

THE RELATIONSHIP OF WRITING INSTRUCTION TO GRADE 4 TO 6  
STUDENTS' REFLECTIVE ACCOUNTS AND THEIR WRITTEN PRODUCTS

ACCEPTED

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### ABSTRACT

The research documented in this dissertation examined the language-related instructional contexts for writing in two intermediate classrooms spanning grades four to six. In addition, students' understanding of those contexts and the nature of the writing produced therein were studied. The three areas explored through this research include: (a) the teacher's instructional language during writing events (what was said), (b) the nature of the writing produced by the students (what was done), and (c) the students' reflective accounts about writing (what was understood). Specifically, this inquiry investigated the writing-related activities of two teachers and twelve students from two elementary classrooms spanning grades four to six over a five-month period (October, 1991 to February, 1992). The students were selected in consultation with the teachers on the basis of providing a group in each class representing both genders at various levels of writing development. Guided by previous research findings, the study documented students' evident understanding of: (a) what good writers do, (b) principal audience for their writing, (c) the goals and purposes of writing tasks, (d) themselves as writers, and (e) the value of writing. Data collection procedures included formal and informal interviews, extensive classroom observations, and

attention to the writing produced by the students throughout the study.

By documenting students' evident understanding of specific aspects of their teachers' instructional language, it was concluded that one's perception of instruction is a valuable and necessary source of information and one that appears to mediate between teaching and learning how to write. On the basis of the evidence provided here, an interplay between instructional language and students' level of writing development contribute to students' evident understanding of the nature of instruction. These results suggest that teachers need to employ procedures that reveal or make transparent students' understanding of their writing instruction. Such procedures may be valuable for teachers and students alike. For students, as they become aware of their own thoughts about writing and its instruction, they may begin to see what they are able to do and what they might do. Hearing what students say about writing and how it is taught permits teachers to better assess students' needs in order to provide useful instruction that builds on their students' evident understanding of writing.

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**DEDICATION**

*To my mom and dad,  
my most beloved teachers*

*To Nan,  
my inspiration*

*To Jesse,  
my hope*

*To Glenn and Amy,  
my love*

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background to the Study

Schooling is considered to be a transactive process in which written literacy stands as one of its ultimate aims. From a very early age, children are called upon to write in school. Current views of composing indicate that school-related writing tasks occur in a variety of settings, use different forms, and are undertaken for various purposes (Frederiksen & Dominic, 1981; Graves, 1983). Most writing tasks occur within a social context in which language is central to how people "read one another's behavior, interpret who we are and what we are doing now, and simultaneously act in terms of those interpretations" (Dorr-Bremme, 1990, p. 381).

In addition, teachers attempt to bring about understandings in children using language as the means of communicating the knowledge deemed important and useful in curricula (Kress, 1985; Lemke, 1985). Language has been characterized as the primary determinant of learning in classrooms:

Classroom equipment, spatial arrangement, or social groupings of teachers and students are not the primary determinants of learning. What is important is what is communicated in the classroom as a result of complex processes of interaction among educational goals, background knowledge, and what various participants perceive over time as taking place. (Gumperz, 1981, p. 5)

The task, then, for those interested in children's understanding of school-related writing, is to discover what it means to engage in the process of writing and "explicate the contexts in which children must act" (Bloome & Neito, 1990, p. 258).

Previous research demonstrates that classroom language, educational goals, and participants' perceptions and background knowledge influence and guide learning in schools. Researchers have, in the past, elected to treat these aspects of the classroom as separate and distinct entities. For example, considerable research is available in the areas of classroom language (Adelman, 1981; Cazden, 1988; Sinclair & Brazil, 1982; Stubbs, 1976; Willes, 1983), teacher and student perceptions (Bloome & Neito, 1990; Dyson, 1985; Fraser, 1986; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1983), and literacy goals (Graves, 1983; Harste, Burke, & Woodward, 1982; Holdaway, 1979).

While the research areas of (a) classroom language, (b) students' perceptions, and (c) writing instruction have been linked theoretically, few studies have examined the relationship among these variables. Morine-Dershimer's (1985) sociolinguistic study of second-, third-, and fourth-grade classrooms is a notable exception. This research attempted to study how participants, children and teachers, understand classroom language and how their understanding might be related to learning. Specifically, six 30-minute

language arts lessons, covering a variety of topics, were video-taped and examined. Participants' perceptions of the language in use during the lessons also were gathered. Morine-Dersheimer "found that achievement seemed to be related to a close 'fit' between pupil perspectives and interpretations and the teacher's use of classroom language" (Pinnell & Jaggar, 1991, p. 708). Given these results, it seems important to ask if and how classroom language, as it is related to writing instruction, affects students' understanding of the tasks they perform in that curriculum area.

#### **Students' Understanding of Writing**

A comprehensive literature review on student thought processes (Wittrock, 1986) indicates that studies on student perceptions have been designed to discover how students rate teachers, teaching processes, and academic climates. Perceptions are often narrowly defined as pertaining to very specific and pre-determined areas of study. For the most part, these studies used forced-choice questionnaires with large numbers of students to correlate what they term "student perceptions" with another aspect of schooling such as achievement (Fraser, 1986). In these studies, students were asked to choose between a limited number of options presented to them on a questionnaire, which may or may not accurately indicate their perceptions. Researchers then attempted to discover uniformity or similar patterns of

response among students in order to indicate significant correlations between variables. By highlighting similar response patterns, the tendency has been to either mask individual variation or not to account for it. Wittrock (1986) concluded that students do not perceive the teacher's actions in the same, or in a uniform, way. Such general findings usefully inform us, as educators, about the complexity of classrooms and students' experiences. Relatively little research is available that focusses on particular instructional contexts and individual participant perceptions.

A number of recent studies have focussed on students' perceptions of school-related writing tasks, mainly to investigate what writers do when they are writing. Harlin and Lipa (1991) indicated that the majority of research reported in this area of inquiry is based on direct observation in classrooms or by administering forced-choice questionnaires to large samples of children. However, these results offer limited information that can be helpful in the improvement of teaching, because a focus on observing group patterns is maintained and there is little attempt to locate individual participants' own articulated understanding of events within the classroom context.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that a writer's own understanding of composition influences the entire process, from what information is perceived to be

necessary, to how it is selected, organized and presented (Wittrock, 1986). Only occasionally, however, have researchers attempted to interview children as "chief curriculum informants" (Cairney, 1988, p. 420), about their understanding of writing, as has more often occurred in the field of reading (Bloome & Neito, 1990; Cairney, 1988; Tierney, Bridge, & Cera, 1979; Wixson, Bosky, Yochum, & Alvermann, 1984).

Tierney (1991), in summarizing studies of reading and writing growth, called on researchers to ask themselves to identify children's views of literacy. He referred to a shift away from studying writing itself to studying what children think about writing.

The role of the writing environment and the instructional language therein is often cited as an influential factor as children make sense of a writing activity (Applebee, 1984; Hillocks, 1986). However, agreement does not exist as to the nature and impact of the specific features of that environment (Indrisano & Paratore, 1991).

### **Writing in the Classroom Context**

From a social-contextualist perspective, writing is both a communicative and a social process. Dyson and Freedman (1991) explain:

Both the social and cognitive consequences of written language, then, depend upon the specific nature of the written language events, including

the goals and the cognitive processes those events entail. In other words, it is not writing per se but the sorts of social situations in which writing is embedded that determine its ultimate humane effects. (p. 756)

As such, it is unlikely that all children, even in the same situation, will hold similar views of writing (Bloome & Neito, 1990).

Heath's (1983) study of literacy in varied cultural groups found that reading and writing are influenced by the social milieu in which they occur. The research was conducted in three settings - two working-class communities and one middle-class community - and showed that in each social group, literacy shapes and is shaped by the larger social, cultural, and historical context. While individuals from the three communities used written language to accomplish functional tasks, only the middle-class community used writing in ways comparable to those dominant in schools. Thus, children arrived at school in command of a variety of perceptions about writing that invariably influenced their writing performance. An implication of this study is that researchers working in a variety of social settings require insight into children's understanding of writing in order to help teachers make informed decisions about their instructional programs.

Emig (1981) suggests the existence of a "gap" between what teachers teach about writing and what children come to know about the process. She calls it "magical thinking"

(p. 21) to believe that children learn exactly what is taught. Data indicates there is "at best an indirect relation between what children are taught about writing and what they learn" (Gundlach, 1981, p. 134). Furthermore, "the actual [as opposed to the intended] curriculum consists in the meanings enacted or realized by a particular teacher and class" (National Institute of Education, 1974, p. 1).

The literature on classroom language can inform efforts designed to gain insight into the social context of learning, particularly as it pertains to writing (Cazden, 1988). Instructional language is one of the observable ways in which teachers reveal their goals for learning (Clark & Florio, 1983). In other words, "writing is taught as teachers and children talk about writing" (Dyson & Freedman, 1991, p. 757).

The relationship between instructional language and children's understanding of writing remains largely unexplored and overlooked in previous research claiming a panoramic presentation of the influences of schools (Cuban, 1984; Goodlad, 1984; Lortie, 1975). Consequently, the social nature of writing suggests the importance of studying classroom language in order to understand characteristics of children's views of writing. This, in turn, could have instructional implications for writing in classrooms.

### Research Questions

The following research questions guided the inquiry process in this study:

1. From the children's perspectives, what is the nature of their understanding of writing? Specifically, what are children's evident understanding of:

- (a) what good writers do?
- (b) principal audience for their writing?
- (c) the goals and purposes of writing tasks?
- (d) themselves as writers?
- (e) the value of writing?

The data used to answer research question one, parts (a) through (e), were derived from multiple and varied methodologies. During the first month of study, parent questionnaires were sent home with all children in both classrooms. Classroom observations were conducted over five months during which informal interview data were gathered from the children. Then, during the fifth month of study, formal interviews were conducted with the participants.

2. What is the relationship between children's evident understanding of writing and the teacher's instructional language during writing sessions? Data consisted of classroom observations, gradually increasing from two- to nine-hour weekly visits in each room over the five-month period. More than 100 hours of classroom observation and recorded instructional language resulted. Informal

interviews also were conducted with the participants during observation times. The teachers were formally interviewed during the fifth month of the study.

**3. What is the relationship between children's evident understanding of writing and their written products?**

Children in both classrooms maintained writing folders throughout the school year. All of the children's writing from their folders was photocopied and examined to identify the kinds of writing in which they were engaged.

**Definition of Terms**

Several key terms are used throughout this report, and these are defined below.

**Writing**

Murray (1980) defines writing as "the process of using language to discover meaning in experience and to communicate it" (p. 86). In the past, the term "writing" has frequently referred both to handwriting and copying, in addition to crafting and authoring (Moffet, 1979).

For the present study, the focus has been restricted to writing as crafting and authoring. Specifically, crafting is the development of units of discourse into meaningful patterns and authoring is the elaboration of inner speech into outer discourse for a specific purpose and a specific audience (Moffet, 1979).

### Transactional Writing

This term was used by Britton (1975) to indicate informative types of writing, whereby the primary purpose is "to transfer information between reader and writer." It may be intended to record, report, inform, persuade, instruct, inquire, or bring about any other sort of informational exchange" (Tamor & Bond, 1983, p. 115).

### Expressive Writing

Expressive writing incorporates "the notion that students might write simply to express their own ideas, ideals, frustrations, gripes and reactions to situations" (Kinneavey, 1991, p. 637). This type of writing includes those instances in which writers have no intended readers except for themselves. Due to the nature of school-related writing, the presence and demands of a teacher, it has been suggested that most expressive writing is also written for readers.

### Students' Understanding of Writing

The term "understanding" is defined conventionally as:

. . . Knowledge of or familiarity with a particular thing. Random House Dictionary

. . . having knowledge or judgement. Oxford English Dictionary

For purposes of this study, Bloome and Neito's (1990) definition of children's understanding of basal readers has been adopted and modified to indicate that understanding of

writing refers to "children's understanding of the social and academic significance, meaning and consequence of writing" (p. 258). Clay (1991) observed that it is impossible to have a definitive description of another's knowledge processes, but through procedures of observation and interview, it may be possible to describe one's evident understanding of particular aspects of writing. The phrase students' evident understanding of writing was adopted to indicate the difficulty of accessing an individual's understanding in a definitive sense. In addition, the phrase is used to indicate that students' understanding of writing was observed through a variety of methods. These aspects include students' evident understanding of:

- (a) what good writers do, (b) principal audience in writing,
- (c) the goals and purposes of writing, (d) themselves as writers, and (e) the value of writing.

### **Reflective Accounts**

In this study, a reflective account is a text produced orally by a child and an interviewer in which the child talks about writing in response to semi-structured open-ended questions. The account was transcribed and used for further discussion. In the area of reading research, interviews have been recognized as effective techniques for accessing teachers' and children's perceptions, attitudes and beliefs (Mangano & Allan, 1986).

### Instructional Language

Oral language is the primary medium through which the business of learning is carried out in the classroom (Cazden, 1986) and is considered to be one of the dominant contextual influences in learning, and specifically, in learning to write. Instructional language, in this study, refers to teacher talk during writing sessions. As such, it includes instructional language used during daily writing sessions. What the teacher said to set up the writing task, monitor its progress, and end the session was included as instructional language. In addition, teacher language used during individual writing conferences was defined as instructional language.

### Crafting

Crafting is defined in this study as the incorporation of particular instructional strategies for writing as outlined by Graves (1983). According to Graves, teaching writing as crafting involves the teacher as a writer during instruction. In addition, crafting means providing instruction through individual conferences, asking students questions as they write, and providing choice in topic selection.

### Significance of the Study

The relationship between context, as defined as instructional language, and student learning is a complex

one. By investigating children's understanding through the use of observation and interview techniques, "a glimpse is provided into the thinking and written language development of children" (Haussler, 1985, p. 30). It has been suggested that perception is the primary medium connecting teaching and learning and it is this medium that requires further investigation. This study allows for simultaneous study of process and product in writing and attempts to address the criticism that, "the end-product does not necessarily reflect all the knowledge assessed and used during composition" (Stein, 1986, p. 227).

Teachers make assumptions concerning the degree to which children share with their teachers a common understanding of writing (Freeman & Saunders, 1987). Such assumptions have consequences for instructional planning and for expectations of children's written products. It is of current interest to researchers to consider what children themselves say about writing in order to understand better what it means to write and the instructional implications therein.

As researchers focus on the complexity of teaching writing in classrooms, the following observation is noteworthy. Dyson and Freedman (1991) suggest that:

Despite teachers' best intentions for planning productive writing activities, students may not interpret those writing opportunities as teachers have planned them. The writing opportunities seemingly available to students from a teacher's or an observer's point of view may not, in fact,

be realized in students' interpretations of those events. (p. 757)

It is also worthwhile to highlight Bruner's (1982) observation that the teaching of any task is not intrinsically difficult once insight is gained into the learner's point of view. Such insight and the corresponding language for presenting tasks could help teachers and curriculum writers represent material in ways that acknowledge students' own meaning-making strategies. By studying students' understanding of the writing instruction they receive, it may be possible to offer teaching suggestions that take into account the students' viewpoint.

The grade four or intermediate level (approximately grade 3-7) represented an age group not previously researched in this area of children's understanding of writing. In addition, previous studies indicated that younger children produced vague and general responses during an interview procedure (Cairney, 1988; Wixson, Bosky, Yochum & Alvermann, 1984).

In addition, this study of children's evident understanding of writing combines examination of recorded teacher language, children's reflective accounts of writing, and their written products. Accordingly, it adopts a situation-based view of writing that "move(s) us toward a more expansive view of the child's reading and writing development" (Tierney, 1991, p. 180). This multi-method approach appears increasingly able to examine writing

instruction from several vantage points in order to offer a comprehensive account of writing-related activities in school settings. The strength of this kind of research, that is, studying small groups using a variety of methodological procedures, lies in its ability to address individual and idiosyncratic approaches to writing.

The results may inform educators in several ways. First, insight may be gained into both common and diverse patterns of understanding among individual children experiencing the same instructional program. Second, as researchers continue to describe aspects of the classroom context, qualities of classrooms that appear beneficial to writing growth may become evident. Third, insight into children's understanding of writing in school may lead teachers to examine their own instructional practices in this area and suggest alternate or additional procedures. Finally, this study may provide insight into a methodological approach of planned pluralism by examining the various research methodologies into written composition and their underlying assumptions.

#### Theoretical Assumptions

The theoretical assumptions listed below provided the guiding principles for this study on students' evident understanding of writing in school.

### Epistemology

1. The development of literacy may be viewed from a constructivist perspective. Based on the learning strategies of early language acquisitions, children appear to construct meaning during the activities of reading, writing, listening or speaking (Bissex, 1980; Donaldson, 1978; Harste, Burke & Woodward, 1984; Wells, 1986). This perspective proposes that learners individually construct new knowledge and are influenced by social situations and specific factors in those contexts (Resnick, 1991).

### Context

2. Reading and writing are socially derived activities, involving socially derived knowledge and taught ways of thinking and problem-solving (Bloome, 1991). According to Dyson (1985), "Any classroom community of readers and writers is also populated by a dynamic, intricately designed community of children, a community not fully accessible to adults" (p. 638). Children are influenced by the context in which they learn.

3. The role of the instructional language in affecting children's understanding should not be underestimated. Cairney (1987) states, "What we are, influences what we write, and what we are, is the result of growth in a social context. As well, the unique social context at any time, in any place, will affect the meaning we create as we write" (p. 93).

### Writing

4. Researchers suggest that writing development begins at a very early age and parallels reading development (Ollila & Mayfield, 1992). Therefore, an emergent literacy perspective has been adopted which maintains that children's literacy abilities "emerge from their wealth of experience with oral language and their attempts to enter the rewarding world of print" (Strickland & Cullinan, 1990, p. 427). The developmental patterns that have been observed in emergent literacy research may be considered to continue in older students.

5. Writing "is a social practice that varies according to the particular use to which it is put in each context" (Farr, 1986, p. 199).

6. "The end product - the written text - does not necessarily reflect all the knowledge accessed and used during composition" (Stein, 1986, p. 227).

### Students' Evident Understanding of Writing

7. Students' evident understanding of writing is potentially powerful in its ability to reflect understandings of instructional practices and may shed light on their writing products. Dyson (1985), states,

There is no guarantee, then, that all children will interpret tasks in identical ways. Within any one activity, individual children may be writing for different purposes and audiences, with different moods, and therefore have very different writing behaviors and resulting messages. Observing children in varied writing contexts may

help teachers make decisions about beneficial writing contexts for individual children. (p. 638)

8. Beliefs and attitudes are considered to both energize and guide learning. They are personally significant aspects of children's knowledge that give rise to meaningful goals and intentions. As such, insight into such beliefs may be particularly informative for instructional practices. Wittrock (1986) states, "The learner's perception of the teaching is the functional instruction that influences student learning and achievement" (p. 298).

9. Children are able to articulate aspects of the thought processes related to their own learning. Researchers need not infer children's perceptions and cognitive processes by examining their written products (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1983).

10. Children's understanding, it has been suggested, changes over time. The child's view of school tasks and activities is a cycle of dissolving, reforming and reinterpretation (Bohm, 1980).

### **Language**

11. Language patterns in classrooms affect what occurs in learning. According to Lemke (1985), "Classroom education, to a very large degree, is talk; it is the social use of language to enact regular activity structures and to share systems of meaning among teacher and students (p. 1).

12. One characteristic of language is its arbitrariness. That is, words themselves do not communicate thoughts, feelings and ideas. Rather, it is the meanings that children hold for words which allow communication or miscommunication to occur (Pavio & Begg, 1981).

13. The teacher's role in affecting the students' understanding of particular topics and subject matter is significant. Clark and Fiorio (1983) state, "The teacher is chiefly responsible for conceiving, initiating and maintaining writing occasions within the classroom community; but the enactment of those occasions and the writing produced therein are consequences of the interaction between teachers and students" (p. 245).

#### Limitations of the Study

1. A limitation of descriptive research in general is its inherent tendency to freeze in time complex processes and activities, thereby rendering them fixed or unchanging. It must be acknowledged that such descriptions emphasize events, activities, places and people at a particular time, and therefore are "static attempts to represent processes that change in time" (Clark & Florio, 1983). Descriptive research does, however, offer "pictures" of the complex processes involved in written literacy development.

2. The participants from the two classrooms represent different age and developmental levels and therefore cannot be considered comparable groups. The teachers themselves

represent different levels of educational and instructional experience. Additionally, sampling procedures were purposive rather than random. As such, claims of representativeness must be tentative. Berkenkotter and Murray (1983) note, "The researcher must make a trade-off, foregoing generalization for the richness of the data and the qualitative insights to be gained from it" (p. 167). Triangulation, "the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 146), was employed as one method to strengthen the study's usefulness for other settings.

3. Researchers are unable to claim, in a definitive sense, knowledge of students' specific understanding of writing. Fear (1990) observed that, "asking questions -- stimulating responses about cognitive processes in interviews may change the process that is being measured." Therefore, the researcher provided various opportunities for participants to express what is referred to as their "evident understanding" of writing concepts.

4. The entry and continued presence of a researcher in the classroom under study can affect the nature of data collection, because "the very act of observing any phenomenon may alter that phenomenon" (Odell, Goswami, & Herrington, 1983, p. 228). The researcher followed procedures of negotiated entry to help the participants become accustomed to the presence of a new person. On-going

taping procedures may also have altered participants' naturally occurring behaviour. However, steps were taken to encourage the teachers and students to experiment and become familiar with the tape recorders and taping procedures for a week prior to the formal data collection period.

5. The analysis of descriptive data is inevitably shaped by the subjectivity of the researcher. Mosenthal (1983) states, "Researchers tend to research writing competence from their own partially specified descriptive and operational definitions of these phenomena" (p. 63). It is important to acknowledge the influence of background knowledge from previous research literature and state guiding theoretical assumptions.

6. A final limitation of the study regards the definition adopted for the term "crafting" as an instructional process for writing. Teaching composition as crafting represents only one viewpoint about instruction, albeit one that has gained wide acceptance. Other characterizations of writing instruction may also be informative and useful.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The conceptual framework for this study on children's evident understanding of writing, and its relationship to instructional language and the writing produced in school settings was developed from three primary areas of inquiry. These include research on student perceptions, research on classroom language, and research on writing.

The first section is a review and traces research on student perceptions and supports the need for focusing on this information source in educational inquiry generally, and in writing instruction research specifically.

#### Student Perceptions

Several areas of inquiry, including ethnography, classroom environment studies, and, recently, literacy research, acknowledge and maintain a commitment to investigating student perceptions as the primary medium connecting teaching and learning. This commitment is guided and sustained by theories of interaction and constructivism forwarded by Bruner (1962), Donaldson (1978), and Vygotsky (1962). Bruner stated that, "at each stage of development the child has a characteristic way of viewing the world and explaining it to himself [or herself]" (p. 33). Insight into the child's interpretations, based on Bruner's viewpoint, suggests that "any idea can be represented

honestly and usefully in the thought forms of children of school age" (p. 33).

According to a theory of interactive-constructivism, children enter classrooms with "territories of knowledge" (Duckworth, 1987) that cannot be overlooked in the child's quest to personally construct new knowledge. Vygotsky (1962) proposed that learning is not a matter of transmitting information to the child, as characterized by Friere (1985) in his "banking" concept of education. Rather, interactive-constructivist principles assert that children actively construct new knowledge by relating it to that which is already known. Wells (1986) described this process as it pertains to language learning as follows:

It has to be constructed afresh by each individual knower on the basis of what is already known and by means of strategies developed over the whole of that individual's life, both outside and inside the classroom (p. 218).

Wells referred to this enterprise as the "guided reinvention of knowledge" (p. 218), thus defining the roles of interaction and constructivism in learning language.

Furthermore, Donaldson (1978) claimed that consciousness, which she defined as the child's awareness of his/her own thinking, is not synonymous with intellectual development. She argues that a difference exists between knowing something and being aware that you know it. Therefore, according to Donaldson, "if the intellectual

powers are to develop, the child must gain a measure of control over his [or her] own thinking and he [or she] cannot control it while he [or she] remains unaware of it" (p. 122). Research on student perceptions, while attempting to uncover the learner's awareness of his/her own thinking in specific curriculum areas, may bring to conscious awareness specific thoughts and ideas benefitting teachers, researchers and students alike. In sum, the interactive-constructivist viewpoint, emphasizing the critical role of the learner's own interpretations and the ways in which individuals influence one another's constructive processes (Resnick, 1991), clearly underlies and supports research endeavors into student perceptions.

### **Ethnography**

Ethnography, as a field of study, has long relied on the perceptions of others as clues to understanding a culture as a whole. Derived from anthropology, ethnography seeks to understand a particular culture from an insider's point of view (Dobbert, 1982). The researcher, an outsider to the culture, may become involved in the social situation under study, but typically relies on the use of informants to access a "native's perspective" (Spradley, 1980). According to Spradley, informants generally can provide insight into situations and experiences that observation alone cannot provide. This is important if the goal, as

Spradley claims, is not to study people but to learn from them.

Heath's (1983) landmark study Ways With Words focused on both the individual perspective and on the nature of the social and cultural context. The author lived and worked in the communities of 'Roadville' and 'Trackton' between 1969 and 1978. Her rich ethnographic account indicated that in each social group, literacy shapes and was shaped by the larger social, cultural, and historical context. Heath ably portrayed the different ways children thought about communication, and how these were dependent on the community and on family socialization.

For educational purposes, the use of micro-ethnographies has become increasingly useful, and these "produce descriptions of what it means to participate in various social situations that occur within the whole culture" (Green & Wallat, 1981, p. xii). Ethnographers and those employing ethnographic methods use conversational strategies to validate their observations from the participants' perspectives.

Taken together, ethnographies provide detailed descriptions of social and cultural contexts and the meanings these contexts hold for the participants. As such, ethnography provides a strong theoretical framework from which to study participants' perceptions of events, situations, and experiences.

### Classroom Environment Studies

Classroom environment research, which has documented student perceptions of particular aspects of the schooling experience (e.g., instructional methods, learning environments, reading materials), has gained acceptance as substantially contributing to knowledge about how children learn (Bisanz, Bisanz, & Kai, 1983; Bloome & Neito, 1990; Dyson, 1985; Fraser, 1983). Paris and Cross (1983) state, "The issue is no longer whether attitudes influence behavior, but when and how they affect behavior" (1983, p. 150). This field of inquiry acknowledges that the participants in a social situation such as the classroom are best equipped to characterize aspects of their own learning.

Fraser's (1981) volume reviewing classroom environment research distinguished between two approaches to studying classrooms. The first approach consists of external observations. The second, Fraser argues, is designed to access student perceptions. He maintains that both approaches are necessary when investigating classroom environment.

In the studies cited by Fraser, accessing student perceptions is performed primarily through large-scale administration of written questionnaires. Fraser (1981) defends the questionnaire format as follows:

1. Paper-and-pencil perceptual measures are more economical than classroom interaction techniques.

2. Perceptual measures are based on students' experiences over many lessons.
3. Perceptual measures involve the pooled judgements of all students in a class.
4. Perceptions, because they are the determinants of student behaviour . . . , can be more important than observed behaviors.
5. Perceptual measures of classroom environment typically have been found to account for considerably more variance in student learning outcomes than have interaction variables (p. 8).

Following Fraser's defense of this particular instrument, other researchers have designed similar tools to efficiently access student perceptions. The instruments in use are varied, including the Primary Grade Pupil Report (Driscoll, Browning, Stevens & Peterson, 1990), the Learning Environment Questionnaire (Fraser, 1981), and the Teacher and Student's Beliefs about Language Arts Questionnaires (Mangano & Allen, 1986).

These specific instruments are able to indicate patterns of response across large samples of students and typically have shown that teachers and students perceive aspects of the learning environment quite differently. Specifically, Harlin and Lipa (1991) found that 50% of the children in their study held different perceptions of the writing process than their teachers. Driscoll et al. (1990) also found that young children's perceptions of their teachers differed from one another and noted developmental differences through age-related patterns. This group of

researchers worked with 318 pre-schoolers, kindergarten, and grade one children, posing the question, "What information can young children provide?" Test administrators read questions to the children, who responded by marking one of three choices.

The major critique of these kinds of studies is the exclusive use of forced-choice instruments which do not provide the respondents with an opportunity to expand their ideas or introduce new ones. It would be difficult to conclude, based on studies of this type, that one has accessed children's expanded or differentiated perceptions of particular phenomena. Gannaway (1977) poses the problem in the following way:

Many people involved in education, teachers and administrators, include in their frameworks of reference notions about the needs, perceptions and activities of the pupils: such views as "children like to work in a secure framework where they know what's what . . . ." One doubts instinctively whether pupils share the same theories of causation as the teachers, but to what extent do they show aims, or definitions of everyday reality? (p. 47)

Nelson (1978), responding to this criticism, designed a structured communicative format called a "script", for use with young children. This format helped to enlarge the questionnaire to give children the opportunity to talk about their perceptions in an open-ended manner.

Additionally, classroom environment studies have typically provided a limited amount of interactional data. Since student perceptions are formed on the basis of

particular influencing factors, it is difficult to ascertain which aspects of the social context affect student perceptions of the writing process and particularly what role can be attributed to instructional language as an influential factor affecting students' perceptions. Specific references to these factors are notably lacking in this area of literature (Fraser, 1986). For example, students may be asked to respond to items from the Classroom Environment Scale (CES) (Fraser, 1981). One item from the CES states, "The teacher lectures without students asking or answering questions." Students then circle one of the following responses - Almost Never, Seldom, Sometimes, Often, Very Often. Such a format is not without attendant difficulties. Bialystok & Ryan (1985) conclude that a "multiple choice format for responding . . . taxes knowledge less than does a more open-ended format" (p. 244). Studies that rely on this type of data are unable to provide real classroom examples of the environmental phenomena they study. Therefore, cognitive development research, while providing extensive support for studying student perceptions, does not adequately account for the variance in those perceptions.

If researchers are to examine relationships between classroom environment variables and perceptions, another mode of inquiry that attempts a full description of influences and outcomes is both necessary and desirable.

This discussion will now focus on reading research to indicate how specific aspects of instruction in reading are experienced and perceived by the learner.

### Reading Research

Reading research represents a very comprehensive body of literature. The studies cited in this discussion are guided by the assumption that student perceptions play a key role in how skill in reading is attained. Several recent studies have attempted to develop insight into student perceptions of reading, reading materials, and strategies for reading (Cairney, 1988; Mangano & Allen, 1980; Wixson, Bosky, Yochum, & Alvermann, 1984). To a lesser extent, this has occurred in the area of writing (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1983).

Bloome and Neito (1990) observed a first grade class during reading instruction to gain insight into the "understandings and consequences of basal readers" (p. 258). The authors explain that children's perceptions are mediated by three factors. These include: (a) the extent to which the children are familiar and comfortable with the school environment, (b) how the children view themselves academically, and (c) the degree to which they are represented (culturally, socially, and linguistically) in their reading materials.

Bloome and Neito derived this information by explicating the contexts in which children read. Three

classrooms were examined in terms of how basal readers were used and the meanings conveyed to children through their use. The conclusion reached was that the three classrooms were remarkably different in their use of basal reading materials, as documented through classroom observations and interviews.

Nonetheless, the researchers operated on a high inference level in order to predict children's understanding of reading in each of the three contexts. While Bloome and Neito acknowledged, "It is not easy to explore children's understanding of basal readers" (p. 258), they conveyed little information about how children demonstrated their understanding. In the end, it was concluded that children's understanding of the purposes of reading sets the conditions for learning and determines intellectual growth.

Similarly, other studies have sought to access more specific aspects of children's perceptions of reading. For instance, Wixson, Bosky, Yochum and Alvermann (1984) explored the following areas: (a) students' perceptions of the goals and purposes of reading activities, (b) students' understanding of the task requirements, and (c) the strategies students report using during reading.

The authors developed a 15-item questionnaire called the Reading Comprehension Interview (see Table 1), which was administered to children in grades 3 to 8. According to the researchers, the questionnaire served as a useful diagnostic

Table 1

Reading comprehension interview (Wixson, Bosky, Yochum & Alvermann, 1984)

Name:  
Classroom teacher:

Date:  
Reading Level:  
Grade:

*Directions:* Introduce the procedure by explaining that you are interested in finding out what children think about various reading activities. Tell the student that he or she will be asked questions in his/her reading, that there are no right or wrong answers, and that you are only interested in knowing what s/he thinks. Tell the student that if s/he does not know how to answer a question s/he should say so and you will go on to the next one.

General probes such as "Can you tell me more about that?" or "Anything else?" may be used. Keep in mind that the interview is an informal diagnostic measure and you should feel free to probe to elicit useful information.

1. What hobbies or interests do you have that you like to read about?
2.
  - a. How often do you read in school?
  - b. How often do you read at home?
3. What school subjects do you like to read about?

*Introduce reading and social studies books.*

*Directions:* For this section use the child's classroom basal reader and a content area textbook (social studies, science, etc.). Place these text in front of the student. Ask each question twice, once with reference to the basal reader and once with reference to the content area textbook. Randomly vary the order of presentation (basal, content). As each question is asked, open the appropriate text in front of the student to help provide a point of reference for the question.

4. What is the most important reason for reading this kind of material?
5.
  - a. Who's the best reader you know in \_\_\_\_\_?
  - b. What does he/she do that makes him/her such a good reader?
6.
  - a. How good are you at reading this kind of material?
  - b. How do you know?
7. What do you have to do to get a good grade in \_\_\_\_\_ in your class?
8.
  - a. If the teacher told you to remember the information in this story/chapter, what would be the best way to do this?
  - b. Have you ever tried \_\_\_\_\_?
9.
  - a. If your teacher told you to find the answers to the questions in this book what would be the best way to do this? Why?
10.
  - a. What is the hardest part about answering questions like the ones in this book?
  - b. Does that make you do anything differently?

*Introduce at least two comprehension worksheets.*

*Directions:* Present the worksheets to the child and ask questions 11 and 12. Ask the child to complete portions of each worksheet. Then ask questions 13 and 14. Next, show the child a worksheet designed to simulate the work of another child. Then ask question 15.

11. Why would your teacher want you to do worksheets like these (for what purpose?)
12. What would your teacher say you must do to get a good mark on worksheets like these? (What does your teacher look for?)

*Ask the child to complete portions of at least two worksheets.*

13. Did you do this one differently from the way you did that one? How or in what way?
14. Did you have to work harder on one of these worksheets than the other? (Does one make you think more?)

*Present the simulated worksheet.*

15.
  - a. Look over this worksheet. If you were the teacher, what kind of mark would you give the worksheet? Why?
  - b. If you were the teacher, what would you ask this person to do differently next time?

Note. From "An interview for assessing students' perceptions of classroom reading tasks" by K. Wixson, A. Bosky, M. Yochum & D. Alvermann, 1984, The Reading Teacher, 37(4), p. 346. Reprinted by permission.

tool identifying students' views of the purpose of reading. They observed that a dominant view of reading is to achieve flawless decoding. As such, the instructional implications of this information was one of the most important reasons for gaining insights into student perceptions.

Another attempt to gain insight into children's knowledge and perceptions of the purposes of reading and reading behavior was documented by Cairney (1988). In his study, the interview format used by Wixson et al. (1984) was adapted and shortened (see Table 2). In all, 178 primary and intermediate school children, aged 5 to 12, were administered the interview questions. Cairney concluded that children do identify a variety of purposes for reading basal materials. These purposes ranged from being task related and utilitarian to pleasing the teacher.

In addition, children's perceptions appeared to indicate developmental patterns. Younger children emphasized reading for purposes of accuracy and decoding, while older children tended to focus on the educational function of reading. These perceptions were reiterated when the children were asked to comment on what is important when making judgements about themselves and others as readers. Cairney (1988) concluded:

Younger children (K-3) felt that decoding, vocabulary, and accuracy, and regularity of reading are very important. In the middle grades, fluency, expression, and speed and mastery of

Table 2

Reading interview schedule for grades K-6 (Cairney, 1988)

Name:

Date:

Reading level (teacher rating):

Class:

Initial instructions: Tell the child that the interview is being conducted to find out what his/her views are on reading and reading materials. It should be explained that there are no right and wrong answers; it is his/her views that are important.

1. How often do you read books at home?
2. How often do you read at school?
3. What is the most important reason for reading this type of book (Show a basal reader that the child has used)
4. How good are you at reading this type of book (Show the same basal). What makes you say this?
5. Why would your teacher want you to do worksheets like this? (Show a worksheet typical of those used at this level)
6. What do you have to do to get a good mark (or stamp) for this worksheet? (Show the same material)
7. Who is the best reader in your class? How do you know?
8. What do you have to do to get a good mark (or stamp) for reading in your class?

NOTE. From "The purpose of basals: What children think", by T. Cairney, 1988, The Reading Teacher, January, p. 420. Reprinted by permission.

related materials begin to emerge as important, while regularity of reading becomes less important. (p. 425)

The author had hoped to gain insight into children's perceptions of the purposes of reading materials, but observed that the children did not appear to view seeking meaning as an essential element of reading. Cairney referred to this inability as characterized by a "dysfunctional notion of literacy" as opposed to a "functional notion of literacy" whereby students would indicate an understanding of the communicative value of reading and writing. Unlike Bloome & Neito's (1990) work, this study did not address the actual use of reading materials in the classroom, which may have shed more light on the nature of students' perceptions.

Additional evidence is available from research on emergent literacy suggesting that children, even at a very young age, demonstrate considerable knowledge about the communicative nature of written language, before they themselves are readers. In sum, an emergent literacy perspective postulates that children's perceptions are emerging almost from birth and therefore are probably complex and well-developed by the time they reach school age.

The preceding discussion indicates that student perceptions of reading, an important and useful information source, may provide insight into a seemingly invisible arena that mediates teaching and learning. Wittrock (1986), in his extensive review of research into students' thought processes, views the value of this mode of inquiry as follows:

The results indicate some of the value of student mediating processes for explaining the effects of teaching upon achievement, and for revising our understanding of how fundamentally important teaching variables and learning processes, including reward, teacher expectations, time-on-task, success in school, learning, and knowledge acquisition, function in schools. In each case, it is the learners' generation of meaning from the teaching that mediates the achievement. (p. 311).

Naturalistic inquiry in education encompasses the ability to describe context, thereby providing an opportunity to describe and account for variation in children's perceptions. Language, particularly instructional language, is one aspect of context currently

studied in sociolinguistics, anthropology, sociology of education and cognitive psychology (Bloome & Green, 1982). This discussion has served to indicate that current reading research is informative in its focus on student perceptions, of not only what reading is, but also of the instructional materials and processes from which they learn. The next section of this literature review will address research on classroom language and its relationship to students' perceptions of specific aspects of writing.

## **II: Classroom Language**

Much current research focusses on classroom communication processes and is framed within a sociolinguistic perspective. Researchers from a variety of disciplines including education, anthropology, linguistics and sociology have pursued the elusive relationship between language and learning. As Lemke (1985) observed, "The study of how teachers and students use language in classrooms is important not only for teachers, but for all those concerned with the social functions of education" (p. 1). In other words, schools are viewed as social institutions in which people use language to share meaning. Several researchers comment that to do well in school children must understand the communication context of the classroom and how to act socially within that context (Tway, 1991; Willes, 1983).

Lemke refers to the significance of language study in classrooms as follows: "Classroom education, to a very large

degree, is talk: it is the social use of language to enact regular activity structures and to share systems of meaning among teachers and students" (p. 1). In addition, classroom language is "the most visible part of teaching" and includes "the spontaneity of the plans enacted" (Clark & Florio, 1983, p. 242). Therefore, the study of language use in classrooms is of crucial importance to teachers and researchers concerned with describing and understanding educational practice. This section of the review will provide an overview of literature from the past 20 years that addresses itself to the language of teaching in classrooms.

### **Teacher-Student Interactions**

Flanders' (1970) Interaction Analysis is likely one of the most widely known systems developed to analyze teacher-student interactions. The system contained a total of 10 descriptive categories by which the verbal interactions of students and teachers could be characterized. The coding procedure could be performed by an observer in the classroom or by someone listening to audiotapes of classroom language. The result was a series of notations that visually displayed the nature of the interaction and the sequence in which it was spoken.

Language is quantified through instruments and tools in order to describe it in categorical terms. Flanders' system relied upon coding methods to quantify language patterns but

could also be accompanied by transcriptions of language use in classrooms (Good & Brophy, 1973). Overall, Flanders' work has led to a greater understanding of how students and teachers communicate, who initiates communication and how teachers use praise, criticism and questioning in classroom interactions.

While Flanders is recognized as one of the pioneers of classroom language research, his work has been criticized on a number of significant grounds. A limitation of documenting the language of classroom communication using a pre-determined coding system is that one expects all observable language behaviours to be encompassed by those categories. In addition, for efficient and accurate coding to be possible, the categories must be mutually exclusive (Flanders, 1970). Unfortunately, this is a very difficult procedure to employ in the highly complex, fast-paced classroom setting where language transactions occur simultaneously and often without reference to specific and determined categories.

Although Flanders' Interaction Analysis provided valuable data and permitted the quantification of language and teaching behaviors, it was unable to capture the richness or the complexity of language expressed in classrooms. To illustrate this limitation, the coding system did not provide descriptions or explanations about the tone of the language used, the accompanying gestures or

movements, or the participants' construction of meaning. Specifically, the categories often were viewed in terms of the expressor's intent, with little attention afforded the receiver's point of view. These difficulties suggested the need for alternative methods of investigating language in classrooms.

Bellack (1966) was one of the first to document classroom language in an attempt to further understand the teaching process. Bellack's subjects were 15 secondary classes from seven schools in metropolitan and suburban New York City. The researcher was primarily concerned with the pedagogical significance of what the teachers were saying to their students.

Interestingly, Bellack and his associate researchers attempted to control the content of the lesson in order to study teaching style and language use. Bellack's strategy failed, however, as each teacher ostensibly used similar content but focussed on varying aspects of the material. This suggests the difficulty of introducing controls into the classroom setting that would otherwise not occur naturally (Delamont, 1976). Nonetheless, Bellack analyzed units of discourse as pedagogical moves which were further studied according to the functions they served. The pedagogical moves included the follow. . . (a) structuring - focussing attention on subject matter; (b) soliciting - eliciting a verbal response; (c) responding - the reciprocal

aspect of soliciting; (d) reacting - accepting, rejecting, modifying or expanding what has previously been said. A sequence of moves, the author asserted, comprised a single teaching cycle of which 21 possible cycles were identified.

This early study has received much criticism for excluding a more descriptive analysis of the linguistic data. In addition, Lindsay (1990) characterized both Flanders' and Bellack's approaches as "process-product" (p. 109) in an attempt to distinguish their focus on categories and frequency counts from research designed to provide more descriptive analyses of classroom language.

British linguists Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) also attempted to study discourse in the classroom by initially focussing on 10- and 11-year-olds in formal teaching situations. Their system of analysis included a rank scale to code classroom discourse data. A lesson, they postulated, was made up of transactions, which were made up of exchanges, comprised of moves. The lowest unit of analysis was an act, which corresponded linguistically to a clause. Sinclair and Coulthard noted that classroom lessons were characterized by a hierarchical ranking of acts, moves, exchanges, and transactions, with the formal lesson being the highest unit of classroom language.

Interestingly, the researchers identified a structure they defined as a "move", similar to the unit forwarded by Bellack. Altogether, they observed five different moves, as

contrasted with Bellack's four. These include:

- (a) focussing, (2) framing, (3) opening, (4) answering, and (5) following up.

In addition, Sinclair and Coulthard's work served to increase awareness of non-verbal behavior as a significant counterpart to linguistic behavior. Others have furthered this awareness by capturing and analyzing non-verbal features accompanying classroom communication by investigating gesturing, movement, silence, intonation and tone of voice (Byers & Byers, 1972; Corsaro, 1981).

Mehan's (1979) research focussed on a single grade three classroom in which his colleague Courtney Cazden, also a sociolinguist from Harvard University, was the teacher. The researcher conducted detailed analyses of nine videotaped lessons over the course of one school year. His results indicated the predominant existence of a three-part sequential structure consisting of teacher initiation (I), followed by student response (R), which led to teacher evaluation (E). Since Mehan has conducted this investigation, others have found the IRE structure to be the most common pattern of classroom communication in all grade levels (Cazden, 1988).

The IRE pattern of communication is embedded in what Mehan referred to as the hierarchical organization of the lesson. The author has identified a sequential organization to lessons comprised of an opening phase, an instructional

phase, and a closing phase. Characterizing the opening phase was dialogue between the teacher and students about the fact that the lesson was about to begin. Then, during the instructional phase, some form of academic content was exchanged. Finally, the closing phase provided an opportunity for the participants to discuss what had been accomplished.

Mehan's analysis of the instructional phase of a lesson in which the purpose is to pass on information is of particular interest to those studying pedagogy. The researcher expanded the earlier work of Bellack (1966) and Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) by identifying three different kinds of elicitations used by the teacher, each of which was intended to appropriate certain responses. These included: (a) choice elicitations, where the student was asked to agree or disagree with a statement; (b) product elicitations, where the student was asked to give a factual response; (c) process elicitation, where the student was asked to provide information about how he or she arrived at a particular interpretation. Mehan's research maintained a focus on teacher talk without reference to two significant variables, these being (a) the context of the situation, and (b) students' and teachers' perceptions or understanding of the language used.

### Symbolic Interactionist Research

Other researchers have continued the tradition of studying classroom language. Their work has been significantly influenced by a sociolinguistic perspective in which the social situation is viewed as the strongest and most important determinant of verbal behavior. British researchers Stubbs and Delamont based their work on a symbolic interactionist orientation, a type of study similar to participant observation (Spradley, 1980).

Both Stubbs and Delamont, reflecting a symbolic-interactionist perspective in which investigators learn through participation and observation, stressed the importance of documenting context when studying classroom language. Delamont (1976) observed that most classroom interactions could only be understood by viewing classroom relationships and events as they develop over time. Context, according to the author, meant locating a school and a classroom in time and space. She referred to this aspect of an investigation as "stage setting", which involved documenting observations of the physical layout as clues for understanding classroom communication.

Walker and Adelman's (1976) study of secondary classrooms also provided an example of the importance of placing classroom language in context. While examining formal and informal talk in classrooms, the researchers discovered they were unaware of specific meanings shared

among the participants, even though they had access to the language used. An example follows:

T: Wilson, we'll have to put you away if you don't change your ways and do your homework. Is that all you've done?

S: Strawberries, strawberries. (Laughter)

When we asked why this was funny, we were told that one of the teacher's favourite expressions was that their work was "Like strawberries - good as far as it goes, but it doesn't last nearly long enough".

The remark, "Strawberries, strawberries", might seem amusing, but trivial, because essentially it functions as a diversion, peripheral to the main stream of the lesson. Alternatively it might be seen as revealing the underlying means of social control in this class—the class is signalling to the teacher that they know what he wants and the quoting of the rule becomes a joke. Here we want to use the incident because it seems to us that it dramatizes and highlights an important quality in the way talk is used to communicate meanings in long-term situations like school classrooms. For meanings are not simply dictionary labels attached to works which we "learn"; the words themselves have associations and particular, personal meanings not readily accessible to those outside the immediate experience of the group. As outsiders, when we look at lesson transcripts, what we tend to see is the bare bones of meaning - the universals freely available within our culture - not the full richness of talk, which is what makes a relationship valuable and unique to its participants. What we miss is the subcultural experience of the group and its associated private and personal meanings - in short, its restricted code. (p. 139).

Taken together, the previous research has been informative in two ways. First, the work of Flanders (1974), Bellack (1966), Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), and Stubbs and Delamont (1976) has been instrumental in

elevating the profile of classroom language for understanding the nature of educational practice. Their results raise issues for future research about the impact of classroom language on students' learning and communication development. In addition, these studies provide feedback designed to assist teachers in becoming aware of their own language as a means to improving their teaching. If "language is seen as a window to provide information on learning and social development" (Pinnel & Jaggar, 1991, p. 707), then these researchers have shown it is valuable to focus on the window itself to learn how students and teachers affect one another's lives in classrooms. It is this focus on the mechanism or means through which learning takes place that guides research on the relationship between instructional language and students' perceptions. Their influence continues through current research on classroom communication.

Recently, several researchers have explored cultural differences among students and the complex relationship between community and school talk (Au, 1980; Cazden, 1988; Heath, 1983). Their work has provided considerable description of the cultural influences on interaction and, in particular, of the problems associated with classroom discourse due to differences between home and school discourse patterns.

Heath's (1983) study in varied cultural groups indicated that reading and writing were influenced by the social milieu in which they occur. The research indicated that in various social groups, literacy shapes and is shaped by the larger social, cultural, and historical context. While individuals from the three communities studied by Heath used written language to accomplish functional tasks, only the middle-class community used writing in ways comparable to those dominant in schools.

As a member of the three communities for nine years, Heath was able to affect the school situation and helped teachers work with students from varied cultural backgrounds. Specifically, she encouraged teachers to acknowledge and accept children's ways of participating orally with adults. Typically, children from the working-class communities were unfamiliar with the interaction pattern involving the question-answer structure where the questioner obviously knew the answers, as occurred frequently in schools. Heath's work helped teachers and children to work collaboratively in a way that did not marginalize students because of their cultural background.

Cazden (1988) has been particularly influential in raising the level of consciousness of educators about the significance of cultural variation in communication. The author observed, "One of the most important influences on all talk (some say the most important influence) is the

participants themselves - their expectations about interactions and their perceptions of one another" (Cazden, 1988, p. 67). Following this direction, other researchers have explored participant understanding of classroom talk in order to more fully explicate the relationship between language and learning.

Morine-Dershimer (1985) conducted a comprehensive study of classroom language by examining recorded language, conducting formal interviews and collecting achievement data. Her subjects included six teachers and 165 pupils in grade one to four classrooms. The classroom discourse from six videotaped language arts lessons was analyzed according to linguistic features, speech acts, and sequences of language. Morine-Dershimer concluded that "achievement seemed to be related to a close 'fit' between pupil perspectives and interpretations and the teacher's use of classroom language" (Pinnel & Jaggar, 1991, p. 708).

Studies such as this one illustrate that analysis of language use in classrooms must be accompanied by pupil perspectives in order to understand the impact of specific communication. Morine-Dershimer's work provides an example of the complexity of contextual variables in classroom communication processes in which the general focus is on language arts instruction.

Marshall (1989) focussed on classroom discussions of literature with secondary students, asking, "What are the

basic patterns of talk during classroom discussions of literature?" and "What are the teachers' and students' perceptions of the purposes that guide those discussions?" (p. 1). While the results documented the controlling features of teacher talk and its asymmetrical nature confirming patterns identified by Bellack et al. (1966) and Mehan (1979), there appeared to be a shift away from the typical IRE communication pattern from earlier studies. Marshall's study is relevant to this investigation because of its tri-focus on language, content and participant understanding. His approach enabled the refinement of scope and focus for other studies of classroom discourse.

The research reviewed in this discussion indicates several important characteristics of classroom language processes. First, classroom communication has been shown to be predictable. It occurs in an orderly and patterned manner. The basic interactional pattern is a three-part sequence of initiation, response and evaluation. Second, talk is asymmetrical and is used almost entirely by the teacher, causing some researchers to observe that it is the teacher who owns classroom talk. Third, the meaning of talk is context-specific, and these contexts are constructed during interaction. Fourth, language use is related to the types of activities in which students engage. The content of the lesson, the perceived level of difficulty of the material, and the nature of the activity contribute to the

linguistic patterns observed. Finally, recent research suggests there is a need to focus on how students understand the language used by the teacher. It is not appropriate to assume that the students understand the message the same way in which it was intended (Kucer, 1991).

Teaching is language (Stubbs, 1981). The pervasiveness of instructional and interactional language in classrooms has been thoroughly documented in educational research (Cazden, 1988; Green & Wallat, 1984; Lindsay, 1990; Mehan, 1979). It has been stated that "All learning results in part from social interaction" (Collins, 1982, p. 429). It is, therefore, logical to attempt to relate children's view of writing tasks to instructional language, an aspect of the social context that may influence the student's writing development (Bloome, Harris, & Ludlum, 1991). To explicitly articulate the relationship between instructional language and students' views of the functional uses of writing, Langer and Applebee (1986) wrote:

At the root of instructional interaction are the student's goals of learning or explicating some content, or of learning to do something new or to do it differently. These goals affect the nature of the text being written or construed, and, in turn, help to shape the nature of the instructional interaction. (p. 173)

This section of the discussion has emphasized the importance and usefulness of examining classroom language as a key contextual component affecting students' understanding of writing instruction. The final focus of the literature

review, contained in the next section, will examine research on the writing process.

## Writing

### Writing as Process

Over the past two decades and specifically since Emig's (1971) seminal study of the composing processes of eight twelfth-graders and Graves' (1975) work with seven-year-old children, researchers have been focussing on writing as a process, observing "how it is done." Until Emig's study, the field of composition had "been sustained by attention to the written product and to questions about the presentation of the product" (Donovan & McClelland, 1980, p. x). This emphasis was severely criticized by researchers and professional writers alike (Coe, 1986; Murray, 1980). More recent research continues to point to a shift away from product to process in both reading and writing (Irwin & Dayle, 1992).

Shanklin (1991) labelled this emphasis on "writing as a process" a movement that is "broad and has crossed disciplines and has spanned age ranges" (p. 48). This author, interestingly, related new developments in writing with those of the whole language movement of the 1970s and 1980s. The author suggested that the whole language movement and the writing-process movement share emphasis on "creating such environments and instruction that encourage

children's conversational interactions as part of meaningful reading and writing experiences" (p. 56).

There is some agreement as to the nature of the writing process; that is, most writers appear to move through the stages of rehearsal, drafting, revision, and editing (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Murray, 1980; Suhor, 1984). But they do so at their own pace and in their own way. According to Berthoff (1981):

The phases of the composing process are not distinct: they are dialectical; they are on again - off again. Revising, for instance, can, and I think should, continue right up until the last; introductions are seldom written first.  
(p. 25)

Nonetheless, understanding writing as process is complicated by product-orientations, regardless of criticisms like that made by Murray (1980): "Process can not be inferred from product any more than pig can be inferred from a sausage" (p. 3). Hamilton-Wieler (1990) noted a freshman's misconception of writing as a coherent body of knowledge to be transmitted to the learner in his comment, "If I missed the day you taught me how to write, I'm sorry" (p. 12).

Professional writers have also begun to speak out on their own creative writing process (Murray, 1982; Macrorie, 1976; Bradbury, 1980). Murray (1991) observed that "To learn what to do next, the writer doesn't look primarily outside the piece of writing . . . . To learn what to do next, the writer looks within the piece of writing" (p. 21).

Bradbury (1980) described the process as involuntary and spontaneous:

My stories have led me through my life. They shout, I follow. They run up and bite me on the leg - I respond by writing down everything that goes on during the bite. When I finish, the idea lets go, and runs off. (p. xii)

Generally, the consensus from scholars, educators and professional writers is that writing is a process, admittedly one that is not easily understood. Recognizing that process writing takes time, researchers have employed various procedures to allow them to watch writers at work. This has led to recent research characterized by ongoing, on-site and in-process observations.

Some researchers elected to work in clinical-like settings where specific writing tasks were set and observed (Emig, 1971; Perl, 1978; Sommers, 1980). Others entered the classroom setting to make observations, but continued to set up writing tasks for the students (Graves, 1975; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1983). In these cases, several subjects were selected and provided with writing tasks to be completed within a specific time period. To illustrate, Emig (1971) met with each subject four times; Perl (1978) conducted five 90-minute sessions with her subjects; and Sommers (1980) engaged her subjects in three separate writing tasks. Each of these studies was characterized by a limited amount of time devoted to establishing a relationship between the researcher and the participants.

While these studies yield useful information about how individuals produced text in specific situations, certain limitations need to be recognized. First, claims of representativeness must be tentative. Berkenkotter and Murray (1983) note, "The researcher must make a trade-off, foregoing generalizability for the richness of the data and the qualitative insights to be gained from it" (p. 167). The strength of this kind of research, studying small groups of students, lies in its ability to address individual and idiosyncratic approaches to writing. Second, North (1987) asserts that it is inappropriate to set forth far-reaching instructional goals based on short-term inquiry with small groups of students. Implications for pedagogy must first be examined before wide-scale implementation of strategies is adopted.

Still other researchers, also aware of writing as process, enter the classroom setting as participant observers. They are outside members of the classroom community who occupy a temporary position as an older friend to the students or sometimes as a teacher. As in clinical-type studies, these researchers select a number of students to observe, based on several factors (i.e., gender, age, ability level, accessibility and willingness to participate).

As such, this kind of inquiry addresses limitations faced by clinical-like studies by entering the setting in

which students find themselves. This type of research tries to discover variables that seem important for understanding the nature of writing, and its contexts. Seldom does it attempt to establish cause and effect relationships. Nonetheless, researchers have indicated that process writing provides for the development of understanding related to "effective elements" in writing, such as purpose, audience, ownership, and value (Suhor, 1984). While emphasis varies according to the writing model proposed, there is agreement that the nature and quality of children's writing is related to these elements (Juliebo & Edwards, 1989).

#### **Purpose**

The research of Britton, Martin, McLeod & Rosen (1975) documented the writing functions inherent in the writing tasks of a secondary school population. Three patterns of function were identified by the researchers: transactional writing, to inform or persuade; expressive writing, dealing with matters of primary experience; and poetic writing, to create an imaginative form. Britton and his colleagues concluded that, overall, there was a dominance of transactional writing observed. Wason-Elliam (1986) further elaborated two general functions of writing as, "Writing to inform which connects writers with an audience, and writing to learn which gets writers in touch with themselves" (p. 5).

Frederiksen and Dominic (1981) suggested that producing and revising text is constrained by a variety of factors, including the writer's purpose for writing, the setting in which writing occurs, the time taken to write, the task requirements (stated or unstated), and the imagined audience. The authors observed that "To be studied effectively, situations would have to be viewed in relation to the purposes writers adopt as they compose." (p. 14)

Walmsley (1983), researching writing disability, suggested that proficiency in writing should be viewed in terms of the purposes underlying the text, and noted that some students are unable to recognize these purposes. While the importance of purpose is clearly documented in writing research, evidence exists that "students may differ in their social interpretations of those events (e.g., who, in fact, the audience is, what the actual purpose of the event is, what the evaluative standards are)" (Dyson & Freedman, 1991, p. 757). It appears useful to not only examine the range of writing tasks typically encountered in school, but, additionally, the nature of students' interpretations of those tasks deserves more focussed attention. This information can perhaps most effectively be gained by observing and talking with students as they write.

### **Audience**

A second essential element of writing, distinct in some ways from purpose, is the audience for whom it is intended.

Audience is viewed as a necessary component of a communicative process that involves the writer and the reader. Nonetheless, the degree of importance afforded audience varies. While Murray (1980) stated that "a student writer is an individual who is learning to use language to discover meaning in experience and communicate it" (p. 13), Graves (1985) attempted two interpretations. On one hand, he observed that "writing makes sense of things for oneself, and then for others" (p. 36), and on the other, concluded that writers need audiences.

Britton and his associates (1975) observed that audience was a powerful motivator of student writing. Their research found that students generally wrote only for the teacher as audience, and particularly the teacher as examiner. Langer and Applebee (1987) distinguished among four audiences for school writing: self, teacher as part of an instructional dialogue, teacher as examiner, and the wider audience. Audience and purpose have been characterized as two interrelated dimensions defining the production of text (Britton, 1975). Researchers may derive insight of a more particular nature by focussing on students' evident understanding of these specific aspects of the writing process.

### **Ownership**

The concept of ownership has been identified as an aspect of effective environments for teaching writing.

Applebee (1991) summarized this concept as follows: "In writing, opportunities for ownership occur when topics call for students to explore their own experiences and opinions, or to elaborate upon a point of view" (p. 554). Graves (1983), referring to children between the ages of five and seven, used the term to suggest the need for students to select their own topics and thus engage in expressive writing tasks at school.

Hudson (1986) focussed on children's perceptions of ownership within classroom writing. The researcher characterized classroom writing as located along a "continuum of control" (p. 46), sometimes tending toward the writer and sometimes toward the constraints of the curriculum. Hudson concluded that:

As children gain more control in the amount, content, and format of writing, they are more likely to perceive it as their own even if a teacher has made the assignment. In other words, the more they compose, the more likely they are to assume ownership of a particular product. (p. 65)

Perhaps the value of the above study is its focus on student perceptions of ownership as opposed to the researcher's perceptions. That is, the researcher attempted to access students' understanding of their own writing in relation to the concept of ownership.

### **Value**

Beach (1977) characterizes students' conceptions about the value of writing in the following way:

Based on their school experiences, many students view writing as limited to utilitarian ends: writing to please a teacher or to pass a composition course. They often perceive little inherent value in their writing. (p. 1)

Research documenting the value of writing for writers has come predominantly from professionals who reflect upon their experiences in the composing process (Collins, 1985). Bereiter and Scardamalia (1983) labeled this kind of reflection "Level 1 Inquiry" and suggested it is a necessary part of a comprehensive view of composition. Seldom have researchers engaged children in this type of reflective inquiry. One exception is the work of King (1980). King's research with eight-year-olds yielded the conclusion that some children "see little value for themselves in the task" (p. 168).

Some researchers have found that an emphasis on expressive writing provides an implicit message to students, that they have something worthwhile to say. Collins (1985) provided the following observation, based on an overview of research in this area:

Expressive writing may relate to students' attitudes towards writing in general and their understanding of its personal and social functions. (p. 51)

Taken together, the previous studies have identified the overall importance of purpose, audience, ownership and value of writing for the individual. There is considerable evidence to suggest that a writer's understanding of these specific aspects of writing influences the entire

composition process. Limited data are presently available from students about their understanding of these aspects of writing tasks.

### Writing as an Individual and Social Process

Another assumption underlying writing research is the view that writing involves unique cognitive and social processes. Murray (1980) explained:

At the beginning of the composing process there is only blank paper. At the end of the composing process there is a piece of writing which has detached itself from the writer and found its own meaning, a meaning the writer probably did not intend. (p. 3)

While writers maintain individual approaches to composition, they are always influenced by the social context. Collins (1982) pointed out that all learning results in part from social interaction, and while "texts occur in isolation from a particular situational context, writers do not" (Hudson, 1986, p. 42).

Attending to these diverse observations on the nature of written composition are multiple and varied research methods. In order to address the unique aspects of writing, researchers employ case studies, student interviews and retrospective reports. Conversely, classroom-based observational procedures that focus on the social environment are employed to address the assumption that writing is influenced by context.

### **Writing as an Individual Process**

Specific methods currently in use that address the idiosyncratic nature of writing include: case study (Emig, 1971; Graves, 1975; Perl, 1978), think-aloud protocols (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1983), forced-choice questionnaires (Driscoll, Browning, Stevens & Peterson, 1990; Harlin & Lipa, 1991; Rasinski & Deford, 1986), and interviews (Fear, Anderson, Englert & Raphael, 1987; Freeman & Sanders, 1987; Hudson, 1986; Morine-Dershimer, 1985). Such tools reveal, to greater and lesser extents, the individual ways writers practice their craft (Lopate, 1978) and "stress . . . the natural powers of the mind and the uniqueness of the creative act" (Young, 1978, p. 31).

The studies guided by the assumption that writing is a unique process can be coarsely organized according to the number of participants they observe. Researchers using a case study approach generally work with groups of students of 20 or less (Coe, 1986; Dyson, 1984; Fear et al., 1986; Hudson, 1986; King, 1984). Birnbaum and Emig (1991) state, "Case study inquirers tend to reconstruct the respondents' constructions" (p. 195). It was Emig (1971) who first used case study methods to examine writing processes. She cited her approach as "a legitimate and needed tapping of this mode of inquiry into the composing processes of students" (p. 3). In addition, Applebee (1984) examined the state of

writing for selected students in the high school years using case studies of 15 students.

Typical ways of working in a case study approach include observing students during composition, conducting formal and informal interviews and audio or videotape recording the writing sessions. For instance, Dyson (1984) combined observation of three case study students with individual interviews. Similarly, Fear et al. (1987) conducted five observations of two teachers during writing lessons followed by individual student interviews.

What these researchers did well was talk and listen to the students they were observing. A common underlying belief in case study research is that the child is an important source of information, even a curriculum informant (Hatch, 1989). Focussing on small numbers of participants, most studies use unstructured interview formats allowing students a degree of freedom in responding.

A potential difficulty facing case study research is the tendency to generalize findings from, for instance, eight twelfth-graders to all twelfth-graders. Fortunately, there appears to be a general trend in educational research towards "the particular: on what happens in a particular place, at a particular time, with a particular set of people, engaged in a particular activity and event" (Bloom & Bailey, 1992, p. 182). Case study researchers, guided by the assumption that writing is a unique process, cannot

claim representativeness without the risk of losing their real strength, which is "hearing the individual voice" (p. 195).

Another approach to the study of writing from the perspective of "writing as an individual process" involves the administration of wide-scale surveys or forced-choice questionnaires to large numbers of subjects (Rasinski & Deford, 1986; Harlin & Lipa, 1991; Driscoll, Peterson, Browning & Stevens, 1990). This approach has been popularized in reading research in order to examine how students engage in the reading process (Black & Martin, 1982; Clay, 1991; Wixson et al., 1984). In these studies, instruments were designed to gain insight into students' articulated views of writing. Harlin and Lipa (1991), investigating children's understanding of process writing, used force-choice questionnaires with subjects and concluded that approximately 50% of the students agreed with their teachers' view of writing.

While these methods usefully show patterns, regularities and deviations, it is beyond their scope to account for these. In other words, it is very difficult to interpret the data produced by these designs due to the inherent complexity of writing. Referring back to the previous study (Harlin & Lipa, 1991), more questions are raised by their results than are answered. For instance, how was process writing implemented in these classrooms? Do

the researcher's questions allow students to reveal their perceptions?

Taken together, studies guided by the aforementioned assumption yield useful and interesting data. Large-scale surveys indicate patterns, while case studies reveal particularistic understanding. Their conclusions must be tentative because no single approach, method or technique can disclose the whole story about the nature and development of writing. Therefore, researchers (Calkins, 1985; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1983; Stanovich, 1991) suggest we accept planned pluralism in methodology to provide insight into different aspects of writing. The results must be read and understood alongside the results from other inquiries.

### **Writing as a Social Process**

The role of social and cultural contexts influencing and guiding writing is addressed in recent literature.

Bloome, Harris and Ludlum (1991) observed:

Researchers have debated, and continue to debate, what cognitive processes constitute reading and writing. It is clear that whatever the cognitive processes involved, they are influenced by the social and cultural contexts in which the reading and writing occur.  
(p. 14)

The assumption that writing is a social and cultural process has specific consequences for methodology. In this respect, researchers have considerable difficulty knowing how to

define the nature of their inquiry, using a variety of labels: description, micro-ethnography, ethnographic, naturalistic, participant observation, and classroom-based, to name a few (Heath, 1983; Green & Wallat, 1981; Fear et al., 1987; Freedman, 1987; Morine-Dersheimer, 1985; North, 1987). This confusion in terms may lie in the blurring of lines between the approach and methods associated with the approach. To illustrate, Zaharlick and Green (1991) pointed out that ethnography is not a set of tools or techniques, rather a "systematic approach to the study of everyday life of a social group which includes a planning phase, discovery phase, and a presentation of findings phase" (p. 205). Nonetheless, doing ethnography involves the selection of tools and techniques.

Many researchers have focussed on the nature of classroom contexts for writing. Dyson (1984) described the nature of this inquiry as follows:

By systematically examining classroom writing contexts and the writing behaviors they encourage, researchers should be able collaboratively to describe qualities of classroom environments that appear beneficial to writing growth. Similarly, practitioners might critically examine their own classrooms as literacy environments. (p. 49)

Several studies demonstrate adherence to Dyson's mandate. Florio and Clark (1982) reported on a two-year study in an elementary classroom examining the functions attributed to writing. They identified four such functions: writing to participate in community, writing to know oneself

and others, writing to occupy free time, and writing to demonstrate academic competence. Although this study claimed to focus on the nature of context, its very focus on writing allowed that subject to override context (North, 1987).

North asserts that context became secondary as Clark and Florio focussed only on the nature of the writing produced.

Similar observations may be made regarding a thorough and lengthy study by Dyson (1984). The researcher spent approximately 14 weeks in a third-grade classroom, and visitations occurred between two and five times each week for one to two hours at a time. Although Dyson spent the first phase (approximately four weeks) observing the entire class, the focus soon became writing only. Although the researcher claimed to focus on both the individual and on the nature of the literacy context, this dual focus became difficult to maintain as Dyson studied separately the instructional context and the children's writing. In this case, the context became lost.

Heath's (1983) study did not experience this potential difficulty. Her research indicated that in each social group, literacy shapes and is shaped by the larger social, cultural, and historical context. Although not a writing research study per se, Heath showed the different ways children communicate in writing and otherwise, and how these were dependent on the community, and on family socialization.

Relatively few studies have examined the relationship between language and writing. One exception is Fear, Anderson, Englert and Raphael's study of Cognitive Strategy Instruction in Writing (1987). Following the procedures of interview and observation, the researchers suggest a positive relationship between instructional practices and students' perceptions of writing. An obvious limitation of this study is that the authors cannot seek universality in their findings (North, 1987).

The information provided by these studies is of interest in its ability to describe, not just the social context, but the meaning that context holds for the participants. The purpose, therefore, is to describe, and, as Lauer and Asher (1988) concluded,

This descriptive research design, if conducted carefully, can transform unwieldy projects into manageable research and yield valuable, representative descriptive data for composition studies. (p. 78)

### Writing as an Invisible Process

Some researchers have observed that writing is essentially invisible, or at least, not directly observable (King, 1984; Odell, Cooper & Courts, 1978). Clay (1991) stated that in reading, as in writing, researchers attempt to gain insight into the student's "inner control", which is "what we cannot see them doing in their heads" (p. 317). A number of indirect methods (Slobin, 1971) have been designed to help discover what the writer has in mind to say and what

is ultimately said (King, 1984). These include: observing the writer at work (see previous section), examining written products, and encouraging students to use think-aloud protocols (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1985; Newell, 1984).

Researchers continue to gather writing collections in order to discover what students understand about the process (Freedman, 1987; Hudson, 1986; Langer & Applebee, 1987). In an exploratory study entitled Learning from Writing, Langer and Applebee (1987) collected the writing produced by students on three separate tasks: note-taking, answering study questions, and essay writing. The results indicated that these three writing tasks "involved students in very different patterns of thinking and also led to different kinds of learning" (p. 101). Langer and Applebee's research analyzed writing products in conjunction with data from several other sources. The researchers used interview procedures, case studies, planned meetings, and classroom observations.

Similarly, Hudson (1986) collected written products from 20 children from grades one through five. In her design, the researcher provided an additional technique to examine the children's writing. Rather than interpret the written product from an outsider's point of view, Hudson met with each child on three occasions, encouraging him or her to talk about, sort, and label their products. These methods appear influenced by observations such as, "Two or

three or ten outside perspectives can never accumulate the authenticity of that of a single insider" (North, 1987, p. 312).

There is a trend towards a multi-method approach in educational research, generally, and composition research, specifically. Examining the written product and deducing the writer's thought processes is no longer the only tool available to researchers who are attempting to overcome the problems of studying an invisible process. Hatch (1990) suggested specific strategies for improving interview practices with participants:

(a) Take time to establish personal relationships with students; (b) emphasize informal rather than formal interviewing as studies are designed and implemented; (c) ask questions children can answer, expect them to answer, and accept their answers; (d) provide concrete or semi-abstract symbols to elicit explanations of classroom social phenomena. (p. 260)

Nonetheless, researchers cannot claim intimate knowledge of another's perspective. Conclusions must therefore be tentative in a field devoted to researching the invisible.

#### Summary of Research

In summary, the framework for this study was based on a synthesis of concepts from three areas of inquiry: research on student perceptions, research on classroom language, and research on the writing process. First, research on student perceptions appears informative by providing evidence that perception is key to understanding the means through which

learning takes place. Without access to this kind of information, educational strategies and techniques may be doomed to failure. Second, classroom language has been characterized as the dominant contextual factor influencing student learning. Its continuing influence must be documented, not as a lone entity, but in relation to students' own articulated understanding of the instruction they receive. Finally, process writing, a much heralded instructional innovation, is a focus of student learning that can benefit from simultaneous study of instructional language and student understanding of that instructional language. In sum, the framework presented here represents students' evident understanding of specific aspects of writing as an important and useful focus for examining classroom events.

### CHAPTER 3

#### RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative research design was adopted for this study of children's understanding of writing and its relationship to instructional language and written products. The study, therefore, had the natural setting of the classroom as the direct source of data with the researcher as the key instrument. Such a design was adopted with the assumption that "human behavior is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 28). This chapter describes the methodological assumptions underlying this study, the participants, data collection phases, and analytical procedures.

#### Methodological Assumptions

##### Subjects

1. Informed consent from all subjects, including the teachers, school administrators and children must be obtained. In the case of children, parental consent must also be acquired.

2. The identities of the subjects must be protected. Protecting privacy involves changing names, places and other identifying features in both fieldnotes and the final report (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Spradley, 1979).

3. It is helpful and necessary, particularly when interviewing children, to provide them with a concrete referent. Vague questions will result in vague or

stereotyped responses (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1983). Blank (1975) indicates that "the child's behavior changes radically if the objects are not present" (p. 255). By objects, Blank suggests providing a concrete referent to which one can refer during the interview.

4. When a sample is selected to serve a specific purpose, in this case, to represent various writing development levels, the term "purposive sampling" is used to select the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

5. The researcher must communicate the purpose of the study to the subjects, but in order to protect the validity of the data, the specific focus of the research should not be divulged. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) suggest researchers be "truthful but vague" in the portrayal of the research purpose to participants (p. 25).

### Context

6. In the classroom situation, instructional language represents only one aspect of the immediate social context that affects understanding (Bloome, Harris, & Ludlum, 1991). However, it is an aspect that requires study if insight is to be gained into the complex relationship between speech and learning (Pinnell & Jaggar, 1991).

### Data Collection

7. Fieldnotes are written by the researcher and represent an on-going account of the events documented.

They include: descriptions of the subjects, reconstructions of dialogue, descriptions of the physical setting, accounts of particular events, depictions of activities, and the observer's behavior and reflections (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

8. Reflection on the part of the investigator is an important component of research. It ensures that researchers "purposefully take into account who they are and how they think, what actually went on in the course of the study, where their ideas came from" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 88).

9. Juxtaposing interview data with other documents (in this case, fieldnotes, parent questionnaires and students' written products) "can prove to be a revealing combination of data" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 102).

10. The "use of a pilot [study] can lend credence to the researcher's claim that he/she can conduct such a study" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 51).

### Data Analysis

11. Data analysis is the process by which the researcher brings order, structure and meaning to the data collected. Marshall and Rossman (1989) identify five steps involved in this process: (a) organizing the data; (b) generating categories, themes and patterns; (c) testing the emergent hypotheses against the data; (d) searching for alternative explanations of the data; and (e) writing the report.

12. The processes of coding and interpreting the data result from an interplay between the content of the data and the researcher's beliefs and assumptions.

### Selection of Participants

#### Teachers

The two teachers in this study, Thomas and Michael, were selected according to specific criteria. These included the following:

(a) professors in the Faculty of Education indicated that these teachers were interested in participating in a research study related to literacy;

(b) the teachers indicated an interest in and willingness to participate in the study through initial and informal contacts with the researcher;

(c) the teachers worked with grade levels representing intermediate stages of development (grades 4-6). In addition, these grade levels had received limited research attention in the area of writing in the past; and

(d) the teachers each had four or more years of teaching experience, and therefore were not novices.

#### Students

The students were selected in consultation with the teachers to include six children from each class (three males and three females). The children represented various levels of writing development. That is, one boy and one

girl were chosen as representative of advanced, average and delayed development in writing, as identified by the teacher. However, in one class, it was decided to select two girls who displayed advanced writing ability because of the composition of the class (see Table 3). The teacher indicated that he did not have any boys at an advanced level of writing ability. The teachers' student selection criteria were based on observations during writing sessions, analyses of written products and writing conferences conducted with each child. In addition, assessment data available to the teacher that reflected developmental profile patterns were used to verify the selection of participants. Purposive sampling of this type allowed the researcher to observe whether or not patterns of children's understanding about writing were limited to one particular developmental group. The students represented age levels that had previously been identified as possessing an ability to articulate their understanding about schooling experiences (Fraser, 1981).

### Consent

Before the research activity was begun, approval for the study was granted by the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects at the University of Victoria. Details of the study were outlined to the superintendents, the participating teachers and the school administrators and permission was granted to conduct the research project. A

Table 3

Gender and identified writing ability levels of participants

Participants	Grade and Ability Level		
	Advanced	Average	Delayed
<b>Thomas' Students</b>			
Girls	Kristen (Gr. 6) Melissa (Gr. 6)	Sarah (Gr. 5)	Jean (Gr. 5)
Boys	—	Steven (Gr. 5)	Donald (Gr. 6)
<b>Michael's Students</b>			
Girls	Lynn (Gr. 5)	Natalie (Gr. 4)	Amanda (Gr. 5)
Boys	Colin (Gr. 5)	Terry (Gr. 4)	Daniel (Gr. 4)

letter was sent home to the parents of the students in the two classrooms, indicating the purpose of the study and requesting permission for participation. In order to preserve anonymity, the names of the teachers and the students have been changed.

Description of ParticipantsThomas

Thomas has been teaching for the past 24 years, beginning his career as a grade three teacher. He went on to teach industrial education at the junior high school level for 12 years, primarily in woodworking. For the past 11 years, he has been teaching grades five, six and seven. In addition, he taught remedial language arts classes on a

district-wide basis for three consecutive summers. Thomas recently completed a Master of Education degree and has taught an introductory teaching course at the University of Victoria. Maintaining a keen interest in writing and writing instruction, Thomas follows developments in this area through course work, conferences, workshops and his own research.

There were 26 students (12 boys and 14 girls) in Thomas' grade five-six combination classroom. Three of the participants in the study were in his grade five class last year. The students sat in pairs facing the front of the classroom, arranged in three main groups. The grade six students, 8 in all, sat in the centre of the classroom and the grade fives, 18 in all, sat in the two groups on either side. The boys were seated together as were the girls.

Thomas taught in a large suburban elementary school that provides instruction from kindergarten through grade seven. The student body consisted of approximately 560 students served by 33 teaching staff. To an outsider, the school appeared friendly and welcoming. The staff frequently exchanged professional and personal information in the staffroom and the hallways. The beginning of each day was marked by school-wide announcements and the recognition of individual student and staff birthdays.

In an interview, Thomas discussed the role of the school context for writing as follows:

We've talked about it, one of our focusses - you know we try to have a focus each year - one has been to concentrate on writing. And we've tried to do different things but I don't know that we've done them with very much success. We tried to talk about putting together a collection of writing to go home, in newsletters, anthologies of kids' writing that type of thing . . . And I don't think we, as a school, have done a very good job of that . . . . (February 17, 1992)

**Thomas' Students - (grades five and six)**

Kristen was 11 years old at the beginning of the study and considered by Thomas to be advanced in her writing ability. According to her teacher and parents, Kristen excelled in all curricular areas. Her parents stated that some of her interests included violin, tennis, volleyball and art; in addition, she has been enrolled in art classes. In the parent questionnaire, it was reported that Kristen appeared to be too hard on herself when writing. Perhaps as a result of this, Kristen often preferred not to show her work-in-progress to the researcher. Kristen's teacher described her as a very talented writer, capable of extremely sophisticated use of language. In her writing habits, Kristen was quiet and preferred to work alone.

Melissa, who had a twin sister in another classroom, was 11 years old at the beginning of the study. Her teacher identified her as advanced in her writing ability. Melissa was an exuberant and confident student. She spoke very

quickly, often punctuating her sentences with "you know." In the questionnaire, her parents reported that Melissa loved to write at home and enjoyed many other hobbies including basketball, baseball, art, tennis, roller-blading, swimming, skating and skiing. Melissa and Kristen often sat together and appeared to be good friends.

Sarah, identified by the teacher as average in her writing ability, was also 11 years old at the beginning of the study. Her mother worked as a teacher on call and reported involving Sarah in many writing activities including creating special occasion cards, making lists of chores, corresponding with an Australian pen-pal and writing out favourite songs. Sarah reported that she loved to write while sitting on the family's balcony overlooking her mother's garden. She was frequently observed writing about nature and her numerous pets.

Steven was 10 years old at the beginning of the study and was considered by the teacher to be average in his writing ability. In the questionnaire, Steven's mother stated that her son enjoyed many hobbies including performing magic tricks, playing card games, fishing, golfing, biking and maintaining a paper route. She did not express any concern over Steven's writing development and observed that Steven himself appeared confident in his abilities. She noted that her son particularly enjoyed

writing stories. The teacher described Steven as showing improvement in his ability to communicate his thoughts.

Jean, an 11-year-old, had been identified by the teacher as delayed in her writing ability. Her teacher described her as very quiet in her work habits. In the questionnaire, Jean's mother stated that "Jean has never really seemed to enjoy writing, except this year that is changing." According to her mother, Jean seemed to be progressing well in school, but her mother added that she wished her daughter could express her thoughts more clearly. By all accounts, Jean did a lot of writing both in and out of school, and stated that she liked to write, in particular, letters, stories and poetry. Her other interests included playing soccer and basketball and taking care of her cat and turtles.

Donald was a tall 11-year-old who was identified by the teacher as delayed in his writing ability at the beginning of the study. His teacher observed that Donald had made great improvements in his writing since first coming to his class almost two years ago. Donald credited his teacher with helping him to improve his writing. In the parent questionnaire, Donald's mother reported that "Donald is not happy with his writing" and showed no interest in writing outside of school. She also stated that Donald particularly enjoys art in addition to soccer, basketball, hockey, rugby, camping, Scouts and fishing. Donald's mother

noted that she tried to encourage him to write letters but was not very successful in these attempts.

### Michael

Michael has been teaching for the past four years at the grade four and five levels. Before entering the teaching profession, Michael worked as a commercial fisherman for several years. He maintains his love for the outdoors and the sea by fishing during the summers. During his fishing expeditions, Michael wrote for himself, composing poetry, stories and recording his observations and experiences in a logbook or diary. The obvious differences in educational and instructional experiences between the two teachers must be acknowledged at the outset of the study.

Michael decided to attend university following the birth of his two young children, whom he credits with awakening his keen interest in language growth and development generally, and writing and writing instruction specifically. He noted:

Well, initially the reason I got interested in education in the first place was when my kids were born and I watched them acquire language. It intrigued me and so much so that I got involved in going to university and auditing a few courses and then actually taking them for credit . . . and so in terms of children's perceptions, language acquisition, that is how I got interested and that continues to intrigue me. (February 28, 1992)

The year of the study, Michael's class consisted of 23 students, 10 boys and 13 girls. There were 15 grade fours

and 8 grade fives in his combination classroom. Three of the study's participants were in his grade four classroom last year. The seating arrangement in the classroom changed frequently but group configurations dominated. Students sat in groupings of two, three, or four, facing either one another or the front of the classroom. Similarly to Thomas' classroom, boys and girls were seated separately.

Michael taught in a medium-sized, kindergarten through grade five school in a suburban setting. The school employed 13 teachers and served approximately 300 students. Members of the staff treated the researcher in a courteous yet reserved manner. The school's atmosphere was comparatively cautious and formal. Michael described his school context for writing as follows:

Well, there is no context, which I think, we're losing out in many ways in not having that. I find that, it has always bothered me but it hasn't been possible to get it to be, not perhaps a writing school, but there should be some continuity, some consistency in terms of just the language that's used. But, there isn't. And, as much as I'm not restricted in what I have to write, (and) what kinds of things I have to teach in writing - but we've perhaps gone the other way and that there's no direction at all. I know that's difficult. (February 28, 1992)

#### Michael's Students - (grades four and five)

Lynn was 10 years of age at the beginning of the study and identified by the teacher as displaying advanced writing abilities. Michael observed that Lynn was a "lurker" during writing sessions, not wanting to engage

in the physical act of composing. Lynn echoed this sentiment by stating she did not like the "actual part of writing" but did enjoy creating stories in her mind. In the questionnaire, her mother stated that Lynn showed no interest in writing outside school, preferring her favourite activity of reading. Additionally, she wrote that Lynn enjoys playing the piano, playing soccer, Scottish country dancing, attending Sunday School and roller-blading. Lynn appeared both confident and articulate in and out of class, although she expressed some concern about not being able to write quickly.

Colin, who was 10 years old at the beginning of the study, was considered by the teacher to be at an advanced level of writing. Colin appeared very confident in all his school endeavors, and seemed to be looked up to by other members of the class. According to the parent questionnaire, Colin did not show interest in writing outside school, but his parents reported being pleased with his composing efforts and his ability to write in a humorous way. According to his teacher, Colin expressed himself through writing very effectively. A favourite activity for Colin when he finished his work in class was playing a computer game entitled "Travelling".

Terry, 10 years old, was identified as displaying average writing abilities. He appeared quiet in class, preferring to work on a writing task alone or with one other

friend. According to the parent questionnaire, Terry wrote occasionally outside of school, particularly stories, and he often used a computer at home for that purpose. His parents reported that Terry enjoyed reading, swimming, hockey, basketball, playing computer games, and drawing.

Natalie was a talkative and personable student of 9 years of age. At the beginning of the study, the teacher considered her to be of average writing ability. She worked closely with two other girls in her class during writing sessions, frequently reading their work and providing supportive comments. Natalie's mother stated that her daughter often engaged in writing at home and seemed confident of her abilities. She observed that one of Natalie's favourite activities was making all of the family's greeting cards. In addition, she reported that Natalie was involved in Girl Guides, jazz, ballet, singing and baseball.

Amanda, considered by the teacher to be delayed in her writing ability, was 10 years old at the beginning of the study. Michael expressed concern over Amanda's inability to write down her thoughts in a clear manner. She frequently left out words, letters and phrases during composition. Amanda's mother reported that her daughter did engage in writing activities outside school and did not seem confident in her abilities. Her mother also stated that she was concerned about Amanda's spelling and story content which

she felt were immature for her age. In addition to drawing, Amanda enjoyed swimming, softball, computer games and roller-blading.

Daniel, who was 9 years old at the beginning of the study, was also considered by the teacher to be delayed in his writing ability. Daniel appeared quiet in class and seemed to rely on others to get started writing. The teacher initially expressed some concern when Daniel handed in a writing assignment that had been finished at home rather than at school, but later commented that the writing Daniel engaged in at home appeared to help increase his confidence. Although identified as delayed in writing ability, the teacher indicated he was not overly concerned about Daniel's quality of work or developmental level.

#### Data Collection

The data collection period included four phases:

- Phase I: The Pilot Study,
- Phase II: Classroom Observations,
- Phase III: Interviews, and
- Phase IV: Collecting Written Products.

(The schedule for data collection and preliminary analysis is located in Appendix A.) The following outlines the procedures used during each of the four phases.

### Phase I: The Pilot Study

In June of 1991, a pilot study was conducted to determine the appropriateness and adequacy of four methodological strategies designed to access students' evident understanding of writing. This pilot study was intended to facilitate the main research study carried out in the fall of 1991.

#### The participants.

The participants in the pilot study included six students from one grade four class (three boys and three girls) in an urban elementary school. The students were selected in consultation with the teacher and represented three different levels of writing development. Two students, one boy and one girl, were selected from each of the following ability levels: an average level, an advanced level, and a delayed level of writing. The teacher's experience in observing the children over the course of a year facilitated the decisions determining ability levels.

Parental consent forms were signed and returned to the researcher before the pilot study began. The following four methodological strategies were used with each of the six students, thereby providing rich reflective accounts about writing for each child: (a) direction-writing activity, (b) metaphor activity, (c) proof-reading activity, and (d) interview.

### The strategies.

The criteria used to determine the adequacy of the four methodologies for the purposes of the study were as follows:

1. The strategy should represent an activity that is ecologically valid in nature. In other words, the students should not be asked to participate in an activity that has no apparent relationship to their lives in or out of the classroom (Corsaro, 1981).

2. The strategy should allow for open-ended comment from the students, thereby reducing forced choice responses (Hatch, 1990).

3. The general purpose of the activity should be communicated as openly and honestly as possible to the children so they are aware of why their participation is valued. They need to be given an opportunity to ask questions about the study.

4. The strategy should allow the children to focus on the object of inquiry, in this case, on writing (Hatch, 1990).

These criteria were adapted from guidelines set forth by Scardamalia and Bereiter (1983) to help children gain insight into their own mental processes. Each strategy used to access the student's evident understanding about writing will be described individually. Interpretation is designed to assess the strategies' ability to exhibit

aspects of children's understandings of writing. Having collapsed the data for purposes of this discussion, the depth and scope of interpretation is limited. Of the four strategies piloted, only one was selected and refined for use in the main study.

**A. Direction-Writing Activity:** A direction-writing activity based on Scardamalia and Bereiter's (1983) suggestion to use tasks that transfer existing strategies to new domains. It asked the students to write down, as completely as possible, the directions for a particular writing activity that they themselves had performed recently in the classroom. First, a writing task was identified, in consultation with the teacher and the students, as having proven enjoyable in the past. Second, students were asked to provide as much information as possible in written form, about the identified writing task, so that other students might also engage in such an activity. The direction-writing activity was designed to assess students' understanding of what is and is not emphasized in a particular writing task. A text was produced by each child. The text was to be based on several pictures distributed by the teacher depicting the journey of two Haida Indians. An example of a direction-writing text follows:

**Robbie's Text - Writing Directions**

Step 1. Your teacher will give you a pitcher and a piece of paper.

- Step 2. Then she will tell you to right what you think they are doing in the picher.
- Step 3. Then shell give you a nother picher and a nother peeces of paper.
- Step 4. Then do eysactley like step 2.
- Step 5. The shell give you two more peeses of paper and two more pichers.
- Step 6. The shell tell you with the last peeces of paper that you get to end your story.
- very important** Step 7. You have to revice and edit your story revice and edit meens to creaked the words in your story if you have any nonstander.

Taken together, this account and the others offered by the six grade four students displayed several themes about their understanding of writing. First, each text appeared to focus on the teacher as initiator, sustainer and ultimately, evaluator of the writing task. While researchers (Graves, 1983; Newman, 1984) emphasize supporting students choosing their own writing topics as this "establishes ownership and with ownership, pride in the piece" (Graves, 1983, p. 21), these accounts bring into question the possibility that school writing can allow this to occur. Hudson's (1986) research identifies classroom writing within a continuum of control noting, "A child's sense of ownership of classroom writing more closely parallels an adult's definition of composer rather than that of the initiator of an activity" (p. 63).

Second, there appeared to be a general lack of concern about content. This may have been due to the nature of the writing task, in which the researcher supplied the content through the use of photocopied pictures and the directions, which stressed procedural information over content. Nonetheless, it is of interest that the only account that includes a reference to writing about a particular topic was produced by a child who is experiencing difficulty with writing.

It should be pointed out the children were composing the directions for one writing activity that they themselves experienced during the school year. As such, their texts provided reflections on only one type of school-related writing task, powerful in and of themselves but perhaps not representative of all their writing.

A weakness of this particular activity was its inability to provide any insight into how children understand school writing in general. If it were used with several different kinds of writing tasks, it might usefully indicate ways in which children's understanding is similar or different across writing tasks. It offered a unique and revealing view of how children described one of the writing tasks they performed in school. However, the researcher's role in setting up this activity must be explicitly articulated in order to assess its effect on the child's text. It was decided to incorporate this activity into the

informal interview format, asking the children to comment upon or write specific directions for a variety of writing tasks they experienced in the classroom.

**B. Metaphor Activity.** The purpose of a metaphor activity was to discover insight into the forms of imagery children might articulate for the act of writing (Berthoff, 1981). The method used to access children's metaphors for writing will be described. First, the researcher reviewed the general concept of metaphor with the children and together brainstormed several examples. Second, the researcher modelled the process involved in writing a metaphor and then engaged the children in guided and independent practice of the activity. The students were given the frame, "Writing is \_\_\_\_\_" to use for this activity.

Together, the children's texts indicated that writing is a complex, emotional, and powerful process and its meaning is as varied as those who engage in it. Individually, specific themes were particularly evident throughout the analysis. These include (a) the physical movements involved in writing, (b) writing for fun and enjoyment, (c) space and time constraints, and (d) ownership of writing. Two examples of a metaphor-writing text follow:

**1. Simon's text -- Metaphor**

Writing is like a hockey game the pencil is the puck going from end to end never knowing when its going to stop again an every time you stop its a

period. When you draft its a fignt for the words, and perioids, and quocation marks.

**2. Meghan's Text - Metaphor**

writing is like a catterpillar tring to get in a peice of cake and it's getting closer and closer to the good part of the cake. It's like your writing something and then you're getting closer to the good part of the story.

It was quite possible to look for and find several provocative themes within the children's metaphors, which may or may not reflect personal understanding of writing. The children received instruction in this mode of expression only once before being asked to produce a metaphor for detailed analysis. Therefore, it is not probable that their texts represented understanding of writing beyond the immediate instructional context. Emmeche and Hoffmeyer (1991) observe, "A metaphor can be thought of as effectively creating similarities, [by] suggest[ing] possible relations and analogies" (p. 5). However, it was difficult to ascertain whether the metaphor held personal appeal for the individual or whether it simply represented an unconsidered response to a question posed. Due to these inherent difficulties, it was decided not to use this format as a means of accessing student understanding.

**C. Proof-Reading Activity.** In order to participate in a proof-reading activity, the children were presented with a handwritten and typed version of a child-written text appropriate for their grade level (see Table 4). This piece

of writing originated in Curtis' (1990) article on evaluating literacy. They were asked, after having had the story read to them, to comment on ways to improve the piece. As such, each child used self-determined methods to make sense of and evaluate written texts. They attempted to solve what were perceived to be problems or errors in the text.

I observed and taped each child throughout the process. Table 5 summarizes their proof-reading processes and indicates that, during the proof-reading activity, the children spent most of their time correcting spelling errors. In addition, they corrected the punctuation and to a lesser extent, made changes related to style by adding or removing phrases, changing vocabulary or extending ideas.

A description of the second part of the proof-reading activity follows. In order to refocus the children's attention away from spelling and towards content, a revised copy of the same text without spelling errors was provided. Then, the children were asked for their suggestions to improve the piece of writing. Several children's responses explicitly indicated that writing needs to make sense.

Laurie elaborated this concept as follows:

They didn't really explain it very well, how it happened. They explained it in short words and that's all right but they didn't explain it properly in short words. Like if this was the first time you heard this story I don't think the person would understand it very well.

Table 4

The typed version of Cinderella

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**Sarah**

**Wons apon a time  
 Theer livd a glri namd  
 cindrela. bcoz ene had  
 some Sinds She had to  
 agli sder sissders and  
 hre mum and dad did  
 one day The door  
 opend and one oz The  
 sans came to The door  
 The sans sed how wood  
 you like to come to the ball  
 and cindarella Sed can  
 I ccme Sed Cindarella  
 the agli step sistaes  
 sed no you haveent  
 got enie nice  
 dressrs cindarella  
 sed yes I have  
 got nice drsseas  
 she had to do  
 all the jobs  
 in the house  
 cindarella  
 crid and crid  
 and wen she  
 wos criing  
 a teri sed fech  
 me a pamcin  
 so cindarella  
 ferht a paich**

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**Note.** From "Whole language evaluation strategies: Examining the doughnut instead of the whole" by S. Curtis, 1990. In E. Daly (Ed.) Monitoring children's language development. Victoria, Australia: Australian Reading Association, p. 44.

Table 5

Summary of proofreading activity

	How many times story was read by student	Spelling corrected	Punctuation Added				Wording changed
			Period	Comma	Quotation	Exclamation or question	
Andrew	3	43 words	6	--	4 sets	--	• Removed 1 phrase & 2 words; removed 1 repeated phrase
Meghan	3 doesn't rewrite all the words; makes changes in original text	46 words	5	4	5 sets	1?	• Removed words that were repetitive; • (stylistic changes) • 1 repeated phrase removed
Laurie	2 second time through not as thorough as first time	42 words	5	1	--	--	none
Simon	4	38 words	6	--	5	2!	1: crossed out 2 words that were repeated
Jillian	1 1/2	43 words	--	--	--	--	none
Robbie	Jumped around parts of text, no indication of going through the text in a linear way	20 words	3	--	--	--	none

This text appears to support Faigley and Witte's (1984) observation that writers revise for their own purposes, to make surface and/or meaning changes. In effect, Laurie's text suggested the need to make microstructure changes which altered the meaning but did not affect an overall summary of the text.

Robbie and Jillian, in particular, provided general advice to revise and but did not elaborate the specifics for doing so. Jillian offered the comment, "there is only one period in this whole thing" as the proposed change to the

text. In contrast, Simon's text indicated the necessity for more descriptive information concerning the stepsisters and more variety in dialogue. Meghan removed repetitive vocabulary and asked why the writer chose to compose this particular story.

According to this set of children's texts, proof-reading may be interpreted as a way of making a piece of writing coherent. It is less clear what direction such action should take. The observation has important implications for pedagogy as it relates to writing. Each of these children had received the same writing instructional program in grade four. Yet, their accounts revealed very different ways of detecting and revising problems in a narrative text. Gordon (1990) observed a similar phenomenon with sixth-grade writers. She noted, "Thus unable to diagnose the exact nature of the problems (where it was or what it was), many students made general evaluative comments about the nature of the problem based on their intuition" (p. 27). What is interesting is the possible relationship between children as writers and children as proof-readers.

The information provided through this activity may be connected and compared with other sets of texts. However, it was decided not to use the proofreading activity as a main source of data for the study in the fall of 1991. The proof-reading activity was specific in its attempt to access a certain kind of information, that is, how students engaged

in the proofing process. It was decided that it would be more powerful if references to proof-reading emerged from data collected from a more general perspective as occurred through the direction-writing activity. Several children, during the activity, referred to proofreading as a necessary element of writing. This could be explored further in an interview with each child.

**D. Interview (I and II).** The interview format was used twice with each child individually and emphasized informal rather than formal techniques. That is, the children individually responded to semi-structured, open-ended questions and their answers frequently guided the inquiry. Also, they brought writing folders to the interview providing "a symbolic bridge to the social context of interest" (Hatch, 1990, p. 262). The purpose of the first interview was to elicit information about children's understanding of (a) what constitutes good writing, (b) the role of audience in writing, (c) the goals and purposes of writing tasks performed in school, (d) themselves as writers, and (e) the value of writing. The second interview focussed specifically on children's writing habits outside school.

The interview format provided the researcher with an opportunity to talk to the children about writing. This did not require children to write out their responses, which may have been interpreted by some as a difficult task. In fact,

Laurie checked with me several times about having to re-copy her "Direction-writing" task. This may have inhibited her from expanding her ideas.

### Results of the Pilot Study

Through the use of a pilot study, the importance of establishing a personal relationship with the participants became readily apparent. Consequently, it was decided that informal interviews would occur throughout the five month period spent in the classrooms, and that the student's formal interviews would be conducted in the fifth month of the study, allowing ample time to get to know the students on an individual basis. In addition, the children appeared comfortable when they were able to show samples of their own writing. Therefore, concrete referents throughout formal and informal interviews were used whenever possible.

Each of the methodologies used in the pilot study yielded interesting data. In most cases, the activities required children to write out their responses, which, it was decided, was not the best way to access their understanding. Students for whom writing was a chore apparently did not express themselves as fully as they might otherwise have done. For the main study, the interview format was refined and used. If an individual child referred to proof-reading during the interview, specific questions were asked regarding that aspect of writing.

## Phase II: Classroom Observations

### Fieldnotes.

Beginning in early October, regular classroom observations were scheduled with each teacher. One teacher preferred to arrange the entire five month schedule at the beginning of the study, while the other teacher was phoned on a weekly basis to arrange classroom visitations. Much care was taken to negotiate entry into the two settings, and each teacher's personal preferences for classroom observation times were considered. Observational periods ranged from three hours per week to nine hours per week in order to accustom participants slowly to the researcher's presence (Bogdan & Biklen, 1983; Corsaro, 1981). The aims of remaining in each classroom for extended periods of time were: (a) to help develop positive relationships in the field, and (b) to lessen the probability of "showtime performances" during the data gathering sessions (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989).

Classroom observation data, in the form of fieldnotes, were collected weekly throughout the study. Fieldnotes comprised the main source of data for classroom observations and were both descriptive and reflective. The fieldnotes for each observation period included a heading (e.g. haiku poetry instruction), the date, time, length and place of

observation, and page number. Large margins were left for notations by the observer.

Descriptive notes included the following information: (a) descriptions of the subjects, (b) description of physical setting, (c) accounts of particular events, (d) reconstruction of dialogue, and (e) the observer's behavior. In addition, information as it appeared on the chalkboard or overhead was recorded and handouts distributed to the students were collected and dated. Reflective notes included: (a) reflections on analysis, (b) reflections on method, (c) reflections on dilemmas and conflicts, (d) reflections on my own frame of mind, and (e) points of clarification (Bogdan & Biklen, 1983). In all, over the five month study, approximately 200 pages of fieldnotes were written in the two classrooms.

#### **Audio-taping**

Audio-taping procedures were used extensively in the study. Each teacher wore a portable Sony cassette recorder on a belt (MODEL TCM-85V) with a lavalier microphone attached. The recorder was able to capture the instructional language and that of the students with whom the teachers conversed. The recording equipment was introduced to each classroom one week before the formal data collection period. It was hoped this would encourage the teachers to experiment with the equipment and to familiarize

themselves and their students with the taping process. The taping procedure was initially commented on by the students. One remarked to his teacher, "Are you getting ready to go undercover?" Eventually, the teachers and the students seemed comfortable with the tape-recorder and infrequently remarked on its presence.

In Thomas' classroom, a total of 18 one-hour tapes were collected and in Michael's classroom, a total of 11 one-hour tapes were collected. The discrepancy between the amount of recorded talk gathered from the two classrooms was caused by occasional scheduling difficulties in Michael's classroom and technical problems experienced during taping. In both classrooms, observations frequently lasted longer than the actual tape recording, as the teachers would turn off the recorders during conversations with other teachers, parents and/or the school administrator. In addition, the beginning of the day was marked by a number of routines that were recorded in the field notes, but, because of their repetitive nature, were not taped. From time to time, unscheduled classroom events such as school assemblies or Christmas concert practices required that taping be postponed or cancelled. In addition, both teachers were responsible for student teacher supervision; therefore, observation and taping sessions had to be scheduled around those additional teaching duties.

### Transcription.

Whenever possible, transcription of the audio-tapes began immediately following the observation session in which they were recorded. This was done so that I could recollect the context surrounding the tape-recording (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). The method of transcription was made easier by the use of a Sanyo memo-scriber dictating/transcribing machine (MODEL TRC 9200). Transcription for each one hour tape took from eight to ten hours, depending upon the amount of talk recorded and the ease with which it could be attributed to individual speakers. Four tapes could not be used because of technical difficulties when the record button was not pressed down firmly or when a battery in the lavelier microphone no longer worked. The transcriptions were handwritten and later typed into a computer. In all, approximately 400 pages of transcriptions were collected from the two classrooms.

The audio-tapes were dated and labelled using a code to identify the teacher and the topic of the writing session. Those were then color-coded and stored in boxes for ease of retrieval. Audio-taping and transcription permitted examination and re-examination of the information collected. The tapes were not erased in order to conduct validity checks of the data.

Transcription Conventions. The following transcription conventions were used during this process:

1. Standard orthography was used.
2. The real names of the students and teachers were used to facilitate recall, then later changed.
3. All transcripts were coded to identify the classroom and the topic of the writing session. The time was noted at the beginning and end of each recording. Transcripts were dated and numbered for ease of information retrieval.

4. Pauses in dialogue were indicated as follows:

. . . . a short pause of 3 seconds or less.

(pause) - a long pause of more than 3 seconds.

5. Emphases were indicated by underlining accentuated words or phrases, thus:

We drafted together a list of important events in the story.

6. When it was impossible to determine specifically what was said, because of extraneous noise or because the tape recorder was too far from the speaker, the following convention was used:

She                     (inaudible)                    

7. If the speaker could not be identified, the label "student" was used. Teachers were easily identified.

8. Additional information was provided using parentheses in order to contextualize the talk. This

information was either evident in the recording itself or available in the fieldnotes:

Thomas: [Teacher moves to the chalkboard at the front of the classroom.] Okay, let's do a little webbing. [Teacher writes in word "storm" on the board and draws a circle around it.]

(A sample transcript appears in Appendix B.)

**Validity Checks for Transcriptions.** Transcript validity checks were performed by the researcher and a colleague trained by the researcher. One difficulty associated with having someone unfamiliar with the participants provide validity checks is that it is impossible for the other person to identify speakers. A useful method of checking the validity of transcriptions is for the primary researcher to restudy the data "with a fresh eye" (Dobbert, 1982, p. 265). This procedure is possible with permanent data such as tapes, photographs or notes. The researcher retranscribed five randomly selected classroom observation sessions of approximately 250 words each. For accuracy of transcription, agreement was 97%. In the case of the validity checks made by a colleague, agreement was 93%. When there was a difference of opinion, the tape was replayed and discussion provided consensus. Following the validity checks, all the tapes used in this study were retained for not more than one year following the completion of the study, at which point they were erased. This was done to provide confidentiality to the participants

and to prevent the data from being used for purposes other than those originally intended.

### Phase III: Interview

#### Interviews with Students.

The participants were interviewed on a formal and informal basis throughout the five month study. Throughout the routines of observing and recording information, the researcher spoke to the students informally about their writing. As the study progressed, the students became more comfortable with the researcher's presence and frequently initiated dialogue. Speaking in support of developing relationships with participants, Hatch (199) stated: "Because researcher-informant relationships are so important, the researcher should be willing to sacrifice initial data, if necessary, to facilitate the development of harmonious relationships. For children especially, time to become familiar with the researcher is essential" (p. 260). Initially, the researcher carried a portable cassette recorder similar to those provided to the teachers in order to record informal conversations with the students. However, the students appeared to find this method obtrusive and it was discarded after a few weeks. Instead, the names of the students with whom the researcher spoke and the content of the conversations was recorded in the fieldnotes under the heading of "Informal Interview" immediately following the observation session. Over the five months,

approximately 100 pages of informal interview notes were collected.

Following the pilot study in June, 1991 designed to assess the efficacy of methodological strategies accessing children's understanding of writing, a semi-structured, open-ended interview format was developed and refined for use in the main study (see Appendix C). The interview format was administered by the researcher on an individual basis during the fifth month of the study, allowing the researcher time to develop a comfortable relationship with the students before conducting individual interviews. This was done to reduce a possible "halo" effect which sometimes occurs when a sample is purposively selected from a larger group.

The formal interviews were conducted individually with each of the 12 students and lasted from 20 to 45 minutes each. Each student was interviewed in a room in the school, most often the library. Two students, Kristen and Melissa, were interviewed together as their teacher, Thomas, believed that this would encourage participation on Kristen's part. Students and their parents were asked for permission to audio-tape the interviews. Transcription of the taped data followed, using similar procedures to those outlined in the previous section entitled "Audio-taping".

### Interviews with Teachers.

In addition, formal interviews with each teacher were conducted towards the fifth month of the study to gain insight into attitudes, beliefs, and goals for writing and writing instruction and to substantiate classroom observation findings. An interview format was developed based on Fear's (1990) interview schedule in a comparable study of teacher's conceptions about writing instruction. The teacher interview is provided in Appendix D. Thomas' interview was conducted on February 17, 1992 and lasted two hours. Michael's interview was conducted on February 28, 1992 and lasted approximately one hour. The discrepancy in the length of interview between the two teachers was due to previous commitments on Michael's part. Both interviews were transcribed using previously outlined procedures.

### Parent Questionnaires.

In the final month of the study, parent questionnaires were sent home to provide additional information concerning the students' writing, past and present writing habits, the extent to which writing was observed at home and reading behaviors. In addition, parents were asked to comment on their child's interests and hobbies. Observations were elicited concerning parental perceptions of their child's writing development. These data were used to substantiate classroom observation findings and students' interview accounts (see Appendix E).

#### Phase IV: Written Products

All of the participants' writing produced throughout the five month study was collected in each classroom. In Thomas' classroom, students kept all their writing in a notebook and in Michael's, writing folders contained the students' work. The students' written products were photocopied, dated and labelled, and maintained in individual writing folders for analysis.

#### Data Analysis

Data analysis is the task or process of organizing, sorting and coding the data. This process, for the most part, was on-going and included reading and re-reading fieldnotes, transcribing tapes collected through interviews and classroom observations, and developing a system for information retrieval (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Spradley, 1979). The researcher collected and analyzed information from multiple sources in two classrooms. As indicated in the data collection schedule, the following forms of information resulted: two teacher interviews, 12 children interviews, approximately 107 hours of classroom observation (fieldnotes and transcriptions from tapes), parent questionnaires, and students' written products. The analysis process of naturalistic data has been characterized as "unwieldy" (Clark & Florio, 1983) unless conducted concurrently with data collection process. Therefore, it was necessary to engage in preliminary data

analysis while still in the field. Table 6 indicates the four phases of data collection and the accompanying sources of data.

There is considerable agreement among qualitative researchers that the data should be allowed to speak for themselves without using predetermined structures for analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989; Spradley, 1979). Equally important is the need to develop a focus and research questions for the study and to anticipate possible outcomes. The following discussion will indicate modes of analysis for the collected data.

#### Sources of Data.

Audio Tapes. Each recorded classroom observation session and all student and teacher interviews were transcribed in their entirety. Both during and following the transcription process, the classroom observation data and the interview data were examined for patterns of meaningful activity in writing and writing instruction. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) indicate this is when the researcher "looks for regularities and patterns as well as for topics the data cover" (p. 156).

Analytic categories were tentatively assigned at this stage of analysis using a file card system (Bogdan & Bilken, 1982; Spradley, 1979). The research questions provided the initial lens through which to view the data. This method of coding categories was the first step in applying reduction

Table 6

Summary of data sources for analysis

Phases of Data Collection	Sources of Data
Phase I: Pilot Study	As outlined previously
Phase II: Classroom Observations	Fieldnotes and Audio tapes of instructional language
Phase III: Interviews	Parent questionnaires Audio tapes of teachers' and students' interviews
Phase IV: Written Products	Students' written products

techniques to the data and permitted categories to be arrived at inductively and deductively (Clark & Florio, 1983).

The file card system consisted of recording categories, themes, and patterns individually on 4 x 6 inch index cards. From the moment a category was generated, any instances of it in the data were recorded on the card, identified by the classroom from which it originated, the date and the page number of the transcript. All the transcripts were numbered to facilitate locating data later.

Second and third readings of the transcripts tested the workability of the categories. Data were reread, and in some cases retranscribed, in an attempt to ensure the accuracy and to the evidence speak for itself. At this step of the analytical process, categories were modified, new ones added and some discarded. The criteria for maintaining

categories rested in their usefulness in addressing the research questions and for their adequacy in representing information (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Using file cards enabled the researcher to group similar categories together. For instance, in one classroom, episodes were recorded of the teacher providing whole group and individual instruction in various aspects of writing including spelling, sentence combining and descriptive vocabulary. Placing these three file cards together enabled the researcher to observe patterns of the teacher's instructional emphasis. The coded category "Emphasis" eventually became an established category for instructional language. At several points in the process, it became necessary for the researcher to step back and allow for an interpretation that did not fit with preconceived ideas and biases about writing instruction. In other words, it became evident that favorable and unfavorable impressions were developing towards the instructional approaches observed. Acknowledging these impressions was the first step towards maintaining a dispassionate viewpoint.

With over 100 cards generated for instructional language alone, the file card system did not permit the information to be scanned all at once. Therefore, another data reduction technique was applied. The information on the cards was transferred to large wall charts and colour-coded according to categories, one for each

classroom. The charts were set side-by-side facilitating the next step of analysis, commonly referred to as the constant comparative method (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and often used with multi-data sources. This enabled the researcher to place the codes developed from classroom observations beside those from the student interviews and facilitate viewing connections between teacher's instructional language and students' reflective accounts about writing. Such analysis revealed insights into research question number two: what is the relationship between children's evident understanding of writing and the teacher's instructional language during writing sessions?

In the case of students' reflective accounts, another oversized recording chart was developed in an attempt to streamline the data (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Students' names appeared across the top and research questions one "a" through "e" were located along the side of the chart. This visual representation facilitated the observation of patterns and irregularities within and across groups of students (see Table 7). For instance, the data could be scanned to show any developmental patterns of response, thereby facilitating analysis.

#### **Validity Checks for Analysis.**

Procedures for checking the accuracy with which the data were coded reflect those described by Lauer and Asher (1988) and Dobbert (1982). Another rater was familiarized

Table 7

Summary of students' reflective accounts.

Reflective Accounts of ...	Participants					
	Kristen	Melissa	Steven	Sarah	Donald	Jean
What a good writer does						
The role of audience						
Goals and purpose						
Themselves as writers (ownership)						
The value of writing						

with the codes used to characterize instructional language data and interview data. Five randomly selected transcripts from each data source were provided to the rater, who was asked to read and classify the information (up to 250 words at a time) according to the researcher's categories. Percentages of agreement initially was 94.5%. Discussions resolved all differences of opinion. Data from varied sources allowed the researcher to cross-check information and served to verify and strengthen observations and categories.

**Fieldnotes.**

Data collection procedures yielded over 200 pages of fieldnotes from the two classrooms. The fieldnotes were read and elaborated upon in the evenings following the observations. These notes were not formally analyzed, but as a "written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 74), it contextualized the instructional language data and the interview information. As such, the fieldnotes were a well-used source of information during analysis. By way of illustration, in Michael's classroom, he referred to classroom charts about the steps in the writing process. Upon locating the date and topic of the writing session in the fieldnotes, detailed information of the charts and their contents was available to the researcher.

**Parent Questionnaires.**

A two page parent questionnaire was filled out by each of the participant's families (see Appendix E). These data were used to provide detailed portraits of the students in addition to substantiating the findings from other sources, in particular, from the student's interviews. Parent questionnaires provided yet another perspective on the participants.

### Written Products

Similar to Clark and Florio's (1983) study of writing in two elementary classrooms, student writing was not focussed on "in isolation from the social and academic processes that engendered it" (p. 259). The writing produced by the participants in this study was analyzed on two levels in order to address research question number three. First, each student's collection was examined to determine its contents. Individual pieces were counted and identified according to the author and the writing session of origin. This information was used for creating lists of types of writing performed in each classroom. In addition, variations and similarities among students' writing were observed by examining all of the products from a single writing session.

A second level of analysis was conducted relating written products to students' evident understanding of writing. Specifically, the data from student understanding of writing was examined alongside their written products in order to identify patterns of relationship. This enabled the researcher to indicate patterns of each student's evident understanding of writing in relation to writing ability and the writing produced in school.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter the results of each of the three areas of inquiry will be presented and discussed. These areas include: (a) the teacher's instructional language during the writing event (what was said), (b) the writing produced by the students (what was done), and (c) the students' reflective accounts (what was understood). In order to provide a meaningful context in which to frame the students' perceptions, it is first necessary to address the nature of the two teachers' instructional language during writing; therefore, this will be dealt with in Section I. Section II will present and discuss aspects of the students' written products collected throughout the study. This information will be used to address question one:

1. What is the relationship between children's evident understanding of writing and their writing performance?

Finally, section III will present the data gathered on students' reflective accounts of writing. In the interest of clarity, research questions two and three will be addressed in this section and where appropriate and applicable specific aspects of the teachers' instructional language will be related to the students' own accounts. To reiterate, the questions are:

2. From the children's perspectives, what is the nature of their understanding of writing? Specifically, what are children's evident understanding of:
  - (a) what good writers do?
  - (b) principal audience for their writing?
  - (c) the goals and purposes of writing tasks?
  - (d) themselves as writers?
  - (e) the value of writing?
3. What is the relationship between children's evident understanding of writing and the teacher's instructional language?

#### **I. The Teacher's Language: What was Said**

The two classrooms were initially selected because they appeared to possess similar features, that is, they were both upper elementary or intermediate classrooms of comparable size located in middle-class neighborhoods. In addition, the two teachers had expressed interest in the research focus of students' perceptions of the writing they do in school. As might be expected, each classroom proved unique in terms of how writing is taught and the instructional language used therein.

Detailed observations were collected in the form of fieldnotes and audiotapes which were transcribed and analyzed. By studying the fieldnotes and transcriptions, an open-coding system was first applied whereby "conceptual

labels were placed on discrete happenings, events and other instances of phenomena" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61).

There are several ways to develop an open coding system. One method is to perform a line-by-line analysis; a second method is to code by sentence or paragraph, and a third is to work with an entire document. Owing in part to the extensive amount of information collected and the fact that meaningful chunks of data appeared in both the sentence and the paragraph units, the second method of analysis seemed most appropriate and useful. The concepts were then grouped or classified. Researchers acknowledge that categories used in analyzing the data must be derived from and grounded in the data itself (Harste, Burke, & Woodward, 1983), but a coding system "does not spring directly from the data. Rather it arises from an interplay between the data and the researcher's knowledge of theory" (Lauer & Asher, 1988, p. 17).

The categories for instructional language were defined according to certain properties in a manner similar to Spradley's Domain Analysis (1980). The actual origin and nature of criterion for judging category selection were determined by the researcher's background knowledge and experience. To illustrate, Wallace (1989) states, "We can know of nothing that exists in its own nature, independent of the mind that recognizes it" (p. 114).

Four-by-six cards were used to record categories when these occurred in the data. According to Spradley (1980), "As the stack of cards grows, the cards can be sorted easily into different piles and arranged to suit different purposes in analysis." In addition this system provided the researcher with a range of dimensions associated with a particular category. Although the use of pre-determined categories was avoided, it is likely the final category selection was influenced by the research questions and their focus on what good writing is, the role of audience in writing, the goals and purposes of writing and the value of writing. Because the two teachers in the study were considered to be effective writing teachers by others in the education community, this system of analysis made it possible to view simultaneously the subtle variations in their instructional language and observe possible patterns.

Table 8 outlines the four major categories derived from the data on instructional language and an accompanying range of dimensions. The instructional language used during each writing session was observed, transcribed, and categorized by teaching focus. Four major teaching foci were identified: emphasis, ownership, audience, and purpose. The visual representation of these categories and dimensions is not meant to be dichotomous in nature but rather, represents a range of observed behaviors, providing an

Table 8

Teachers' instructional language

Categories		Dimensions
Emphasis	whole-group strategy instruction	individual strategy instruction
Ownership	teacher	student
Audience	other	self
Purpose	task-oriented	discovery-oriented

overview of the instructional language and helping to organize and make the immediate context apparent. Each category will be defined and discussed from the vantage point of the two classrooms.

**Emphasis**

In the past decade, a trend toward process writing has received attention in language education journals, conferences, and workshops (Calkins, 1986). While a number of studies offer teachers' first-hand accounts of their classroom writing programs and practices, comparatively few studies have examined instructional language to determine how individual teachers interpret and implement a writing process approach in their classrooms. Murray (1983) observes that it is possible for writers and teachers of writing to apply various interpretations or emphases to the writing process. He notes:

When this concept [that writing is a process] first became popular, some people understood the process to be linear and even taught it as a production-line operation. Others . . . have pointed out that the process is not linear, but that a writer moves back and forth through the process. (p. 3)

In both classrooms, the teachers articulate process-oriented approaches to writing instruction but maintain quite diverse methods of implementation. Through careful analysis of these two teachers' instructional language patterns, distinct instructional emphases become apparent.

Thomas' classroom is characterized by particular established routines for writing. The teacher spends the majority of time working individually with students while they write. He involves himself in the work by showing them ways to approach writing by modelling strategies. Thomas deliberately "thinks out loud" so his students see and hear the writing process unfolding. Occasionally he gets stuck while composing and admits this to his students. Then, together, they come up with possible solutions.

In essence, he emphasizes writing instruction in a manner similar to Graves (1983) who defines writing as "crafting":

A craft is a process of shaping material toward an end. There is a long, painstaking, patient process demanded to learn how to shape material to a level where it is satisfying to the person doing the crafting. Both craft processes, writing and teaching, demand constant revision, constant reseeing of what is being revealed by the information in hand; in one instance the subject of the writing, in another the person learning to write. The craftsman is a master follower,

observer, listener, waiting to catch the shape of the information.

The craftsperson looks for differences in the material, the surprise, the explosion that will set him aback. Surprises are friends, not enemies. Surprises mean changes, whole new arrangements, new ways to revise, refocus, reshape. But the craftsperson is not in a hurry. Surprises are enemies of time constraints. Surprises are enemies of control. For when information or children present them with a surprise, the surprise has force and energy. They want the child to control, take charge of information in his writing. Their craft is to help the child to maintain control for himself. That is the craft of teaching. They stand as far back as they can observing the child's way of working, seeking the best way to help the child realize his intentions (p. 6).

When asked to characterize his writing program in an interview, Thomas replied, "'Writing program' is an interesting concept because it implies a package and I don't think it is. I think it's a reaction to needs" (February 17, 1992). When reacting to students' needs, Thomas instructs according to what he knows about the student's writing and what the student says to him. At various times throughout the study, he worked with individuals and groups of students on the following: subject matter, word meanings, character development, spelling, theme, rhyme scheme, combining sentences, story sequence, syllabication, pronunciation, form, mood, plurals, pronouns, similes, long and short vowels, webbing, subject/verb agreement, or clarity. Instruction appeared to be tailored to individual students, and Thomas responded to their needs and interests.

A closer analysis of Thomas' language disclosed several important features. First, he frequently acknowledged that writing is not easy, that it requires concentration on the part of the writer and that it is sometimes a struggle. On several occasions, when Thomas noticed more than one or two students having difficulty with their writing, he called a small group together and worked through the task, providing personalized feedback and strategies to help them with their writing (November 12, 1991; November 27, 1991; December 3, 1991). On one occasion, he worked with a group of students using a webbing strategy to help them write a poem using the title "Storm" (November 12, 1991). He wrote the word "Storm" on the board and had the students brainstorm a list of words related to that title. On another occasion, he provided individual instruction to Steven on the spelling of words ending in 'ing', such as 'taking', 'getting' and 'fitting' (October 23, 1991). Thomas offered support and individual instruction but was not directive in giving students ideas about which to write. This type of instruction is in keeping with Graves' view of teaching writing as craft.

Second, Thomas wrote with his students. He seldom asked them to write a piece that he had not modelled with them previously. For instance, during writing sessions featuring limericks, haiku, and poetry based on personal experience, Thomas attempted these forms, employing

think-aloud strategies. He noted when a line did not sound right or when he was not satisfied with his work. In so doing, he involved himself with writing "from the inside by actually doing it [him]self" (Graves, 1991, p. 76). In the following episode Thomas had students help him write a limerick and modelled his think-aloud process:

Thomas: What about the subject matter here? Is it very serious? (pause) It's humorous, sort of silly. Let's do one. I think if we write a poem, if we do it right now, then you'll be awake on a Monday morning. Who would like to be written about? (most children raise their hands) Adam. No, I'm going to do Adam first. (teacher writes on the board) "There once was a fellow named Adam." Let's do the second line. I need something that's going to rhyme with Adam that has about 8 syllables.

Student: He got married to a perfect madam.

Thomas: He got . . . (teacher prints the line on the board). Now we need a couple of short lines. They're not going to rhyme with those two. (teacher writes on the board as he is prompted by several students) OK, who's got a line that rhymes with Adam. (students offer out lines) OK, wait a minute. Who thinks that salmon and Adam rhyme? . . . Could you say it so they do rhyme? I can. Adam. Salmon. (laughs) OK, so you don't like that one . . . Does the poem make any sense?

Students: No.

Thomas: Not very much. (November 18, 1991)

As this example shows, modelling writing behaviors was a key aspect of Thomas' pedagogy.

Third, Thomas responded to students in a manner not unlike what others (Langer & Applebee, 1986) have termed instructional scaffolding. In the following instance, Sarah asked if she could create her own title for a piece and the

teacher responded, not by saying yes or no, but by asking her to reflect on the purpose of titles.

Thomas: That's a good question, Sarah . . . Tell me about titles and poems. (pause) Julie?

Student: That you're to write the poem first then you can do the title.

Thomas: Yes?

Student: What Julie said is right. Write the poem, like have the idea and then write the poem, but if the poem doesn't turn out because the title (inaudible).

Thomas: Can you say it again please, Cam, because I think you've got it exactly right.

Student: Well, you have an idea in your head and you write about the poem but you don't put a title down, and then when the poem is finished, if it doesn't fit the title, then you do it.

Thomas: Yeah. Quite often you will find that there have been songs that have been written or poems that have, you'll read in the book the title of the poem and then you'll see in brackets or underneath, originally called, sometimes known as. In other words, the poem may have more than one title. Whether the author changes his mind or the people who read it think it should have a different title, we're not quite sure. The title is often very, very important. (December 3, 1991)

In responding to Sarah's inquiry, Thomas emphasized the role of titles in writing. It did not seem to matter whether they titled a piece before or after writing, but he did ask the students to reflect on the very questions they posed. Students were asked what they thought about questions of procedure, content, and form. Such instructional procedures encouraged the control of the writing to remain in the students' hands. In the following

excerpt, Thomas asked his students to comment on their understanding of what art is:

Student: A way you express your feelings.

Thomas: A way you express your feelings. Yes?

Student: A way to communicate to other people who don't know your language.

Thomas: (repeats student's response) K\_\_\_, will you write that down on that piece of paper, please, and put it somewhere so we can return to that many years from now. Like, maybe next week. (laughter) No, I like that. That's going to be worth some thoughts. Yes sir.

Student: Art can be a lot of things, like there can be the art of bragging, there can be the art (inaudible), the art of making clothing.

Thomas: OK, D\_\_\_, I think a couple of people aren't listening but what you're saying is very, very important. So, S\_\_\_, would you listen to D please. S\_\_\_, A\_\_\_ Go ahead.

Student: Almost everything is an art that (inaudible). Art is in everything.

Thomas: L\_\_\_? Good, D\_\_\_.

Student: Art is creation and some (inaudible).

Thomas: OK. Yes?

Student: Art explains things words cannot.

Thomas: (pause) Put that up on the board, would you please? Yes?

Student: Describing words.

Thomas: Describing words. Art is describing words. Yes?

Student: Art describes you.

Thomas: Art describes yourself. Yes?

Student: Art, instead of writing down words, you make pictures that describe words (inaudible).

Thomas: OK, I think we'll go back to what D\_\_\_\_ said . . . Is, is a person who can play a musical instrument, let's say a piano, beautifully, are they an artist?

Students: Yes. (several students indicate this)

Thomas: OK. I think all of you agree a painter is an artist. Is a person who's a dancer, do we call them good artists?

Students: Yes.

Thomas: What about a person who's a writer, a really good writer, do we say they're very good at their art?

Student: Yeah.

Thomas: Good. (pause) Is poetry an art?

Students: Yes. (several)

Thomas: Is writing poetry an art?

Students: Yes. (several) (November 12, 1991)

Thomas engaged his students in discussion that encouraged them to think about writing as an art. This awareness is evident as students talked about how they write and how they approach writing problems. Perhaps the grade level of these students (grade fives and sixes) allowed this type of metacognitive activity to be successful. This example shows that, in addition to providing instruction in specific writing strategies, Thomas engaged students in discussions of broader concepts, such as whether writing can be considered an art.

Overall, Thomas' approach to writing instruction emphasizes strategies associated with Graves' definition of crafting. He himself wrote during writing sessions. He

worked primarily with students individually and accepted idiosyncratic approaches to writing. Furthermore, he acknowledged the difficulty involved in writing but made it clear that he expected students to work hard and think about their writing in a context larger than the school-based one.

Turning to Michael's classroom, there were well established routines associated with the writing sessions. He spent time planning the writing activity, ensuring that his students experienced and became knowledgeable about the various stages of the writing process: pre-writing, drafting, revision, editing, and publishing. Large wall charts were displayed at the front of the classroom which identified the various stages of the writing process and were referred to during instruction. Michael spent the majority of instructional time focussing students' attention on each of the stages, defining specific writing behaviors to accompany each stage. His instructional language seemed less influenced by Graves' (1983) conception of writing, and more by Brannon's (1985) observations that: "Many writing teachers believe that students need 'strategies' for composing, a repertory of invention heuristics and organizational structures, for instance, from which they can choose as they compose" (p. 22).

While both teachers appeared to provide their students with strategies for writing, Michael and Thomas were distinctive in their sense of role during instruction.

Apart from instructing his students about the stages of the writing process, Michael also indicated their order by planning a methodical step-by-step writing task whereby all students were guided through the stages. For instance, when drafting, Michael emphasized the need to get ideas down quickly without attending to conventions (spelling, punctuation, and capitalization), and to double space one's writing in order to make future revisions easier. Revision was next, according to Michael, and involved changing a draft to make it better by removing unnecessary words and making sure it made sense. Editing was taught, using the acronym COPS, referring to Capitalization, Organization, Punctuation and Spelling. The final stage, publishing, was not observed with every piece of writing but at times, it involved students typing their drafts onto a computer and printing out the final copy.

In the following episode, the students were working on a piece of writing that would serve to predict a sequence of events from the story Aladdin. The teacher's language clearly shows an emphasis on instructing students about the stages of the writing process:

Michael: OK, lots of people are still drafting. Take ideas from what you've heard if you want. When you've finished your draft, remember your draft is getting your ideas down, read it over out loud and make sure you have your periods and capitals in so that your sentences are complete because a draft doesn't make sense without punctuation. A draft is getting your ideas down but it does have to have punctuation. Then I want you to revise and edit it. I want you to quickly

revise and edit it. And how do we do that?  
Andrew?

Student: Change to make it better.

Michael: You're changing it to make it better, that's what you're trying to do. And what are some of the ways you can do that? James, what's one way you can revise it to make it better?

Student: (inaudible response)

Michael: If you have a draft, how can you make it better? (pause) Can't remember?

Student: (inaudible)

Michael: Well, if you've finished drafting a story, now you're reading it over, how do you, what kinds of things do you do to make it better? Just one thing you could do to make it better . . . Can you help him out, Aaron?

Student: Yeah, maybe put longer sentences in.

Michael: OK, you can add things to the sentences to make them longer. What else could you do, Terry?

Student: Change it to make it better.

Michael: How? But how though?

Student: Check the punctuation, I guess.

Michael: You can check the punctuation but you . . . want to be focussing on other things first.

Student: (inaudible)

Michael: OK, so you can add your punctuation to make it make sense. But, that's the key, isn't it, you want to make sure it makes sense when you're revising and editing it . . . Read these over out loud. Make sure they make sense. Add and change words to paint pictures. Make sure that you have all your necessary punctuation in. Work on those. If you've done that, then you let Mrs. Bright or I read what you've done. Then you can go on and do a picture that goes with it.  
(February 6, 1992)

Throughout this episode, Michael focussed the students' attention on the processes of revision and editing. He attempted to have his students state what they should do during the revision process. Michael provided strategies for his students to use during composing. As he worked with the whole group, it was difficult for individual students to comment on revising their own writing. Therefore, the instructional language tended to be general in nature and the comments were applicable to most of the students' writing. Michael inquired, "If you have a draft, how can you make it better?" Without access to a specific piece of writing, the teacher had to emphasize generic writing behaviors associated with revision, including punctuation, spelling, capitalization and organization. This emphasis stands in contrast to that observed in Thomas' classroom, where he taught strategies during individual writing conferences. As such, the strategies Thomas provided varied from student to student. Michael taught the writing process as it often appears in teaching resource books and materials, using a linear, step-by-step schema for students to follow. It must be acknowledged that these two teachers represent different levels of teaching experience and rely, to greater and lesser extents, on published materials and personal experience to guide their writing instruction.

Tremmel (1992) points out that some methods tend to reify writing, making it appear static, rigid and easy to

acquire. This 'formulaic' emphasis may provide Michael, the less experienced teacher, with the necessary handle on an otherwise complex process, particularly when faced with the task of instructing 24 students in writing. Michael provided a systematic approach to the teaching of writing that addressed the entire class more often than the individual student and taught the components of the process in a well-organized and step-by-step manner. When interviewed, he articulated his hopes for his writing instruction:

[I] try to get the kids or allow the kids to understand that writing is something that they can use to organize their thoughts, that they can use to communicate and that it's something that is used as a tool, outside of class. (February 28, 1992)

Michael was interested in helping his students view writing as purposive and personally valuable. However, his approach to instruction was primarily group-oriented, making his focus the needs of the class as a whole. Despite his interview comments, Michael's instructional language reflected an approach to writing instruction in which the stress is placed on the phases of prewriting, writing and revision. He noted appropriate strategies for each stage which provided students with the necessary tools to engage in the writing process. He took time to plan what he hoped would be an interesting and meaningful planned writing activity that incorporated a long pre-writing phase. He then guided students through the steps in a particular

order, frequently reviewing the writing behaviors associated with each stage.

**Summary: Emphasis.** Lauer (1980) characterized writing instruction as follows: "Teaching writing as a rhetorical art neither offers a recipe for good writing, nor, at the other extreme, abandons the writer to struggle alone" (p. 54). Both Thomas and Michael appear to provide strategies to help their students in writing, but with varying emphases. An important established strategy in Thomas' classroom was that he responded to students' writing on an individual basis. He encouraged students to tell him about their writing, acting as "a backboard, sending the ball back into the student's court" (Calkins, 1986, p. 119). Additionally, he emphasized an awareness of writing beyond the task itself.

Michael's established routine consisted of pre-planning writing activities that determined content, form, and length. He provided strategies or procedures for students to use at each stage of the writing process and instructed primarily at the whole-group level. Each teacher's instructional language, as related to emphasis, can be located within a range of dimensions from whole group strategy instruction to individual strategy instruction. Table 9 indicates the researcher's interpretation of the two teachers' emphasis for instruction, as a range of dimensions and not as outermost opposites.

Table 9

Emphasis

	Michael	Thomas	
Whole group strategy instruction			Individual strategy instruction

Ownership

Ownership refers to who is actually in charge of the writing. Murray (1982) notes that frequently, "we command our students to write for others, but writers report they write for themselves" (p. 64).

Others have used the term to mean that students select their own topics for writing (Graves, 1983) and find their own voice in the assignments (Moffet, 1981). Applebee (1991, p. 554) describes ownership in the following way:

In writing, opportunities for ownership occur when topics call for students to explore their own experiences and opinions, or to elaborate upon a point of view. In reading and literature, similar opportunities for ownership occur when students are encouraged to develop and defend their own interpretations, rather than being led to accept the teacher's predetermined point of view.

The data revealed Thomas to be a teacher guiding his students to see themselves as capable writers, able to make judgements about their own compositions. Further, he responded positively to students who changed the focus of a writing assignment that did not suit them and offered possible alternate ways of handling a writing task. For

example, in a writing session on November 26, 1991, he commented:

If you're finding what we're doing repetitious from last year or a little bit easy, you may request a personal assignment just for you. I talked to Melissa about doing something different and she's going to spend her time writing a narrative poem.

While most of the writing sessions observed had as a focus either a topic or a form (e.g. sonnet, narrative), students were encouraged to develop their own method of responding to an assignment. For instance, after listening to a record of "Sounds of Silence" by Simon and Garfunkel, he suggested:

Put down the title, Sounds of Silence, and write down anything you can think of. Maybe even just write down some of the words that you heard . . . . Maybe just one phrase or just one group of words . . . . One little expression might strike you.  
(November 27, 1991)

Not surprisingly, the students' own products were quite varied (see Section II). Some students wrote about a visual image elicited by the song, others listed words and phrases from the song and still others wrote a response based on mood. Much of the teacher's direct response to students' writing was offered in a one-to-one situation and he complimented students for taking a novel approach:

I'm very . . . the way you responded to this. This is very difficult stuff. And I think that sometimes it's extremely difficult to write down how you feel about something, especially something as serious and as personal as this could be.

Interestingly, when responding to a student's work in front of a group or the whole class, Thomas did not provide a personal comment. When interviewed he indicated that such feedback, even when positive, often intimidated the other students. He did, however, provide positive evaluative comments when working with students individually. In the above case, Thomas' positive response was related to a student's undertaking of expressive writing. This kind of writing, according to Brannon (1985), is tied to self-expression. Overall, Thomas' instructional language appeared to be structured to encourage students to engage in this type of writing and to take ownership of it. His students were often told to make and trust their own judgements about their writing.

On the other hand, Michael worked hard to plan writing tasks that incorporated a lengthy pre-writing phase, which his students then drew upon to apply to their own writing. The pre-writing phase often set the topic, form, length and content of the writing to be produced. Three examples of such activities included writing a plot profile for the book, The Little Match Girl, predicting what will occur next in the story of Aladdin, and producing a piece called The Magic Carpet, in which the student was the central character and visited five Canadian cities.

Before beginning these assignments, the students asked a series of questions such as: How long should it be? How

do I start? Do I handwrite? How many events do I write? Do we have to memorize it? While these questions appeared to be part of a ritualized behavior, the combination of student questions and responses by Michael, often served to set further parameters for the writing task. Michael addressed each student's questions with a definite answer which then seemed to signal the beginning of the writing session.

Another feature of Michael's language as it relates to ownership was his use of questions when responding to students who say, "I don't know what to put next." For instance:

Student: (comes up to the teacher) I don't. This is what I think is going to happen in the story and that's it.

Michael: OK, let's have a look. (teacher reads) OK, now, why don't you make this an outline? What did he look like? You say he dresses himself?

Student: Yeah.

Michael: OK, dresses himself or disguises himself as a slave. OK, how did he do that? What did he look like?

Student: OK.

Michael: OK, so you can draw a picture with words of what he looked like and then, how did he steal it? I mean, I'm sure Aladdin's got this thing guarded, because this is everything to him, so how did he get in, past all the guards and the slaves? How did he trick them? How did he get it? How did he get back out? And then, what did he do with it? OK, does that give you some ideas?

Student: Yeah.

Michael: Good.

(another student comes up to the teacher)

Student: I put something stupid and I don't want to do that.

Michael: OK, well this is a draft, that's where you find out those things. (reads) 'I think he'll get his magic wand o' say' . . .

Student: (begins giggling)

Michael: Now, just a minute. Think about where was the, where was the lamp? . . . Aladdin didn't have it on him, did he? It was in the palace. I think, try and picture that palace, how is the sorcerer going to get in there? What's he going to do to get in? How does he get the lamp once he gets there?

Student: OK.

Michael: And then how does he get back out? And then what does he do with it when he's finished?

Student: OK.

Michael: OK. Does that get you started?  
(February 6, 1992)

A byproduct of this kind of dialogue is that Michael posed many questions of the students in order to focus their writing and perhaps help get them going. It should be noted that the students requested Michael's help and he responded by supplying ideas through a question-asking strategy, particularly when students seemed uncertain or blank as they wrote. In total, Michael supplied 87% of the total talk in this exchange. There is a subtle difference in approach between Michael and Thomas' instructional language. Thomas asks questions that are less specific such as, "What do you want to say?" while Michael's questions are more specific, "How does Aladdin get into the palace?" Since the two

classes are not comparable in terms of teacher experience or student age level, the teachers may be providing encouragement best fitting the age and experience of their students. Whatever the reason, the effect of the two teachers' instructional language appeared considerable, to be further discussed in Part III: The Children's Perspective.

Another feature of Michael's instructional language was the amount of time spent in the pre-writing stage, ranging from 45 minutes to several days. This was when he set up the writing activity. Michael articulates this stage of the writing process in the following way:

Often I find myself putting together some kind of a package in a lesson or hoping to have some kind of a selection. Other times, I will say OK, we're going to be writing, I will think ahead of time in my planning, we're going to be writing in this form, whatever it might be. So, that's usually the first thing I look at and then within that form, sometimes I will have a fairly structured writing task where I want the kids to think about the beginning, the middle and the end of a story and so on. (February 28, 1992)

The planning was done entirely by the teacher with little or no room to deviate from the task, either in content or form. This was true for most of the writing observed throughout the study in Michael's classroom.

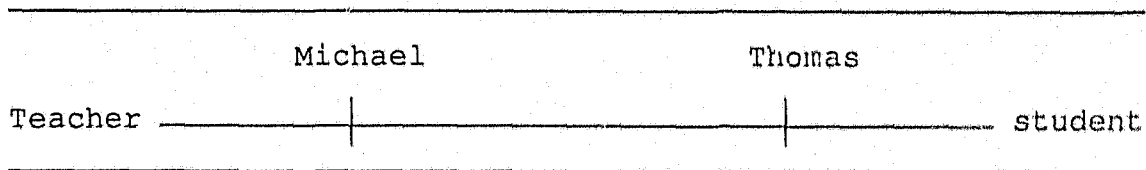
The result of such planning was that there was less opportunity for students to direct their own writing by selecting their own topics or displaying their individual approaches to developing a topic. This may have been a

direct result of the nature of the kind of writing Michael planned for his students and the needs and experiences of those students. In sum, analysis of Michael's instructional language tended to indicate that ownership of skill development in writing remained in the hands of the teacher.

**Summary: ownership.** Thomas' instructional language emphasizes that students are in charge of their writing. They made decisions about content, form and length. Thomas encouraged his students to change tasks to meet their needs and interests and responded positively when they did so. He withheld compliments, evaluations and assessments during whole group instruction and encouraged students to become the critical readers of their writing.

Michael articulated the necessity of well-planned, writing activities. Consequently, decisions regarding content, form and length were often pre-determined by him. In responding to student queries, Michael asked specific content questions that may have pulled the writer toward the teacher's assessment of the writing task. Table 10 provides a visual representation of each teacher's language as it relates to ownership, indicating that the teachers stressed ownership as a range composed of student and teacher involvement.

Table 10.

OwnershipAudience

Audience is the writer's sense that language is adjusted according to the characteristics of the reader. Cambourne (1988) states that writing encapsulates reading. This sense of audience can be as close as one's self (the "inner" audience) or as vague and distant as an unseen, unknown other (the "external" audience). Murray (1991) observes that many established and successful writers engage in writing for themselves first and then for a small group of intimates. He cites Rebecca West's comment that, "Writers write for themselves and not for their readers, and that art has nothing to do with communication between person and person, only with communication between different parts of a person's mind" (Murray, 1991, p. 164). Others have argued that a sense of audience as other, imagined or real, is important for the meaning derived from the activity for writers and readers (Frederiksen & Dominic, 1981).

Both teachers in this study discuss the role of audience with their students in different ways. In Thomas' classroom, audience was not referred to in the sense that

"audience knowledge is centrally involved - that is, in writings such as persuasive, regulative, or communicative" (Tierney & Shanahan, 1991). Thomas directed students to focus on the inner audience during writing. He appeared to be influenced by Brannon's belief (1975) that "the dominant motive for writing is self-expression; communicative and aesthetic abilities depend on the nurturing of the expressive capacity" (p. 19). The influential factor of form must be considered as affecting the nature of the audience for student writing. In addition, he asked students to be sensitive if they wrote about one another in their compositions. They were required to get permission from a classmate if they wished to use that person in their writing. This sensitivity to one another as writers and subjects of writing appeared to be aimed at maintaining a comfortable and non-threatening environment. The following comments made by the teacher indicate this emphasis:

Thomas: This is what I'd like you to do. You must not be rude to anybody as you write your limericks. What about the subject matter here? Is it very serious? (pause) It's humorous, sort of silly . . . That's probably quite typical of limericks, that they're not going to make too much sense, that they're a little bit ridiculous, somewhat insulting, and yet not enough that anybody's going to be upset. (November 18, 1991)

Thomas attempted to have students look at and comment upon the content and quality of their own writing:

Thomas: Tell me what you've done here.

Student: I sort of made it so that this [part] would be on the same page and it would change the reader's mood.

Thomas: Good for you.

Student: So it would all be sad and heavy.

Thomas: Ah! That's a good idea. I like that.

Student: It sort of changes from sort of a sad scene to all of a sudden to a lighter scene. And . . . I'm bringing them back down, a change of mood.

Thomas: Good for you. (continues to read the student's work) Umm . . . This is very clever . . . this is very clever. Good for you. I like this one and I think that your idea here is good. You know what sometimes authors do, is they'll do that in a poem. They'll have a mood change like that in a single poem. (December 3, 1991).

In the first instance, Caroline came to the conference aware of her own use of mood change in a piece of writing. Nevertheless, Thomas played a role by complimenting her on this awareness. He provided an evaluative comment and reinforced her use of language by telling her that other authors use similar methods. However, he assumed a more directive role with Jonathon, who appeared frustrated by his inability to think of a word to rhyme with 'friend':

Thomas: (turns to another student) Can I help you?

Jonathon: I can't get anything to rhyme with what I want to do.

Thomas: OK, tell me the list of words you want to write down. What are the words that you want to talk about?

Jonathon: (inaudible)

Thomas: OK, give me some words that you want to . . . that you're thinking about putting in the sentence.

Jonathon: (pause)

Thomas: Give me a line that you want me to come up with a rhyme for you.

Jonathon: I was playing with my friend.

Thomas: I was playing with my friend. OK, let's write that down. (teacher writes the line) Now, what do you want to happen? (December 3, 1991)

During these two writing conferences, Thomas assumed an active and responsive role when conferencing with students, and listened to what his students said. In the second case, Thomas refocussed Jonathon's attention toward the content of his piece which was, at this point, less well-developed. He asked Jonathon what he wanted to have happen. This is similar to Michael's strategy of getting students going on a writing task. A subtle difference is that Thomas asked Jonathon what he wanted to have happen while Michael, in the example on pages 136 and 137, posed questions that served to guide what would happen in the student's writing.

Thomas' questioning strategy focussed on teaching the writer, not the writing. Calkins (1983) observes, "If a piece of writing gets better but the writer has learned nothing that will help him or her another day on another piece, then the conference was a waste of everyone's time" (p. 120). In Caroline's and Jonathon's cases, the teacher did not refer explicitly to these students as the primary audience of their writing, but helped them remain in control

of the process by having them reflect on their writing as readers.

In other instances, Thomas seemed to sense when students were struggling with their writing. Rather than indicate to students that he could fix their work, the teacher acknowledged their own responses to their writing with phrases like, "You're not very happy with this, are you?" Or he focussed the student's attention on their own effective use of language, as in the following excerpt:

Thomas: See, you've done it here without even thinking. You've left out the verb 'was', right? We should say, 'On her face never was a frown, ' but you have done something else to keep the syllables down. You left that out (points to the word 'was'). (December 3, 1991)

Apart from Thomas' emphasis on writer as audience, it appeared that he, as teacher, was also an important audience for his students' writing. During a session on evaluation, Thomas told his students they needed to be aware of his expectations. It may be important to note that his remarks concerned presentation of writing and not quality of content, which, for the most part, he encouraged students to judge for themselves.

Thomas: Does anybody know what I mean by presentation? (pause) Julie, if you, at Christmas time, if you were to receive a big Barbie doll and somebody said it was outside and you went outside and this Barbie doll was in a package lying in the road, it was all covered in mud and dirt. Would you like that as much as if the same Barbie doll was all wrapped up under the Christmas tree, by the nice warm fire? . . . Pretty obvious, isn't it? It's the same with your work. Your work may be really, really good but if it's not, if it

doesn't look good on the page and I don't feel good about reading it, then it's . . . it's difficult for me to get at the message. So, I think it's especially important that you want to present your work well. You want to give it, not as a present, but you want to present it well. You want to show it off well. So, that's what I mean by presentation. And that includes your handwriting . . . organization of the page, how the whole book looks, that type of thing.  
(November 18, 1991)

In examining this excerpt, it is apparent that Thomas presented himself as an important external audience in matters of neatness and handwriting.

In Michael's classroom, the role of audience in writing was discussed explicitly. On several occasions, Michael told his students who would be reading their work. For instance, he planned a Remembrance Day writing activity whereby students wrote three to four line vignettes on what peace and war meant to them. Throughout this writing session, the teacher indicated to his students that they would be reading their writing aloud during a school-wide assembly. He said:

Michael: Now kids, I'm just going to remind you that we have an assembly on Friday morning and at that assembly we're going to be sharing individually some of the things we've written  
. . . .

and

Michael: You'll be reading what you've written. Some of the other classes are reading poetry. But you're going to be reading one of the two, or both of the things that you've just written . . . But before you read it, I think we should really concentrate on revising and editing it so we make sure then when we read it out in the assembly that

everybody listening hears what you want them to hear. (November 6, 1991)

It is clear that Michael asked his students to be aware that their writing would have an external audience.

Students were often encouraged to work with a partner when writing. One of the strategies emphasized in this classroom is that students read their writing aloud and to a partner, pencil in hand following the text, ready to make changes when deemed necessary by the pair. Michael says:

What I want these volunteers to do, as you're reading it, I want you to have your pencil in hand, following along and changing anything that doesn't make sense or isn't there. (February 6, 1991)

As did Thomas, Michael encouraged students to be readers of their own writing but stressed the importance of external audience over inner audience. Peers had a major role to play during writing sessions. On three observed occasions, students were asked to work with a partner or the teacher and follow a procedure of reading their work aloud and making changes in the text. In an interview, Michael articulated his focus as follows:

They still often write very much for me. And that has some concerns. But to them, much of what they do is meaningful in that context and we can still extend it beyond into the other units and outside class, but they are becoming able to communicate effectively. (February 28, 1992)

It is clear that Michael encouraged his students to engage in a type of writing that was transactional in nature, meaning designed to summarize and report

information, and therefore required attention to the external audience. When students were recounting the events from the story The Little Match Girl, Michael emphasized, "You have to decide how many [events] are necessary for someone reading it to understand the story" (November 15, 1991).

In another writing session, Michael explained to his students that their stories would be displayed on a bulletin board outside the classroom and would be read by other students, and by parents and teachers. In this instance and in the Remembrance Day session, he focussed attention on audience. These comments were made at the outset of each session and to the entire group. "Audience," as such, was not presented as an integral consideration during the actual drafting process. In other words, students were not necessarily encouraged to reshape their writing with an eye toward their putative audience.

Conversely, there were several instances in the writing sessions observed when Michael indicated to his students that certain decisions were up to the writer, not the audience. These were generally matters of style, as indicated in the following excerpt:

Michael: You might want to think about taking those words out. You don't have to but just read it with them in and with them out, OK? (November 6, 1991)

When modelling the revision process for his students, Michael indicated that a wording change suggested by a

partner may sound better but that it was always up to the author to decide whether or not a change is actually made. Therefore, in matters of style, Michael emphasized "inner audience" to his students.

Altogether, Michael's instructional language as it related to the role of audience in writing seems to indicate that he told his students about audience, and that this information would be significant during writing. As Michael talked about audience at the beginning of a writing session and directed these comments, not to individuals, but to the whole group, he tended to suggest that audience is an important aspect of shaping one's writing. While he encouraged his students to become attentive readers of their own writing, he focussed attention on audience as someone other than the writer except in matters of style where he indicated to his students that these decisions are made by the author.

**Summary: Audience.** Each teacher emphasized different aspects of the role in writing of audience to his students. Thomas encouraged his students to be sensitive to their audience, but stressed that they themselves are critical readers of their writing. He taught awareness of inner audience. Concerning presentation, however, Thomas appeared to emphasize outer audience to his students. Michael referred to awareness of audience as an important aspect of writing and instructed students specifically about who that

Table 11

Audience

<u>Style</u>	Michael	Thomas	
Other	----- -----		self
<u>Content</u>	Michael	Thomas	
Other	----- -----		self
<u>Conventions</u>	Michael	Thomas	
Other	----- -----		self

audience was. He taught awareness of external audience, except in matters related to writing style.

**Purpose - Thomas**

Why write? It seems apparent that writing serves the purpose of communicating meanings in a permanent sense either to ourselves or to others. It may seem less apparent that writing also serves as: "(1) a means of ordering and creating worlds, (2) a mechanism for bringing conscious awareness to that which was previously unconscious, and (3) a method for developing the language skills which both empower and dignify" (Cambourne, 1990, p. 185).

The following discussion will examine each teacher's instructional language as it relates to the purposes of writing. At the outset, it should be noted that both teachers were observed as having planned writing activities

that appeared to serve some of the aforementioned purposes and they articulated awareness of such purposes in interviews. They did not, however, consistently express to their students the various purposes they had in mind for engaging their students in specific writing tasks. First, Thomas' classroom data will be discussed, then Michael's classroom data will be presented.

Throughout the study, Thomas emphasized five major purposes for engaging in writing. These included: (a) writing to discover one's own thoughts, ideas, and feelings, (b) writing for personal expression, (c) writing for enjoyment, (d) writing to communicate using a particular form, and (e) writing as preparation for future school experiences. These are not presented in any particular order.

**Discovery.** There were several recorded instances when Thomas asked students to use writing to find out what they knew or thought about a topic, subject or question. Writing as a method for discovery was a dominant dimension of purpose as expressed in this teacher's instructional language. In an introductory writing session on poetry, Thomas asked his students to write several lines describing their understanding of poetry. In the following transcript, he indicated that students should write down their personal interpretations, and acknowledged the task to be one that he himself struggled with:

Thomas: What I'm asking for is just to give me a definition. Poetry is . . . um, a bunch of words on a page. That's a one-liner. poetry is . . . mmmm? Poetry is . . . um, um (pause) something I don't like very much. So, those are all called one-liners. They're not related to the previous thing. So, you can just do a series of those . . . You could write a paragraph on what you think it is . . . But I'd like you to spend about 10 minutes writing down what you think poetry is because I'm not sure that I know. I'm not entirely convinced that I could write down a definition, but I would like you to explore that. (November 12, 1991)

The students offered a number of alternate responses to the question, "What is poetry?" The teacher accepted their responses positively, and viewed the session as having provided students with an opportunity to identify for themselves thoughts and ideas about poetry. In addition, the session communicated to him the students' prior knowledge about poetry. Following a discussion comparing a writer's craft to that of an artist, the teacher asked students to comment on whether they thought poetry was an art requiring natural ability or whether it was the result of persistence and hard work. Once again, Thomas acknowledged that this was an issue to be considered, and encouraged students to "play around with these questions." In so doing, he focussed the students' attention on a general concept of writing beyond the immediate task. It provided an opportunity to use writing as a means of organizing thoughts and ideas and perhaps more importantly, bringing those thoughts and ideas to conscious awareness. It meant, of course, that the writers and the teacher could

not be certain what would be expressed until it was written, mirroring the adage that "I cannot know what I think until I hear what I've said."

Personal expression. In a lengthy transcript Thomas told a personal story about a friend who nursed a sick bird back to health, and then lost the bird in an accident. On this and several other occasions, Thomas talked about writing as a means of expressing one's personal, and sometimes emotional feelings. A brief excerpt from this transcript follows:

Thomas: . . . . A friend of mine's daughter who is about 25 works as a veterinarian's assistant . . . and being a veterinarian's assistant, she has some unpleasant things to do, one of them having to do with, as the expression goes, putting animals down, which means they are too sick to live, they end up . . . .

Student: Putting them to sleep.

Thomas: Putting them to sleep, that's the expression, isn't it? And she does this, she's been doing this for three or four years. And out back where they worked last summer, they noticed there was a little tree, a little nest in a small tree out behind. And they watched the sparrows raising a number of young birds. And . . . they noticed that one bird was a little different from the others. I guess they were looking out the window and watching these birds. And eventually they noticed this bird on the ground so they went out and looked at it. And they noticed that its wing had been badly . . . (Thomas continues the story).

Now I know this person . . . and I want to write the poem to her. I don't know if I'm going to talk to Leslie or not, but I'm going to be thinking of her as I write that poem. And (pause) um . . . I don't quite know . . . I'm not trying to make her feel better because that's not the point. I think that what happened to her was a

really interesting thing and, sad as it was, I just want to record that . . . So, I'm not sure where I'm going to go with this . . . (December 3, 1991)

The transcript illustrates that the teacher invested a degree of personal energy in this writing session by describing to his students an incident that was very important and meaningful to him. By including specific details of the event, Thomas created a quiet, serious mood and his students listened intently. As he spoke about the purpose for engaging in this writing task, he mentioned his audience, Leslie, to whom the poem would be given. Additionally, he noted that his real purpose for writing this piece was to record an event that had affected him personally, and that by writing about it, he would be provided with the opportunity to express personal feelings. Writing to discover what those feelings were was also present through his comment that, "I'm not quite sure where I'm going to go with this."

Thomas worked on this poem over a period of two months and eventually published his work by showing it to his students and giving it to the friend for whom it was written. It appears evident, through this teacher's language, that writing to express oneself personally, was a driving force behind this session.

On other occasions, Thomas played recorded music that the students listened and responded to in a personal manner, as evidenced in the following episode:

Thomas: (to the class) You should tell me a little bit about the mood of the song, how it makes you feel, type of . . . singing in there. Was it angry, was it sad, was it happy, was it silly, was it light, light-hearted or the opposite of light-hearted, we could say heavy . . . . Those kind of things I think all of you could pick up a little bit. Peter, you can do this. Good for you! Excellent . . . .

(The students begin talking to one another. The teacher stops and talks to individual or groups of children.)

Thomas: What do you think the theme of this is?

Student: Kind of . . . like happiness and sadness and (inaudible) in between.

Thomas: OK, and was it going from one to the other or was it just sort of . . . .

Student: (inaudible)

Thomas: Yeah, keep going.

Student; It was sort of . . . peaceful.

Thomas: Peaceful. Very good. That's a nice word. What do you think? (turns to the student beside him)

Student: I think it's just telling you're lonely by yourself in the silence.

Thomas: That's very nice. I like that. You're lonely by yourself in the silence. Why don't you write those exact words down. Good, that's a start. Good, Steven. (goes to next student)  
(November 28, 1991)

Thomas provided an opportunity for students to respond to a piece of music in any manner they wished but emphasized a personal response.

Recognizing that this might have been difficult for some students, he followed the lesson up with an

acknowledgement of the difficulty of the task and reinforced the purpose of writing for personal expression.

Enjoyment. Writing was also discussed by Thomas as an activity that writers engage in for pure and simple enjoyment. This purpose was frequently mentioned as students were involved in writing limericks. The following two transcript excerpts characterize Thomas' focus on the purpose of writing for enjoyment.

Thomas: When we asked you last week for some definitions, most of you had definitions about imagination, but poetry can also be fun. It can be humorous. And those people who come from Kerry's homeland, Ireland . . . (pause) The Irish have developed a form of a poem called a limerick. (November 12, 1991)

Thomas: You must try and have the last line to be a little bit of a surprise, to sort of complete the thoughts that happen up here, but a little bit of a surprise. And it should have a bit of humor. So, they are called (writes "limericks" on the board). (November 18, 1991)

As the teacher and students worked together creating several limericks, it was apparent that one major purpose of the activity was to have fun, and learn about a new form of communication. One of the most memorable exchanges captured on tape occurred towards the end of class between the teacher and David.

David: Mr. P\_\_\_\_, do you know when you said you would make me start to enjoy poetry?

Thomas: Yes? Am I right?

David: Yes, you are.

Thomas: There you go. You made my day! (December 3, 1991)

Clearly, the student indicated that writing for enjoyment had been achieved, and he credited his teacher with having made it a reality.

**Communication using a particular form.** There were several recorded instances of writing for the purpose of communication, using a particular poetic form. Lesson organization consisted of instruction in the form presented and discussion of specific purposes for engaging in it. For example, when a few students expressed an interest in learning to write narrative poetry, Thomas indicated various purposes served using this type of poetry. He suggested that as a genre, it tells a story and often through the use of rhyming couplets. Its theme may be varied and Thomas offered several examples for the students to read including "Casey at the Bat", "Casey's Revenge", and "The Man from Snowy River" (November 16, 1991). Similar dialogue was recorded during instruction in the writing of limericks, haiku and free verse.

**Preparation for future school experiences.** Finally, although there were no recorded episodes whereby the teacher told students their writing sessions would prepare them for future school writing episodes, he did indicate in the interview that he tried to be conscious that the writing activities provided in his classroom would be useful for them later in school and hopefully would make such experiences easier for them.

Overall, Thomas emphasized to his students five major purposes for engaging in writing. As the transcripts indicate, most of these purposes were communicated explicitly to the students. In his own words, Thomas viewed the purpose of his writing instruction as follows:

I guess the ultimate thing would be . . . I hate to use the word but, metacognitive thinking tool, so when they run across something they are having trouble with, they will be able to start writing and make sense of something that's confusing to them by writing, whether it be a school thing or a personal thing or emotional thing, it becomes something they are aware they can use in order to help sort things out. The other thing is of course to be able to use it [writing] for various functions, the . . . call the school things, essays and reports and all that type of thing, and to be able to do all the everyday things of writing letters to companies and ordering things and doing all of those things which I am . . . continuing to be surprised that so many adults can't do. They want to write a letter to complain about . . . the soccer coach [laughter] and they're just not able to do it and I think that sort of functional part of it also. But I guess if I had to say one thing, it would be the thinking, the way of sorting out ideas. (February 17, 1992)

This quotation indicates Thomas' emphasis on writing as a tool to clarify and organize thinking. He also spoke of the communicative function of writing. However, because of the emphasis on expressive writing during the study, there were relatively few examples of writing for purely transactional purposes.

#### **Purpose -- Michael**

In Michael's classroom, the following five purposes for engaging in writing were emphasized during instruction

(these are not ordered): (a) writing to remember and to explain, (b) writing to communicate to others, (c) writing to discover one's own thoughts, ideas and feelings, (d) writing to share with an audience, and (e) writing to learn the stages of the writing process.

**Remember and explain.** Michael asked his students to write in order to remember or explain what previously had been listened to or read. One activity reflecting this purpose was referred to as a "plot profile" (see Appendix F). After having listened to the teacher read a version of the story The Little Match Girl, the students were asked to remember and record the sequence of events and to plot these on a graph according to the perceived level of importance. The following episode is indicative of Michael's emphasis on writing to remember.

Michael: OK, the next thing we're going to do is I want everybody to really listen carefully to the story, Carol, because you'll have to remember the important events. Now when you're making up your list of important events you can work with partners at your table. You don't have to do it by yourself but you'll all have to listen carefully. I see a few people are getting some draft/edit notebooks out and some pads and things. If you want to take notes, that's fine. But you should listen carefully to the story. Don't let your note-taking get carried away. It's up to you whether you take notes or not. Make yourself comfortable . . . It needs to be really quiet when I read this. [Teacher takes out The Little Match Girl to read] Shh, Sam. [It becomes very quiet, teacher goes quietly to one student, then looks at whole class.]

Now, I just want to remind you when you're listening to this story, listen for those important events that you can put into your plot

profiles. OK? OK. [Teacher reads the story to the class, holding up the pictures and telling the students to look at the illustrations while he reads.] (November 15, 1991)

Throughout the lesson, Michael emphasized that students needed to listen to the selection in order to recall the events later. However, students were also encouraged to discuss their work with one another and therefore were not required to recall the information independently. Since all the students were listening to the same story, it seems likely that such a process would lead to consensus, but the teacher indicated that students did not have to agree with him or one another.

Michael: OK, that's fine. [Teacher listens to a student tell the student teacher that he thinks there are two climaxes.] Mr. Jones, they can say both if they want. If they can't decide, they can say the climax was these two events happening. And they can draw either one or both . . . It's hard to decide and I think the kids should be able to say both. [Teacher goes around the room looking at the students' work and makes a comment about the colour of the paper the students are using to glue their pictures on.]

Michael: What are you doing there Jesse? Holy cow . . . Now, did you get the last one? Is this your eighth one? Did you feel that the ending where they found her was the most exciting or important part? [Student nods.] OK, that's fine. That's your choice. So, you've got them all in. Now you have to think about how you can show that in a . . . picture. You think about it for a bit, and then . . . (November 15, 1991)

A very interesting incident occurred towards the end of this writing session. Michael asked his students to reflect on the reasons for engaging in an activity such as the plot profile:

Michael: I want you just to put your pencils down and listen for a minute. [Teacher whispers names of students until all are quiet.] Before we finish, I want to ask you a few questions. I want you to think about this before you answer, too. First of all, why do you think we would do an activity like this? Why do we bother doing something like this? Nikki?

Student: To improve our writing.

Michael: Yeah, that's true. How would it improve your writing?

Student: Well, you have to write lots of stuff.

Michael: Oh, so you have to get your ideas down.

Student: Yeah.

Michael: OK, so it improves your writing. That's really an interesting answer . . . Any other ideas why we might do this? Tannis?

Student: Well, it, like, for a time we're going to have a test, you're going to read us out a story and we have to explain what it's like. It just helps us remember what the story's about.

Michael: OK, being able to remember the important parts of the story helps you understand the story. Lynn?

Student: It's a summary.

Michael: It's a summary and how does that help you?

Student: It helps you just like telling a story except like you can write it down really quickly so it won't take you as long.

Michael: So, perhaps you understand it better? How do you think this kind of thing would help you with stories that you read in the future? Other stories that you haven't read yet? Anybody think it would help? Andrew?

Student: Mmmm.

Michael: Think it would?

Student: Yeah.

Michael: How so?

Student: Well, uh . . .

Michael: Just think it would? OK, it's a tough question to answer. I agree, I think it would help. Maybe just the fact that it organizes your way of thinking about a story and makes it easier to explain. OK, we're going to do some more of these in the future. We won't do any more right away, but the next one you do . . . you'll choose your own book. And do the incident summary from a book of your choice. (November 15, 1991)

The students offered the following possible purposes: to improve their writing (although it is unclear from the transcript whether the reference was made to improving handwriting or the ability to get ideas written down), to prepare for a test, to remember, to remember quickly. The students appeared unable to think of how this activity would help them with future writing. Michael concluded by suggesting what he considered to be the major purpose of the activity, that is, to organize one's thoughts about a reading selection, so it can be explained to someone else.

**Communication.** The theme of writing to communicate a message to someone else appeared to dominate Michael's writing sessions. This was evident in the previous section on Audience. Michael's instructional language appears influenced by a belief present in the discipline of rhetoric, that writing is "the process of using language to organize experience and communicate it to others" (Knoblauch, 1985, p. 29). For instance, as we have seen, on one occasion, students were asked to write about what

Remembrance Day meant to them in order to read these during a schoolwide assembly, and on another to predict the next part of the story Aladdin, to share in class. In both cases, Michael focussed the writer's attention on audience and communicating to that audience.

**Discovery.** In addition, there was an element of writing to discover one's own thoughts about the topic or subject matter. This purpose of discovery was clearly documented throughout the session on Remembrance Day reflections. However, the Aladdin prediction writing session appeared less straightforward. The purpose communicated early on suggested that the teacher would have liked students to discover what might happen in this story.

Michael: OK, let me clarify for everybody. You need to continue the story and your story ending has to be consistent with what's gone on before. You can't start bringing in spaceships and M-16's. You have to think about the characters, think about the different things that have happened and allow the sorcerer, or tell how the sorcerer goes about getting or trying to get the lamp and what happens in the story. (February 6, 1992)

As the session continued, there appeared to be a growing emphasis on writing the story to include content suggested by the teacher. This occurred as he attempted to answer students' questions about what to write.

Michael: I want you to tell, picture the castle, tell how he got in there, how maybe he had to disguise himself, maybe he tunnelled underneath, maybe he whatever. If you describe how he got into the castle, describe what it was like, him getting to the lamp, I mean there must have been guards and things to get through. How did he get through them? How did he manage to get the lamp?

How did he get back out? Once he got out, what did he do with it?

Student: OK.

Michael: Does that help? (February 6, 1992).

This episode and others indicated that the teacher, in response to his students, provided more information about what to write. This may be a natural reaction for a teacher trying to encourage students to write, but the purpose of the writing session changed from one in which the student discovers for him or herself thoughts about the events of a story to one in which students seek and receive from the teacher the specific content and sequence of events to write about. In the interview, the teacher did comment that he hoped his students would understand that writing is something that they could use to organize their own thoughts. He said,

It's not something that they're doing for me, although despite trying to communicate that, they still often write very much for me. And that has some concerns [for me]. (February 28, 1992)

It appears that Michael planned activities that emphasized writing to discover one's own thoughts, ideas and feelings, but during instruction, the theme of discovery became subordinate to writing what the teacher said. The students requested and were given direction for their writing with the result being that the purpose of discovery was overshadowed. This is made clearer in the following exchange:

Michael: How did you get your ideas down there, Angie? Tell me what you did there. It looks pretty interesting.

Student: Well, I heard you say it so I put it down.  
(November 15, 1991)

**Sharing with an audience.** In addition, there were a number of recorded instances whereby writing was emphasized by Michael as a means of sharing one's work with others, either by reading a piece informally to friends, or by reading it aloud to the class, or by displaying it on a bulletin board. He encouraged students to work together, and talk to others about their writing. Consequently, the classroom was often quite active with students talking and reading out loud. These strategies emphasized an external but also an immediate audience for the students. It would appear that Michael's students benefitted from having their work listened to by their peers on an ongoing basis.

**Writing to learn the stages of the writing process.**

Finally, in Michael's classroom, writers engaged in writing for the purpose of practising the writing process. Although this may seem obvious and not worthy of mention, it does indicate an emphasis on teaching "the writing process" in addition to teaching "writing as a process." Michael consistently reminded the students what stage of the writing process they were engaged in, and the strategies accompanying those stages. For example:

Michael: Well, if you've finished drafting a story, now you're reading it over, how do you, what kinds of things do you do to make it better?

Just one thing you could do to make it better  
. . . . Can you help him out, Aaron?

Student: Yeah, maybe put longer sentences in.

Michael: OK, you can add things to the sentences  
to make them longer. What else could you do,  
Terry? (February 6, 1992)

Michael almost never failed to point out to the students that they were involved in drafting, revising, editing, or proofing. Each of these stages was associated with specific strategies and he encouraged the students to use their "drafting" strategies to get ideas down quickly and not spend excessive time on spelling. For revision and editing, students were asked to read their drafts aloud, and ask themselves three questions:

1. Will it make sense to others?
2. Does it actually say what I want it to say?
3. Should I add or change words to make it easier to understand?

Finally, proofing strategies included reading one's draft, pencil in hand, and attending to capitalization, punctuation and spelling.

In every transcript reviewed, there were multiple references made to the stages of the writing process. It is apparent that one of the major purposes for writing, in this classroom, was to teach students about the stages of the writing process and their accompanying attributes.

**Summary: Purpose.** These two teachers proved quite different in their approaches to communicating the purposes

of writing to their students, both in terms of the kinds of writing activities they planned and the ways they described the purpose of these to themselves and their students. It is likely that both teachers provided instruction about purpose that reflected their perceptions of students' needs and experience. Thomas was more likely to articulate the purpose of a writing activity to his students while Michael engaged students in writing, with a particular purpose in mind, but was diverted by efforts to respond to his students' enquiries.

Thomas planned writing activities that allowed students to discover and record their thoughts, ideas and feelings and focussed less on communicating these to others. Michael guided students through activities that stressed communication to an external audience. Table 12 refers to the categories and dimensions discussed earlier.

Table 12

Purpose

	Michael	Thomas	
Task-oriented			Discovery-oriented
	Michael	Thomas	
Communication			Personal

## II. The Children's Writing: What was Done

In order to obtain a picture of the relationships between students' reflective accounts about writing and writing performance, the following section provides examples and observations of students' writing collected over the course of this study. All the writing produced by the students was collected by the teachers. In Michael's classroom, student writing was stored in individual file folders and placed in a box at the front of the room. Thomas' students kept their writing in individual notebooks in their desks.

### Kinds of Writing

Researchers involved in assessing and evaluating the written performance of students indicate that the most important source of variability in writing is the kind of writing required (Wilkinson, 1983). In order to document and analyze this aspect of writing, Table 13 presents a list of the types of writing students engaged in over a five month period.

Each classroom teacher involved his students in approximately 12 to 15 writing activities during the time period observed. Thomas focussed on poetry. His instruction consisted of listening to lyrics of contemporary songs and poetry by well known songwriters and authors; reading a wide variety of poems from poets such as Shakespeare, Shelly, Frost, Cummings, and Pratt; and writing

Table 13

Kinds of writing

Thomas' Class	Michael's Class
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• limericks</li> <li>• poems written on a Valentine's theme</li> <li>• frame, "What is poetry?"</li> <li>• poems written on a weather theme</li> <li>• haiku</li> <li>• poems written on a Christmas theme</li> <li>• written responses to songs</li> <li>• poems written based on a personal experience with "loss" as a theme</li> <li>• frames, "What is truth? Beauty? Love? Freedom? Anger?"</li> <li>• notes</li> <li>• rhyming couplet poetry</li> <li>• narrative poetry</li> <li>• miscellaneous</li> <li>• copied poem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• plot profile</li> <li>• finish a story</li> <li>• predict a sequence of events</li> <li>• choose from 5 titles (write a letter to a barnacle, tell how your mind is like an onion, write a poem that tells how sunshine sounds, write a dinner invitation from a mouse to a cat, explain why an earlobe is more valuable than an elbow.)</li> <li>• skill exercise sheets (comma usage, adjectives, capitals, punctuation, spelling, nouns, sentence combining, revision/edit practice, cloze exercises)</li> <li>• Christmas letter to a younger child</li> <li>• newspaper article featuring the student</li> <li>• frame, "What peace and war mean to me"</li> <li>• list and illustrations of characters from a novel</li> <li>• drafts of stories</li> <li>• web or list of ideas</li> <li>• spelling dictation</li> </ul>

free verse, rhyming couplets, haiku, limericks, and narratives. Thomas suggested topics, subjects, genres or titles as cues, then encouraged his students to write extensively and keep all poems in their writing notebooks.

Michael planned a variety of writing activities for his students, and frequently related these to a reading or listening component. Instruction consisted of reading a selection to the students and asking them to respond by recalling events or characters, predicting upcoming events, completing the story. Overall, students from both classrooms completed an average of 23 pieces of writing each during the study. Beyond this similarity, however, the writing produced by the students in the two classrooms showed several major differences.

Table 14 indicates that in Michael's classroom, 5 or fewer pieces of writing in each student's writing file were composed entirely by the student, without the use of writing frames or story starters. The majority of writing tasks these students engaged in were motivated by teacher-planned stimulants. Teacher-led activities meant that students did not choose their own subject, genre, length or audience. In some cases, when composing stories, Michael's students did have responsibility over the content but not the topic of their writing.

In Thomas' classroom, all writing in the student's poetry book was composed entirely by the student. The teacher provided possible titles, themes and genres for the students to use, but they were not restricted by such cues. Students exercised control over the topic, number and length of the pieces they wrote. Additionally, the number of

Table 14

Number of pieces written by students

Children	Thomas' Class		Children	Michael's Class	
	Total # of pieces written	# of pieces authored wholly by the student		Total # of pieces written	# of pieces authored wholly by the student
Kristen	20	all	Lynn	20	5
Melissa	33	all	Colin	27	4
Sarah	27	all	Natalie	26	5
Steven	15	all	Terry	23	5
Donald	9	all	Amanda	26	5
Jean	39	all	Daniel	19	1

pieces produced by individual students in Thomas' class ranged from 9 to 39. Interestingly, Donald produced the fewest pieces (9) and Jean produced the most (39). Both students were identified as delayed in writing ability.

The same range was not observed in Michael's class. Between 19 and 27 pieces were produced by his students. This range paralleled writing ability as Daniel, identified as delayed in writing, produced the fewest pieces (19) and Colin, identified as advanced in writing, produced the most (27).

### Distribution of Kinds of Writing

Tables 15 and 16 outline, for each student, the kind and number of pieces produced. In Michael's classroom, the majority of writing completed by the students was centred on skill worksheets prepared by the teacher (see Appendix G). Students engaged in the revision and/or editing process to complete the activity. In other cases, students completed each writing activity as assigned, although some students did not show evidence of having every assignment in their files. There was no evidence that students went beyond the task by writing more than was expected. Indeed, there would not have been time to do so. Nonetheless, the classroom routines were clear. The teacher planned writing activities and the students produced writing to meet the outlined expectations.

The following writing samples were produced by the students in Michael's classroom, after having listened to the teacher read from the story, Aladdin. The students were then asked to predict the next sequence of events. This is what they wrote:

#### Lynn

The magician hurried out and borrowed a poor person's wheelbarrow, then, he went and bought some shiny new lamps. He pushed the wheelbarrow up and down the streets making his way to the palace, shouting, "New lamps, for old, new lamps, for old." The princess got annoyed and threw him the magic lamp. The magician dropped everything and ran, but he had taken the wrong lamp!!!! Luckily for Aladdin, he was just coming back.

Table 15

Distribution of kinds of writing (Thomas' students)

	Kristen	Melissa	Steven	Sarah	Donald	Jean	Total
Total	20	33	15	27	9	39	
Limericks	3	16	2	4	2	5	32
Valentine theme	-	-	1	2	-	2	5
What is poetry?	1	2	2	1	1	3	10
Weather theme	2	3	2	1	1	9	18
Haiku	4	4	1	3	-	3	15
Christmas theme	1	-	1	3	1	3	8
Response to a song	2	3	2	1	1	2	11
Personal experience	1	-	-	1	1	1	4
What is truth? beauty? etc.	3	1	1	7	1	4	17
Notes	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Rhyming couplets	1	-	1	-	-	1	3
Narrative poems	1	1	-	-	-	-	2
Misc.	-	2	1	3	1	5	11
Copied poem	1	1	1	1	-	-	4

Colin

Later that day, the magician went back to the palace and saw how magnificent it was. He thought to himself, with the lamp, I could wish for a palace 1000 times better than his and then I could also wish for the princess Badr Al Budar and then I would be the richest person alive. I will dress up as the Sultan and go steal the lamp. So the magician got into the castle dressed as the Sultan and went to the room where the lamp was kept and stole it. He rubbed and wished himself out of the country.

Natalie

Aladdin was in his room admiring his stuff when someone knocked on his bedroom door. Before he opened the door Aladdin rubbed the lamp and asked the genie "should I let the man in?" "No" answered the genie. "He is a sorcerer, a very bad sorcerer." So Aladdin ran up the steps of the

Table 16

Distribution of kinds of writing (Michael's students)

	Lynn 20	Colin 24	Natalie 26	Terry 19	Amanda 27	Daniel 19	Total
Total							
Plot profile	-	1	-	1	1	1	4
Finish a story	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Predict a story	1	1	1	-	1	1	5
Choose from 5 titles	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Skill exercise sheets	8	10	13	9	12	11	63
Christmas letter	1	-	1	-	1	1	4
Newspaper article	1	2	1	1	1	-	6
Frame, What does peace/war mean?	1	2	2	2	2	2	11
Drafts of stories	4	3	4	4	4	1	20
List of characters	1	1	-	-	1	-	3
Web/list	1	1	-	-	1	-	3
Spelling/dictation	-	-	1	-	1	-	2
Wanted character poster	-	1	-	-	-	-	1

palace and not even thinking to bring the lamp ran all the way up the castle. When he got to the very top of the castle someone called "aladdin where are you"? Aladdin ran down stairs and he was the sorcerer with the lamp.

Terry

The sorcerer cast a spell on himself and flew in as a crow, snatched the lamp from its place and left for a place some where in the desert about three hundred miles or so and creates a castle. Back at the castle Aladdin filled with terror as he saw that his lamp, his porcelain lamp as gone. Aladdin rubbed the ring and said "slave of the ring I command you to bring me the lamp" "I am too weak to undo the magic of the lamp."

Amanda

I predict that he is going to run in and get the lamp. When Aladdin gets back he wishes on his ring that he is going to wish the lamp back.

Daniel

The sorcerer asked if he could see the palace and could see the lamp was still not in possession but when he got up to the tower he thought of the ring. When he got there he was pasted with the ring and fell to the ground and he turned into dust.

These particular students' assigned samples indicated a task-orientation towards writing. Amanda's writing, particularly, indicated writing as task-oriented. She began by reporting, "I predict . . ." showing an understanding of the task to predict a sequence of events. The writing produced by the other students was in keeping with the teacher's directions and also served to predict events even though they did not begin their pieces in such an obvious manner.

In Thomas' classroom, the students produced uneven numbers of pieces of writing according to assigned tasks. They often wrote additional pieces if the topic, theme or genre was of sufficient interest. For instance, Melissa wrote 16 limericks, Jean composed 9 poems based on a weather theme and Sarah composed 7 pieces on "Truth, Beauty, Freedom or Love." Limericks were the most popular pieces accounting for 24% of the total writing produced by the students. Conversely, some topics, titles or genres were not pursued by the students. There is a greater variance observed

between this class and Michael's in terms of types and numbers of pieces written.

Only Donald's writing shows the same kind of pattern as that observed in Michael's classroom. He completed one piece of writing in each of the areas observed. Donald's reflective account suggested an understanding of audience in writing as someone other than himself. In addition, during an interview, he appeared not to value writing as an integral part of his life by stating that he would not miss writing if he could no longer perform such an activity. It is noteworthy that Donald's writing reflected someone who does not make his own choices in writing and who appeared to view writing as primarily task-oriented.

Turning to examples of the actual writing produced in Thomas' classroom, in response to the supplied title "Storm," this is what the students wrote.

**Kristen**

The rain came pelting down upon,  
The ground lighted by the break of dawn,  
The puddles exploded as each rain drop hit,  
And the lightning flashed, the sky was lit.  
Beneath a tree a boy sat down,  
Sheltering himself from the rainy town,  
His eyes of shame were sad and wet,  
Like a still still river not flowing yet.  
He sat freezing on the dark green grass,  
waiting for the angry storm to pass,  
His memories of home that day,  
Flashed back to him as he lay,  
Alone,  
Cold as stone.  
He'd run away from the ones who cared  
But nobody had stopped him, nobody had dared  
To interfere with the choice he had  
to stay or leave his mom and dad.

He had chosen to leave, though there wasn't any strife  
 He had run away from home he had run away from life.

**Melissa**

Raging storm,  
 Howling wind,  
 Boats tossed at sea.

With the rain pounding,  
 You won't see many people,  
 Out at sea.

Lightning,  
 Thunder,  
 This makes bedtime a scare.  
 We better have a large supply of hot chocolate,  
 Somewhere around here.

Storms of anger  
 Storms with thunder  
 Many storms pass my way.

Howling winds  
 I am furious  
 When the rain will not quit.

**Steven**

Thunder  
 Clouds  
 Tornado  
 downpour  
 sneak  
 stranger  
 hiding  
 spying  
 overcast  
 dark  
 angry  
 revenge  
 murder

**Sarah**

Storm is a beautiful horse  
 that is happy and gay,  
 Running free on the field  
 My mouth sealed  
 Gray, gray as a storm  
 Not as light as a polished stone  
 My feeling expressed on my face

Watching Storm at a steady pace.  
Suddenly my smile fades watching  
Watching Storm run away  
She'll be back another day!  
When the day finally comes  
I watch as she runs  
Then she comes close I feed her buns.

### Jean

Storm is wind,  
that blows in the night.  
It is cold,  
and a eerie sight.  
It is rain,  
and it is angry.  
It's a river,  
that comes down.  
The storm is over,  
It's a nice sound.  
It is dark,  
the sun is coming down.  
It is coming down,  
now it's done.  
We can go play,  
is the springs sun.  
And the river is flowing,  
with the flowers just blooming.  
The grass is damp,  
from the storm.  
It is nice,  
to play in.  
It gets you dirty,  
the clouds come down.  
It comes and covers the sun,  
the storm is coming,  
coming very close.  
What should we do.  
Oh now it's back.

Storm is cold,  
a winters cold.  
A mean sound,  
an angry sound.  
It's icy cold,  
it starts to rain.  
It's gloomy,  
and hard to see.  
And it's very ugly,  
so ugly it's got an ugly face.  
it's mean it wants to crunch you up.

The farm is wet damp and cold,  
it's icy slippery freezing the river.

Snow (Jean)

Snow, snow,  
icy snow.  
It's here,  
have no fear.  
It's cold,  
but not for me,  
the river is frozen.  
Ready to go ice skating,  
The bears are in there cave.  
With the birds down in the South.

Donald - Donald did not complete a poem using the title "Storm"; therefore, the following piece will be included as a sample of his writing. It was a piece describing a metaphor for the act of writing. Interestingly, Donald uses the idea of weather to describe the process of writing.

Writing is like weather in many ways like in a story or poem. When the weather is rain. I may be crying or if it's cloudy my mind may be blurry. In a storm my emotions would flare. If the wind came my thoughts would be blown past me. The sun could be bright happiness or hot anger. Light and fluffy snow would fall and it would make me happy or cheerfull. If hail fell it would be like a thumping headache.

Noticeable are the diverse ways students proceeded with this task. Kristen's poem told a story, Melissa used descriptive language to indicate her feelings towards the topic, Steven listed related vocabulary, and Sarah wrote about a gray horse named Storm. Jean wrote two poems describing a storm and its aftermath. Finally, Donald described his writing of poetry as stormy, particularly when emotions flare. Taken together, these written products, though initiated by a common title, showed diverse ways of interpreting and handling the assignment. Like their

reflective accounts, presented in the following section, these students' written products indicated an understanding of writing that is individualistic and expressive in nature. Being encouraged to use the writing task to discover their own methods of working, these students' understanding of writing as personally valuable appeared to be reflected in the writing they produced.

### III. The Children's Perspective: What was Understood?

#### 1(a) From the children's perspective, what is the nature of their evident understanding of what good writers do?

The students in Thomas' classroom focussed on a good writer's ability to persevere, work hard and practice. This was evident in all six reflective accounts (see Table 17). Four students (Kristen, Melissa, Sarah and Jean) noted that good writers also do a lot of writing. For Jean, this meant writing longer pieces but for the others, it meant being engaged in writing for long periods of time, as often occurred in Thomas' classroom. This understanding of what good writers do suggests a view that writing is not a mysterious process but may be accomplished through effort. Their teacher's emphasis on writing as craft is in keeping with this view.

Beyond the evident common understanding that these students express, their accounts indicate understanding that was particularistic. For instance, three students (Steven,

Table 17

What does a good writer do? (Thomas' students)

Children	Reflective Account
Kristen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• puts a lot of effort into it</li> <li>• practices</li> <li>• works hard</li> </ul>
Melissa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does a lot of writing</li> <li>• shows effort, perseveres</li> <li>• concentrates</li> </ul>
Steven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• practices</li> <li>• perseveres</li> <li>• is neat</li> <li>• writes in an interesting way</li> </ul>
Sarah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does a lot of writing</li> <li>• reads a lot</li> <li>• listens to directions</li> <li>• is a good handwriter</li> <li>• knows about the subject</li> </ul>
Donald	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• uses humor</li> <li>• perseveres</li> </ul>
Jean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• practices</li> <li>• works hard</li> <li>• has neat handwriting</li> <li>• knows meanings of words</li> <li>• writes long pieces</li> </ul>

Sarah and Jean) identified neatness as a criterion for good writers. Interestingly, neither of the two students identified as showing advanced writing abilities commented on this aspect of writing. Only one student (Donald) noted that a good writer uses humor. In addition, these students mentioned that a good writer is familiar with the subject

Table 18

What does a good writer do? (Michael's students)

Children	Reflective Account.
Lynn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• writes long stories</li> <li>• uses humor</li> <li>• proofs own work</li> </ul>
Colin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• uses humor</li> </ul>
Natalie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• puts hard work into it</li> <li>• makes sure it makes sense</li> <li>• adds a lot of detail</li> </ul>
Terry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• writes neatly</li> <li>• puts in suspense</li> <li>• writes long stories</li> <li>• doesn't rush the story</li> <li>• has a good beginning</li> <li>• is naturally good at writing</li> </ul>
Amanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• uses lots of different words</li> <li>• uses imagination</li> <li>• does a lot of good things</li> </ul>
Daniel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gets ideas down</li> <li>• knows lots of words</li> </ul>

he/she is writing about, reads a lot, knows the meanings of words, listens to directions and writes in an interesting way. While Thomas' instructional language emphasized the importance of perseverance, practice, neatness and humor, which matched his students' accounts, he also referred to other strategies such, as webbing, that his students did not mention. In addition, some students offered characteristics

of good writers not observed in Thomas' instructional language, such as 'writes long pieces' and 'listens to directions'.

The student accounts from Michael's classroom also were quite varied (see Table 18). For instance, hard work was mentioned once (Natalie), as was neatness (Terry); length was listed by two of the students (Lynn, Terry), and humor as an ingredient of a good writer's repertoire also was noted twice (Lynn, Colin). In addition to observing that good writers work hard, work neatly and use humor, Colin indicated that he knew that one of his compositions, "The Magic Carpet", was good because the principal complimented him on it. This account indicates a match between Michael's emphasis on writing to communicate to an external audience and Colin's evident understanding of that emphasis.

The students in both classes provided general responses about what good writers do, and to a lesser extent, mentioned specific strategies offered by their teachers during instruction. For example, Terry (from Michael's class) said that a good writer adds suspense, doesn't rush the story, and has a good beginning. He further commented that he believes a good writer comes by this ability naturally. Amanda explained that a good writer does a lot of good things. Three other students from Michael's class (Lynn, Daniel, and Natalie) indicated good

writing behaviors that match their teacher's instructional emphasis including: proofing own work by re-reading, crossing out and removing sentences, getting ideas down quickly, and assuring one's writing makes sense.

In both classes, the students' accounts indicated awareness of selective aspects of their teacher's instructional language with no patterns observed across ability levels. One possible exception would be that none of the four students identified as advanced in writing ability mentioned neatness as a criterion for good writing. Aside from this, the students' accounts reflected varied understanding of their teacher's emphasis concerning good writing.

This mismatch between the teachers' language and the students' evident understanding may be accounted for because these students, now in grades four through six, have had many experiences with writing both in and out of school. Their accounts therefore may display an accumulative understanding of what a good writer does. It is possible that neither Thomas nor Michael's instructional language was able to address the complex nature of what good writers do. As such, their students' reflective accounts showed matches and mismatches between what their teachers said and what the learners articulated about their understanding.

In order to analyze further the relationship between students' evident understanding of what a good writer does

and instructional language, a second related question was posed as follows.

1(a)i **What is the nature of the students' evident understanding of their teachers' emphasis on what good writers do?**

The most striking difference occurring between these two groups of students' reflective accounts is the degree of individuality or lack thereof afforded their teacher's influence. It is apparent that the students in Thomas' classroom showed varied and individual understanding of teacher help, with comments ranging from, "He shared an analogy with me," to "He jokes and makes you feel easier."

Kristen explained:

He told me when I didn't like a poem I wrote, he said, he used the analogy, he said that there's a valley and there's two mountains and you could be on this mountain but to get to the other mountain, you have to go down a bit. But you're still closer than you were there. Because I didn't like my poetry and he said sometimes you have to go down a bit but you're still closer.  
(February 6, 1992)

Each student reflected on something different that Thomas had said to them personally (see Table 19). This is seemingly indicative of the teacher's routine of instructing students through individual writing conferences. For instance, Melissa commented that her teacher "helped open my imagination," while Steven said, "He showed me the difference between using **ocean water, fresh water, or sparkling water** in my writing."

Table 19

What does your teacher say to help you be a better writer?  
(Thomas' students)

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Children	Reflective Account
Kristen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• think about writing using an analogy</li> <li>• give individual help</li> </ul>
Melissa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• keep writing when stuck</li> <li>• develop at own pace</li> <li>• gives individual help</li> <li>• helps open my imagination</li> </ul>
Steven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• change things to make it better</li> <li>• move sentences</li> <li>• it doesn't have to be perfect the first time</li> <li>• difference using different vocabulary</li> </ul>
Sarah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• add and move lines</li> <li>• gives me ideas when stuck</li> </ul>
Donald	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use word chain</li> <li>• writes something not so good</li> <li>• spelling, commas, capitals</li> </ul>
Jean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• he jokes and it makes you feel easier</li> <li>• write neater</li> <li>• practice</li> <li>• he explains things</li> </ul>

---

Donald noted that his teacher told him to write something "not so good" but to keep writing, as is often suggested in instruction manuals on writing. Steven echoes this advice, though in slightly different terms, as "it doesn't have to be perfect the first time." Donald, who had been identified as delayed in his writing abilities, was the only student who said that his teacher helped him with

Table 20

What does your teacher say to help you be a better writer?  
(Michael's students)

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Children      Reflective Account:

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Lynn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• organization</li> <li>• adds details</li> <li>• gets ideas down quickly</li> <li>• changes it later using COPS</li> </ul>
Colin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gets ideas down quickly</li> <li>• uses COPS</li> </ul>
Natalie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make sure it makes sense</li> <li>• checks spelling</li> </ul>
Terry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• uses COPS</li> <li>• takes out unnecessary words</li> <li>• combines sentences</li> </ul>
Amanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• uses COPS</li> </ul>
Daniel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• get ideas down</li> <li>• go through writing with a pencil, change non-standard spelling and put in punctuation</li> <li>• uses COPS</li> <li>• puts in humor</li> <li>• double space</li> </ul>

---

spelling, punctuation and capitalization. This reinforces the observation that Thomas offered individual instruction through writing conferences in response to the student's needs. In addition, Donald commented that a good writer, according to his teacher, uses a "word chain" to help develop ideas. It is important to note that most of Thomas' students' comments indicated instruction that teaches the

writer rather than the writing. That is, their comments are unique and varied suggesting they recall Thomas' advice in personal terms. The students' accounts do match Thomas' instructional language as he stressed an individual and responsive approach to improving writing.

Contrast these accounts with those offered by the students in Michael's class (see Table 20). All six students mentioned that their teacher indicated the importance of using COPS (capitalization, organization, punctuation and spelling) to become better writers. This understanding very clearly matches the teacher's instructional language. In addition, these students said a good writer drafts by getting ideas down quickly and double-spacing, revises by making sure it makes sense, adding details and combining sentences, and edits by taking out unnecessary words and using COPS. Because of the high degree of similarity in these students' reflective accounts, it seems obvious that the nature of instruction stressed by Michael is less individualized but designed to provide all his students with similar revision strategies. Michael's students clearly understood the teacher's instructional emphasis on revision and editing strategies.

In one case, Daniel veered away from the standard response that a good writer engages in specific behaviors associated with the stages of the writing process and noted that the use of humor is one thing his teacher says will

improve his writing. For the most part, these students appeared to understand their teacher's language as focussing on instructing the writing to a greater extent than on the writer. Their responses were technical (focussed on the writing) while the students from Thomas' class offered personal (focussed on the writer) reflective accounts about their teacher's instructional emphasis.

To summarize, while the students in Michael's classroom understood the teacher's instructional message as primarily technical, and focussed on strategies to be used during the revision and editing processes, this did not represent their entire understanding of what a good writer does. When they were asked, in the previous question, to comment on what a good writer does, without reference to their teacher, the students indicated other qualities than those emphasized during instruction. Therefore, while there appears to be a match between student understanding and teacher's instructional emphasis about what a good writer does, the students in Michael's classroom showed additional understanding of this aspect of writing, likely attributable to their previous experiences with writing. This was also true in Thomas' class. While Thomas' students understood their teacher's instructional message to be primarily personal, they too showed an understanding of what good writers do beyond what the teacher says. It is interesting to note, however, the strong match between each teacher's

instructional language and his students' evident understanding of this specific aspect of writing.

**1(b) What is the nature of the students' evident understanding of the goals and purposes of writing?**

The reflective accounts offered by the students in Thomas' class indicated an understanding of the purpose of writing that was beyond completing the task itself (see Table 21). These students talked as if they were deeply and personally involved in their writing. For the most part, their accounts indicated that writing is functional. That is, it allowed them to grow as writers (Kristen) but also to discover their own thoughts, ideas and feelings.

For Kristen, writing brought enjoyment, and for Melissa, Steven and Sarah, writing helped them with the thinking process. It made that which was tacit, explicit. Donald noted that writing helped him to express emotions, be humorous and creative. Jean observed that writing helped prepare her for future school-related writing experiences. For each student, writing also performed a communicative function, by helping them discover thoughts and ideas and then showing these to the teacher.

Thomas' instructional language emphasized writing as a discovery oriented process, whereby students were encouraged to develop a new understanding of a topic, subject, form, or question. In addition, he consistently reiterated, for his students, the goals or purposes for engaging in a writing

Table 21

Goals and purposes of writing (Thomas' students)

Children	Reflective Account
Kristen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enjoyment</li> <li>• improvement of skills in writing</li> </ul>
Melissa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• personal expression</li> <li>• aids thinking</li> </ul>
Steven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to describe what's in my mind</li> <li>• checks spelling</li> </ul>
Sarah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to work out problems</li> </ul>
Donald	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to collect thoughts and put them down on paper</li> <li>• to write emotions</li> <li>• to be humorous, creative</li> </ul>
Jean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to practice for grades 7, 8 &amp; 9</li> </ul>

Table 22

Goals and purposes of writing (Michael's students)

Children	Reflective Account
Lynn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learn to write better</li> </ul>
Colin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sees no purpose in exercises</li> </ul>
Natalie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to improve handwriting</li> </ul>
Terry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to improve writing speed</li> </ul>
Amanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to complete the task</li> </ul>
Daniel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to write things down using good sentences</li> </ul>

task. There does appear to be a match between Thomas' instructional emphasis and students' evident understanding of writing to discover thoughts, feelings and ideas. Steven articulated this emphasis as follows:

Researcher: Can you tell me one thing that you think your teacher does to help you write?

Steven: When he puts words up on the board and tells us just to do anything with it. Like he did before, and before we finished talking, you knew what you were going to write. And this is kind of like a mystery. You don't know what you're going to write.

Researcher: Do you like that?

Steven: Yeah, it's neat. (December 3, 1991)

On the other hand, the students in Michael's classroom often seemed uncertain when asked to reflect on the purpose for a writing task (see Table 22). A typical first response was "I don't know." Even with probes such as, "Are you learning something by doing this activity?" and "Is this helping you in some way?," students provided responses that did not indicate a deep or personal involvement in their writing. Their responses showed an understanding of the purpose of writing as task-oriented. This could be partly explained by the age of the students who, on average, are 1 to 2 years younger than Thomas' students.

Colin pointed out that he could not see any purpose in the various writing exercises they completed. These often took the form of a half page draft written by the teacher that needed to be revised and edited. As was seen in

Section II (Table 16), this kind of writing occupied approximately 88% of the total writing observed in this classroom. Other students commented that engaging in writing activities improves handwriting, speed of writing, skill in writing, and the use of good sentences. Only Lynn's response, that the purpose of writing is to help improve skill in writing, may have suggested an understanding that is not task oriented.

Regardless of the perceived inherent purposes of the writing tasks he presented, Michael did not inform students about these purposes. For example, the following two excerpts indicate Michael's instructional language used to introduce new writing tasks:

Michael: I'm just going to remind you that we have an assembly on Friday morning and at that assembly we're going to be sharing individually some of the things we've written. Yesterday, we talked about what war meant to you (pause) and we're going to do the same thing but this time we're going to look at the other side, which is peace. (November 6, 1991)

. . . . .

Michael: I want everybody to really listen carefully to the story because you'll have to remember the important events. (November 15, 1991)

The two purposes of (a) writing to communicate and (b) writing to complete a task are exemplified here. The first message of writing to communicate appears to match the accounts offered by Lynn and Daniel. The second message of writing to complete the task match Colin's and Amanda's

accounts. Natalie's and Terry's responses do not appear to match Michael's instructional language as it related to goals and purposes of writing. They suggested writing serves to improve handwriting and improve writing speed.

In addition, observations of Michael's instructional language indicated that the purpose of writing tasks was to teach the stages of the writing process and strategies associated with each stage. Michael did not discuss purposes for writing with his students that went beyond the task at hand. His students' reflective accounts indicated the purpose for writing as primarily task-oriented.

**1(c) What is the nature of students' evident understanding of audience in writing?**

When asked about audience awareness in writing, the students in Thomas' class showed an interesting pattern (see Table 23). Four out of six students (Kristen, Melissa, Steven and Sarah) listed themselves as the most important audience for their writing. What is interesting about this observation is that audience awareness in writing typically means being sensitive to the expectations, demands, and background of those reading the composition. Yet four students considered they must please themselves first as critical readers of their writing. They appeared to have internalized a sense of audience. However, neither Donald nor Jean, both identified as delayed in their writing abilities, reflected on themselves as critical reviewers of

Table 23

The role of audience in writing (principal audience)  
(Thomas' students)

Children	Reflective Account
Kristen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• self</li> <li>• friends</li> <li>• parents</li> <li>• teacher</li> </ul>
Melissa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• self</li> <li>• teacher</li> </ul>
Steven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• self</li> <li>• teacher</li> </ul>
Sarah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• parents</li> <li>• teacher</li> <li>• friends</li> <li>• self</li> </ul>
Donald	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• friend (Matt)</li> <li>• teacher</li> </ul>
Jean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• family</li> </ul>

their writing. This may suggest that these less successful writers are not confident about their ability to judge writing and therefore, seek external validation. It may also indicate their perceptions of the importance of writing to communicate to an external audience. Thomas' students also listed the teacher, friends and family as important audiences for their writing. The friends named by the students were generally seated nearby, suggesting proximity dictates audience. Thomas was mentioned by five of the six students as an important audience for their writing. In

separate interviews, Steven and Sarah recounted events whereby their teacher played an important role as audience for and evaluator of their writing:

Steven: Last year, I got a B because my handwriting was messy. I would have gotten an A cause all of my stuff was all right. It was all there, all right. I just forgot to label two things and my handwriting wasn't neat. (February 10, 1992)

Sarah: . . . if he (the teacher) wants to look at our books, I might tear a page out and write it on a new page that looks neater. (February 13, 1992)

Information presented in Table 23, together with Steven and Sarah's comments, indicates that the teacher was an influential audience for these students' writing. Both these accounts refer to teacher audience as being concerned with neatness in writing, although it should be noted that Steven is recounting an experience with a previous teacher. Nonetheless, their comments are indicative of an understanding that writing is sometimes judged, not by what it says, but by how it looks.

While Thomas' instructional language appeared to emphasize the self as "the writer's first reader" (Murray, 1983, p. 164), four student accounts suggested there is a match between this message and the understanding. It is instructive to note that such an understanding is not demonstrated by the "delayed ability" students. Perhaps

Table 24

The role of audience in writing (principal audience)  
(Michael's students)

Children	Reflective Account
Lynn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• friends</li> <li>• teacher</li> </ul>
Colin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teacher</li> <li>• friend</li> <li>• anyone</li> </ul>
Natalie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• friends</li> </ul>
Terry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• parents</li> <li>• teacher</li> </ul>
Amanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• friends</li> <li>• teacher</li> <li>• parents</li> <li>• class</li> </ul>
Daniel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• friend</li> </ul>

these students have not had the necessary experience nor reached a level in their development of writing ability to examine their work in this way. It is also possible that these students viewed writing as primarily transactional in nature and therefore, requiring an external audience. In addition, Steven and Sarah's comments raise the possibility that a mismatch exists between the teacher's emphasis on self as audience and the students' understanding that teacher is audience in matters of neatness and handwriting.

Turning to Michael's classroom, his students listed the teacher, friends and family as audience for their writing (see Table 24). Five students (Lynn, Colin, Natalie, Amanda and Daniel) listed friends as the primary audience for their writing and four (Lynn, Colin, Terry and Amanda) listed the teacher. Two students (Terry and Amanda) indicated the importance of a parental audience. Notably absent from these reflective accounts was reference to oneself as audience. With few exceptions, Michael's instructional language emphasized that one's writing must be able to be understood by an external audience. Amanda's reflective account demonstrates this emphasis as she talked about her Dad as an important audience of her writing:

My dad because he always gets mad at me because I don't put my punctuation in and my spelling's not standard when I just do my draft. (February 11, 1992)

Michael encouraged his students to read their work aloud and seek additional comments from one another. Michael's students' understanding of audience appears to match what he said to them regarding this aspect of writing. However, Michael also stressed the role of inner audience in matter of style (i.e., using a comma or changing vocabulary). His students did not indicate an understanding of the role of inner audience in their own writing. Again, the age of Michael's students must be considered influential in their views of inner and external audience.

1(d) **What is the nature of students' evident understanding of themselves as writers?**

One aspect of how students view themselves as writers concerns their attitude towards writing and whether or not they choose to write on their own. All six students in Thomas' class reported they liked writing although half of them said they did not write outside school at all (see Table 25). There is no clear pattern with this small group of students that an aversion to writing outside school was characteristic of a particular writing ability level. Indeed one student from each of the identified levels reported not writing outside school.

This older group of students (grades five and six) clearly articulated a positive attitude towards writing. Melissa reported liking writing and the following anecdote indicates she viewed herself as a writer.

Researcher: Can you tell me a little bit about why that's your favourite poem?

Melissa: I don't know. It's just I like writing narrative poems, long poems and I like unicorns.

Researcher: Writing a narrative poem was your idea, wasn't it?

Melissa: Yes.

Researcher: Did you know you wanted to write that type of poem?

Melissa: No. I just said if he [the teacher] had any idea of what kind of poem, like a different poem.

Researcher: So the two of you talked together.

Melissa: Yeah. He gave me a book with a whole bunch of famous narrative poems and then I decided to write a narrative poem. (February 6, 1992)

Table 25

Seeing themselves as writers (Thomas' students)

Do you like to write?  
Do you write outside school\*

Children	Do you like to write?	Do you write outside school?
Kristen	yes	no
Melissa	yes	yes
Steven	yes	no
Sarah	yes	yes
Donald	yes	no
Jean	yes	yes

\* Parent questionnaires verified the students' responses concerning whether or not they write outside school.

Table 26

Seeing themselves as writers (Michael's students)

Do you like to write?  
Do you write outside school?\*

Children	Do you like to write?	Do you write outside school?
Lynn	yes	no
Colin	yes	no
Natalie	yes	yes
Terry	no	no
Amanda	yes	not much
Daniel	no	no

\* Parent questionnaires verified the students' responses concerning whether or not they write outside school.

Such results contradict previous findings that, as students get older and continue their schooling experiences, they indicate liking writing less. This finding may suggest that it is the individual teacher rather than the student's age that influences how attitudes towards writing are manifested.

In Michael's classroom, two students (Terry and Daniel) reported that they did not like to write and four students (Terry, Daniel, Lynn and Colin) said they did not write outside school (see Table 26). Lynn clarified her "no" response by noting she liked thinking of ideas to write about but did not enjoy the physical act of writing. She indicated a preference for writing with the use of a computer. Only Natalie reported both a positive attitude towards writing and a desire to write outside school. Both these questions also appeared on a two-page parent questionnaire and in all cases, the parents verified their own child's responses. It is important to point out that Michael's students, on average, were younger than Thomas', which may, in part, account for these differences.

Overall, the students in both classes talked about a wide variety of activities they engaged in outside of school. It is possible that writing pales in comparison to fast paced activities such as swimming, playing soccer, hiking, and biking for this group of children.

**1(e) What is the nature of students' evident understanding of the value of writing?**

The students in both classrooms were asked to respond to the following question: "If you woke up tomorrow morning and found that you could no longer write, would it matter to you?" All but one student (Donald) in Thomas and Michael's classes commented on what they would miss if writing were not a part of their lives.

In Thomas' class, all the students provided three or more examples of how they value writing (see Table 27). Their accounts again suggested a deep and personal involvement in writing. Kristen said, "It would take away the enjoyment of doing it," and Melissa added, "I find it easier to express (my)self through writing something down on paper than it is to talk about your feelings" (February 6, 1992). In addition to the obvious value that writing aids communication, these students indicated writing was personally satisfying in its ability to: (a) address personal and emotional expression; (b) make conscious one's thoughts; (c) provide enjoyment; (d) express humor; and (e) help in future grades.

Four of the six students reflected on the value of writing in expressing emotions or feelings. Sarah commented, "Then I couldn't write poems, the way I feel and in my diary and I write stories and it would just be empty . . . You might save trees but it would matter to me very

Table 27

The value of writing (Thomas' students)

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Children      Reflective Account

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Kristen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ enjoyment</li> <li>• fills a need</li> <li>• expresses feelings</li> <li>• helps when nervous</li> </ul>
Melissa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>" expresses feelings</li> <li>• helps more things come to mind</li> <li>• aids thinking</li> </ul>
Steven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to help when older</li> <li>• to describe what's in my mind</li> <li>• to help if you want to become a writer</li> </ul>
Sarah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• personal expression</li> <li>• enjoyment</li> <li>• work out feelings</li> </ul>
Donald	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to help in future grades</li> <li>• express emotions</li> <li>• express humor</li> <li>• numbers are more valuable than writing</li> </ul>
Jean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• something I'm used to</li> <li>• to communicate</li> <li>• to help in future grades</li> </ul>

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much" (February 13, 1992). Donald also mentioned this aspect of writing for himself, although his conclusion about whether or not he would miss this activity was somewhat different.

Researcher: Just imagine that if tomorrow you woke up in the morning and you couldn't write anymore. You could do everything else, but you couldn't write. Would it matter to you?

Donald: (thinks for a moment) Hmm . . . Does it count as numbers, too?

Researcher: umm, No. You can still do numbers.

Donald. OK, all right. Not that I can think of.

Researcher: So it probably wouldn't matter too much. You could do all the other things you wanted to do?

Donald: So far as I could think of. (February 10, 1992)

There appears to be a match between Thomas' emphasis on ways to help the students control their writing, and students' evident understanding of writing as personally valuable. In a similar vein, a match was evident between Thomas' language regarding the purpose of writing as discovery oriented and his students' accounts of the value of writing to discover and express feelings, thoughts, ideas, and humor.

There are, however, some notable differences among these students' accounts. Kristen and Melissa articulated specific functions that writing addresses, noting that it expresses feelings, helps when nervous, helps more things come to mind and aids thinking. Natalie's reflective account was more general with respect to the functions of writing. She indicated it is an activity she is used to and one that allows for communication, particularly letter writing which she engages in often. Jean said, "I'm so used

to this now. And I do a lot of it at my house, so I get pretty used to doing it at school" (February 10, 1992). While this is an important insight, it did not provide the detail present in the other accounts. The difference between these accounts may be, in part, attributable to ability level in writing.

Three students (Steven, Donald and Jean) commented that writing was valued for its future potential either in school or a career. While this could indicate an understanding that the value of writing is not readily apparent in the present, each of these students offered other responses to suggest that it is.

It is notable that the students from Michael's classroom offered fewer responses to the question than the others. (see Table 28) Lynn's response was interesting. An avid reader, she was quick to note that she would be upset if other people could no longer write as she would be robbed of new reading material. Her account suggested that other people's writing is valued but it is not an activity she would miss doing herself.

Other accounts indicated that writing has functional and communicative abilities for these students. Terry's response that one cannot get through life without writing suggests functional value and he offered cheque-writing as one of life's necessities. Daniel offered a hypothetical situation to indicate the value of writing. He observed

Table 28

The value of writing (Michael's students)

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Children      Reflective Account

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Lynn	• writing means new reading material
Colin	• it's a talent • expresses humor
Natalie	• to communicate • enjoyment
Terry	• to get through life (i.e. writing cheques, tests, stories)
Amanda	• to communicate (i.e. writing notes)
Daniel	• if you needed to communicate to someone who was deaf • to communicate

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that writing would facilitate communication with the hearing-impaired. These are both interesting and insightful comments. Although these students did not talk about writing as personally valuable, they did point to an awareness of writing as both helpful and necessary.

Amanda and Natalie both commented that they would miss letter writing, suggesting they value writing for communication. Colin noted that he would miss writing because he views it as a talent and it would be the "talent" he would miss rather than what it enables him to do. He

added that writing allowed him to express his humor and this would indicate a more personal value.

Michael's instructional language emphasized the writing process as primarily task-oriented, stressing the ability of writing to communicate to an external audience. There appears to be a match between Michael's emphasis on task-oriented writing and students' reflections about writing as communicative, important and necessary.

Calkins (1986) reminds us that, "what children do as writers depends largely on the context in which they write and on their backgrounds as writers" (p. 33). The main difference observed between these two classrooms was that Michael's students viewed writing according to its communicative function. Writing provided them with the ability to write letters and express humor. They also raised the importance of functional aspects of writing. The students from Thomas' class reflect on the value of writing for communication and personal expression. Their examples of how writing is valued indicated that writing had a role to play in their lives.

#### **Summary of Students' Reflective Accounts and the Relationship to Instructional Language**

Section III has detailed aspects of the students' reflective accounts about writing and the relationships between these and the teacher's instructional language. The following discussion briefly summarizes these findings.

What good writers do. Participants from both classes were asked to think of someone who they considered to be a good writer and then talk about what he or she did to be successful in writing. The students in Thomas' classroom reflected on the ability of a good writer to persevere, put forth effort and engage in writing over extended periods of time. Apart from this common theme, the students provided individualistic responses about the nature of what good writers do. Such evident understanding suggests students did not define a good writer as knowledgeable about writing as ready-made curriculum, but rather, as someone focussed on his/her own writing. It's clear that a match exists between Thomas' instructional language emphasizing writing as expressive and students' reflective accounts about writing as personally defined and individually oriented.

In response to the first question about what good writers do, the students in Michael's classroom indicated diverse understanding about this aspect of writing. Yet, when asked to comment on the teacher's instructional emphasis, the students provided a list of strategies used by a good writer. According to them, a good writer uses COPS, gets ideas down, double spaces writing, combines sentences, organizes and adds details.

Section I detailed aspects of Michael's instructional language as systematic, presenting the writing process in a linear, step-by-step manner. It is evident that a match

exists between this emphasis and students' reflections on successful writing behaviors. Michael's students imitate their teacher's instructional language about what writers do at each stage of the writing process. The students in both classes, however, articulated an additional understanding of what a good writer does apart from their teachers' instructional language.

**Audience.** In Thomas' class, four students indicated they considered themselves to be primary and critical readers of their own writing. Specific exceptions were noted. The two students, Jean and Donald, identified as delayed in their writing ability, did not appear to have internalized a sense of audience and mentioned friends and family as the most important readers of their writing. In addition, Steven and Sarah, identified as average in their writing ability, indicated that the teacher was best able to judge writing in terms of handwriting and neatness. Therefore, it may be concluded that a match existed between instructional language and students' understanding of audience in writing except in the case of the two students of delayed ability and in matters of presentation, that is, handwriting and neatness.

Reflective accounts gathered from students in Michael's class indicated, without exception, an understanding of audience as someone other than the writer. A match is therefore affirmed as Michael encouraged them to focus on

someone else making sense of their work. Michael, less frequently, drew attention to developing students' inner audience awareness but student reflections suggested his attempts were unsuccessful.

**Goals and purposes of writing.** Overall, the students in Thomas' classroom considered the purpose of writing to discover and articulate thoughts, ideas and feelings. Their reflective accounts match Thomas' instructional language, which highlighted writing for personal insight as an important purpose. Only Jean indicated the purpose for writing as preparing one for future school experiences. This may be viewed as a match since Thomas also articulated concern that his students be able to meet writing challenges in school.

Michael's students were uncertain and tentative when reflecting on this aspect of writing. When questioned further, many of their responses indicated evident understanding of writing as communicative and task-oriented. Such an understanding matches Michael's instructional language which referred to purpose of writing to communicate to one's peers and the teacher and to complete the immediate task at hand. It is possible that the age difference between these two groups of students accounts in part for some of the differences noted here.

**Students' view of themselves as writers.** Thomas' students all reported that they enjoyed writing and three

out of six indicated they wrote outside of school. The teacher's language detailed an emphasis on helping students to become personally involved in their writing. In addition, students were encouraged to maintain control over their work.

Similar patterns were observed in Michael's class. Four out of six students reported liking writing and two indicated that they wrote outside of school.

**The value of writing.** In reflecting upon the value of writing in their lives, the students in Thomas' class overwhelmingly offered personal and meaningful reasons for engaging in the process. Not speculating about writing, but "see(ing) the sense of it all" (Kohak, 19, p. xii), these students indicated the ways writing is valued by them. "Writing helps me when I'm nervous, " said Kristen (February 6, 1992) and Donald noted, "It can help you express your feelings, how to put the words together" (February 10, 1992). A match exists between Thomas' language emphasizing the form of expressive writing to discover and these students' evident understanding of the value of writing as important and personally satisfying. In the final analysis, Donald concluded that he would not miss writing if he could still do numbers. Jean, too, observed she would miss writing as an activity she is used to and not for the particular role it plays in her life. This indicates a

mismatch between what is said by the teacher and what is understood by these two students.

The students from Michael's classroom indicated the importance of writing to communicate. They speculated about the value of writing as a talent, a necessity and a way of life. The predominant instructional emphasis on writing for communicative purposes appears to match these students' evident understanding of the value of writing.

In reviewing the findings of this study, it becomes apparent that there are observable relationships between students' evident understanding of writing and the teacher's instructional language. This is consistent with previous research on student perceptions of teachers and instructional processes (Fear, Anderson, Englert, & Raphael, 1986; Harlin & Lipa, 1991; Kumarava-divelu, 1991; Wittrock, 1986). Inconsistent findings exist as to the specific nature of these relationships (Collins, 1982).

While there was not complete agreement between what the teacher said and what the students understood about writing, these students, for the most part, understood their teacher's instructional language and appeared influenced by it. It is a given that students bring vast resources to their writing (King, 1984), and this study was able to describe specific aspects of these two teachers' language that appeared influential in their students' evident understanding of writing. This finding supports the view

that individual teachers do make a difference in writing instruction and that their language does influence student understanding (Morine-Dershimer, 1985). The findings documented here will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The goal of this study was to describe and interpret the naturally occurring language-related instructional contexts surrounding writing activities in two intermediate classrooms, students' understanding of those contexts, and the nature of the writing produced in them. While context has been cited as crucial in shaping students' thinking (Bloome, Harris & Ludlum, 1991; Heath, 1983; Langer & Applebee, 1987), few studies have explicated specific aspects of the language context that appear influential. On the basis of the evidence provided here, it appears that an interplay between instructional language and students' level of writing development contributes to students' evident understanding of the nature of instruction.

Learning to write has been likened to weaving a "delicate tapestry" (Smith, 1982, p. 139). Britton (1982) observes that "we give and find shape in the very act of perception" (p. 168). The results of this study provide insight into students' interpretation of their instruction, a primary medium connecting teaching and learning. By documenting twelve students' evident understanding of specific aspects of their teachers' instructional language, through classroom observations and formal and informal interviews, it may be concluded that students' perception of writing and its instruction is an important source of

information in investigations of writing-related activities in school. Furthermore, these students appeared influenced by their teachers' language, by the kinds of writing in which they engaged, and by their own developing writing abilities. While Graves (1983) has suggested that, "Children are complicated. Their statements about writing . . . are unpredictable" (p. 105), the findings from this study indicate that by focussing on students' own reflections about writing, teachers and researchers may begin to account for this apparent unpredictability.

The precise relationship between instruction and development has been speculated upon by researchers and theorists alike. Vygotsky (1962) states:

We found that instruction usually precedes development . . . What the child can do in cooperation today [s]he can do alone tomorrow . . . Therefore the only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it. (pp. 101, 104)

Calkins (1983) reminds us that instruction and development form an extremely complex partnership. She writes, "Teaching - in the richest sense of the word - interacts with development and changes it" (p. 60). It is apparent, in this study, that instruction plays a vital role in students' development as writers, as observed through their evident understanding of this complex task.

The research documented here shows that, for the most part, students' understanding of writing and its instruction paralleled their teachers' beliefs and practices. In some

cases, however, it was obvious the instruction preceded or lagged behind development.

Furthermore, the findings from this study expose the underlying complexity inherent in teaching and researching writing in natural settings without having experimental constraints imposed from the outside. This final chapter will serve to highlight the results and discuss their relevance to pedagogy, research methodology, and process writing. In the end, recommendations for future research, based on reflections on the data, will be suggested.

#### Pedagogical Issues

The two teachers described in this study conform to Langer and Applebee's (1987) observation that "the definitions of process approaches vary considerably from one teacher to another" (p. 6). While both teachers appeared guided by process orientations toward writing instruction, subtle differences were observed in their teaching methodologies. These differences may be attributed to teaching and educational experiences, in addition to personality and temperament.

To illustrate, Thomas (the teacher of the grade five/six class) emphasized expressive writing with his students throughout the five-month study. He provided instruction on an individual basis, and therefore taught a wide range of writing strategies to his students as needs dictated. Michael (who instructed the grade four/five

class) provided whole-group instruction that featured transactional types of writing and the presentation of specific writing strategies. Overall, both teachers' instructional methodologies and their own understanding of writing appeared related to their students' evident understanding of:

- a) what good writers do;
- b) audience for their writing;
- c) the goals and purposes of writing tasks;
- d) themselves as writers;
- e) the value of writing.

#### **What Good Writers Do**

Students from both classes characterized the strategies used by good writers in ways similar to their teachers. However, each group of students indicated greater understanding of this aspect of writing than was presented during instructional sessions. This finding suggests that, while these grade four, five, and six students were able to articulate a view of writing that reflected their teacher's instructional emphasis, they demonstrated a more comprehensive view of good writing strategies than that which had been described and demonstrated to them by their teachers. For instance, Michael focussed his students' attention on a good writer's ability to get ideas down quickly, to revise and edit, and to read one's own writing aloud. His students echoed his advice but added that a good

writer perseveres, practices, inserts humor, reads a lot, and knows about his/her subject.

These findings support and extend Applebee's (1984) claim stating that "studies of the writing process are as much studies of past experience and instruction as they are of the ability or level of development of a particular writer" (p. 186). One instructional implication of this finding is that, while these teachers may be confident that their students recognized the instructional emphasis on particular strategies, students' prior knowledge should also be determined and taken into account when planning for instruction. It seems logical that knowledge of students' comprehensive views of the topic, subject, or discipline is more valuable to student learning than their ability to retell the teacher what he/she has said. Such findings provide further evidence that a transmission model of learning in which teachers convey knowledge to their students and test recall of that knowledge may be inadequate. Rather, based on the evidence provided here, a model of learning that acknowledges students' own evident understanding and sense-making strategies is necessary if teachers are to appropriately challenge students throughout their schooling careers.

In other words, students may be able to tell the teacher what they have learned by restating their teacher's words, but this may not accurately indicate the complexity

of students' understanding. Buckingham (1992) observes that the use of open-ended and informal discussions allows students to transform spontaneous concepts and gives them greater control over their own thought processes. Such findings have implications for assessment and evaluation. For instance, recall tests and standardized tests, while providing useful information about group performance, are less helpful to the teacher in planning future instruction for individual students. Therefore, other forms of assessment may be desirable in order to address an individual student's comprehensive view of, in this case, writing and its instruction. Assessment methods such as recorded observations, surveys, individual and small group conferences and self-evaluations could provide opportunities for teachers to access students' broad understanding of the instructional emphasis. In particular, this may be appropriate for the grade four to six level as the twelve students in this study indicated an ability to articulate such information.

Because no apparent developmental pattern emerged from students' accounts concerning what good writers do, the notion of individual differences in processing instructional language must be considered. In other words, past instructional experiences, background knowledge, and home environment also likely played a role in students' understanding of good writing strategies. So, although

these students could verbalize their teachers' wisdom about writing, providing the appearance that a similar understanding was shared by most, the students held views about good writing strategies beyond and, occasionally at variance with, those articulated by their current teacher.

These findings provide support for instruction in composing that acknowledges and makes explicit students' prior knowledge about good writing strategies in order to expand on that knowledge. In addition, the variability in students' understanding of this aspect of writing may suggest that students cannot be integrated into a single homogeneous cluster for instruction. Langer and Applebee (1984) suggest a type of instructional support called "scaffolding" to help students incorporate new learning with prior knowledge. The instructional guidelines they provide follow oral language learning principles. They suggest that the adult listen to the child, or read his/her text, ask questions about the meaning of what is being said or written, and expand upon the message. Such an approach would be facilitated by individual or small group instruction rather than whole group teaching practices.

Reporting on a separate study, Applebee (1982) found that certain types of writing knowledge were downplayed in the instruction of secondary students. Specifically, Applebee referred to the "less than ideal" character of instruction in which the emphasis is on knowledge that

consists of the ability to recite previously organized information and that assumes "an audience whose body of relevant information is both larger and better articulated than the writer's own" (p. 378). In the present study, it would appear that Thomas' instructional emphasis on expressive kinds of writing in which writers discover their own thoughts, ideas and feelings through composition, addresses Applebee's concerns about the writing experiences of secondary students. While the age and ability level of students likely influence the nature of the writing activities teachers plan, it seems logical to suggest that instruction should include expressive writing as a means of encouraging students to develop a broad understanding of good writing. In addition, such writing experiences allow the writer to demonstrate knowledge about topics that may be unfamiliar to the teacher. Andrasick (1990) points to the usefulness of expressive writing as follows: "[It] releases students from the fear of being wrong and allows them to acknowledge their personal responses" (p. 42).

#### **Audience for Writing**

In both classes, students' evident understanding of audience appeared influenced by the instructional language to which they had been exposed. However, developmental patterns also were observed. All six of Michael's grade four and five students, and the two students in Thomas' class who were identified as developmentally delayed in

writing, viewed audience as external to the writer. In Michael's class, this would have indicated the influence of his instructional processes, which emphasized writing to communicate to a reader, but in Thomas' class, the students experienced an instructional approach emphasizing self as audience. Providing further support for these findings on developmental patterns were Michael's attempts to develop a sense of inner audience, in matters of writing style, with his younger group of students. Michael appeared unsuccessful in these attempts, as his younger students, in grades four and five, only reflected on an external audience for their writing.

This finding suggests an interplay between instruction about audience, as either internally or externally motivated, and students' level of writing development. Fontaine's (1988) study of 9-, 13-, and 18-year-olds' awareness of audience also showed a strong relationship between instructional language and this aspect of writing. Howard and Barton (1986) argue that understanding both internal and external audience is necessary in order to acknowledge the dual nature of writing to communicate and make meaning. The authors state that an over-emphasis on writing to communicate "overlooks writing's first meaning-making or articulation phase, which is so crucial to getting started" (p. 25). These results may guide teachers to ask

their own students about audience awareness to gauge the influence of instruction and developmental level.

Tamor and Bond (1983) indicate the importance of gaining this type of information from students, since "a model of the composing process must contain the writer's notions about his or her reader, regardless of what the researcher (or teacher) believes these notions could or should have been" (p. 106). Awareness of these notions may eventually lead to instructional decision-making by teachers and researchers alike.

The use of short inventories or monthly interviews that ask students to comment on their own learning would provide systematic information to teachers. Instruction could then take the form of writing activities that allow students to write both for themselves and for an external audience. Graves (1991) suggests teachers reduce their use of prepared materials (e.g. story starters) and encourage students to develop their own topics for writing. In addition, Graves observes, "Writers need audiences to respond to their messages" (p. 73). It appears that what is called for is a balance. Children need to choose topics for themselves while learning how to be sensitive to their audience. Since the results of this study indicate that the instructional approach does influence students' views of audience, teachers at the grade four to six level need to provide

experiences for their students that encourage awareness of instructional and external audiences.

In addition, genre appears to be related to students' views of audience. That is, students from Thomas' class engaged primarily in expressive writing and, for the most part, maintained a view of audience as internal. For instance, the students primarily engaged in poetry writing throughout the five-month study, and their teacher directed students to focus on an inner audience during writing. Four out of six students commented that they viewed themselves as the principal audience for their writing. It is interesting to note that neither of the two students identified as delayed in their writing ability commented on the importance of inner audience. Rather, Donald and Jean both said that others were important readers of their writing. Thus, both genre and developmental level in writing appear influential in affecting these students' views of audience.

On the other hand, Michael's younger students engaged in transactional writing and talked about audience as someone other than themselves. Not one of the six students in the study said that he/she was the principal audience for his/her own writing. However, five out of the six students indicated the importance of friends as audience for their writing. Thus, it appears that genre and developmental writing level are important factors influencing students' views of audience.

### Goals and Purposes of Writing Tasks

Concerning students' evident understanding of the goals and purposes of their school writing tasks, the teachers' instructional language again appeared influential, and developmental patterns were observed. Thomas and his students agreed that writing served the purposes of discovering one's own thoughts, feelings, and ideas. In addition, Thomas provided explicit comments throughout his writing sessions on the goals and purposes of the tasks. Michael's younger students appeared tentative and uncertain about the purposes of their writing tasks. The use of probing questions yielded responses that indicated their understanding of purpose extended little beyond the need to complete the task. In other words, Michael's students provided comments that suggest they understood the purpose of their school-related writing tasks to improve handwriting or writing ability, increase writing speed or complete the activity. It is possible that writing, for purposes of communication, was viewed as self-evident and therefore not requiring comment.

Nonetheless, these findings extend our understanding of the developmental trends observed by Freeman and Sanders (1987). These researchers worked with kindergarten, grade two, and grade four students and observed that as children developed, they were able to describe greater diversity in the purposes of writing. The students were not, however,

commenting upon the purposes of their own writing. Similarly, Cairney (1988) noted developmental patterns in his study of children's perceptions of purpose in reading. He observed that younger children read for purposes of accuracy and decoding, which he termed "dysfunctional notions of literacy", and older children read for purposes of learning new material, termed "functional notions of literacy". However, Cairney did not observe actual instructional processes to determine their influence over students' reported understanding of purpose. Cairney's labels appear to unfairly dichotomize students' developing understanding of purpose and may inadvertently cause teachers to view some children as coming to either "right" or "wrong" conclusions about the purpose of writing.

Gundlach (1982) argues that teachers and researchers have, in the past, assumed that children were unable to understand the purposes of writing. These assumptions, according to Gundlach, have led to writing instruction that teaches composition exclusively as a code (spelling, punctuation, organization). It appears, from the students' reflective accounts in this study, that when a teacher did focus attention on the purposes of writing and explicated these for his students, they were able to articulate significant aspects of writing. The present study indicates that it may be valuable for teachers to talk with their students, at this level, about the purposes of the writing

tasks in which they are engaged. This would promote explicit awareness of the knowledge students construct about writing. Such instruction would be similar to Halliday's (1975) idea of "intentionality" in language learning.

According to Applebee and Langer (1984), intentionality occurs when "the task has a clear overall purpose driving any separate activity that may contribute to the whole. Eventual evaluation of students' success can be cast in terms of what they intended to accomplish" (p. 185).

Teachers first need to find out what their students think about the purposes of school-related writing tasks. This can be accomplished by asking students, "What do you think you are learning (accomplishing) by doing this activity?" followed by probing questions such as, "Can you tell me more?" Teachers can make explicit their own purposes for engaging students in writing tasks, but this should not discourage students from developing their own goals and purposes for writing. Again, a balance between teacher directives and student initiatives is called for.

### **Students' View of Themselves as Writers**

The majority of the students in both classes reported that they enjoyed writing (all six students in Thomas' class and four students in Michael's class), but fewer indicated they engaged in writing outside of school (three students in Thomas' class and two students in Michael's class). One noteworthy pattern is that all of the older students said

they enjoyed writing. King (1984) and other researchers have suggested that as students get older, they report enjoying the act of writing less than their younger counterparts. This trend was not observed in the present study. Although it must be acknowledged that this study primarily used self-reported data which may have been influenced by the participants' desire to please or 'help out' the researcher, the data suggest that Thomas' emphasis on individual instruction, self as audience, and expressive writing was influential in affecting the older students' view of writing. This finding is supported by Hudson (1986), who stated, "As children gain more control in the amount, content and format of writing, they are more likely to perceive it as their own even if a teacher has made the assignment" (p. 65).

The very nature of expressive writing offers the writer opportunities to make personal responses. These responses are then validated by the teacher, which may "lessen students' inclination to await passively the conveyance of Truth from text or teacher" (Andrasick, 1990, p. 52). It may be the influence of expressive writing tasks, together with specific instructional strategies, that accounts, in part, for these students' positive attitudes towards writing and their sense of themselves as writers.

Implications of such findings for future instruction suggest that rather than decreasing the amount of expressive

writing students engage in as they get older, some forms should be maintained throughout their schooling. This could benefit students' attitudes towards writing and their view of themselves as writers.

### The Value of Writing

Finally, the instructional processes used by these teachers appear related to and influential in affecting students' views about the value of writing. Thomas' students commented on personally valuable aspects of engaging in writing which may be related to the expressive nature of the writing tasks they undertook throughout the period of study. In addition, developmental trends in students' reflections were observed. The two students from Thomas' class who were identified as developmentally delayed in writing, showed patterns of response more closely aligned with those offered by students from Michael's class, who were younger overall. Furthermore, one student from Michael's class, Colin, who was identified as developmentally advanced in writing, reported an understanding of the personal value of writing, similar to the older students in Thomas' class. The findings from the study support the explanation that developmental patterns and instructional processes affect students' understanding of the value of writing.

To reiterate, the specific results of the study are as follows:

**What good writers do.** In both classes, it appeared that instruction lagged behind students' evident understanding of what good writers do. All students indicated a broader understanding of this aspect of writing than was articulated by their teachers.

**Audience.** Thomas' instructional emphasis on inner audience matched students' evident understanding of principal audience for their writing, except in the case of the two students who had been identified as delayed in their writing development. Similarly, Michael's instructional emphasis on external audience matched his students' evident understanding. He appeared unsuccessful in his attempts to develop a sense of inner audience with his younger students. It may be concluded, based on the evidence presented here, that instruction of inner audience preceded student understanding.

**Goals and purposes of writing.** In both classes, the teachers' instructional emphasis matched students' evident understanding of the goals and purposes of their writing. In Thomas' class, students articulated purposes for writing that were discovery oriented, while Michael's students articulated purposes that were task-oriented.

**Themselves as writers.** The students in both classes, for the most part, appeared to enjoy writing, as evidenced

in their own accounts and verified through parent questionnaires. Interestingly, the older students in Thomas' class all expressed their enthusiasm for writing. This finding differs from other reported trends that suggest students do not like to write as they get older.

Value of writing. A match was also observed between each teacher's instructional emphasis concerning the value of writing and their students' evident understanding. Thomas' emphasized the value of writing to express thoughts, ideas and feelings to oneself. His students appeared to reflect upon the value of writing in their lives. Michael emphasized the value of writing to communicate to others, and his students appeared to speculate upon the value of writing in their own lives.

While there was seldom a perfect match between the teachers' instructional language and their students' evident understanding of aspects related to writing, it was apparent that the majority of these grade four to six students were able to articulate their teacher's instructional emphasis. This was true especially for students of average ability level, while variability in understanding was evident in students representing either advanced or delayed levels of writing development. Such findings suggest the need for teachers to discover their students' views of instruction, regardless of ability level.

Andrasick (1990) suggests that teaching means affecting how the student processes information. Therefore, it follows that teachers need to employ procedures that reveal or make transparent students' understanding of their writing instruction. Think-aloud protocols, a valuable strategy for researchers, can be adapted for use in the classroom so that the teacher can monitor students' thought processes on a regular basis. In addition, the methodological strategies described in the pilot study offer teachers a variety of ways to access information from their students about how they perceive aspects of writing. Finally, it would be worthwhile for teachers to invite writers from the community to their classrooms to describe their own writing processes. Such procedures are valuable for students who may begin to distance themselves from the act of writing in order to think critically about what they do and what they might do. Teachers may use such procedures to find out what their students say about writing and how it is taught, in order to assess needs and provide useful and effective instruction.

In addition, teachers may need to provide a range of writing experiences for their students, so that students who may be predisposed to one form or another, because of individual differences, past experiences or level of ability, will have opportunities to do well and learn new ways of expressing themselves.

Reading research has acknowledged that the understanding a child brings to the reading of a selection is as important to comprehension as the actual words in the written text (Hennings, 1984; Rummelhart, 1980). Schema theory, developed in this area of research, holds that the child "has a fund of knowledge through which he or she filters messages" (Hennings, 1984, p. 198). The results of this study indicate that students similarly appear to hold concepts about writing and its instruction, and knowledge of these can better prepare educators to provide effective writing instruction for their students. For instance, those students who already understand and have internalized various goals and purposes for their writing require tasks that challenge them in different ways than students who have not yet internalized a sense of purpose for writing. In the first case, students can be encouraged to make decisions about their writing (e.g. what to put next, vocabulary choice, character development) using their intended audience to monitor the process. In the second case, students must be helped to come up with their own topics for writing, perhaps through the use of journals or diaries. This may help them to develop their sense of writing for a purpose of their own choosing.

#### **Methodological Issues**

This section will serve to highlight methodological issues that arose in the effort to understand writing and

its instruction in two intermediate classrooms. Clark and Florio (1983) state:

There are many ways to move beyond mere observation of phenomena to an understanding of their meanings to participants. Sometimes people can give words to the meanings they hold; sometimes they reveal their meaning systems in patterns of action. (p. 244)

The design of the study provided opportunities to obtain information about the meanings held by participants with respect to writing and its instruction. In the past, writing research has examined the composing processes of children through think-aloud protocols (Flower & Hayes, 1981), observations of students (Clark & Florio, 1983), questionnaires (Harlin & Lipa, 1991), and written text analysis (Tamor & Bond, 1983). The present study employed a multi-method approach toward data collection. Classroom observation, informal and formal interviews, together with a collection of written products, provided the data for interpretation. It was possible to probe participants' understanding, as opportunities to observe teachers' and students' experiences first-hand were a part of the methodological process. In particular, the use of students' reflective accounts, gathered formally and informally, addressed the issue of accessing "the writer's notions". The process of observing and talking with students as they wrote was invaluable in providing the researcher with contextual information for framing questions. Students' articulated understanding of writing and its instruction

provided yet another lens through which to view this process.

### Participant Observation

It must be recognized that the researcher entered the field with preconceived ideas about writing and instruction, guided both by the research questions and early observations. "Because no observation is unbiased, it is important to mention at the outset several kinds of information that contributed to the sense made of what was seen, read, and heard in the classroom under study" (Clark & Florio, 1983, p. 244). Specifically, the research questions served to frame the nature of the data collected and the analytic methods. Key topics from the literature on written composition focussed attention on five aspects of writing, including: (a) what good writers do, (b) audience, (c) goals and purposes, (d) students' views of themselves as writers, and (e) students' views of the value of writing. These foci, together with ideas from the data, affected the nature of the coding procedures and categories that were used to organize the information.

In addition, the decision to work in two classrooms was made, partly as a precautionary measure, to alleviate possible concerns that unforeseen circumstances might prevent one of the teachers from continuing in the study. Second, it was decided that two classrooms would provide a system of "checks and balances," so that the observations

from one class could be tempered with those from another. This decision led to inevitable comparisons that, while providing valuable insights, occasionally drew attention away from the focus on children's understanding of writing towards the differences in instructional processes. Methodologically, these comparisons may have been unavoidable as the researcher continually maneuvered between the two classrooms over the five-month period.

The process of interpretation was also affected by the obvious comparisons made between the two teachers. It was through the processes of reflection, discussion and re-reading that other interpretations of the data emerged. That is, I checked my own perceptions against those of others and made some fundamental changes in interpretation. Such changes could be made because I was willing to continually confront my own biases about writing and its instruction. Consequently, it would be beneficial to other researchers to accept that, even, or perhaps especially during interpretation, one must continually guard against the tendency to maintain one interpretation that may inadvertently cause some data to be overlooked or ignored. It is sometimes thought that by stating one's assumptions at the outset of the study, biases can be made neutral. This was not the case. One's biases continually plague the researcher and must be acknowledged throughout the entire research process.

composition research. Examining the written product and inferring the writer's thought processes is no longer the only tool available to researchers attempting to overcome the problems of studying what may be characterized as an invisible process.

Even though there has been some concern expressed about the use of multi-methods (North, 1987), there is little evidence to support a return to the single product-oriented approach to this area of inquiry which prevailed until the 1970s. Flower and Hayes (1983) characterized research activity in writing as "enjoying, or suffering through, a period of exploration" (p. 218). Although the exploration period is both useful and necessary, it is also worthwhile to assess the research procedures while they are in progress.

This study demonstrated that "Two or three or ten outside perspectives can never accumulate the authenticity of that of a single insider" (North, 1987, p. 312). On the other hand, while the availability of techniques such as informant interviewing and participant perspectives reveal insight into the individual's thought processes, researchers can not claim intimate knowledge of another's understanding. Using several sources of data, this study offers "pictures of the complex processes at work in schooling and the acquisition of written literacy" (Clark & Florio, 1983, p. 259). Nonetheless, conclusions must be tentative in a field devoted to researching a complex and invisible process.

The general methodological implications of this study include the following: first, the researcher should acknowledge assumptions at the outset of the study but also take measures during analysis to maintain an open mind concerning results and interpretations that seem contrary to one's own point of view. Second, the researcher must remain sensitive to the needs and feelings of the participants by providing feedback and information that could be useful or of interest to the teachers. Third, it is necessary to continually negotiate the position of participant observer. This may require an occasional 'stepping-back' until the participant(s) feel at ease. Fourth, the use of multiple methods for data gathering makes possible a rich description of the people, the classroom, and the events.

#### **Process Writing Issues**

Many established and professional writers have described their own writing processes as discursive and non-linear (Murray, 1982; Berthoff, 1981). While they caution against formulaic interpretations of process writing for teaching, they do not advocate an approach that leaves students to their own devices. The data presented here indicates that there is a fine line between these two instructional demands. Graves (1991) observes that structuring the process is important to focus thinking, but he does not suggest a linear or step-by-step approach for doing so. Tremmel (1992) has argued that teaching methods

surrounding process writing have become "reified". He maintains that instructional processes translate this abstract theoretical construct into a rigid and linear set of steps.

Yet it must also be acknowledged that the instructional processes used by the two teachers in this study were affected by what they perceived to be their students' ability levels and needs. As both teachers were instructing an age group with which they were familiar, having worked with children of this age for a period of not less than four years, it is more than possible that their differing methods were influenced by their students. In addition to the age and perceived needs of the students, the teachers' levels of instructional and educational experiences must be considered to be influences in their planning and teaching.

Therefore, while established writers continue to reflect on their own writing processes, a gap still exists between their accounts and how writing should be taught in schools. What is appropriate for instruction? What data sources should we examine in an attempt to answer that question? This study has indicated the usefulness of observing the instructional processes currently in practice, while simultaneously asking students about their developing understanding of writing and its instruction.

One implication for teaching is that teachers with an interest in writing and its instruction should

collaboratively examine their own practices, in order to provide feedback and ideas to one another. Both teachers in the present study indicated the difficulty of documenting and examining classroom practice as individual teachers. They felt it was necessary to involve an observer in order to learn more about their own practices. Although this was not a collaborative research project, it was necessary for the teachers and the researcher to mutually agree on the importance of the research topic and ways to collect data. The researcher, then, must respect the individuality of each teacher in carrying out his or her instructional program, and provide feedback and information sensitively or as requested by the participants.

#### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This section outlines possible future research endeavors based on the findings from this study.

1. The first suggestion for future research is a call for studies that actively engage teachers and their students in discussions about writing. This would serve to access and account for students' developing notions of literacy. The effect of these discussions, as a method for teachers and researchers to access students' evident understanding of specific aspects of writing, would require still further study, particularly when studied with different ages and sizes of groups.

2. It became apparent in the course of this study that each teacher emphasized different types of writing during language arts instruction. Thomas focussed on expressive writing and Michael on transactional writing. It would be worthwhile to examine the same group of students' evident understanding of both these types of writing. This would remove the degree of variability present in this study in which two groups of students of different ages were observed. In addition, future studies should focus on case studies of teachers of varied experiences in teaching writing, from those who are experienced to those who are just beginning their instructional careers.

3. Future studies should also focus on a single aspect of process writing, such as the role of audience in writing for the goals and purposes of writing. Intervention techniques could be developed, refined, and studied in order to determine their effect on students' understanding.

4. Studies similar to this one that provide "a rich corpus of descriptive data on the teaching and learning of writing in schools" (Clark & Florio, p. 261) should continue, but not to the detriment of other methodologies. It appears useful, based on the findings of the present study, to study teacher actions and student processes simultaneously in order to gain insight into the nature of teacher-student transactions. The process, in other words, is as valuable to learning about writing and its instruction

as is this product. While this type of research provides valuable insight into what occurs in classrooms, studies that test instructional suggestions are also worthwhile.

5. This study has examined students' understanding of writing and its instruction during a specific period of the day reserved for language arts. Future studies need to include the writing experiences of students outside the language arts discipline, in order to contribute towards an understanding of writing across the curriculum.

6. If researchers are to close the gap between what is known about writing processes and ways to instruct writing, a focus on teaching methods is necessary. Case study research of competent teachers of writing, alongside studies that include student interviews, may provide insight into the importance of the context of writing and student learning.

7. There is little research available that documents the writing development of the same group of school-aged children over time. Valuable insights could be gained about the specific influences of instruction and developmental level through such longitudinal research.

8. In the area of teacher education research, instructors need to provide their pre-service students with opportunities to engage in the writing process. This would allow student teachers to experience for themselves this instructional approach. Furthermore, by discovering pre-

service teachers' own evident understanding of writing, a set of instructional competencies could be developed to help teachers teach writing.

To conclude, this study indicates that one's understanding of writing provides important and valuable information concerning the impact of instructional language. While this was an expected outcome, the data revealed specific aspects of individuals' evident understanding of writing that were far richer and more complex than was anticipated. It seems clear that students do construct knowledge for themselves and that a variety of factors influence that process. The results provide support for the observation that similar-aged children differ in how they process instructional language and in how they develop their skills in writing. When teachers access their students' perceptions about their programs, they are better able to offer effective and individual instruction. The teachers who participated in this study must be respected for their courage and generosity. It is through their efforts that instruction can be examined, analyzed, and changed. Finally, it may be anticipated that when teachers access their students' perceptions about their programs, those teachers may be better able to offer instruction suited to the needs and understanding of their students. That is, "Teaching can be the cutting edge for learning" (Calkins, 1983, p. 60).

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Data Collection								
June–August	October	November	December	January	February			
Conduct Pilot Study Refine Instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct Teacher Interviews (2)</li> <li>Begin informal classroom visits</li> <li>No recording of data</li> <li>Send home parent questionnaire</li> </ul>	← Classroom Observations for each class →			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use February to schedule any missed observation sessions.</li> <li>Conduct student interviews: Class 1: 6, Class 2: 6</li> </ul>			
		Week 1	2.0 hours	Week 1		5.5 hours	Week 1	7.0 hours
		Week 2	3.0 hours	Week 2		6.0 hours	Week 2	8.0 hours
		Week 3	4.0 hours				Week 3	9.0 hours
		Week 4	5.0 hours				Week 4	9.0 hours
Data Analysis								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pilot methodologies for accessing students' understandings of writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transcribe interview data</li> <li>Set up profiles for individual children and teachers</li> <li>Code/analyze parent questionnaires</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collect and copy children's writing</li> <li>Code field notes</li> <li>Transcribe audio- and video-tapes</li> <li>Review interview data with teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collect and copy children's writing</li> <li>Code field notes</li> <li>Transcribe audio- and video-tapes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collect and copy children's writing</li> <li>Code field notes</li> <li>Transcribe audio- and video-tapes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transcribe student interview data</li> <li>Begin formal analysis</li> </ul>			

Study will result in the following sources of data:

- |  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 1) 2 hours of teacher interviews   | 4) 12 parent questionnaires      |
| 2) 12 hours of student interviews  | 5) Samples of children's writing |
| 3) 107 hours of classroom observation (58.5 hours per class)<br>— field notes and transcriptions of instructional language |                                  |

## APPENDIX B

## SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT

Nov. 12, 91  
Topic: Poetry  
Thomas' class

- T. Put your hand up high if you listen to a lot of music. (students raise hands) Good. Thank you . . . . How many people like to sing? (students raise hands) . . . Thank you . . . Thank you. C\_\_\_\_, could you read your definition again for this class?
- S. I think poetry is a beautiful way to express feelings.
- T. OK (pause) I'm going to ask you to think about that and then I'm going to ask you another question, just related right now, what is . . . artwork, what is art?
- S. Should we write this down?
- T. No, I want you to think about it. If you, J\_\_\_\_, what do you think art is?
- S. Just a picture.
- T. Just a picture. OK, and what do you think? Yes, S\_\_\_\_?
- S. Using your imagination.
- T. Yes?
- S. Putting down a picture and painting it \_\_\_\_\_.
- T. L\_\_\_\_?
- L. Expressing like the thing that you might like or not like.
- T. (pause) A\_\_\_\_, M\_\_\_\_.
- S. I have two things. One is something I don't like and two is poetry.
- T. (pause, smiles) K\_\_\_\_?
- S. Something that people can do. (laughter)
- T. (pauses) Something like blowing your nose. Something people can do. (laughter) Right, OK. Yes, A\_\_\_\_? Is it silly or is it serious?

- S. You get some paint and do anything.
- T. You get some paint and do anything. Yes?
- S. Life.
- T. Art is life. Yes, J\_\_\_\_?
- S. A way you express your feelings.
- T. A way you express your feelings. Yes?
- S. A way to communicate to other people who don't know your language.
- T. (repeats student's response) K\_\_\_\_, will you write that down on that piece of paper, please, and put it somewhere so we can return to that many years from now. Like, maybe next week. (laughter) No, I like that. That's going to be worth some thoughts. Yes sir.
- S. Art can be a lot of things, like there can be the art of bragging, there can be the art m\_\_\_\_\_, the art of making clothing.
- T. OK, D\_\_\_\_, I think a couple of people aren't listening but what you're saying is very, very important so, S\_\_\_\_, would you listen to D\_\_\_\_ please. S\_\_\_\_, A\_\_\_\_. Go ahead.
- D. Almost everything is an art that \_\_\_\_\_.  
Art is in everything.
- T. L\_\_\_\_? Good, D\_\_\_\_\_.
- S. Art is creation and some \_\_\_\_\_
- T. OK. Yes?
- S. Art explains things words cannot.
- T. (pause) Put that up on the board, would you please. Yes?
- S. Describing words.
- T. Describing words. Art is describing words. Yes?
- S. Art describes you.
- T. Art describes yourself. Yes?

- S. Art, instead of writing down words, you make pictures that describe words \_\_\_\_\_.
- T. OK, I think we'll go back to what D\_\_\_\_\_ said . . . Is . . . is a person who can play a musical instrument, let's say a piano, beautifully, are they an artist?
- S. Yes. (several students indicate this)
- T. OK. I think all of you agree a painter is an artist. Is a person who's a dancer, do we call them good artists? (students say yes) What about a person who's a writer, a really, really good writer, do we say they're very good at their art?
- S. Yeah.
- T. Good. (pause) Is poetry an art?
- S. Yes. (several say this together)
- T. Is writing poetry an art?
- S. Yes. (several say this together)
- T. OK. Now, how about this one? Is reading poetry an art?
- S. No, Yes. (several students answer both ways)
- T. OK. (pause) What I'm going to do today is I'm going to, what I'm going to do frequently for you, is I'm going to give you a title, and I know we had some writing earlier this morning, but I want you to do this. (speaks quickly) I'm going to give you a title and I want you to write a poem. And I'm not going to tell you what it's supposed to look like. I'm not going to tell you how to do it. I'm not going to tell you anything about it. I just want to see what you can do as far as writing a poem.

**APPENDIX C****STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

(Students bring their writing folders, or writing in progress to the interview.)

"As you know, I'm studying the kinds of writing students do in school. I'd like to find out what makes writing easy or difficult, fun or not fun, so I can help teachers teach writing to students like you. Today, I'm going to ask you some questions about your own writing. Also, I'm going to tape what we say and then write it down later. Is that okay? I'd like to make sure you know this is not a test. There are no wrong answers. I only want to find out what you think about writing."

**Attitudes Toward Writing**

1. It looks like you've written a number of pieces here. Can you tell me about them? What were the directions? What were you asked to do?
2.
  - a) Do you like to write? What's your favorite type of writing to do?
  - b) Is writing hard? What makes it hard?
  - c) Is writing easy? What makes it easy?
  - d) What do you write in free time?
  - e) Is there anyone you share your writing with?
  - f) Do you like it if your teacher asks to read your work aloud?

**Understanding of Writing**

3.
  - a) Would you like to read me something you've written? (If the child declines, ask if he/she would choose a sample of writing in progress.)
  - b) Are you happy with this piece? Why or why not?
  - c) What makes this piece of writing good? (Not good?)

- d) Where did you get the idea to write this piece?
- e) What was the reason for doing this piece?
- 4. Think of someone you know who is a good writer. What does he/she do to be a good writer?
- 5. Do you ever do any writing at home? If so, what kinds of things do you write? Do you write differently at home than at school?
- 6. If something happened and you couldn't write any more, would it make any difference? What wouldn't you be able to do if you couldn't write?

#### Perceptions of Teacher's Expectations

- 7. a) What does your teacher say you need to do to be a good writer? (Probe if necessary: Why does your teacher tell you to do that?) Do you read your teacher's comments? What do you do about them? Do they help you become a better writer? How?
- b) When you had a conference with the teacher (or another student) about this piece, what advice/help were you given?
- 8. Why do you think your teacher asked you to write this piece?
- 9. What are you learning about writing this year that is different (new) from what you learned last year?
- 10. Are you a better writer this year than you were last year? How do you know?
- 11. What does your teacher do to help you become a better writer? Does it help when he . . . ? What does your teacher want you to do when you are stuck in your writing?

#### Perceptions of My Expectations

- 12. What do you think I've learned about writing from talking with you?

## APPENDIX D

## TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Background Information

1. Number of years of teaching experience? Grade levels? Subjects?
2. When did you decide to become a teacher and why?
3. In your university program, did you receive instruction in the teaching of writing? If so, please describe.

Was there anything you found particularly valuable in your studies about teaching writing? Was there anything lacking?

4. Given time and opportunity, do you engage in writing for pleasure (either now or in the past)?

Do you engage in writing that is job-related?

Do you ever share your own writing with your students?

The Writing Program

5. If you were asked to characterize your writing program to another teacher, what would you say? What would you emphasize?
6. What are your chief goals in helping children to write? What do you want your children to take away with them at the end of the year concerning their writing? Concerning purpose/goals in writing? Specify.
7. What kind of skills do you work on in writing?  
  
What kinds of attitudes do you hope they will have about writing when they leave your classroom?
8. What do you do to help children find topics to write about?
9. Which writing activities have proven successful in the past? Why?  
  
Least successful? Why?  
  
Which have you abandoned? Why?

How do you think these have been perceived by the children?

What was the role of purpose in these activities?

10. Think of a child who has impressed you as being a good writer. How would you describe him/her and the writing he/she did?
11. How would you set up a new writing task for your students?
12. How would you describe the school's context in reference to writing?

### Children's Perceptions of Writing

13. How did you become interested in the topic of student perceptions, meaning their attitudes, understandings, interpretations of writing?
14. When a new class arrives in September, do you get a sense of how they feel about writing and why?

Do you do anything to assess student perceptions at various times throughout the school year?

Do you sense that perceptions change over the course of the year?

APPENDIX E  
PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

January 10, 1992

Dear Parents,

As you know, I am currently conducting a research study of children's perceptions of the writing they do in school as part of my Ph.D. program at the University of Victoria. I am requesting that you fill out the accompanying questionnaire which is designed to gain information about your child's perceptions of writing, but not handwriting as such.

Please note that all the information collected will be kept strictly confidential. Thank you very much for your continued support throughout this study. It is a pleasure working in this classroom.

Sincerely,

Robin Bright

Parent Questionnaire

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

This questionnaire is designed to gain information concerning your child's perceptions of the writing process. Specifically, it is concerned with the child's view of writing text and not handwriting as such.

1. At what age did your child show an interest in printing or drawing? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you kept any of these early efforts?  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. How much interest did your child show in printing or drawing before coming to school?

A lot

Somewhat

Not at all

3. How does your child feel about the writing she/he does in school?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you display the writing that comes from school? If so, how?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you have any concerns about your child's writing development?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Does your child show any interest in writing outside of school? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, what kinds of writing does your child do outside of school?

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6. Where does your child usually write? (kitchen table, playroom, etc.)

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7. Do you deliberately involve your child in any writing activities at home? (shopping list, letters to grandparents, etc.) Please describe.

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8. Does your child like to draw? \_\_\_\_\_  
If so, what?

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9. Please describe your child's interests, hobbies or sports.

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10. Please describe any writing that you or other adults do at home that your child might see you doing.

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11. Do you think your child sees him/herself as a successful writer?

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12. Does your child enjoy reading? \_\_\_\_\_

Being read to? \_\_\_\_\_

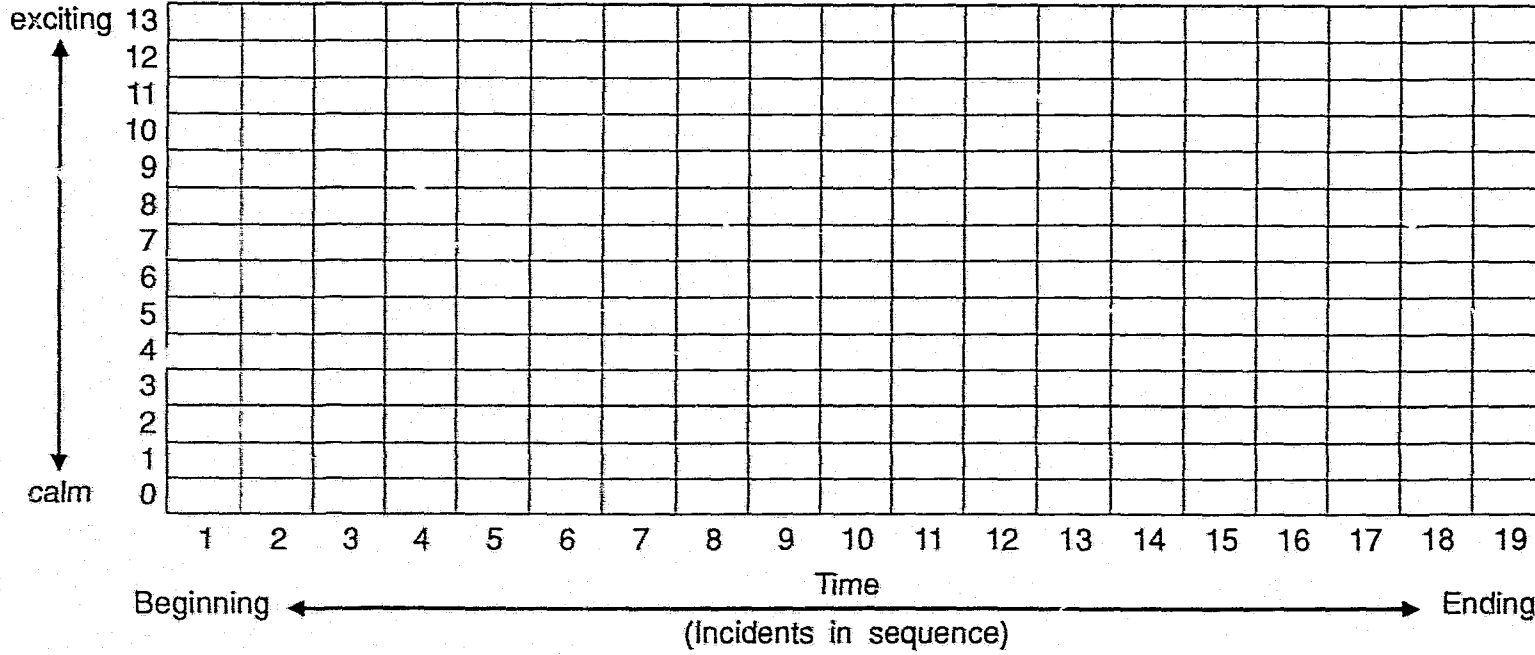
Where does your child get books to read? (e.g., library, purchase, school, older siblings)j

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Form completed by: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_



PLOT PROFILE WORKSHEET

APPENDIX F

ENTERED NOV 15 1991

APPENDIX G  
REVISE/EDIT WORKSHEET

It turned out too be a one-eyed creature with an large smiling mouth and green fuzzy fir all over it's body. it couldn't talk but pointed to a large dark dangerous cloud ahead of us before I new it we were inside rain pelted hour faces and lightning flashed to close for comfort. The wind buffeted the carpet and i felt myself slipping a powerful gust tore my hands lose and . . .