THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRADITIONAL

and

WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACHES

TO LANGUAGE ARTS INSTRUCTION

by

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Abstract

Initially the purpose of this ethnographic study was to discover insights into effective teaching in an actual classroom. However, as the study developed, it became apparent that two very different and distinct approaches to language arts instruction were operating. These two approaches came to be known and understood as traditional and whole language concepts of effective teaching. This lead to the question, to what extent are these two approaches compatible in one classroom during language arts? Each position was researched and explored to provide extensive background and clear definitions for the study.

Throughout this process, the data collection began. Descriptive data of one grade four classroom during language arts instruction emerged. The research did not focus on one of two pre-determined teaching behaviors but described the classroom as a social situation during language arts. The lengthy and in-depth description contained information about me, the teacher, the school, the students, the classroom, the parents, the program and its resources.

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The main data collection occurred through participant observation which means I studied a situation in which I was already an ordinary participant. Data were collected according to a systematic scheme which served to document the classroom and were compared with ethnographic notes of two other independent field researchers, who were non-participant observers. The ethnographic record consisted of field notes, tape recordings, pictures, student work and student and teacher journals. These data were collected from the beginning of January until the middle of April, 1987. Each observatioon lasted for 30-45 minutes twice weekly, yielding about 25 hours of classroom data over a four month period.

The data provided a lengthy description of a grade four classroom during language arts instruction and in so doing, discovered characteristics of both traditional and whole language approaches. Specifically, a traditional approach exercised greatest influence in the areas of: 1) spelling 2) classroom management, and 3) evaluation. A whole language approach primarily influenced the following areas: 1) concept of learning 2) pedagogy, and 3) curriculum. These conclusions suggest that what goes on in a classroom may be a highly complex process that is not necessarily influenced by only one theoretical approach but by a combination of several. This may suggest a change in the treatment of these approaches as unconnected strategies of effective teaching.

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Autobiographic Preamble

In order to offer the reader some background knowledge concerning the origin of this study, a brief description of its inception follows. When I began the post-graduate program at the University of Lethbridge, it soon became apparent that the coursework I was involved in emphasized two very different approaches of effective teaching. These two approaches came to be known and understood under the headings of traditional teaching and whole language teaching. They appeared to have completely separate and often diverse characteristics.

The disconnected way these two approaches were presented caused me some concern, particularly in my capacity as an elementary teacher. My own teaching experience together with discussions with colleagues lead me to believe that these approaches to teaching were not completely separate in the day to day operation of a classroom.

Later in the program, coursework in the area of ethnography provided an effective research tool to eventually study this concern. Ethnography provided descriptive observations that allowed important research questions to emerge. At the outset of the research, I hoped to fully describe all aspects of my own classroom in order to better

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understand its operation and to discover insights into this area of concern, that is, effective teaching. This would help to either confirm the need to separate traditional and whole language teaching or to deny it.

As a full-time teacher, the task of fulfilling the role of full-time researcher became extremely time-consuming. Eventually, only one area of the curriculum became the focus of the study, to limit the amount of data without jeopardizing the intent of the research. As traditional and whole language approaches both concentrate on language arts instruction, I chose to concentrate my research on that area of the curriculum.

Initially, my research question remained wide in scope, what is happening in this classroom, immediately before, during and following language arts? This question allowed me to focus not only on literacy activities but others which may have been affected by my approach to language arts instruction. Descriptive data of one grade four classroom during language arts were collected. The lengthy ethnographic record contained information about me, the teacher, the school, the classroom, the students, the parents, the program and its resources.

These wide-focused descriptive observations continued throughout the research. However, the emphasis shifted to focused and then to selective observations as the data indicated dominant patterns of effective teaching behaviors.

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Due to the nature of the research, one question emerged which dominated the focus of further data collection and its analysis. That is, to what extent are traditional and whole language approaches to language arts instruction compatible in one grade four classroom? This process allowed the dominant patterns of effective teaching behaviors regarding literacy to emerge and it further provided the ability to focus more selectively on individual teaching behaviors and practices.

Therefore, it is important to note that this type is not a linear study as Chapters One and Two became refined by discoveries made in Chapters Three and Four. The primary research question was an emergent one, developing as the study progressed until it became the focus of continued observations and analysis.

This brief preamble will serve to indicate to the reader important background information concerning the origin of this study and how it progressed.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Agreement on the school as the place where it all
comes together and the place to engage in a
collaborative process of improvement does not
require agreement on a common theory of schooling.
But it does force greater attention to the
school's present condition, the quality of life
there and some of the things likely to enhance the
quality." (Effective Schools Project, 1982).

The identification of behaviors, practices, and skills
of effective teaching continues to be an important task in
research in the area of language arts instruction (Edelsky,
et. al., 1984; Slaughter, 1985; Joyce, 1985; Osburn, 1983;
Gage, 1985).

Two very different concepts of effective teaching
emerge from the literature about literacy instruction. On
the one hand, a traditional, curriculum-centered approach
seeks to define a series of teaching behaviors that
correlate with measures of student achievement.

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On the other hand, a whole language approach seeks to develop teaching behaviors that are based less on a pre-specified curriculum and more on a child-centered view of language learning. Both the traditional and whole language approaches are currently prominent as researchers, teacher educators, administrators and teachers attempt to discover and describe effective patterns of language arts instruction. This chapter will introduce the paradigms associated with the two approaches. They will be more fully explored in the second chapter.

A Comparison Between Traditional and Whole Language Approaches to Language Arts Instruction

These two general approaches to language arts instruction can be compared and contrasted according to several categories: concept of learning, curriculum, pedagogy, teacher's roles, evaluation and research orientation. In each of these major areas there are marked differences between the two kinds of language arts programs.

Concept of Learning

The concept of learning fostered by a student-directed whole language approach is one which affirms the need of learners to put knowledge into their own words. This reconstructionist view maintains knowledge must be constantly reconstructed by the individual to be effectively

learned. Therefore, learning is viewed as the modification or elaboration of what is already known, and children engage in this process to accommodate and understand that which is new (Smith, 1978). This approach assumes a particular view of our world which suggests that one can never separate the world from those who attempt to know it (Walker, 1986).

The concept of learning implicit in a traditional approach, which is primarily curriculum or teacher-directed, is one which assumes knowledge exists outside the learner and must be acquired as a kind of commodity. The curriculum and instruction task is seen as one in which information and skills are organized, pre-determined and presented to the learner as explicit, precise learning objectives. This is what Friere (1985) refers to as the "banking concept of education" in which the child has a more passive role in the learning process, and must adopt the interpretation of the teacher.

This is opposed to the whole language view that knowledge is not a static body of information but changes constantly. It is created and recreated by the learner with the support of adults and other learners (Wells, 1986).

Curriculum

"Curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge, pedagogy defines what counts as valid transmission of knowledge, and evaluation defines what counts as valid realization of this knowledge

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on the part of the taught." (Bernstein, 1971).

Bernstein (1971) notes that a major difference between two kinds of approaches to instruction (similar to the two being compared here) is their treatment of curriculum. A traditional approach is characterized by a curriculum divided into content units which are completely separate from each other. The boundaries between these contents are clearly and strongly marked or "closed". This is referred to by Bernstein as a "collection" curriculum. A traditional approach views the language arts curriculum as a series of separate hierarchical skills that must be taught and mastered separately before a new skill may be introduced (Nemko, 1984; Rash, 1984). For instance, individual letter names and sounds must be learned by the child before reading can occur. Teachers using this approach have tended to focus on one aspect of the language arts program at a time, separating reading, writing, listening, speaking and viewing into independent hierarchical skills.

A whole language approach views curriculum in a different manner. Where a traditional approach views the curriculum direction as proceeding from very small units of understanding to larger more complex ones, a whole language approach views the direction as beginning with the larger units of understanding and proceeding to the smaller ones. Content units do not stand separately from one another but the boundaries between them are relatively ambiguous or "open". In contrast to a traditional or "collection"

curriculum, Bernstein refers to this as an "integrated" curriculum.

Therefore, a whole language approach to literacy supports the interrelatedness of the processes of listening, speaking, reading, writing and viewing (Goodman & Goodman, 1981; Baghban, 1984; Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984). The boundaries among the different elements that make up language arts are weaker and more ambiguous. Sequence is not so important. Students become involved in the reading process through chanting and singing, for example, before individual letter names and sounds are mastered. Language is not broken down into abstract, non-meaningful parts, during instruction.

> "Three systems interact in language: grapho-
> phonic, syntactic and semantic. These cannot
> usefully be separated for instruction without
> creating non-linguistic abstractions and non-
> sense." (Goodman & Goodman, 1981, p. 2).

In order to fully understand what these three systems are and how they are used by the listener or reader, a brief description follows. Grapho-phonemic information is the knowledge readers have of their sound symbol system and how symbols relate to the sounds they represent. It includes the knowledge that "b" translates as "buh". Syntactic information refers to the ordering of words in sentences and semantic information includes knowledge of how word meanings are related. For instance, we are not surprised to see the

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words water, boat and harpoon in the same context because our knowledge suggest these "fit" together (Pearson, 1976).

The skills orientation identified as one aspect of a traditional approach to language arts focuses on the smallest pieces of language, drilling for perfection and then proceeding to larger units of language (Watson, 1984). In contrast, a whole language approach sees strength and sense in the totality rather than in the parts of language and bases instruction on that assumption.

Here is an episode from a classroom where a whole language approach is being used. The focus appears to be on sentences in relation to the entire text.

I.   Teacher & Children — (Singing Eensy Weensy Spider)

Teacher	Good. Do you think you could help me write that on the board? Did you know I didn't know that song until yesterday? So I don't know if I know the words unless I look at it.
Children	(Begin Singing)
Child	Shhh
Teacher	Who wants to tell me the first line?
Child	I will. Eensy Weensy Spider...
Teacher	(Under breath) I don't know if I can spell it. Eensy Weensy Spider. Okay Mike, what's next?

Child	(General talking, but no direct answer.)
Teacher	Don, what's next?
Child	Went up the water spout...
Teacher	(Writes on board--- Went up the water spout)
Children	(Singing) Went up the water spout. Down came the rain...
.Teacher	(Continues putting the song on the board as the children dictate). (Watson, 1984).

A skills approach which has been identified as part of a traditional approach to instruction focuses on small units of language such as letters, syllables or words which are minimally related to the text. For example:

II.	Teacher	Okay. Very easy word. Tell me, Chris.
	Child	Without.
	—Teacher	With — Out. What kind of word is it?
	Child	Compound.
	Teacher	Compound word. Very good. Okay. Now I have a real hard word.

In this episode, the child arrives immediately at the larger unit of language – a sentence. The child's attention is then focused on each word by the teacher. The teacher encourages the last step to be recognition of a sentence.

III. Teacher   Today I gave you two words to write. Now you're going to make a. sentence. I gave you the words. First words. Figure them out. Helen, what are they?

Child   It's a rainy day.

Teacher   Wait. First of all let's do the words. What is this?

Child   Rainy.

Teacher   And?

Child   Rainy Day.

Teacher   Okay. Rainy day. Give me a sentence like this. It...

Child   It is a rainy day.

Teacher   It is a rainy...

Child   Day.   (Watson, 1984)

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Pedagogy

Traditional and whole language approaches also differ in their pedagogy. A traditional approach is characterized by what Bernstein (1971) terms a "visible" pedagogy as opposed to an "invisible" pedagogy which is linked to a whole language approach to literacy.

A "visible" pedagogy is one in which the teacher or a pre-specified curriculum exercises control over the selection, organization, pacing and timing of knowledge to be learned. Pupil's influence over what and how it is learned is greatly reduced. Garth Boomer (1984) utilizes the term "traditional" teaching in language arts to represent teacher control of language interactions in the classroom. He further applies the term to include events such as 1) a greater amount of teacher talk compared with student talk, 2) the teacher as sole planner of the sequence of work to be followed and 3) the inability of students to affect curriculum.

A whole language approach is more clearly linked to an "invisible" pedagogy. The teacher still arranges many aspects of learning; however, the student has greater participation in decisions about what is selected, how it is organized and finally the amount of time to be spent on it. For instance, a student involved in a research project on the sea, may choose a topic within that framework. If the project must be completed in two weeks, the student may choose to work on it during specific periods in the

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classroom, in the library or at home. Finally, the student may decide to present the project as a written report, a film strip or a poster. The result is a curriculum and pedagogy that has been negotiated by teacher and pupils to meet the interests and needs of both.

Teachers' Role

A traditional approach to language arts instruction identifies the teacher's role as the central and dominant force in the classroom.

> "With teacher-directed instruction, the teacher
> sets the goals, plans the activities, chooses the
> material; questions are convergent, not divergent;
> interaction is structured, not authoritarian;
> tasks are cognitively oriented, not humanistic."
> (Joyce, 1985)

Teacher-directed instruction refers to the manner in which criteria for learning success are transmitted. Bernstein (1971) notes that the more explicitly stated the criteria, the more a traditional approach is being used. The teacher uses materials that are structured and sequential reflecting the belief that literacy is best achieved when presented as a set of skills taught in a pre-determined order.

Conversely, Bernstein (1971) indicates that where the criteria are transmitted implicitly and the teacher's control over the child is implicit, a different approach to

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instruction is realized which is linked to a whole language approach.

The teacher's role from a whole language point of view is one of facilitator, enabling the student to become a central figure and decision-maker in the classroom. This is observed in Freire's (1985) concept of a "mock" death on the part of the educator as the exclusive teacher and his/her rebirth as a self-educator and self-learner. Student-centered instruction means the child's own work indicates areas in need of further learning and the teacher, then, adjusts the sequence of the curriculum to meet the child's needs at a given moment. This role supports the concept of the interrelatedness of language processes, which maintains wholeness of experience would be emphasized over a pre-ordained sequence of skills.

A second component central to the teacher's role is the ability to present language learning in whole meaningful texts that allow students to build upon previous experiences (Heath, 1983). For example, students are encouraged to freely discuss their experiences at a zoo before actually reading a story about the topic. A whole language orientation to teaching encourages children to talk about what they already know in order to accommodate new language. The following are examples of children using experience and stated information to construct unstated information.

A Grade One Classroom:

I.	T & CH	(Discussing <u>The Little Old Man Who Could Not Read</u>)
	T	How did you know what the boxes said?
	C	We read it.
	C	I know how to read.
	T	Why didn't the little old man know that?
	C	'Cause he was old.
	T	He hadn't learned to read at the beginning of the story, had he?
	Ch	(General discussion)
	C	'Cause he didn't go to school.
2.	T	How will we set up our store -- with our food?
	Ch	Set it up on the tables. Use the tables. We will put the boxes of cereal here. The soup here. (Discussion continues)
	T	That's a good idea, isn't it? We'll sort them into what kind of food they are.

Ch	(General Discussion) Get all the cereal together, get all the cookies together, all the crackers together.
T	Does anyone know what they call the person at the store who does this? Rusty?
C	A stocker.
Ch	Stocker, Stocker!
T	A stocker — Right! And there's a person hired to do that. So, who would like to be the stocker?
T	Now, who's another person that works at the store?
Ch	(Several Comments) I know. A man who works at the counter. You pay him. (Discussion continues as children name meat cutter/butcher, the baker, the manager, and the customers. Children act out their roles). (Watson, 1984).

These students appear to be very involved in the dialogue of the lesson while the teacher clarifies their ideas and encourages more conversation.

Evaluation

Traditional and whole language approaches may be contrasted according to the evaluation procedures and

systems they use. Bernstein (1971) maintains that traditional approaches to language arts instruction use evaluation procedures that have very clear criteria which are easily measured. Small units of learning are measured enabling comparisons between students and schools. It is further argued by Bernstein (1971) that the public examination system is based primarily on traditional approaches where units of learning are separated and taught explicitly by the teacher.

A whole language approach would not view these as effective measures of evaluation since they do not treat literacy as an integrated process. A concentration upon small units of learning for purposes of evaluation may not, from a whole language perspective, provide a complete and accurate account of the student's ability to make effective use of the literacy processes.

Evaluation procedures are rather complex in a whole language approach. They are often "multiple, diffuse and not easily subject to apparently precise measurement." (Bernstein, 1971). The teacher is involved in observing and checking during the process of learning in an effort to assess present performance. Folders of children's work, journals or tapes of group work may be part of the teacher's evaluation repertoire (Boomer, 1984). Bernstein (1971) notes this method of evaluation would resemble a dossier, containing information on the progress of one child.

Research Orientation

Finally, the nature of the research that has been conducted and which, indeed, is permissible according to these two paradigms may also be contrasted.

A traditional view of the language arts curriculum has allowed researchers to assess the learning of very small units of meaning at a time, such as letter names, letter sounds and sight words. In order to accomplish this, the research has generally followed these inquiry procedures:

1) develop an instrument for systematically recording specified teaching behaviors;

2) rank classrooms according to measures of pupil achieve-ment, and;

3) relate teaching behaviors to class achievement scores.

This means that specific teaching behaviors, such as teacher-centered instruction or clarity of instructions (Alberta Education, 1985), are observed first. Then achievement tests which measure separate aspects of the literacy process at a time, are administered to the students. Finally, high scores on achievement tests are related to those specific teaching behaviors. An assumption is then made that these particular behaviors are affecting teaching procedures. It becomes apparent that a traditional approach has typically viewed the teaching and the testing of literacy as processes that separate reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing into hierarchical skills or

as a collection curriculum. For example, Rash (1984) investigated this research question, "Do kindergarten children learn word acquisition better in an isolation condition or in a sentence condition?" Her research focused on one separate skill in the literacy process. The design of this kind of research is fixed. Before collecting data, the researcher has identified very specific questions, based upon prior knowledge of that area. This approach assumes a rationalist view of the world, maintaining the existence of an objective reality beyond one's own existence. Research of this kind attempts to discover certain generalizations to apply to a multitude of situations (Walker, 1986).

This kind of research has traditionally been of a quantitative nature relying on the use of achievement tests to identify effective teaching behaviors (Gage, 1985). Consequently, this research has been conducted to achieve the values implicit in achievement tests by equating effective behaviors in language arts with high scores. (Edelsky, et. al., 1984).

Whole language researchers do not view these as valid measures of achievement since they do not treat literacy development as an integrated process. That is, a traditional approach separates the grapho-phonic, syntactic and semantic systems for purposes of instruction and conducting research. Because of the integrated nature of the language arts curriculum, whole language research has been primarily qualitative in nature, attempting to describe

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complete language arts programs instead of focusing on small units of learning. Researchers who do attempt to observe all three systems as they interact through the literacy process (Watson, 1984; Edelsky, et. al, 1984; Slaughter, 1983) rely heavily on ethnographic research procedures.

One method used in qualitative research is ethnography, which is the work of describing a culture from the native point of view. It involves the disciplined study of grasping another's point of view by observing behavior and then inquiring about the meaning of that behavior (Spradley, 1980).

Quantitative procedures do not appear to be appropriate when conducting research into effective whole language teaching behaviors because whole language emphasizes the unity of the literacy processes, thus measuring them independently of one another in a quantitative approach is contradictory. Consequently, the use of achievement tests to measure specific skills in language arts is also not considered appropriate. The design is an unfolding or emergent one based upon the actual data collection.

In summary, the two approaches to language arts instruction referred to as traditional and whole language have briefly been compared and contrasted according to certain dimensions: concept of learning, curriculum, pedagogy, teacher's role, evaluation and research orientation. This overview will serve to set out clear and precise definitions of each of these approaches for purposes

of this study. For further clarification, this comparison

is presented in Table I.

TABLE I

SUMMARY of DEFINITIONS

	A Traditional Approach to L.A. instruction	A Whole Language Approach to L.A. instruction
Concept of Learning	Knowledge exists outside of learner and must be acquired Knowledge is a fairly stable body of information.	Knowledge exists within the learner and must be recon-structed. Knowledge constantly changes.
Curriculum	"Collection" curri-culum content units have strong bound-aries. Direction of curri-culum is from small to larger units of understanding. teaching follows a pre-determined sequence set by curri-culum or teacher.	"Integrated" curri-culum content units have weak boundaries. Direction of curriculum is from large to smaller units of understanding. Sequence is determined by students' needs and interests.
Pedagogy	Pedagogy is "visible" Criteria are trans-mitted in an explicit manner and are pre-sented by a prespe-cified curriculum or a teacher.	Pedagogy is "invisible" Criteria are transmitted in an implicit manner where negotiation between teacher and students is on-going.
Teacher's Role	Teacher directed in-struction. Teacher structures content according to a pre-determined sequence.	Student directed instruc-tion. Student structures content and the Teacher acts as a facilitator.
Evaluation	Criteria and methods are clear. Results are easily comparable. Evaluates small units of understanding.	Methods are multiple, diffuse and complex. Results indicate progress of one student. Evaluates totality of development.
Research Orientation	Quantitative in nature. Relies heavily on student achievement tests. Focuses on small parts of the language arts program for research purposes.	Qualitative in nature. Relies heavily on ethno-graphic research proce-dures. Focuses on the language arts program as a whole for research purposes.

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There are indeed two different methods of identifying effective teaching behaviors for language arts instruction. From this brief review and analysis of traditional and whole language approaches, it appears that these two ways of defining and describing effective language instruction are irreconcilable, at least, in theory. This poses problems for teachers and curriculum developers who are faced with the difficulty of either combining aspects of these approaches or adhering predominantly to one approach for classroom instruction. Therefore, the question of the degree to which traditional and whole language recommendations are compatible in actual classrooms remains an important question. That is the question this investigation will address. To what extent are traditional and whole language approaches to language arts instruction compatible in a grade four classroom?" Compatibility will be defined, for the purposes of this study, as evidence of the co-existence of both these approaches in a single classroom.

This investigation will take the form of a personal case study of myself, a grade four teacher. Therefore, most of the data collection will occur through participant observation (Spradley, 1980). This means I am an ordinary participant with an ability to have access to a classroom on a regular basis. The data collected will describe a grade four language arts program and it will be determined whether

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or not it is whole language in nature, traditional or a combination of both. The definitions provided in the introduction of the terms, traditional and whole language will provide the basic terminology to be used throughout this investigation..

A review . of the literature follows to provide clarification of the underlying assumptions of a traditional and a whole language approach to language arts instruction as they will be understood in this study. The review will describe the type of research that has previously been conducted in these areas. It will also serve to seek a common ground shared by these two approaches, particularly through an examination of recent studies which have sought to reconcile them.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to explore the similarities and differences between two research traditions in the study of effective language arts teaching in elementary classrooms. What will emerge from the review will be, firstly: the differences between the two traditions with respect to:

(1) research orientation and assumptions; (2) pedagogy;

(3) teacher's role and classroom management strategies, and

(4) teacher's concept of learning. Secondly, it will indicate compatibilities between the two traditions with a view to establishing grounds or areas of reconciliation between the two. In so doing, the review will clarify for teachers potential areas of reconciliation. It may reduce the apparent inconsistency between incompatible research recommendations that tend to emerge from the two approaches.

A TRADITIONAL APPROACH

1. Research Orientation and Assumptions

Research conducted within the traditional paradigm has been concerned primarily with the identification of certain

teacher behaviors that correlate with specific student learning outcomes. This process has not been limited to language arts instruction but has been applied to other subject areas. It has been described as, "the dream of altering from afar what teacher's do in classrooms." (Cuban, 1986)

In this "type of research, teacher and student characteristics represent variables. In order to investigate particular variables, researchers state they must be observable or measurable in some way. Then, investigators decide on an operational definition for each variable. This assigns a meaning to a variable by stating the observable behavior representative of that variable. Frequently, student behaviors are defined in terms of test scores. For example, achievement in reading may be determined according to scores on the Canadian Achievement Test, or time on task may be calculated according to the amount of time individual students appear to be involved during instruction. For instance, Veatch and Cooter (1986) used the California State Department of Education Reading Assessment to indicate improvement and decline in reading achievement and then explored teacher factors that might account for the difference.

The teaching behaviors are also defined as a precise set of actions and represent the values assigned to a second variable. For instance, Stallings (1975), in a study of

first and third-grade classrooms, found that higher reading scores with these young, low S.E.S. students were associated with structured,. systematic instruction patterns such as longer amounts of time spent on reading, direct instruction from the teacher accompanied by praise and/or feedback. These. studies seek, therefore, effective teaching practices in traditional classrooms by studying the correlations between achievement on reading tests and specific teaching strategies.

One major study (Joyce, 1985) recommends such teaching practices as large group instruction, use of direct and focused questions, maintaining highly structured learning environments, monitoring seatwork, and assigning homework on a regular basis. These recommendations are the result of correlation studies of identified teacher practices and student achievement not only in reading but also in mathematics. Achievement in these two subject areas tends to dominate this type of research, although the main focus in the present study is on the teaching of language arts.

It appears that researchers operating within a traditional framework begin with the definition of a problem, formulate an hypothesis they believe may describe the relationship between the variables in the situation and develop a strategy to collect the evidence (Brophy and Evertson, 1975; Stallings, 1975). The review presented thus far attempts to characterize the process used by some

researchers to determine effective teaching according to a traditional approach to language arts instruction at the elementary school level. This kind of research has been called the descriptive-correlational-experimental loop (Gage, 1985). The loop has three stages. First, teaching practices are observed, described and measured. Second, they have been correlated with achievement. Finally, these practices are manipulated or changed in experiments to seek correlations with higher student achievement. The most frequent data to emerge from this type of research are achievement scores which are interpreted as to their significant correlation with specific teacher behaviors. For instance, Robinson (1976) noted a statistically significant difference was found in language arts gain between elementary students who perceived their teachers as providing high levels of warmth, empathy and guidance and those students who perceived their teachers as providing low levels of these qualities.

Research into traditional approaches to language arts instruction are characterized by scores on achievement tests, teaching behaviors and statistical correlations (Gage, 1984). Inherent in these research designs is the rationalist's belief that it is possible to maintain an objective reality outside one's own existence. This is opposed to the view that suggests one can never truly separate the world from those who attempt to know it

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(Walker, 1986). The first world view maintains the possibility of discovering stable generalizations that would apply to a multitude of situations.

Absent from many of these studies is descriptive information concerning on-going classroom realities that go deeper into classroom processes, provide more information and with greater sophistication of detail (Gage, 1985). Many researchers remove students from classroom reality to test various methods of language arts instruction (Nemko, 1984; Rash, 1984). Nemko (1984) designed a study to test the efficiency of two methods of early reading instruction. The two methods were 1) introducing words in isolation and 2) introducing words in context. It is important to note the researcher's treatment of language arts as separate processes. Reading was viewed as one part of the curriculum, separate from listening, speaking, writing or viewing, for instructional purposes.

Nemko's (1984) subjects were ninety-six first graders, forty-eight boys and forty-eight girls from five first grade classes taken from two inner city schools in Oakland, California. Sixteen words were chosen as the target words and two-word learning tasks were developed and administered. The assumptions were made that reading could be treated as a single word recognition process separate from other literacy processes. Secondly, student performance was assessed upon procedures which removed children from the classroom

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individually which did not accurately take classroom life into account. Rash (1984) chose to test the same area of language arts instruction as did Nemko (1984) but her subjects were fifty-two kindergarten children. The basic principle was similar. By focusing on one specific part of literacy, that of word acquisition, she and Nemko (1984) maintain the concept of a "collection" curriculum (Bernstein, 1971) whereby the content units are separate from each other. This concept has been clearly defined in the previous chapter.

2. Pedagogy

Traditional approaches to language arts instruction at the elementary level focus on specific ways in which knowledge is transmitted. Several studies (Stallings, 1975; Cuban, 1986) recommend teaching practices in which teachers spend greater amounts of time structuring the environment and teaching directly to students in large groups. These are referred to as teacher-directed strategies or teacher-centered instruction (Cuban,1984) and display certain characteristics. For example, teacher talk exceeds student talk during instruction, use of class time is determined by the teacher or a pre-determined curriculum and the classroom is usually arranged into rows of desks facing a blackboard with a teacher's desk nearby. Soar (1973) examined teacher behaviors in kindergarten and first-grade classrooms to determine their effects on student learning. Simple-

concrete gains involving recall of specific facts were positively associated with the amount of teacher's use of direct, focused questions and large group instruction.. He found that moderately high levels of freedom facilitated complex growth while greater - teacher direction increased simple learning.

3. Teacher's Role and Classroom Management

"Teacher-centered classroom tactics enabled teachers to maintain order with large groups of children and, at the same time, to convey content that the community deemed appropriate." (Cuban, 1986) The teacher's role in one study refers to the management aspect - of instruction (Anderson, Evertson and Brophy, 1979). This study was conducted in several first grade classrooms in which teachers were given manuals for instruction. The manuals outlined specific .teacher behaviors for managing the classroom as a whole and for handling student answers. Bernstein's (1971) view of the teacher's role as a central and dominant force in the classroom according to a traditional approach, is reflected in this literature base. The teacher or the curriculum direct classroom activities and content.

4. Teacher's Concept of Learning

A teacher's concept of learning is defined by Watson (1984) as the underlying beliefs upon which a teacher bases, organizes and presents the language arts curriculum. Watson

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(1984) observed and described two teaching procedures stemming from two different theoretical influences concerning the nature of learning and distinguished them according to the terms 1) a whole language concept of learning, and 2) a skills concept of learning. In order to understand the differences between these two concepts of learning, a whole language viewpoint is also presented here to illustrate its opposing nature.

According to Watson's whole language concept of learning, language is viewed as a complete organization of grapho-phonic, syntactic and semantic systems. It sees strength in the totality rather than in the parts of language and bases instruction on that assumption. This is not unlike the definition of a whole language approach to language arts instruction presented in this investigation in which the curriculum is integrated (Bernstein, 1971). A skill concept of learning sees strength in structuring knowledge in a way that allows children to extract units of language from the totality of language, master those pieces and then move on to larger units and more mastery. This concept of learning can be seen to be associated with a traditional approach to language arts instruction in which the teacher or a pre-specified "collection" curriculum (Bernstein, 1971) follows a sequence of hierarchical skills proceeding from small units of understanding to larger ones.

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Gage (1984), noted that research aimed at changing teachers' practices is not always successful. This may be due in part to the possibility the behaviors did not represent or match the teachers' personal beliefs concerning the nature of learning during language arts instruction (Hunter, 1975).

Many of the studies associated with a traditional approach (Joyce, 1985) did not attempt to study the teachers' concept of learning. Therefore, there is a difficulty in determining whether any observed change in practices will continue over extended periods of time. This appears to be a limitation of this kind of research as no follow-up studies have been conducted to indicate whether or not a teacher's changed behaviors, observed during on-going research, continue after the study has been completed. This possibility is that of the Hawthorne Effect, which suggest results produced during an experiment may be due to the artificial situation rather than the factors being manipulated.

To summarize, research into effective traditional approaches to elementary language arts instruction accepts certain basic features of classroom teaching: the separation of the literacy process for purposes of instruction and conducting research, the effective transmission of knowledge through teacher-directed strategies in which the teacher's role is to explicitly

control and direct classroom activities. Finally, the research paradigm does not acknowledge the significance of the teachers' own orientations towards learning and literacy.

A WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH

- For purposes of comparison, the second research tradition, that is called the whole language approach will be described according to the same categories: (1) research orientation and assumptions concerning curriculum; (2) pedagogy; (3) teacher's role and classroom management strategies; and (4) teacher's concept of learning.

1. Research Orientation and Assumptions

Research conducted into whole language classrooms is primarily descriptive in nature using a methodology that borrows heavily from ethnographic research (Wolcott, 1967; Slaughter, 1983; Watson, 1984; Edelsky, et. al, 1984; Heath, 1983). These studies attempt to provide in-depth descriptions of the literacy process maintaining that all systems of literacy (grapho-phonic, syntactic and semantic) are interactively, inter-dependently and simultaneously present during elementary language arts instruction. This view of research and curriculum is similar to what Bernstein (1971) refers to as an "integrated" curriculum in which the direction of literacy instruction is from larger and meaningful units to smaller ones. Bernstein (1971) argues

that it is a new middle class that has been responsible for the rise of an integrated curriculum particularly at the elementary school level. This has been due, in part, to the manner in which socialization of the young takes place. It appears there has been a shift away from strong boundaries of classification in the socialization process which has carried over into the schools. For example, Bernstein (1971) asserts the respective roles of father and mother in the running .of the home and in the rearing of children are less clearly differentiated than they used to be. The rise of a weak classification system means' that home and school experiences are no longer separated, rather, home experiences are valid and important to the schooling of the child.

Consequently, research within this paradigm attempts to observe and describe classroom life as completely as possible. Watson (1984) noted it was necessary to use techniques that allowed observers to work with wholes rather than minute parts and that allowed phenomena to be described as well as counted in order to be appropriate to the underlying assumption that understanding is best achieved when presented in a whole and meaningful way. One goal of many of these studies (Wolcott, 1967; Slaughter, 1985) was to provide "thick" descriptions of the instructional contexts from the viewpoint of young children. Descriptive observations serve to reveal an overview of the language

arts classroom, its people and its activities so that researchers and teachers gain a total perspective not always possible through traditional research methods.

> "One reason for conducting an ethnographic study is to explore hitherto vague or unknown domains. When researchers are challenging entrenched paradigms, as we are challenging a formalistic skills-based approach to language arts instruction in schools, and exploring a new paradigm. For example, the whole language approach, we must devise research designs for exploring openly, without the constraints of a pre-determined theory." (Slaughter, 1985).

Therefore, ethnography is an appropriate method to conduct whole language research as it seeks to understand the inter-relatedness of literacy in the classroom in new and innovative ways that will contribute to our understanding of effective teaching. The strength of many whole language studies lies in the extensiveness of the data describing literacy events and does not focus on finding correlations between pre-specified variables (Watson, 1984; Slaughter, 1985; Edelsky, et. al., 1984). Descriptive studies include the knowledge and perspective of the teachers and students as participants in the situation. According to Spradley (1980), experimental studies which

exclude these descriptions, provide a partial explanation
that distorts the human situation.

2. Pedagogy

Research into whole language approaches to literacy
seeks effective ways in which knowledge is transmitted in
student rather than teacher-centered classrooms. Edelsky
(1984) studied the nature of effective direction giving in a
grade six classroom. She found that effective directions,
defined as those which were given and followed, tended to be
minimal or implicit and were usually given once an activity
was already underway. The idea was that students were
carrying out their own tasks and required little direction
from the teacher.

Other studies (Slaughter, 1984; Baghban, 1981) of very
young and beginning school age children sought to discover
strategies which encouraged children's oral language.
Slaughter (1984) noted that students often directed
storytelling activities in whole language classrooms
allowing the child to talk about experiences relating to the
story. The assumption underlying events in these studies
suggest knowledge must be reconstructed in the learner's own
words to be effectively learned. Freire (1985) proposes the
necessity of authentic dialogue between learners and
teachers as an aid to the learning process.

In other words, effective pedagogy is influenced by instruction in which transmission of the criteria for successful learning are implicit. (Bernstein, 1971)

For example, at the present time, the Alberta Education project identified as the Early Childhood Services (E.C.S.) and Primary (Grades 1-3) Program initiatives is designed to shift emphasis from the teacher to the student, stating that,

> "Language acquisition and production will be the
> principal vehicle by which the project will find
> its way into implementation. The role of language
> will see a shift, for the teacher, away from
> predominantly expressive language; i.e.
> teaching and telling to a receptive mode; i.e.
> more listening and interpreting of the child's
> expression, and a shift for the child, away from
> an emphasis of receptive language to an expressive
> mode." (Alberta Education, 1985).

Free and spontaneous oral language in relaxed situations allows the child to demonstrate what knowledge he/she possesses and what decisions he/she is capable of making in the literacy process (Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984). One teacher's view of dialogue follows:

> "It was not only her own relationship with the
> students in which language played an integral
> part. She encouraged the students to develop

their relationships with others through language.
When children had a problem playing together, they
were encouraged to talk to the other person ..."
(p. 153). (Clandinin, 1986).

There is little evidence available from traditional
approaches to language arts to suggest that interaction may
be an important criterion of effectiveness.

However, the need for student-to-teacher and student-
to-student interactions, according to a whole language
orientation, is based on a theory of language learning
proposed by Vygotsky (1962). This view maintains that
language development initially occurs for social reasons.
Language maintains a social function throughout life in
"social speech". Eventually, thought and language combine
to form thought over which the child gains verbal control.
Egocentric speech then develops which is a kind of inner
speech not used for communication; it serves to vocalize and
facilitate one's thinking. Language is not seen as merely
an expression of thought but as a means to discover and
create thought. This approach to literacy confirms a
strategy in which learners must put knowledge into their own
words for it to become meaningful.

In order to accomplish this, research tends to focus on
a pedagogy similar to that experienced in many home
environments by parents and children. Continuity of
strategies from the child's home or outside experiences to

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those at school is important since young children gradually become literate through meaningful interactions with language and print long before school begins (Slaughter, 1985; Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984; Heath, 1983).

3. Teacher's_Role_and_Classroom_Management

Management strategies are rarely mentioned in whole language research on effective teaching. However, one study (Edelsky, et. al., 1984) observed an effective whole language teacher's rules for classroom behavior. This particular teacher had established a few rather ambiguous rules such as "Do What's Effective" or "Use your Head", that did not specify precise behavior. This study also noted that management and curriculum were interrelated. In other words, goals for implementing a whole language program in this elementary classroom were similar to the goals of managing the classroom. For instance, one goal was stated:

"To manage the day-to-day environment smoothly so other goals could be accomplished".

This included ignoring inappropriate behavior, establishing routines and giving directions. In this case, classroom management appears to be an effective teaching behavior insofar as it allows other effective teaching practices to occur.

The teacher's role in many of these studies (Watson, 1984; Slaughter, 1985; Edelsky, et. al, 1984) is one of facilitator in which students rearrange and structure the context set by the teacher.

4. Teacher's Concept of Learning

Some whole language studies purposefully describe the teacher's concept of literacy learning in order to fully understand language arts instruction in classrooms (Slaughter, 1985; Watson, 1984; Edelsky, et. al., 1984).

Watson (1984) selected two teachers for a descriptive study based upon recommendations, interest in the research and an ability to articulate a concept of learning about literacy development. A concept of learning was defined as the underlying beliefs upon which a teacher bases, organizes and presents the language arts curriculum. Three major assumptions were made: (1) teachers have a concept of learning on which they plan literacy instruction; (2) researchers can discover that base; and (3) teacher's beliefs about learning will be evident in their teaching practices. The researcher validated each teacher's concept of literacy learning through a test called the Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP) developed by DeFord (1978). It has been suggested that all action is rooted in belief and those beliefs are often below the level of consciousness (Kuhn, 1975).

This may suggest reasons why teachers, in the past, did not change their practices even when researchers had identified new and effective behaviors for them to use. Stallings, et. al, (1978) concluded that less well-followed practices were those that seemed less practical, less congruent with the teachers' values and less easily adapted to the teacher's own classroom environment.

Madeline Hunter (1985) supports the idea of teachers considering their own theoretical orientations towards learning before deciding what to do in a classroom. Yet, much of the literature in traditional classrooms does not consider the importance of teachers reflecting upon their own theories before requiring them to use behaviors which they may or may not agree with (Gage, 1985).

Summary

At this point, these two research traditions studying effective language arts teaching in elementary classrooms appear difficult to combine in light of their diverse assumptions concerning the literacy process. This literature review has offered some insight as to the basic differences between the two approaches. They appear to agree upon classroom management as an effective teaching strategy but differ in the degree of importance attached to it and the ways to implement it. For example, a traditional approach suggests management strategies be explicitly transmitted to students (Cuban, 1986) whereas a whole

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language approach proposes management strategies be implicit
(Edelsky, et. al., 1984).

In the past, whole language and traditional approaches
to language arts instruction have been treated separately
using different research paradigms. Recently, some teacher
educators (Osburn, 1983; Gage, 1985) and teachers (Edelsky,
et. al., 1984) attempted to study these approaches for their
potential compatibility in classrooms. One study (Edelsky,
et. al, 1984) documented life in an inner-city sixth grade
classroom in order to determine effective whole language
teaching strategies. Some of the strategies explored were
(1) the teacher gives minimal directions while students are
involved in an activity; and (2) the teacher has only a
few rather ambiguous classroom rules. These results were
contrasted with findings from the literature on traditional
approaches to language arts teaching. It was discovered
that effective traditional approaches did not correspond
with the researcher's classroom observations concerning
criteria for effectiveness. Edelsky, et. al. (1984),
through a brief comparison of these two approaches,
concluded they exist separately in classrooms.

On the other hand, Osburn (1983), a teacher educator,
worked with thirty-one pre-service and in-service teachers
to develop effective whole language approaches to teaching
reading that could be assessed using specific measurable
objectives, a characteristic of traditional teaching, and

established several practice lesson plans whose objectives could be measured in clearly objective terms. The growing existence of such studies indicate that perhaps teacher educators, researchers and other interested groups are attempting to understand each of these instructional approaches and are searching for potential areas of reconciliation in order to build on the strengths of both.

This appears to be a current area of inquiry as there has been a very recent trend to attempt to understand the compatibility of these two approaches. It remains to be seen whether or not these approaches can or do exist in actual classrooms and to what extent.

Therefore, this study proposes to shed some light on the question, "To what degree are traditional and whole language approaches compatible in reference to language arts instruction in a grade four classroom?" A case study is proposed which will focus on the language arts instructional procedures used by one teacher, who is also the researcher of this project, in a grade four classroom. The intent of the study will be to observe and describe the teaching situation during the months of January to April, 1987, in order to discover if characteristics of these two approaches, co-exist in one classroom and if so, under what conditions.

CHAPTER 3

PURPOSE, SETTING AND DESIGN

As indicated in the literature review, attempts have been made to search for compatibilities between whole language and traditional recommendations for effective language arts teaching in elementary schools. The purpose of the present study is to provide additional insight about the degree to which traditional and whole language approaches are compatible in an actual classroom by studying language arts instruction in my own grade four classroom. I will collect in-depth ethnographic data about the classroom's instructional and organizational contexts. The data will be described and interpreted in order to reveal whether the instructional methods and program components can best be described in terms of traditional approaches to language arts, in terms of a whole language approach, or in terms of a combination of these two approaches. The setting of this study will be described according to the following headings: the teacher, the school, the students, the classroom, the parents and the program and resources. Anonymity of the subjects has been ensured.

The Teacher

I am the teacher of the grade four classroom I propose to study. I have 7 1/2 years of teaching experience at two schools — four and one-half years teaching grade one and three years teaching grade four in Lethbridge School District #51. I am currently enrolled as a part-time student in the Master of Education program at the University of Lethbridge where I also completed the requirements for a Bachelor of Arts and Sciences Degree in 1979 and a Bachelor of Education Degree in 1981, both with a major in Modern Languages.

I consider myself to be primarily a whole language teacher, according to the definitions outlined in this study. I support a concept of learning in which students constantly reshape and reconstruct knowledge for themselves in order for effective learning to occur, and I have attempted, in the past, to provide a curriculum that integrates the literacy processes of reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing. However, my experience as a teacher and a graduate student has indicated that I accept certain dimensions of traditional teaching. For instance, there are times when I direct instruction completely through the use of a prescribed curriculum. Evaluation procedures adopted on a school district-wide basis ensure that I use certain methods that provide letter name grades for purposes of comparison. Up until this point, it has been unclear to

me exactly how these two areas influenced my teaching, to what extent and the degree to which they were compatible in my own classroom. I have not had the opportunity nor perhaps, the time, to examine so completely my practices as a teacher of language arts.

I became involved in this study in hopes of determining for myself and other interested teachers, potential areas of reconciliation between these two approaches through a detailed description and interpretation of my own language arts program in grade four.

The School

For the past two years, I have been teaching in a Community School in Lethbridge, Alberta. The school is five years old and is located in a newly developed area of the city. Approximately, 540-550 students attend grades K-6.

The community school philosophy has influenced my teaching by maintaining that "A dynamic interrelationship of school and community can extend the range of learning experience, strengthen motivation for learning and encourage learning by inquiry and discovery." (Nicholas Sheran Community School Student-Parent Handbook) A learning partnership between the school and community helps to establish a bridge between the world inside the school and the world beyond the classroom walls. Bernstein's (1971) "integrated" curriculum has important implications for a community school that attempts to integrate community and

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school concerns.   It is interesting to note that provincial
funding of this type of school .provides for a member of
staff to aid teachers perform the role of integrating
community and   school activities.   One   way this is
accomplished is through the involvement of volunteers who
assist in the classroom, on advisory committees, with after
school programs, tutoring or as classroom resources.

The Students

In 1986-87, there were 35 students in my classroom; 21
were girls and 14 were boys. They ranged from 9 to 11 years
of age. The students were randomly assigned to my classroom
at the beginning of the year. In addition, there were two
other grade four classrooms of 33 and 35 students each. One
student moved away from my classroom during the year and
another moved in.   There are a number of special programs in
the school to help meet the needs of students, and some of
the children in my class attended these programs through the
year.

For instance, three boys and three girls--worked with
another teacher during language arts instruction in a
Resource room. The Resource Program is designed to help
students in a regular classroom who need assistance in
particular areas of language arts instruction because of
learning problems.

These students participated in only one aspect of the
language arts program in my classroom - journal writing,
which will be explained later in the discussion.

The school also offered the full-time services of a
specially trained teacher to work with children with severe
learning problems. Two students from my class were taught
in a Learning Assistance Program regularly during Language
Arts and Mathematics. They did not participate in any
aspect of the Language Arts program in my classroom.

Finally, the school offered the part-time services of a
teacher to plan and implement programs for students with
exceptionally high abilities. Three students in my class
attended these special classes twice a week but not during
language arts instruction.

The Classroom

My class was heterogeneous in nature and students were
not assembled according to homogeneous seating arrangements.
The desks were arranged in five groups of four and three
groups of five with students facing one another in their
respective groups. The students chose their own seating
arrangements and often requested changes for various
reasons, but changes needed my prior approval. Seating
arrangements were occasionally changed by me in consultation
with students and sometimes parents concerning reasons for
the move. The classroom itself was one of nine classrooms,
approximately 14 x 9 metres, in a single hallway attached to

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the main part of the school. There was one door and one

window at opposite sides of the room. The walls and

bulletin boards were covered with student art work, stories,

pictures and charts relating to the language arts theme

under study. A three-sided graffiti board, which was used

by students as a room divider to create a private area was

also covered with student pictures, diagrams and writings.

About a quarter of the room was carpeted and was

referred to as "The Reading Corner". There were no desks in

this area. A blackboard-easel stood in one corner, the

graffiti board in another and books and student displays

covered the shelves. There were several pillows and a few

chairs in various places on the carpet. On the opposite

side of the classroom was a very large table covered with a

blue blanket to display students' art work. In between

these two areas were the students' desks and my desk was to

one side of them.

Parents

Parents were encouraged to attend a "Back to School

Night" early in the year to meet their child's teacher and

discuss a detailed explanation of the instructional program,

which will be examined in the next section. During the

school year, there are three reporting periods in which

students take home a written report to their parents. The

report cards provide information to the parents in the form

of letter grades, numbers for effort and teacher comments.

In addition, two formal parent-teacher conferences are arranged throughout the year with the parent(s). However, conferences may be scheduled any time throughout the year by parents and teachers.

These conferences often yield valuable information concerning parents' expectations for their children. It is an opportunity to discover and discuss potential problems that may be encountered with a predominantly whole language instructional program. This year, parents were very interested in and supportive of the kinds of classroom activities their children were involved with. A few parents indicated that expectations in the home were more traditionally-oriented as they directed many of the child's activities. These were noted by me in order to fully understand students' perceptions and perhaps, frustrations.

One event that clearly indicated a difference of opinion concerning curriculum occurred early in the school year. Students were scheduled to take a spelling test one afternoon. However, I discovered at noon time that a resource person was visiting another classroom with two live hawks. Since we were studying a theme entitled, "Wild Animals in Captivity," I asked my colleague if we might join the presentation and the spelling test was rescheduled. The next day, the parents of one child were extremely upset by the change of plans. It is possible their child had studied the spelling words for testing purposes primarily rather

than for correct usage over the long term.- As such, the studying effort was perceived as having been wasted when the test was postponed. Another interpretation is that the skill of spelling, for them, existed as separate from other language arts processes. This would represent a more traditional approach to instruction. My own whole language approach accepted the integrated nature of this activity particularly as students wrote follow-up letters of thanks that required correct spelling usage. However, I strongly suspect this incident, together with administrative expectations, affected the spelling program I offered throughout the year. Specifically, from that time, spelling tests were scheduled regularly on Fridays without exception.

On a more positive note, that particular parent and several others worked as volunteers throughout the school year in the classroom and on field studies outside the school. Parents arrived to offer their services regularly on Wednesday and Thursday mornings. Some of the activities they were involved in included displaying student work on bulletin boards, illustrating, cutting, listening to students read individually and in small groups, organizing classroom parties, and supervising students on computers. They performed valuable services in addition to observing first hand the approach to language arts instruction their children experienced. This certainly helped to inform parents regarding a whole language approach to instruction

but it did not prevent the one episode where differences of opinion were evident.

The_Program_and_Resources

The grade four language arts program is based primarily on Alberta Education's elementary language arts curriculum guide. The goals of language arts for grades 1-12 are as follows:

"The language arts program should provide opportunities for students to experience language in functional, artistic and pleasureful situations with the aim: (1) to develop an awareness of and interest in how language works, (2) to develop an understanding and appreciation of a wide range of language use, (3) to develop flexibility in using language for a variety of purposes."

The many program objectives arise out of goals for the language arts program for grades 1-12 and are organized according to abilities in listening, speaking, reading, viewing and writing. These broad skill areas will be discussed in relation to my language arts program.

First, the program is based upon approximately 10-12 themes that are explored throughout the year. Ideas for themes arise from two sources: The students write a short "interest inventory" (See Appendix A) on the first day of school indicating interests, hobbies and ideas for future learning. I also have a number of themes that have been

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successful in past years and these are sometimes used (See Appendix B). Some themes studied this year include space, autobiographies, the sea, careers, golf, and wild animals in captivity.

Once a theme has been identified, students bring any books, magazines, pictures, models or posters, which they may have at home, to school. One of the first activities associated with the introduction of a new theme is that of "brainstorming". Students think of all the words that relate to a particular theme which are recorded on a large piece of chart paper to be displayed throughout the study unit. This serves as a guide for correct spelling of new vocabulary and as an "idea" bank for children. The preceding discussion very briefly outlines the general organization of the language arts program. A more detailed explanation follows.

Reading and Viewing

The identification of a theme often suggests a type of suitable reading material. For example, a unit entitled, Space, was primarily concerned with students demonstrating reading and viewing skills to locate information in a variety of publications and visual materials. The school library provides the bulk of reading materials to be used; however, students bring their own materials to supplement the resources.

Sometimes reading and viewing material related to the theme is found in various reading series which are then used for those selections.

One reading program that I use throughout the school year is a literature-based integrated program called Books Alive, published by Doubleday Canada Ltd. It is based on seven novels that the teacher and students read together. The read-aloud novels introduce specific themes which are integrated with activities not only in reading, but also in writing, listening, speaking, drama, art, music, social studies and science.

Reading skills are further developed when students read their own writings and those of their peers, which occurs as a natural epilogue of the themes.

Writing

Through writing the student can learn to clarify thought, emotion and experience, and to share ideas, emotions and experiences with others. Within the various themes, students use different forms of written language for purposes of communication. For instance, during a unit on Christmas traditions, students wrote poetry and personal anecdotes. Outlines and reports were written extensively during the unit on space. Students wrote their own autobiographies in a unit of the same name. Nearly all thematic units involved students in writing invitations and thank-you notes to guest speakers and resource people who

furthered our knowledge and understanding of a particular
subject.

Another aspect of writing in this language arts program
was journal writing, which occupied 10 to 15 minutes of the
daily time allotment. Each student wrote in a journal that
was kept in their desks. I read their journals on a weekly
basis except for those entries which were folded and
therefore, private. Journal writing allowed students to
write freely without any threat of evaluation. They wrote
about in-school and out-of-school activities, recess,
friends, enemies, personal feelings, family and non-topic
"thinking aloud" which included,

> Hello journal, how are you today? Well, anyway,
> I'm fine. Sort of. Not really. I'm not really
> fine!

Many personal messages and requests to me highlighted their
journal writings on several occasions.

Spelling is another element specific to writing. It is
my own belief that many children intuitively come to
understand the alphabetic nature of our writing system and
generalize from these learnings to reading. However, that
is only possible when teaching of reading and writing occur
at the same time, thus, there is no set sequence of words
to be taught and spelling becomes a sensitive responding to

the needs as the teacher reads the daily writings of the children.

However, it was necessary for me to utilize a school-wide spelling program since other teachers of the same grade level were using the program and a degree of similarity between classes was encouraged. I feel I was also influenced by those parents who may have viewed spelling tests as important indicators of correct usage. The Canadian Spelling Program (Ves-Thomas, 1975) provided fully sequenced word lists for grade four to allow individualized learning within a structured system of instruction. Certain modifications were made by me for its use in the classroom. Spelling lists became a combination of words relating to the theme that students had brainstormed for and the traditional spelling program. In addition to weekly spelling quizzes of 15 to 20 words, students completed activities and exercises from the spelling text book that focused on the spelling words under study. These assignments were not completed as individualized learnings; students were encouraged to work together to discuss and check spelling in order to come to an understanding through meaningful interaction. In retrospect, I feel the reasons I used this approach to spelling stemmed from perceived pressure from others to be involved in a sequential program.

Speaking

'Students came to understand that language functions throughout the entire curriculum. Through talk, students learn to organize their environment, interpret experiences and communicate with others. Mathieson (1975) argues the value of encouraging children's talk. Bernstein (1971) has developed this concept through identifying labels such as "exploratory language" and "talking to learn." The arrangement of classroom furniture, in which students sat in groups of four or five and facing each other, suggested the importance of language in daily learning. They sat in a way that facilitated interaction rather than inhibited it. As students developed concepts and understandings, they were encouraged to clarify and organize their thinking through language. Talking while students worked on projects, writings or readings occurred naturally.

Other more formal "sharing" occasions occurred naturally throughout the year. Students often brought displays, projects, trophies or hobbies from home to share with others. Most sessions began as the student introduced the topic and spoke for about five minutes. Afterwards, students were given an opportunity to respond through comments and questions which the speaker acknowledged.

It should be noted that students were closely monitored at the beginning of the school year to help them understand the importance of appropriate oral language situations in the classroom.

Listening and Viewing

Students needed to demonstrate listening and viewing awareness in order to understand, extend and evaluate ideas gained auditorially or visually. Although students were involved in these activities regularly in studying novels and themes throughout the year, a special attempt was made by me to read to students almost daily from novels they brought to school. The primary purpose of this activity was to help students attend to the listening task, in a courteous way, understand the role of the audience and the relationship between speaker and listener. Often I served as a model for their reading of chapters and passages, at which point I become a member of the audience. Questions and discussions arose in which students attempted to clarify their understanding through recalling details or sequence. The same procedure occurred when a guest speaker makes a special presentation.

When students used the library for a specific purpose such as researching, they often used media that required listening and viewing abilities. They watched National Geographic films, listened to taped stories or sounds and looked at charts, posters and pictures.

The preceding discussion has served to describe the situation and the people in this study by providing descriptive information of both. As I am serving as the key "instrument" in my research, it is necessary to provide the reader with an account of the context in which I have conducted this study. It is hoped that through the preceding description and the following discussion of the methodology, I can better achieve what Wolcott (1973) refers to as an objectivity regarding the descriptive account to follow.

Ethnographic Research Design

An ethnographic study of this grade four classroom during language arts instruction was conducted to discover insights into effective language arts instruction and to determine the extent to which whole language and/or traditional teaching behaviors exist compatibly in an actual classroom. As such, the research did not focus on one or two pre-determined teaching behaviors as some research into effective traditional classrooms attempts to do, but described the classroom as a social situation during language arts instruction. This research orientation is based on a whole language approach to teaching and was employed to allow the dominant patterns of effective teaching to emerge from the data. The reader should recognize my personal bias regarding this orientation to

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research.   Its aim is the discovery, description and
interpretation of factors integral to one classroom
necessitating descriptive research methods that provide in-
depth observations. This methodology, by its very nature,
will attempt to investigate certain teaching behaviors that
are associated with a different approach to language arts
instruction than my own, whereas, a traditional research
orientation that selectively focuses on pre-specified
behaviors may not allow for the emergence of other non-
specified behaviors.

       Several researchers have studied their own classrooms
and those of others (Wolcott, 1967; Watson, 1984; Slaughter,
1985), providing "thick" ethnographic descriptions of
classroom life and extensive examples of literacy events in
addition to children's developing written and oral language.
This has led to a better understanding of the literacy
process and other classroom phenomena such as organization,
rules, directions and transitions which may be affected by
the view of literacy held by the teacher.   "Thick"
descriptions will convey the meanings of instructional
contexts from the viewpoint of the students, as well as that
of the teacher, a research goal that is perceived to be of
great importance for research on teaching (Berliner, 1983).

Dewey suggests:

...; that science by its very nature is a single
and universal system of truths. But this need not
frighten us. Even in advanced sciences....
advance is made by entertaining different points
of view and hypotheses, and working upon different
theories. The sciences present no fixed or closed
orthodoxy.

Ethnographic research is full of concrete detail which
is both qualitative and systematic. Interpretations and
explanations are developed over time as patterns of events
emerge and awareness is developed of the meanings that
actions and events have to the people being studied.

The strength of this approach lies in its ability to
describe what is known as well as what is unknown. It may
reveal welcome as well as unwelcome information (Gage,
1985). The goal of ethnography is to seek to understand a
social situation from the native point of view suggesting
the importance of the meaning of actions and events to the
people one attempts to understand. It has been suggested
that a single ethnography can prove that a certain
phenomenon is possible and a number of ethnographies can
lead us to discover the frequency and probability of that
phenomenon. This study may yield new phenomena or replicate
previous findings of effective teaching behaviors identified
by either whole language or traditional approaches.

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Limitations of the Study

A limitation of this kind of research is that the findings are context specific. The nature of a case study provides descriptions and interpretations that may be of interest to others such as teachers, administrators or teacher educators but it is "... when a sizeable body of ethnomethodological descriptions accumulate, that we will have strong indications of how teaching effects occur in various types of settings." (Bolster, 1983) Therefore, the discoveries of this case study must be analyzed simultaneously as a single ethnography whose generalizability is limited and as contributing to a greater collection of knowledge in which generalizations may be possible.

Secondly, there is the problem of relating the information I have gathered to the information I also generate and convey. When studying an educational setting as a participant-observer, the researcher elects to occupy one of the limited statuses available for active participation. It is my hope that through acknowledging and understanding this limitation, and using specific strategies for asking ethnographic questions, collecting ethnographic data and recording and analyzing those data, I can use these skills to understand (Spradley, 1980) and present information concerning my research questions.

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Data Collection

Data were collected according to a systematic scheme which served to document the social situation under study and was collected by myself, the teacher, in conjunction with two other independent field researchers. The main data collection occurred through participant observation (Spradley, 1980). Consequently, I studied a situation in which I am already an ordinary parti-cipant. However, to provide additional perspectives, many of my own ethnographic notes were compared with those of independent field researchers, who were non-participant observers.

The ethnographic record consisted of field notes, tape recordings, pictures, student work, and student and teacher journal entries. These data, documenting the classroom as a social situation, were collected on a weekly basis by me and my field researchers, from the beginning of January until the middle of April, 1987. Each classroom observation lasted for 30 to 45 minutes twice weekly, which yielded approximately 25 hours of classroom observation over a four month period.

I collected condensed accounts, which were abbreviated notes, on a notepad whenever possible and these were written into expanded accounts later in the day. At two-week intervals, I reviewed the data collected with the independent field researchers to verify the content of the data and to begin to determine patterns of teaching.

.effectiveness. The content of the data collected was very similar and any discrepancies were noted.

It is important to note that my participant observation began with wide-focused descriptive observations. These continued until the end of the field project. However, the emphasis shifted to focused and then to selective observations. The process was cyclical in nature, allowing me to collect and analyze data in order to provide a clearer understanding of what to focus on (Spradley, 1980, p. 101). This process guided the observations from the beginning of the study in addition to allowing the emergence of new questions from the field experiences of the ethnographers, conferences among the research team, and from analysis of the on-going data. This indicates that it was possible to allow the dominant patterns of effective teaching behaviors regarding literacy to emerge and then to focus more selectively on the individual teaching behaviors and practices.

In the beginning, my observations were wide-focused, concentrating on the question, "How do I implement a language arts program in my own classroom?" Several other research questions guided my observations and were changed throughout the study. Due to the nature of the research, new questions emerged from the field experiences and the analysis of the data. The initial questions were:

1. "What is happening in this classroom
    immediately before, during and
    immediately following language arts?"
    (Edelsky, p. 264). This question allowed
    me to focus not only on literacy
    activities but others which may have
    been affected by my approach to language
    arts instruction.

2. How and when do students engage in
    extended conversation? This question
    was posed since some of the preliminary
    data included a great deal of student-
    to-student interaction.

3. What concept of learning is being
    communicated to the students (implicitly
    or explicitly) through directions,
    rules, trans-itions, explanations, the
    manner in which tasks were designed or
    the physical learning environment? This
    question was explored to determine
    characteristics of the theoretical
    orientation towards language arts that
    students are predominantly being exposed
    to.

Interpretation

The process of transforming the observations and information contained in my field notes and journals into a completed account underwent a long period of reading, discussing, and trying alternative ways to catalogue the notes. Due to the large number of observations that were transcribed, it was necessary to make use of thematic analysis (Slaughter, 1983). This type of analysis helped in the interpretation of activities and events in the classroom according to dominant themes that had meaning for the participants. A tentative set of categories was developed and sections of the data were organized from them. The categories tentatively guided the selection of relevant excerpts from the notes and in turn, the notes provided the ultimate test of the comprehensiveness of the categories. This systematic interpretation was used by Wolcott (1973) in his ethnography of the elementary school principalship. Student journals, a supplementary source of data, lent themselves readily to this systematic form of analysis. In each case, journals were read and coded according to emerging themes or categories. At first these themes were numerous and unwieldy. However, Bernstein's (1971) work on the classification and framing of educational knowledge considered three categories which appeared to effectively organize my initial sorting. These were: curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation. Eventually, two more categories

emerged primarily from the data: concept of learning and teacher's role. This process of identifying effective categories provided much needed organization without the problem of premature rigidity. It is important to note this is not a linear study as Chapters One and Two became refined by discoveries made in Chapters Three and Four.

For purposes of illustration, an example of ethnographic data collected in the preliminary stages or research is included:

Students are sitting on a carpeted area of the classroom around a small chair with a girl sitting on the chair. The teacher is sitting as part of the group.

"J" stayed in over recess to practice her story for

us.

("J" reads her story)

(Children are seated, girls form inner circle. All the boys are on the perimeter as is the teacher. One student plays with another's key chain)

"J" continues her story. There is no talking while she reads. Most students are watching "J". She finishes.

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Teacher - Super.   Thank you.   (Children clap)

(Then, 3 or 4 hands go up and "J" calls on them)

S1 - Where did you get all those neat names?

J - Just came to my mind.

S2 - How long did it take you to write?

J - I did 4 pages at home and 3 pages here.
It took, I don't know how long (Laughs).

Teacher - Let's see, "J". We worked on them
all week.

J - That's five days.

Teacher - That's quite a long time.

The dominant theme emerging from this anecdote concerns
teacher's role.   Spradley (1980) calls this a cultural
domain since it is a category of cultural meaning that
includes other smaller categories.   In the previous excerpt,
the teacher's role is one of facilitator.   The teacher acts
more as part of the group than the leader, due to the
seating arrangement and the amount of teacher talk.   The
teacher is seen as someone who helps students to participate
and direct activities.

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Finally, in the interpretation of the data an attempt was made to go beyond the descriptive element in order to elicit the dominant elements of effective teaching in this classroom. This was done to determine the extent to which whole language and traditional recommendations for effective language arts teaching in an elementary classroom were compatible. These preliminary data are indicative of a whole language approach that supports the concept of teacher's role as one of facilitator over that of director which is more closely associated with a traditional approach.

CHAPTER 4

DISCOVERIES AND DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this study was to fully describe
daily life in a classroom and to discover if traditional and
whole language approaches to language arts instruction, as
defined in Chapter 1, are compatible in a grade four
classroom and if so, to what extent. These two approaches
have been compared and contrasted according to specific
dimensions, the organization of the results is according to
these headings: concept of learning, curriculum, pedagogy,
teacher's role, and evaluation. The research orientation
dimension, as a category, is not relevant at this point of
the discussion which centers around the actual classroom
activities.

Concept of Learning

The concept of learning fostered by the teacher
influences all aspects of classroom life and refers to the
teacher's beliefs concerning the nature of knowledge and
learning. What concept of learning was transmitted to the
students in my classroom? How did they become aware of my

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expectations regarding a concept of learning? These questions were addressed according to three basic continuous classroom activities: journal writing, interaction and spelling.

1. Journal Writing

Journal writing was an activity which occupied a significant amount of classroom time, approximately 10 to 15 minutes daily. It is my belief that students who may otherwise find the writing process difficult or even frustrating, begin to enjoy writing about their own experiences. Therefore, this time period was loosely organized allowing students wide powers over what was written and how it was organized. The experiences and knowledge which exist within the learner are validated by this activity. Students wrote continuously which implied to them the importance of expressing and keeping their thoughts and ideas. The very existence of this type of learning strategy suggests a concept of learning in which learners cannot effectively be separated from the world they attempt to know and understand. Children, therefore, engage in a process of writing about their experiences which are then validated as curriculum. The distinction between Bernstein's (1971)"profane" or everyday knowledge and "sacred" or school knowledge is greatly reduced.

Validation occurred when the journals are read by their authors, other students and myself, the teacher. Eventually, students came to realize this procedure and began seizing this opportunity to inform, report, express, decide, contemplate or request, as noted in the following excerpts.

"A" writes - "T" is moving on Friday. I am going to miss her a lot. She is my best friend in the world. I sure don't want her to go.

"C" - Dear Mrs. Bright: I think this is fun that we're talking about space. I want to get moved because "J" keeps bugging me while I'm working and I ignore her and then she gets mad because I'm not listening and because she keeps looking at my work and I don't like it. Thank you.

"R" - On Saturday I had 3 hockey games in the Crowsnest Pass. I had to get up at 6:30 in the morning for a 9:00 game. The first game I played I got 1 goal and 3 assists. The second game I got 2 goals and 5 assists and I got a medal for the most valuable player and at the third game I got 5 goals and 2 assists. On Sunday there was the finals. All the games were in Blairmore. We won second place in the finals. I played "S's" team in the finals.

"S" — Today I feel bad — the birthday is off.
Nobody can come. I have been waiting since my
real birthday, May 5th — 3 weeks.

Each of these entries contains student experiences
which acknowledge to them that their writings qualify as
valid and important knowledge. The concept of learning
fostered in this case, between out-of-school experiences
and the journal content of the school curriculum, suggest
the boundaries between home and school are weak. School
knowledge is not seen as sacred and separate from out-of-
school knowledge. This concept of learning is associated
with a whole language approach to instruction.

2. Interaction

The field study notes indicate that students often
gathered together in pairs, small groups or large groups to
share their ideas, their work in progress and completed
projects. These sharing sessions encouraged students to
interact with each other and allowed a reconstruction of
knowledge process to develop. In other words students
participated in sharing situations to learn from others and
to reconfirm their own knowledge through interaction.

In one sharing episode, students were working on
various forms of poetry. We met together in a large group
to discuss the work in progress.

Students are seated on a carpeted area of the classroom surrounding small chairs occupied by students and the teacher.

Teacher — These people want to share with us their poetry. "C", can you share with us what you're doing. ("C" reads).

K — I noticed she repeated words at the beginning and end.

T — Were there rhyming words?

C — No

Teacher — "R".   ("R" reads his poem).

S1 — It really had a rhythm or beat

S2 — Yeah, we saw you move.

S3 — Sort of like, you could feel a rhythm.

Teacher — Well, let's try the last one.   (Poem is read)

S — The poet likes the sun.

S — You can tell how the poet feels.

S — It's a bit like a story.

S — With a beat.

S — Yeah, I felt a beat.

At this point, students retrieved their own poetry work
and found an appropriate work place. Some worked at their
desks, on the floor, behind a movable divider and on the
carpet. The students are beginning to understand various
writing techniques used by poets as they listen to one
another and comment upon specific procedures used in their
own poetry. This understanding is furthered through
interacting with others in order to verbally shape and re-
shape their ideas. Following this process of reconstructing
knowledge into their own words, students proceeded to use
that knowledge in their own writing.

Students seem to be aware of the interaction process
and its operation in our classroom. "L" writes in her
journal:

_____

Today in health we watched two films. One was
"Our Own Two Hands" and the other was "People
He ping People". People Helping People was about
teamwork and working together. I think our
classroom is like that film because we help other
people when they don't understand things and we
have a new student in our class and we help her
and make her feel part of our classroom.

"C" expresses this ability to interact in somewhat
covert terms:

What I really like about our class is that our
teacher lets us whisper and stuff like that... And
also the people in my group care and listen to
problems when you have something to say.

_____

3. Spelling

In an interesting episode in which students are helping
one another study spelling words for a school-wide Spell-a-
Thon, another concept of learning, unlike that recognized
previously, appears.

Students are engaged in a variety of activities
mostly in groupings of two.

_____

1. J - Squirrel

R - Spell it again

J - There. It's easy.

S1 - Trout. The boy caught a trout. Trout.
S2. - (Writes the word)   Okay.   Dinosaur.   The
dinosaur is very big. Dinosaur.

_____

This episode indicates a very traditional concept of
learning in which the correct spelling of a word exists
outside the learner and must be acquired according to a
specific procedure.

The procedure is one in which there is a tester and a
learner, the word is given, used in a sentence and repeated.

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2. "K" has asked "T" to write a sentence with the

word heart in it.

T - (looking at the teacher) He doesn't want me

to put down a period here, but I wanted to. , (I

indicate a period would be appropriate if it's the

end of his sentence).

They begin discussing "T's" sentence according to

"K" remark: "Hearts can't talk." "T" notes that

many objects talk in Alice of Wonderland. They

talk about the difference . between myth and

reality.

These two students treat spelling, not as a separate
language skill as in the previous episode, but in relation
to knowledge they already possess about the word. Their
discussion reveals a re-shaping of knowledge.

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3. A - Dinosaur (but pronounces it "deenosaur" and

. laughs).

H - Holiday (pronouncing, It's a "hollow" day

today).

The second episode indicates that some students focus on the semantics of the words by connecting the new word, heart, with information they already possess concerning its meaning. It implies a concept of learning that supports the need for interaction and involvement in the reconstruction of knowledge associated with a whole language approach. Students in the first and third episodes tend to focus on letter recognition and articulation in order to familiarize themselves with correct spelling. In these cases, knowledge of spelling exists separately from the knower and must be acquired through a specific procedure. This is associated more closely with a traditional approach to literacy development. It's interesting to note that in the treatment of spelling, students adhere to two very different concepts of learning within a single classroom.

Curriculum

"Curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge." (Bernstein, 1971, p. 85).

In Alberta, an elementary language arts curriculum guide is presented to educators to assist them in implementing literacy instruction in their classrooms. In addition to an overview of the philosophy, goals and objectives, basic components of the elementary language arts

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for each grade level are presented for skills in reading, writing, listening, speaking and viewing. This curriculum guide influences decisions I make concerning daily classroom activities.

1. Journal Writing

Daily journal writing is one aspect of the language arts curriculum that I stress for a number of reasons. Throughout this field study, students wrote daily in their journals for ten to fifteen minutes. The experience of keeping a journal is one method of helping students to achieve a writing fluency which may be otherwise difficult to attain. A journal allows students to write about experiences, feelings and ideas that are their own. In other words, that which is important to the child will be easy to write about. This concept of what counts as valid knowledge suggests a whole language approach to language arts instruction in which students' interests and needs guide the journal's content. Journal entries vary from child to child depending upon their interests. All journal entries reflected either home or school experiences. The Alberta elementary language arts curriculum guide suggests students should be able to communicate clearly in journal or diary writings, as the following excerpts indicate.

L - Yesterday I got a new waterbed with drawers. I got
it in Calgary at Waterbed Magic and my brother got one
at the same time. I can only put mine up when my
grandpa comes and leaves because he doesn't like
sleeping in waterbeds and he is sleeping in my bed.
His son is coming too!!! I wonder how long Miss Wilson
is staying for. I hope I spelled her name right.

J - On Friday my hamster died. It was when me and
my little sister were playing (What Time is it Mr.
Wolf). She hid in my room because she didn't want
to play. After I found "L" I checked on Chippy
and she was dead so I ran upstairs and told my mom
and when my dad came home we took Chippy and set
her in the garbage can and then "H" and "T" came
over and I told them the bad news.

C - Last night my dog got out of the yard and me
and my mom had to go and find him. He got in a
fight with another dog. The dog he got in a fight
with was about 30 cm bigger and me and my friend
were scared. Then we caught him and my mom told
my sister to go get the leash. She put it on
wrong and then we had to take it off again and he
got away again. Then we caught him and my dog's
name is Corky and that is what everybody is
calling me now.

One aspect of provincial curriculum guidelines is met in this type of activity. The activity also reflects a whole language concept of learning. These three journal entries each indicate that most of the writing is based upon students' experiences. In this classroom, these experiences are then validated as curriculum since journal writing is a daily school activity.

2. Integrated Nature of the Curriculum

The boundary between school and out-of-school experiences is weakened as students begin to view these together through the medium of a journal. Bernstein's (1971) integrated curriculum maintains the existence of weak boundaries between content units such as home and school experiences. This type of integrated curriculum suggests a whole language approach to literacy by allowing students to write about meaningful events in their lives as part of the on-going school curriculum.

An episode from the field study taken during a journal writing period suggests that students used the time to sit and think, write, fidget, read, share and review their own personal curriculum.

10:15 a.m.   Children return from recess.   Some children talk. Most settle down.

Teacher — "A's" writing in her journal. (Other's

take out their journals and begin writing). I

walk around the room speaking with various

children). "M" and "C" talk about their writing.

"M" shows "C" her book. I sit at my desk and

write. One student kneels on his chair and leans

over to read his neighbor's journal.

"J" rereads her entry using her pen to underline.

10:25 a.m.   "T" has finished writing and her

"break from concentration is to underline

different parts of her text with a purple marker.

A page of "T's" journal is folded for privacy.

She's written across it, "Don't look or else."

These data indicate that although this is a designated

writing time, · the process is not an isolated one.

Sometimes, writing is a private affair, as in the case of

"T's" folded page and sometimes it's a sharing time as "M"

and "C" read each other's entries. Writing is not seen or

treated as one distinct part of the curriculum having sharp

boundaries between it and other aspects of the literacy

process. Rather, the processes of reading, writing,

listening, speaking and viewing are integrated

simultaneously suggesting weak boundaries exist between the

many language arts content areas. This "integrated"

curriculum is linked closely to a whole language approach to literacy as opposed to a "collection" curriculum identified by a traditional approach.

3. Direction of Content

A whole language approach is also characterized as proceeding from whole units of understanding to smaller ones. Many classroom episodes reflect a "sharing" of student work in which students have an opportunity to present an entire piece of work to the rest of the class. The direction of the content begins with the presentation of a whole and meaningful text and often proceeds to smaller units of meaning, as indicated below.

Teacher and students sit on the floor around a small chair occupied by a student, "J".

Teacher - Okay, "J". ("J" indicates that I should read her story. While I am reading, "J" is looking at the other students. She appears to be very nervous and is taking deep breaths. She also looks intently at me as I read her story. She smiles when the other students laugh at a funny part. When I finish, students turn to look at "J". A number of students raise their hands. "J" nods to one student.

S1 - Can I start? I really liked the way you said, "Quickly and in a worried way."

Jerri — (Smiles and nods)

S2 — I liked the way you described the characters.
(He notes the differences between the two main
characters).

S3 — Can we see your pictures?

Teacher — Do you want to describe what they are?

J — (describes her pictures)

S4 — I like the names of the planet and the people
who live there — Nicron and Nicronians.
(A general discussion follows indicating how this
same suffix can be applied to other words. I copy
down the examples on a chalkboard which is behind
"J" as students suggest them. The list contains:
    Edmonton, Edmontonians, Calgary, Calgarians,
Canada, Canadians).

S5 — In my story, I added ings on earth to show
earthlings...

The progression of the content being explored in this
situation began with a whole and meaningful content and then
proceeded to smaller units of understanding such as
discovering the uses for the suffix "ians". Skills were
identified and practiced but not in isolation. The purpose

of maintaining this direction is to present that which may appear non-meaningful or insignificant in a whole and meaningful context thereby creating a method to ensure a degree of understanding. A whole language approach to language arts instruction maintains the importance of this direction. This approach also allows the sequence of content to be explored to be determined by students' needs and interests. As the teacher, I do not attempt to direct this conversation, however, I do participate, often recording, clarifying .or requesting clarification. As students express an interest in this phenomenon of changing words to create new meaning, the opportunity presents itself to teach at a time when it becomes meaningful to do so. At regular intervals throughout the year, the provincial curriculum is examined as a sort of check list of skills already taught and those remaining to be taught.

4. Curriculum Determined by Students.

Students may determine the learning content as was the case with "K" who approached me about the possibility of performing a Ukrainian Easter Egg demonstration. This is not a teaching event I could have pre-planned as it is "K's" expertise and interest that lead to its occurrence.

"K's" Ukrainian Easter Egg demonstration.

10:15.   Students are coming into the room from recess. "C" points to a large box on "K's" desk and whispers to "L". When "K" enters the room, I ask her to set up her materials in the reading area while the rest of the class writes in their journals. ·˙

10:21.   It's very quiet now.   A few students watch "K" who is moving a table.   I go over to help. She opens a large box with several jars of colored dye.   She brings out 3 or 4 eggs, a candle, two decorated eggs, several sharp looking tools and a pamphlet with pictures and writing. I ask "K" if she's ready and she says yes.

10:36.   The students are now sitting on the floor in front of "K's" display.

K - This is what my grandma showed me last year. Even my mom doesn't know how to do it.   (A few students talk at once, the question they ask, "Who taught your grandma?")

K - She's Ukrainian and she probably learned from her grandma.   "K" proceeds to demonstrate how to decorate an Easter egg. She uses the tools, the dye, her pamphlet and asks me to light the candle,

which I do. She talks continuously as she works, although she is asked questions by other students who either call out or wait for "K" to call on them.

K - What color should I use now?

.Student - Yellow.

K - Okay. It won't show up too good yet, but later...

The demonstration and discussion continue.

10:55. As the presentation comes to an end, I thank K for all of us. The audience claps.

This classroom event represents an example of curriculum within the language arts program which does not follow a pre-determined sequence set by the teacher or a curriculum. It is the event determined by one student's interests. It is also one example of Bernstein's (1971) integrated curriculum that ties out-of-school experiences with the content of the school curriculum.

My role in this episode was simply one of providing an environment in which this student was then able to structure the content and the organization of that content in a meaningful way.

This entire demonstration indicated a whole language concept of learning. "K" showed that she understood this decorating process in an in-depth way through her explanations and that allowed others to also understand. It is unlikely that her explanations were exactly like her grandmother's but through them, she was reconfirming this knowledge to herself. A whole language approach maintains that the learner must constantly reconstruct knowledge to become fully aware of it. Kim's demonstration was an example of this concept of learning. Interestingly, Kim also took on certain aspects of a teacher who allowed participation from her students by having them direct parts of the experience such as choosing colors and designs for her to use. Her demonstration seems to mirror many of the characteristics identified in a whole language approach.

5. Curriculum Determined by Teacher

Conversely, there was an area of the curriculum which students identified as a separate content area in language arts instruction, the area of spelling. Laura writes in her journal:

In the spell-a-thon I did real well! I got two or three wrong.

Later...   Guess what!!   On the spell-a-thon I

scored 100/100 = 100%.   I earned $37.00 for the

school.

Amanda Notes:

I got 13-15.   Last time I got 12-15 and I got a

new jacket.

The teaching of spelling   followed a   specific and pre-

determined sequence according to a prescribed program.

Although I attempted to modify and augment the program in

various ways,   it remained the one area of the language arts

curriculum most closely related to a traditional approach.

It seemed   important to my relationship with my colleagues

and administrators to maintain a degree of similarity in

spelling programs in use.

To summarize,   most of the previous field data indicate

that integration of curriculum was a key factor.   The one

exception is the area of spelling which is perceived as a

separate unit despite attempts at modification.   The

direction of the curriculum is predominantly one that begins

with whole meaningful contents and proceeds to smaller units

of understanding.   The sequence of content units is not pre-

determined by the teacher or a prescribed curriculum but by

the students who indicate their needs and interests through

discussion, journal writing and their daily work.   This is

predominantly a classroom where a whole language approach is

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being used. However, there is evidence to indicate that integration is not thorough in the area of spelling. Students and teacher followed a prescribed program which determined the sequence of content. Students, through their journal entries, are conscious that spelling exists as a separate unit. This one aspect of the language arts program is traditional in nature having characteristics of Bernstein's collection curriculum.

Pedagogy

What counts as valid transmission of knowledge, is the question to be considered with respect to one grade four classroom.

1. Control of the Teacher over the Child is Implicit Rather than Explicit

The action of modelling appears on several occasions as a means of transmitting information from teacher to child. This occurs when I indicate to students what to do or how to behave, primarily through my own actions. During a game situation, I structure the events in the beginning to show students the routine to be used. I do not go to the extent of explaining the instructions of the game in detail. Instead, I model the behavior then to be used by students.

Students are seated on the carpet around a chair occupied by the teacher. She has a card whose writing is hidden from the audience. Students seem to sense they will guess the word on the card.

Teacher - The clue is... the word on this card and the others (motions to a number of cards turned face down on the counter) have something to do with our theme, the sea. (Numerous hands are raised).

Questions:

S1 - Is it one word?

S2 - Is it a noun?

S3 - Does it have two words?

S4 - Does it have a "P"?

S5 - Is it an ocean?

M - Pacific Ocean (smiling) "M" comes to the chair and takes a card from the pile, looks at it, then hides it.

Questions:

S1 - Does it have gills?

S2 - Is it a fish?

S3 - Does it have a "P"?

S4 - Is it a noun?

T - Is it "dolphin?"

M - Yes. (shows card)

Students become well aware of the expectations without the need for verbal instructions by observing and then modelling my behavior.

After my initial involvement in the game, my own participation becomes limited. My remarks are intended to facilitate the learning through implicit directions rather than to explicitly direct the process.- For instance, I comment, "Remember "N's" question, please ask someone who hasn't had a turn yet, or would you like to do another one?"

Another instance where modelling effectively transmits information is during journal writing. Each session begins immediately following the morning recess break. Shortly after students enter the room, I go to my desk and become engrossed in my own writing. Even students who may be unfamiliar with this routine quickly become aware of the expectations through observation and modelling. "C's" first journal entry coincides with her first day in our classroom on March 2:

> This is my journal. I just moved from "N". When
> I went to school in "N" I had a lot of nice
> friends. But now I moved to Lethbridge, I think
> _it's a nice place. Here in Lethbridge I go to
> school too. My teacher's name is Mrs. Bright. I

think she's the nicest and kindest teacher I ever

had. I have gone to four schools. There are nice

kinds here too. I'm a little scared but I won't

. die. ;   /   .

_____

The transmission of expectations is implicit suggesting

what Bernstein (1971) refers to as an invisible pedagogy

(p.116). Earlier discussions indicate this is linked to a

whole language approach to instruction. An assumption

underlying this pedagogy is that learning is essentially an

invisible act and one which is not facilitated by a public

and explicit show of control. Another example of this form

of pedagogy occurs in the data on various occasions when I

enter the room and close the door. It is a signal to the

students to get ready by returning to their desks and

listening. It is not necessary to explicitly state these

expectations which would assume explicit control over the

child.

2.   Teacher Arranges Context which Students Re-arrange
     and Explore

Another assumption underlying this form of pedagogy is

that ideally, the teacher is responsible for arranging the

learning content which children then re-arrange and explore

(Bernstein, 1971). Data from the field study indicate that

this was one method or strategy in use. During language

arts, I initiated a game I called, "Cracking Codes," in

which students tried to guess a theme word by discovering
its code. In the beginning of this excerpt, students are a
little unsure of the procedure but -eventually become
responsible for guiding and changing the game.

Teacher - Where can you find words that tell about
our theme, space?

S1 - On the wall chart. (Student points to back
of room where a large sheet contains over one
hundred words the students brainstormed for
earlier in the week)

Teacher - Sure. We've already brainstormed for
those.

S2 - In library books.

S3 - On posters like "A's".

Teacher - So today, we'll try to crack codes to
find out what the secret space words are.
(Teacher hands out cards to each group. Students
are seated in 8 groups of 4. Their desks touch
and the face each other)

Teacher - Try the first one. (Teacher walks around,
the room.) (These comments are heard)

S4 - It doesn't make any sense.

S5 - I don't get this.

S6 - I don't even know what we're doing.

S7 - I bet I know what this is going to be.

S8 - Shh. Don't tell them.

As I walk around the classroom, those remarks are noted. Eventually, the comments take on a more confident and less tentative outlook. I could have stopped their work and completed a sample code for them which would have resulted in a quickening of the process. However, this would have destroyed the child's ability to explore, discover and eventually change the process for themselves.

The lesson continued:

(Students get up and exchange their words with other groups and continue the game.

S - Did you get that one?

S - (Nods)

S - Good. (She writes the word into her book)

S - Oh, this is easy.

S - This is a cinch.

(Some students who have already finished have begun reviewing their words, by glancing up and down the page or reading them aloud. I notice a group of students who are making up their own codes to words).

Teacher — You can choose your own words to code
and share in your groups, as Group 4 is already
doing.

(Several students move to the list of words on the
bulletin board looking for words to use. "T"
moves to a dictionary located on a side shelf and
is looking up a word. I continue to circulate
around the room making suggestions and encouraging
students' efforts).

Students eventually became the creators of this game
rather than the consumers of it. There is not a great
emphasis upon the acquisition of specific skills during this
anecdote. Students are becoming more familiar with the
vocabulary associated with a theme. Consequently, their own
interests eventually direct the experience.

3. Self____Regulation____of___Movement___and___Social
   Relationships

Students exercise their right to regulate their own
movement and direct their own social relationships within
the classroom. On most occasions when students were
involved in participating in an activity, they frequently
moved to other areas of the classroom. It was not an
uncommon sight to enter the room and see students at desks,
tables, on the floor, at the blackboard or lying across

pillows in the carpeted area of the room. They often chose to work with or near other students, but some opted for complete privacy by surrounding themselves with a 3-sided border that offered no access except over the top.

One day, as Valentine's Day approached, a number of students began bringing bags of valentines to distribute to others. It was obvious to me, after discussing with the class, that students needed to construct mailboxes to accommodate the valentines. Therefore, one language arts class was devoted to the task of creating Valentine boxes. I collected a number of supplies including coloured construction paper, ribbons, tissue paper, scotch tape, wool, masking tape, staples and staplers and assembled them on a large table at the front of the room. I asked students to be responsible for the noise level in the classroom. Within this context, students made decisions concerning their work space, movement, partners and details of the project.

_____

Children begin moving about the room, organizing themselves and their supplies. The talk at the various groupings seems to be about what each is doing and questioning one another about how to proceed.

S — I need some bigger scissors.

S — "C" has Mrs. Bright's.

(Children move from group to group to retrieve the

necessary supplies)

S — I need the stapler after "L".

S — Yeah, and then I need it after her.

Other Comments:

S — This is cute.

S — Here, I'll fix it.

S — There's more than one stapler.

S — Here look at mine. Yours may be a

little   bit small.

(I work with "N" who seems unsure of how to proceed).

S — Open the stapler and put these in.

S — If you want to use the scotch tape,

tear it off like this.

S — "N", how does this look?

N — Fascinating.

S — See, "C", I taped mine instead of stapling.

(I continue moving around the room, helping out

where needed).

The monitoring I do helps to ensure students work within the arranged context in an implicit manner, but allows them to participate fully in the selection and structuring of the project. This reflects a whole language approach to instruction through the realization of an invisible pedagogy where students regulate many of their own activities within the context arranged by the teacher. Another episode portrays students researching their own topics in the library. It indicates they do have an arranged framework within which to work but beyond that, they select and organize the information in a way that is meaningful to them.

Teacher - Okay, the last couple of days, we've been researching our topics. Can someone tell me what kinds of topics you've been researching?

S1 - Umm, um, oceans of the world.

S2 - Different names of oceans and the deep trenches.

S3 - (Holds up hand and points to each finger as he speaks). First read. Then think - do I need it. Think - where do I write it. Think - What do I write and write it. But put it in you own words.

Teacher — Mmm. Are pictures important when researching?

K - You can, like, just describe a picture.

Teacher - That's interesting. Today, you'll be going to another center in the library. I'll be working with the group watching filmstrips at first, so I won't be available. (Teacher and students hand out research booklets. Students assemble at centers).

TABLE 3

S1 - I'm using this. (points to a library book)

S2 - Do you have the one on dolphins?

S1 - It says porpoises.

S2 - Yes, I need that one.

S1 - This isn't about starfish.

S2 - Yes it is.

S1 - How come it doesn't say starfish?

S2 - It's like this one. It doesn't say dolphins. It says porpoises but its about dolphins.

TABLE 2

S1 - There is not five oceans, ok, yeah, five oceans but there are seas too, like the Red Sea.

S2 - (Retrieves a globe and returns. He checks for oceans, counting them).

S1 - (Also gets a globe to compare)

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S2 - I wish we were working together.

S1 - Okay, let's work together. This one (globe)

has all the oceans.

S2 - There's the Caspian Sea, the Red Sea and the

Black Sea.

S1 - Do you think we should do lakes? Here's the

Bering Sea.

S2 - Here's the Coral Sea.

_____

The students review a framework to structure their research process then they select the information, organize it and record it. They decide how to use their time in order to complete the activity, once again suggesting an approach to pedagogy that is based on a whole language view of language arts.

A whole language approach or an "invisible pedagogy" is also characterized by a reduced emphasis upon the transmission and acquisition of specific skills. The previous excerpts from the field study indicate specific skills were rarely focused upon. Rather, the largest linguistic units were emphasized as students were encouraged to make the activity meaningful for them. Once students were aware of the total meaning of an activity, other specific skills for carrying out that activity were introduced. For instance, students read and listened to research reports, discussed their significance and

identified their own areas of interest. Then, a form for
actually becoming involved in the research process was
introduced and reviewed in reference to students own topics.
In other words, students do not learn skills to be used
later, rather they learn by using these skills.

4. Spelling

However, there were instances in the field study when
students were using their spelling textbooks, that attention
was called to small units of meaning such as rules governing
sound symbol relationships. The data indicate that within
the content of the spelling textbook, some modifications had
occurred. Students were encouraged to interact with others
when working from this book, do questions, and to vocalize
words and phrases to each other. This modification was
offered to help students interact with the curriculum and
trust their own judgments concerning its content.

"T" and "S" hand out spelling books to students.

R - All right, you write in your book. I'll

write in mine.

J - No, not, those words. (They disagree over

the order). Okay. How do you spell calf?

R - C - A - L - F

J - Right. Okay. Write it down.

"C" and "N" are reading the directions from the

book.

"C" is standing up in front of two other students

apparently telling them words to spell.

T - I got it right, right?

A - Mmm. (She speaks very slowly) Shaarrrk!

         Let me see if you're right. "Sh".

T - Yes, I got "Sh".

A - Next a

    Next r

    Next k.

T - Nope. (He scribbles over his "ck" with "k").

A - Okay. Spell it.

T - S - H - A - R - K -

A - Ready for the next one?

"C" runs up to the board, points to a word that

her partner looks at. Then she sits down again.

Although these excerpts contain some of the

characteristics of an "invisible" pedagogy as students

regulated their own movements and social relationships, they

were working within specific procedures set out in the

textbook which limited their own abilities to choose and

organize. Also, the focus on acquiring specific skills is

evident.   Therefore, a whole language or "invisible"
pedagogy dominated the language arts curriculum in all areas
except that of spelling where a pre-specified curriculum was
mandated reflecting a more traditional approach to literacy
development.

Teacher's Role

The teacher's role needs to be explored particularly in
the area of language learning, since language use appeared
to be an integral part of this classroom's daily activities.
Language and interaction were constantly encouraged through
seating arrangements in groups and pedagogy that required
students to direct their own learning.   Therefore, specific
questions concerning teacher's role emerge.

What role do I play in this grade four classroom? Is
there more than one role?   Does one dominate?   Does my
perception of my role differ from the students' perceptions?
These are questions that I will attempt to answer through
the extensive use of classroom anecdotes gathered through
out the field study and relating information which describes
and analyzes those episodes.

1.   Teacher as Facilitator

The teacher as facilitator was conveyed on more than
several occasions. This means the teacher is viewed as
someone who can help the student reach a goal or work on an
activity which the student participates in and directs.

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There was one incident in which "S" came to me after school.

He asks if he could change places with another boy in order to sit in the same group as his good friend, "N". I tell him that I would be concerned about this move for two reasons: 1) Would he be able to work productively with his friend, and 2) Would another friend be hurt or jealous? I ask him to think it over and we'd talk again the next day.

The next day, "S" and "N" stay after school. They both indicate they've discussed the move with a third friend who said he wouldn't feel bad if the two sat together. "S" says they will remind each other to work responsibly. I agree to a seating change.

_____

Both these boys view themselves as participants in order to effect change in the classroom or this request would not have been made. I consider my role in this process as one of negotiator encouraging the students to consider the situation carefully and to discuss it with those involved. The third boy, who was consulted about the decision, may have felt he also had some input into effecting the change. I didn't know at the time if the change would be successful but the students involved would deal with the problem if it did occur. It's important that

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they felt they had the ability to effect change through negotiation.

Other students exercise their ability to participate in the decision-making process through journal entries.

"L" writes:

"I like my classroom because it has a nice atmosphere and nice people. I also like it because it has a job board and charts for everyday. It also has lots of things to do. I don't like the classroom because I don't have a girl partner and also because I have to sit by a boy that sometimes isn't that pleasant to be with. I would like to be moved but, the teacher probably wouldn't let me, and also it wouldn't be very nice if I asked to move."

"L" is attempting to influence the structure of the seating arrangement. In this instance, she simultaneously acknowledges my ability to make the change while recognizing her participation in the process. Her next entry reads:

"Mrs. Bright, thank you very much for changing partners. I really appreciate that."

Students also express their other interests and needs through the journal in an effort to influence an arrangement.

"K" writes:

"Mrs. Bright when are we going to write in pen because I am not good in writing with a pen. I'll show you. "K", "S", "N", "R", "C". I don't know if I'm ready."

Because this interest in writing with a pen is expressed and noted by the teacher, this student is structuring, to some extent, the content of the program and I act to facilitate that process. This suggests that one role I play is that of facilitator, as identified in a whole language approach.

The teacher as facilitator, is further evidenced in a language arts period in which students are involved in a number of different activities relating to their own writing projects. The students are situated throughout the room, some on the floor, others at desks and tables. They are working individually or in pairs.

S1 - I have to fix it up. It's a little too...

S2 - Okay, my turn (begins reading).

T - Can I look through these books to get some ideas?

Teacher - Absolutely. Try this one.

"N" reads his poem to "K". "K" continues to write.

N - Is this ready to write in good?

Teacher - If you're satisfied with it.

"C" reads to "J". She stops and looks at "J".

C - Falls?

J - (Looking) No. Drops.

C - Yeah. (Smiling)

She erases and continues to write.

I look over "T's" shoulder. He is drawing.

T - I think better when I draw so here's a picture
     I'm working on to get ideas.

Teacher - Really coming along.

T - Mmm.

The students are structuring the assignment in different ways to achieve a final product. "T" searches through books, "S" draws a picture, while other pairs of students talk to each other in order to work on the assignment. My role is one of aiding students to trust their own decisions in the process and to offer help when

needed. Sometimes students do want the teacher to make a decision for them. Such requests may result in this kind of response:

S - Should we play "Multiplication Hike"?

Teacher - If you think that's a wise choice, you make
             that decision.

In other words, even though students request my direction, I try to encourage self-direction. There are times, however, when I will make a decision for a student which brings us to a second role played by the teacher in this grade four classroom.

"J" recognizes this role of facilitator when she writes in her journal:

     "Mrs Bright - In math can you help me, I'm having
     trouble. Thanks."

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2. Teacher as Authority Figure

This role, one of authority, is often perceived by students simply because when they enter a classroom, the teacher's name is on the door and they have been assigned to his/her classroom. Previous school experience may also influence this perception.

There are times when students recognize an authoritative characteristic on the part of the teacher in a particular situation. A few of the episodes from the field data indicate that I take a directive approach to certain occurrences in the classroom. For instance,

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10:15 a.m.   Today when I entered the classroom following the recess break, two boys immediately approached me saying "J" had been hurt at recess. They were both obviously very excited. I asked them where he was and they pointed to the d̄o̅o̅r̄ where he was coming in with another teacher. Many students were beginning to gather around him and two or three children were coming out of the classroom to see what was happening. I say, "Please, everyone go into the room and I'll see how he is." I look into the room remarking, "Some of you are writing in your journals. Please continue." I go to see "J" and ensure he is all right before he goes to his next class.

The teacher's role in this incident is quite different from the one described when students were structuring various aspects of the literacy process. I direct this situation totally in order to minimize the actual time spent on sorting it out and to ensure students

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who are not directly involved proceed to some on-task activity. The difference between this situation and one in which students are participating in decisions is a managerial one. Moreover, it has to do with time and managing a situation efficiently. There is a sense of urgency about this incident that isn't present when students are involved in curriculum tasks. The role of the teacher seems to become more directive, as in a traditional approach, when handling these managerial rather than curriculum tasks. It seems to be an efficient method of sorting out a situation and providing a solution in minimal time.

On other occasions, I direct students by having them line up at the door before proceeding to another room, or by choosing students' working partners for an activity. I take on this role particularly when some aspect of a situation requires managerial expertise and efficiency.

For instance, during language arts, I was monitoring the activities by walking around the classroom stopping to discuss various topics. One incident caused me to stop and talk to one student that had nothing to do with content but with management.

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"T" turned to "M" and said, "Be Quiet!" "M" turned back to her own partner. "T" continued working with his partner then turned again to "M", this time saying, "Shut-up!" "M" appears not to have heard him.

However, I felt a need to talk to "T" about his choice of words and suggest that if something bothers him to try to talk to that person. I directed this conversation once again suggesting that when setting out managerial rules or -routines, I become more "traditional" in my approach.

At times, students in my class are aware of this directive role in managerial tasks and transfer it to curriculum tasks. "T" inquires whether or not he should begin writing on a certain page in his scribbler. My answer, "Sure", is not designed to be authoritative but to confirm the child's own decision in the process. "T" obviously senses this is a good idea but checks with me anyway.

3. Teacher as Confidante

In the descriptions of teacher as facilitator and teacher as director, each role could easily be seen as linked to either a whole language or a traditional view of language arts instruction. There is another teacher's role that does not seem to be associated with either approach exclusively. It is teacher as confidante. This is a case in which the data collected did not correspond primarily

with either of the two language arts approaches discussed in the present study. It becomes an important category due to this very characteristic and must not be overlooked.

"M" writes in her journal:
I have a secret that I know. And I know I can tell you...
"M" writes as if she is talking to a friend with whom she can entrust a special secret.

"H" confides feelings in her journal:
This is the month and the time of season that everybody gets ready for "Easter"! When we went away to Montana we had a skittles hunt. My dad hid them in trees. I got 24 candies. But I had to put some back. But my dad kept on saying "you stay away from that tree! that's left for the other kids"! I hate it when he says that.

This seems to be a special case in which the child wishes to express feelings brought on by an event. Neither of these entries suggest one language arts approach over another.

Evaluation

1. Monitoring

The most frequent form of evaluation used throughout this field study was that of monitoring students' work and behavior. This means I constantly walked around the classroom, talking to students to discover if they were experiencing difficulty and to what extent. Throughout this monitoring process, I may be called up to provide more direction, clarify, offer challenges or reteach concepts.

Reteaching occurred frequently after a monitoring session indicated several students required similar help. This was the case with a number of students who were unsure as to what steps to take throughout their research projects. Therefore, students were invited to come to another area of the room to discuss any problems or difficulties they were encountering.

Teacher - Is anyone having trouble finding enough data?

(Several hands go up) What are you researching?

S - The Moon

(Another student indicates they know where some information is on that topic).

Teacher - Good. If that's a problem for you, too - talk to your friends to see if they can help.

(Pause. Teacher shows one student's research

booklet).   Everyone   has   a data base like this.
What will we do with the information?

(Children respond that. the information will be
used to write short reports).

Teacher   -   (holds   up   a student's piece of paper
with the beginning of a report on it).   What do
you think the next step will be?

S - Turn the points into sentences.

Teacher - (reads the example of one child's work to
illustrate that process).

S - Then, good copy.

Teacher - Is everyone ready?

K - Like in our sentences, do we, like, just write our
points?

Teacher - (illustrates with another example). See,
She's taken her points from here and written them as
sentences here.

K - Mmmm.

Teacher - O.K. Let's see. Here. Take these. (I hand

out sheets of paper. Children return to seats and con-

tinue to work. I circulate and help individuals).

This one episode is indicative of the on-going

monitoring process that occurred often throughout classroom

activities. It reflects my own belief that evaluation, to

be effective, needs to be predominantly formative.

Evaluation of Language Arts instruction is characterized by

frequent teacher observation, small group discussions and

one to one consultations. My comments and evaluative marks

are recorded on the student's work and in a grading booklet

I keep. Report card marks and comments are arrived at

through a combination of these on-going procedures and

grades students receive on cumulative tests.

2. Journals and Student Work

Student journal entries were read every week by me in

order to respond to students' concerns, thoughts and

requests. This system of evaluation provided insight into

the child's internal processes.

> 1.   In L.A. we are finished our stories and
>
>   we get to read them to the class. I
>
>   haven't got to read mine yet but I would
>
>   like to.

2.   We are studying the Seas and Oceans. We are going to the library to get information on the Seas and Oceans in our booklets. Our booklets are made of eight pieces of loose leaf paper from our binder. We go to the library at 10:30 until 11:15.

3.   Today we started centers. We picked 8 topics about space and wrote them down on 8 pieces of paper and made a booklet. We filled up our pages in the centers in the library. I'm not sure if I'm going to get enough information to make a report but I'm going to get quite a bit. It's fun gathering the information.

4.   Today we are at center #2. I got a whole bunch of information on the Sun and Mars. I don't have any information on Black Holes, but I heard that in Center #3, our next center, there's lots of information on it. Amanda and I are going to get together tonight and get some information from each other.

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These journal entries describe students' perceptions of
specific language arts activities without reference to any
processes of evaluation. In other words, they write about
the day to day realities associated with their activities
but do not focus on an impending grade or test. This is
indicative of the majority of the language arts activities
observed. Students were evaluated informally through class
discussions and intermittent checking of work. In addition,
conferencing between two students or one student and myself
occurred as a means of evaluation. These numerous
methods helped to ensure that a learning process continued
throughout most language arts classes as opposed to an
evaluation process. It allowed students to take risks in
the writing process and make errors without the threat of
constant evaluation. Students did not experience formal
tests in language arts during the year except prior to
reporting periods. These will be discussed in a later
section. Instead, students completed a project, shared it
with others and received written comments on it from me.
Occasionally, I used a points system to signify performance
such as 35/40.

3. Sharing

It is evident from the data that a "sharing" of
students' products followed each unit or theme. Students
came to realize that this was the final step in the process
of writing, composing or researching. They did not receive

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a specific grade from me, but instead looked for questions and comments from their peers to respond to. I often wrote one or two paragraphs to the student commenting upon the major areas the student worked on, the strengths of the piece, and offered suggestions for future writing. This message was stapled to the work and sent home to be shared again. Results indicated the progress of one child and could not easily be compared.

4. Standardized Tests

The use of standardized grade level language arts tests preceded each report card period as mandated by the administration of the school. Through consultation with the other fourth grade teachers, I discovered the students in my class performed as well on these tests as other students even though the evaluation procedures I used throughout the year were multiple and did not result in clearly defined grades. It seemed that students could be evaluated according to these multiple and complex procedures throughout the year and yet perform equally well on standardized tests when necessary. It is interesting to note that those students who did not perform well on a standardized test were also those I noted as having difficulty through my evaluation methods.

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As such, the results of these tests have a function for those interested in comparing classrooms, schools and school districts. To date, the results have not changed my approach to curriculum or pedagogy.

5. Spelling

Spelling is the one area of the curriculum in which clear criteria for performance are set. Student's received a quiz every Friday consisting of fifteen to twenty words. In addition, on two occasions during the year, a school-wide Spell-a-Thon was held in order to raise money for special school projects. These methods provided results that can easily be compared.

Students were concerned with results from this type of evaluation through their journal entries.

> I just finished a very hard test. Oh, it was the hardest test I ever had. I never want to get another test like that again!! All I can say is it is hard!

> Last Friday I got 20 out of 20. My mom is going to be proud of me.

> I got 15 out of 15 on my spelling test today.

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Hello journal.   Today we had a C A T Test

(Canadian Achievement Test).   It was pretty easy

but some were a little hard.

Today in school we did part of our C A T Tests.

They were in Language Arts. Tomorrow we are

having C A T Tests on Math.   ⬦

I didn't get the highest score.   "J" got 104.   Do

you think I'm doing good in Spelling, Mrs. Bright?

Students in this grade four class were exposed to

very diverse evaluation methods.   On one hand,

standardized tests were used at various times

throughout the year. ↓Spelling quizzes occurred

weekly.   Such tests consisted of very clear

criteria for evaluation and resulted in a specific

grade which could be easily compared.   This kind

of test evaluated small units of learning such as

the correct spelling of individual words or

correct use of quotation marks.   Methods that

incorporate these characteristics have been linked

with a traditional approach to language arts

instruction.

On the other hand, evaluation methods used throughout the field study are more closely associated with a whole language approach. Procedures such as observation, monitoring, checking, sharing and conferencing result in an anecdotal report on the progress of one child. These reports are sent home on a regular basis throughout the year. Therefore, students in this classroom were exposed to methods of evaluation stemming from two very different approaches to literacy development at certain times throughout the year.

At this point in the discussion, it is necessary to summarize the implications of these discoveries for me, as a teacher and a researcher. Although whole language is known chiefly as a teaching strategy, it is affected by theoretical traditions. It is, therefore, not surprising to discover the areas most heavily influenced by a whole language approach are curriculum, pedagogy and to some extent, teacher's role.

Characteristic of a whole language curriculum is a child-centered education in which the student's own experiences and responses provide the basic information concerning what is taught/learned and how it is taught/learned. My grade four classroom's language arts curriculum and pedagogy contained elements of reading, writing, listening, speaking and viewing. These areas were explored in ways that allowed students to choose study

topics, make decisions concerning the learning process and interact with one another.

Speaking or classroom talk was one area of the curriculum which reflected a whole language approach. For instance, students asked one another questions, read or listened to each other regularly, learning from themselves as well as their peers. Central to this concept of developing language is the belief that it will enhance learning in other areas besides language arts.

In this classroom, where the curriculum and pedagogy were affected by whole language, my role as teacher portrayed certain characteristics. For instance, I frequently facilitated learning rather than directed it. Conversations were often student-directed. They indicated their needs and interests and I attempted to clarify these and arrange further learning based on them. This may suggest that one role of the teacher in a whole language classroom is to help children develop into independent learners.

However, in my classroom, it became apparent that certain areas of activity were influenced more by a traditional approach, namely those of management and evaluation. Progress was recorded using anecdotal records throughout the year but letter grades were used at each reporting period and were requested at various times throughout the year by both parents and students.

Evaluation in this form was also recorded for administrative purposes and provided a basis for comparison between classrooms, schools and school districts. I used these evaluation procedures as a kind of check that ensured the students in my room learned how to: 1) take standardized tests and 2) look at language arts instruction in another way. Evaluation of this kind was not always optional and results provided me with information frequently requested by administrators, parents and students. A conversation with researcher, Smith (Edelsky,et. al., 1984) indicated that this is an area of concern in whole language research today.

Management was an area that was also affected by a traditional approach. It is my belief that a happy and comfortable environment provides the best atmosphere for learning. Certain steps were taken to ensure that all students felt comfortable and free from stress in the classroom environment. I initially created classroom seating arrangements based on observing children's strengths, weaknesses, interests and needs. Certain routines were taught and practiced to help create order at particular times throughout the day, such as after recess and lunch. These were useful since as a classroom, we are part of a larger entity, the school.

Secondly, teachers often supervise in other parts of the school and outside during breaks and cannot be in their rooms as students arrive. The teaching of routines not only establishes student order but also independent learning habits.

Finally, a word about spelling. I feel this is one area of the curriculum which I am struggling with as an educator. Spelling is an area of the curriculum which appears to depend on skill and mastery. My own experience as a teacher, is that parents expect spelling to be taught this way and frequently encourage learning of this type at home.

Many language arts activities grow from the child's own experiences and spelling may also be based on their interests but eventually mastery of that skill is expected.

Consequently, my classroom is affected by characteristics of both these approaches. I will continue to be a researcher in my own classroom, clarifying and reflecting upon my beliefs and adjusting my practices to meet the needs of students.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS
and RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of conducting research in a grade four classroom during language arts instruction was to describe the program sufficiently to discover patterns of a traditional approach, a whole language approach and/or a combination of the two. If characteristics of both approaches were found to exist in a single classroom, it would suggest some degree of compatibility between traditional and whole language approaches. Compatibility was defined as the ability of these two approaches to co-exist in an elementary language arts classroom. This study also provided an opportunity to observe and document one language arts program over a four month period. This time period enabled the researcher to discover insights into specific influences in the following categories: concept of learning, curriculum, pedagogy, teacher's role and evaluation.

_ The findings indicate the primary concept of learning fostered in this language arts classroom was influenced by a whole language approach particularly in the areas of speaking and writing. These areas are closely related to curriculum. Students spent daily class time writing about

their own experiences during journal writing. They also shared their ideas and worked frequently in small and large groups. This study also ·discovered that students asked questions and discovered knowledge through discussion. The sequence for teaching skills followed students' own needs and interests and was not set by a pre-determined curriculum. This indicates a reconstructionist (Wells, 1986) concept of learning identified earlier with a whole language approach. However, in the area of writing, specifically spelling, a different concept of learning was observed. Students were presented with a prescribed curriculum through which specific knowledge was taught in a pre-determined sequence. Students acquired this knowledge through textbook assignments and by studying for weekly spelling tests. This approach suggests characteristics of a more traditional concept of learning.

The two areas of 1) curriculum and 2) pedagogy were influenced primarily by a whole language approach, with the one exception of spelling. Students experienced reading, writing, speaking and listening activities together in a way similar to that method outlined in Bernstein's (1971) "integrated curriculum". Through the use of daily journal writing, students became less aware of boundaries between "in" and "out of school" or "sacred" and "profane" knowledge (Bernstein, 1971). However, the spelling curriculum existed as a separate content unit. The pedagogy used provided for

the learning of sequential hierarchical skills and focused on small units of understanding such as word parts. This is identified with a traditional approach to instruction.

This study also observed and identified dominant teacher roles. A teacher-directed approach identified by a traditional perspective occurred primarily in situations pertaining to classroom management such as seating arrangements, routines and handling problems originating during recess. However, the teacher's role as facilitator was discovered to be dominant during teaching and learning episodes which did not relate to managerial tasks. This role is more closely associated with a whole language perspective.

Finally, characteristics of traditional and whole language approaches in a language arts program were observed in the area of evaluation. Whole language evaluation methods were primarily used formatively and provided lengthy feedback comments to students and parents. Traditional methods were used summatively and resulted in letter grades to be used in school-wide report cards.

Characteristics of these two approaches were observed in one grade four language arts program. Despite apparent major differences between the two, traditional and whole language characteristics were compatible insofar as aspects of each were found to co-exist in one grade four classroom. Specifically, a traditional approach exercised greatest

influence in the areas of spelling, classroom management and evaluation. A whole language approach primarily influenced the following areas: 1) concept of learning, 2) pedagogy, and 3) curriculum. The actual areas that these two approaches influence may suggest possible strengths of each in an instructional program. They may simply reflect one teacher's method of incorporating the perceived important elements in one language arts program. Nonetheless, various aspects of each of these approaches have been found to co-exist in one classroom.

These conclusions suggest that what goes on in a classroom may be a highly complex process that is not necessarily influenced by only one theoretical approach but by a combination of several. This study does not claim that other elementary classrooms will demonstrate similar influences over language arts programs but indicates there is a possibility for this to occur. This may be an area for further exploration as replication studies would indicate the importance of these influences in other classrooms.

A second implication for me, as a teacher, is that one may not always be conscious of the approaches influencing the language arts program. For instance, I felt my own program had been guided predominantly by a whole language approach and was surprised to discover many characteristics of a traditional approach operating in my classroom.

Other areas that may warrant further exploration follow. Replication studies might be conducted to provide data to be compared and contrasted with these findings in order to determine the effect of other factors, such as a teacher's years of experience or the grade level taught on the language arts program.

A survey or interview form might be developed to be used with teachers of language arts to determine if other educators perceive their classrooms to be. influenced in similar ways by whole language or traditional approaches.

Whole language and traditional approaches have, in the past, been treated as completely separate perspectives as noted in much of the literature. This study, however, provided a background in the form of a classroom that allowed for the possibility of their co-existence. It became apparent that in at least this one elementary language arts program, there were aspects of each of the two approaches suggesting a degree of compatibility between them. This finding had not previously been observed or described at the classroom level.

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APPENDIX A

INTEREST INVENTORY

Grade
Name
Date

1. If you cannot watch television at home, what would you most like to do?

2. If your parents told you that you could do anything that you wanted to do this weekend, what would you choose?

3. What is your favorite subject in school?

4. What subject is most difficult for you in school?

5. If you could learn about anything you wanted to learn about, what would you choose?

6. What is your favorite television show?

7. What book or story have you read recently that was really exciting for you?

8. What is the most fun thing to do inside besides watching television?

9. Do you like to do your work best in groups or alone?

10. Do you do your best work in groups or when you work alone?

11. Would you rather read a book or watch a movie if you have to learn something?

12. Who are your two best friends in this class?

A P P E N D I X   B

UNIT TOPIC: GOLF

1. **GRADE LEVEL:**   Four

2. **DEVELOPED BY:**   ROBIN BRIGHT/JOHN LOREE
   NICHOLAS SHERAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL
   380 LAVAL BOULEVARD
   LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA
   T1K 3Y2

3. **TIME SPAN:**   Fifteen Periods of Sixty Minutes

4. **SUBJECT AREAS:**   Language Arts
   Mathematics
   Art
   Physical Education

5. **COMMUNITY RESOURCES INTO SCHOOL:**
   - Golf Pro to discuss history of sport, rules of play, equipment, and types of golf games
   - Golf Pro to hit golf balls and to talk about different types of clubs
   - Television employee to discuss the production of television shows/commercials
   - Local author or book illustrator to discuss the making of a book

6. **COMMUNITY RESOURCES OUT OF SCHOOL:**
   - Field Trip to Golf Course

NOTES: The unit is developed mainly around Language Arts and Mathematics. Lesson Plans are presented for the fifteen days that the unit is to take.

Art and Physical Education: Teachers are to incorporate lessons for art and physical education throughout the unit. Art lessons would involve illustrating the filmstrip and the scale construction of a golf course.   Physical Education activities would involve the learning of a sport for leisure time activities.