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**IN SEARCH OF WHOLE LANGUAGE IN FRENCH IMMERSION
A DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION
OF THREE SCHOOL SETTINGS**

A Thesis in The Department of Education

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master
of Arts at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada**

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ISBN 0-315-90839-4

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ABSTRACT

In Search of Whole Language in French Immersion A Description and Interpretation of Three School Settings

Katherine Johnson-Burke

This thesis is a description and interpretation of three types of school settings. The first composite portrait describes whole language activities in action, in English (first language) classrooms. The second composite description illustrates many misconceptions and misinterpretations of whole language observed in different English schools. The first and second school settings draw a vivid picture of what whole language is and is not. The third description is a composite or mosaic of three French Immersion classrooms, including a class in transition and a traditional French Immersion class; the primary focus of the study is an actual French second language grade two class, where the teacher has adopted a whole language philosophy. For the purpose of contrast and comparison, all the classroom settings described are observed with a focus on the children's writing period, one of the features of whole language classrooms. Observations and descriptions of the whole language French Immersion class are interpreted according to whole language theory and certain aspects of second language theory, showing the link between the two.

Dedication

Dedicated to Gerry for his patience, understanding, and his belief in me. To Kerry and Lindsay who continue to show me their natural language development. To mom who never tires of listening to me and for her encouraging words of wisdom. And to Margaret who was there during the "ups" and "downs" of the butterfly flight.

All that is required is that we listen to children and learn from them. In this, children are our teachers. (van Manen, 1986, p. 13)

Acknowledgements

So many teachers and professors were instrumental in helping me realize my wish to write this thesis, heartfelt thanks to all of you. In particular, I wish to thank Dr. Florence Stevens who started my journey by teaching me first language acquisition and took my beginning efforts seriously. Thank you for your guidance, support, and sincerity. Unknowingly, Dr. Cleghorn showed me the value of teachers' staff rooms as settings to be researched, thank you. Dr. Mary Maguire opened up the link of whole language in French Immersion in her research, thank you for your support. A very special thank you to Dr. Sandra Weber for her extreme patience, encouragement, and time. Thank you for believing in me.

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CHAPTER 6--DISCUSSION

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCHER

The initial question of my thesis has been on my mind for a very long time - perhaps a lifetime. Much like the St.Lambert parents in the sixties, my parents decided in the fifties that their four children should have the opportunity of being bilingual. Therefore as a child, I attended a French elementary school, where I became bilingual at the hand of very strict authoritarian teachers. I wondered if there was a more pleasant way to learn French.

My memories of grade one are still vivid for me. The culture shock I experienced was twofold. Not only had I never experienced any type of schooling, let alone a play group or kindergarten, but also, the French language did not exist in my little world. My world consisted of English parents, English relatives, and English friends in my English neighbourhood. School memories of myself are of a silent well-behaved little girl who listened and obeyed the rules. The golden rule was to be silent. Neatness and correct spelling were the goals of writing. I learned to conform, to write neatly in cursive, and to memorize words. In my adulthood, I became a teacher. The experiences I had as a second language learner were very helpful to me and, ultimately, to my students. Although I taught for ten years in English schools, the majority of the children in my classes were not anglophone. Much as we see in French Immersion today, the majority of the children came from varied multicultural and multilingual backgrounds. I worked in different communities: an Italian, a Greek, and a French community. Most of the children I taught were first generation immigrants whose parents were also new to the English language.

In the late 1970's, whole language was being slowly introduced by various school boards to teachers, including myself. Did researchers, administrators, and school officials address the fact that the majority of the children in the English

schools were, in my experience, second language learners? Was the reason to implement whole language for the language arts curriculum based on any research that supports the suitability of whole language for second language learners? These are questions to which I have not yet found an answer. Although teachers and researchers, such as Edelsky and Goodman, in the American Southwest United States were concerned in the 80's about whole language and teaching second language learners, little evidence is found that their concerns supported the implementation of whole language for the language arts program in the province of Quebec.

Teachers' questions that surfaced when whole language was first introduced in Quebec, in the late 70's and the early 80's did not reflect concern for teaching second language learners. They seemed, rather, to be preoccupied with interrogating the necessity of teaching "differently". Teachers, myself included, questioned many aspects of whole language, such as: invented spelling, the disappearance of structured phonics lessons, and the introduction of literature. For example, I recall how my first attempt at implementing whole language theory by introducing journal writing and literature appreciation with my grade one students felt so right. Yet, I felt guilty because it took class time away from what I felt was the necessary teaching of the three basal reading groups, the workbooks for both reading comprehension and phonics, spelling exercise books, and the printing lessons...etc. I felt that whole language was an extra thing to do. It got in the way of my teaching and added to my workload. In short, as a teacher, I did not at first understand or believe in whole language.

During the 80's my questions came from a different perspective, that of a parent. What was the best choice of education for my two daughters? As so many of us do, I followed in my parents' footsteps by wanting my children to be bilingual. My eldest daughter began her schooling in French Immersion. She

experienced great difficulty in adapting to the setting, therefore I withdrew her from French Immersion and enrolled her in an English whole language program. She has since succeeded very well in a whole language English environment. When I began graduate school, it seemed natural that I chose to explore the questions I still had about whole language. Gradually, I came to know and understand whole language theory not only by reading the research literature, but also by attending whole language conferences and discussing whole language practice with my daughter's teachers. During this period I also began to do substitute teaching in English schools where the teachers' and administrators' philosophy was based on whole language. I thus learned how to implement whole language theory by actually teaching in whole language settings. Graduate courses on first language acquisition cemented my belief in whole language. My interest in whole language expanded even further while taking a course on second language theory. I was struck by how much it overlapped with whole language theory. Could whole language be implemented in French Immersion? Are any teachers successfully doing so? I began to question and investigate what was going on in French Immersion classrooms in Quebec. Thus began my search for whole language in French Immersion; this search led me not only to French Immersion classrooms, but to English ones as well.

I have taught in various English schools during the past few years. My experiences have led me to realize that whole language is very much misinterpreted by many teachers, administrators, and even academics. It is for this reason that I feel it is so very important to describe what whole language looks like in practice and how many of the common misperceptions of the theory might be affecting current practices in the schools. As will become evident later, my experience and knowledge was most useful, informing the research design.

CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY

Over the past few decades, education in Quebec has experienced at least two major changes in its English educational system. The first change was the successful introduction of French Immersion in the mid-sixties. The second was the Quebec "mandated curriculum" (Maguire, 1989, p. 146), implementation of "whole language" in the English language arts program, in the eighties. Whole language is a grass-roots movement (e.g. K. Goodman, 1989; Watson, 1989; Maguire, 1989; Y. Goodman, 1989) in English language education which is beginning to generate much research, discussion, literature, and controversy. Despite the official popularity of whole language in Quebec's English language programs, whole language does not yet seem to have had a great impact on French mother tongue and second language education. This might seem odd, given that French Immersion teachers often work side by side in dual track schools with English language arts teachers, often teaching the same children. Yet whole language theory appears to be limited not only in the research literature of French Immersion, but also in classroom practice. Although very little documentation on the application of whole language in French Immersion appears in the research literature, with the exception of Maguire (1989), I have found some informal evidence that French Immersion teachers ARE moving slowly in the direction of whole language teaching. What is missing, however, is an in-depth study of what is actually happening in the Immersion classroom regarding whole language. This study will help to fill that gap.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study is to describe how one teacher incorporates a whole language philosophy in her teaching in a French Immersion classroom, and to investigate the implications of that application for certain theories of second

language acquisition. The primary focus of this research project is therefore the description of a French second language grade two class where the teacher has adopted a whole language philosophy. I will describe my observations of the children's language activities, focusing in particular on the children's writing during writing workshop periods. The study is thus a partial response to Genesee's (1987), and Maguire's (1989) call for research to investigate how Immersion teachers integrate academic and language instruction. The secondary focus of the study is a description of English schools implementing whole language. The purpose for the secondary focus is to offer the reader a glimpse of what whole language looks like and to uncover what may also be a misunderstanding of its application. The description of English whole language also provides the reader with pictures with which to compare and evaluate whole language in French Immersion. As Eisner (1991) states, "description enables readers to visualize what a place or process is like" (p. 89).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The questions that guided the research were:

- 1) What does whole language look like in a selected group of English schools after being implemented for more than ten years?
- 2) What does whole language look like in a selected group of French Immersion school settings?

OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

The research is a qualitative inquiry into what whole language theory looks like in practice in English schools and French Immersion settings. A number of observations are synthesized to create a portrait of two different English schools and two different French Immersion classrooms: a class in transition and a

traditional one. The whole language in French Immersion class I describe is an actual class. I use ethnographic research techniques to gather the data. Acting as both an observer and a participant observer, I describe and interpret a selected group of English school settings and French Immersion settings which are observed using educational connoisseurship (Eisner, 1991).

Eisner (1991) describes educational connoisseurship as the art of appreciation in describing and interpreting educational settings. The goal of this thesis is reflected in what Eisner (1991) states as the most important hope for his book The Enlightened Eye that it, "...will contribute to the improvement of educational practice by giving us a fuller, more complex understanding of what makes schools and classrooms tick" (p. 8). Further details of qualitative research techniques and educational connoisseurship are explained in the methodology section of the study. My interpretation of the English schools focusses on the extent to which they reflect whole language theory. In my search for whole language in French Immersion, I observed many classrooms that purport to be whole language settings. I observed with a focus seeking to determine whether the settings reflected a whole language philosophy. Descriptions of three of the French Immersion classes observed give a partial insight into what is happening in French Immersion settings today. I report on a class in transition, a traditional class, and a whole language French Immersion class. Observations and descriptions of the whole language French Immersion class are interpreted according to whole language theory and certain aspects of second language theory, showing the link between the two.

CHAPTER 2

A COMPARISON OF WHOLE LANGUAGE AND SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING THEORY

INTRODUCTION

Before providing details of design and methodology, a brief definition and a list of several principles of whole language are provided. A description of the writing workshop; one of the central features of whole language will then follow. Some characteristics of French Immersion are then introduced outlining the goals of French Immersion programs. Comparisons are then drawn between whole language and second language theory. The chapter concludes with several opinions found in the literature on writing in a second language. I will discuss the methodology of the study in a separate section.

WHAT IS WHOLE LANGUAGE ?

Goodman (1986) states that the main focus of whole language is on the construction of meaning in authentic speech and literacy events. Whole language is not a new teaching method, it is rather an orientation towards teaching - a way of thinking about and of knowing the children we teach and how children learn. Teachers working within a whole language philosophy view the child from where the child is developmentally. "Whole language takes seriously Dewey's statement about starting where the learner is" (Goodman, 1989, p. 209). Learning begins with what the individual child already knows and teaching stretches that knowledge a step further. The focus of whole language is not merely on the content of what is being studied but more importantly, on the children (Y. Goodman, 1989). The children participate with the teacher in the decision making process of what will be

learned. Both teachers and students have voices in a whole language classroom (Newman & Church, 1990). Each whole language classroom has its own uniqueness and personality which stem from the individual teacher and children. However, most whole language teachers share some common beliefs. Watson (1989), lists several of these beliefs which support whole language:

- 1) Choice is the beginning of ownership in both reading and writing.
- 2) Students can take ownership and responsibility for their own learning.
- 3) Children are encouraged to take risks.
- 4) Language users can learn as much from getting language wrong (producing a non-standard form) as they can from getting it right, and maybe more.
- 5) Stopping students at the point at which they are producing meaning (through either oral or written language) in order to make surface-level corrections may result in stopping students in their linguistic and cognitive tracks. (pp. 136-137)

Another common characteristic of a whole language classroom is the writing workshop, which is explained in the following section.

THE WRITING WORKSHOP IN WHOLE LANGUAGE TEACHING

Since this study describes observations of the writing process in both first and second language classrooms, it is important to understand the role of the writing workshop in a whole language classroom. Wason-Ellam (1992) believes that, "to some extent, these child-centered workshops have become the indicators for full membership in 'whole language' classrooms" (p. 1).

There are three basic components to a writing workshop: time, ownership, and response (Atwell, 1987). Children need time - scheduled and regular stretches of time they can look forward to - in order to plan, think, seek ideas, edit, and just

plain write. Secondly, children's writings belong to them. They are the creators of their own pieces of writing, as they are the ones who chose which topic, subject matter, or which genre to use. The children decide how they are going to write and what they are going to write about. The third component of a writing workshop, response, simply means a teacher or another child's reaction to the writing. Response is often referred to as conference time. However, response in Atwell's (1987) view is, "I wait, listen hard, tell what I heard, ask questions about things I don't understand or would like to know more about, ask what the writer might do next, and offer any options I might know of" (p. 70).

CHARACTERISTICS OF FRENCH IMMERSION

French Immersion education grew out of a need in Quebec for children to graduate from school with bilingual language skills. Bilingual proficiency is a major objective of Immersion programs (Genesee, 1987). This need began to be recognized in the mid-60's and was acted upon by a group of parents in St.Lambert, Quebec. French Immersion began with a single class and has expanded to such an extent that some parents today camp outside schools overnight in order to ensure that their children are enrolled in the French Immersion program of their choice, since in many schools there is a first come, first served policy for enrolment. According to Genesee (1987), the goals of the St.Lambert Immersion program as well as most other Immersion programs are:

- 1) to provide the participating students with functional competence in both written and spoken aspects of French;
- 2) to promote and maintain normal levels of English language development;
- 3) to ensure achievement in academic subjects commensurate with the student's academic ability and grade level; and

4) to instill in students an understanding and appreciation of French Canadians, their language and culture, without detracting in any way from the student's identity with and appreciation for English-Canadian culture. (p. 12)

In Genesee's (1987) view, the most distinctive feature of French Immersion is that school subjects are taught as they would be taught in a regular English class, except that they are taught in French, a second language. "Immersion teachers teach regular school subjects in French much as they would if their students were native speakers of the language" (Genesee, 1987 p. 14). Most early Immersion programs in Montreal are housed in English schools. The schools therefore have two systems of education under the same roof: an English system and a French Immersion system of education. These schools are often referred to, as "dual-track" schools. Children in early French Immersion are taught exclusively in French until grade three. From grade three onwards, a period of English language arts is taught by English teachers, once a day. The amount of English increases gradually every year, by introducing other subjects in English, so that by grade six, the curriculum is approximately 60% in English.

A discrepancy lies in the fact that the English school curriculum has adopted the whole language approach to teaching and learning language arts whereas the French curriculum has not, as yet, implemented it, remaining more traditional and skills oriented in its approach. Although conferences such as Springboards (1991 to 1994) and the Canadian Association for Young Children National Conference (1991 to 1994) offered workshops on the topics of whole language in French Immersion, the movement of whole language into French second language teaching has been slow. It is thus not uncommon for children in the French Immersion program to receive two modes of instruction: subjects taught in French may be taught more traditionally, and English language arts may be taught in a more

holistic manner. "The result of the existence of two contradictory language models in Quebec's dual-track schools is that children experience two different language-learning models" (Maguire, 1989, p. 150).

WHOLE LANGUAGE TEACHING AND SECOND LANGUAGE THEORIES

Although I will argue that there are many principles of whole language teaching that are congruent with second language theory, most second language theorists do not often mention whole language. They thus seem to ignore a large body of research and theory that is directly relevant to their work. This unacknowledged commonality is perhaps best exemplified by the topic of "meaningful language". The underlying assumption of the whole language approach, according to Goodman (1986), "is that language should be whole, meaningful, and relevant to the learners" (p. 9). Without acknowledging whole language theorists, Krashen (1984), a second language theorist, also stresses meaning when he explains why Immersion works. He argues,

that we acquire language in only one way: when we understand messages in that language, when we receive comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982). Memorizing vocabulary words, studying grammar, and doing drills contribute little to language competence in the adult and even less in the child - the only true cause of second language acquisition is comprehensible input. (p. 61)

Many whole language theorists, (eg. Lindfors (1987) and Edelsky, Altwerger & Flores (1991), may not agree with Krashen and argue differences between "comprehensible input" and the construction of meaning. Some whole language theorists may assume that the term "input" conveys that children are passive learners. Although one could find fault in the terminology, I interpret the essence of Krashen's message as one that could follow whole language principles

should "comprehensible input" be interpreted as the construction of meaning between children and teachers.

Cummins (1989) asserts that:

Most second language theorists (e.g. Krashen, 1981; Long, 1983; Wong Fillmore, 1983) currently endorse some form of the 'input' hypothesis which essentially states that acquisition of a second language depends not just on exposure to the language but on access to second language input which is modified in various ways to make it comprehensible. Underlying the principle of comprehensible input is the obvious fact that a central function of language use is meaningful communication; when this central function of language is ignored in classroom instruction, learning is likely to be by rote and supported only by extrinsic motivation. (p. 24)

In discussing second language teaching, Lindfors (1987) addresses the conflict of whole versus part, and asks which of the following activities offer the second language child the better opportunities for making sense: a) activities involving language parts, oral ESL (English second language) drills, basals, and workbook exercises or; b) activities that are "whole", sociodrama, dialogue journals and literature. Lindfors concludes that "the whole activities stand in striking contrast to the part activities, offering opportunities for the child to use his knowledge of human behaviours, intentions, concerns, and the expression of these through gesture, voices, pictures, and so on..." (Lindfors, 1987, p. 466). Whole language advocates Edelsky, et al (1991) agree with Lindfors by stating that, "all language learners, whether they are learning a second language or a written language, learn by really using language, not by going through exercises or artificial language-like activities" (p. 16). The literature on whole language and the literature on second language acquisition both cite meaningful communication and relevant experiences as important factors for learning. "Language is learned best

when the focus is not on the language but on the meaning being communicated" (Goodman, 1986, p.10). Genesee (1987) cites Ellis (1984) who puts forward the following four characteristics of instructional methods that feature real discourse in the classroom:

- 1) There must be a communicative purpose, not merely a pedagogic one.
- 2) There must be a focus on the message or on the meaning rather than on how the message is conveyed.
- 3) Communication must be negotiated rather than predetermined. In particular, there must not be rigid control over the language to be used.
- 4) The learners must be allowed to use whatever resources, verbal or nonverbal, are at their disposal. (p. 184)

Another linkage of whole language and second language theory is the communicative approach, which according to Enright & McClosky (1985) supports the following assumptions:

- 1) Children learn language by communicating rather than studying language as a curriculum subject.
- 2) Because oral and written communication involve both a sender and a receiver, listening, speaking, reading, and writing are interrelated activities that are best developed simultaneously.
- 3) Children learn language through purposeful interaction within an environment that furnishes many opportunities to practice language in a variety of contexts.
- 4) Communication is most likely to occur when it is meaningful, interesting, and connected to concrete experiences and children's background knowledge.

- 5) Language use is encouraged by focusing on meaning rather than correctness of form, regarding errors as part of the learning process.
(p.434-436)

The second assumption listed by Enright & McClosky (1985) uses terminology that again might not be fitting with whole language theorists. The terms "sender" and "receiver" may imply controlled and directed passive teaching. In keeping with whole language theory, I would rather substitute "at least two people" instead of the term "both a sender and a receiver".

The whole language approach could thus be compared to the successful activity-centered method of teaching in a French Immersion classroom, such as that reported by Stevens (1983). The following are the basic aspects of the activity-centered methodology (Stevens, 1983).

- 1) There is no attempt to structure linguistic content.
- 2) Students choose their own areas of study within the theme suggested by the teacher.
- 3) Students do whatever is necessary to find information required to pursue their projects (e.g., go out and look for it, ask someone for information, or check reference books).
- 4) Students present their findings in a form which they have selected, such as a model, a picture, a written hand-out, or whatever means they consider appropriate.
- 5) Students use each other as well as the teacher as resource persons.
(p. 261)

In comparing whole language learner centered and activity-centered classrooms, one could consider several of Goodman's (1986) questions to teachers, in evaluating whether their teaching is consistent with a whole language program. The questions are as follows:

- 1) Is your classroom organized around flexible activity centers?
- 2) Do the pupils help plan their school experiences and engage in problem solving?
- 3) Do you use a wide range of materials and involve pupils in a range of language functions?
- 4) Is your classroom a literate environment?
- 5) Are your pupils involved in authentic speech and literacy events? (p. 70)

One can thus see many possible similarities between the two modes of teaching.

In conclusion, although whole language theorists and especially second language theorists do not often acknowledge each other's work, this brief review of the literature shows that some scholars do have compatible and overlapping views on the theory of language teaching and learning. The connections I have made between whole language and second language theories are connections I have interpreted in my understanding of the literature. These connections are reiterated in the final chapter of the thesis when I interpret the different settings observed for the study. This overlap and congruent thinking is also evident in the area of the writing process, which is examined in the following section.

WRITING IN A SECOND LANGUAGE

Children's writings in a second language could be a window that reflects their risk taking, their experimentation, and the decisions they make. "Each written product is the result of many different decisions: decisions about audience, topic, genre, layout, sentence structure, spelling and style" (Newman, 1984, p. 66). Genishi (1989), speaking about second language learners, states,

that in the classroom where language, spoken and written, permeates every part of the curriculum, there are many opportunities to assess, or document

informally, children's progress in using language. Listening to interactions and reading written products in a variety of activities gives us evidence about what kind of language users children are becoming. (p. 510)

Second language teaching theory also stresses the importance of risk taking and experimentation. "Language production (the writing process, in this case) may be an important and critical means for language learning because it provides the learner with the means for discovering, testing out, and practising the elements and rules of language use" (Genesee, 1989, p. 10). Several second language theorists have attempted to list the qualities of the "good language learner" (Rubin, 1975; Naiman et al. 1978; Ellis, 1985). According to these theorists, a shared characteristic of the "good language learner" is that the learner be prepared to experiment by taking risks.

In terms of risk-taking, Wong-Fillmore (1989), says that because second language learners have prior resources from their first language, they are able to make educated guesses. As Weber & Tardif (1991) point out, "guessing was the most widely used strategy" found in a second language kindergarten (p. 7). The risk-taking characteristic of second language learners may be intended by some theorists to apply to the listening and speaking skills of the learner, however I believe risk-taking may also be related to the writing process. Invented spelling became important and a heuristic feature of teachers' response to children's writing. As Newman (1984) states, whether language is spoken or written, the fundamental aspect of all language is experimentation. One of the basic objectives of whole language is to build children's confidence and to encourage risk-taking.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

I will begin by discussing the techniques used to gather the data for the research. An explanation of Educational Connoisseurship (Eisner, 1991), which guided the selection and reporting of my observations, will then follow. This chapter will conclude with a description of my expectations and background rationale for the study, as well as an overview of the design of the project.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

This research comprises three composite descriptions of different school settings. I chose ethnographic research techniques to gather the data because ethnography is compatible with the subject matter and questions of my thesis. As stated in chapter 1, the research questions are:

- 1) What does whole language look like in selected groups of English schools after being implemented for more than ten years?
- 2) What does whole language look like in selected groups of French Immersion school settings?

There is growing support in the research literature that ethnography is not only suitable for research in whole language but also for second language research. "Case study and ethnographic research fit well for the study of whole language" (Goodman, 1989, p. 211). Goodman adds that, "researchers must be able to study what happens in whole-language classrooms without restricting it, changing its nature, or isolating features from their natural contexts" (Goodman, 1989, p. 211). Mehan (1982) broadly defines ethnography as a "description of the culture of a community or society" (p. 60). Watson-Gegeo (1988) describes ethnography

as "holistic; that is, any aspect of a culture or a behaviour has to be described and explained in relation to the whole system of which it is a part ..." (p. 577).

Tardif and Weber (1987) call for more ethnographic or qualitative perspectives to investigate "many issues that have not been adequately addressed" in French immersion (p. 71). Carrasco (1981) also stresses ethnography in second language classrooms. He states that qualitative research "should focus on all the communicative arteries of the classroom, for therein lies the heart of the educational process" (p. 155). Referring to second language research, Watson-Gegeo (1988) points out that, "because ethnographic observations take a holistic perspective on behaviour in settings and because the ethnographer seeks to achieve an insider's understanding of interactions, ethnographic techniques can be used to provide helpful feedback to teachers about what is going on in the classroom..." (p. 588). Mehan (1981), in recommending ethnography to bilingual education researchers, proposes that it should be used in order to find out what the structure of the curriculum program might be. This thesis investigates whether the curriculum program of each classroom observed follows whole language philosophy or not. Much like Carrasco's study (1981), the findings in this thesis are described in a simple narrative form, because I too believe that, "... studies such as this one are of value not only to social scientists, but to practitioners in the field- teachers, administrators, aides, and college education majors" (Carrasco, 1981, p. 154). Detailed characterization of how whole language is interpreted and implemented will form the core of the study, describing the classroom processes in each of the different school settings.

EDUCATIONAL CONNOISSEURSHIP

My observations and descriptions of the three composite school settings will be interpreted and reported using a particular form of qualitative inquiry known

as educational connoisseurship (Eisner, 1991). Eisner (1997) describes educational connoisseurship as the art of appreciation in describing and interpreting educational settings. A connoisseur is a "highly perceptive" (p. 7) person who in educational terms is able to describe and interpret "the perception of educational practice" (p. 63). As Eisner (1991) explains, "perceptivity is the ability to differentiate and to experience the relationships between one quality... and others" (p.64). He describes educational connoisseurship by saying, "it is about trying to understand what teachers and children do in the setting in which they work" (p. 11). Eisner (1991) explains several features of educational connoisseurship, which are incorporated into the methodology of this study. He lists the following six features:

- 1) The focus of the field.
- 2) The self as an instrument.
- 3) The interpretive character of the study. This feature describes how a researcher tries to account for what they have given an account of.
- 4) The use of expressive language and the presence of voice.
- 5) Attention to particulars.
- 6) Qualitative research becomes believable because of its coherence, insight, and instrumental utility. (p. 32-40)

First, the focus of the study is the field. The field may include the schools, the classrooms, the teachers, and the children. The focus of this thesis is in particular on the teachers and the different language arts activities children partake in. Classroom physical settings are also an area of focus, because they often reveal or indicate signs of teacher's practice. I observe, describe, and interpret settings as I understand and perceive them. Observations, conversations, and informal interviews are recorded. Eisner's (1991) thoughts on interviews mirror my belief that: "Conducting a good interview is, in some ways, like participating in a good

conversation: listening intently and asking questions that focus on concrete examples and feelings rather than abstract speculations which are less likely to provide genuinely meaningful information" (p. 183).

Secondly, I use myself as the instrument for the study. My expertise, knowledge and experience helped me to be able to SEE which features of whole language are relevant to the study. As Eisner (1991) states, "personal biography is one of the tools researchers work with; it is the major instrument through which meaning is made and interpretation expressed" (p. 193). Both qualitative research and whole language focus on "matters of meaning". As Eisner writes, "qualitative research is concerned with matters of meaning" (p. 35). The link of "meaning" which underlies the philosophies of both whole language and educational connoisseurship shows how very appropriate it is for this study.

Thirdly, the findings section of the thesis gives an account of the classroom descriptions observed and the discussion section provides an interpretation for these descriptions. Eisner (1991) explains interpretive character: "one meaning of interpretation pertains to the ability to explain why something is taking place".

Fourthly, I have written my narrative descriptions as arguments for the reader to be able to see what whole language looks like and what it is not. The classroom settings described provide vivid pictures and a sense of atmosphere observed. Eisner (1991) states that, "qualitative inquiry penetrates the surface" (p. 35). I hope to give the reader an in-depth view and understanding of the classrooms I have observed. The use of expressive language in the descriptions of the findings is therefore intentional. As Eisner states, "seeing in the mind's eye is not the only important effect of descriptive writing; the text should enable readers to participate vicariously in the events described" (p. 89). It is noteworthy that I may be empathetic towards the various teachers and classroom practices, as I have indeed, through my own experience as a teacher, "walked in their shoes". At the

same time, I was constantly reminding myself, that my experience is not necessarily what they were experiencing. I tried rather to set up an open dialogue between my experience and theirs.

The fifth feature of qualitative enquiry is the attention to particulars. The descriptions of the various classrooms are written so that "readers gain a feeling for the distinctive characteristics of the case" (Eisner, 1991). I note and appreciate different and similar qualities of classroom life. And lastly, this qualitative study "employs multiple forms of evidence" and I try to "persuade by reason" (Eisner, 1991 p. 39).

It is interesting to note that much of what Eisner (1991) writes about educational connoisseurship holds true as well for some schools of thought about ethnography and other forms of qualitative research. For example, both Eisner (1991) and Geertz (1988) agree on the importance of the researcher's personal style in qualitative work. Geertz (1988) states that a source of authority in research is the author's voice. Eisner (1991) writes that descriptions of observations should "bear the signature of the writer". Another link is Eisner's (1991) conviction that researchers should be able to "don the shoes" of those observed. Ethnographers also stress the importance of the researcher being able to "achieve an insider's understanding" (Watson-Gegeo, 1988) of the environment that is being observed in order to appreciate the truth of what is observed.

RESEARCHER EXPECTATIONS AND BACKGROUND RATIONALE

Some insight into preconceptions expected to be found in my research would help the reader assess the worth of my interpretations. Expectations were based on my own prior experience, as a teacher of both whole language and the older traditional language arts methods, and also as a parent of children who

attended both French Immersion traditional programs and English whole language schools. I fully expected to find a traditional, skills based, behaviouristic model of teaching in the French Immersion classrooms I visited. I also presumed that most English educators had adopted a whole language philosophy. This presumption stems from my experience as a teacher in English schools in the late 70's, when whole language was first beginning, and my experience as a substitute teacher in the late 80's, where for the most part, many teachers adhered to a whole language philosophy. As the reader will learn later, my expectations were not always met, but I was open to seeing beyond my preconceptions.

The research began with an initial search for whole language in French Immersion classes. However, a secondary focus emerged with time. As Eisner, (1991) states, qualitative research not only takes time, but "flexibility, adjustment, and iterativity" are basic to qualitative inquiry. During my search for whole language in French Immersion, I was also teaching in various English schools. What I came to realize was: 1) After ten years of whole language implementation in the English system, whole language was very often misinterpreted and misunderstood. 2) Observations of English settings provided a foundation or substructure for my observations in French Immersion, as I was finding similar observations in both the English and French Immersion settings. Thus, the more I looked into whole language in Immersion schools, the more I realized that an investigation of what whole language looks like in English schools might be pivotal to more fully understanding of what I saw in the French Immersion classrooms. I came to realize the value of contrasting my observations through the analysis of my own experiences as teacher and observer in different English settings.

In addition, because there are so many misconceptions about what whole language actually is, the reader must be able to SEE what whole language is to be able to compare and contrast it in different settings. As Edelsky, et al (1991) write,

"we want so much for us all to be able to distinguish whole language from what it is often confused with - a new style for an old way of doing things" (p. 105). Information from English language classrooms will give the reader a broader understanding of what whole language really is. It may also give insights to administrators and teachers in French Immersion as to what they might expect if whole language is adopted in any curriculum change.

OVERVIEW OF EACH COMPOSITE SETTING

A brief overview of the three composite schools, that form the core of this thesis, will now be described. The details of the setting, locations, and subjects of each composite portrait will be described more thoroughly in the findings section.

COMPOSITE PORTRAIT #1: ENGLISH WHOLE LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS.

For three years I worked as a substitute teacher in three English schools. During this period I was formulating my research questions and preparing my research proposal. The initial question of whole language in French Immersion was foremost on my mind. I knew that I had to understand whole language theory and be able to teach in a whole language classroom in order to transfer this knowledge to a second language setting. For this reason, I was particularly careful to note my observations and my experiences, for future reference. I took notes, conversed informally with teachers, asked questions, listened, and I watched. My focus was on children's writing. I spent a considerable amount of time substitute teaching from grade one to grade six. A week did not pass that I was not called in to teach, often for a full week's duration.

Not only was I teaching in different English schools, but I was also welcomed to visit some classes to observe teachers and children during the writing workshop periods. The teachers were aware of my ongoing thesis and my interest

in the writing workshop periods. All the classrooms and teachers observed and described in this first composite portrait are a combination of settings that reflect whole language theory. For the purpose of anonymity I have grouped all the various whole language settings observed together to form a composite of a fictitious school, which I have called "Hilltop".

The years of substitute teaching not only taught me how to implement whole language theory but it also made me more aware of the many misconceptions and misinterpretations of whole language.

COMPOSITE PORTRAIT #2: MISCONCEPTIONS OF WHOLE LANGUAGE IN ENGLISH CLASSROOMS

I worked five days a week as a language arts consultant. I circulated from classroom to classroom to work with teachers from grades one to six. My job description was to model whole language practice and to help teachers during their language arts period. During this teaching contract, I was perceptively aware of what whole language was and what it was not, as I was faced daily with teachers' different understandings of whole language. My focus remained on children's writing activities. I taught, I worked with teachers, I observed teachers teaching. As I had a hectic day moving from class to class every forty minutes, I kept a detailed diary of the day's schedule, noting the language activity for each class. Comments, observations, teacher's remarks, and my own reflections were also recorded in this diary. These all formed part of the data base for this study.

Composite portrait #2 is also a mosaic, like composite portrait #1, of different teachers and classrooms observed in different schools. The misconceptions I observed and describe in this second case study are misconceptions observed in the many English schools I have taught in over the three year period, previously described. For the purpose of anonymity, "Mountainview" is the fictitious name I use to describe this school.

COMPOSITE PORTRAIT #3: FRENCH IMMERSION CLASSROOMS

The search for whole language in French Immersion was indeed a search. Numerous phone calls to various school boards, contacting possible leads, and visiting many classrooms proved to be discouraging and disappointing. Time and time again, classes that were suggested to me to observe whole language turned out to be either very traditional or in transition (teachers who incorporated a few whole language principles). I observed fifteen to twenty classes before finding Joanne's (fictitious name) whole language in French Immersion class. It is for this reason that I included two brief classroom descriptions to show what I most commonly observed in the search for whole language. The "thickest description" in composite portrait #3 is Joanne's whole language in French Immersion class. "Ecole Trinité" is the fictitious name I use to describe the school in which the three French Immersion classes (a class in transition, a traditional class, and a whole language French Immersion class) are portrayed.

I observed approximately twenty writing workshop periods (each an hour long) in Joanne's class from mid March until the end of June. The procedure for collecting data was similar to both composite portrait one and composite portrait two. The major exception was that I only observed the class and did not participate in any teaching activities. I was able to record notes as observations occurred because I was not actually involved in the classroom operation. More time and freedom enabled me to investigate incidents that happened. My notes, as an observer, are more detailed, descriptive, and fuller than when I acted as both an observer and participant in case study one and two. Informal interviews were conducted throughout the study with both the teacher and the children. More detail on the subjects and setting of Joanne's whole language class in French Immersion is provided in chapter five.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS: ENGLISH SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTION

In order to understand what whole language looks like in a second language setting, I investigated what is happening in the English sector by visiting and/or teaching in approximately twenty-five classrooms in four different English schools. As Watson (1989) states, "*a single visit in a whole language classroom is worth more than a hundred definitions, for it is in the classroom that the definitions, the theory, and the stated practices come alive*" (p. 134).

The following descriptions provide an overview of the atmosphere of the English schools I visited, with an emphasis on my observations as an observer, as well as a participant observer, in the early primary grades. As Eisner (1991) states, "to understand the kind of place a school or classroom is, we need to have the kind of account that will enable us to know what it would feel and look like if we were there" (p. 89). One of the research questions, 'what does whole language look like after ten years of implementation in a selected group of English schools?' is answered in the following section.

Composite portrait #1 is a synthesis of my on-site observations of whole language teaching in four different schools. I selected for this composite those classrooms that provide a particularly good example of whole language learning. I try to capture the essence of the English whole language classroom observations by portraying a fictitious school that typifies whole language practice. Although the name of the school and the setting are fictitious, the observations I select and report are not. I am reporting real events, based on my detailed observations and notes.

COMPOSITE PORTRAIT #1: HILLTOP SCHOOL

Composite portrait #1 describes whole language in action. "Hilltop" school is situated in an affluent neighbourhood, high on a mountain in the city, the homes surrounded by lush greenery, manicured lawns, and a quiet stillness that exudes tranquillity. Most street activity comes from gardeners, delivery people, home renovation crews, and street cleaners. The schools in this area have rich heritages and are housed in beautiful surroundings. The children have green spaces to play in, equipped with sand areas, climbing apparatus, swings, trees, grass and places to explore nature.

A typical early morning scene at Hilltop would show approximately one hundred and fifty elementary-aged children gathered on the school grounds, as if meeting in a park. The hand held old fashioned bell is rung, (most often rung by a child), and the children informally walk up the stairs to enter the school, boys and girls and different ages intermingling haphazardly. There are two teachers on duty.

Most Hilltop teachers are not only educated, but are also dedicated, resourceful, and highly motivated. Both the administrators and teachers follow a whole language philosophy toward teaching. Upon entering Hilltop school, one witnesses individuality. The art work on display is original. No two creations are the same. Not only is art work on display, but an array of projects, writings, correspondence, recent photographs of field trips, club announcements, coming events...etc. decorate the corridors. The displays resemble the jumbled and colourful collections held by magnets on the fridge door of a loving, caring family with young children.

As one walks down the hallways peering into the inviting classrooms, one feels a sense of warm tranquillity. There is a calm busyness. Both teachers and children are active in a relaxed, comfortable way. The classrooms hold precious treasures, such as pets: hamsters, snakes, rabbits, birds, and giant turtles. Projects

are ongoing: the ocean is swelling in a grade two class, where research books on fish, mammals, and plant life overstuff the shelves. In one corner a display of lobster claws, fish scales, fossils, and seashells is labelled and categorized. Many of the collections have been brought in by the students themselves. Some children choose to work on their own project, others work in pairs depending on the topics they have chosen.

While observing a grade one classroom, children are busy writing stories during time set aside in this whole language classroom for writing workshop. One smiling child approaches me waving three books in the air and announces, "Kathy, look at the books I published!". As I read them, the child's face beams with pride, anticipating a response. Publishing is taken very seriously in this classroom. It is the children who decide the topic they want to write about and whether they want to publish the piece or not. As Edelsky et al (1991) say, *children gain a "dignity" when they are able to shape their own topics in writing.*

The grade one children move about freely consulting a teacher, a friend, or a reference book. They settle down to write as the teacher, [Marianne], seemingly wanders aimlessly around the room. However, on closer examination it becomes clear that the teacher seeks out several specific children she wants to confer with. She notes their progress, updates her record keeping, and discusses their development - what they have done, where they are at the moment, and what they are planning to do next.

An excellent strategy I observed in Marianne's class is the use of the overhead projector for group editing. The teacher displays a child's written message on the window blind. The group then discusses the meaning of the message. For example, one child volunteered that he could read the message except for the word "wyl". He added that he guessed his classmate wanted to write "while" because "while" makes sense in the context of the message. Marianne then

asked the children for suggestions about how you would write "while". "While", "will", and "wal" were three responses given. The teacher wrote the responses on the overhead acetate. Quickly one child told the class that the first spelling was right because of the silent "E". Briefly the teacher agreed, calling their attention to the silent "E" rule, adding the proper pronunciation of "will" and "wall". Marianne's use of the overhead is just one example of how she brings children's attention to language. Children are most often the "*curriculum informants*" (Harste, 1989) in becoming skilled language users.

The children in another classroom at Hilltop were found clustered in small literature groups, sharing experiences, feelings, and thoughts about the book their group read (or had read to them) the previous night for homework. Sets of five books are available for children to choose from as a homework assignment. Each set of books is introduced to the class for selection. The teacher reads the description from the back of the book or explains what the book is about. The book does not necessarily have to be read by the child, it might be a "listening book" which the parent reads to the child. At home, the children write post-it notes about certain aspects that pique their curiosity, parts they question, segments they might have written differently had they been the author, descriptions they liked, similarities and or differences to other literature, or connections to their own experiences. The post-it notes are affixed to the pages they want to discuss the next day in class. Once the small groups (3-5 children) have discussed their books and shared their thoughts, the notes are then stuck in a special folder for future reference.

Hilltop school has a set silent reading time for the whole school. The first twenty minutes of every afternoon begins with silent reading. Some teachers refer to this time as DEAR time (Drop Everything And Read time). Not only do all of the children read, but the teachers and other staff members are encouraged to read

as well. While this period may in fact really be silent in the upper grades, in the younger grades it is not totally quiet. There is a productive, focused, rhythmic hum, so different from the chaotic, irregular rhythms of the sounds of children who are not engaged. Children choose books from a range of literature. Some choose specific topics to research, others choose books they know how to read to share with a friend. Several may gather around a Big book to read together, while others will snuggle into a pillow on the floor to read alone. As Edelsky et al say about DEAR time, "*Whatever their personal agendas for reading, the children are able to enact them and thus to maintain ownership over their reading*" (p. 93).

Most homework assignments in the early primary grades reflect the reading and writing activities from their school day. Children choose the book they want to read. Written assignments may consist of writing a "reading response" to a book they have read. A reading or a literature "response", as some teachers term it, is a journal entry where the children write about their interpretation of the book they have read. They may make connections to their personal lives, question certain parts of the story, or record their observations. Reading response journals create a written dialogue between child and teacher when the teacher responds to the child's entry. Other written assignments may, in this classroom, include a simple journal entry, which is very similar to a diary, writing on any topic of their choice. Some teachers in older grades choose to initiate "buddy journals" among their students. A buddy journal follows the same principles as a journal except that it is written to a fellow classmate, not to the teacher. Continued research or work on various projects may also be a homework assignment.

A revealing area of any school is the staff room (Cleghorn & Genesee, 1984; Jackson, 1968). The Hilltop staff room atmosphere, like the classroom atmosphere, is contagious with the excitement of literacy development. Teachers share new children's, adult, and professional literature. Author's names are

dropped casually as if the teachers know them personally. In many cases they do. The teaching staff recount the positive steps that they and the children have taken in learning. They also discuss the troubles that they and the children have encountered. Teachers share ideas, give suggestions, and listen to each other. In general, they converse in an energized, interested way. They discuss conferences they have attended, will attend, or are presenting themselves. Teachers support and respect not only the children, but one another.

Reflections. In speaking with the teachers and some of the parents, it would appear that most of the Hilltop parents have chosen to enrol their children because of the school's philosophy. The parents are guided by the teachers during information meetings and teacher interviews. Suggested readings, books, and articles are also made available to the parents to fully understand the principles of a whole language education. Further conversations with parents suggests that parents understand the role they are to play for homework assignments. Not only do they allow their children to write on their own without adult help, but they also encourage them to choose their own topics. Hilltop school exemplifies whole language in action. Administrators and the school principal encourage the teachers who in turn are supported by the parents.

COMPOSITE PORTRAIT #2: MOUNTAINVIEW SCHOOL

Composite portrait #2 describes misconceptions and misinterpretations that commonly occur during the implementation of whole language in some English schools. Although many teachers understand and successfully implement whole language, I am focusing here on cases where I observed misconceptions and misinterpretations of whole language. The teaching practices at Mountainview School (fictitious name) are supposed to follow a whole language philosophy for

the language arts program, as mandated by the Ministry of Education in 1982. However, as I will soon show, the Mountainview response to this mandate is quite different from that of Hilltop school.

Leaving Hilltop school, I descend the mountain to what could be referred to as "the bowels of the city". The descent makes my ears pop and I readjust to my surroundings of Mountainview school. It is concrete and cramped, streets are littered, and oh so busy. The area is poor. It has a pride of its own in the small unique spaces which are tended and cared for. It is not uncommon to see people sweeping not only their front steps, but also neighbouring walks and sidewalks. The tiny fenced-in patches of gardens bordering the spiral stair-cased triplexes are neatly trimmed and appear to be lovingly cultivated. There seems to be a sense of community, a sense of understanding, a sense of accepting personal situations.

In the early morning, parents are in the corner stores, walking their dogs, bringing children to school, and hanging around the school yard; for the most part they are not working, they are unemployed or on welfare. Unlike Hilltop, whose gardeners, renovation crews, and delivery people seem to be the main presence, the Mountainview parents are visibly THERE.

When the electronic bell rings, approximately two hundred children are instructed to freeze on the spot. A whistle blows and they run to line up in specific order, according to sex and grade. Only when the children are silent are they allowed to enter the school in an orderly and quiet fashion. The school yard is concrete and so small that road blocks are put up on the street during playtime so the children can play in the street. The principal, vice-principal, and six teachers are on duty.

Upon entering Mountainview, one is struck with the conformity. The children march in "ranks", the desks are arranged in straight rows with the teacher's desk at the helm. Art work on display is not really art work, but

coloured-in ditto sheet outlines of raindrops, or sailboats, or lighthouses. Sameness is stressed. Children are told what to write on those ditto sheets: How do raindrops help us?, What would it feel like to be a sailboat?, What could you see if you were a lighthouse? Each sheet of paper has a predetermined amount of lines to write on.

Listen. It is silent. No not quiet, not tranquil, not relaxed, not comfortable. It is silent. Listen. When the silence is broken, hear the screaming, the yelling. It is the teacher who exclaims: "I've never seen children like this before". "This work is garbage". When asked if the children can sit on the floor to hear a story, the teachers answer, "Oh, that is too disruptive", or "The floor is too dirty", or "They'll just fool around". It seems that the only time the children leave their desks is when they leave the classroom! A snapshot of what one would most often see peering into many of the classrooms would be a picture of neat rows of silent children busy at seatwork. There is a lack of softness, comfort, and warmth.

As for whole language, the Mountainview teachers' general view is that it is inappropriate for their students. 'Back-to-basics' is very much the rule of thumb. Teachers stress rote and memory learning. Children recite grammar rules, chant lists of rhyming words, and spell words in unison that will be on the weekly spelling test. Many of the language arts activities consist of answering questions on reading comprehension, (What color were the boots?) and filling in the blanks, (The boots were ____). Most of the Mountainview teachers are close to retirement, have taught for many years, and were trained in a very traditional manner. They feel they have had whole language imposed on them.

In the staff room, the teachers are a friendly and jovial social group of individuals. They swap recipes, tell stories about their pets, and discuss pension plans and retirement. Occasionally, whole language is an issue of great debate. Most teachers are either strongly opposed to the theory or appreciate the concept for

privileged children (Hilltop children) but not for Mountainview children. A few teachers are genuinely interested in learning more about whole language teaching, but they proceed quietly without drawing attention to their intent because some of their colleagues shun whole language and tend to be suspicious of teachers who advocate whole language teaching.

The prevailing negative attitudes toward whole language are reflected in teachers' attitudes toward professional development. For example, some view teacher conferences as days off, others view conferences as a time to meet old colleagues, while many simply look upon conferences as an opportunity to shop. Mountainview teachers buy classroom decorations, stickers, and duplicating stencils. They seek "recipes" for implementing whole language, such as "Basal" whole language series, story starters for creative writing, and stencils, and more stencils. In discussing lectures heard or workshops attended, comments most often heard are: "Whole language sounds so great but we could not do "IT" with OUR KIDS", "I've heard it all before, I'm not learning anything new", "I'd like to see THEM try it in my class!"

Teachers talk about burnout. Van Mannen (1989) says that *"teacher burnout is not necessarily a symptom of excessive effort, of being overworked. It is the condition of not knowing why we are doing what we are doing"* (p. 29). Fullan (1982) describes this condition as a notion of false clarity. At Mountainview, habits are reinforced, gestures and practices are continued without much concern or thought. For instance, finger snapping is considered to be an appropriate way to call to attention students who are not conforming to a specific task. Teachers snap their fingers, point to the accused, and gesture with either an index finger to the lips for silence, or a circular twirl of the index to indicate "turn around", or the quick pointing to their desk meaning "get to work"! Lights go off

indicating, "I want your attention", or "quiet", or whatever the teacher wishes it to signal. As Eisner (1977) states,

We learn to see, we turn off what we have become accustomed to. Thus, a teacher with years of experience in the classroom or a school administrator with a decade behind the desk might develop only enough educational connoisseurship to enable them to cope at minimal levels within the classroom and school in which they work. Being oblivious to a large portion of their environment they are in no position to bring about change, to rectify educational ills they cannot see, or to alter their own behaviour. What is even worse, the conditions and qualities they do see they might believe to be natural rather than artificial. We often come to believe, because of habit reinforced by convention, that the way things are is the way they must be. (p. 8)

Observing and working in Mountainview school gave me an especially eerie feeling. I felt as though I had travelled through a time tunnel back to when I had taught in the 1970's. The literature being used in the classroom was very much the same. For example, in the late 1970's, the language arts curriculum guide suggested "Tikki Tikki Tembo" as an appropriate story for teachers to read to six year olds. Instead of the one copy for teacher's use, as was the case in the late 1970's, thirty copies are now available: each child now has a copy to refer to in order to answer mundane questions on reading comprehension. At least in "the good old days", teachers read the story aloud to their students, discussed it, and related it verbally to their own life experiences. It was a treat, not the arduous task it has become: the level of language in this book is suitable for listening to but difficult for most young children to read on their own.

Gone are the actual phonics workbooks of the 70's, only to be replaced by ditto sheets of the very same workbooks. Gone are the basal readers, only to be

replaced by photocopies of good literature. Yes, thirty copies of Ezra Keats' Snowy Day are PHOTOCOPIED and transformed into a 'whole language basal'. Nothing is personal. The feel, the look, the smell, the enjoyment of selecting a REAL book has vanished. Not only do the teachers photocopy some of the literature for "reading", but the schools have bought sets of thirty copies to be circulated from class to class and transferred from one school to the next. Roving basals! Perhaps these practices are thought of as progress, but in actual fact, they have little to do with whole language and if anything, are a step backwards. Children do not have a choice as to what they want to read. Nor are they free to savour literature at their own leisure. Stories are dissected, inspected, and segmented. Not respected.

Gone are the compositions on a given topic, only to be replaced by something similar, called a journal. "What can we write in our journal today?", the teacher asks. Instead of waiting for the children's response, the teacher immediately says, "Well, we had our field day yesterday, the words we would need would be: tug of war, three legged race, potato sack race...". These words are written on the blackboard and children are admonished critically if they should appear in their journal writing misspelled. Children have limited access to dictionaries. As the general classroom rule is that children are to stay in their seats, children are not free to find words (wherever) for their writing. Invariably during journal writing, or any kind of writing activity, the constant question from the children is "how do you spell?" Not only is spelling problematic during a writing activity but so is the choice of topic. Ironically, but not surprisingly, when the children are given freedom to choose their own topic to write about, there is a constant complaint of, "I don't know what to write about". As Calkins (1991) states, *we cannot expect children to write with "vigour and voice", if they are silenced throughout the day.*

Several of the teachers at Mountainview are in transition, meaning they try to incorporate whole language 'activities'. Some of the Mountainview teachers showed interest in whole language and would seek out advice and direction. One teacher, for example, wanted to begin publishing her students' writing. However, it became an exhausting battle for her to complete one published book per child. Her aim was a finished product, something the parents would find cute. She misunderstood what publishing in a whole language class is: publishing is not an assignment - it is an ongoing process. Teachers publish childrens' written work when both the children and teacher agree it is worthy of publishing. Books are published early in the school year and continue to be published until the end of June. It is not a one shot class project. Edelsky et al (1991) claim that, "*there is a strong tendency for people to assume that what shows is all that matters, that the essence is the surface behavior -the methods- rather than the underlying meanings*" (p.39).

Reflections. The teachers appear to be under considerable stress. The pressure of report cards, standardized tests, and school board exams may be but a few of the factors underlying their stress. Administrators and school officials may also be contributors. Lack of quality support systems and an overwhelming standard of expectations loom over the teachers daily. They appear to be controlled by so many factors, that they in turn act as if they have no power in their own classrooms (Lortie, 1975; Jackson,1968). Perhaps, this is why the teachers try so desperately to control their students.

The teachers are not the only ones who lack an understanding of whole language. Some of the principals, vice-principals, and administrators, whom I have met during my years of teaching, also require more cognizance of the theory.

Parents, for the most part, have been traditionally educated and expect a drill and skill basic program for their children.

Descriptions of the teaching practices I describe illustrate teachers' understandings of whole language as mandated by the Ministry of Education in 1982. My first research question, 'what does whole language look like in selected groups of English schools after being implemented for more than ten years?', reveals that there are many faces of whole language teaching, also found by Maguire (1989). "Hilltop" teachers appear to be reflective, authentic, and knowledgeable whole language teachers. In contrast, "Mountainview" teachers appear to misinterpret and misunderstand the basic philosophy of whole language. The following section compares and contrasts the two schools of thought.

COMPARISON OF HILLTOP AND MOUNTAINVIEW SCHOOLS

An interesting contrast between the two interpretations of whole language is provided by the following example of how both Hilltop and Mountainview schools utilize the same book "Red is Best" by Kathy Stinson. A grade one teacher at Mountainview photocopies the book so that each child has a copy. The children use the photocopy to read along with the teacher, then each child has a turn to read aloud to the class. The copy is then used for a phonics lesson. They are instructed to circle words with a short "e". Stencils of fill in the blanks and reading comprehension questions then follow. In contrast to Mountainview school, Warren,(1989) recounts a small segment about a teacher in a school similar to Hilltop reading Red is Best to her grade one class.

She tells the children that the little girl in "Red is Best" is really Kathy Stinson's little girl...she says that sometimes authors do that. They talk about people in their own lives, in their books, but give the characters a

different name. This is something you may think about when you're stuck for writing ideas.... (p. 41-42)

The teacher demonstrates how "Book Talk" can highlight the reading-writing connection. The teacher also brings insight into the author's life by demonstrating a strategy the children can use themselves for writing. The teacher begins the story by reading the title, talking about the author and illustrator, and reading the dedication. This beginning practice is uniform for all books that are read. The children are comfortable with this sequence as they themselves write dedications, write about themselves (the author of their own stories) and may choose someone different to illustrate the work that they write and publish.

In comparing and contrasting Hilltop and Mountainview schools, the different ways teachers view phonics and language skills are important issues to understand. As Edelsky, et al (1991) explain, a whole language framework intends that children become "skilled language users", it does not advocate that children "learn language skills" (p. 38). Learning language skills is very similar to the sequence outlined in phonics workbooks. Phonics lessons are structured class lessons where the whole class will focus on one specific skill. For example, the lesson for the day may be learning the sound the letter "B" makes. A teacher may tell students, or ask the children for a list of words that start with "B". Phonics worksheets accompany the lesson. Children are instructed to color in pictures of words that start with "B". The following day, time will be spent on another letter or skill. All children work on the same skill regardless of their own individual stage of development. The focus of learning specific skills is isolated, disconnected, and out of context.

On the other hand, becoming a skilled language learner is in context, connected, and has meaning. For instance, a child may be sounding out a word to write in a story that begins with "B". A whole language teacher would provide

different clues and/or strategies for a child to figure out what a "B" looks and sounds like. Many whole language classrooms have environmental print such as: job charts, class lists, poems that help children find words beginning with the sound they are looking for. Children also know they can ask peers and teachers for help. I believe a child who figures out how to solve his/her problem (the letter "B") will learn and remember better than meaningless rote memory lessons. Edelsky et al (1991) explain,

What one child learns is not necessarily what the other children are learning, and most importantly, what is taught or learned is triggered by what the children need for the language they are actually using at the time. That is, to become skilled language users, the focus of both teachers' and childrens' activity is whatever purposes the children themselves are trying to accomplish. By contrast, to learn language skills, children work on exercises according to a curricular sequence, and above all, the focus of teachers' and childrens' activity is the skill. (p.38)

Children in a whole language class are encouraged to comment, question, and investigate language. Therefore, it is not uncommon for some children to notice that the word "to" is written differently in a story. The grade one teacher seizes this opportunity to point out that "to" can be spelled "two", "too" depending on the meaning of the word. Traditionally, this is a grade two phonics lesson not intended for grade one!

Reflections. I understand where the Mountainview teachers were coming from. I, too, came from a very traditional teaching background, and I left teaching when whole language was just budding. I, too, felt intimidated as a teacher with the introduction of whole language. But most of all, I suddenly felt lacking in knowledge. Previously I thought I knew the answers, I was sure of my

convictions. Phonics worked. Now, I was shaken, I had to rethink, reevaluate, and most frighteningly, I was asked to change. I wasn't asked to change my teaching method, I was asked to reevaluate myself as a teacher. It is threatening to relinquish power and control. It is threatening to change. I, too, used the light switch of the classroom to gain students' attention. I probably snapped my fingers too. I was in control, I had quiet classes. I thought I knew how to teach. Until I found out differently.

The fundamental differences I observed in the two schools were based on the contrast in philosophies of the administrators and teachers. The Hilltop staff believes in whole language whereas the teachers in Mountainview school have had whole language imposed on them without them understanding the theory. I could say that the main difference between the two settings is that one is child-centered and the other is teacher-centered. My descriptions of the two settings provide the reader with a sense of the different atmospheres in each school. Hilltop school is a warm, caring, and respectful environment. Children learn at their own individual rate with the guidance of their teacher and help from their peers. Teachers encourage the children to take risks, to make choices, and to seek answers. In contrast, Mountainview school is a cold, controlled, and regimented environment. Children all learn the same thing at the same time, they are told what to do, they work on their own, and they are afraid of making mistakes. Teachers teach lessons, control, and correct mistakes.

The following Table summarizes the differences between the two schools:

TABLE I. Whole language versus traditional teaching.	
HILLTOP	MOUNTAINVIEW
Belief in whole language	Whole language is imposed
Child centered	Teacher centered
Warm atmosphere	Cold atmosphere
Individuality	Conformity
Freedom	Controlled
Cooperation	Isolation
Connection	Separation
Skilled language users	Learn language skills
Literature	Basal literature
Risk taking	Afraid
Meaningful	Meaningless
Ownership	Sameness
Fun	Boring

Table I. is designed as a heuristic guideline. Classrooms cannot be so easily divisible. Whole language teachers do ask children to conform to classroom rules, teachers may at times be boring, and they may ask children do work on their own. The reverse may also apply to traditional teachers. Traditional teachers may indeed encourage children to cooperate, read literature, and provide meaningful activities. Table I. is a generalized outline to help the reader compare the two settings described.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS: FRENCH IMMERSION SCHOOL

INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses the second research question, 'what does whole language look like in a selected group of French Immersion settings?' The composite portrait describes my search for whole language in a French Immersion setting. I observed fifteen to twenty French Immersion classrooms and teachers. The French Immersion classes were selected for me by teachers and principals who believed they were examples of whole language learning environments. In fact, my observations revealed three very different types of classrooms. The observations were very similar to what I found in the English school environments. Most of the classes either fit the description of a class in transition toward whole language or a highly structured traditional class. I observed only one whole language class.

The descriptions that follow of a class in transition and a traditional class are brief. They are examples of the types of classes I observed most often in my search for whole language in French Immersion. However, the description of whole language in French Immersion is an actual class observed and is the "thickest" part of this composite portrait, in keeping with my research question. The three classes that I will describe (the class in transition, the traditional class, and the whole language French Immersion class) are housed together in a fictitious school, I have called "Ecole Trinité".

COMPOSITE PORTRAIT #3: Ecole Trinité

Ecole Trinité is set in a middle class suburban neighbourhood. Bungalows, townhouses, and split-level homes are surrounded by green parks, little league baseball diamonds, and small shopping malls. The community is child orientated

for the young upwardly successful couples with children. The local library, public swimming pool, and recreational facilities are at the center of this district.

Some children arrive at school by school bus, however the majority arrive by car. Moms and dads carpool in station wagons and vans, unloading four to five children at a time. Upon arrival at Ecole Trinité, greetings, chatter, and conversations are distinctively in English.

The school is officially labelled a "French" school. However, although the language of instruction is French, 90 to 95% of the student population is not francophone (French speaking). A great majority of the students are anglophone (English speaking), mixed with many other different language and cultural backgrounds. In other words, the pedagogy is the same as a French Immersion school in Quebec; a pedagogy for second language learners.

Ecole Trinité is a single storey, long U-shaped structure. The schoolyard is very large with a field of green grass and an extensive asphalt area designed and stenciled in white paint for childrens' games: games such as hopscotch, dodge ball, and soccer. Some children huddle in groups to talk, while most play games, run around, skip, and chase each other. The level of activity is high and boisterous. The bell rings, children line up according to grade and classroom and enter the school in a semi-quiet fashion. It is interesting to note that the children walking down the corridors to their respective classrooms speak in English. Each teacher waits at the classroom to greet the students. Teachers and students alike remind each other that it is time to switch and speak in French.

Walking down the long winding corridors, I observe an eclectic arrangement of bulletin board displays which unwittingly indicate teachers' priorities. One shows unique and original art work; another has test papers and test scores arranged from the highest marks (with "BRAVO" stickers) to the lowest

marks for the passerby to see; yet another has a seasonal theme of brightly colored cardboard figures made by the teacher, I now describe.

CLASS IN TRANSITION

This composite class in transition typifies a teacher who in essence uses traditional teaching methods, but who tries to incorporate some "whole language" principles. The teacher may have attended a few workshops on whole language and is trying to include certain strategies, without fully understanding the philosophy.

A typical writing period in a grade one French Immersion class begins with a topic assigned by the teacher, Mme Labelle. The children are to write about Hallowe'en and what they hope to get when they go out for trick or treat. They write on a stencil of a drawing of a pumpkin. The pumpkin has eight lines to write in, the first line being the longest in length diminishing to the shortest line on the bottom of the pumpkin.

example. -----

The children are instructed to write their story and then to colour in the pumpkin and cut it out. The instructions are quite complex: a second pumpkin is to be cut out a little differently so as to create a window effect. Opening the "window" reveals the hidden writing inside.

Although the idea of an assigned topic and the restrictions of predetermined lines are not in keeping with what whole language advocates, Mme Labelle did encourage the children to write using their own invented spelling. Gunderson (1989) explains invented spelling:

whole language teachers, recognizing that the meaning of a piece of writing is far more important than any surface structure errors, believe that students should be allowed to experiment with print. The students' own invented spellings, far from being "wrong" reveal their developing understanding of phonics .(p. 22)

The children are encouraged to write on their own and/or seek help from their peers and teacher. The noise level is high and many children are misbehaving. Many have difficulty beginning the task. The situation intensifies when the cutting and pasting of the pumpkins became too arduous for most. Mme Labelle and myself (I had become a participant observer) are barraged with requests for help with cutting, glueing, and stapling papers. What is intended as a writing activity quickly fades into a difficult exercise in fine motor coordination. All the children, but one, write a story of eight lines or less. The exception, a boy, uses four stencils of eight lines each to write his story. Needless to say, he could not make a window to look through to see his completed story!

Upon inquiring about a classroom library or books for the children to read, I was shown a beautiful supply of books that belonged to the teacher. These books, however were locked away in a cupboard because the children "do not take care of them".

Reflections. Speaking with Mme Labelle afterwards, I learned that she had attended several workshops on whole language, has read some of the literature, and stated that she is in agreement with the philosophy. However, she went on to stress that her class this year was a difficult one. Although I agree that there were several disruptive children, the classroom atmosphere appeared controlling and showed little respect or trust, giving the children a limited amount of freedom to show what they are really capable of doing.

Guided by the criteria for whole language set forth in chapter two and the description of teachers in chapter six by Maguire (1989), I label this class as "in transition" rather than an example of whole language. Mme Labelle had previously taught in a very traditional manner and was trying to move with the new "modern" way of teaching. However, the very fact that she set the topic so rigidly and limited the space available for writing suggests that she lacked a basic understanding of whole language, in essence the basic understanding of how children learn. *"The difficult part of becoming a whole language teacher is learning to recognize the beliefs that underlie instructional decisions"* (Newman & Church, 1990, p. 24).

A TRADITIONAL CLASS

Some insight into where Mme Labelle might be coming from is provided by the following description of a traditional French Immersion classroom teacher, Mme Bernard. Again, the following classroom description is a composite of many of the French Immersion classes observed.

When I first enter a particular grade two class, the teacher, Mme Bernard is doing math but enthusiastically invites me to return after recess, when they would be doing writing. Returning to the class later, I find that the children are still copying equations from their math texts. The teacher hurriedly instructs the children to put away their math and to take out their writing copy books. They are told to work on the verb "être". Mme Bernard writes five sentences on the blackboard for the children to copy, filling in the blanks appropriately.

example: 1) Je ----à la maison.

2) Nous ----- au parc.

"The goal of literacy instruction is to produce skilled readers and writers, not to teach reading and writing skills" (Freeman & Freeman, 1992, p. 20). The teacher gives the children "two" minutes to complete the task, after which they will

correct it orally. Mme Bernard announces that the class will have ten sentences like these to be copied for homework that night and that they will copy them in the afternoon. The children react in unison to this news with a great low moan. Mme Bernard ignores this and instructs them to take out their writing workshop folders. On first sight, this material appears to look like the writing folders of a standard whole language class. However, upon closer examination, I realize that the topics have been suggested by the teacher. As Freeman & Freeman say,

Unfortunately, in many traditional, grammar-based second language classes, students are not given opportunities to invent or construct meaning. The language in these classes is controlled by the teacher or the text. (p.83)

The topic of the day is sugaring off, "la cabane à sucre". "No unfortunately", Mme Bernard explains, "the children did not go sugaring off this year but there is an excellent story about it in their basal reader". The children appear to struggle to write a story about sugaring off without knowing the real experience of such an outing. As Freeman & Freeman (1992) state, "*Too often second language classrooms do not offer students the opportunities to interact in authentic ways*" (p. 102).

As the children are writing, the teacher engages me in conversation. Mme Bernard explains how she had to order these readers and is quite delighted with them and feels very disappointed that the first grade teacher does not share her enthusiasm. With her permission, I circulate quietly to observe the children's writing. I say quietly because the silence in this classroom was deafening. "*Schools are not here to silence students*" (Harste, 1989, p. 245). Many children use their basal readers to find the words needed for their writing, while some use their own invented spelling. However, the children seldom interact amongst themselves. In fact, many of the children build walls by standing the basal readers and assorted books up on edge around their writing. Writing is a quiet, solitary

event in this classroom. When they are finished, they may write a story of their choice, or work on the SRA kit; a "busy time" activity that was popular in the 70's. Mme Bernard seems to regard this writing period as a "spare", that is, as time off for her to do her own things. She is not offering the children guidance or encouragement, she is busy clearing her desk.

Glancing around the room, I notice the lack of individuality. Bulletin boards display 25 cut outs of Inuits that the children have coloured, 25 robots with lines for the children to write a story about robots, 25 snowmen for the same purpose,..etc... The children's desks are in a U shape, with the teacher's desk positioned at the opening of the U, a very controlling position. There is a lack of books, and for that matter a lack of shelving. All belongings are stored in desks, which were going to be cleaned out in the afternoon. The general atmosphere is regimented, controlled, and ever so quiet. As Harste (1989) argues, "*Teachers know that when basal authors and researchers were in charge, teachers' and students' voices were silenced*" (p. 246).

Reflections. Many of the observations are quite telling about the teacher's priorities. Busy work, quiet children, and neatness appear to be valued. Writing is described as a lonely event, not as a time when children are busy writing by themselves, immersed in their own thoughts, and producing creative texts. Writing in this classroom is isolated; children segregate themselves from each other by building guards around their writing so others will not copy or see what they are doing; the teacher secludes herself by disengaging herself from the children and engages herself in her own busy work. The position of the desks (U shape) may suggest to an observer that the seating arrangement is to foster students' interactions. The U shape is better than rows and children can make easier eye contact with one another and the teacher. However, observations led me to believe

that silence, not sharing one's work, and keeping the classroom neat are a priority with this teacher.

WHOLE LANGUAGE IN FRENCH IMMERSION

My search for whole language in French Immersion finally led me to a classroom and a teacher (Joanne, fictitious name) that will be described in detail. Descriptions of the children, Joanne's background, and a physical description of the classroom environment will then follow. Data collection is then described followed by a description of a typical scene in Joanne's whole language French Immersion classroom. The writing workshop steps are then explained followed by a brief glimpse of Joanne teaching a grade one class the following year.

THE CHILDREN

Information on the children in the other classes previously described is not given as they are composite classrooms. Joanne's class is an actual classroom observation. I observed a second grade class of eleven boys and eleven girls. Of these 22 children, two speak French at home, nine speak English, and the remaining eleven speak various languages, including Armenian, Chinese, Polish, Spanish, and Arabic. The children come from middle class homes. Generally, both parents are employed. The English speaking students are enrolled in French not because they have to be there but because this is their parents' choice. Letters have been sent to the parents informing them of my study, requesting them to sign the letters in order to reconfirm that they are aware of my presence and my purpose in the classroom (appendix A).

THE TEACHER

The teacher has recently graduated from a French University in Quebec. This is Joanne's first year of teaching. Fortunately for her, she had the opportunity to do her internship in a French class whose teacher Pierre (fictitious name) is a strong advocate of whole language. Pierre, who attended French university, is not only an active participant at many conferences and workshops on whole language, but is also a professor teaching teachers or future teachers such topics as literacy. It is interesting to note that Pierre teaches in a French university, drawing from the English literature on whole language and the writing process. Joanne is following Pierre's example by being one of the pioneers among French teachers who is beginning to implement whole language in their classrooms. The fact that Joanne is in her first year of teaching has proven to be advantageous to this study. Not only is she fresh out of university, eager to place whole language theory into practice, but she is also untouched by examples of older traditional methods.

Joanne shares not only her enthusiasm for teaching, but also other aspects of teaching that are new to her. For example, she eagerly shows and explains her record keeping and evaluation techniques. She readily recounts things that have worked, and things she will never do again, as well as things she plans to do differently next year. Details of Joanne's development as a teacher are provided in the descriptions of her grade two class and a follow up visit the following year, when she is teaching a grade one class.

THE CLASSROOM

With time, my visits to the classroom enabled the teacher, the children, and I to become more acquainted, comfortable, and naturally at ease with each other. Upon my first visit, the teacher introduces me to the children, reminding them of the conduct expected of them. They are to continue as they normally do, my

presence is simply to find out how the writing workshop works. It appears that this class is very accustomed to having visitors. The teacher reports there are many visitors, possibly because the class's uniqueness and success has drawn much attention from various interested parties, such as myself.

Upon entering Joanne's grade two classroom, one is struck by the overwhelming evidence that the written word dominates the environment. Flow chart sheets of paper exhibit the individual projects that children have completed on various countries. The papers hang from homemade clotheslines throughout the room. Many books, (e.g. reference books, story books, encyclopedias) are on display on shelves that also double as a room divider, providing the children with the information required for their projects. Added to this collection of books are brochures, pamphlets, and other resource material that the children gathered from embassies, consulates, travel agencies, and from other sources which they had written requesting information about the country they wished to research. In the far corner of the classroom, there is an insectarium which houses the insects, both dead and alive, that the children have gathered. Posters of the insects adorn the walls with labels for identification, as well as the children's written descriptions of information about the insects that they have found. Beside the insectarium are magnifying glasses and a log in which the children record their comments, observations, hypotheses, and queries they may have about insects and their habitat.

The math center also features evidence that writing is an integrated part of the classroom curriculum. For example, the children published mini-books for problem solving. The children use their own life experiences as topics for the math problems they want to be solved. In the conference and editing area, numerous lists of words are posted on the walls, and strips of single word cards are categorized and ringed together according to subject matter. For example, Hallowe'en words are on orange cards, emotion words on blue cards, etc....

The words were provided by the children during a brainstorming session and are often used when the children edit a story. Throughout the classroom, the children's art work, written accounts, and individual published stories as well as class publications are on display. Interestingly, the blackboard area is most frequently blank. Joanne's classroom environment mirrors Edelsky, et al (1991) description of a whole language classroom: "*It is immediately apparent that everything in the room is child oriented - made by children, written by children, owned by children, arranged by children*" (p.78).

DATA COLLECTION

Throughout the duration of the study I maintained a low profile observing the writing workshop in this grade two class. I tried to be as unobtrusive as possible, taking notes during class, or jotting notes down soon after the observation. The field notes were most useful for the study, as they provided a consistent view of the nature of the climate, atmosphere, and curriculum of this particular classroom. I continued my observations two to three times a week for a three-month period, observing a total of twenty writing workshops during that period. From these observations, I saw that the teacher modelled much of her curriculum on Harste, Short, and Burke's, (1988) "authoring cycle" (see appendix B). I will describe how Joanne interprets and implements the authoring cycle and will illustrate how the teacher and students interact in order to try to keep the flow of the cycle manageable, actively alive and productive.

DESCRIPTION OF A TYPICAL SCENE IN A WHOLE LANGUAGE FRENCH IMMERSION CLASS

The grade two children arrive in class that morning chatting freely in pairs or groups. The first twenty-five minutes is a free time period for them to choose what to do. Some busily huddle in groups and others solitarily begin a flurry of

birthday card making. Not only is it a child's birthday that day but also the teacher's. When the teacher announces that it is time to gather together on the carpet, one group of children complain that they need more time to finish a project. She asks, how much time? They ask for two more minutes. She agrees.

Once on the carpet, she asks who would like to read the daily message she wrote to the class. The content of the message is explaining my presence in the classroom, birthday greetings, and the name of the film they are to see in the afternoon. The message appears relevant and meaningful to their classroom lives. As Harste (1989) says, *whole language teachers believe that children learn by "making connections to life experiences"*.

Beside the teacher's message is a blank sheet of paper for a designated child to write a message. The child writes, "AuJourdhui c'est la fete de Clair et Joanne, c'et apres-midi ons va voir un film". The children are required to check the message for spelling and punctuation -a group editing. A poster on the wall lists the main trouble spots encountered by many in the class and help as a reminder for editing purposes. The children discuss editorial changes and the reasons for the changes. The teacher's role during this discussion is merely as a guide; it is the children who offer the information. Goodman (1986) concurs, *"most crucial is the new role of the enlightened teacher who serves as guide, facilitator, and kid-watcher"* (p. 44).

The class then rereads the corrected form, "Aujourd'hui c'est la fête de Clair et Joanne, cet après-midi on va voir un film". Joanne later explains to me that the few minutes the class spends correcting the messages each morning is her only focused grammar teaching. She feels it is very beneficial for the children's writing. Newman & Church (1990) discuss focused lessons, *"when it seems appropriate, the teacher might provide information or assistance through short, focused lessons with individuals, groups, or the whole class"* (p. 21). After a brief sharing of

news, an informal time is allotted for the few children who brought things of interest from home. The teacher then announces it is time for writing workshop. I am startled when the whole class cheers and scurries off to find their pencils, notebooks, writing folders, and join the specific groups with whom they are to work. It is quite a contrast to the moan I had previously heard in the traditional class. There is a buzz of activity as children know exactly what they want to do and also know what is expected of them. Watson (1989) describes class activities during writing workshop, "*writing in whole language classrooms involves generating ideas, revising, editing when necessary, and celebrating (publishing, presenting, sharing) pieces chosen by the author*" (p.135).

WRITING WORKSHOP

In full view of the class is a poster describing the steps to be taken during the writing workshop.

- Find an idea...
- Brainstorm
- First Draft
- Conference
- Second Draft
- Correction
- Edit
- Conference for publication
- Publication

FIND AN IDEA:

As I observe the class in the Spring, very little brainstorming is evident. Children have little difficulty in finding ideas to write about, something their teacher says "was much more problematic in the beginning of the year". Children appear to develop their own strategies to start a story. Many do confer with their peers to

seek out new ideas, while others read their classmates' published stories, some read the existing literature in the classroom library and several others rely on the old "sit and think" strategy.

FIRST DRAFT:

A variety of paper and formats is available for the children to choose from for their writing. One format leaves the top half of the sheet of paper blank for art work with lines at the bottom for the text. Another model is divided into four sections, each sheet of paper has four small boxes for illustrations followed by lines underneath each box for a short description. Many choose this form to write short chapter books. And lastly, there is plain lined paper to be used exclusively for writing, leaving the illustrations for the final publication.

Children are encouraged to take one piece at a time, and to help themselves as the need arises. One child did take 11 pieces at once announcing that she is going to write a L__O__N__G story. However, for the most part, children follow their own flow of writing by letting the words in their stories dictate the number of pages required, taking one page at a time.

Joanne circulates unobtrusively among the children, conferencing with one particular group, then moving on to individual conferences. The children know that when the teacher is conferencing with others she is not to be disturbed. For help, they rely on their peers, dictionaries, books, whatever is at hand. For example, one boy wants to know how to write "Canadiens" for his hockey story. He asks another boy who did not know, but who refers him to yet another boy, who has a poster he had shown the class earlier that might have the word on it. It did. It was an airline poster with faint writing in the clouds and sure enough "Canadian" was there. A discussion follows as to whether the spelling is the same

in English as in French. It is inspiring to witness such collaboration, interest, and enthusiasm.

The search for the word "Canadian" and/or "Canadien" may be an example of what Wason-Ellam (1992) is referring to: *"teachers are encouraged to allow second language users to test their ideas about differences and eventually compare a concrete representation of their own language against what they encounter in printed texts written in standard language..."* (p. 2).

It must be added that during this fifty minute writing workshop, the children seem to be actively engaged in the writing process, sharing ideas, thoughts, and their own writing in a very responsible manner. The level of noise is not problematic; the teacher never has to remind them or interrupt them because of excessive noise. They are respectful of the rules. And to my amazement, they speak to each other in French, even when they are out of ear shot of the teacher. Upon questioning the teacher about this, she explains that the rule in the class is that they speak in French. If they have trouble communicating or feel they really need to express something in English, there is a special chair (a writing chair) that they can sit in and speak in English.

CONFERENCE:

Lists are posted to indicate who wants to conference with the teacher, who needs support in editing, who needs aid for brainstorming for ideas to write about. The children write their own names on these posted lists as the need arises. The children have the option to read their story to the entire class at the end of a writing workshop period and/or to write their name down on the conference list in order to confer with two classmates who would be designated for conferencing. The situation of sharing their writing with the entire class entails reading their work while the class listens. The author then picks people (usually 3) to give

suggestions, comments, or to question the meaning of the story. Joanne is instrumental during such classroom conferences: she helps guide the children away from the usual comments of "that's a good story" and "I like the part when..." to more pointed questions, such as "I'm not sure what you mean when...". When a child conferences with the two designated children, they often go outside of the classroom and confer in the hallway. While questioning several children about this procedure, mixed feelings are voiced. Some love the opportunity to be outside of the classroom "because we get to see what is going on", while others complain that they are wasting their time listening to other people's stories when in fact they are itching to write their own.

SECOND DRAFT, CORRECTION AND EDITING:

My observations lead me to believe that editing in this classroom merely means correcting spelling mistakes, not editing for the true structure of a story, or the meaning, nor the flow a story needs. Much concentration is spent on correct spelling, which is not in keeping with whole language practice in the early grades. The children are allowed up to three periods of writing workshop to devote their time to correction of spelling errors. Depending on the schedule, up to a week can be devoted to the task of correcting spelling rather than to the more enjoyable art of writing. Edelsky, et al (1991) concur by saying, "*...assigning revision and conferencing... occupies so much time that students never have a chance really to write in school*" (p. 23).

CONFERENCE FOR PUBLICATION:

During this time, the children individually confer with the teacher and discuss the story they have written. It is a time to reflect on the writing, ensuring the child feels right about it and decides that it is complete and ready for

publication. It is at this point that Joanne discusses the flow of the story, making sure the story makes sense, and has meaning.

PUBLICATION:

In her spare time, Joanne types up each story on the word processor, correcting spelling, and binds the book. Once the book is published, the children draw in their illustrations. Some children have another classmate do the illustrations for them. In this case, the cover of the book has not only the title, and the author, but also the name of the illustrator. The children are encouraged to dedicate the book and to write a brief description of the author, that is, of themselves. Once the work is completed the children share their story with others, seated, if they wish, in a special author's chair. Sharing one's work is not only for final products, but rather an ongoing process. Children often read a first draft for suggestions, or ask for ideas if they are experiencing writer's block.

Freeman & Freeman (1992) speak about second language learners writing and publishing;

What is important is that students choose their own topics and celebrate their writing as respected authors. This type of writing has been found to be especially successful with second language students. Since the students' message is accepted and valued even when the form is not always conventional, writing becomes a way for all students to contribute. (p.55)

When the teacher announces that they have to put away their writing folders because it is time for recess, there is a great moan of aah's. After recess, the teacher reads them the story "Je t'aimerai toujours" by Robert Munch. It is translated from a delightful English story and is both predictable, and repetitive.

Joanne not only reads translated stories that the children have heard in English, she also uses good authentic French literature by various authors. Watson (1989) feels that, "*Good literature is at the heart of the curriculum*" (p. 135).

The children gradually join in with the teacher as she reads the repetitive verse. They discuss the story thoughtfully and the teacher draws their attention to the repetitive verse and discusses why the author has chosen to write in this manner. Many creative thoughts and reasons surface. Joanne focusses the children's attention to their own writing and they discuss how and when they could possibly use repetition in their story writing. "*Reading aloud helps students become willing to receive different genres and styles of writing*" (Peterson & Eeds, 1990, p. 10).

Reflections. I'm not sure of the value that children receive in conferencing with their peers. The input received is minimal and may be damaging rather than encouraging without the teacher's guidance and support. The children appear to be too young to be delegated to such a crucial step in the writing process. Wason-Ellam (1992) suggests that "collaborative writing strategies such as author's chair, where peers serve as editors for one another, may be negative experiences for ESL speakers" (p. 2). At conferences and workshops, Donald Graves also voiced opinions on the detrimental effects of young students editing and correcting their writing. I believe the flow of writing is the main goal of writing for young children. Nonetheless, except for too much emphasis on correction, Joanne's classroom exemplifies whole language philosophy.

A FOLLOW-UP VISIT: A SNAPSHOT OF JOANNE'S GRADE ONE

The following school year, I returned to visit Joanne who was now teaching a grade one French Immersion class. The previous spring she had

expressed great apprehension about teaching grade one for the first time. She felt very nervous and truly doubted her ability to teach "such young children who may not know anything about the written word". Thus, it was a delightful surprise when Joanne greeted me by saying, " I love grade one, it is truly magical what the children can do". Many things I observed are the same as last year, such as Joanne's calmness, her respect for the children, and her love of literature. However, many things have changed. The most evident change is in the writing workshop steps. They are now as follows:

- Write your story
- Conference
- See Joanne
- Correct Capitals and periods
- Read your story to the visiting mother

No longer do the children have a set conference, rather they confer with whomever they want and whenever they want. The main conference is with Joanne. She feels that she must model for them now. Gone is the over emphasis on correcting spelling: correct spelling is now not an issue.

Children enter the room knowing exactly what is expected of them. Lunch boxes are neatly tucked into one set of cubbies, while ongoing work is slotted into various areas, correspondence (mail box) is sorted accordingly. The first twenty to twenty-five minutes is scheduled as a free choice time. The majority of the children choose to read either on their own or with others. Many choose this time to record books they would like the teacher to read to the class or books they themselves would like to read to the class. Lists are provided for this purpose. Once the class is organized, children are welcomed, and have adjusted themselves to an environment different from home, class begins. Joanne starts the day, as she did last year, greeting the children, listening to their tidbits of news, and looking at the few interesting things they may have brought in to share with her or the class.

This is not to be confused with the traditional show and tell where children compete to show off their belongings. Because of Joanne's love of literacy, children will bring in books, letters, cards, or writing they have done at home.

Joanne begins the writing workshop with a story. Today she focuses on the fact that most stories have a beginning, a middle, and an end. After reading the story, she asks what was the beginning, the middle, and the end. She then shares a story she is in the process of writing herself, the story does not have an ending. Children offer suggestions, ideas, and comments. She illustrates how the children may use this technique when they are conferencing.

Many changes are evident this year. The most outstanding is the lack of a set conference with specific people for correction and editing. As I mentioned earlier, children only confer when they wish and with whomever they wish. The only grammatical rule Joanne stresses at this time of the year (mid-November) is that a sentence begins with a capital and ends with a period. As Edelsky et al, (1991) point out, "*The rule about putting a capital at the start and a period at the end of sentences requires that a person have a sense of what a sentence is to begin with*" (p. 18-19).

Stories that the children complete and want published are typed by volunteer mothers, who come in during writing workshop periods to transcribe the children's stories into corrected form. Joanne explains her reasoning. Last year in grade two, she was quite able to read, or at least figure out what the children had written. However, this year in grade one, at the beginning of the year this task was problematic. She tried to get to each of the children to hear them read their stories and she tried to remember them. This was an unsuccessful procedure. Therefore she asked mothers to volunteer their time and come to listen to the stories the children have written. The mothers then note the child's name and write down the story on a separate sheet from the child's copy, as a record for Joanne. The

addition of volunteers this year has also freed Joanne to give more individual attention and guidance to her students. Other changes include a listening center with various books with accompanying audio cassettes, a quiet corner (named the desert) for children who would like to write without interruption, and a puppet theatre which houses only "French" speaking puppets.

In addition to some physical changes, Joanne has an extra teacher in her classroom to help a child with special needs. The child, as well as the students, and teacher are learning sign language together. As I questioned several children as to what languages they spoke, trying to identify second language learners, many said they spoke three languages: English, French, and sign language.

During writing workshop, I observe Joanne and her interactions with the children. The children have themselves taught Joanne about emerging literacy. A magic spark is ignited in Joanne as she witnesses a child's writing, which up until now had always been a long string of letters. She asks "why have you left spaces between the letters?" The child responds "because they are words and they are different from the word before and the word after". Joanne notes down in her records, this giant step in the child's literacy development. All notes are recorded on small adhesive sheets which are always handy to register individual observations. The small adhesive stickers are then sorted into the various evaluation files on each child. Joanne finds this new system of recording most effective. It is a tip she learned at a conference on whole language the previous summer.

Reflections. Joanne continues to follow her own beliefs as a teacher, as an individual, and as a professional who has constantly questioned her practices and has kept in touch with the literature, other professionals, and who refurbishes her knowledge through contacts at workshops and conferences.

Although there are many changes and improvements in Joanne's second year of teaching whole language, many practices remain the same. The underlying respect for the individual child, the ability to wait for development which the child will display, and the insight to act upon and guide growth remains constant with Joanne. For example, during the follow up at the end of the writing workshop, Joanne points out several incidents which had occurred during the period. Two boys have copied stories from books. First, Joanne explains that she is very happy it happened so that others will learn from it. The boys are off the hook and a scaled down talk on plagiarism follows. She stresses how they did not know that they shouldn't have copied and explains why people should not copy. The second incident reveals the strategy a child used to add more information to his story. The child wanted to add more to the middle of his story and therefore used arrows to indicate where sentences belonged for publishing purposes. Suggestions come from the children as to what they would do: add more pages at the end, staple papers to where the addition belonged, write in the margin... etc. The beginning of editing!

The atmosphere is one of relaxation, acceptance, challenge, excitement, warmth, caring, responsibility, and most of all, respect for all. What seemed to surface throughout the morning was a delightful interaction between the students themselves and the teacher. One could enjoy the ambience, easy social interactions, and the children's thirst for learning.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with a general interpretation of the three composite school settings observed and previously described. Brief interpretations of the 'traditional' and 'in transition' composite settings are then provided, followed by a more extensive interpretation of the whole language settings described. The question of the feasibility of whole language in French Immersion and issues of socio-economic concern are then addressed. The link between both second language theory and whole language theory then follows. Proposals for future research, recommendations and suggestions for teachers, consultants, and school administrators conclude the chapter.

INTERPRETATION OF THE THREE COMPOSITE PORTRAITS

In contrasting and comparing the different classes observed, it was found that the classes fell into two categories. As van Manen (1986) says, "*when we enter a classroom, we soon have a sense of what pedagogy is practised there*" (p. 34). The two categories are adapted from Bredekamp's (1986) list of Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8 (see Table II). Hilltop school and Joanne's whole language French Immersion fit under the column of "WHOLE LANGUAGE". The other settings (Mme Bernard's traditional French Immersion class and Mme Labelle's class in transition and Mountainview school) fit most appropriately under the "TRADITIONAL" column. Although one composite French Immersion setting described is labelled as 'in transition' because of the children's use of invented spelling and the teacher's willingness to learn more about whole language, the teaching and structure nonetheless remain very traditional.

TABLE II. A COMPARISON OF WHOLE LANGUAGE CLASSES*

WHOLE LANGUAGE

TRADITIONAL

Curriculum goals are:

- to develop children's self-esteem.
- to cultivate a sense of competence.
- to foster positive feelings toward learning.

- to conform to group expectations.
- to acquire specific academic skills.
- to achieve grade level predetermined goals.

Children are:

- unique individuals
- allowed to move at their own developmental pace

- a group norm
- measured to conform to a grade level

Activities are:

- a reflection of children's interests and suggestions
- worked cooperatively together
- enjoying quality literature
- real writing
- writing of their own choice using invented spelling
- writing is purposeful

- teacher-directed
- worked silently alone
- reading basal readers
- worksheets, workbooks
- writing efforts rejected if spelling is incorrect
- writing is taught as grammar and penmanship

Teachers:

- discuss
- encourage self-evaluation
- view the opportunity of literacy in all subject areas.

- lecture
- correct worksheets
- teach reading and writing only as a distinct subject.

* Adapted from Bredekamp's (1986) list of Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8.

Classrooms are complex environments much the same as families, communities, and society at large. Groups cannot be so rigidly divisible and classrooms are no exception. Children and teachers have different personalities, styles, attitudes, and different backgrounds. In my experience, I know of many traditional teachers who develop children's self-esteem, enjoy quality literature, and view the opportunity of literacy in all subject areas. Conversely, whole language teachers may lecture at times and have activities where children work alone. Table II. is not a check list to rate classrooms into two distinct categories, it is merely a guideline: a guideline to generalize, not to categorize and label.

INTERPRETATION OF TRADITIONAL SETTINGS

Eisner (1991) says, "if description can be thought of as giving an account of, interpretation can be regarded as accounting *for*" (p. 95). The descriptions of the traditional classes (Mountainview school and Mme Bernard's traditional French Immersion class) were descriptions of what IS happening in the traditional classes I observed. I have painted a rather harsh picture of how whole language can be misinterpreted. My description of misinterpretations observed gave the reader a vivid picture of what whole language is not. The interpretation of WHY teachers continue to teach traditionally is difficult to explain. I could retrace my steps to when I was a traditional teacher and doubted the introduction of whole language. The school board and the Ministry of Education were telling me and all the other teachers to change. These were some of my thoughts: "Why should I change?", "I was a 'good' teacher", "my students knew how to read and write at the end of grade one". Teachers at the time voiced similar opinions:

- "Why change when things are going fine?"
- "The higher-ups don't know, they are not in the classroom."

- "We have to teach the alphabet before they can write and that's only after Christmas."

A lot of the teachers were resistant to whole language in the late 70's and early 80's. The findings of this thesis show a similar resistance to whole language. Research conducted by Maguire (1989) on the English school system in Quebec, states comparable findings:

open-ended interviews indicate that we now have three groups of teachers attempting to deal with whole language:

- (1) reflective teachers who know about whole language;
- (2) eclectic teachers who know the blue book is the curriculum mandated by the ministry and have adopted some of the recommended practices in their classrooms; and
- (3) resistant and unreflective teachers who either have not grasped the concepts or refuse, for one reason or another, to examine and test the principles and concepts and consider any change in their classroom practices or teaching-learning ideology. (p. 152)

Why have some traditional teachers not progressed? Over the years, school boards have set up in-service courses, workshops, and seminars on whole language for teachers to attend. Nevertheless, some teachers remain resistant. Do some teachers remain traditional because of their firm belief in how children learn? The traditional teachers I described seem to view the children as half empty needing to be filled up. Some teachers appeared to think it was their responsibility to fill that void with their teaching and knowledge. "There are educators who believe that their own education is complete" van Manen (1989, p. 15). He adds, the "completed" educator tends to see children as incomplete. Freeman & Freeman (1992) express similar sentiments regarding second language learners; "...it is important to remember that second language learners are not deficient just because

they do not speak English (French, a second language)" (p. 40). Do teachers remain traditional because they are close to retirement, set in their ways, and do not see the point in changing the way they have taught for years? Previously, I thought that was one of the main reasons until I recently had the experience of meeting student teachers in their last year of university. For the most part, they too are quite traditional. Is it because they themselves have been traditionally taught? Do universities not teach prerequisite whole language courses when the Ministry of Education has mandated whole language for language arts programs? Perhaps, teachers are resistant to whole language because it was imposed on them? I do not have answers to these questions.

What I have found in speaking with student teachers and so many teachers in different schools is that they do not understand what whole language is. To fully appreciate and know what whole language is I had to read the literature, to attend courses, and to observe whole language teachers actually teaching in whole language classroom settings. The transition from being a traditional teacher to a whole language teacher takes a long time. My advice to whole language teachers is to tread softly with traditional teachers. As Harwayne (1993) says, "teachers who have taken a long time to accept whole language are thoughtful and reflective teachers who don't just blindly change without question or thought". Offer guidance and support without being judgemental.

INTERPRETATION OF CLASS IN TRANSITION

In discussing the traditional teacher's transition to whole language implementation at a workshop on whole language, one language arts consultant stated: "we know that children are at different stages in their literacy development, similarly teachers are at a variety of stages of development in understanding and implementing whole language". Many teachers remain quite traditional in their

thinking yet incorporate certain whole language 'activities'. As Edelsky et al (1991) assert,

..A classroom with literature studies, writing workshops, journals and so on is not necessarily a whole language classroom. What is essential, what makes a method 'whole language' are certain principles and beliefs... (p. 42).

Although teachers in transition may not have fully understood whole language principles and beliefs, children benefited from the whole language 'activities' teachers incorporated in their teaching. For example, I spoke of the 'roving basals' found at Mountainview. One language arts consultant worked around this problem by providing funds for the purpose of purchasing literature sets. Teachers could not buy thirty copies of one book, but could purchase, with guidance, up to five copies of the same book. One teacher, who had previously "done" Charlotte's Web for the last seven years with the whole class, was quite enthusiastic to arrange the class in different literature groups sharing thoughts, discussing characters, and predicting outcomes. That year the class read six novels instead of one.

In my experience, I have also witnessed teachers, traditional in many ways, but who encouraged their students to use invented spelling when writing. These reflective teachers in transition saw how the children's writing flowed when restrictions of correct spelling were lifted.

I have described how some of the "eclectic" teachers interpreted whole language practices and the "resistant" teachers who do not understand or do not even try to understand whole language. If whole language is to be more successfully implemented in French Immersion, we must first understand possible misinterpretation in the classroom, such as those I have presented in the findings section of this study. As Goodman (1989) requests, " *...research is needed on*

ways of supporting teachers and learners as they make transitions from traditional to holistic schooling" (p. 219). Somehow whole language advocates have to demonstrate to teachers that whole language is not a threat. Teachers trying to understand and implement whole language cannot be judged, criticized, or told what they can and cannot do in their own classrooms. One must be gentle and offer guidance only when asked for, and in a delicate manner.

INTERPRETATION OF WHOLE LANGUAGE SETTINGS

As Eisner (1991) states, "if description deals with what is, interpretation focuses upon why and how" (p. 98). Descriptions of the general atmosphere and physical set-up of both Hilltop school and whole language in French immersion reveal much of the teaching philosophy. How are these whole language classrooms set up? Tables, desks are grouped together. There are quiet areas, group areas, cosy areas, reference books, literature books, picture books, all kinds of books. In the writing workshop area there is a varied supply of paper, envelopes, poster board, pencils, crayons, and markers. Why are these important to the whole language classrooms? Working together in groups encourages children to talk, to share ideas, and to help one another. As Genesee (1987) cites Ellis (1984) on the topic of real discourse

communication must be negotiated rather than predetermined. In particular, there must not be rigid control over the language to be used (p. 184).

There is freedom, not only in movement around the room, but of choice. Freedom to work alone, or with others. Freedom to choose their own topic, topics and subjects that are both meaningful and interesting to the children. Stevens (1983) lists some of the following aspects of activity-centered methodology:

- *Students choose their own area to study.*
- *Students do whatever is necessary to find information required to pursue their projects.* (p. 261)

Ellis (1984) concurs by stating that, "*the learners must be allowed to use whatever resources, verbal or nonverbal, are at their disposal*" (p. 184). Writing tools are accessible and on hand when needed. Cooperation and risk taking are praised and encouraged.

A common denominator in both whole language classrooms observed is not only a passion for literacy development, but also a love of literature. Story is respected, treasured, savoured, and thoroughly enjoyed. Literature is used not only for its own sake but also as a base for learning. Children read literature, discuss it, respond to it, and write about it. Teachers expose the children to different genres and styles of writing. In turn, the children may incorporate some of the diverse techniques they have been exposed to into their own writing.

In discussing details of author's lives and commenting on the author's writing process, Harwayne (1992) believes that, "*much of this information can inspire children to lead wide-awake lives*" (p. 139). I concur with Harwayne (1990) "*that children take lessons from literature*" (p. 156). Writing connections are a valuable part of reading a story. Conversation is encouraged to relate the story to the children's own experiences. Discussion generates ideas. The story is used as a tool to promote discussion, to demonstrate one style of writing, to discuss words and language, and most importantly to enjoy books. Some stories are used to point out different beginnings, such as time related settings: "once upon a time", "one day", "a long time ago"; physical settings: "in the great green room", "in a dark deep forest", "at the edge of a village"; character introduction: "Alfie wanted to be a toymaker", "there was once a poor man". "this is a story of a girl".

Whole language teachers read stories to illustrate different writing techniques such as circle stories. Circle stories start in one location, travel around, and return to the beginning location. A good illustration of circle stories is "Oi, get off our train" by John Burningham. Teachers read stories to show how some authors use rhyme, rhythm, and/or repetition. As Peterson & Eeds (1990) conclude, "*Through the study of literature children will grow in their appreciation of the craft of writing and their own writing will benefit*" (p. 25).

Although Joanne embraces a whole language philosophy, there are undoubtedly a few discrepancies between whole language theory and her classroom practice. All teachers fall short of the ideal and Joanne is no exception. She is new to the teaching profession. Although Joanne abandons the overemphasis of correcting spelling she emphasized in her first year of teaching, she continues in her second year of teaching to require that the children start each sentence with a capital and end with a period. In a segment previously described, Joanne is delighted when one child leaves spaces in between the long string of letters he has written. How could she expect a child to begin a sentence with a capital and end with a period, when the child may not have the concept of a sentence and perhaps not even a full understanding of a word yet?

Joanne is the only whole language teacher in her school. She lacks the support system from fellow colleagues unlike the strong support felt at Hilltop school. This makes teaching whole language in a traditional environment very stressful. She might be tempted to follow in the footsteps of her colleagues by producing 'busy work' stencils that the other teachers kindly continue to supply her with. Although she is a reflective teacher and continues to attend conferences, workshops, and various association meetings on whole language, I can't help wondering if these outside supports will be enough to sustain her "true" spirit?

In describing what whole language is, Edelsky et al (1991) state three main issues:

- 1) *A key whole language belief is that reading and writing are learned through really reading and writing (not through doing reading and writing exercises).*
- 2) *Another whole language premise is that process, product, and content are all interrelated.*
- 3) *Still another whole language tenet is respect for and trust of teachers and learners. (p. 8-9)*

Hilltop school and Joanne's French Immersion class fit Edelsky et al's (1991) description of what a whole language setting should be. It is very evident in my descriptions of these two whole language settings that the kind of reading and writing the children do is not only authentic and purposeful but also enjoyable. They really read and write unlike the children in the other settings who do teacher-assigned reading and writing exercises. In discussing the communicative approach, Enright & McClosky (1985) state, "*children learn language by communicating rather than studying language as a curriculum subject.*" For example, we saw how Hilltop and the successful whole language French Immersion class are learning valuable information through the process (How do you write Canadian in Joanne's class?, How do you figure out what "wyl" is when reading a friend's writing?). The children learn through the process of reading and writing by making mistakes. Enright & McClosky (1985) maintain that, "*language use is encouraged by focusing on meaning rather than on correctness of form, regarding errors as part of the learning process*" (p.434-435). They learn by taking risks, guessing, making connections, and by learning from others. Stevens (1983) describes another feature of an activity-centered classroom, "*students use each other as well as the teacher as*

resource persons "(p. 261). They not only learn through the process but also through the product and content of that product. The class not only discusses, but also reads the stories, poems, lists, and songs the children have written. Enright & McClosky (1985) say, "*Children learn language through purposeful interaction within an environment that furnishes many opportunities to practice language in a variety of contexts*" (p. 434-436). And lastly, respect and trust are very evident in observing the class interactions in both the Hilltop school and Joanne's classroom. Teachers and students are enthusiastic and spirited about learning. Authenticity and reflectivity are words that describe the whole language teachers I observed.

The general atmosphere of the two whole language environments is very similar. The children and teachers in both the English and French immersion whole language classroom appear open, trusting, and honest. Both children and teachers take literacy very seriously and celebrate learning. Teachers listen to what the children have to say, seize opportunities to stretch knowledge further, and respond to the children's needs. The teachers set high standards for the children's work and the children's efforts to meet those standards are supported and guided by the teachers. As van Manen (1989) writes, "*A sensitive teacher is able to create or foster an atmosphere that is productive for certain kinds of living and learning*" (p. 33).

IS IT FEASIBLE TO IMPLEMENT WHOLE LANGUAGE IN FRENCH IMMERSION?

Joanne believes it is possible to implement whole language in French Immersion. She says that it would be unrealistic to say that differences do not exist between first and second language settings. The differences she sees are at the level of oral communication. This difference does not change her style of teaching.

She observes where children are in their literacy development and guides them a step further. Her classroom library spills over with all kinds of books. Children are encouraged to read one of the library books each evening. Many of the books are translations of English books. There are easy predictable books with lots of repetition, rhyming books, riddles, jokes, and stories with repetitive verses.

Children are also often invited to speak French. Many opportunities are provided to communicate their opinions, ideas, needs, and feelings. As Stevens (1983) discusses activity-centered classrooms, "*there is no attempt to structure linguistic content*" (p. 261). The classroom atmosphere in non-threatening and risk-taking is respected and commended. Freeman & Freeman (1992) say,

*Risk taking occurs more often with authentic assignments.
In whole language classrooms where teachers involve
students in meaningful, authentic activities, students take
risks, and in this process, they learn. (p.76)*

Joanne believes it is important that the children have the freedom to express themselves, both orally and in writing in French. Ellis (1984) maintains that one of the features of real discourse in the classroom is that "*there must be a communicative purpose, not merely a pedagogic one*" (p.184).

I agree that whole language is feasible in French Immersion. Freeman & Freeman (1992) concur, "*whole language may be the only road to success for bilingual learners*" (p. 5). Whole language advocates maintain that children's environment be "*littered in print*" (Harste, 1988). Goodman (1986) asks, "*Is your classroom environment a literate environment?*" (p. 70). What better environment than Quebec to expose children to the French language? It is the most positive reason I can think of to explain the laws concerning French signs. An incident with one of my daughters (aged four) illustrates this point. While parked in front of a bowling alley, she asked "what is the first letter in that sign?" Without

much thought I answered, "Q". She then questioned me about the bowling pin on the sign. It was when she asked, "but where's the B" that I realized she was trying to read the sign and couldn't make sense of QUILLE. We then had a wonderful discussion about French and English labelling, which progressed in the future to signs for apartments to rent, popsicle wrappers, bus advertisement, etc. Not only do we have access to French or bilingual signs in our environment, but we also have fabulous opportunities to use grocery item packaging, flyers from grocery stores, toy stores, and consumer magazines, where the print is in both English and French.

Environmental print is just a small factor that favours implementation of whole language in Quebec French Immersion programs. More significant reasons underlie my belief that whole language is applicable to French Immersion. The most important reason, I believe, is to give children a voice. Not only a voice to give opinions, share thoughts, and express ideas, but also, to provide children with freedom of speech to converse, learn and teach fellow classmates. During my observations of teacher-directed French Immersion settings, the silence I heard was unsettling to me. How can you learn to speak a second language if you are not allowed to talk? It is my belief that children's voices should not only be heard in unilingual mother tongue classrooms. Immersion children, too need a voice.

Living in Quebec, it is not uncommon to meet people who have learned to speak French "on the street". These people grew up in French environments and played in French. Whole language classrooms are the closest arrangement I can think of that would best resemble a natural setting to play, learn, and live a second language. As mentioned in chapter two, whole language theory encourages risk taking, respects mistakes as a learning process, and fosters self-confidence. These attributes can help make a "good language learner". Also in chapter two, I point out the importance of meaningful communication. How can children be asked to

write about a visit to a sugar shack for a sugaring off party from a story in their basal reader? Goodman (1986) asks, "*are your pupils involved in authentic speech and literacy events?*" (p. 70). Actually going on such an outing would create a relevant experience with meaning. You can't imagine the taste, smell, or feel of maple syrup: you have to experience it. As Enright & McClosky (1985) maintain, "*communication is most likely to occur when it is meaningful, interesting, and connected to concrete experiences and children's background knowledge*" (p. 434-436).

Not only do I feel that it is feasible for whole language to be implemented in French Immersion, but also that it is beneficial for all children. The belief that whole language is beneficial and advantageous for all children brings forth discussion on issues concerning socioeconomic status, which I will address in the following section.

SOCIOECONOMIC CONCERNS

One might argue that the difference in socioeconomic status of the children at Hilltop and the children at Mountainview plays a role in the different teaching styles described in the findings section of the study. Hilltop children do come from middle and upper class families, French Immersion Ecole Trinité is a middle class school, and Mountainview children are from lower class families, and sometimes deprived homes. Does this mean that whole language is only suitable for "rich" children. I do not believe so. On the contrary, poor, deprived, and needy children are the ones who would benefit the most, in my opinion, from whole language teaching.

In an interview with Ken Goodman, several scholars and educators discuss teaching, learning, and issues critical in education. Goodman (1989) says, "whole language is very appropriate in other situations like French Immersion and special

education because it doesn't set any floors and ceilings" (p. 49). Whole language teachers do not set specific norms for children to meet in a specific time frame. For example, grade one children do not have to achieve a grade 1.5 reading score by Christmas. Goodman (1989) continues to say, "the issue is how much can the kid grow, how much can the kid learn, and what kinds of natural ways can we find to involve those kids in authentic experiences whatever their backgrounds, problems, or special needs" (p. 49). It is for this same reason that I believe whole language is appropriate for all children, regardless of class. From my experiences, I have seen whole language in inner city schools work where poor children learn and succeed. All children need the chance to succeed. Socioeconomic status should not be an issue that is of concern to whole language teaching, because whole language teachers view each child from where each child is developmentally and helps each child to expand that development further.

As mentioned earlier, not only is whole language beneficial for all children, it is also most appropriate for children in French Immersion settings. The following section discusses links I have found between whole language and second language theory.

THE LINK BETWEEN WHOLE LANGUAGE AND SECOND LANGUAGE THEORY

Goodman, (1989) states that "the theory and practice of whole language are solidly based in fundamental research on language, learning, literacy development, and the relation of teaching to learning" (p. 216). Lightbown & Spada (1993) state that, "both second language research and second language teaching have been influenced by theories of how children acquire their first language" (p. xiv).

Ellis (1985) maintains that "second language acquisition studies have from the outset owed a great deal to the methodology and theory of first language acquisition research" (p. 284). "Second language researchers", Ellis (1985) adds,

"have always felt free (if not obligated) to make reference to first language acquisition, but it is interesting to note that this attention is not often repaid by first language researchers" (p. 284). Similarly, most first language acquisition theorists do not specifically refer to whole language theory nor do they actively advocate whole language practice.

A minor link, yet a common view of traditional learning is shared by both theories. Both whole language advocates and second language theorists reject the behaviouristic (traditional) view of learning. Lightbown & Spada (1993) explain, "As in first language acquisition, the behaviourist account has proven to be at best an incomplete explanation of second language acquisition... researchers have moved on to new more complex theories of learning" (p. 25). However, I could not find much evidence (except for Freeman & Freeman, 1992) that second language theorists are looking at whole language theory as one of the "new more complex theories of learning". Another important link between second language and whole language theory is concentration on meaningful learning. Lightbown & Spada (1993) cite Krashen, "We acquire (second language) as we engage in meaningful interaction in the second language - in much the same way that children pick up their first language - with no attention to form" (p. 27). 'Meaning' related practices are central components to learning in both whole language classrooms and second language settings. Goodman (1986) says, "to be successful, school second language programs must incorporate authentic functional language opportunities" (p. 17). Ellis (1985) writes, "the immersion classroom and in some cases also the bilingual classroom are more likely to closely resemble natural environments in that the kind of discourse observed there is more likely to be characterized by the negotiation of meaning" (p. 150). Goodman (1986) adds, "the key to immersion programs in second language learning is the fact that learners are involved in real speech and literacy events" (p. 43).

Issues surrounding rules (grammar and phonics) are coincidentally of great debate among second language theorists and the target of great controversy among educators about whole language. Lightbown & Spada (1993) cite recent research findings which state that "instruction which focuses primarily on meaning but allows for a focus on grammar within meaningful contexts, works best" (p. 99). Quantitative tests have not been conclusive as to which approach or which combination of approaches is the best. Similarly, the controversy on grammar, spelling and teaching phonics in whole language reflects one of teachers' biggest misconceptions about whole language. Some believe whole language is a laissez-faire free for all. It is not. It is structured, organized, and with purpose. Whole language has a progressive direction. Grammar, phonics, and spelling ARE taught. However they are taught within a meaningful context, not a class lesson. The focus is on what children are constructing.

More research is needed in finding possible links between whole language and second language theory. For example, I have only skimmed the surface by pointing out the common controversy of rules and grammar. Correction is another area that has generated much research in second language. Research investigating issues surrounding correction, spelling mistakes in the case of whole language, and correcting oral errors in the case of second language research, would be very beneficial should whole language be implemented in French immersion.

The following section begins by addressing this very topic, future research. Recommendations for teachers, administrators, and researchers interested in whole language teaching and the implementation of whole language in French Immersion settings will then follow.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Two separate scenarios of children's writing illustrate possible areas for future research. I have observed several children who had previously written reams and reams of descriptive stories in whole language settings yet who could not think of ideas to write about when they moved into traditional classroom settings. Not only was there a lack of ideas, there was also a lack of content. Their writing became stifled, limited, and boring. It is upsetting to witness children who one year loved to write beautiful chapter stories change to dreading the writing period, producing short, boring pieces the following year. I suspect the overemphasis on correct spelling, neatness, and teacher selected topics play a key role in the change of their writing style. Maguire (1987) found that when teachers corrected children's spelling, the children wrote less.

Another incident that I found very interesting and worth recounting, occurred in Joanne's whole language French Immersion class. Four children from a very traditional class, who could not attend their own class field trip, came to spend the morning in Joanne's second grade class. During writing workshop, these children built walls out of books around their writing. They appeared tense and were reluctant to begin any writing. Those who did attempt to write, erased over and over again. Some copied texts from books. Their eyes kept darting to Joanne and myself, as some of the other children in Joanne's class came to help them. Perhaps their discomfort and uneasiness was due to the evident freedom the other children felt in helping them with their work. Or did they lack the self-confidence to take risks in writing?

The following are possible areas for future research:

- 1) Case studies of children who have been in traditional classes one year and move into whole language classroom the following year might prove to be an interesting area to research. Conversely, future research on children's writing when they

move from whole language settings into traditional environments might be of value.

2) Also of value might be future research of interviews with teachers who have successfully made the transition from traditional teaching to whole language. These interviews might shed some insight into what was helpful, required and useful for them in making the transition.

3) The links between whole language and second language theory might include investigations on issues concerning spelling, grammar, and correction should whole language be implemented in French Immersion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This section begins with some recommendations to teachers, language arts consultants, and school administrators. The recommendations are applicable to both English and French Immersion settings. Words of advice to beginning teachers and student teachers conclude this segment.

Many of the practices, language activities, and school policies tried in many of the English schools might be beneficial to French Immersion schools should whole language be adopted. The first six recommendations are strategies I have seen in action that, even with the most traditional teachers, have produced steps towards change. Baby steps I must say, but progress nevertheless.

- 1) Hire qualified, knowledgeable, and sensitive language arts consultants.
- 2) Restrict budgets for buying thirty copies of literature. Recommend literature sets (3-5 books) instead. Encourage, with guidance from informed literary experts, the purchase of "good" literature.

- 3) Invite storytellers, children's authors, and illustrators to visit classrooms and/or schools.
- 4) Stimulate children's writing by printing a special anthology of young writers.
- 5) Celebrate reading and writing with book fairs, displays of children's authentic writing, and shared reading and writing.
- 6) Invite different grade levels to read and write to each other.

I recommend that teachers learn the theory of first language acquisition in order to better understand children's literacy development, which is the base of whole language. Teachers should also keep abreast of the research literature, attend workshops, conferences, and join various teaching associations. Support groups are needed for reflective teachers. Language arts consultants and school administrators must also educate themselves in the theory of first language acquisition as well the literature on whole language. Traditional teachers and teachers in transition need knowledgeable personnel to consult and to provide guidance.

A WORD OF ADVICE

Students who may be just entering the teaching profession should be aware that although whole language has been officially implemented for over ten years in the language arts program, many misconceptions and misinterpretations exist. Student teachers should assess classroom environments with a critical eye, or as Eisner's (1991) book title suggests, an enlightened eye. It is easy to doubt oneself and be swayed by well-meaning seasoned teachers with quiet classes doing busy work. That kind of teaching is easy. Whole language teaching is hard work for both the teacher and the children - hard work worth celebrating.

CONCLUSION

"Whole language gets us in trouble", says Harwayne (1993), "it sounds cute". It does not sound very academic to describe how very important it is to care and love children. I must admit I am hesitant to say what I instinctively know. And that is, that as teachers we must love and care about the children we teach. Although it sounds glib, honeyed, and non-academic, academics are in fact talking about these very sentiments. For example, a keynote speaker at a teachers' seminar said, "*it is the teacher's responsibility to love the children as if they were their own*" (McKenna, 1993). He adds, "*kids don't care what you know but want to know that you care*". Calkins (1991) writes, "*We don't need to be Superteachers to teach children to write, but we do need to love and respect our children and to help them love and respect each other - and themselves* (p. 14). Harwayne (1993) expressed similar feelings in her lecture at a teachers' convention. She used Donald Graves' phrase "*smart love*" to describe the kind of love teachers need for their children. Harwayne (1993) continued to say that "*children care not only about themselves but about each other and that teachers should make children feel special, welcomed, and cared about every day at school*".

This thesis has enabled the reader to enter into different classrooms, to witness a variety of language activities, and to sense different classroom atmospheres. My intent was to portray whole language in action and to illustrate misconceptions and misinterpretations of whole language by describing the various classrooms I observed in my search for whole language in French Immersion. The reality that antiquated traditional teaching in both English and French Immersion settings still exists should not discourage or influence teachers. Whole language teachers must continue to teach and learn with the children, in the way they believe is in the best interest of the children. It is important to remember that we have also

seen the fact that whole language is alive in some English schools and is progressing and moving into second language classrooms. Change takes time.

In describing certain teaching strategies, teachers priorities and attitudes were depicted. My purpose was not to describe "good" and "bad" teachers, but rather to demonstrate alternative ways teachers teach. The descriptions of the traditional settings I observed in this thesis are reflected by the following citation Calkin's (1991) refers to concerning Goodland's (1984) study of American schools.

Goodland (1984) found that emotional neutrality and student passivity are the norm in American education. Children sit passively at their desks and listen with glassy eyes. They expect someone to tell them what to do. They go through the motions of filling out dittos, answering reading questions, doing math exercises, copying off a chalkboard-and when the school day is over, they burst through the schoolhouse and into their lives. (p. 13)

I can envision the children Goodland (1984) describes, as they mirror the children in my findings in the traditional settings I observed and described. However, this study also reports quite an opposing view of children in different learning environments. The children, I describe in whole language settings, bring their lives into the classroom. They are actively involved, enthusiastic about learning, and have ownership of their education. Some of the prominent features of the whole language settings are: productive activities of children interacting in groups, opportunities for children to express themselves, and meaningful, relevant experiences.

The finding that whole language teaching is not only evident in English school settings but also is alive in French Immersion is an answer to my initial query at the beginning of this thesis. I now know that whole language in French

Immersion would be a more pleasant way to learn French. Whole language teachers respect the children's lives and hear their voices. French Immersion children also need a voice. Without children's voices, how can teachers learn? As van Manen (1986) knows,

All that is required is that we listen to children and learn from them. In this, children are our teachers. (p. 13)

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Chers parents,

Je suis une étudiante, qui fait des études à l'University Concordia. Mes intérêts sont partout dans la philosophie de "whole language" et de l'écriture des enfants dans une langue seconde. J'ai déjà observé beaucoup de classes dans la région de Montréal et j'étais vraiment excitée quand j'ai vu la classe de

. Je voudrais observer sa méthode d'enseigner et décrire comment les enfants écrivent dans cet environnement si naturel et positif.

est d'accord pour que je vienne pour observer la classe durant les périodes d'écriture deux ou trois fois par semaine jusqu'au milieu de juin. Dans mes écritures, il n'y aurait pas de mention du nom de l'école, du professeur, ni des enfants.

Si vous avez des questions, des suggestions, je suis disponible en tout temps.

Sincèrement,

Kathy Burke

Date: _____

Signature: _____

APPENDIX A

Dear parents.

I am a graduate student studying at Concordia University. My interests are in the whole language philosophy of teaching and in the writing process of second language learners. After many observations of classrooms in and around Montreal, I was delighted to find _____ class. I wish to observe her teaching method and incorporate the children's writing in my description of such a positive learning environment. May it be assured that the school, the teacher, and the children will remain anonymous in my research.

_____ has agreed that I may come and observe her writing workshop period, which varies from twice to three times a week and is approximately one hour in duration, until the middle of June.

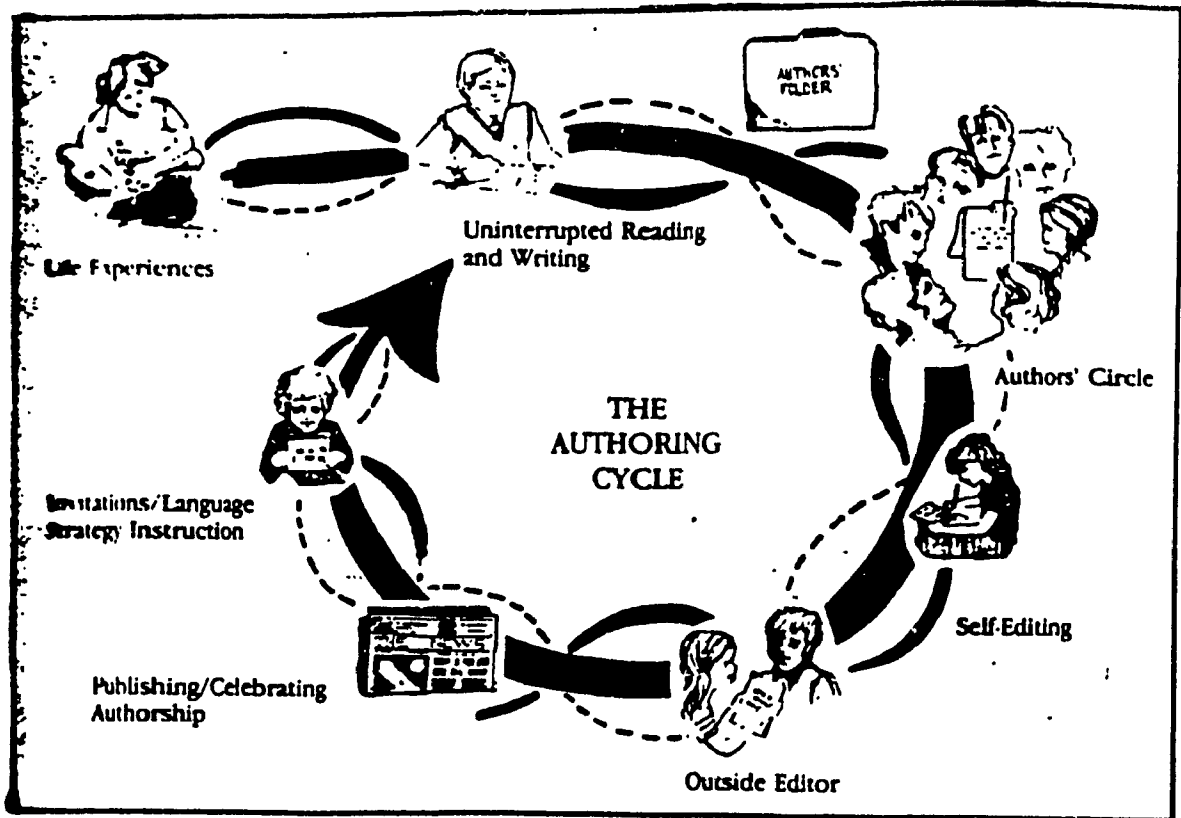
Should you have any questions, inquiries, or suggestions please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely yours,

Kathy Burke

Please sign and return in order to verify your awareness of my presence in your child's class. Thank you for your time and attention.

APPENDIX B



From Harste, J., Short, K., & Burke, C. (1988).
Creating classrooms for authors: The reading - writing
connection. (p.55)