An Analysis of the British Columbia Language Arts English Curriculum: Perspectives on Literacy

by

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ABSTRACT

Using resistant reading as a vehicle, this study examines the newly articulated British Columbian Language Arts English curriculum documents, specifically Curriculum Guide, Position Statements, The Research Base: Research about Teaching and Learning, and Learning Through Reading: Teaching Strategies Resource Book. By placing the Language Arts English curriculum documents within a specific intertextual framework constructed from related curricular documents and contemporary investigations into literacy and curriculum, the author shows how the curriculum documents subvert their most important intended goals. Ultimately, the curriculum documents subvert their important intended goals, making the attainment of these goals improbable and perhaps impossible, by failing to incorporate adequately and consistently contemporary conceptions of literacy.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Framework of the study

In 1990, the British Columbia Ministry of Education published the newly conceived Language Arts English curriculum documents. These documents, despite the fact that they are not yet the official Language Arts English curriculum for British Columbian schools, reflect the direction in which British Columbian schools are headed. The Language Arts English primary to graduation program consists of four core documents: Curriculum Guide, Position Statements, The Research Base: Research about Teaching and Learning, and Learning Through Reading: Teaching Strategies Resource Book. Taken as a whole, the implicit purpose of these texts is twofold. First, the texts are to fulfil, within a Language Arts English framework, the mission statement for British Columbian schools: "The purpose of the British Columbian school system is to enable learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.14). Second, these texts are to serve as "practical working document[s]" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.10) for persons interested in understanding and perhaps implementing in the classroom the newly conceived

ministry-approved Language Arts English curriculum.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this investigation is to construct an understanding of how the newly articulated Language Arts English curriculum documents subvert their intended aims. That is, this inquiry will show how components of the curriculum documents undermine important program goals articulated by the documents themselves, making the attainment of these goals improbable, perhaps impossible. From the outset of this investigation, I adopted the deconstructive belief that all texts subvert themselves.

An understanding of how the aims of the curriculum documents are subverted is developed through the vehicle of resistant reading, a process, which in some ways, relies on the attitudes, intentions, and processes of deconstructive literary criticism. The salient points of resistant reading, for the purposes of this study, are as follows. Resistant reading, or reading against the grain, permits the reader to adopt a particular stance which does not view the text as an inviolable whole with its meaning conspicuously apparent at the surface. In taking this stance, the resistant reader deliberately constructs a subtext--"what [the text] does not say, and *how* it does not say it" by carefully searching for "certain 'symptomatic' points of

ambiguity, evasion or overemphasis in the text itself" (original emphasis; Eagleton, 1983, pp.178-179). By actively writing what the text has not stated overtly, the reader is behaving in a resistant manner, or reading against the intended grain of the text. By contrasting the text with the reader-constructed subtext, the reader is able to 'deconstruct' the intended or overt meanings of the text. The idea of deconstructing a text has nothing to do with the term destruct. Rather, as Norris suggests, to "'deconstruct' a text is to draw out conflicting logics of sense and implication" (Norris & Benjamin, 1988, p.7) with the intention of showing, in this particular study, how the conflicting subtext is the most prominent message of the text. It must be emphasized that this study is borrowing a limited number of the attitudes, intentions, and processes of deconstructive literary criticism, as is explained below.

As well as being informed by deconstructive literary criticism, this particular resistant reading process is informed by contemporary research into literacy. The reading against the grain performed for this investigation relies on a carefully constructed definition of literacy to sensitize the resistant reader to "points of ambiguity, evasion or overemphasis" (Eagleton, 1983, p.178). This sort of reliance on external criteria is not generally the habit in deconstructionist textual close reading (It should be

noted that the criteria are not entirely external to the curriculum documents: frameworks for literacy proposed by this investigation and by the curriculum documents in some ways overlap). By using a set of criteria at least partially external to the curriculum texts to perform the resistant reading, I am, to a degree, abandoning pure deconstructionist theory. In other words, the deconstructionist paradigm is not the sole tool in this critical analysis of the curriculum documents: it is placed on an equal footing with a pre-established framework for literacy.

Within a deconstructionist paradigm, all texts are believed to subvert themselves. Although deconstructive criticism characterizes all texts as self-subversive, a resistant reading of the curriculum documents is not simply an academic--in the pejorative sense of the term--exercise. To the contrary, performing a resistant reading in order to understand how the Language Arts English curriculum documents subvert their intended aims is educationally significant for three principal reasons.

First, the Language Arts English curriculum documents determine that literate students will respond "thoughtfully and critically to language produced by others in speech, print, media, for factual or imaginative communication" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.15). Presumably, the literate

teacher would be expected to behave in the same manner and, presumably, the curriculum documents are not exempt from the thoughtful and critical scrutiny of literate persons. To that end, a resistant reading of the curriculum documents may stand, both conceptually and personally, as a model of the type of literate behaviour in which teachers should be engaging and in which they should be encouraging their students to engage.

Second, under the influence of Tylerian and other similar theories of curriculum, schooling has long been viewed as a technical, even scientific matter (Wood, 1988). Furthermore, the vast majority of educational research into the areas typically associated with Language Arts English--notably reading and writing--has, over the past few decades, been within a psychological framework. Given this predominantly technical/scientific/psychological context, Language Arts English teachers have seldom been encouraged to view the larger picture of education. That is, teachers have often cast their eyes upon the little bits that make up schooling--whether or not grade ten students studying <u>To Kill a Mockingbird</u> should be explicitly taught vocabulary, for example--but teachers have seldom been asked to view a larger educational picture and rigorously question, let us say, the purpose of the whole concept of a grade ten level.

Contemporary research in literacy and curriculum calls,

both implicitly and explicitly, for teachers to become more active in the critical examination of a larger picture of education (Apple, 1990; Cornbleth, 1990; Galtung, 1981; Grundy, 1987; Kretovics, 1985; Wells, 1987). Teachers must look beyond the technical rationality, beyond the purely psychological, beyond the confinements of a single classroom, and begin considering the social, the political, the ideological.

This investigator believes that resistant reading--a process which Eagleton notes is "an ultimately political practice" (1983, p.148)--is an apt tool for an investigation into this larger picture. Moreover, a belief in the appropriateness of the resistant reading process is upheld further by the fact that this particular reading against the grain is informed by current investigations into literacy which emphasise the social, political, and ideological facets of literacy. To perform a resistant reading which is informed by contemporary investigations into not only the personal and pedagogical, but also the social, political, and ideological implications of literacy, is to explore wide parameters of Language Arts English education.

The third educational significance of this investigation stems from the fact that research has shown that official curriculum documents, especially those documents conceived within the traditional top-down,

technical/scientific view of curriculum, often have little to do with lived classroom curricula, that is, with the lived interaction of the participants in a particular classroom setting (Cornbleth, 1990, pp.15,89). The discrepant trend alluded to by Cornbleth is important given that the creation of the British Columbia Language Arts English curriculum documents ascribed in many ways to the top-down, technical/scientific paradigm (This assertion is discussed more thoroughly in Chapter Four, Findings of the Study). The reasons for the discrepancy between curriculum documents and lived curricula appear to be many; however, Cornbleth does not identify official curriculum documents which subvert their own program goals as one of these reasons. If this study can prove that a *strong* subversive relationship exists among official Language Arts English curriculum components, another possible cause for this discrepant trend between official and lived curricula might be approached.

Given these three possible consequences, endeavouring to construct the subversive subtext of the Language Arts English curriculum documents appears to be a significant task, one which may have implications for all individuals with an interest in British Columbian education.

Definition of terms

Curriculum (plural - curricula) is the lived interaction of the participants in a particular classroom setting (Cornbleth, 1990; Grundy, 1987).

Curriculum documents are the texts which serve to state the official (i.e. government or district approved) aims, philosophy, rationale, resources, and evaluation methods for a particular subject area which teachers are required to adopt or adapt within their classrooms (Grundy, 1987).

Intertextuality may be thought of as the infinite relationships among all textual discourse. Intertextuality posits the suggestion that "those boundaries that mark off one text from another" (Norris, 1982, p.114) do not exist other than as tentative heuristic constructions. This study has framed a fairly precise network, in which intertextuality refers only to the relationships among those texts explicitly named.

Literacy will be defined more completely in the literature review; however, the following points may act as signposts for the definition this investigation is using. Literacy acts are deeply contextualized and therefore literacy is comprised of a multiple rather than unitary set of skills and behaviours; reading and writing are skills necessary to literacy, but literate behaviours should be the focus of teacher instruction; it is necessary to allow

learners to construct their own meanings, rather than be filled up with predetermined, sequential skills and facts; oracy plays an extremely important role in the acquisition of literacy; literacy itself is not automatically empowering, either socially or cognitively, but, rather, the contexts in which literacy is acquired and used direct the consequences of literacy.

Literacy behaviours include literacy skills; however the term "literacy behaviours" is meant to indicate a more comprehensive view of literacy which includes but is not limited to the ability and willingness to question, reflect, persist, act on, think critically, and appreciate the beauty and power of language. The term literacy behaviours is used to bring attention to often overlooked attitudes and beliefs, such as a sense of confidence and efficacy, necessary to literacy. Literacy behaviours, therefore, is synonymous with this investigation's definition of literacy.

Literacy skills refer most specifically to the acts of encoding and decoding.

Resistant reading, in the context of this study, may be thought of as a reading which deliberately considers intertextuality and intentionally writes a subtext as "an attempt to dismantle the logic by which a particular system of thought, and behind that a whole system of political structures and social institutions, maintains its force"

(Eagleton, 1983, p.148). Resistant reading relies in many ways on the philosophies and practices of deconstructive literary criticism (Culler, 1982; Norris, 1982; Norris & Benjamin, 1988); however, the attitudes and practices of deconstructive criticism which are being used in this investigation could be justly characterized as diluted. Most specifically, the resistant reading performed in this investigation relies on a set of criteria (a pre-constructed framework for literacy) which is at least in part external to the documents being deconstructed. By doing so, this investigation has made the preconstructed framework for literacy an integral part of the resistant reading; at times, the framework for literacy even usurps resistant reading practices and is used in isolation as a tool of criticism. Although it does allow the reader to adopt a particular and perhaps atypical stance, resistant reading is mediated in the same way as any other kind of understanding, and is therefore in no way inherently more biased.

Subtext is a construction of the reader who is sensitive to "'symptomatic' points of ambiguity, evasion or overemphasis" (Eagleton, 1983, p.178) in the text. In this particular study, it may be helpful to think of the subtext as something analogous to the implicit official curriculum.

Research questions

1. Are the curriculum documents faithful to the most crucial aspects of contemporary investigations into literacy?

2. Does the implied role of the student subvert the stated aims of the curriculum documents?

3. Does the implied role of the teacher subvert the stated aims of the curriculum documents?

4. Do the discrete components of the curriculum documents subvert each other?

5. Are the so-called "new" aspects of the curriculum documents characterized correctly?

Limitations of the study

1. This investigation will focus on the late intermediate and graduation components of the curriculum documents in spite of the fact that the creators of these documents have purposely integrated a primary to graduation program. Although this study will not entirely overlook the primary component, it will ignore some of the primary program information which has been linked with the intermediate and graduation Language Arts English programs.

2. The parameters of intertextuality in this study are in some ways arbitrary. That is, arguments could be made for and against the inclusion of, as an example, Year 2000:

A Framework for Learning within the parameters of intertextuality; however, it must be remembered that parameters of intertextuality cannot be avoided for the purposes of any study. Justification for the parameters of intertextuality framed for this study can be found in Chapter Three, Methodology.

3. This investigation will intentionally fail to report the aspects of the curriculum documents which the author finds positive, other than in the context of how these positive features are subverted by components of the subtext.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Contemporary explorations into the meaning of literacy have problematized earlier, rather narrow notions of literacy. In scrutinizing the metaphors by which literacy has been understood, scholars have both implicitly and explicitly addressed the ways in which educators have chosen to teach literacy. It is the initial premise of this investigation that new conceptions of literacy speak clearly to the construction of Language Arts English curriculum documents. In consequence, this review of the literature will draw lines to include beneficial ways of thinking about literacy, and to exclude more traditional ways of thinking which I consider educationally counter-productive.

One of the most prevalent ways of interpreting literacy is as a unitary set of skills placed along a continuum. In this way of thinking, one is either more or less literate, depending upon where one falls on the continuum. If one falls below a certain, arbitrary level, one is no longer less literate, but becomes illiterate. Chall argues for this understanding of literacy: "I think it is useful to see the different definitions of literacy on a continuum of literacy, from least to most" (1990, p.56).

Perhaps the strongest reinforcers of the literacy-on-a-

continuum metaphor are the standardized reading achievement test, and, more importantly for this investigation, the provincial graduation examination. The following quotation is a continuation of Chall's statement above; it expresses one outlook which supports standardized testing:

> This kind of continuum is essentially what the developers of standardized reading achievement tests and the developers of readability measures have done. Standardized reading tests place readers on a developmental scale of reading skills and increasing linguistic and cognitive abilities. Readability formulas do the same for texts....The points or bands can be converted into qualitative categories. (1990, p.56)

Or, in the case of provincial graduation exams, the "points or bands" are converted into letter grades.

Widespread acceptance of standardized reading achievement tests and provincial graduation examinations indicates an unproductive perception of literacy held by the public and educators alike: that literacy is a unitary set of skills--namely those skills which are traditionally valued in a school setting--and therefore literacy is school literacy. By relying on these assumptions, Chall can propose "three broad adult literacy levels" which correspond to reading grade levels: (a) one below functional literacy,

(b) functional literacy, and (c) advanced reading (1990, pp.57-58). The advanced reading stage encompasses ninth to twelfth grade reading levels, but, ultimately, Chall maintains that a "twelfth grade reading level...is needed in a high tech world" (1990, p.55). Chall's definition of the literate person states explicitly the philosophy implicit in the use of provincial graduation examinations.

Perceiving literacy as a singular entity measurable on a continuum of less to more presents a number of problems. As Gee (1988) points out, reading and writing are transitive verbs; one must be reading or writing something, presumably for some purpose. That all literacy acts are deeply contextualized is a point overlooked by the literacy-on-a-continuum metaphor. More important than the categorizing of people--as "functional literates" or "advanced readers", as "A" or "C"--on tests which, at best, give only an indication of traditional school literacy and one's ability to read and write tests, is the recognition that all literacy acts are performed by different people in different situations in different ways for different reasons. The continuum metaphor, and the practices which both derive from it and continue to support it, seem to suggest that some sort of neutrality, non-contextuality, and objectivity surround literacy acts. This is simply untrue.

Another problem with perceiving literacy as a unitary

ability is the notion of transferability. If literacy is viewed as school literacy, as outlined above, then one must assume that literacy skills and behaviours are completely transferable. That is, one who is considered literate--with, let us say, a passing grade on a provincial exam--would be competent in all literacy acts. According to Mikulecky (1990), this is a misconception: "[l]iteracy processes vary widely to reflect the pluralism of social contexts in which literacy is used. Transfer of literacy abilities is severely limited by differences in format, social support networks, and required background information as one moves from context to context" (p.25).

Conversely, Sticht argues that "correlation among academic and job-related, functional literacy tests have been found above .75 for various tests" (1990, p.49). It must be noted though, that Sticht is relying on data from test situations, and one could argue that the correlation stems from the context of testing, rather than high transferability between so-called academic and functional literacy skills. Sticht is also choosing to ignore the variable of outside school literacy experiences, which could greatly influence one's ability to write both types of tests. And, finally, the tests to which Sticht refers may themselves lack validity.

I argue, then, that thinking of literacy as unitary and

measurable on a generic continuum may be more harmful than helpful. I am not denying that the role of the educator is to promote growth; I am urging the recognition that the growth of individuals is not linear, and often not predictable. In choosing to embrace the literacy-on-a-continuum metaphor, educators often confuse a theoretical hierarchy with the processes in which individuals actually learn (Wells, 1990).

A second traditional and still prevalent manner of thinking about literacy defines it as the ability to read and write. The first question one might ask is "read and write what?" As argued above, literacy acts are always contextualized. Not only must one be reading or writing something, for some purpose, but one must also feel the need to read or write, as well as believe that one has the authority to do so. It is therefore necessary to look beyond what has commonly been perceived as the foundation of literacy--reading and writing skills--and look to the attitudes and behaviours which must accompany reading and writing skills. Wells (1987, 1990) offers an inclusive model of literacy which features the performative mode of engaging with text as a foundation for the other four modes in his revised 1990 model. The performative mode focuses on the "encoding/decoding relationship between meaning and its physical representations, and the conventions that govern

it" (1990, p.372). More importantly, however, Wells asserts that the "epistemic" level, which includes the performative level, most adequately answers the question "What is literacy?" (1987, p.111). The epistemic level entails a way of thinking about print, one which involves "creativity, exploration, and critical evaluation" (1987, p.110). Wells does not suggest that translating his theoretical model into pedagogical practice means teaching the "basic" skills--the performative mode--before moving to the more complex literacy behaviours. Rather, he emphatically states that "[t]he five modes of engaging with text proposed here should NOT be construed as constituting a developmental sequence. Rather, they should be seen as forming a repertoire of complementary approaches, all of which should be given deliberate attention at every stage of literacy development" (original emphasis; Wells, 1990, p.377).

To explore the relationship between the skills of reading and writing applied in any particular situation, and the kinds of thinking that accompany the reading and writing, one must examine how schools attempt to provide literacy instruction. Fagan (1989) emphasizes the difference between literacy skills and literacy behaviours, and argues, as does Wells (1987, 1990), that, rather than being mutually exclusive, behaviours include skills (Fagan, 1989, p.38). However, schools have tended to focus on

teaching skills and to ignore behaviours, indulging in what Wells terms "the pedagogical fallacy that equates the developmental sequence of learning with the abstract hierarchy of skills used to organize instruction" (1990, p.377). If educators are interested in avoiding a too-narrow definition of literacy, it is the behaviours which should receive instructional focus. Literate behaviour implies that learners perceive themselves as literates, people who are capable of and entitled to think about print critically, creatively, and independently. Many other scholars argue this same point (Greene, 1982; Kretovics, 1985; Willinsky, 1990b), but perhaps the most widely known advocate of this perception of literacy is Paulo Freire.

Under the heading "The Adult Literacy Process as an Act of Knowing" (1970), Freire argues that "[i]f learning to read and write is to constitute an act of knowing, the learners must assume *from the beginning* the role of creative subjects. It is not a matter of memorizing and repeating given syllables, words, and phrases, but rather of reflecting critically on the process of reading and writing itself, and on the profound significance of language" (my emphasis; 1970, p.369).

Each of the scholars noted above argues that many classroom literacy instructional practices have relied on a simplistic definition of literacy, or have confused actual

ways of learning with abstract organizational hierarchies. In either case, this has been to the detriment of learning literacy behaviours. Part of this problem may stem from the widespread acceptance of "functional literacy" as an educational goal. Functional literacy, generally considered the skills one needs "to get by" in everyday life (whatever that means) in a literate society, focuses on basic (again, whatever that means) skills in reading and writing (Willinsky, 1990a). The problem with this type of approach is circular. Those people we most frequently target in our schools as needing functional literacy to get by--generally people marginalized by socioeconomic status, culture, race, or gender--remain marginalized even with, and perhaps partially because of, these so-called basic skills.

A Canadian example of this phenomenon can be found in the article "Johnny came back to school but still can't read" (1989). The authors, Pritchard and Yee, bewail the "tragic phenomenon of adult illiteracy" while at the same time targeting "functional literacy" as an appropriate goal for both returning adult students as well as, presumably, those students involved in public education. Consider these statements:

> "Experience within our own program would strongly suggest that the general failure to produce a flood of functionally literate graduates is not so much due to

> misguided instructional strategies, or the quality of staff or programs, as it is to the *inherent nature of the student himself or herself*" or "The potential for attaining functional literacy holds forth some promise that *the student may one day become a participating and contributing member of society*" (my emphasis; 1989, pp.46-48).

Statements such as these--and "Johnny came back to school but still can't read" is full of them--clearly imply a belief system which further marginalizes the person targeted for the "functional literacy" program, the person who, in the words of Pritchard and Yee, has been "socio-economically deprived." The overarching message given to the reader, and, one would assume, to the participants within the literacy programs that Pritchard and Yee oversee, is double-edged. On one side, functional literacy programs are failing abysmally, and, on the other side, the problem lies not within the societal structures, or the school, or the literacy program itself, but solely within the student and the student's family. Not once do Pritchard and Yee question the appropriateness or implications of functional literacy programs.

That Pritchard and Yee have adopted a "blame the victim" philosophy which seems to blind them to all other possibilities seems indecorous, to say the least, in

educators. More significantly, however, this attitude overlooks much of the current research into the social aspects of literacy and schooling, and entirely disregards the serious questions which have been levelled at the desirability of functional literacy as an educational goal.

Kretovics (1985) takes issue with the underpinnings of beliefs such as those of Pritchard and Yee. Kretovics suggests that the only way schooling might address some prevailing social inequalities is to replace our current,

> mainstream educational theory's emphasis on functional literacy [with] a focus on critical literacy. Within this more critical perspective the notion of literacy is politicized and points to a quality of human consciousness as well as mastery of basic skills. As such, critical literacy takes seriously the form and content of knowledge as well as the social practices through which one gains access to the skills and tools of critical self- and social empowerment. (1985, p.56)

If, then, the goal of education is beyond perpetuating present inequalities, it seems that functional literacy is not enough; indeed, targeting students for functional literacy instruction may serve to promote current social injustices.

Smith (1985) criticizes another facet of the

unfortunately prevailing narrow view of literacy which he argues "has worked directly against the interests of literacy" (p.196). The metaphor which Smith takes to task is that of literacy as the shunting of information. Smith argues that schools, just as they have focused on the skills of literacy, have also concentrated on simply the information-transmission function of literacy acts. In our efforts to create functional literates, we have withheld the possibility of our students constructing their own meanings, or, as Smith says, "creating worlds." Langer (1987) makes the same argument as Smith, that a narrow definition of literacy has prevented schools from "recognizing that literacy is also a way of thinking and doing" (p.10). Langer maintains that certain common practices in our schools have hampered the effective implementation of a wider definition of literacy:

> [Teachers] who were committed to using writing as a way to help their students think and learn, had great difficulty carrying out these good intentions. We found that their good intentions were undercut by their deeply rooted views of their role as transmitter of knowledge--and with it their own overarching concern with diagnosing what their students need to learn, teaching the missing information, and testing to evaluate the

> success of that teaching. (1987, p.10)

Wells also perceives a problem in literacy instruction in our classrooms at all levels of public education which stems from the metaphor of literacy as shunting of information:

> there is sufficient evidence from classroom research to suggest that, despite the impressive statements of aims to be found in policy statements, the transmission-oriented curriculum that actually operates in many classrooms--at all levels of education--has the effect of constraining both the range of text types that are given explicit attention and the opportunities to engage with texts in any ways that encourage those characteristics of critical and constructive thinking that I have called epistemic. (1990, p.377)

Wells' argument points not only to the type of material we choose to facilitate instruction, but also to how we use that material.

Another misconception of literacy has become known as "the great divide theory." It has been labelled as such because some people have viewed oracy and literacy as two entirely different language behaviours, producing entirely different cognitive abilities and behaviours. Eric Havelock (1982) and Jack Goody (1968) have perhaps been the most

prominent in promoting this way of thinking, but scholars in the education field also argue the same premise (Olson, 1977); as well, many classroom practices reflect an implicit belief in the great divide theory. The attention that is given to oracy in the classroom is generally token. Educators, especially those at the secondary level, see listening, reading, and sometimes writing as the only ways of learning, and student talk is generally viewed as disruptive. Most scholars of literacy now, however, argue that it is more helpful and accurate to think of oral and literate behaviours as sharing many of the same characteristics. Willinsky persuasively argues "the continuing importance of oral practices for the promotion of intellectual activities which are centred on texts" (1987, p.147). And outside the education field, Brian Street has problematized the assumptions, both implicit and explicit, made by scholars and educators alike, that,

> "literacy affects cognitive processes in some of the following ways: it facilitates 'empathy', 'abstract context-free thought', 'rationality', 'critical thought', 'post-operative thought' (in Piaget's usage), 'detachment', and the kinds of logical processes exemplified by syllogisms, formal language, elaborated code, etc" (1984, p.2).

Street demonstrates the contextuality of literacy

instruction and behaviours in order to show how scholars (and educators) have often confused the effects of literacy with the effects of certain kinds of schooling. Moreover, Street shows how many literacy researchers have failed to recognize so-called literate qualities in people from oral cultures.

Street's argument is not that certain literacy behaviours, learned and practised within certain contexts, do not change the way people think about things. (In fact, this is the point of his argument: The ways in which certain researchers have learned and practised literacy behaviours have prevented them from seeing a different way of thinking about literacy.) Rather, he asserts that literacy is never a neutral technology which automatically changes cognitive processes. How individuals acquire literacy, and how they choose and/or are allowed to use literacy are the significant factors. This final point is of immense importance. By viewing literacy and oracy as two entirely different behaviours, educators have been deluded into believing that any sort of literacy skills will automatically empower an individual. Our mistakenly placed hope in what Street calls the autonomous model of literacy has led to unsound pedagogical decisions and practices.

If, then, literacy of itself is not capable of changing individuals cognitively, we might well be suspicious of the

claims made for literacy as a social equalizer of individuals. This misconception has been alluded to above, in the discussion of functional literacy, but deserves further attention. Scholars, educators, and the public alike often view literacy as some sort of mandatory prerequisite for positive contribution to society. Therefore, if someone is illiterate (however this is defined) in a literate society, it follows that this citizen is greatly at risk, and is possibly a risk to society. Consider Chall's comment:

> free public education through twelfth grade...has achieved its purpose [literacy] for many, [but] it has done badly by others--the poor, ethnic minorities, bilinguals (particularly Hispanics), and those with learning disabilities. The early school dropouts come mainly from these groups. Their literacy problems are manifested early, and their difficulties accumulate and result in early school leaving, and in such social problems as delinquency, drug addiction, teenage pregnancy, and unemployment. (1990, p.55)

Chall's view of literacy as a panacea for the undeniable social ills she lists greatly overestimates the power of literacy, especially as she has conceived of it, and underestimates social forces such as discrimination,

poverty, unemployment, racism, and the distribution of power. It is difficult to believe that an "advanced reading level," as measured on an ethnocentric standardized test, is going to eliminate (rather than promote) discrimination against Hispanics in the United States or Native people in Canada. It is equally difficult to believe that an "advanced reading level" is going to create jobs for everyone. Harvey Graff has done a great deal of research to expose what he calls the literacy myth. He notes:

> [t]raditional wisdom, modern sociology and educational theory, the rhetoric of modernization as well as of nineteenth century school promoters...all sing out the glorious relations of education to success. Not surprisingly, not all the evidence, past or present, lends credence to this view...the relationship of education/literacy to work, occupation, and mobility is an imprecise one, complex and often contradictory. (1987, p.67)

Graff's assertions point to the absolute need for teachers and scholars to consider literacy and education beyond the confines of the school walls and investigate the relationships among literacy, education, and social factors such as racism, sexism, poverty, unemployment, and the distribution of power.

Rather than promoting equality, literacy education

practices such as the standardized reading test have acted more as effective gate-keepers. Ferdman (1990) acknowledges that in theory education's primary role is to develop literate individuals in order to allow "equal opportunity" for all, but in practice we fall short of this aim. Failure is often blamed on the individual, who is accused of some sort of deficit: "learning disabled, dyslexic, hyperactive,...culturally deprived, linguistically deprived" (Cambourne, 1990, p.289; see, for an example of this occurrence, Pritchard and Yee, 1989). Ferdman argues that much failure, rather than being the result of individual deficits, might result from how we choose to measure success. In our efforts to be fair, we often elect to measure each individual with the same yardstick rather than "choosing a yardstick appropriate to the person and group. To ignore group membership is to deny an important part of the individual. Indeed, treating everyone the same can result in the very inequalities that are to be avoided" (1990, p.183). Ferdman is referring specifically to the importance of cultural groups; however, his argument could be extended to incorporate other facets of an individual's makeup, such as gender or family background.

These points elicited from contemporary research into literacy provide the framework for the resistant reading in that the main points of the above inquiry act as sensitizing

concepts for the resistant reading performed on the Language Arts English curriculum documents. These main points can be summarized in the following assertions: literacy acts are deeply contextualized and therefore literacy is comprised of a multiple rather than a unitary set of skills and behaviours; because all literacy acts are deeply contextualized, teachers must not assume the transferability of literacy skills or behaviours; reading and writing are skills necessary to literacy, but literate behaviours should be the primary focus of teacher instruction at all age levels; it is imperative that learners be allowed to construct their own meanings, rather than be filled up with predetermined, sequential skills and facts considered "basic" to schooling; oracy plays an important role in the acquisition of literacy in that oral and literate behaviours share many traits and skills; literacy itself is not automatically empowering, either socially or cognitively, but, rather, the contexts in which literacy is acquired and used direct the consequences of literacy. These principal elements in the framework for literacy, as well as the details which support them, were used both to construct the subtext of the Language Arts English program and to explore the relationship between the subtext and the main goals of the Language Arts English curriculum documents.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Intertextuality

Given the notion of intertextuality with its suggestion that the boundaries conventionally thought to delimit individual texts are in no way fixed, it follows that any study must construct parameters of intertextuality in order that the study might have, at least for the purposes of publishing results, a beginning and an end. The parameters of intertextuality for this study were set in two ways. First, to establish the parameters of intertextuality for the specifically school-oriented texts, I followed the suggestions of the curriculum documents themselves: Curriculum Guide, Position Statements, The Research Base Research about Teaching and Learning, and Learning through Reading: Teaching Strategies Resource Book are meant to be used as a package, with the Curriculum Guide as a prescribed document for teachers, and the other three texts serving as support documents for the Curriculum Guide (Catalogue of Learning Resources Primary to Graduation 1991/92, 1991, p.4). As well, according to the Curriculum Guide, Secondary Guide English 8-12 (Revised 1978) is "the foundation of [the] revised curriculum" (1990, p.10) and was therefore included within the parameters of intertextuality set for

this study.

Other inclusions to the framework of school-oriented texts were a result of more subtle relationships. Year 2000: A Framework for Learning and the 1990 provincial examination specifications for English 12 are also conceived of as falling within the parameters of intertextuality for this investigation because of their relationships to the Language Arts English program. The Language Arts English curriculum documents must support and exemplify the initiatives outlined in Year 2000; as well, provincial examinations are a reality of student assessment within the Language Arts English program. In fact, provincial examinations constitute a major component of the so-called evaluation during year two of the graduation program. For this reason, this study will rely on the 1990 provincial examination specifications as an indicator of the type of examination, in regard to both format and content, graduates of the British Columbia Language Arts English program will face.

Further parameters of intertextuality outlined for this investigation involved recently published research into the nature of literacy and curriculum. For the most part, the texts which investigate literacy or curriculum and have been used for this investigation are contemporary or have played seminal roles in their respective disciplines. However,

these were not the most significant factors. Each scholarly text playing a positive role in this investigation views literacy and/or the curriculum from a broad perspective. That is, the authors of these texts have taken into account, to varying degrees, social, historical, cultural, ideological, political, gender, or racial factors when investigating their respective areas. Ultimately, this study, as does any other, relies on intertextual boundaries which are at the discretion of the author's personal philosophical stance.

Procedure for resistant readings

In a more pure form of deconstructive criticism, the process does not involve a set of formally recognized and established criteria as a starting point for identifying the symptomatic points of the text being deconstructed. In this particular study, however, very precise criteria were established prior to the commencement of the resistant reading, in the form of a framework for understanding literacy (as outlined in the review of the literature).

Having established criteria to frame the meaning of literacy, individual components of the curriculum documents were read repeatedly through the lens of these criteria. As the resistant readings progressed, the framework for literacy lens was used in conjunction with various lenses

extracted from the curriculum documents themselves. For example, the initial framework for literacy sensitized me to the suggestion of the curriculum documents that the official Language Arts English curriculum "allows the learner to take ownership of and responsibility for learning" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.12). This concept, one integral to literacy, and, it would seem, to the Language Arts English documents, was used as a lens to read each and every component of the curriculum documents. Again, in performing a resistant reading, I was looking just as much for what the curriculum documents did *not* say as for what they did say. Therefore, when employing the lens which I have provided as an example above, my reading would pursue instances of when the learner was not given ownership of and responsibility for his or her own learning, either through omission or commission. In doing so, I actively resisted the suggestion of the curriculum documents that each component of the texts *automatically* ascribes to the concept of learner responsibility and ownership which was outlined in the "Philosophy Statement". By entertaining the possibility that the ways in which the curriculum documents characterize themselves might not be true, I was reading against the grain of their intentions. These ways in which the text was not identical with itself allowed me to write the subtext.

Data analysis

Because of the nature of this study, as data were being gathered, the analysis was, to a considerable degree, also taking place. That is, in performing the resistant reading, it would have been difficult for me to recognize a "symptomatic" point in the text, without at the same time recognizing why the point was symptomatic. As well, during the process which might be characterized as data analysis--that time when note-taking on components of each individual text was complete--the strategy of resistant reading was on-going. In other words, to characterize data analysis as a distinct step is false; it was merely a component of the resistant reading and therefore shares the attributes of that procedure.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Defining important program goals

In Chapter One, I state: "The purpose of this investigation is to show how the newly articulated Language Arts English curriculum documents subvert their intended aims. That is, this inquiry will show how components of the curriculum documents undermine important program goals articulated by the documents themselves, making the attainment of these goals improbable, perhaps impossible." It is therefore necessary to define exactly what the *important program goals* of the Language Arts English documents might be.

In order to identify important program goals, the meaning of this phrase must be considered. A convenient starting point for this consideration is the glossary provided by the Curriculum Guide, in which goals are characterized as "broad statements that define the direction and parameters of the curriculum..." (1990, p.103). This investigation accepts the above explanation of the term goals; however, I wish to suggest that the definition provided by the Guide is incomplete. In turning to a dictionary, a goal is characterized as "something toward which effort...is directed" (Funk & Wagnalls Canadian

College Dictionary, 1989, p.572). This additional sense of the term goal--a sense which insists on the implication of active effort--together with the Guide's glossary meaning, provide a working definition for the term goals: statements which define the directions and parameters of the curriculum as well as the matters toward which effort must be focused.

The Curriculum Guide is not so helpful in understanding the meanings of *important* and *program*. However, in turning again to a dictionary, important is defined as "having much significance, value, or influence; outstanding...deserving of special notice or attention" (Funk & Wagnalls Canadian College Dictionary, 1989, p.675). With this definition in mind, and for the purposes of this investigation, that which is highlighted in the curriculum documents through repetition, placement, and/or special language will be regarded as important.

In considering the term program, the connotations of purposeful scheduling, sequencing, and presenting are attendant. This sense of the term program is perhaps less than helpful--one would assume that every detail of the curriculum documents has been purposefully scheduled, sequenced, and presented. However, there is a further sense of wholeness and completeness found in the term program; that is, if any of the thoughtfully constructed and sequenced parts of the program are missing, what is left is

no longer the program.

What implications do the above definitions have for this investigation? When delineating important program goals, this investigation will be exploring those aspects of the curriculum documents which describe "broad statements that define the direction and parameters of the curriculum" and define the matters "toward which effort...is [or must be] directed." In order to be deemed important, those aspects of the curriculum documents which fulfil the working definition for goals will also be highlighted through repetition, placement, and/or special language. Furthermore, those aspects of the text which meet the above criteria will also have significant ramifications for the entire official curriculum; that is, if the aspects of text identified as important program goals were removed from the curriculum documents, the entire proposed nature of the program would be notably changed.

Having provided a working definition for important program goals, they must now be identified. Once again, this investigation turns first to what is overtly offered by the curriculum documents. In the Curriculum Guide's glossary definition of goals, stated above, I withheld half of the definition: "Goals are broad statements that define the direction and parameters of the curriculum. *In this guide, the goals are the same for all students in order to*

provide unity and consistency as students' literacy develops" (my emphasis; 1990, p.103). This second half of the glossary definition is alluding specifically to the nine goals listed under the heading "Language Arts English Program Goals" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.17). Regardless of the fact that these are the only goals explicitly identified as such, this investigation refuses these nine programs goals as the *only* important program goals for the curriculum documents. In other words, just as I am determining to accept the stated denotation of the term goals provided by the Guide as a partial working definition, I am choosing to accept the program goals overtly submitted by the Guide as a partial list.

Assuming, then, that the program goals explicitly stated by the Curriculum Guide are not the only important program goals for the curriculum documents, what are the additional goals? This investigation has organized both explicitly and implicitly suggested program goals into four headings: literacy, the educated citizen, literature, and accommodating the individual. This organization is in no way to indicate hard and fast boundaries. Indeed, the interrelationships among these heuristic categories are of much significance.

Important program goal: Literacy

Learning Through Reading: Teaching Strategies Resource Book suggests that "[i]f the primary goal of the language curriculum is to help children become literate people, teachers have the responsibility to ensure that reading and writing happen. They must establish expectations for literacy..." (1990, p.3). The Curriculum Guide (1990, p.14) provides a fairly detailed definition of the literate person, and even establishes a separate heading to highlight this definition. Excerpts from the glossary suggest the importance of literacy: "the goals are the same for all students in order to provide unity and consistency as students' literacy develops" and "it is important to note that a number of objectives may be promoted simultaneously through one literacy activity" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, pp.103-104). In The Research Base: Research about Teaching and Learning (1990, p.17), an explanation of the concept "emergent literacy" is provided. And, finally, when explaining continuity between the 1978 and 1990 official curricula, the Guide states: "Affirmation of the value of literacy...is fundamental to the curriculum" (1990, p.10).

Given all this, it would appear that developing literate people is, unquestionably, an important program goal for the curriculum documents. This assertion is supported by the explicitly stated important program goals

found in the Curriculum Guide. There are six program goals which deal most directly with literacy as it has been conceived of in this investigation:

> 1. To develop the knowledge, skills, and processes needed to communicate effectively by listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and representing.
> 2. To develop knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of language and how it is used.
> 6. To extend capacity for creative thought and expression within the context of language, literature, and media.
> 7. To extend capacity for critical thought and expression within the context of language, literature, and media.
> 8. To develop the wide variety of strategies necessary for learning.
> 9. To develop attributes of wonder, curiosity, independence, and interdependence necessary for lifelong learning. (1990, p.17)

Bearing in mind the significance of the program goal concerning literacy, I have two contentions: (a) the documents fail to recognize critical research into literacy, and, (b) the curriculum documents fail to translate much of what they have acknowledged about literacy into proposed action which is in accord with this understanding.

Arguments to support both contentions will be provided below; for now, perceptions of literacy offered by the curriculum texts will be examined in order to understand this program goal more clearly.

Consider the Curriculum Guide's definition of the literate person (1990, pp.14-15). The literate person:

*is competent and confident in using language powerfully and gracefully for a variety of personal and social purposes;

*makes language choices appropriate to situation, audience, and purpose and is comfortable with a range of language styles, from informal and personal to standard English used for doing the world's work;

*uses language constructively and effectively to bring meaning to the world and to synthesize knowledge;

*is competent and confident in understanding and responding thoughtfully and critically to language produced by others in speech, print, media, for factual or imaginative communication;

*is flexible, creative, and reflective in presenting and responding to ideas, feelings, and knowledge; responds to literature as a way of knowing, a way of developing personal values, and a way of broadening experience;

*is curious about and sensitive to language and resists

simplifying its complexities;

*is increasingly familiar with and knowledgeable about our country's cultural heritage as expressed in language. (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.15)

Although the Guide's definition makes references to so-called cultural literacy and literacy skills, the majority of the definition is devoted to outlining literacy behaviours. For example, the definition acknowledges the significance of literate behaviours by insisting that the literate person is "competent and confident in using language" as well as "flexible, creative, and reflective in presenting and responding to ideas, feelings, and knowledge." The Guide's definition also refers to the contextuality of literacy acts by suggesting that language can be used "for a variety of personal and social purposes" and that language choices must be made which are "appropriate to situation, audience, and purpose." Furthermore, the definition acknowledges that the individual "uses language constructively...to bring meaning to the world."

This emphasis on literacy behaviours, an emphasis paralleled in the review of the literature, is not limited to the Curriculum Guide's formal definition of the literate person. The central aim of the Language Arts English curriculum is "to enable each student to experience

literature and to *use language with satisfaction and confidence, striving for fluency, precision, clarity and independence*" (my emphasis; Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.10). Note the value given to aspirations for learner satisfaction, confidence, and independence--all are characteristics of the literate person within the framework of literacy constructed for this study in the review of the literature. In characterising "What is New?" within the curriculum texts, the Guide suggests that the revised Language Arts English program has incorporated "thinking skills, processes, and strategies as part of the program" (1990, p.11). Obviously, thinking skills, processes, and strategies are also commensurate with literacy behaviours outlined in the framework for literacy.

The "Rationale Statement" for Language Arts English states "evaluation and analysis skills, critical thinking, problem-solving strategies, organizing and reference skills, synthesis, application of ideas, creativity, decision-making and communications skills....are developed through the Language Arts English curriculum" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.13). Many of the abilities listed here duplicate the framework of literacy established in the review of the literature.

When the curriculum documents state that the "child-centred environment focuses on the learner rather than on

content" (Position Statements, 1990, p.10), surely this corresponds to the position of many literacy scholars who stress that a transmission-oriented curriculum only impedes literacy learning (Freire, 1970; Langer, 1987; Smith, 1985; Wells, 1987, 1990). One would assume that the "child-centred environment" would not only allow learners to construct their own meanings--an integral aspect of literacy education--but would actively encourage and authorize them to do so.

A distinct section devoted to oracy in The Research Base: Research about Teaching and Learning, states emphatically: "Oracy is an essential means of making sense of the world and, as such, must be an integral part of our classrooms" (1990, p.22). There is no question regarding the overt position of the curriculum documents on the essential nature of oracy in a literacy learning environment.

I need not belabour this theme. The curriculum documents abound with explicit statements and more subtle suggestions which align the documents with the framework for literacy constructed for this investigation in the review of the literature. The message is clear: the ultimate goal of the Language Arts English curriculum documents in terms of literacy is to create students who are equipped with something more than what the Guide itself has termed basic

literacy. In other words, literacy behaviours are to be the focus of instruction because literacy behaviours best describe the aims of the program. It seems evident that when the curriculum documents state that "the primary goal of the language curriculum is to help children become literate people," (Learning through Reading: Teaching Strategies Resource Book, 1990, p.3) teachers can rest assured that the concept of literate the creators of these documents have in mind is based on "recent research" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.7) and reflects the fact that "the definition of the educated person and thus of literacy has expanded in this century" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.14). In other words, and for the purposes of this investigation, much of the concept of literate which the creators of the curriculum documents apparently wished to project is exceptionally similar to the framework for literacy outlined above in the review of the literature.

Important program goal: The educated citizen

Literacy and schooling have long been connected, the understanding being that the latter is a prerequisite for the former. Furthermore, a literate and schooled population has traditionally been associated with democratic government (Wood, 1988). In fact, many have argued that the growth in Athenian literacy in fifth century B.C. caused the advent of

democracy (Goody & Watt, 1963) and that "literacy fosters the abstract ideals [like justice] that make democracy possible" (Lentz, 1989, p.179). Given this strong connection between schooling, literacy, and democracy, it is not surprising to discover that one of the important program goals found in Canadian curriculum texts deals with the role of the educated citizen.

A portion of the "Rationale Statement" contends: "Students who read, write, speak, represent, view, and listen with intelligence, empathy, respect, and discrimination will develop the skills in thinking and communication, as well as the attitudes and knowledge that will prepare them for active participation in a complex society" (Curriculum Guide, p.13). This statement in some ways reflects the mission statement for British Columbian schools which declares that "The purpose of the British Columbian school system is to enable learners to develop their individual potential and *to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy*" (my emphasis; Curriculum Guide, p.14). As well, the educated citizen is characterized, among other ways, as someone who is "motivated to participate actively in our democratic institutions" and "aware of the rights and prepared to exercise the responsibilities of an individual within the

family, the community, Canada, and the world" (Curriculum Guide, p.14). The explicitly stated program goals found in the Curriculum Guide address the issue of the educated citizen in a number of ways:

> 5. To develop and extend knowledge of self, the world, and our multicultural heritage through language, literature, and media.
>
> 6. To extend capacity for creative thought and expression within the context of language, literature, and media.
>
> 7. To extend capacity for critical thought and expression within the context of language, literature, and media.
>
> 9. To develop attributes of wonder, curiosity, independence, and interdependence necessary for lifelong learning. (1990, p.17)

It would seem, then, that an important program goal of the curriculum documents is the development of educated citizens, prepared to "contribute to a healthy society," "participate actively in our democratic institutions," and "exercise the responsibilities of an individual within...Canada."

Before identifying the next important program goal, it is worthwhile to clarify somewhat the general relationship between literacy and democracy, and, in doing so, illuminate

the connection between the first two important program goals recognised by this investigation. As argued during the review of the literature, literacy is far more than the acquisition of a few skills related to reading and writing. Instead, the best way for Language Arts English teachers to perceive literacy is as a wide variety of behaviours and attitudes which in certain ways rely on language skills to manifest. In this way, the literate person is characterized as someone who believes that he or she is capable of and entitled to think about the world critically, creatively, and independently. Freire states explicitly that "learners must assume from the beginning the role of creative subjects" (1970, p.369). Smith (1985) suggests that literates must not be perceived as simply those who are capable of comprehending specific information, but those who are capable of "creating worlds."

One view of a strong democracy implies that citizens are able to, indeed responsible for, creating change within society. That is, democratic citizens are not simply able to read their society as it is, although this is a part of their behaviour; more importantly, they are able to write a new society. In this way, the fullest potential of the phrase "active participation" is exploited, and the connections between literacy and democracy are clear. Given this account of the relationship between literacy and

democracy, it becomes clear that so-called basic literacy skills--the kind of skills you need to read the black marks on a ballot, for example--are simply inadequate for "active participation" in a democracy. Literacy skills must coexist with literacy behaviours if an individual is to become what the curriculum documents have defined as an educated citizen.

Important program goal: Literature

The significance of literature to the Language Arts English program is immense. In an explanation of continuity between the 1978 and 1990 official Language Arts English curricula, the Guide states: "Affirmation of the value of...literature is fundamental to the curriculum" (1990, p.10). Confirmation of the fundamental role of literature in the official curriculum is everywhere. The central aim of the program is, in part, to "enable students to experience literature" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.16) The "Rationale Statement" declares that the "reading and study of literature enhance the aesthetic, imaginative, creative, and affective aspects of a person's development" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.13). The literate person, among other things, "responds to literature as a way of knowing, a way of developing personal values, and a way of broadening experience" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.15). Headings found

in Position Statements (1990) include: "Literature in the Language Arts English Curriculum" and "Studying the Literature of Canada and British Columbia." Headings found in The Research Base: Research About Teaching and Learning include: "Written Response to Literature," "The Importance of Literature," and "Facilitating the Response to Literature." As one last example of the prominence of literature in the Language Arts English curriculum documents, five program goals address literature explicitly:

> 3. To develop knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of a wide variety of literary genres and media forms.
>
> 4. To develop knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of Canadian and other world literature.
>
> 5. To develop and extend knowledge of self, the world, and our multicultural heritage through language, literature, and media.
>
> 6. To extend capacity for creative thought and expression within the context of language, literature, and media.
>
> 7. To extend capacity for critical thought and expression within the context of language, literature, and media. (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.17)

It seems clear that to have students experience literature in particular ways is an important program goal

of the curriculum documents. The ways in which this program goal relates to the program goals stated above are significant. One only has to consider the history of English as an academic specialization (Eagleton, 1984, Chapter 2) to discern that English is, in many ways, short hand for English literature. Furthermore, it is what we call common knowledge that literature is the domain of the English classroom--one does not find literary texts in the biology or mathematics classrooms: one finds biology or mathematics texts. Therefore, when I say that literature serves as the primary medium for learning in the Language Arts English classroom, I am not reporting anything new. Experiencing literature, then, as an isolated program goal is untenable; literature, literacy, and the educating of citizens are inextricably bound.

Important program goal: Accommodating the individual

The final program goal offered by this investigation concerns accommodating the individual student. Instances which prove the significance of this particular program goal abound in the curriculum texts. The central aim of the program professes to be addressing "each student" just as the mission statement for British Columbian schools addresses "individual[s]". In providing a comparison between the 1978 and 1990 official curricula, the Guide

states that "Students are accommodated within a common curriculum" and that the curriculum provides "flexibility in meeting individual needs and abilities" (1990, p.10). These assertions are elaborated in the "Philosophy Statement" which declares that the "curriculum accommodates the learner's interests, abilities, and background by allowing for a range of learning styles, teaching styles, instructional strategies, and resources" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.12). Furthermore, teachers "are sensitive to both the wide range of abilities that exist in any given classroom and to the divergent experiences, interests, and backgrounds that exist in a group of students" and "acknowledge the fact that the learner is a complex individual with unique needs, interests, rates of learning, and learning styles" (Position Statements, 1990, p.9).

Many assertions found in the curriculum documents go even further than suggesting that the curriculum is flexible in accommodating for the individual. Instances can be found where the individual learner is said to reside at the very centre of the curriculum, and therefore, one would assume, would not require further accommodations. For example, Learning Through Reading: Teaching Strategies Resource Book claims to address "A learner-centred curriculum [where] [l]earners play an active role, and learning experiences are adapted to learners' need to ensure progress toward

independence (1990, p.ii). In turning to another text, the reader is told that "A supportive environment that celebrates learning and places the learner at the centre of the experience is safe, comfortable, and respectful" and "A child-centred environment focuses on the learner rather than content" (Position Statements, 1990, pp.9-10). The significance of creating a child-centred curriculum becomes clear when one considers the statement which prefaces the above quotations: "The learning environment is crucial in determining how successful students will be in achieving their full potential" (p.9).

This last statement indicates why I have chosen to conclude my examination of important program goals by examining the insistence on accommodating the individual within a child-centred curriculum. It is essential to understand that each category of program goals explained heretofore--literacy, educated citizen, literature--must be acted upon within a learner-centred environment, or, at the very least, must be fulfilled within a climate where each individual is fully accommodated.

I have now established the categories of program goals recognized by this study. Furthermore, I have explained the more prominent relational aspects among these categories. I will now show how these categories of important program goals are subverted by aspects of the curriculum documents.

This argument, as mentioned above, will reflect the integrated nature of the established categories and be presented holistically.

Important program goals: Their undermining Oversights and contradictions

As mentioned above, the curriculum documents subvert their literacy program goals--and therefore other related program goals as well--by failing to recognize important literacy research. That the curriculum texts have failed to acknowledge a vast amount of research into the meaning and teaching of literacy is most easily discerned in The Research Base: Research about Teaching and Learning. The "Table of Contents" reveals such headings as "Emergent Literacy" and "Oracy"; however, literacy as a topic on its own is absent. Now, this might be inconsequential given that the Curriculum Guide provides a definition for the literate person (1990, p.15). However, the definition of the literate person provided does not appear to be grounded in research. What might it mean that one of the most significant aims of the curriculum documents--creating literate people--is not addressed in an identifiable research base?

Even if one reads thoroughly the information provided under headings such as "Reading-Writing Connections,"

"Written Response to Literature," "Oracy," "Thinking Skills," "Independent Reading," "Facilitating the Response to Literature," and "Writing as Process," it is difficult to find clear associations between the definition of the literate person provided in the Curriculum Guide and the references cited in The Research Base. In other words, unless one is *already* conversant with a good number of the references cited in The Research Base, it would be difficult to understand the crucial connections between the definition of the literate person and the recent research recommended by the curriculum documents.

The apparent unconnectedness between research and the official curricular definition of the literate person seems especially odd in light of the recognition that "[t]he definition of the educated person and thus of literacy has expanded in this century" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.14). If the definition of literacy has expanded in this century, and if creating literate persons is a critical aim of the revised curriculum, it would seem at the very least prudent to identify research which explicitly addresses this expanded meaning. Otherwise, the people for whom these documents were created may rely on previously held perceptions which have informed their perhaps not-so-expanded definition of literacy. In other words, if the new and expanded definition of literacy provided by the Guide is

not grounded in research, nor contextualized in any clear evidence, why should people change their prior conceptions? Granted, this argument is based on negative assumptions about people's willingness to change; however, there is evidence to suggest that this particular assumption is not without foundation: "Accounts of [curriculum document] use in the US and elsewhere portray considerable discrepancy between intended and actual use, suggesting that new curriculum documents and materials often are adapted to pre-existing beliefs and practices" (Cornbleth, 1990, pp.15-16). Perhaps even more significant, however, are the indications in the curriculum documents which suggest that, in many ways, readers of the documents are not expected to change traditional, perhaps less than helpful conceptions of literacy.

Consider, for example, this information provided by the Guide: "*Literacy at its basic level (meaning skills in the technologies of language*) has been teamed with other words to suggest these wider expectations" (my emphasis; 1990, p.14). It is this understanding of literacy--as basic, and skills-oriented--and the manner in which educators have acted on this understanding, that many contemporary scholars of literacy attack as far too prevalent in educational circles if education is to promote truly literate persons (Fagan, 1989; Freire, 1970; Greene, 1982; Kretovics, 1985;

Wells, 1987, 1990; Willinsky; 1990b).

Consider this subsequent information provided by the Guide: "There are many stages in literacy, for one's competence is ever growing" (1990, p.15). Once again, the Guide is endorsing the kind of thinking about literacy argued against in the review of the literature, namely, viewing literacy on a continuum. It matters little that the Guide goes on to state: "Ultimately, the literate person may be regarded as that person who has a conscious awareness of the possibilities of language and has the skills needed to express that consciousness in ways appropriate to the person's age, context, and purpose" (1990. p.15). The Guide has already declared that there are distinct, identifiable phases in literacy--for this is what the term stages means. It would seem, then, that age, context, and purpose (and other unmentioned factors such as background experiences and interests) are secondary to the stages of literacy--whatever they might be--and consequently, teaching should reflect the priority of literacy stages over age, context, and purpose. Furthermore, as argued in the review of the literature, perceiving literacy on a continuum has many implications, two of which are taking an autonomous view of literacy which implies that literacy skills and behaviours are entirely transferable, and believing that literacy in itself is automatically socially and cognitively empowering.

Accept, then, for the moment, that the Guide, while acknowledging an expanded definition of literacy, undermines this broader understanding by providing traditional and less than helpful explanations of literacy as "skills in the technologies of language," or so-called basic literacy, and literacy-on-a-continuum. These widely held conceptions of literacy, I contend, require radical disruption, not reinforcement. My contention brings this particular argument full circle. If the curriculum documents were to disrupt rather than reinforce traditional and unhelpful perceptions of literacy, this disruption, in order to gain credibility within the context of curriculum documents that purport to rely on recent research, would have to be clearly supported by recent research. Furthermore, this disruption would have to be highlighted as an important element of the curriculum documents--as, for example, given its own heading in the document The Research Base: Research about Teaching and Learning. And finally, this disruption would have to be absolute--not subverted by other aspects of text such as the examples provided above.

Of course, the creators of the curriculum documents had to draw boundaries of intertextuality--simply put, some things had to be left out. My argument is that because program goals concerning literacy are of such significance, and because literacy has traditionally had such a close

relationship to schooling in general and Language Arts English classrooms in particular, what the creators of the curriculum documents chose to exclude is of much significance. The documents neglect certain vital research into the meaning of literacy: as one example, the documents do not acknowledge, implicitly or explicitly, that the consequences of literacy are a result of how literacy is acquired and used. This negligence writes a most notable subtext. The unspoken--most particularly the fact that the consequences of literacy depend completely on how literacy is acquired and used--subverts the spoken.

The arguments made above are, for the most part, rather general in their exploration of the notions about literacy which are conspicuously absent from curriculum documents. I will, however, return to these same arguments in more detail as this investigation points to the relationships among what the texts *have* said about literacy and the program goals concerning literacy, the educated citizen, literature, and accommodating the individual.

As argued above in the section entitled "Important program goal: Literacy," the curriculum texts, in very many, although not all ways, appear to be forwarding the same framework for literacy as constructed in the literature review. To summarize, the curriculum documents appear to be placing a great deal of emphasis on literacy behaviours as

opposed to literacy skills, conceding the contextuality of literacy acts, concentrating on the constructive individual rather than on a transmission-oriented curriculum, and highlighting the importance of oracy. Refer to the definition of literacy provided in Chapter One and it becomes clear that the curriculum texts have, point for point--with one notable exception--paralleled the working definition for literacy offered by this investigation. The one notable exception, however, is egregious. The curriculum documents never acknowledge this fact: literacy of itself is not automatically empowering, either socially or cognitively, but, rather, the contexts in which literacy is acquired and used direct the consequences of literacy. This notable exception has done much to clear the way for the curriculum documents to subvert their own intended aims, and must be kept in mind when examining the following arguments.

Exercising choice and independence

In three of the four program goals outlined above--literacy, the educated citizen, and accommodating the individual--it is absolutely vital that students be allowed to exercise choice and independence. Perhaps I am stating the obvious in pointing to the relationship between exercising choice and independence; nevertheless, to choose

"implies an act of will" in selecting one thing over another and to be independent implies that one is "not subject to the authority of another...[but] self-determining" (Funk & Wagnalls Canadian College Dictionary, 1989, pp.240, 684). Hence, in order to be independent, a person must be allowed to exercise will, that is, make choices--and vice versa. The definition for the literate person provided by the Guide explicitly recognizes the significance of choice and independence in developing literacy behaviours. The definition states that the literate person "makes language choices appropriate to situation, audience, and purpose..." (1990, p.15). However, the definition of the literate person also implicitly recognizes the fundamental role of choice and independence in literacy. For example, the literate person "uses language constructively and effectively to bring meaning to the world and to synthesize knowledge" (p.15). Another way of phrasing this is to assert that the literate person chooses to bring meaning to an agreed-upon set of marks on a page or spoken sounds. Another way of stating that the literate person "is flexible, creative, and reflective in presenting and responding to ideas, feelings and knowledge" (p.15) is to declare that the literate person chooses to carefully consider alternatives, including those which are less orthodox and perhaps not sanctioned by convention, when

presenting and responding to ideas, feelings, and knowledge. The sort of rephrasing in which I am indulging need not be continued here; my point is that whenever one is engaging in the sort of behaviours that have been termed literate--creative and critical thinking, synthesizing, constructing, reflecting, and so on--one is engaging in choice. When one is engaging in choice, one is, to a certain degree, exercising independence.

This same sort of process can be applied to the Guide's definition for the educated citizen. For example, the educated citizen is "cooperative, principled, and respectful of others regardless of differences"; this attribute could be rephrased to read that the educated citizen chooses to cooperate, act on personal principles, and respect all other persons. Other examples could be provided, but perhaps my point is made clearly enough by one of the attributes of the educated citizen that states, without the benefit of a rephrasing, the educated citizen is "capable of making independent decisions" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.14).

Even in putting aside the phrase "student-centred" for now, and examining the aim of accommodating individuals within a common curriculum, the necessity of allowing individual students to exercise choice and independence is clear. For example, a novel chosen by the teacher for the entire class will not meet the needs, interests, and

abilities of each member of any class. Groups found in school are--need I even say it--heterogenous rather than homogenous. Therefore, to continue the example I used above, it is necessary to create a context in which students are allowed choice in terms of the novel to be read, the way in which it is read, and the activities which accompany the reading. A teacher, especially one who is planning in advance for students he or she has yet to meet, is simply not in the position to make all the decisions necessary to meet the needs, interests, and abilities of all the students he or she will encounter.

If, then, choice and independence are significant factors in meeting the program goals pertaining to literacy, the educated citizen, and accommodating the individual, how do the curriculum documents deal with these factors?

The format of the Curriculum Guide itself provides a striking example of how students are not allowed to exercise choice or independence in terms of their own learning. The central aim, program goals, and objectives are already formulated and prescribed for students. There is no flexibility within these already-made decisions other than for teachers, who are asked to formulate appropriate learning outcomes for the objectives. The Curriculum Guide states that the example learning outcomes provided "are meant to **enable** students and teachers" (original emphasis;

1990, p.104); however, "[t]eachers are urged to develop learning outcomes for their students in order to realize the goals and objectives of the curriculum (1990, p.9). Note the use of the word *for* in the above statement. Although the Curriculum Guide suggests that the example learning outcomes are provided for the benefit of both teacher and student, it is only the teacher who is to act as "instructional decision-maker" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.11). There is no suggestion that a teacher might develop learning outcomes with students, despite the call for each student "to take ownership and responsibility for learning" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.12).

The decision-making process which affects students is represented graphically below, in Figure 1.

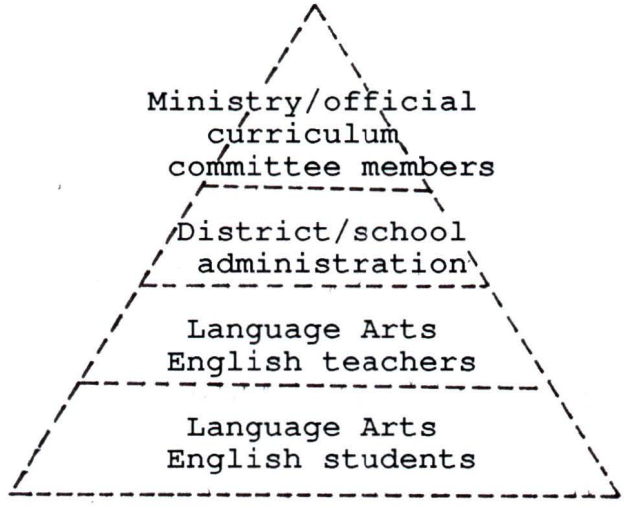

Figure 1: Decision-making processes and numbers of individuals

In some ways, Figure 1 is misleading. Although the triangular shape represents a rough estimation of the numbers of people involved at each level--in other words, there are far more Language Arts English students than there are curriculum committee members--it does not portray graphically the number of decisions made at each level. An inverted triangle would more realistically represent the numbers of decisions made at each level. For this representation, see Figure 2, below. In either representation, it is difficult to discern how the learner might be perceived as being at the centre of anything, despite claims made within the curriculum documents to the contrary.

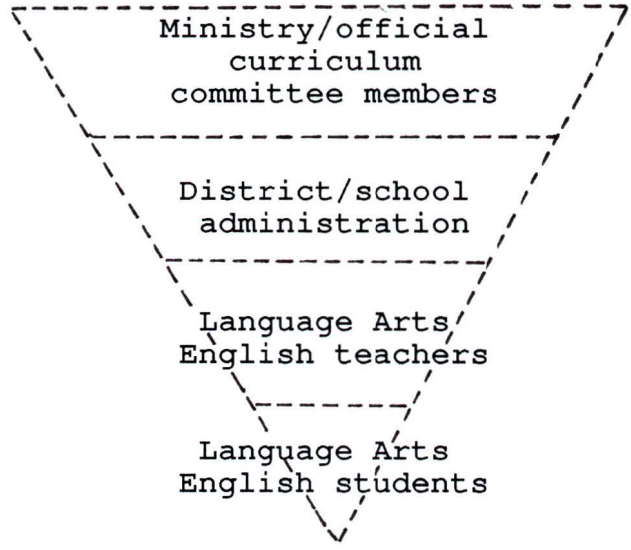

Figure 2: Decision-making processes and numbers of decisions

Within these graphic representations of the decision-making process, and in reality, all learners in British Columbian schools are at the receiving end of decisions made by other people. Both the procedures by which the curriculum documents were constructed and their ultimate format address most conspicuously the undermining of program aims to accommodate the individual. In a top-down process, few decisions of any significance are left for those at the bottom of the process. The result? Those at the bottom of this process--students--are forced into a position of dependence on those who are higher up in the decision-making paradigm. Because each student is placed in a dependent position with few available choices, grasping what the curriculum documents might mean by the phrase *child-centred curriculum* requires some acrobatic deliberation. Furthermore, one who is placed in such dependent and choice-limited circumstances is in a poor position to demand accommodation if accommodation is not forthcoming.

The construction and format of the curriculum documents do not only speak to the program goal concerning accommodation of the individual. As mentioned above, each of the program goals is related; when one is undermined, so, to some extent, are the others. More specifically, however, in looking at some of the particular aims associated with the literacy and educated citizen program goals, one finds

that more is at stake. In a top-down process, there is little room for students to develop the attributes of "independence and interdependence necessary for lifelong learning" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.17). Instead of learning independence and interdependence, students learn dependence. When it comes to re-writing curricula and the curricula-building processes, there is no room for any student's ability to "read, write, speak, represent, view, and listen with intelligence, empathy, respect, and discrimination" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.13). "[A]ctive participation in a complex society" (p.13) does not refer to students and the official curriculum; the only part students take in the dynamic of curriculum is that of recipient.

Although the process for curriculum construction outlined above may seem natural, in that it is the typical model of curriculum development in North American schools, it is unquestionably a cultural construct. One only has to contrast the dialogue-based process of curriculum construction proposed by Paulo Freire to appreciate at least one other option open to educators (Posner, 1988).

In turning from the format to the content of the curriculum documents for evidence of choices and independence available to students, one is faced with the same finding: real choice, independence, and even genuine interdependence (in the sense of reciprocal dependence) are

withheld from students. Learning through Reading: Teaching Strategies Resource Book "is an integrated resource to support teachers...in the use of sound pedagogical procedures to promote the development of students' independence in reading" (1990, p.ii). Furthermore, the Resource Book also addresses, in terms of sound pedagogical procedures, "A learner-centred curriculum...[t]hinking skills...[and] [l]ife-long learning (1990, p.ii). In order to fully understand these claims, it is necessary to recall the integrative nature of the entire curriculum; that is, objectives are not taught in isolation, nor are language strands independent of each other. These aims for independence in reading, therefore, cannot be viewed as sound pedagogical procedures dealing solely with that area. Presumably, because each of the language arts strands--reading, listening, representing, viewing, writing, representing--are integrated, and furthermore, should be integrated by the English Language Arts teacher, the Resource Book will help teachers to develop student independence in more general terms of the language arts.

With the above understanding of the Resource Book's intentions in mind, it is perplexing to note that the twenty-two reading lesson models included in the Resource Book do not provide the teacher with one model of how to structure a reading activity within the classroom so as to

allow students to choose their own literature. Earlier in the Resource Book, it has been suggested that "[i]n contrast to the reading conference where the students selects the reading material, the reading lesson is a teacher-directed activity in which students read assigned material" (1990, p.25). Given, however, that schooling has traditionally been a teacher and content-centred process, one must question how helpful a text might be that spends seventy-two of its one hundred and thirteen pages suggesting activities for a teacher-directed classroom, where the teacher determines all of the readings, activities, and goals, in contrast to the mere two and one-half pages suggesting practices to allow for student-selected reading. Furthermore, only two of the four suggested ways of promoting self-selected material for reading are meant to take place in the classroom. The ratio of teacher- versus student-centred models makes one wonder about the sincerity of statements such as "[i]f students are to become completely independent in reading, they must be given opportunities to exert ownership and to choose the material they will read" (Resource Book, 1990, p.15).

Choosing one's own literature for reading is only one decision-making process withheld from students in order to affirm their dependence on the authority of the teacher. The overall nature of the reading lesson models is such that

the teacher is also responsible, without exception, for choosing the method of reading, the activities which accompany the reading, the time-frame for reading and the accompanying activities, and the evaluation processes which guide the activities. Choices which students are given are trivial; in fact, the terms *choice* is probably a misnomer.

Consider Lesson 7, Graduation (Resource Book, 1990, pp.63-65), which focuses on the suggested reading of "Sonnet 130," by William Shakespeare. Within the suggested activities to accompany "Sonnet 130," students are given the following choices:

(a) to decide whether the poem is old or modern;

(b) to decide why someone would write such a poem and what kind of mood a poet would have to be in to do so;

(c) to decide what pre-reading clues are available, what compressed language means, what the purpose of rhyme scheme is, and why the sonnet format is "the most effective means of getting this message to a loved one";

(d) to choose the attributes of their ideal love in a web form, "beginning with a name or *my ideal love* at the centre of their page" and then share these;

(e) to choose unfamiliar words from the poem;

(f) to write personal responses to the poem--presumably choosing the details to which they wish to respond;

(g) to re-respond, again choosing personally significant details, within the framework of how the poem changed meaning after a re-reading;

(h) to choose the points for discussion regarding Shakespeare's use of figurative language to create an image of his lover;

(i) to choose characteristics of the poem to imitate in a personally composed poem;

(j) to choose points for discussion of satire in "Sonnet 130" and own poetry;

(k) to choose points for a re-write of "Sonnet 130" as modern letter;

(l) to choose topics for writing a sonnet of their own in one or each form of Renaissance sonnets;

(m) to choose points for imitation of "Sonnet 130" in a tribute to a male subject;

(n) to read, and then choose points for discussion and analysis of other Shakespearean sonnets,

(o) to read, and choose points for discussion and analysis other sonnets;

(p) to choose images for the creation of a collage of the woman described in "Sonnet 130";

(q) to read "Sonnet 18" and choose ways to compare to "Sonnet 130, following up with a choice of how to create an imitation of "Sonnet 18."

Although no teacher would choose to teach all of these activities, I have presented this rather exhaustive list in order to elucidate the nature of the suggested activities throughout the reading lesson models.

From the synopsis of suggested activities I have presented above, it is apparent that the choices open to students are minimal in number and trivial in nature. Students can, for example, choose their own personal response; however, what they are responding to is chosen for them. Moreover, the type of response they make is in many ways limited: it must be written, within a certain time frame, and it must meet the requirements of the type of response you give in an English classroom. For example, a response might insist: "I find it difficult to enjoy this Shakespearean sonnet for a number of reasons--reading Shakespeare *again* means that we aren't reading the poetry of my times, poetry that is important to me, poetry written by someone still alive. My parents had a huge fight today because Mom was given a speeding ticket trying to take me to hockey practice last night and I feel like the whole thing is my fault, and I was given a 40% on the paper I wrote on Romeo and Juliet last year."

Most English teachers, I conjecture, would question how this response had anything to do with "Sonnet 130," and they might be right, in a very narrowly school-focused way.

However, this kind of response has everything to do with the student, and, in a curriculum that is supposed to be learner-centred, and focus on the learner rather than the content, this kind of response is the most honest one a student could give.

Nevertheless, most English teachers would rarely have to deal with this type of response; high school students know the school game well enough to understand that a truly personal response is not what is being asked for--reader response criticism notwithstanding--but rather, a particular type of personal response that is acceptable within an English classroom setting is requested (Mares, 1988).

In Lesson 7, as in all of the reading lesson models, it appears that the only real choice given to students is quite simple: one can conform--read the poem, make the appropriate personal response, politely discuss other Shakespearean sonnets--or one can not conform. Non-conformity means failure; students have always had this choice, and a good number of them have taken us up on it.

The Language Arts English teacher, then, who might be searching for models of how to turn "recent research" into classroom practice to ensure the development of literate persons, active citizens, and a student-centred curriculum is simply given the same conventional message: make all of the important decisions for your students in order that they

become independent decision-makers themselves. Choose what students are to read, how they are to read it, when they are to read it, and why they are to read it, so that they many eventually become independent readers. The message to the students also remains clear: teacher-assigned readings are more important than readings you might choose for yourself; furthermore, the decision-making processes within the classroom are reserved for the teacher. By refusing the student any authority in decision-making, the Language Arts English classroom is encouraging passivity, encouraging the development of people who believe that it is their role to simply obey, or, as was argued earlier, drop out. The claims for the development of students who are well-prepared in the skills, attitudes, and behaviours necessary for active participation in a democratic society become empty. The claims for a student-centred curriculum seem absurd.

Praxis

Another general trend of the reading lessons, even beyond the dependence encouraged by the role of teacher as sole decision-maker in the classroom, is the passivity sanctioned by the complete absence of praxis. The term praxis is perhaps most widely associated with literacy research because of Paulo Freire (1970). In Freire's conception of literacy, learners in partnership with the

teacher develop a framework for reflection on issues pertinent to the needs and interests of learners. However, the reflection which takes place must be accompanied by some type of action. This, then, is the definition for praxis: reflective action. Although the general aims of the British Columbian schools and the English Language Arts curriculum documents do not use the term praxis, the conceptualization of the educated citizen is in accord with Freire's use of the term. That is, citizens who are "thoughtful, able to learn and to think critically" while simultaneously being "motivated to participate actively in our democratic institutions" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.14) would be engaging in praxis.

Keeping this definition of praxis and its relationship to the program goal of developing educated citizens in mind, consider the classroom activities suggested in Lesson 11, Graduation (Resource Book, 1990, pp.85-90). This lesson provides model activities for reading the novel, using Golding's Lord of the Flies and Mitchell's Who Has Seen the Wind as examples. The lesson suggests that Lord of the Flies, among other things, deals with the theme of "man's inhumanity to man [sic]" (p.86). Golding's novel, and perhaps this theme in particular, provide stimulation for reflection, and, ultimately, in Freire's terms, praxis. In other words, within an understanding of literacy which

incorporates praxis as one of its defining terms--a framework, I reiterate, completely in line with the curricular goal of active citizenship--it is inadequate to simply reflect on a fictional text which deals with the factual reality of human cruelty and callousness. If, indeed, literature is to act as a stimulus for growth, it must, at least on some occasions, be only a beginning. That is, truly active participation in any society, be it the classroom or Canada, calls for a person to do more than *simply think about* a situation. One must act on the situation.

Acting on a situation which is fictional is a bit difficult; however, as part of the reading process, the reading lesson models call for "Extending Meaning." It seems reasonable to think of extending the meaning of a novel beyond the classroom setting to the world which surrounds the students. For example, students might extend the theme of "man's inhumanity to man" in Lord of the Flies to consider a real life issue such as the treatment of political prisoners in various nations around the world. "Man's inhumanity to man" is not so much an issue for a literary essay, as an issue for a letter writing campaign through Amnesty International. In providing an activity such as this one within the model lesson, the curriculum documents would be in accord with their general aim of the

preparation of students who are "aware of the rights and prepared to exercise the responsibilities of an individual within the family, the community, Canada, and the world" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.14). Instead, however, teachers are encouraged to offer these activities to extend the meaning of the novel: "...generate a class list of topics for a literary essay...assign students to find poetry that parallels the novel and write a response to the poem and an explanation of why the poem parallels something in the novel. Students could present these parallel poems and explanations to the class; write an essay based upon this work" (Resource Book, 1990, p.89).

In case one wishes to argue that perhaps the graduation model lessons are necessarily slanted toward the graduation examination and are simply revealing a pragmatic acknowledgement of reality, I shall examine an intermediate lesson. Lesson 10 focuses on The Cay, a novel by Theodore Taylor which deals with a white boy's prejudice against blacks in a World War II setting. Under the category "Extending Meaning," the text suggests numerous activities, including asking students to scan the book for examples of pleasing or interesting descriptive sentences and to write them as 'Found Poems', or having students write a letter that Phillip might have written to his father (p.84). Of these many suggested activities for extending meaning, none

deal with the theme of prejudice in the novel, although this theme has been addressed in earlier stages of reading. It is not surprising that prejudice in the world beyond the classroom is overlooked as a possible way of extending meaning. The implied message is that once the theme has been identified as existing, nothing needs to be done about it. Students need not trouble themselves to create any changes in their own world which address this issue. They have done what is expected of them by simply comprehending the novel.

I am not maintaining that there is anything inherently wrong with the types of activities I have provided as examples above. My point is that if one of the main program goals of the curriculum documents is to prepare students for active citizenship, aspects of the model lessons should address this issue. (Perhaps a secondary point is this: if the creators of the Resource Book found it necessary to provide such an abundance of rather orthodox classroom activities, what does this say about the state of the Language Arts English classroom?) Instead of addressing the goal of active citizenship, the model lessons--without exception--suggest activities which subvert the notion of "active participation" by filling student time with teacher-controlled, passive activity which has implications only within the classroom setting. Over and over again, the

model lesson suggest readings which deal with very serious personal and social issues: "David" and the issues of euthanasia and choosing death over a handicapped life; Romeo and Juliet and teenage suicide in a world of hatred and patriarchal rule; Macbeth and the implications of unrestrained lust for power; Who Has Seen the Wind and coming to terms with death. Over and over again, the model lessons relegate students to the role of relatively passive digesters of ready-made ideas. These ideas are not to be related to the real world in which the students live, nor are they to be construed as real problems on which the students might act. Conflict is treated as simply one element of literature, and not as an element of the human condition which prompts people to act.

This treatment of conflict is an issue of concern to Apple (1990) in his analysis of hegemony in curricular practices, particularly within the disciplines of social studies and science (pp.82-104). Although the type of conflict to which Apple refers is somewhat different than the conflict this study is analyzing, the argument Apple proposes is valid for both:

> There has been, so far, little examination of how the treatment of conflict in the school curriculum can lead to political quiescence and the acceptance by students of a perspective on social and intellectual conflict

> that acts to maintain the existing distribution of power and rationality in a society. Besides its support for the production and socialization of schooling, the topic of conflict is crucial....How it is dealt with helps to posit a student's sense of the legitimate means of gaining recourse within unequal societies (1990, p.84).

Apple's arguments are clearly applicable to the treatment of conflict suggested in the reading lesson models. Students are not given any sense of how conflict might be dealt with, other than in the denouement of a text. A sense of efficacy is a crucial prerequisite for active participation within any society (Wood, 1988). The reading lesson models withhold a sense of efficacy from students, subverting the aim of developing active British Columbian, Canadian, and global citizens.

Despite the one example learning outcome which suggests that at the graduation level students might "choos[e] to effect change as a result of new growth and awareness (for example: joining a group, writing a letter to the editor)" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.66), the model learning activities consistently promote both students and teachers to treat conflict as an element of literature which needs only to be recognized. Students are habituated to the notion that the implications of literature are, in a very

real way, restricted to the classroom. If students are aware that the activities in which they are engaging are supposed to function as preparatory for the "active citizen" role they are to assume after school, they might very well become cynical of a promise that long deferred.

As Willinsky states, "if you expect literacy to assist people in performing specific tasks, whether representing their own interests or in working out complex social problems, then it is appropriate to engage in those activities directly, rather than imagining it is sufficient to give them what are seen as basic skills for later application" (1990b, p.153). Willinsky's insight is supported by Mickulecky's research into the transferability of literacy skills and behaviours which suggests that transferability "of literacy abilities is severely limited by differences in format, social support networks, and required background information as one moves from context to context" (1990, p.25). Does it make sense then, for the Curriculum Guide to state that "[s]tudents who read, write, represent, view, and listen with intelligence, empathy, respect, and discrimination will develop the skills in thinking and communication, as well as attitudes and the knowledge that will prepare them for active participation in a complex society"? Can one assume that people who develop a certain adroitness at reading novels, short stories,

drama, and poetry will automatically evolve into active, capable, citizens of a democracy? Can one assume this especially in view of the arguments made above regarding the dearth of opportunities for students to make independent and important decisions, to engage in praxis, or to understand conflict as an impetus for personal action?

Definition of literature

Many of the arguments made above are closely related to the extremely narrow definition of literature which the Language Arts English curriculum documents implicitly endorse. "Experiencing literature" has been identified as an important program goal, and the curriculum documents even provide a definition of literature: "Literature is an art form that presents possibilities of human experience through powerful and effective language" (Position Statements, 1990, p.22). My reading of this definition discerns a vague conceptualization of literature. However, throughout the documents, what I have perceived as a vague definition is usurped by a remarkably limited perception of literature. It is repeatedly implied that literature is fictional, and of a few significant genre. In places, the curriculum documents explicitly concede this narrow focus: "In Language Arts English classes, [students] have frequent opportunity to explore a variety of literary genres (story, poetry,

drama, novel) and to become conversant with strategies that enable them to interpret literary language, styles, and conventions. In other subject areas students are confronted with non-fiction content" (Resource Book, 1990, p.91). Now, as Eagleton points out, literature is a functional rather than ontological term (1983, p.9). Therefore, if perhaps there is a discrepancy between the definition forwarded for literature in the position statements and the implied definitions found elsewhere in the curriculum documents, this is perhaps a minor issue. However, if literature--however it is framed--is the primary medium through which Language Arts English program goals are realised, perhaps consensus should be reached. Are we to believe that only story, poetry, novel, and drama are capable of developing in students "knowledge of self, the world, and our multicultural heritage" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.17)? Are the curriculum documents insinuating that there is little to be learned from diary, newspaper, or essay? Or are these genres simply not literature, and therefore necessarily excluded from the Language Arts English classroom?

In spite of the explicitly stated program goal of developing "knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of a wide variety of literary genres and media forms," the subtext of the curriculum documents reveals a narrow view of literature appropriate for student consumption. This narrow

view, not surprisingly, mirrors the traditional school canon: this canon is comprised of remarkably few genres, and, if one considers the amount of literature available, remarkably few texts.

The narrow view of literature suggested by the subtext of the curriculum documents also has implications for the writing expected of students. Repeatedly, it is implied that literature is something that other people create--students do not write literature; they read literature. Granted, students do write, but the majority of writing is non-fiction. Consider, for example, the fact that in the suggested activities accompanying the fictional texts in the reading lesson models, teachers are encouraged to assign students non-fictional writing thirty-nine times as compared to twenty suggested fictional writing activities. However, even when students do write poetry, or drama, or short story, it is in the form of an assignment, as in "Ask students to use the same format and imitate this poem" (Resource Book, 1990, p.64). I argue that it is not inconceivable to see how students might understand the genre of all of their writing to be assignment. One of the main thrusts of this argument is the implied passivity of the student. When students are reading, they are reading pre-chosen material, waiting to be told the format in which they might respond (for example, in a reading log, a collage,

discussion); furthermore, when students are writing, they are told how, when, and often what, to write. The power of language, the model reading lessons suggest, is either a power which belongs to someone else, or it is a power restricted to a genre (very often a fictional one) other than assignment. In either case, it is difficult to discern how the extremely narrow definition for literature which the curriculum documents have adopted will allow students to experience literature in the sense of being "personally or directly aware of or moved by" literature (Funk & Wagnalls Canadian College Dictionary, 1989, p.468). In other words, I am suggesting that the curriculum documents exhort a stringently teacher-mediated experience of a tiny slice of literature. The student experience of literature, as exemplified in the reading lesson models, remains so narrow as to prevent the enrichment of the learners' sense of themselves as literate persons and educated citizens capable of and entitled to change their society.

Definitions of democracy

The implications of what type of society students are then being prepared for, given this analysis of the subtext of the curriculum documents, is suggested by Wood (1988). Wood's essay, "Democracy and the Curriculum," discusses quite extensively the school's role in preparing students

for citizenship. Wood discriminates between two visions of democracy: protectionist and participatory. Protectionist democracy is characterized by "competition between social and/or intellectual elites" who contend for the right to govern through election. The key to this type of democracy is that most individuals express their needs through the vote only, and as "for those who do not vote, they also play a vital political role. The positive contribution of political apathy is twofold. First, it demonstrates the general level of satisfaction with the system--it is simply assumed that those who do not vote are satisfied with the way things are. The second function of apathy is to keep to a minimum the demands upon the system" (Wood, 1988, pp.168-169).

From the analysis made above regarding the implicit role of the student, it seems that through the Language Arts English program learners are being better prepared for a vision of protectionist democracy, than for a participatory democracy where "citizens do not merely choose between elites but actually transform themselves through debate and contestation over public issues" (Wood, 1988, p.170). Now, the curriculum documents have not explicitly stated the vision of democracy they are purporting to strengthen; however, a curriculum which leaves the classroom decision-making to the teacher, withholds a sense of efficacy from

students, defines literature in such a narrow way as to withhold its potential powers, and treats conflict as simply an element of literature appears to be inversely related to a vision of participatory democracy. Students, in spite of declarations insisting that the curriculum documents support a child-centred program, must accommodate themselves to the system already in place--it will do little to accommodate them. In other words, the Language Arts English curriculum, like a protectionist democracy, is not meant to be transformed by citizens; citizens must transform themselves, and, as Wood (1988) suggests, this transformation is both initiated by and fosters apathy. Not surprisingly, apathy is not a literate behaviour, nor do the apathetic fulfil their individual potential.

Graduation examinations

While discussing the limited number of avenues for change available to students, it is appropriate to address the evaluation procedures in place for graduation students. Provincial examinations are not a component of the Language Arts English curriculum documents; however, as argued in Chapter Three, Methodology, provincial examinations have been included within the parameters of intertextuality because of their integral role in the ultimate assessment of Language Arts English students. Year 2000: A Framework for

Learning states:

> All students will write provincial examinations at the completion of the work in the general studies area of the Graduation Program. In addition, students enrolled in level 2 units associated with the Humanities and Sciences strands will also write provincial examinations. The specific examinations that students are expected to write will be determined by the option that they have chosen. Examinations will be administered at appropriate times, and they will count for 40 per cent of the final mark in examinable subjects. (n.d., p.27)

Even at first glance, it does seem difficult to understand how graduation students across the province are going to each realize their individual potential when they must all be measured with the same instrument. This is especially true given the behaviours that provincial examinations usually create. Grade twelve teachers, for probably three main reasons, often find themselves teaching to the examination (Mares, 1988). First, if 40 percent of a student's final grade is to be determined by an external test situation, most teachers accept that they owe their students a decent chance at doing well on this examination. Second, many teachers might justifiably believe that student marks on the provincial exams are held up as a reflection of

their ability to teach, and that poor marks on the examination will not reflect well. Third, it is simply much easier to focus teaching on specific "knowledge and skill[s]" rather than "attitude learning dimensions" (Year 2000, n.d., p.27), especially when knowledge and skills are conferred such a privileged status by the Ministry of Education (this assertion will be dealt with more completely below). This sort of process is not limited to the grade twelve teacher alone. Grade eleven teachers, for example, want to prepare their students, among other things, for grade twelve, and so forth down the grades. Furthermore, if a system, as mentioned above, privileges a very narrow focus of skills and knowledge, why should the classroom teacher do any differently?

By teaching to the exam, however, and all the behaviours that might accompany this phenomenon, the classroom curriculum is no longer learner-centred. The classroom is now foremost a content-centred, and secondly, a teacher-centred environment. It is the teacher who is empowered with an understanding of the kind of responses which are appropriate on a provincial examination, and therefore the kinds of knowledge and skills considered culturally and educationally significant. Thus, preparing students for this type of assessment becomes the teacher's expertise, and other possible classroom activities will

likely fall into line with this paradigm. Students are not expected to develop their individual potential by exploring their own needs, learning styles, and interests; they are expected to conform their potential to an external measurement designed to control not only students, but their teachers as well (Mares, 1988).

With this type of example set in the grade twelve classroom, it seems foolish to believe that other levels will be immune to the same framework for learning. As argued above, if the Ministry of Education is explicitly endorsing this paradigm for their evaluation processes, it would appear to take more energy for the individual teacher to work against this philosophy than to work with it. This is especially true given the tradition of education, which has endorsed content- and teacher-centred classrooms.

Ironically, in light of the entire issue of provincial graduation examinations, the Curriculum Guide states as one example learning outcome for the Graduation program: "the student may demonstrate increasing ability by...treating competition as an aid to the individual's learning (for example: appreciating the positive aspects of fair competition to stimulate effort, helping to establish standards, and generating positive feelings)" (1990, pp.93-94). To suggest that this particular example learning outcome is aimed at the provincial examination process is

not, I believe, a giant leap: all of the correspondences are there. The suggestion is that standardized provincial examinations are serving as "fair competition" which will "stimulate [student and perhaps teacher] effort" and result in the establishment of "standards" and, moreover, generate "positive feelings" among all participants. One needs to ask how a competition might be fair if everyone is *forced* to compete, in exactly the same way, regardless of their individual skills, knowledge, and attitudes (and no student is so naive as to believe that everyone can win--who ever heard of an important examination where everyone was given an "A"?) How valid might standards be when a three hour examination purports to measure twelve years of learning? How positive might a person's feelings be when awarded a "C" on the provincial examination regardless of the fact that he or she has published poems in the student anthology, actively participated in class discussions, and read six novels in the final graduation year?

The use of provincial examinations to "generate standards" is simply one of the many top-down decisions with which students of the Language Arts English program must conform. To characterize a program such as the one I have discussed above as "learner-centred" is to call seriously into question what "learner-centred" might mean. In an official curriculum which directs teachers, both explicitly

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and implicitly, to provide students with ridiculously few avenues for pursuing their own needs, interests, and learning styles, the provincial examination is an external process which solidifies the content- and teacher-centred reality of the curriculum.

The implications of all this, however, go beyond the fact that, in reality, the curriculum is content- and teacher-centred. By using slogans such as "learner-centred" and making claims that the curriculum is able to accommodate students regardless of their needs, interests, backgrounds, or learning styles, the school system has placed itself in a no-lose situation. Because the curriculum is learner-centred, specifically designed to accommodate all individuals, if an individual fails, the fault must lie somewhere within the individual. Given this scenario, it is not necessary to look at the context in which students have been placed to understand why they might not be experiencing the expected success; rather, the cause for lack of success can always be found in particular individuals. The transferral of blame, like the top-down construction of the curriculum documents themselves, appears as natural.

An observation made above is worth pursuing further. Each of the program goals delineated for this investigation purport to deal with more than the intellectual development of individuals. For example, the entire 1990 curriculum is

characterized as having a "balance between the cognitive and affective domains" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.11). The literate person is identified as "confident...curious...and sensitive" as well as "knowledgeable" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.15). The educated citizen is "creative, flexible, self-motivated...and [possesses] a positive self-image" and is able to "communicate information from a broad knowledge base" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, p.14). In developing a child-centred environment, the teacher must take into account "students' interests, experiences, and abilities" (Position Statements, 1990, p.10). In justifying the role of literature in the Language Arts English curriculum, the documents assert: "Literature is an art form that presents possibilities of human experience" (Position Statements, 1990, p.22).

These few examples from the curriculum texts demonstrate that although intellectual development is an aim of the Language Arts English curriculum, it is certainly not the only, nor even necessarily the primary aim of the program. Attesting to this fact are both the central aim of the program--"to enable each student to experience literature and to use language with satisfaction and confidence, striving for fluency, precision, clarity and independence"--and the mission statement for British Columbian schools--"to enable learners to develop their

individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy" (Curriculum Guide, 1990, pp.10, 14). In other words, one overt pedagogical message of the Language Arts English curriculum documents is that the cognitive and affective domains must both be dealt with adequately. If one is overlooked, it is to the detriment of the other. This is also true for each of the four program goals identified for this investigation: literacy, the educated citizen, literature, and accommodating the individual. However, the subtext of the curriculum documents reveals that rather than treating the cognitive and affective domains as two integral parts of an holistic education, the cognitive domain is flagrantly privileged while the affective domain is conspicuously marginalized.

As I have briefly noted above, the most obvious example of this bias occurs in the graduation provincial examinations:

> Over time, provincial examinations will be amended to ensure that they are examining what students can do in relation to the knowledge and skill learning dimensions of the Framework for Learning. Evaluation of the attitude learning dimensions will remain the responsibility of professional classroom teachers.

(Year 2000: A Framework for Learning, n.d., p.27)

I need not repeat each of my arguments pertaining to the effects of teaching to the exam. Instead, I would like to examine English 12 1990-1991 Examination Specifications to show the very narrow cognitive emphasis of the examination.

The preface to English 12 1990-1991 Examination Specifications notes two "English 12 changes from 1990 provincial examination." The second of these changes suggests: "Since the Language Arts English Curriculum is now in place, students must be able to demonstrate abilities with the goals and objectives of the new Curriculum Guide. These are listed on pages 2 and 3 of this document" (n.d., n.p.). Of more interest than the somewhat premature first assertion of the above statement is the pronouncement that there is a consistency between the new Curriculum Guide and the revised provincial examination. This consistency, as promised by the document, is explained on pages 2 and 3, where it is suggested that the English 12 provincial examination will assess 19 of the 57 objectives outlined in the 1990 Curriculum Guide: "The goals and objectives which are not assessed in the provincial examination are accounted for within the school portion of the mark for English 12. Media forms are assessed in the classroom" as are the "listening, speaking, viewing, and representing strands" (English 12 1990-1991 Examination Specifications, n.d.,

pp.2-3).

Grant, for the moment, that there is some sort of consistency between the aspects of the new curriculum which the examination purports to measure and the measurement techniques employed. This consistency is limited to assessing only 33 percent of the explicitly named curriculum objectives and language arts strands, and of that 33 percent, the examinations, by their own admission, can only measure the cognitive-, content-, product-oriented aspects. Even more to the point, I assert that the provincial examination cannot assess or promote, to any significant degree, the four important program goals outlined for this investigation.

Consider, as a starting point, the fact that although one would assume that the provincial examination has been "amended to ensure that [it is] examining what students can do in relation to the knowledge and skill learning dimensions" of the new Language Arts English curriculum, this is not the case. The practice examination provided for the benefit of teachers and students in English 12 1990-1991 Examination Specifications is, for all intents and purposes, identical to the 1989 English 12 provincial examination, constructed with the Secondary Guide English 8-12 (Revised 1978) in mind. For example, the first two sections of both the 1989 and 1990-91 examinations are entitled "Editing

Skills" and "Reading Comprehension." Editing skills on both examinations consists of multiple choice questions which are meant to test one's ability to fill in blanks of a paragraph with the standard English response. The section on reading comprehension for both examinations asks students to respond to a non-fiction text (the text, "Report on Animal Research," is the same for both documents) by answering multiple choice and short answer questions.

English 12 1990-1991 Examination Specifications outlines two more sections of the provincial examination: "Interpretation of Literature" and "Written Expression" (worth a total of 72 marks) which are essentially the same as the 1989 examination categories entitled "Poetry," "Prose," and "Composition" (worth a total of 72 marks). In both documents, students are expected to respond to a selection of poetry and a short story by answering multiple choice and short answer questions. The final section of each examination asks students to write a composition based on one of three themes, for example "A challenge" or "Things I could get along without" (English 12 1990-1991 Examination Specifications, n.d., p.21; Provincial Examination Papers, 1989, p.21) Marks are allocated identically for all corresponding sections of the documents.

It seems confusing, to say the least, that these two documents, which are meant to reflect two different official

curricula, are essentially identical. Why? The answer is that, in spite of professed changes, the 1990 curriculum documents maintain a content-, cognitive-, and product-focused program.

Once again, I turn to the reading lesson models to investigate how the curriculum documents subvert their intended aims. For example, if one examines the "Summary of Lesson Plans" on pages 42-43 of Learning Through Reading: Teaching Strategies Resource Book, the following highlights from the intermediate and graduation lesson plans are provided:

> predicting; developing predicting, inferring and generalizing strategies; enjoying poetry through reading and writing; understanding figurative language, understanding structure in narrative poetry, discovering universals; understanding form and style in sonnets, relating content to genre; developing literal, implied, and inferred meanings; reading a novel; reading a novel; reading a photo essay; understanding specialized vocabulary, reading social studies text material; using prediction and anticipation strategies, reading science content; developing a study strategy, reading a chapter in a science text, using text organizational clues; recognizing structure of newspaper article, formulating questions, reading a

newspaper article; organizing and comparing details, reading a magazine article; understanding organization and context clues, reading a newspaper article; understanding essay organization, reading an essay.

This summary of central aims for the reading lessons provides a good number of clues regarding how the creators of the curriculum documents envision official curricula becoming lived classroom curricula. First, the lessons, as has been mentioned above, are content-driven in so far that each student must read the same text, in the same way, with the same results. Second, the majority of the dominant intentions of the reading lessons are cognitive-focused. There are 36 main objectives listed above in the summary of the reading lesson models. Of those 36, only two could be considered to deal more with the affective than the cognitive domain (and this in an exceptionally limited way): enjoying poetry through reading and writing. Ten of the objectives state that students will be learning how to read a specific genre. Eight of these ten objectives are found in lesson models which focus on non-fiction text, and, not surprisingly, the lessons focus almost exclusively on the cognitive domain, specifically reading comprehension.

Third, the reading lesson models exhibit a definite bias toward a product-oriented classroom. For example, in spite of the recognized importance of oracy in the

development of the literate person, the reading lesson models call for discussion relatively few times. Even more telling, however, than how many times discussion is suggested as a reading lesson activity, are the kinds of discussions suggested. Consider the following: "Read, discuss and analyze other Shakespearean sonnets" (p.65); "Prepare students for viewing the video production by discussing Shakespeare's popular appeal in Renaissance times" (p.68); "Discuss with students circular journey story patterns, having them recall familiar stories that fit the pattern and identify characteristics of these stories" (p.78). Each of these examples share characteristics: (1) the teacher knows the answers to the implicit questions; (2) because the teacher knows the answers, students must provide responses from the range of correct replies formulated in the teacher's mind; (3) each of the discussion topics is English content-oriented rather than issue-oriented; (4) in practice, each of these suggested discussion activities would resemble recitation, not discussion. Recitation--a cycle of teacher question, student answer, teacher evaluation of answer plus next question--is the dominant form of classroom discourse, supported by many traditional power structures (Dillon, 1988). Recitation differs from discussion in that during discussion only one meaningful question is asked, the teacher does not know the answers to

the questions, the floor does not always return to the teacher, and, most importantly, student responses are not restricted to providing answers. These differences are extremely significant. Consider these findings:

> in fields like counselling and personal interviewing, fields that seek to encourage both talking and thinking on the part of their clients, practitioners are urged to avoid questions. On the other hand, in fields like courtroom advocacy and public opinion surveying questions are encouraged, and practitioners are highly skilled in putting questions--but the self-conscious goal in such fields is to limit the thoughtfulness, and to control the utterances, of the people being questioned...only education seemed to believe that asking questions of 'clients' would stimulate thoughtfulness and encourage expression (Dillon, 1988, p.ix)

My point is that if one uncovers the subtextual meaning of oracy in the curriculum documents, it should look familiar. The meaning of oracy, like the meaning of literacy, is restricted to skills- and product-oriented student behaviour. Students become skilled at providing answers--answers, if Dillon's studies are an accurate indication, that generally take approximately two seconds to provide. Furthermore, if one believes Dillon's findings, the

cognitive focus of oracy development is itself very restricted by the teacher-centred recitation process. Discussion, as it seems to be conceived of in the reading lesson models, is not a time for students to be experiencing the process of literate behaviours such as asking questions, formulating hypotheses, collecting and rejecting arguments, recognizing the interdependent nature of learning, or developing confidence in sharing something other than so-called facts; instead, it is a time for providing answers to content- and teacher-driven questions.

As I asserted above, the overt educational message of the Language Arts English curriculum documents is that the cognitive and affective domains must both be dealt with adequately. If one is overlooked, it is to the detriment of the other. My argument is that the subtext of the curriculum documents neglects the affective domain--specifically such concerns as self-confidence, self-esteem, self-respect, curiosity, sensitivity, a sense of interdependence--decisively devaluing the emphasis on the cognitive domain.

Summary

The four important program goals identified for this study--literacy, the educated citizen, literature, and accommodating the individual--are far-reaching in nature.

They encompass not only the explicitly stated program goals found in the Curriculum Guide (1990, p.17), but also the concept of the educated citizen and literate person, the rationale and philosophy statements for Language Arts English, the mission statement for British Columbian schools, and the vast majority of Position Statements and The Research Base. Furthermore, these four program goals are very much in line with contemporary conceptions of literacy.

I maintain that research into literacy must be taken into account during the development of Language Arts English curriculum documents. The curriculum documents have, to some degree, been successful in their consideration of literacy research. The documents have overtly recognized the significance of literacy behaviours; the important role of oracy in literacy development; the need to allow students to construct their own meanings rather than being filled up with pre-determined, sequential skills and facts; and the fact that literacy is a multiple set of skills and behaviours. The documents have also, unfortunately, overtly conceived of literacy on a continuum, and therefore view it autonomously, overlooking the fact that literacy of itself is not automatically empowering, either socially or cognitively, but, rather, the contexts in which literacy is acquired and used direct the consequences of literacy.

The success, then, of the curriculum documents, is limited to the overt text, and is thoroughly undermined by the subtext of the documents constructed for this investigation. In constructing a subtext for the curriculum documents, I have asserted that the four program goals constructed for this investigation will prove unattainable for a number of reasons and in a number of ways.

The subtext of the curriculum documents fails to allow students any significant degree of choice or independence. Literate persons and educated citizens must be allowed to exercise choice and independence, if, indeed, they are to become literate persons and educated citizens. Furthermore, if the documents, as they claim, are to be student-centred, it is again necessary to allow individual a significant degree of choice and independence.

The concept of praxis, with one negligible exception, is entirely neglected by the curriculum documents. Once again, if one is to be a literate person and educated citizen, one must be willing and capable of engaging in praxis.

The subtext supports an extremely narrow definition of literature, withholding from students the power to be found in words. Literature is viewed fictional, and of a few significant genre. Furthermore, students must read and respond to literature in a very narrow way. This narrow

conceptualization of literature contributes to the paucity of choice and independence offered to students, as well as the lack of opportunity for praxis.

All of the above characteristics of the subtext only make sense if students are being prepared for a protectionist rather than a participatory democracy. In a protectionist democracy, citizens are expected to read their nation as it is rather than write their nation the way it ought to be. Also in a protectionist democracy, power is in the hands of the few; the many must learn to acquiesce.

The new curriculum documents, like the graduation examinations, are ultimately content-, product- and teacher-centred. In practice, it is expected that literacy skills rather than behaviours will be the focus of teacher instruction; that a canonical content rather than individual students will dominate; that students will demonstrate growth exclusively through teacher-designed assignments; and that literacy, no matter how it is defined, acquired, or practiced, will somehow meet the needs of the individual, the school system, and the province.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is an attempt to construct an understanding of how the newly articulated Language Arts English curriculum documents subvert their intended aims. Arguments show that the attainment of four important program goals of the curriculum documents pertaining to literacy, educated citizens, literature, and accommodating individuals is seriously hampered by subverting elements of the curriculum documents themselves and other related documents identified as part of the intertextual framework.

Conclusions to research question 1

Research question one asks "Are the curriculum documents faithful to the most crucial aspects of contemporary investigations into literacy?" The curriculum documents recognize many important aspects of contemporary research into literacy. For example, the overt text of the documents suggests the following: literacy acts are contextualized, and therefore literacy is a multiple rather than unitary set of skills; literate behaviours are a necessary focus of teacher instruction; learners must be allowed to construct their own meanings, rather than be filled with pre-sequenced skills and facts; and attention to

oracy is crucial to literacy development. Each of these concepts, however, is subverted by the subtext of the curriculum documents. This subversion takes place for a number of reasons, one of which is the fact that the documents ignore the crucial certainty that literacy of itself is not automatically empowering, either socially or cognitively, but, instead, the contexts in which literacy is acquired and used direct the consequences of literacy. Traditionally, the autonomous view of literacy has been dominant in our schools; that is, many educators have implicitly believed that any sort of literacy learning or teaching will automatically benefit students cognitively, morally, and socially--this tradition is maintained in the new Language Arts English curriculum documents. In summary, the curriculum documents, in spite of many advances in literacy research, and in spite of their recognition of some of this research, are not faithful to the most crucial aspects of contemporary investigations into literacy.

Conclusions to research question 2

Research question two asks "Does the implied role of the student subvert the stated aims of the curriculum documents?" The stated aims of the curriculum documents are to develop, within a student-centred environment, and through interaction with a variety of literature, educated

citizens and literate persons. First, I argue that the subtext of the curriculum documents reveals that the program is not student-centred. Individual backgrounds, needs, learning styles, and interests are not taken into account; instead, individual students must accommodate themselves to a content- and teacher-driven program. Furthermore, because the program is characterized as student-centred, lack of success can invariably be wholly attributed to the individual student rather than the context in which he or she has been placed.

As argued above, in the conclusions to research question one, the curriculum documents have not been faithful to the most crucial aspects of contemporary literacy research. This inconstancy and subtextual subversion often stem from the implied role of the student. For example, students are conceived of as people who only follow instructions, always answer questions but never ask them, invariably change themselves rather than their environment, and consistently remain passive rather than active. Furthermore, students must devote their attention to issues of the cognitive rather than the affective domain, and, as well, they are expected to transfer--after their schooling is complete and whether it is possible or not--skills and behaviours learned in a narrow, school context to a national, international and political context. The long-

term vision for students held by the curriculum documents is admirable; the methodology endorsed by the documents for reaching this vision prevents the attainment of this long-term goal.

Conclusions to research question 3

Research question three asks "Does the implied role of the teacher subvert the stated aims of the curriculum documents?" As noted above, the stated aims of the curriculum documents are to develop, within a student-centred environment, and through interaction with a variety of literature, educated citizens and literate persons. The implied role of the teacher makes the attainment of three of these goals improbable (experiencing literature being the possible exception). Because of the notably content-, cognitive-, and product-oriented focus of the curriculum documents, the teacher is awarded a privileged status. That is, the subtext of the curriculum documents directs the teacher to make all the important decisions for students in regard to the content studied, how and when it is studied, the ways in which content is responded to, and the ways in which success is measured. In a content-focused classroom, where each student studies the identical, teacher-assigned text, the teacher is at an advantage. In a cognitive-focused classroom, where the teacher is much more familiar

with the cognitive aspects of any text, the teacher is at an advantage. And, finally, in a product-oriented classroom, where, traditionally, teachers are awarded the status of judge because of their content and cognitive advantages, the teacher has power over the students through the products they must create and submit for judgement.

Conclusions to research question 4

Research question four asks "Do the discrete components of the curriculum documents subvert each other?" Throughout Chapter Four, Findings of the study, this question was answered repeatedly in the affirmative. Most notably, the portion of the subtext written by the model reading lessons in Learning Through Reading: Teaching Strategies Resource Book subverts other components of the curriculum documents. For example, the model reading lesson subvert the overt textual messages found in the rationale and philosophy statements for the Language Arts English program (Curriculum Guide, 1990, pp.12-13), much of the research outlined in The Research Base: Research About Teaching and Learning, and many of the assertions made in Position Statements. As one small example, when reading against the grain of the model reading lessons, it is apparent that students are not meant to experience a wide variety of literature; instead, they are to experience a narrow selection of scholastically

traditional and acceptable genres and authors. That the section entitled "Reading Lesson Models" subverts many other components of the curriculum documents is, in many ways, unsurprising. The reading lesson models, more so than any other component of the curriculum documents, come close to resembling lived classroom curricula. In other words, the reading lesson models provide a fairly accurate indication of how the creators of the curriculum documents envision the official curriculum in practice. This study argues that the implementation of the official curriculum envisioned by the creators of the documents subverts the intended aims of the documents.

Conclusions to research question 5

Research question five asks "Are the so-called 'new' aspects of the curriculum documents characterized correctly?" Within the section of the Curriculum Guide entitled "How to Use This Guide" a summary is provided to explain the continuity between the revised curriculum and Secondary Guide English 8-12 (Revised 1978). A synopsis of the so-called new aspects of the revised curriculum is also provided. Some of the assertions are obviously correct; for example, the curriculum documents certainly provide "a Primary to Graduation curriculum guide rather than separate elementary and secondary guides" (1990, pp.10-11). Many of

the assertions, however, are debatable. For example, this study has argued the validity of the Guide's contentions that it provides a "balance between the cognitive and affective domains" and "flexibility in meeting individual needs and abilities." Furthermore, this study has raised doubts as to whether the "process approaches to learning and communicating" are actually in place; instead, this study has asserted that the subtext of the official curriculum supports a product-oriented curriculum, with a strong emphasis on the cognitive. In other words, products are privileged over process. This perspective is most clearly demonstrated by the format of the provincial examinations.

General conclusions

The curriculum documents, in the final analysis, succumb to the tension between the overt text and the subtext. Although the documents clearly attempt to reflect recent research into many educational fields, the meaning of literacy being only one, the subtext of the curriculum documents is steeped in tradition. The Curriculum Guide states: "The 1978 curriculum is the foundation of this revised curriculum" (1990, p.10). This assertion is, unfortunately, accurate. The unspoken and the unquestioned ultimately dominate the documents. The result is a cognitive-, content-, product-, teacher-centred curriculum

which has done very little to address the issues it was intended to address. For example, I argue that the new curriculum documents do little to actively address the need for students to "employ critical and creative thinking skills to solve problems and make decisions...to be literate in the traditional sense, and to be good communicators. Equally, they will need to have well developed interpersonal skills and be able to work co-operatively with others. Finally, they will need to be lifelong learners." (Year 2000: A Framework for Learning, n.d. p.2)

Pedagogical implications

The pedagogical implications of this study are extensive. This study has purposely differentiated between official curricula and lived curricula; part of the outcome of this distinction is the fact that, for the most part, teachers who believe that the curriculum documents do subvert their intended aims need not sustain that subversion in their own classroom. If teachers are aware of the ways (or at least some of the ways--this study does not claim to disclose all of them) in which the curriculum documents subvert their intended aims, they can avoid enacting those particular subversions in the classroom, at least to some degree. For example, if teachers are aware that the curriculum documents repeatedly call for the accommodation

of individual students while simultaneously recommending practices which do not accommodate individuals, teachers can replace these sorts of practices. It is not the purpose of this study to outline methodology more appropriate to program goals outlined in the curriculum documents; however, I will provide one example of how teachers might address the contradiction given above. In doing so, I hope to encourage the recognition of alternate methodologies excluded from the curriculum documents.

If the program goal for accommodating individual students within one classroom is to be met, this study has argued that the methodology provided by the curriculum documents must be disregarded. Rather than assigning identical texts, questions, projects, time-lines, and the like to all students, students must be provided with contexts in which they ask their own questions, choose their own reading material, design their own projects, and the like. My suggestion is not to create a student-centred environment, as the curriculum documents so unfortunately periodically encourage. Instead, I am recommending that teachers develop dialogue-centred (Freire, 1970), or conversation-centred classrooms (Robinson, 1990). Within a conversation-centred classroom, power is shared between participants. Participants must negotiate, question, set personal and group goals, communicate expectations clearly,

and take personal responsibility for developing successful independent and interdependent roles. Within this sort of context, individuals can be accommodated in the ways suggested by the curriculum documents. That is, through various kinds of conversation, "a stimulating environment that offers challenge and encouragement, and where the expectations placed on both teacher and student are made clear" can be developed (Position Statements, 1990, p.9) Also, through various kinds of conversation, teachers can actively demonstrate "tolerance, patience, and respect" as well as "a willingness to learn and share, and a trust that children will learn" (p.9). Not only will a conversation-centred classroom provide a context in which all individuals can be accommodated, this sort of context will also promote literacy behaviours and promote the growth of educated citizens.

Use of the phrase "student-centred classrooms," outside of the fact that it suggests that there are alternatives to teacher- or content-centred classrooms, is unhelpful as an educational metaphor. This metaphor denies the power of the teacher, denies the significance of classroom community, and, most importantly, denies the interdependent relationship of learning.

The one alternative methodological paradigm I have offered suggests many things to the classroom teacher. For

example, we must carefully analyze educational metaphors to discover their often unquestioned significances. As well, we must hold these often unquestioned significances side by side to discern continuities and contradictions. For example, this investigation argues a strong positive relationship between literate persons and educated citizens; this relationship, however, is overlooked in the subtext of the curriculum documents. As a second example, this investigation has argued a contradictory relationship between so-called student-centred classrooms and developing positive interdependent relationships.

Recommendations for further research

Chapter One, Introduction, differentiated between official curricula and lived classroom curricula (Cornbleth, 1990; Grundy, 1987). Furthermore, I have stated that, among others, the purposes of this study were to "stand, both conceptually and personally, as a model of the type of literate behaviour in which teachers should be engaging and in which they should be encouraging their students to engage" and as a model of how a teacher may "look beyond the technical rationality, beyond the purely psychological, beyond the confinements of a single classroom, and begin considering the social, the political, the ideological" (pp.4-5). By once again raising these points I am

suggesting that if progress is to be made in the area of Language Arts English official and lived curricula, classroom teachers must be both willing to and capable of engaging in the sort of critical analysis exemplified in this investigation. If classroom teachers are not acting as researchers themselves, it matters little, in terms of public school curricula, what sort of top-down official curricula is being implemented, or what sort of literacy or curriculum research is taking place. Therefore, my recommendations for further research are aimed directly at the classroom teacher, and therefore frequently pertain to lived classroom curricula. Classroom teachers may:

1. Perform a resistant reading replacing the framework for literacy with a different basis for analysis. For example, recent research into cooperative learning, or reader-response criticism might be substituted for research into literacy.
2. Perform a resistant reading of the curriculum documents, but rather than using deconstructive techniques, adopt another perspective from literary theory, for example, a feminist, or neo-marxist perspective.
3. Using this study as a basis, do a deconstructive reading of personal classroom curricula.
4. Using this study as a basis, do an analysis of the meaning of literacy in personal classroom curricula.

5. Using this study as a basis, do a deconstructive reading of commonly used classroom textbooks in order to discern contradictions and subversions between intended aims and other significant factors.

6. In cooperation with students, and using this study as a basis, do an analysis of the meaning of literacy in personal classroom curricula.

7. Using the techniques of deconstruction demonstrated in this study, analyze the overt and implicit role of the teacher in personal classroom curricula.

8. Using the techniques of deconstruction demonstrated in this study, analyze the overt and implicit role of the student in personal classroom curricula.

9. In cooperation with students, and using the techniques of deconstruction demonstrated in this study, analyze the overt and implicit role of the teacher in personal classroom curricula.

10. In cooperation with students, and using the techniques of deconstruction demonstrated in this study, analyze the overt and implicit role of the student in personal classroom curricula.

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