

**EFFECTIVE WHOLE-LANGUAGE TEACHING:
CASE STUDIES OF TWO TEACHERS' PRACTICE**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents.....	1
I. Abstract.....	2
II. Introduction.....	3-5
A. Background.....	3
B. Research Question.....	5
III. Literature Review.....	5-28
A. Philosophical/Conceptual Literature.....	6
B. Principles of Whole Language Theory.....	9
C. Quantitative Studies of Whole Language.....	16
D. Qualitative Studies of Whole Language.....	22
E. New Frontier of Research in Whole Language..	26
IV. Methodology.....	28-35
A. Data Collection and Analysis.....	30
B. Limitations of Study.....	32
C. Significance of Conclusions.....	33
D. Outcomes of the Research.....	34
V. Case Study #1 - "Henny".....	35-58
A. Biographical Information.....	36
B. School Context.....	37
C. Henny's Classroom.....	38
D. Identification of Themes.....	39
E. Description and Analysis of Themes.....	40
VI. Case Study #2 - "Michelle".....	59-86
A. Biographical Information.....	59
B. School Context.....	60
C. Michelle's Classroom.....	62
D. Identification of Themes.....	63
E. Description and Analysis of Themes.....	63
VII. Summary and Conclusions.....	86-92
VIII. Final Comments.....	92-95
IX. References.....	96-102

ABSTRACT

Whole-language theory, as an approach to language arts instruction, has been the subject of a wide and varied literature that has attempted to define, describe, validate and understand it. This research project is concerned with the issue of "effective whole-language teaching" as demonstrated by case study descriptions of two teachers' practice of whole-language. Using ethnographic techniques for data collection, each teacher's practice has been documented and analyzed in terms of themes that have emerged from the data. The analysis contained within each identified theme contains a descriptive and critical account of the kinds of "effective teaching" skills/strategies that have been identified in each classroom. A final discussion is offered that attempts to draw conclusions about the research question, making some recommendations about effective whole-language teaching. It is expected that these will contribute to a body of knowledge that addresses specific methods and strategies that may be used by teachers interested in whole-language education.

INTRODUCTION

Background Information

The term "whole language" has become popular in the past decade in describing a particular approach to literacy learning in schools. This approach is founded upon a set of principles which state that the acquisition of reading and writing skills in schools must be modelled after the "natural" process of language learning (Cambourne and Turbill, 1988) that children experience in acquiring oral language (Goodman, 1986; Harste, Woodward and Burke, 1984). It is believed that reading and writing literacy is best achieved in contexts that focus on "authentic" experiences with language (Newman, 1985; Atwell, 1987) that are contained in activities that are derived from "whole" text (Cambourne and Turbill, 1988; Rich, 1985) that is seen as "purposeful and meaningful" (Watson, 1989; Goodman, 1989) for the students.

As a Junior High School teacher who adopted a whole-language approach to teaching after a period of years using a more "skills oriented" approach to literacy learning (i.e. where separate skills were taught in isolation from each other, with the assumption that students would be able to "put these together" as part of their development in reading and writing), I am convinced that the principles of whole-language teaching are both useful and effective as an approach to literacy learning in schools. As I learned how to implement whole-language principles

in my own classroom, however, I felt a continual tension between the control and authority that I felt I needed to retain in order to be effective as a teacher, and the notion of "student centered" (Graves, 1983; Watson, 1989) learning and "empowerment of students" (Rich, 1985; Fagan, 1988) that seemed to be promoted and considered essential to effective whole-language teaching. In conversations with other teachers, I began to learn that many of them were feeling frustrated and confused with "how" to implement whole-language principles effectively without abdicating their responsibility and authority as instructional leaders in their classroom.

It was this concern that arose from my own interest in whole-language teaching, and the anxiety that I felt with my colleagues that lead me to this research project. I wanted to discover what good whole-language teachers actually did on a day-to-day basis that made them effective and successful with this approach to literacy learning in schools. I believed that this kind of information was essential, not only for myself as a practicing whole-language teacher, but for other teachers who have an interest in this approach. My survey of the literature on the subject convinced me that although there has been a great deal written about the principles and philosophy of whole-language and about the types of activities that could be used in these classrooms, there has been very little reported about how to effectively implement these principles and activities.

RESEARCH QUESTION

My research question arose from this perceived need for clarification of the teacher's role in whole-language approaches to literacy learning. I specifically wanted to know: What do effective whole-language teachers do to implement whole-language principles in their classrooms successfully? In order to investigate this question, I opted for a case study of two teachers, who had been identified as effective with whole-language teaching. Using ethnographic techniques for data collection (Bodgen and Biklen, 1987; Erickson, 1986), I attempted to record, describe, analyze and draw conclusions about their practice of whole-language. This report is an account of that process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this review is to provide a descriptive synthesis of "whole-language theory". This account will begin with a summary of the conceptual underpinnings of the whole-language movement, continue with a summary of significant research into the effectiveness of a whole-language approach, and will conclude with a discussion of the "new frontier" in whole-language educational research.

Review of Conceptual/Philosophical Literature

Before attempting to understand the theory of whole-language, we must first come to terms with what it is not. Contrary to popular belief (which has been reinforced within the context of publishers' materials labelled "whole language"), whole language is not a curriculum. It is not a method of teaching or a textbook, or a set of pre-packaged activities available for purchase by teachers. It can best be described as a philosophy, a theory, or a set of principles that allows teachers to view learning in a particular manner.

The ability to use whole-language theory depends upon knowledge of and agreement with the underlying principles of whole language. The constructs of whole-language theory embrace not only methodological issues, but also philosophical issues, research methodologies, principles of learning, the classroom environment and teacher and child behavior. The complexity of this paradigm shift (from a "skills based" approach to learning to a more holistic one), and the fact that there is no simple "definition" of whole language has created confusion, misinformation, and often mis-representation of whole-language use in classrooms.

Definitions of whole language are, by and large, rather vague and elusive. This is partly due to the complexity of the concept, and perhaps suggests that a pat definition is neither necessary nor desirable. However, sensing an obligation to give

a more distinct conceptual form to the theory of whole language, most prominent writers on the subject have tried to digest its principles into just such a definition. Kenneth Goodman (1986) says of this topic: "Whole language is an attempt to get back to basics in the real sense of that word - to set aside basals, workbooks, and tests, and to return to inviting kids to learn to read and write by reading and writing and real stuff (p.26)." He goes on to state that whole-language theory is "a way of bringing together a view of language, a view of learning, and a view of people, in particular two special groups of people: kids and teachers." Newman (1985) describes whole language as "an attitude of mind which provides a shape for the classroom; a short hand way of referring to a set of beliefs about curriculum, not just Language Arts curriculum, but about everything that goes on in classrooms. Whole-language is not an instructional approach, it is a philosophical stance (p.5)." Harste, Woodward, and Burke (1984) assert that "Whole-language practices require new ways of thinking about the curriculum and the classroom as well as the use of novel methods of research and inquiry to provide fresh insights into children's language learning (p.37)." Rich (1985) claims that there "is no magic formula for whole language", that "... (in whole-language classrooms) there is a sense of caring for children and childhood. Teachers engage with children carefully, cooperatively so as to help the children enter the literacy community (p.718)." Cambourne and Turbill (1989) describe it as a philosophy of "natural learning" that has

been developed from naturalistic research that sets out to describe and explain how language learning occurs in the everyday ebb and flow of human activity (p. 338)." Bird (1987) believes that "Whole language is a way of thinking, a way of living and learning with children in classrooms (p.96)." Altwerger, Edelsky, and Flores (1987) believe that "Whole language is first of all a lens for viewing, a framework that insists that belief shapes practice (p.145)." And finally, Watson (1989) describes whole language as an alternative, where at its heart "are learners with their teachers - learners inquiring into life and literature by using language fully, teachers taking on the roles of researcher, learner and educator. This new professionalism, movement, philosophy, spirit is called whole-language (p.133)."

Whole language combines the scientific and humanistic traditions in education (Goodman, 1989). It builds solidly on Dewey's philosophical theory of how knowledge develops: that we learn by doing what is meaningful, functional and relevant to us. It also expands on the psychological research and theories of Piaget and Vygotsky. Whole-language incorporates the concepts of language as social semiotic and language learning as "learning how to mean" from the theory and research of Halliday (1975). Building on research into reading and writing, it draws on ethnography and descriptive and collaborative research to curriculum building and teaching methodology that support natural language learning. Whole language is a new orientation to the way the teachers approach teaching based on their theoretical

orientation to the way that they view literacy and language learning (Harste, 1989).

Principles of Whole-language Theory

The key theoretical premise behind whole-language theory is that language, both written and oral, cannot be separated from human experience and culture. Both oral and written language, because they are comprised of elements that are symbolic representations of the same things, and used for the purpose of communication, must be similar in nature. Because both oral and written language can be viewed as having the same function, and essentially being the same, it would be inappropriate to try to teach them in different ways. Thus, the whole-language theorist turns to the process of oral language development in preschoolers in order to understand the best methods for them to acquire written language when they reach school. Research, in the form of observation (Goodman, 1986), has discovered that children have a consistently effective approach to learning oral language that is based on their capacity to learn and a need to communicate. Children use language to make sense of the world around them, and, as they use it, they learn it.

It is this communicative purpose that motivates language development and which moves children toward the language around them (Goodman, 1977). We know that children acquire a language within a cultural context by actually using it, not by practising

its separate parts until some later date when the parts are assembled and the language is finally used.

According to Halliday (1975), function precedes form in language acquisition. The ability to create language makes it possible for individuals to express original thought in new, yet understandable language, and to enable society to move forward. Language acquisition is seen as natural -- not in the sense of innate or inevitably unfolding, but natural in the sense that when language (oral or written) is an integral part of the functioning of a community and is used around and with children, it is learned incidentally (Ferreiro and Teberosky, 1982; Lindfors, 1987).

Noam Chomsky (1957) caused a shift from behaviourist explanations of how and why children learned language. His view of language allowed us to see children as actively engaged in generating language, based on their knowledge and understanding of the syntactical rules for relating the sounds of language in a way that had meaning for them. Language learning was not simply a repetition of sounds that were learned because of reinforcement from adult role models.

We began to understand that oral language learning occurred in a meaningful context (Bloom, 1970), and that it was the richness and diversity of this context that permitted varying degrees of language development to occur. Children were understood to use a variety of contextual information to understand what adults were trying to communicate to them.

Language was seen as a meaning-making activity, where children used whatever cues and clues were available in order to participate in this process. Through the work of Michael Halliday (1975), who explored the functional aspects of language, an understanding of how children began to create language through other language users was formed.

It became apparent that beginning oral language users "experimented" with language in order to create meaning and initiate communication. In order to facilitate this process parents or other individuals participating in these events would "lead" the children through the communicative event by offering prompts, reading other clues, and helping to fill in any gaps in the child's efforts at communication (Wells, 1980). It was noticed (Wells, 1980) that parents tended to use language in real situations and that they responded meaningfully to children's language efforts, which is certainly not always the case in classrooms, where teachers usually follow their pre-planned conversation/dialogue agendas. In contrast parents and other adult individuals outside of schools tend to treat children as partners in communication.

Whole-language theory has embraced the methods by which children learn language naturally and attempts to incorporate these into language development in schools. It is recognized (Goodman, 1986) that children enter school with a well developed oral language that they have mastered in a social context, based on a need and desire to communicate. It is also claimed that

children will only find language learning difficult if it is made irrelevant, broken down into pieces that are not recognizable or usable to the learner (Harste, Woodward, and Burke, 1984). Exposure to real and natural language that is whole, sensible, interesting, relevant, and accessible to the learner makes its learning an exciting, motivating experience (Goodman, 1986).

Based on these observations of natural oral language acquisition have arisen some of the basic principles underlying whole-language theory according to Altwerger, Edelsky, and Flores, (1987):

- a) Language is for making meaning, for accomplishing purposes
- b) Written language is language - thus what is true for language in general is true for written language
- c) The cueing systems of language (phonology in oral, orthography in written language; morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics) are always simultaneously present and interacting in any instance of language use
- d) Language use always occurs in a situation
- e) Situations are critical to meaning making

Newman (1985) sums this up for us when she says:

Learning to read and write would be much easier if we would take the time to understand how children become language users in the first place and then created classroom environments which supported both oral and written language development. Learning to become a proficient language user requires that children have lots of opportunities to experiment with both oral and written language. Using language from the outset in a whole range of literacy contexts enables children to create the knowledge and strategies necessary for

fluent reading and writing in the same was as they have with oral language (p. 84).

Whole-language theory sees readers as engaging in a linguistic process that is monitored by their knowledge of the structure of oral and written language and their desire for meaning and understanding. Readers become engaged in constructing meaning by synthesizing information that is received from the print with the graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic knowledge that they bring to the print. By being aware of and monitoring the meaning of what they read, they are able to make predictions and corrections if necessary. This psycholinguistic view of reading was made popular by Kenneth Goodman (1967), who felt that the reader's engagement with the print, mediated by the knowledge, experience, and desire for meaning, facilitated the ability to read. The importance of the reader's use of "non-visual" information has been emphasized by Frank Smith (1982, 1983). The more non-visual information (which includes general knowledge in conjunction with specific knowledge about language) possessed by readers the less detailed attention they are required to give to what is on the page.

Whole-language educators in a response to fulfilling the child's need for meaningful, interesting, relevant material for reading have rejected the use of basal readers, in favor of literature based, and/or trade book reading materials. They believe that students need to interact with reading material that they perceive as interesting and meaningful to them, and that is

compatible with their experiences and knowledge. It is also felt that reading skills can be acquired in much the same manner as learning to speak. Children need to be immersed in good reading and good literature in order to facilitate this process (Holdaway, 1982). There has been substantial evidence to support the effectiveness of this use of materials in classrooms.

It has been recognized in the research on reading acquisition that the skills involved in reading must be taught within an interesting and meaningful context. Early experiences with the richness and variety of real reading materials seem to give children reason to read, teaching them, as Trelease (1985) explains, not only "how to read, but to want to read". Whole-language programs give meaning and pleasure to the process of reading, making skills instruction meaningful to students.

For many years teachers and researchers have been pre-occupied with cognitive aspects of literacy, and have essentially ignored the fact that knowledge, thought, and learning are intrinsically social or collaborative (Vygotsky, 1978). The whole-language teacher is keenly aware of the important role that social relationships play in the learning that occurs in the classroom, and strives to use social interactions as a supportive mediator and vehicle for language learning and development.

Research (Vygotsky, 1978; Holdaway, 1982) has given us clear guidelines regarding the importance of appropriate social and learning environments as a context for the promotion of literacy

in schools. We are reminded by Halliday (1978) that meaning is constructed in a social context and that language learning is dependent upon social relationships. Bloome (1985) asserts that reading involves social relationships among teachers and students, parents and children, and authors and readers. The social relationships that are involved in reading include establishing social groups, ways of interacting with others and acquiring culturally appropriate ways of acting and reacting.

The learning of language and culture are seen as interdependent, since language is itself a cultural phenomenon. Reading and writing are cultural activities and are extensions of day-to-day activities (Cairney and Langbien, 1989). The work of Heath (1983) has demonstrated that children's beliefs about literacy are in part a product of the kinds of environments in which they grow. School environments are a vital key to the attitudes that students will have about reading and writing. Teachers are seen as key players in the social contexts that are created for students, and thus contribute in large measure to the cultural ideals and attitudes that are displayed in the classroom.

It is recognized that teachers must create environments that permit the sense of collaborative language learning. The interactions that are permitted and encouraged in classrooms make significant differences to the literacy development of our students.

Quantitative Studies of Whole-language

In the past decade there have been several major research studies that have examined literature-based language arts instruction. Literature-based instruction is that favored by whole-language teachers, while teachers with a "skills" orientation to teaching favor the use of published basal readers. A number of controlled studies have directly compared literature-based reading with basal and mastery learning instruction while others have simply looked at growth within whole-language classrooms employing literature-based reading programs.

One of the first significant studies was by Cohen (1968), who used a control group of 130 students in 2nd grade who were taught with basal readers and compared them to 155 children in an experimental group using a literature component along with regular instruction. The schools, in New York City, were selected because of academic retardation likely due to low socio-economic backgrounds of the students. The experimental treatment consisted mainly of reading aloud to children from 50 carefully selected children's trade picture books - books without fixed vocabulary or sentence length - and then following up with meaning related activities. The children were encouraged to read the books anytime.

The experimental group showed significant increases over the control group (on Metropolitan Achievement Tests and a free

association vocabulary test administered in October and June) in word knowledge ($p < .005$), reading comprehension ($p < .01$), vocabulary ($p < .05$) and quality of vocabulary ($p < .05$). When the six lowest classes were compared, the experimental group showed an even more significant increase over the control. Cohen's study was replicated by Cullinan, Jaggar, and Strickland (1974), yielding basically the same results.

In 1981, Beardsley compared two kindergarten classes in a northern Maine community. After pretesting with the "Murphy-Durrell Pre-Reading Ability Test", children in the experimental class received a treatment that consisted of the reading of selected, predictable trade books, using "assisted reading" (Hoskisson, 1975). These daily experiences lasted for 15 minutes each over a period of about 12 weeks. After post-testing, Beardsley concluded that students in the treatment class were able to read both familiar and unfamiliar words, and had better reading strategies than their peers used for comparison. There was a statistically significant difference at the .05 level.

A similar study was conducted by McCormick and Mason (1984) to explore the question, "What can be done to increase preschool children's interest in and knowledge about reading?" They distributed books with simple story lines, repetitive text, and simple illustrations to parents of preschoolers from low and middle income families. Half of the families received packets of books and instructions for reading to their children, as well as

two other similar follow-up packets during the summer. The other half of the families received only the packets of books and instructions, with no follow-up. The researchers found that at the beginning of the year and at the end, (from tests of pre-reading and reading ability) students whose families had received both the packets of books and the follow-up materials were better able to transfer their knowledge about print to the reading and spelling of new words. The effects of using predictable books and literature was also studied by Bridge, Winograd, and Haley (1983) with similar results.

Eldredge and Butterfield (1986) studied 1,149 children in 2nd grade in 50 Utah classrooms. They compared a traditional basal approach to five other experimental methods, including two which used a literature based program. Employing a variety of evaluative techniques, the researchers discovered that 14 of 20 significant differences among the instructional methods favored the literature approach teamed with a series of special decoding lessons, taking no more than 15 minutes daily. The researchers were able to conclude that the use of literature to teach children to read had a positive effect upon students' achievement and attitude toward reading - significantly greater than the traditional methods used. Similar studies and results have been reported by Larrick (1987); Bader, Vetch and Eldridge (1987); White, Vaughan, and Rorie (1986); and Tunnell (1986).

Ribowsky (1985) investigated the comparative effects on kindergarten children of using code emphasis materials versus

shared reading experiences. In this year-long study two groups of children were pretested using several standardized tests of reading ability. The treatment groups focused on a natural language learning environment with frequent reading and writing experiences, while the code-emphasis group was highly structured with a multi-sensory format and traditional readiness skills. An analysis of variance revealed a significant main effect favoring the whole-language group, indicating the treatment significantly affected the emergent literacy of the whole-language class.

Rasinski and Deford (1985) indicate why literature based reading approaches may have a profound positive effect on learners. They compared three 1st grade classrooms, each with competent teachers using different approaches to teaching reading: content centered mastery learning, traditional basal, and child centered literature based approaches. The researchers looked less at achievement than at student conceptions about reading assessed through interviews. The responses to the basic questions "What is reading?" or "What happens when you read?" were rated by a team of raters in relation to whether they were meaning related (high score of 7) or letter-sound related (low score of 1). Mean scores showed that children from the literature based program conceived reading to be more of a meaning related activity than did the other children. Conclusions indicated that good readers in all three groups tended to define reading as being concerned with meaning while poor readers saw it as a process of converting symbol to sound.

The use of literature based instruction appeared to support reading as a meaning related activity.

A study of vocabulary development in whole-language classrooms was conducted by Gunderson and Shapiro (1988). The study was conducted with two classes who were in a program that was developed by two teachers over a period of two years. This program provided a language rich environment in which children were immersed daily in reading and writing. All children wrote, whether they gave dictation to an adult or were able to produce readable text, resulting in a huge volume of writing that was entered as data into a computer. This data was then compared to the vocabulary lists generated by current basal reading programs. It was discovered that the children were exposed to 18 times more words than those children who might have been limited to instruction in the basal reader.

A more recent study that further examines emergent literacy has been done by Karsten and Clark (1989). Using a quasi-experimental design, the investigation focused on two preschools and two kindergarten classes that implemented certain strategies associated with a whole-language philosophy. The classes and matched comparison groups were pre-tested and post-tested with qualitative and quantitative measures. Findings on all measures indicated that all of the experimental groups performed significantly better than comparison groups at the .05 level. Experimental subjects not only knew more than their comparison peers on meaningful aspects of reading, but exhibited enthusiasm

for books and stories, and were observed developing attitudes towards literacy that were not measurable.

Schafer (1989) studied the effects of using a whole-language approach vs. basal readers with grade 2 students. The experimental group consisted of 20 students, the control group 17 students, both in the same school. Pre- and post-tests of reading achievement were given. The treatment consisted of a literature based approach to reading, focusing on trade books, as well as a focus on personal writing and responding. Neither the pre- or post-tests showed significant differences in reading scores for the experimental group, however the researcher noted more positive attitudes about reading and writing from the experimental group. In similar studies Looby and Turner (1989), and Madden, Stevens, and Slavin (1986), discovered that word recognition and comprehension were significantly improved in the experimental group.

It is apparent from these studies which attempted to measure significant differences in reading achievement based on literature-based models of teaching (wholistic) as opposed to skills-oriented models of teaching (basal readers), that there is generally increased performance and achievement in programs that emphasize wholistic, literature-based methods. Although these results are encouraging for those who favor a wholistic, naturalistic approach to language development, they are unsatisfying as well, since the results are measures of particular skills, rather than the more complex nature of

literacy and literacy development. In response to this dissatisfaction, some researchers have adopted a more naturalistic, descriptive approach to research of whole-language classrooms in order to more accurately account for the types of learning and development that are occurring in them.

According to Goodman (1989), teachers must reject restrictive models of effective teaching. He believes that educational research tends to be "atheoretical", particularly as it deals with classroom practice. Quantitative studies that attempt to determine effectiveness through "a treatment" of an experimental group should be rejected in favor of a method that is more descriptive. Positivistic models for evaluating effectiveness of teaching cannot be accepted by educators who have a whole-language orientation to literacy.

Qualitative Studies of Whole-language

Because whole-language theory is seen as a theory of voice (Harste, 1989) that operates on the premise that all students must be heard, it demands that research in this field be true to this philosophy. Educational research about whole-language is seen as most valuable, then, if it is based upon a paradigm that is complementary with a whole-language orientation.

Recently, there have been such studies of whole-language classrooms. Most of these have been based on anthropological methods (ethnography - participant/observation) or case studies

of particular teachers/classrooms. The purpose of most of the recent studies has been to describe whole-language classrooms and whole-language teaching. Because of the nature of this type of research the spectrum of studies is broad and the conclusions are difficult to synthesize; the individual studies are meant to speak to the experience of teachers from the specific experiences of other teacher-researchers. Following is a summary of some of the most recent literature:

Allen (1988) was interested in describing literacy development in kindergartens that used a whole-language approach. Seven kindergarten teachers and a university researcher studied how 183 children in whole-language classrooms developed as readers and writers. Data was gathered on a quarterly basis through direct observation of classroom interactions. The teachers kept anecdotal notes of emerging language and literacy behaviors of all the students over the one year period. The researchers found that when encouraged to invent texts, children grew rapidly as readers and writers, and were able to identify reading as a meaning making activity. It was concluded that whole-language strategies enhanced early literacy development.

Edelsky and Smith (1984) used observation and interview techniques to study the types of writing that students were asked to do in classrooms, drawing a useful distinction between the terms "authentic" and "inauthentic" writing. Other teacher-researchers - Whitin (1984); Huck and Kirstetter, (1987); Chapman (1985) - have written about their observations of this notion of

"authentic writing" when paired with experience with published authors. Donald Graves (1983) writes about experiences that teachers have had with emergent writers (as authors) in authentic writing situations that are facilitated by teachers with a whole-language orientation to literacy.

Slaughter (1988), was interested in discovering the amount of direct and indirect teaching that was occurring in whole-language classrooms. In an applied ethnographic study of the oral and written language development of high risk children in kindergarten, first and second grades in six elementary schools, she attempted to find out to what extent teachers used a whole-language model rather than a conventional skills or subskills model for instruction in reading and writing. Categories were derived for describing the quality of the interactions and child responses to literacy learning in various contexts. From this observational data hypotheses were developed about the essential characteristics of whole-language teaching and learning and how it could be distinguished from more traditional approaches. She concluded that the most important factor influencing teaching approach was the teacher's conception or theory about how language learning occurs, and the degree to which the teacher was able to relate to the child's conception of literacy. Whole-language teachers were seen as being more aware of the processes by which language is learned and used in functional contexts. They seemed more willing to acknowledge and accept the child's point of view than did teachers who had a

skills orientation to literacy.

Edelsky, Draper, and Smith (1983) used an ethnographic approach to examine the question, "What do effective whole-language teachers do to create the kind of environment/structures necessary for whole-language activities to occur?" The authors describe one sixth grade classroom and how the school year began for that teacher and her twenty five inner-city students. The phenomenon they were attempting to explore was how effective whole-language teachers are the same and/or different from effective "skills oriented teachers". They concluded that the literature on effective teaching did not match what they observed. The teacher broke many of the "effective teaching rules" that have become popular in the recent research on the subject. The researchers felt that the teacher's whole-language orientation to language learning and literacy, and the students' acceptance of that, allowed her to design her own model of effective teaching that worked in her classroom.

Atwell (1987) has been a powerful influence on action research in classrooms, researching and writing about her own experiences with wholistic methods of literacy development in her own classroom. She has discovered that workshop approaches to reading and writing have not only resulted in gains in students' reading and writing abilities, but also in their interest in and attitudes about literacy. Her work as a teacher-researcher as well as a co-researcher in whole-language classrooms has helped to "de-mystify" wholistic methods of language development by

describing them in a useful and practical context and format.

Following her lead have been numerous published studies by other teacher-researchers who have attempted to document and describe effective whole-language strategies, methods, and activities, as well as question, debate, and theorize about language learning and acquisition. [See studies by Harman and Edelsky (1989); Taylor (1989); Maguire (1989); Lamme (1989) Ganapole (1988); Ferguson (1988); Cairney and Langbien (1989)]. Although varying in specific topic, all of these studies are founded upon the "wholeness" of language, and a commitment to develop, describe, and evaluate the most effective methods and techniques based on their own personal and practical knowledge and experience.

The "New Frontier" of Research into Whole-language

From this research summary it is clear that the literature about whole language has moved through several phases. The first phase attempted to "define and describe" the philosophical underpinnings and assumptions of a whole-language approach to literacy and learning. As this approach became more popular studies emerged that attempted to "validate" whole-language approaches through experimentally based, empirical studies of reading and writing achievement in whole-language classrooms. The third phase of research has consisted largely of qualitative studies describing whole-language classrooms and whole-language

teaching. This last phase has been the most eclectic and interesting, largely because it has been done with teachers as researchers or co-researchers. It has also helped to more clearly define for potential practitioners a number of different approaches to whole-language education.

Phase four of the inquiry into whole language appears to be on the horizon. We had a taste of it in 1983 with Edelsky, Draper, and Smith's study of effective teaching strategies as used in a whole-language classroom. Instead of attempting to describe whole language within the context of what has been discovered about effective teaching (from quantitative studies done in classrooms favoring a "skills" approach to learning), they described effective teaching in the context of a "whole-language orientation to teaching" which is founded upon an entirely different philosophical and theoretical base. In their study the question of effective teaching in whole-language classrooms changed from "How is whole-language a type of effective teaching?" to "What can whole-language teaching tell us about effective teaching?" This question has been asked again by K. Goodman (1989) in his commentary about the whole-language movement.

We are beyond the point where whole language needs to be defined, justified, measured or described. We have reached the point where, as whole-language teachers, researchers, and writers, we must explore the special kinds of effective teaching that are occurring in whole-language classrooms.

Although whole language developed as a theory of language, it rapidly became a theory of learning (Harste, 1989). The next phase of research should create the bridges between the concept of whole language as a theory of language to whole-language as a theory of learning. Whole-language teachers have knowledge about effective teaching and effective orientations to teaching/learning that will be valuable for educators as we approach the twenty-first century.

METHODOLOGY

It was felt that the research methodology must be congruent with the principles of the research topic (Whole-language theory), as well as with the particular orientation to learning of the researcher. Since the researcher's orientation to literacy development may also be described as "wholistic" in nature, the research methodology must in itself be defined as one that attempts to derive meaning and understanding from situations that are considered "whole". Quantitative research methodology was rejected since it deals primarily with the identification and measurement of discrete behaviors and variables, which would be diametrically opposed to the principles and underlying assumptions of whole-language theory. Thus, the purpose of the study, the topic under consideration, and the orientation of the researcher all contribute to the methodology that has been chosen.

Given these criteria, it was decided that a case study investigation that made use of ethnographic research techniques would best provide the kind of information that would answer the research question. This method is one that is descriptive, interpretive and naturalistic. Its main consideration is how the individuals within a culture (defined as the ways that knowledge, values, and norms are expressed by members of a defined group) make sense of and give meaning to what is going on in that setting. Because schools are seen as a culture in themselves, the use of ethnographic techniques appeared appropriate, and since it makes use of descriptive, holistic methods for viewing and data collection, its principles were seen as compatible with whole-language principles, where meaning is also seen to exist only within a situation or context.

The underlying assumption within this research is that teacher effectiveness is a matter of the nature of the social organization of classroom life, or of what has been termed the "enacted curriculum" (Erickson, 1986), whose construction is largely, but not exclusively, the responsibility of the teacher as instructional leader. The construction of this social reality is determined not only by the immediate participants (within the classroom), but also by the greater social contexts in which they are held (the school, the school system, the community).

It is understood that within this type of research methodology, the descriptive information that is gathered, and the analysis of that information is based in large part on the

interaction between the researcher and the subjects. Interpretation of the ethnographic process then, will be viewed as a negotiation and interpretation of meaning between the researcher and the subjects of the research.

Data Collection and Analysis

In order to gather the necessary information, entry to research sites was required. Because of the nature of the research question, and the methodology to be used, two teachers' classrooms were chosen. Because of the volume of material that would be gathered, and the amount of time data collection and analysis would require, it was felt that only two classrooms could be adequately described within the parameters of this study. These teachers needed to be defined as "effective whole-language teachers". Two teachers were selected who have been actively involved in the implementation of and promotion of whole-language strategies in their school division. It was believed that because of their interest in, and desire to learn about whole-language practice that they would be excellent candidates for a study which demanded an interested participation by the teachers. These teachers have also been highly recommended as "effective" teachers by both their peers, administrators, and university faculty members who have worked with them in the supervision of student teachers.

Since the purpose was to gather as wide a variety of

information as possible about these classrooms, it was essential that the collection be as rich and complete as possible including detailed field notes, video and audio tapes, photographs, interviews (both formal and informal), and collections of classroom materials and artifacts.

Observations of both classrooms (one grade three; one grade four) were made two mornings per week over a ten week period. The observations for the first case study described occurred during the months of September, October and November; the observations for the second case study occurred during April, May and June. All of the observations were with the same group of students in the same subject areas (primarily Language Arts). All field notes, interview, and other information gathered were shared and discussed with the cooperating teachers. Reactions and comments from these discussions were recorded and entered as data. Formal and informal meetings between the cooperating teacher and the researcher were conducted frequently to discuss data, monitor the progress of the study, discuss findings, and draw conclusions. Dr. Laurie Walker (a professor in the Faculty of Education, University of Lethbridge, who is knowledgeable about and interested in "whole-language teaching") acted as an independent third party who read and responded to all data that was collected. His analysis was considered in the conclusions that were drawn.

Analysis was done during and after the collection of data was completed. All of the data gathered was reviewed numerous

times by the researcher (in collaboration with the cooperating teachers, and the independent reader) in order to identify and trace themes that appeared to emerge from the data. As themes emerged they were listed. Any particular information that described and/or identified these themes was categorized within them. Once this process was completed, the data was re-analyzed in an attempt to validate themes that were identified. Only those which remained consistent with the data collected were retained for further analysis. Once the themes were finalized, they were described in terms of the research question. The cooperating teachers were asked to examine these results and to suggest any changes/modifications/corrections that seemed necessary. The researcher, cooperating teachers, and independent reader collaborated to draw conclusions and make recommendations for further investigation.

Limitations of the Study

Because of constraints of time and resources (both physical and financial), the duration of observations was barely sufficient to gather the amount of data required for analysis. A more complete and thorough analysis would be possible if observation times were at least doubled to twenty week periods for each teacher.

It was also understood that cultures grow, adapt and evolve over time. This study was limited by the fact that the

observations were made over ten consecutive weeks. Ideally, the observations would have been made from the first day of classes (where participants begin the "creation of meaning" process) to the last day of classes, with numerous intermittent observations over time.

Another limitation involves the number of observers. Within this study, all of the observations, and subsequent recording of field notes, were made by one observer, whose particular bias certainly affected the data that was collected. An alternate (and perhaps preferable) method might have entailed the use of several observers, whose information might be compared and contrasted in the analysis portion of the study.

Significance of Conclusions

It was expected that the analysis of the emergent themes would result in a set of "effective teaching strategies" that these two whole-language teachers use to make their orientation to literacy learning possible. It was also expected that there would be some similarities and differences in the way that each of these teachers approach this type of teaching. Because the research and the analysis were concerned primarily with individuals' practice and experience, the results of this study are not meant to be generalized to other teachers or other practices. Instead, the conclusions are meant to be illustrative of the way that teacher orientation effects instruction, and how

this instruction may be defined by a particular type of effectiveness.

This research, then, will be most useful for persons who are interested in the way that whole-language principles are operationalized effectively by practicing teachers. Because the researcher believes that effective learning is often the result of peer modelling, the information about specific practice may be seen as useful by educators who wish to utilize strategies in their classrooms that have been demonstrated as effective by other teachers. It is hoped that this research will further set the stage for continued exploration into and dialogue about effective whole-language practice.

Outcomes of the Research

It is expected that there will be several significant outcomes of this research:

- 1) There will be an opportunity for the researcher to create personal and professional meaning from the observation and analysis of other teachers' practice.
- 2) There will be an opportunity for the cooperating teachers to analyze and reflect upon their own practice; to become researchers in their own classrooms.
- 3) A description of particular data will have been collected about two teachers and two classrooms that may be used as further evidence in the growing body of this type of classroom research.

The data and conclusions derived from this study may be compared and contrasted with similar studies. The goal is not to search for abstract universals arrived at by statistical generalization from a sample to a population, but for concrete universals arrived at by studying a specific case(s) in great detail and then comparing it/them to other cases that have been studied in equally great detail. The primary goal of this research is particularizability rather than generalizability.

CASE STUDY #1 - "HENNY"

Henny became a willing participant in this project, mainly because of her own experience with and interest in whole-language. She had participated in other "in house" research projects prior to this, and was actively involved in several professional development projects in the areas of Language Arts, music and mathematics.

Henny agreed to become involved in this project because, in her words, "This type of exercise helps me to think about my teaching. It helps me to be a better teacher." Because of the constant intrusion and inconvenience of having me in the classroom, it was essential that Henny have this positive attitude towards the study. Her desire to consciously engage in reflection on her own practice was essential to the process of data collection and analysis.

Biographical Information

As mentioned earlier, Henny was asked to participate in this project because she was known as a teacher who made use of whole-language principles in her classroom. In addition to this (and essential to the conclusions drawn in this paper), Henny had been identified by herself, her peers, school administration, and university faculty as a highly effective teacher. It is essential that this point be emphasized as the purpose of the study was not to determine if Henny was an effective teacher, but rather how she came to be an effective teacher of whole language.

Henny was born and raised in Southern Alberta, is a graduate of the University of Lethbridge, and has been teaching for over seventeen years, the last eight at this school. She says that she always wanted to be a teacher, and that she loves teaching. She sees herself as a very effective teacher, and attributes her effectiveness to her interest in her career and to the consistency of her expectations of students. She views students as capable learners who are able to initiate independent behaviors if that becomes the expectation. She feels that she is industrious and capable, and expects the same from her colleagues and students. Henny welcomes innovation and change. She feels that although routine is essential to effectiveness and productivity, it can also lead to complacency and stagnation.

Henny values learning and sees herself as a person who is constantly learning and seeking new strategies and awareness.

School Context

The school where the observations took place is an elementary school (grades ECS-6), which draws from a largely middle class suburban area of West Lethbridge (population 65,000; centered in agricultural area of Southwestern Alberta). The school itself is relatively new (within ten years) and has a unique, modern design. The flow of traffic is generally circular; with the library and the offices being the focal point. It is designated a "community" school, and as this implies, is used by the community at large for a wide variety of social, cultural, and educational purposes. The school has also been formally linked to the University of Lethbridge's teacher-education program as a field experience site, resulting in much interaction and cooperation between the university and the school. The enrollment is approximately five hundred, with a staff of twenty-three teachers (eighteen women, five men) and two administrators.

The principal of this school has been there since the inception of the school and appears very committed to the development and future progress of it. He sees the school as a community that he wants to be effective and responsible. He feels a personal dedication to everything that happens in the

school and wants to ensure that everyone has a sense of purpose, responsibility and belonging. The teachers in this school believe that he has been the driving force behind the success of this school. They speak of him with respect, affection, and friendship.

Most of the teachers in this school have been on staff for several years. There is an obvious feeling of community and collegiality in the staffroom. There is a great deal of collaboration with regards to program planning and special events. Many of the teachers in this school are involved in special projects with their school division, the University, or a specialist council of the Alberta Teachers' Association. Professional development appears to be valued and engaged in frequently by this staff.

Henny's Classroom

Henny's room is one of the larger ones in the school. It is carpeted, and is organized into six sets of four desks, which she calls "pods". Everything in this room appears to have a place that is well known by all the students. It is neat, tidy and organized. The displays on the walls are colorful, are usually student made, and generally reflect the theme unit that is being taught in Language Arts and/or social Studies. The physical arrangement of the classroom is not static; in the time that I was there it was rearranged twice.

Identification of Themes

After having spent considerable time in Henny's room, and having come to know Henny personally and professionally, I realized that there were certain things that she did and believed (both consciously and unconsciously) that allowed her to be effective as a whole-language teacher. The discussion which is to follow is organized around certain themes that appeared to emerge from the data collected. These themes are conceptual generalizations about the kind of teaching and learning that appeared to occur in Henny's classroom. The identification of particular themes helped to provide an organizing structure in which particular ideas and/or groups of ideas could be highlighted for description, discussion and analysis. The themes that are identified are not meant to be mutually exclusive, merely representative of patterns of behavior that appeared to be consistent with the data collected. The purpose of this next section is to identify the themes that seemed to emerge from the data collection, to discuss these themes in terms of the research question, and to draw conclusions about how knowledge about this may be useful to the participants of this project and to readers of this research.

Although there appeared to be a number of themes that helped to define, identify and describe Henny's whole-language teaching, I have chosen to include only those that were best documented and

reinforced by the data that was collected. The themes that follow are ones that are consistent with and well supported by the field notes, interviews, videotapes, and artifacts gathered. Each theme has been assigned a title that is meant to be both descriptive and suggestive; the description that follows for each theme will allow the reader insight into both the process of discovery of that theme, the teacher's practice within that framework, and the researcher's perspective.

The themes were identified as follows:

1. Structure is Empowering
2. The Right to be Wrong: Learning has a Voice
3. Talking as Central
4. Celebration of Learning: What are the Questions?
5. Less is more: Ambiguity and Problem Solving
6. Community of Learners: The Collective is Personal
7. School is Life: Real Persons Live There

Description and Analysis of Individual Themes

1. Structure is Empowering

This theme was certainly the most evident and powerful one that emerged from the collected data. The word structure as used here refers to several things that are put into place in Henny's classroom: expectations, rules, values, and routines. The word empowerment refers to the students' and the teacher's ability to

meet their own learning needs; to feel that in this place called school they are able to influence and be influenced by; to act as both teachers and learners.

It was evident that in order to be successful as a whole-language teacher, Henny needed to build a structure within which whole language would be allowed to exist and function successfully. This structure appeared to be based first of all upon the **expectations** that Henny had of herself and of her students. Of this, she says:

I have very high expectations of myself and of my students. Students must learn to understand that what they do in my classroom is what I expect....and I never, never, waiver from that! NEVER!

Henny is very explicit in the expectations that she has. She continually communicates these directly to students in a number of different ways. Henny expects students to work hard in her room and to attempt to solve as many of their own learning problems as possible. She does not "save them" from the struggle of difficult problems. This is particularly evident during writing times when students have difficulty with topic choice, structure, spelling or mechanics. A common response to a question about spelling would be, "How do you think it is spelled?" or "Try it for yourself.", or "How do you think that you can find out?" Henny expects that students will be enthusiastic, industrious, and responsible.

Routines appear to reinforce the type of expectations that Henny insists her students adopt.

The key to my success as a Whole Language teacher is the training that I give my students at the beginning of the school year; specifically with listening skills, and attention to routine.

Although I was not present in her classroom in the first week (a weakness in this research, since it became apparent during this study that much of the "training" that facilitated effective whole-language instruction occurred during this week.), It was evident in my observations that these students have been "trained" to behave in a particular manner, and to act in particular ways in a number of different situations. Some of the most explicit routines included those that governed journal writing, working in learning centers, working in the library, or working within the "pods". The expectations and rules within these "routines" had been explicitly "taught" by Henny; it was expected that the students would conform to these behaviors. During journal writing, for example, students would pick up their journals from the side counter upon entering the room first thing in the morning. They would take these to their desks and would usually all be engaged in writing at the bell for first class. The routines that Henny has established for work to occur in this classroom appear to achieve a dual purpose; they foster discipline, management of the students in the room, and they

promote the types of language activities that she feels are valuable.

The types of expectations and routines that have just been described help to create a system of values that help to define and promote a particular culture in Henny's room. These values may be summarized as personal and social responsibility, and the desire to work hard in a pleasant, collaborative environment. Henny attempts to structure the classroom environment and manipulate the social organization of the classroom in order to foster an internal sense of these values for her students.

2. The Right to Be Wrong: Learning has a Voice

It was apparent in Henny's classroom that students were willing to risk being wrong in order to learn about the questions that they had. Trust was established among all the participants in the classroom that allowed them to "think out loud" - to venture guesses in order to negotiate meaning.

In order to establish this kind of environment it appeared that Henny did two things: First of all she became a model of the type of learning behaviors that she wanted exhibited in the room; she demonstrated herself to be a learner who was willing to make attempts at new ideas without being sure of the right answer. If there was something that she did not know she asked the students if they knew; she often assigned herself or her students "information to be found" for the next day. The discovery of

knowledge was demonstrated by Henny to be an exciting and ongoing process. Secondly, she made the students aware that learning was context bound - that it existed within the parameters of the language that was used to define and describe it. Learning was not perceived as something that was "magic", it was something that could be described or discussed. Learning was demonstrated by Henny as something that occurred within the context of the language of the participants.

I think that you have to be open to new ideas, and you have to be willing to try. You have to be a risk taker. If we want children to be like that, then the teachers have to be risk takers too!

As I spent time in Henny's room, I was struck with the willingness of the students to try difficult things; to explore possibilities; to negotiate meaning. The fear of being wrong appeared to have been replaced with the excitement of the "possibility of being right" or at least in the excitement of discovering.

Learning has a particular voice in Henny's classroom, and that voice is not necessarily that of the teacher. Although Henny has particular objectives and learning goals in mind when she enters the classroom (e.g. discussion of pioneer life, writing and planning an interview), she understands that the students will have different perceptions, knowledge, and experiences with these topics. Because of this belief, there

appears to be very little time spent "lecturing" to the students; much more time is spent engaged in dialogue, which involves a sharing of information, an engagement with the topic and the material to be examined. This does not mean that Henny abandons her objectives; rather that she accepts the particular context that the students' experience brings to the learning situation, considers that, and attempts to merge these together into the learning situation. Within the use of the Language Arts learning centers, for example, the students are allowed and encouraged to use their own experience, knowledge and expertise in their manipulations of the activities (making a reed doll, making applesauce, recording an oral recitation of a poem). In discussions with students in Henny's room, it became evident to me that each of them felt that they had some expertise to offer to the collective knowledge of the room. Each student felt that their voice was essential to the learning that was occurring in that classroom. It became evident in my observations of the students, that they felt motivated to share information and ideas that they felt would be helpful to particular learning situations. This was particularly evident during activities that involved work in small groups, such as the learning centers.

3. Talking As Central

In this classroom language was used in both the "official" and in the "unofficial" curricula in order to develop the kinds of language skills as well as the "social network" that appeared

necessary for effective whole-language teaching to occur. There was an emphasis upon the importance of language that was used socially as well as academically. Students were encouraged to use their language in sociable contexts, to merge these with more academic contexts, thus facilitating a type of learning that was founded upon personal knowledge and experience that had been combined with "other types" of knowledge.

You have to communicate with the students;
you have to talk to them. there is a lot of
time spent in discussion in my classroom.

Most of the learning time in Henny's classroom was spent working in groups or engaging in large group discussion. This classroom was seldom a silent place. Discussion and dialogue appeared to be valued as the way that learning would most effectively occur. This attitude about "talking" is diametrically opposed to that which might exist in classrooms where language is not seen as a way to learn about language. In Henny's classroom the "official" curriculum (school knowledge derived from curricular documents) appeared to be contextualized within the "unofficial" curriculum (knowledge that shaped the personal and collective experience of the students as demonstrated in their use of "sociable" language). The merging of these two types of curricula, and the language that is used to describe, define and make sense of them, created a collaborative, collegial atmosphere in Henny's room. Because students enjoyed being "sociable" and enjoyed using language in this process, they also seemed to enjoy the

"learning" that was occurring in this context. Henny seemed to have "naturalized" the process of learning by setting it within a social context that was pleasurable and intrinsically rewarding for the participants. I became particularly aware of the extent to which this occurred in my observations of "student talk" before, during, and after recess periods. There did not appear to be a significant difference in the tone or even of the topic of their dialogue within these two contexts; the talk of the classroom (lesson material such as "fishing", a novel they were reading, activities in Language Arts centers) became a part of the "sociable" dialogue that they engaged in freely in their recess periods. School knowledge and learning had, in fact, become a part of life for these students.

In conversations with Henny, it became evident that she was a particular type of learner; she appeared to favor using language as a vehicle for the exploration of thought, knowledge and ideas; she understood that knowledge was particular to each knower and that language was the vehicle for the articulation of that knowledge, and also a tool for the understanding of and negotiation of meaning. In light of this personal belief, it seemed natural and necessary that Henny model and value "thinking out loud" in her classroom. The students in her room were able to observe her using language to "work through" thought processes; they had a sense of how she came to personal awarenesses and conclusions about text and/or other subject matter; they saw her as a learner who uses language to

understand. At one point in the year she remarked to the students that she was unhappy about the way that "traffic flowed" in the room, and wondered aloud what could be done about that. In a discussion with them, the matter was put on the table, discussed, negotiated, and was concluded with agreement upon a new room arrangement. The students had become an active part of the use of thought through language to negotiate and overcome some difficulty/problem. They were aware of the way that language could be used practically and effectively. Within this learning community, there was a celebration of language. I believe that this was one of the keys to Henny's success as a whole-language teacher.

4. Celebration of Learning: What Are the Questions?

A natural outcome of the "celebration of language use" is the more general theme which I identify as "celebration of learning". Although we hear the phrase in various types of literature on student centered approaches to teaching, it seems that an understanding of what this really means has become somewhat obscured. In my observations in Henny's classroom it became obvious that the notion of celebration had certain prerequisites: a group of people; a desire to be together; a sense of enjoyment; a sense of purpose. The combination of structures, rules, values, expectations, and teacher warmth, understanding, purpose, and modelling created a community of learners that was able to find the energy of the learning moments that occurred.

As the instructional leader in the classroom, Henny seemed to be able to identify and capitalize on those moments of excitement; to capture those burst of collective energy in order to meet the learning goals of her classroom. One way that this appeared to occur was the way that she was able to focus on the question instead of the answers. Although she represents herself as the leader in this community, she also represents herself as a learner who is active in and interested in the questions that motivate learning, both for herself and for her students.

Learn with the children....I think you have to be an active participant in what happens in the classroom.

Henny's teaching is an example of what Paulo Freire (1984) would call a "pedagogy of questions". She focuses on the questions instead of the answers; there is a sense of anticipation- of celebrated inquiry in her room.

Research indicates that effective teachers are knowledgeable about their students and develop and foster self esteem in them through this knowledge. Much of this literature is focussed in the area of motivation - external practices applied to learning situations that will "motivate" students to want to learn. This is contrary to what Henny appears to do in her classroom. There does not appear to be a need to "disguise the learning" to superimpose motivating activities and/or techniques that will make it more palatable for the students. The students appear to have internalized the value of learning for what it can offer

them; no other reward is necessary. This was particularly apparent in the smooth transitions that students made from one activity or assignment to another (working in journals to novels, moving into learning centers, getting materials for art work, etc.). The students were anxious to move onto the next learning activity and did not appear to want to waste time getting to it. They seemed to anticipate what was to happen next, and were eager to begin whatever that was.

In addition to the structures that Henny had put into place that allowed this type of learning to happen was the type of learning activities that she developed. These activities were perceived by the students as interesting, relevant and genuine. In discussions with the students, they seemed surprised when I suggested that they did work in school only because they were told to by the teacher; most indicated to me that they did the work because they wanted to, and although they could not always tell me why they had this desire, it appeared to be genuine. Although the content of the learning (e.g. pioneer days, map reading, math skills) did not vary from the prescribed curricula, the approach and the engagement with the material elicited an interested and enthusiastic response because the students were expected to participate in exploratory discussion and thinking about new topics. Implicit within whole-language theory is the belief that students will learn and achieve most effectively by using language within the contexts that suit their own level of comfort. Much of the teaching that I observed in Henny's

classroom was in this type of context; although routines and plans were highly structured, students were not frustrated and/or bored with their engagement with the content.

Henny enters learning situations with a tentative rather than authoritative stance. She asks questions that arise from a genuine, personal desire to know; she enjoys being a participant learner in her classroom, and values what the students can contribute to the pool of knowledge that exists in the room. This was particularly evident in "exploratory discussions" that she had with students prior to engagement with new material. In her discussions with students during the "pioneer" theme, for example, there were several discussions about the students' perceptions of "what things may have been like back then, and why they might have been that way". Embedded in these conversations were Henny's own experiences, knowledge about that particular topic (ironing clothes, cooking, planting fields,) in those days. She always gave the impression that there was something that each of her students knew that she did not; as a learner she always remained accessible to new information. It seemed that her natural curiosity and honesty about learning contributed to her effectiveness as a whole-language teacher.

5. Less is More: Ambiguity and Problem Solving

As a person, Henny seemed to be comfortable with the mysteries of knowledge and learning; struggling with not knowing- with learning- was a desirable state. It was evident that

students in this classroom were expected to learn; they were expected to work hard; they were expected to initiate their own learning whenever possible, and to solve their own learning problems whenever possible. Henny did not try to be there for every student all the time.

I think that students have to understand that I am not going to be there as a mediator or a problem solver for them. They have to take responsibility. I think that is the one thing that they have to learn - that they are responsible for themselves when they are in my classroom.

Henny explained that she found teaching most frustrating during periods of time when she had to "wean" students off traditional student/teacher learning relationships. Henny did not see herself as the person who is "all knowing" and did not represent herself as such. She reinforced to the students continuously that they are capable learners and that she expected them to demonstrate that to her every day. Following are some of the most typical exchanges that I found between Henny and her students:

Student: How do you spell that word Mrs. H_____?

Henny: How do you think you can find out?

Student: What do I do when I'm done?

Henny: What do you think would be a good choice?

Student: What should I write about?

Henny: That's something that I can't decide for you!

It became obvious that Henny provided less direction and instruction than was typical of grade three teachers. New students to her class noticed this, and were confused and bewildered until they learned that they would have to fill in the gaps themselves. It was through giving less that Henny allowed her students to do more for themselves and to learn more that was meaningful to them.

This is not to suggest that Henny has abdicated her responsibility as a teacher. She always appeared to be there to rescue a child who was falling from a state of "struggling" to one of "despair" - Knowing the difference between the two states meant that she needed to maintain a constant surveillance of the learning situation and an attunement to each student in the classroom. Her ability to allow students the "freedom to struggle" appears to be directly related to her ability to know each student individually and to use that knowledge in her day-to-day professional decision making.

6. Community of Learners: The Collective is Personal

As I reflected upon the data that I had collected in Henny's room, it occurred to me that there was a significant difference between knowing the reasons for being in school and knowing the

purposes. Most students know that the reason they are in school; they are compelled to be there by their parents or some other authority. Henny makes it her business for them to know the purposes for their being there. She is explicit about her understanding of what education and schooling mean to her, and what she expects it to mean to them. There were several occasions when Henny openly and honestly shared her own experiences with schooling to her students; she did not depict it as something that she was always successful at, but always as something that she valued. Upon returning from a workshop she presented for other teachers, she spent some time explaining to her students what she had done and why she felt it was important for her to share her knowledge and experiences with other teachers. She appears to want her students to internalize a sense of personal and social responsibility about the act of schooling and about the role that they play in it by demonstrating the active role that it plays in her life as a teacher and a person.

In conversations with Henny, it became clear that one of her major goals was to establish a positive learning community in her room, where students feel not only a sense of responsibility to themselves and to the teacher, but to the other students in the room as well. She clearly defines for her students the purpose that she perceives for schooling: **That we should come together colaboratively and cooperatively and help each other inquire and discover.** Although there appears to be a contradiction in

meaning between the words *collective* and *personal* as used in identifying this theme, it is clear that in Henny's room the sense of personal achievement, development and fulfilment grows out of the collective values and ideology that is defined and described in her room. True personal development and growth, because it is a very human and social activity is seen by Henny as dependent upon sociable, human contexts:

We have to work together and cooperate. It is very important to me that within this classroom, each child has a feeling of self worth - that they are just as good as everyone else.

The social climate of this room is one of collaboration and sharing. Henny's use of language illustrates this. Upon finishing one activity she asked:

I wonder if you would like to share what you have been discussing with the rest of us?

Implicit within this question is permission for the students to decline; the teacher has become more suggestive and supportive, rather than directive and authoritative. Although this may appear to demonstrate a leadership weakness, a way for students to choose not to collaborate and share because that would be easier- I observed exactly the opposite. When encouraged to make honest, voluntary contributions that were contextualized within sociable, meaningful activities, the students appeared to demonstrate a genuine and spontaneous interest.

It was essential that Henny was able to forge her classroom into a close knit, cooperative community that valued sharing and collaborative work, because most of what is done in the room is done together. Quiet, solitary work was uncommon in this room. Although it has been my experience that students will often resist being put into groups with students that they do not like, I did not detect this in Henny's room. Instead of resisting change, challenges, and new groupings, the students seemed to welcome them enthusiastically.

It became obvious that although the teacher was the instructional and social leader in this room, she was not the only person with particular expertise. Through explicit acknowledgement and direction from Henny, the students were able to identify, utilize and value the other students as "experts" in particular areas. In conversations with students about the topic of solving spelling and mechanical problems in writing, for example, the students always identified other students as a source for editing and information. It was only if they were not able to solve the problem personally or with their peers, did they identify the teacher as a source of information. It was evident in my observations that this attitude has been developed by Henny in her responses to student problems and inquiries. She is clear and consistent in her insistence that the community of the classroom is the source for information; utilizing as many members as possible to come to collective understanding is valued in this room.

7. School is Life: Real Persons Live There

This last theme is one that encompasses all of the others; it is a framing structure that allows the particular type of teaching and learning that has thus far been described to occur. It has become clear that the success that Henny has as a whole-language teacher is founded upon her attitude about school and schooling and her orientation towards learning. For Henny, what she does as a teacher in school is not separate and distinct from the other parts of her life; her role as a teacher in school is not separate from her role as a mother, a wife, a member of her community. Henny seems to require *connections* in her life; she does not view life as a set of isolated parts, but rather as a mosaic of activities that form a complete picture. Her view of learning is a natural consequence of this view of self. For Henny, learning must occur in contexts that are whole and meaningful. Language learning must occur in a social context that is *life itself as well as a preparation for life*, not merely an *imitation or reproduction of life*. This belief and attitude shapes everything that she does in her classroom, and because it is consistent with whole-language principles, allows her a great deal of success with this orientation to teaching/learning.

It seems that another key to Henny's success as a whole-language teacher is her desire and ability to form positive interpersonal, caring relationships with each one of her students. Of her own teaching she says:

I think that one of the reasons that I move around the room a lot is that it gives me a chance to talk to the kids....That gives me the perfect opportunity to do it - when it's just the students and myself. You can make eye contact - you can be close to them.

I guess I look at it like every one of them is my own. Every child in that classroom is like my own child and I want to create in my classroom a place where they feel safe and comfortable and warm. Maybe that's the only time in the day that they're going to get that.

Perhaps the prerequisite for effective whole-language teaching is this all-encompassing attitude about the purposes and intentions of schooling; that schooling is a significant part of each student's and each teacher's life, and that this must not be viewed as a "charade" or a "game" that is perpetuated and motivated by artificial, meaningless activities. In her own personal search for meaning and "connections" between her life of teaching and her other "lives", Henny has defined and fostered this sense in her students, and created a community that is "whole" within itself - one that is closely connected to the students' other lives. School is seen as part of life; students are real persons that live there.

CASE STUDY #2 - "MICHELLE"

Michelle was asked to participate in this project because of her demonstrated interest in a whole-language approach to teaching. She was well known to her peers, administrators, and university faculty as a teacher who not only utilized whole-language principles in her classroom, but was active in promoting them in workshops for teachers, administrators and parents.

Michelle was excited about being involved in this project because in her words, "It helps me to be a learner"...and "because I like to have an extra pair of hands in the room!" Both of these comments by Michelle are illustrative of the whole-language stance that she uses in her classroom; they become the focal points for many of the observations and conclusions that follow.

Biographical Information

Michelle was born and raised in Saskatchewan, is a graduate of the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, and has been teaching for seven years. She has taught several different levels of elementary school ranging from grades one through six, and has also had experience as a resource room teacher and as a teacher librarian. Although she has always worked as a full time teacher, her current position is half time, owing to the recent birth of her daughter.

Michelle is very interested in teaching and in her career. She sees herself as a person who is continually learning, and is constantly looking for avenues for personal and professional development. She is active on a number of different organizations and committees, including the International Reading Association, The Children's Book Award Committee and her school's Professional Development Committee. She demonstrates an interest in and enthusiasm for her career and its future development.

Michelle feels that her "whole-language stance" is one that was inevitable, as it supports the kind of learner that she is. She felt that she "always had the tendency" to use whole language principles in her room, and that her experience as a resource room teacher, grade one teacher and ESL teacher have all convinced her that a whole-language approach is best for her. She feels that the most important thing for her to do as a teacher is to model enthusiastic and effective learning strategies; she feels strongly about the position that she holds as a role model for her students and consciously attends to the image that she is presenting.

School Context

The school where the observations took place is an elementary school (grades ECS-6), which draws from a socio-economically diverse area of North Lethbridge, ranging from upper middle class homes to lower income homes where a significant

proportion (approximately one third) of parents (and children) are new immigrants to Canada. The school recently celebrated its 75th anniversary, and its structure is an eclectic mix of old and new architecture. The new wing (where Michelle's classroom is contained) is approximately twenty years old. Approximately one third of the school's student population is made up of ESL students, which has created the need for special resource teachers and classrooms to help meet the needs of these students. Although there are opportunities for students to be placed directly into separate resource rooms for periods of time each day, many teachers (including Michelle) prefer to have the resource teachers work within the context of the more heterogeneous class.

The principal has been the instructional leader at this school for approximately four years, and is very committed to the development of the school, her staff, and the students. She is proud of the fact that she has changed the "attitude" about the type of learners and potential that the school has, not only with the public, but with the teachers as well. She gives the impression of being a very assertive person, who is very visible to both students and staff, and who seems genuinely concerned with everyone's well being. Students in the class that I worked were very positive in their comments towards her; they seemed to view her as a person that they liked and trusted. The teaching staff seemed to have the same feelings for her. In discussions with her I noted an enthusiasm and interest in teachers' personal

and professional development, and a commitment to forming a close-knit, collaborative community in the school.

The other teachers and staff in the school appear to have a harmonious, cooperative relationship with each other. There is frequent collaborative planning, including several recent school wide theme units. The administration has allowed teachers a great deal of input in decision making and planning, largely by forming committees of teachers to accomplish various tasks (e.g. a professional development committee that was currently planning a staff "retreat" for next September). My impressions of this staff were that they felt a tremendous pride in their school and its accomplishments, and felt committed to its current and future development.

Michelle's Classroom

Michelle's classroom is a large rectangular shaped room, that is filled with a great variety of books and resources. The shelves are filled with books, as are the counters and the floor. There does not seem to be any one place for anything; the room is "comfortably" untidy. Students' desks are arranged in groups of four facing each other, scattered throughout the room. Michelle's desk is in the back corner of the room; it is heaped with books and papers. The walls and bulletin boards are filled with both teacher and student made thematic material and artwork. Because there are thirty-four students in this room, it always appears "full".

Identification of Themes

As with Henny, the themes that follow are conceptual structures that help to frame particular teaching practice that has been located in the data collected in Michelle's classroom. I have chosen only to include those themes that were best documented and reinforced by the data; these themes are consistent with and well supported by my observations of Michelle's teaching. Following is a list of these themes:

- 1) A Framework for Success: Rules, Values and Expectations
- 2) Work hard, Play hard: Energy, Excitement and Enthusiasm
- 3) Empowerment Through Choice: Engagement with Learning
- 4) Talk as Text: Literacy as a Sociable Activity
- 5) The Gift of Voice: Private to Public
- 6) Life in Books: Personal Experiences with Text
- 7) The Harmony of Difference

Description and Analysis of Themes

1. Framework for Success: Rules, Values and Expectations

Although she was heard to make very few "controlling statements", it is evident that Michelle's classroom is very much governed by a set of rules, values and expectations that have largely been determined and put into place by her. In conversations with students, it is obvious that they have

internalized the norms and values of this particular culture, and that they see them as a valuable framework within which to live.

Michelle consciously attempts to create a particular type of environment and tone in her classroom, that "will allow her" to do the kinds of things that she feels are necessary to fulfill her beliefs about the way that learning occurs.

It's important that we cooperate and be a big family here, because we're going to be spending a lot of time together. We have to get things to work for us right away... September is a very unusual month for me. I would not be able to jump into group work like I am doing here.....

I want to use kids as role models, but I can't ignore the fact that I am a very important model for them. And I think that in September that I am more of a model for them than any other time of the year.

Michelle goes on to explain that because the students are intentionally looking to her for direction, cues, feedback, and expectations, she specifically and deliberately models these for them. She has a specific impression of the kinds of behaviors that she wants exhibited by the students and plans carefully to ensure that these kinds of structures are in place at the very beginning of the year.

On the side blackboard, written in large, colored letters

are the words *Responsibility, Cooperation, and Independence*. Michelle commented that she had narrowed down "long lists of rules" that she had begun her teaching career with to these three that she felt were "all encompassing" and a necessary prerequisite for the type of teacher that she was, and the types of activities that she knew that students would be engaged in in her room. Michelle felt that the students needed to learn immediately that she was the instructional leader of this classroom, and that they must respect her both as a teacher and as a person.

Although these are qualities that most teachers would like to foster in their students, it is interesting to compare the motives for these rules, values and expectations in Michelle's classroom as opposed to the motives as they might occur in other classrooms. For Michelle, the purpose for rules is not so much to control or be controlling, as to foster a sense of self-control and self-discipline in her students. Because her teacher/learner stance is one that demands cooperation, collaboration and dialogue, it is essential for her to create the kinds of structures that will allow these to become possible. As an effective whole language teacher, her first goal is to create and foster the kind of social context and personal values among her students that will become the foundation and frame within which other activities will be housed.

Michelle is a very assertive and determined teacher who has a clear view of how learning is going to occur in her classroom.

She has consciously conceptualized patterns of behaviour and expectations that facilitate her beliefs and orientation about learning. When this organizational and structural plan is threatened, she is quite adamant about her reaction:

I have had students in this room who have worked really hard to destroy this family group - this cooperative living that we have happening here....I have never had a student who has been successful at breaking it up ... I think it is because of my sheer determination to make it work.

I also use peer pressure to make it work... I manipulate it to make it work for me... If kids understand that this comfortable place to be is a direct action of the way that they act, they are going to show kids that misbehave that they are not happy with what they are doing.

Michelle appears determined to make her vision about how learning should occur work. In a sense, her stance is authoritative; for her, cooperation and collaboration must be mandated and then learned by the participants in the classroom culture before she can function effectively as a whole language teacher.

Some of the more explicit expectations and principles in this room are:

1. Cooperating and collaborating with other students and other

adults in the room is valued and promoted.

2. Experimenting with learning - venturing guesses - is valued as a way to negotiate meaning. "I think that" is valued over "I don't know."

3. Knowledge, experience and expertise are meant to be shared. Sharing work is not considered cheating in this room.

4. Taking risks is valued over "feeling safe". Learning is seen as a challenging activity.

It became evident that Michelle was a success, achievement oriented person herself, who modelled this type of behavior and values to her students. She presents herself as a teacher who is interested in her own career by explaining to the students what kinds of activities that she is involved in that help to support and develop that career. In one instance she was recorded to have spent some time telling her students how she valued working with and collaborating with other staff members, how this helps to make her job more enjoyable, and the environment more positive and productive for the students. Michelle seems to consider her energized, dedicated approach to her career vital to her success as a teacher, and is deliberate in communicating this to her students as a necessary framework for their success. It is within this framework that her whole-language stance takes shape.

2. Work hard, play hard: Energy, Excitement and Enthusiasm

As I spent time in Michelle's classroom, and began to

analyze the data which I had collected, I was struck by the amount of energy and fun that seemed to be apparent in many observations that I made. At first I had identified this theme as simply Fun!, but then began to recognize that there were particular motives and underlying causes and reasons for the types of fun activities and moments that were occurring. As a teacher, Michelle is excited about her teaching; she finds it a pleasurable and fulfilling activity:

I want students to know that this is a fun place to be and that this is going to be a really good year for them. I talk a lot at the beginning of the year about the kinds of things that they can look forward to - how fun it is - how excited I am that I am here; that they are here... How enthusiastic I am can set the mood for how enthusiastic the kids are... The bottom line is that I want to have fun in here too! And I do have fun! I look forward to teaching because it's fun to me!

Michelle demonstrates to her students that working hard to achieve specific goals can be fun. She models excitement, enthusiasm, and energy about her own learning activities to the students. Instead of attempting to "convince by telling" students that learning is pleasurable, she demonstrates by sharing authentic, personal learning experiences with her

students. Upon returning from a Children's Literature conference, she spent considerable time talking to her students about what she had learned, why she had wanted to learn it, how she had learned it, and proceeded to share with them the value of what she had learned. For several days students were given opportunities to hear about Michelle's personal experiences with learning as she read books that she had brought back, as she shared conversations that she had had with authors and illustrators, and as she wondered aloud what she would like to do with this knowledge.

Michelle seems to be effective with this strategy of modelling excitement because she appears genuinely excited about the process of learning, and because she shows that it is an exciting, worthwhile activity that she wants to share with her students. The fact that she is genuinely interested in literacy and what one does to become a literate person certainly helps to reinforce the kinds of things that she wants to promote in her classroom. Michelle takes literacy events from the outside world into her classroom and she brings her personal learning into the classroom as an example of how learning is a life-long process.

Michelle spends considerable amounts of time reading books and stories to her class. While she is reading she punctuates the narrative with a running dialogue/commentary of what she thinks, or what she is thinking, or of what the text reminds her of. Rather than asking the students a series of questions about their understanding of the text, she models her own cognitive,

affective processes while reading. Michelle generates interest, energy and excitement by demonstrating her own engagement with a literacy event; she models what it means to be literate and what literacy can do for a person.

This constant modelling of "effective and energized learning" is supported by what I have come to recognize as Michelle's "invitation" to be challenged and empowered by learning events. Students in Michelle's class appear to want to work hard - they seem to value the process of achieving the final product as much as the final product in itself. I can recall one instance during a spelling lesson, where Michelle had asked the students to compile a list of words that they felt "they would like to learn how to spell" and to devise strategies for learning these words for the next spelling test. It has been my experience that given this kind of freedom, students often choose the easiest most expedient route to meet the teacher's expectations. I found the contrary to be true with these students - most groups of students were choosing words that were exceedingly difficult. When asked why they were not picking easier words I received comments such as, "If you pick easy words, then you won't learn anything!" and "It would be no fun to pick words that you already know!" Students seemed quite surprised when I suggested that there might be a "shortcut" to the assignment they had been given. They did not seem to view this as an assignment, but as a challenge to be met, similar to a competitive game of sports.

As an effective whole language teacher, Michelle is able to demonstrate enthusiasm for learning, and is able to allow students engagement with that energy and enthusiasm in their own learning. Effective whole language for Michelle seems dependent upon her own energy and enthusiasm that is derived from a genuine interest and engagement in authentic learning situations.

3. Empowerment Through Choice: Engagement with Learning

There would appear to be a contradiction between suggesting that a teacher who is quite directive, and one who plans specific activities thoughtfully and carefully would be empowering students with choice, yet this is precisely what seems to be occurring in Michelle's classroom. Although students do not have much choice with what kinds of activities they are going to engage, or even with when they are going to engage with them, they have considerable freedom and choice with how they will complete them.

Because Michelle has a clear vision of what learning goals she has in her classroom, she gives careful attention to planning thematically based activities that allow her to enact her belief in language across the curriculum and program continuity. Her desire to create a program of studies for her students that is faithful to this philosophy is demonstrated in the detailed, integrated planning that she does for all of the subjects that she teaches to these students. She is the final arbiter of what will be taught and when it will be taught.

Since this is the case, one might wonder how student can come to feel empowered in this highly structured pre-designed program. It became apparent that within all these planned activities there were choices that students were encouraged and expected to make. Although Michelle was clear about what was to be accomplished, she appeared to be intentionally ambiguous about how this learning should occur.

Not only was the *how* left up to the students, but so too was the *who*. Students were not discouraged from working together on any assignments; in fact collaboration appeared to be promoted and valued. Getting help from other students was not viewed as cheating, but as a worthwhile and efficient way of gaining insight and access to the information needed to solve the learning problem of the moment.

This was most clearly evident as students worked on learning center activities in the library. Michelle had designed a set of learning centers for the theme unit *Dinosaurs*, that allowed students access to a half dozen different work stations which asked them to accomplish a variety of different tasks (from doing word searches to building plasticene models of dinosaurs). The students appeared quite comfortable working together in their groups to read the directions and tackle any of the problems that were in the centers. At no point in my observations was I asked by a student to explain "how" they were to do something. In fact, instead of helping the students do their work, I noticed that the adults in the room (Michelle, the ESL resource teacher,

the teacher aid, the librarian, and myself) were all engaged in our own manipulations of the activities in the centers.) It was interesting for me to note how the other "adults" in the room had adopted the behaviors that Michelle expected her students to demonstrate. We had, in fact become enculturated into this setting.

Choice was also evident in what students did during library periods. Although these times were scheduled and imposed by Michelle, at no time were students ever coerced into signing out books, or even reading for that matter. In my observations of library periods I noticed that students were engaged in a number of different activities ranging from reading quietly, to reading jokes to each other, looking through photo albums, doing other homework, or just talking. The students told me that they did not have to read or take out books if they didn't want to. It was obvious, however, that most of the students were engaged in some kind of "reading" activity, whether it was with written text or with oral or graphic text; there was always an exchange of information. Michelle's attitude about the kinds of environments described here may be summed up in her own words:

I think from my experience that children learn to read and write: number one, when they want to- when they're motivated to do so; and number two, when it's relatively safe for them. I think that a safe environment is essential for kids...they have to feel

comfortable in order to go forward.

Perhaps it is this "desire for a safe environment" that is one of the motivating factors for the detailed and careful planning of activities that Michelle does. Since many of her students are learning English as a second language, and come from a cultural background that is different from the mainstream, it may be more important for this classroom to be predictable and planned than for other classrooms. It appears that through the highly structured environment, that allows for some personal choice, Michelle is able to provide this "safe environment" that is still personally stimulating and empowering for each student.

4. Talk as Text: Literacy as a "Sociable" Activity

In my first visit to Michelle's classroom, I asked her why she was such a willing participant in a project which would leave her and her students somewhat vulnerable to a pair of "prying eyes and ears". In addition to commenting on the "learning experience" that it would provide for her, she also mentioned that she always liked to have "an extra pair of hands in the room". As I spent more and more time in Michelle's classroom, it became evident to me that Michelle valued and needed to have other adults (members of her peer group) involved in her classroom. It was typical to find at least three other adults in the room with Michelle at any given time (the ESL resource teacher, the ESL aid, and myself), all of whom took part in some way in the lessons and/or activities that were occurring at the

time. As I spent more time in the room, and became comfortable with the setting and the culture, I began to realize that the conversations that Michelle had with the other adults in the room were no different in tone to the conversations that she had with her students. In addition to being an "extra pair of hands" to help out with activities, the adults served to model "adult talk", demonstrating the way that adults interact with language and with learning.

The dialogic exchanges that occurred among adults and between adults and children were a natural extension of the social relationships that had been formed in the room. There was no distinct difference between "talk about subject matter and/or content" and "sociable talk." I can recall one instance where Michelle was reading a story that made reference to the word "bunions." She commented that these were something that "old people often got." Upon hearing this Beryl (teacher assistant) piped up, "Well, I was going to show you mine until you made that comment about old people!" These kinds of exchanges were common in the room. In a discussion about paleontology the question of how things were "dated" came up; all of the adults and students became involved in an exchange of knowledge until the desired term of "carbon dating" was arrived at. The search for knowledge is circular in this room; although the activities and the curricula is prescribed, the engagement with it by both the adults and the students is genuine. Dialogue becomes the text of learning in this room. Michelle ensures that it serves as a

model of the way that real learners learn; learning is not presented as a "mystery", but as something that is described and negotiated with language.

The physical arrangement of Michelle's classroom reinforces the types of "talking texts" that Michelle seems to value. Silence is not valued in this room. Students are arranged in groups of four facing each other. These groups are designated by Michelle based on her knowledge of who the students are; their personal and learning strengths and weaknesses. (For example, all of the groupings have a mixture of girls and boys, ESL learners with English learners). In addition to being a pleasurable social arrangement where students may "visit" with each other, it serves to stimulate and foster "dialogue" about subject matter that is covered. In my observations of students working on assignments, it was evident that they all valued and made extensive use of their group members' knowledge and expertise. This sharing of information was not restricted to the groups that the students were in; I observed students leaving their groups on numerous occasions to seek help and/or ideas from other students in the class. The tone of this classroom was of a "workshop" where participants were gathered to pool resources in order to meet common and individual goals. There was always discussion in the room, but it was always of a subdued, intense tone - at no time did I hear Michelle or any of the other adults reprimand students for "wasting time by visiting" or by talking too much. The students seemed to be able to direct and regulate

their own work within the comfortable "sociable" atmosphere that had been developed in the room.

Michelle hinted several times that her attitude about "talking" in the room had a lot to do with all of the ESL students in her classroom. She felt that watching how they learn English has reinforced what she believes about the way language is learned; that it is learned in a social context, when there is a desire and need to communicate. She also commented on the ability of students to foster and stimulate language learning:

(..in a conversation about helping ESL learners)... "The other thing that I do (in addition to using ESL resource teacher) is use kids, which is really interesting....I've just been amazed at how a student like Sheila is able to communicate with other kids, but is not able to do the same kind of communication with adults. I think that it is this intense desire to be able to communicate with peers. She finds a way to communicate or tell those kids what she's feeling and they in turn help her to get that down into English writing.

As an effective whole-language teacher, Michelle understands and capitalizes on the power of the "talking text" as used in the sociable context of the peer group. Rather than insisting on silence as a means of defining "control" and/or "learning", she

uses the natural tendency and desire for persons to communicate and interact in order to meet the learning goals that she has for her students. The merging of "talking text" and "written text" seems to have created a positive sense of what it means to be a literate person; in Michelle's classroom literacy has become a pleasurable, sociable activity.

5. The Gift of Voice: Private to Public

Michelle makes her students aware of "what literacy can do for them" by demonstrating the uses and value of communication through a variety of texts. Because she is herself an active member of "the literacy club" (Smith, 1988) and the "club of people who write" (Atwell, 1987) she is able to genuinely and enthusiastically communicate her experiences with these activities with her students. Michelle is able to give her students the gift of voice because she has already owns it herself.

Michelle's private and public voice are both very much in evidence in her dialogue with students. She freely shares with them her experiences and feelings about her family (particularly her daughter, Mataya), her life in the community (her involvement in committees and organizations), and her life as a professional teacher. These private "voices" of Michelle are put into a more "public" arena; she allows her students access to the multifacetedness of her life. Michelle presents herself as a person who has many sides to her life, one who has chosen to make

teaching one of those important sides. In her dialogues with students she is able to bring the "outside world" of Michelle into the classroom, and makes it clear that she also takes the classroom to the "outside world". It is this exchange of knowledge that typifies the ebb and flow of private and public voice of the teacher in this classroom.

Michelle seems to sense that students need to engage in "voice building" activities that become "public". Private writing tasks often become collective, public pieces. An example of this was the "Dinosaur Field Guide" that was a compilation of individual students' research on one particular dinosaur. This "class collaboration" became a text that was used by all students in further projects and activities on dinosaurs. Fiction writing is collected into class books that are kept both in the classroom and in the library for other students to read. Students' stories are read aloud by Michelle to the class. Students writing is shared, collected, published, and valued. Their personal voice is often used in a more collective sense; there is a merging of private to public - personal to communal. Writing in this room does not appear to be exercises in writing or practice in writing, but rather writing as an expression of valued ideas, feelings, and discoveries.

When asked about how they felt about writing, the students seemed to agree that writing was a difficult process; a number even thought that they would sometimes rather not do it. Most of them were eager to explain, however, that it was something that

they thought was valuable; they enjoyed seeing their thoughts and words in print, and recognized and appreciated the fact that Michelle took the effort to make them "public". Through modelling and active engagement with authentic literacy tasks, Michelle has removed much of the risk of going public and replaced it with the challenge and thrill of making ones' individual voice heard.

Michelle is able to approach literacy tasks in her classroom with authenticity because she is herself an interested participant in these events; she is an author herself. Because of this, the types of activities that she promotes (e.g. writing pieces of work for class and school anthologies that will be placed in the school library), are demonstrated by her as genuine writing events, and are perceived by the students as such. Because she demonstrates a genuine interest and demonstrated engagement in the writing activities herself, her role in these activities is more of a *collaborator* or *partner in writing* than a teacher or director. Her sense of excitement and enthusiasm frames these assignments within the context of an event to be celebrated as opposed to an assignment to be completed. Michelle's genuine interest in and involvement in these literacy events, both personally (privately) and in the context of her classroom (publically), allow Michelle great success as an effective whole language teacher. As a craftsperson (both as a teacher and a writer), she is able to demonstrate and help engage students in whole language activities that are genuine,

authentic, and meaningful.

6. Life in Books: Personal Experiences with Text

In my visits to Michelle's classroom I was struck by the sophisticated way that her students were able to talk about books, and about the process of writing. They had really made sense out of what it means to be an author. When asked how they knew how to choose "good" books they were able to list several strategies: looking at the front and back covers, getting recommendations from friends, browsing through the first pages, or finding works by favorite authors. They were also able to give information about what good authors do. Their ideas included: writing about silly or unusual events, writing about emotional (sad or happy) events, making characters unusual, but believable. It was interesting to me that all of these students seemed to consider themselves "authors" (even those who were learning English as a second language), and did not seem to be afraid of the process of getting the words on paper. Although a number of them acknowledged that writing was difficult, there were none whom I spoke to who felt unable to do it.

I believe that Michelle's constant sharing of her personal responses to books has helped students to de-mystify the authoring process; her active engagement with books on a daily basis with her students has helped them to understand what she looks for as a reader, what she likes and dislikes, and this in turn has helped them to understand that they too have the ability

to read and write like an author.

Michelle demonstrates a love of books, and is able to express practically the value of a variety of different written texts. In addition to bringing books in that she likes (Michelle brought in a number of books that she had bought for her infant daughter to share with the class), she welcomes and acknowledges books brought in by other students. I can recall a conversation about a Cambodian Hymn book brought in by a girl who had emigrated from there recently, as well as a Chinese book on Dinosaurs (brought in by a another ESL student) that became another resource for the class to use. Books are represented as "good friends" that are there to be enjoyed; Michelle shares these friends with her students and expects that they will do the same with books that they like.

Michelle seems to be able to remove the "flatness" from written text. She spends considerable time reading to her students, both published material (usually fiction), as well as material that they have written. Within this reading she embeds her enthusiasm for, and personal experiences and reactions to that text. On one occasion she chose to use time in class to read a short novel to her class ".....because it is one that I like!" As she was reading the text to the class she stopped to remark on how the grandmother in the story reminded her of her own grandmother who was aging, and how she and her family were concerned about her. She stopped to comment on the illustrations; to point out which was her favorite, and why it

was. It is evident that we have been allowed to participate in Michelle's personal experience and response to that particular text; she has opened a window to what literacy is able to do for her at the moment that it is happening. She makes it very clear to the children that her very private experience of reading is something that she values and wants to share with them. She does not ask them to "do anything" with the reading that she has done for them (i.e. assignment), but rather concludes with, "I liked this book because it was important to me."

Books are not treated in this classroom as a representation of life, but rather as a part of life. Michelle's students are able to see what books have done for her that makes her life fuller; she demonstrates the personal power that books have for her. If this is to be considered an effective whole language strategy, it is so because it is implemented by a teacher who uses it authentically for a particular purpose. Michelle wants her students to see the life that exists in books and hopes that they will make books an important part of their personal lives.

7. The Harmony of Difference

As I reflected upon the dynamic of Michelle's classroom, I kept going back to the image of a television commercial that appeared around Christmastime a few years ago advertising Coca-Cola. Using the song, "I'd Like to teach the World to Sing in Perfect Harmony", were a group of children from many nations, arranged in the motif of a Christmas tree. The message was

clear: difference can be expressed in harmony; the pleasing merging of contrasting melodies. I feel that this "harmonic" image depicts clearly the ethos of Michelle's classroom. As the social and instructional leader, she has somehow been able to acknowledge, validate, and value the histories and experiences of her students without compromising or devaluing her own. Although there is a "desirable" culture (a way of acting and being) that facilitates the learning that she wants to occur in the room, it does not obscure or exclude the possibility for difference. It is not surprising that this should be the case with this teacher. It is evident by the way that she seeks ways to collaborate and cooperate with peers that she values a merging of personal and professional ways of enacting curricula; her orientation about the way that knowledge can and should be negotiated has set the foundation for the harmony that is evident among her students. Instead of becoming an obstacle to effective learning, the multicultural nature of her classroom has become a facilitator of learning:

I appreciate all of the knowledge that my ESL students can bring to this classroom. I try to capitalize on what they have to bring and use it whenever I can.

Michelle commented that the students who have come from all parts of the world have given her a new global sense of education; that she has learned much about herself by being with them. She mentioned that her ESL students have taught her that there are

"many ways of telling"; that she learned that when students "didn't know or understand it wasn't always because they weren't listening." This was aptly demonstrated after a series of directions for a writing activity was given by Michelle. It became obvious to her that the students did not understand. Rather than simply repeating or rephrasing the directions, she and the ESL teacher performed a spontaneous dramatic improvisation of the kind of conversation that might be included in the students' writing assignment. Upon completion of this "new way of telling", it was apparent that all confusion was eliminated by the way all students quickly and confidently approached the assignment.

As a teacher, Michelle seems to understand the need for her students to become empowered with a particular "literacy"; she understands that her students need to acquire the "standard literacy" (standard English) that will give them access to cultural benefits and rewards. This is evident in her insistence that written work is presented in a manner that is accessible to its intended audience; there is not a glossing over of the necessary structures inherent within standard English. She does not, however, insist on, or particularly value, conformity and uniformity of idea and/or thought. The personal voice of the knower/writer/speaker is not silenced in the attempt to master the "standard" means of expression of that voice. Michelle's emphasis on personal writing and sharing and discussion of that writing helps students understand and ride the

line between individualism and conformity, both of which have their place in this classroom.

As an effective whole language teacher, Michelle seems to have the ability to sense when to intervene and when to withdraw; when to be directive and authoritative, and when to be accepting and accommodating. Because she represents herself as a learner and a teacher, she herself is constantly changing and evolving; she accepts and expects that of her students. In coming to know Michelle as a teacher, it seemed that creating harmony was not problematic for her; maintaining that harmony within a class of divergent learners who were evolving, growing and developing at different rates was the challenge. I believe that Michelle is successful as a whole language teacher because she is able to hear the changing voices and make adjustments in herself and her teaching that allow for those differences.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

From the case study information that has been presented, it is evident that both Henny and Michelle are effective as practitioners of whole language in their classrooms. Although there are a number of differences in the way each shapes her practice, both appear to have been determined by a particular belief about the way that learning should occur in their classrooms; their orientation to learning has shaped their practice.

The purpose of this research was to attempt to determine what it was that allowed these two teachers to be successful with their whole language stance. I believe that the answer to this question lies in the descriptive analysis of the case study information that has already been presented, and because reduction creates a sense of generalization, I am hesitant to draw summary statements that appear absolute and/or inclusive of whole language practice in a general way. It is evident, however, even within a study as limited as this, that there are some general principles and practices that were observed that appear to highlight effective whole language teaching. These may be summarized as follows:

1) Both teachers appear to share common beliefs about the way that language learning (and learning in general) should occur in schools. They firmly believe that knowledge is held by the knower; that knowledge is something to be reconstructed by each learner, not merely something to be transmitted from teacher to learner. This orientation towards learning is compatible with the whole-language stance that they have adopted. In other words, the practice of whole language is a suitable vehicle for the kind of vision that they have about the way that the teaching/learning climate should be defined in their classrooms.

2) Both teachers work within a supportive school and administrative context. Both have a strong professional relationships with their principals. Both principals value and

practice implementation of professional development programs within the school; teachers within both schools are given the financial and personal support required to engage in developmental activities. Teachers in both schools are encouraged to experiment with innovative programs; they are encouraged to risk in order to learn. Whole language principles of collaborating, and learning by engaging in authentic learning activities appear to be valued and modelled by each principal. It seems natural that teachers with a whole language stance to learning would be effective in this type of working environment.

3) Both teachers demonstrate an "authoritative/tentative" stance. They are authoritative as an administrator in the classroom; their vision of how things should be structured, what is valued, and so on, is mandated. These overriding structures are not negotiable, as they are seen as necessary for the kinds of learning that must take place later. Although the conditions for learning are imposed, the learning in itself is not. As a learner, each teacher demonstrates a tentative stance, entering the classroom as a participant learner. Both teachers appear to approach learning with humility and honesty, presenting learning as a desirable and ongoing part of their lives.

4. Both teachers consciously manipulate conditions in their classrooms to create a "community of learners" that value sociable collaboration. The public voice of education is merged with the more personal voice of the participants of the classroom in a way that inspires a personal commitment and involvement by

both the teacher and the students. The values of this community are explicit, consistent, and compatible with whole-language principles. This consistency allows for a certain degree of predictability for students, which in turn, appears to provide the kind of safe environment that is valued in whole-language classrooms.

5. Both teachers value and demonstrate the use of "peer/social talk" as a legitimate way of knowing and learning. Dialogue and collaborative ways of negotiating learning appear to be valued over private/silent ways of negotiating meaning. Talk as "text" is given status in both rooms.

6. Although the what and when of teaching/learning are largely determined by each teacher, the how and with whom are not. Students are encouraged to experiment with and to struggle with not knowing. There is an emphasis on "risking" as opposed to "being right"; the challenge of the attempt is valued over the correctness of the attempt.

7. Both teachers demonstrate an enthusiasm for learning and model this enthusiastic engagement with learning for their students. They both bring their outside world knowledge into the classroom and take their classroom knowledge to the outside world. They are both determined in their desire to share and collaborate with other teachers and persons about their personal practice. It is this enthusiasm for their "vision" that seems to help them make the connections between their different "worlds"; it is this integrated sense of self that seems to energize their

practice, since there is no distinction between the person inside the classroom and the person outside the classroom. Energy is not lost in the transition from one part of life to the other; they are inextricably connected; they are whole.

8. Both teachers focus on establishing a personal relationship with each student in their classroom, as well as with their peers. They both believe that their approach to learning will not be successful without an "attunement" to their students and their peers. In addition, both teachers were convinced that success with whole language depended upon positive relationships between and among students/peers. It was expected that effective learning would occur once these were established.

9. The use of oral language is valued in both rooms as a legitimate way of knowing, learning, and expressing. Telling stories, dramatization, and using dialogue were valued and practiced. Written text was not seen as the only way to "know" or "express."

10. Both teachers were reflective about their own practice. They demonstrated an ownership of, and an engagement in their own teaching; they had taken control of it, and molded and shaped it to suit their own beliefs and values. As educators this gave them a sense of empowerment - of power within their own teaching practice. As reflective teachers, they demonstrated an active interest in the continued development and evolution of their own teaching, and merged this with a sense of personal growth and development. This attitude and stance gave both teachers a solid

foundation for the effective practice of whole language principles in their classrooms.

Effective whole language teaching seems to be guided by a set of concepts that help to generate and shape teaching practice. This conceptual knowledge seems to be guided by a particular vision about the way that learning should occur which in turn seems to be consistent with the teacher's personal belief and understanding of the way that knowledge is acquired. Implicit within this understanding is that new knowledge (and the process of learning) is created through the merging of personal/private with professional/public ways of knowing that helps to determine teaching practice.

The vision of the effective whole language teacher appears to be energized by an enthusiasm for learning and for the creation of learning possibilities in the classroom. Both teachers in this study appeared determined to share the success that they have had as learners with their students by allowing them access to the tools of learning. There seems to be a mission that is almost evangelical in its drive; as learners themselves, these teachers believe that they have the key to an effective way of knowing and learning; they want to give this to their students.

This vision and enthusiasm for learning/teaching has empowered both teachers by generating engagement with and reflection about their own teaching. It has helped them to

define and determine a particular voice in which to express their own beliefs as demonstrated in their own practice. This voice has an authenticity that is derived from personal, professional and practical knowledge, experience and beliefs that make it effective. Effectiveness of instruction is derived from the wholeness of the philosophical, conceptual and the practical-theory and practice have become one for these teachers.

FINAL COMMENTS

One of the outcomes of this research has been a clearer understanding of how whole-language principles were effectively implemented by two teachers. Through an analysis of actual practice it became evident that there were particular conditions that appeared to allow these whole-language principles to exist; as skilled practitioners both teachers put into place pre-determined structures, values, rules, and expectations. It is hoped that research of this type will help to make the concept of "whole language" more useful for teachers who wish to adopt it in their classrooms, but are unsure about how to initiate this new approach to teaching.

One of the outcomes of this research has been the understanding of the types of knowledge that two teachers have brought into their classrooms, how they are negotiated, and how they are made into an "effective" instructional stance. From the case studies presented, it seems apparent that these two teachers enter the classroom with several types of knowledge:

1. Personal knowledge (life experiences)
2. Content knowledge (curricula)
3. Craft knowledge (professional skills)

Much of the literature on effective teaching would have us believe that effective instruction is the effective mastery of the craft knowledge - that knowledge of practical skills will ensure that effective instruction is taking place.

The information about effective whole language teaching as gathered in this research, however, seems to view the role of the teacher not merely as a *craftsperson*, who has perfected particular skills, but rather as an *artist*, who although dependent upon the very same skills as the *craftsperson*, uses them in very different ways, for very different purposes. The teachers in the study more than demonstrated a particular "skill", they demonstrated what Eisner (1983) calls "connoisseurship" in their teaching; they live the "Art of Teaching" in their practice of whole language.

If the idea of "becoming an effective *craftsperson* of whole language" is transformed to the idea of "becoming an effective *artist* who uses whole language as a tool", it becomes clear what must occur in order for whole language to be practiced effectively. Although most persons have the ability to conceptualize an idea artistically, they will not all use the same tools. Artists do not learn from written texts; they do not become artists by following a prescribed set of "rules". Instead, they begin with a passion for some "idea" and then

proceed to learn the "craft knowledge/skills" that are necessary to make tangible and real that passion/idea/statement (Otto Rank, 1932). True artists empower themselves (and their audiences) with the power of their passion and vision as expressed through a medium that has demanded a particular craft and skill.

Although a list of "effective whole language strategies" as practiced by two teachers has been provided as an outcome of this research, these appear to be representative of "craft knowledge and skill" that has been determined and refined out of necessity. As teacher/artists, both Henny and Michelle have found within the principles of whole language a way to give voice to their vision about the way that learning can and should occur in schools. They have taken the challenge that Madeline Grumet makes to all teachers in her essay Where the Line is Drawn (1988):

"Freedom like silence, runs deep, way below the babble of habitual speech. We need space and time to find it.....I call upon teachers to make a place for themselves where they can find the silence that will permit them to draw their experience and understanding into expression." (p.88)

Both Michelle and Henny have found the freedom that they need within the guiding principles of whole language. It has become a way for them to draw upon their personal experience and beliefs and create a personal and collective life-space in their classroom that is comfortable and compatible with their view of living and learning.

In his book, The Art Spirit, Robert Henri (1960) considers the role of the artist in society:

"An artist has got to get acquainted with himself (herself) just as much as he (she) can. It is not easy job, for it is not a present day habit of humanity. This is what I call self-development, self-education. No matter how fine a school you are in, you have to educate yourself.... Find out what you really like if you can. Find out what is really important to you. The sing your song. You will have something to sing about and your whole heart will be in the singing." (p.125)

As teacher/artists who have adopted a whole-language stance as their "tool for expression", both Henny and Michelle have found their song. It is in their singing of it that we find the skill of their craft; their effectiveness with whole language is a product of the passion that they have for their art - for their vision that has been given voice.

If the "art" of whole-language teaching is to be considered in the light of this research, it would seem apparent that the "effectiveness" that has been defined in these teachers' practice is a product of their experience, knowledge and skill; their ability to integrate these successfully seems to have to do with their "vision - their determination to realize a particular approach to teaching/learning in their classrooms. It would seem, then, that the "effective" strategies as defined in this project must only be considered in the context that they have been derived; they are inextricably linked to the "wholeness" of the teacher and of the teaching, and must never be considered apart from these. As whole-language teachers Henny and Michelle have become the "text" through which effective classroom teaching and learning exist.

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