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Connecting Language and Literacy Learning: First Graders Learning to Write in a Whole Language Classroom[1]

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The current political atmosphere surrounding literacy education in the United States pits whole language and phonics-only instruction against each other. Whole language teachers, already besieged by parents and district administrators clamoring for evidence of rising standardized test scores, are coming under increasing public pressure to abandon meaning-based language arts curricula in favor of basic-skills instruction. Using ethnographic methodology, the study from which data for this article are drawn examines how local language arts pedagogy is instantiated in classrooms. In particular, this project focuses on documenting how teachers use an ecology of social practices to form a comprehensive literacy curriculum. The analysis will show how one first grade teacher creates a context for learning in which the whole and parts of text are in dialogic relation. By gaining an understanding of current practice, this study may help teachers construct literacy curricula that more effectively addresses the tension they have experienced within language arts pedagogy. By understanding the practices of real teachers, we will be in a better position to enter the public debate over the strengths and weaknesses of both whole language and phonics pedagogies by providing evidence of how teachers merge process and skills in their classrooms.

INTRODUCTION

The current political atmosphere surrounding literacy education in the United States pits whole language and phonics-only instruction against each other. Whole language teachers, already besieged by parents and district administrators clamoring for evidence of rising standardized test scores, are coming under increasing public pressure to abandon meaning-based language arts curricula in favor of basic-skills instruction. Using ethnographic methodology, the study from which data for this article are drawn examines how local language arts pedagogy is instantiated in elementary classrooms. In particular, this project focuses on documenting how teachers use a variety of literacy approaches in an ecology of social practices (Irvine & Elsasser, 1988) to form a comprehensive literacy curriculum. As classroom interaction carries powerful messages about what counts as literacy (Luke, 1994), understanding how local literacy learning is constituted as a profoundly social process provides researchers and teachers with a valuable resource for curriculum development in context.

Data presented are drawn from a larger project that documents current language and literacy practices in two classrooms: one rural/suburban first grade and

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one urban multi-aged pre-k/kindergarten classroom. I have been working in these classrooms for the past year in order to gain a richer understanding of how interaction in literacy activity influences students' learning. Only data from the first grade classroom will be discussed here to provide a detailed analysis of how the language and literacy practices in this context mediate learning to write.

If we, as researchers, are to work with teachers to learn how to effectively teach literacy and create meaningful student learning experiences, then we must work to gain a deeper understanding of the complex nature of classroom interaction and language practices in literacy activities. By gaining an understanding of local practices grounded in data, we can then enter the public literacy debate with evidence that locally constructed pedagogies are more than a hybrid between whole language and phonics. I will argue, in fact, that literacy is a social practice and describe that practice as it is constructed in the context of elementary language arts curricula. In this way, this study challenges the dichotomous debate over whole language and phonics-only pedagogies by documenting actual classroom practices.

In this paper, I will briefly describe the current debate over whole language and phonics as a context for the description of the classroom under observation. The first grade classroom will be described, followed by presentation and discussion of classroom interaction data. This is an ongoing research project; therefore, discussion and analysis of data can only be preliminary in this paper.

THE DEBATE

The current public debate over literacy instruction centers around a set of media inflamed, mutually insulting assertions about which pedagogy will most effectively result in higher test scores on standardized reading and writing assessments. Critics of whole language philosophy claim that phonics has been forgotten and that the basics are not taught, resulting in progressively lower scores on standardized tests (Rochester, 1996). Experimental researchers simply state that whole language does not work (Stahl & Miller, 1989). Whole language advocates argue that phonics has always been taught in the context of whole and predictable texts (Routman, 1996). Furthermore, critics of phonics-only pedagogy claim that if skills are separated, then the learner is positioned as a passive object rather than active subject in meaning construction (Luke, 1994). As Edelsky points out "the act of performing indivisible subskills may have little or no relation to the indivisible activity we call reading" (1991:102).

It is not my intention to fully explicate this debate in this paper. Rather, the purpose here is to document how students and teachers, in real time and in real classrooms, draw on a wide variety of skills and knowledge about text and text meaning in the context-specific processes of reading and writing. Furthermore, I argue that this debate over pedagogies is miscast and sidetracks the issue that most concerns literacy educators: How do children become literate members of the

complex society in the United States?

The problem addressed in this paper centers on this false either/or juxtaposition of whole language and phonics-only pedagogies. The larger study found that neither of these pedagogies is unilaterally implemented in the classrooms observed. In particular, the first grade teacher, who articulates a desire to someday call herself a whole language teacher (she states that she continues to strive toward whole language philosophy), has created a classroom where "language learning takes place in a coherent, sensible, predictable, purposeful environment in which coherent, sensible, predictable, purposeful language is being *used* - not practiced - both with and in front of the learner" (Edelsky, 1991:130). Students are immersed in a text- and language-rich environment within which to actively explore their own reading and writing processes over extended time periods. Reading and writing are intimately integrated across all content areas so that children are exposed to a variety of genres and strategies as they develop an understanding of text meaning, audience, and purpose.

In sum, I will look at the language and literacy practices in this classroom to argue that the current politicized debate underestimates the issues involved in the construction of literate individuals. Educators and policy makers must understand that implementation of language arts pedagogy is a much more complicated issue that includes institutional constraints (time, administrative support), educational background of teachers and students, teachers' beliefs about their students, parental involvement, and teachers' own reading and writing practices as sociocultural factors that profoundly influence the process of learning to read and write in today's classrooms.

STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Observing the organization of talk in everyday literacy activities allows researchers an analysis of how contextually situated language practices mediate literacy learning. In addition, micro-analysis of face-to-face interaction in classroom literacy activity provides an opportunity to study language, culture, and social organization in context (Ochs, 1988; M. Goodwin, 1990). Grounded in this view of language and its relation to literacy learning, I explore the following research questions:

- What are the current language practices of this classroom and how do these practices mediate literacy learning?
- What are the consequences of these language practices on students of diverse socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds?

Classroom literacy activity is videotaped on a weekly basis throughout the academic year so as to visually and auditorily document talk and interaction in activity. Field notes document weekly participant observation of literacy activity in order to present a rich picture of the whole context, particularly what occurs outside of the camera. In order to document the consequences of current language

practices on classroom participants' literacy learning, teacher and student interviews (both formal and informal) are conducted and transcribed[2] to have access to the participant's perspective on literacy learning. Coding schemes emerge from these transcribed data in the course of the analysis.

Each videotape is viewed and a tape summary made. Key segments are identified and transcribed. These transcribed segments are used for detailed discourse analysis of face-to-face interaction and serve as the primary data base. Detailed discourse analysis of the participation framework (Goffman, 1981) is based on these selected portions of the basic transcript in order to present specific data as evidence of the discursive practices of particular classrooms (Ochs, 1979) and how these practices mediate literacy learning.

Transcription conventions derived from Atkinson & Heritage (1984) are used in transforming these data into text[3]. Transcription of discourse, or the process of inscribing social action (Duranti, 1997), enables the micro-analysis of how language use among activity participants mediates literacy instruction. Non-vocal, vocal, and timing features were transcribed and treated as additional evidence of students' developing literacy competence (Ochs, 1979).

THE CLASSROOM CONTEXT

The long drive from the city to Mrs. Miller's classroom is comforting as I know I will soon be in an engaging language learning environment. The beauty of the terrain, particularly the breathtaking views of Lake Ontario, enhance my anticipation. My eyes are always drawn to the woods as I search for deer, still a joy for a city kid. As I enter the small Upstate New York town, my mind wanders to historical times as I imagine the Victorian era and the lives the people must have led in these houses. Once in town, the drive to the school is short - a quick right turn and a short drive to the cemetery, then left into the parking lot. The school itself is a K-3 primary school located in a long single story, fifties-style building. All the classrooms have windows along one wall that look out over the surrounding landscape. The school serves approximately 600 students of mixed racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Mrs. Miller's classroom of twenty-two first graders is down a long hallway to the right as I enter the front door. She has windows that look out to the front of the school, facing the cemetery. A visitor's initial impression of the classroom is that it is full to capacity. Stacks and stacks of books occupy every open shelf and cupboard space: all 6000 of them available for student use during free reading time over the course of the year. The room is brightly decorated with children's artwork, writing, and literature-related theme bulletin boards. Much of the room decoration is typical of a first grade classroom in this country (calendar, theme-related posters and bulletin boards, alphabet and number charts, etc.). Children work easily here. They work constantly and predictably in texts of all kinds. Reading and writing permeate their everyday activities. Mrs. Miller integrates all

tent areas into a profoundly literacy grounded curriculum. These first graders are readers and writers in a tight-knit community of learners (see Rogoff, 1994 for the definition of community of learners referred to here). Ironically, while Mrs. Miller claims to not know how she and the students construct this community, she seems able to articulate the process clearly:

> I don't know how you get community. I can't tell you. All I can tell you is you need to spend time with them. You need to- I eat lunch with them. I'm with them a lot. I make time for them. I write to them everyday. I know everything about their personal lives I could possibly know. I know the names of their dogs. I know the names of their family members. They know about my family. They know what I like to do. I know what they like to do and I think the familiarity of it helps. You can't have a sense of community if you don't have time, spend time (October, 1996).

The intimacy that the teacher and students have constructed in this classroom is evident throughout the day. They freely discuss their lives at home and ask her questions about her family and life away from them. The students know her likes, dislikes, and life passions.

THE FOCAL ACTIVITY: MODELED WRITING

Mrs. Miller uses a modeled writing activity to introduce student writing time on a daily basis. To examine this activity, I draw on sociocultural theories of learning (Rogoff, 1990, 1994; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). In this view, learning occurs through participation with others in routine everyday activity (Rogoff, 1990, 1994). Learning is thus co-constructed through joint participation in activity, such as the writing activity which is the focus of this study. Co-construction is defined here as "the joint creation of a form, interpretation, stance, action, activity, identity, institution, skill, ideology, emotion, or other culturally meaningful reality" (Jacoby & Ochs, 1995:171).

While learning to write is co-constructed in joint participation in activity in both classrooms under study, what the students are learning differs. In the first grade classroom discussed in this paper, students learn the writing process and such writing conventions as topic selection, spacing, paragraphing, punctuation, spelling, sequencing, etc., in the course of interaction during the writing of meaningful text. This teacher carefully integrates the teaching of these conventions as she makes the writing process explicit for her students. As the data will illustrate, students in this classroom actively contribute to text construction in ongoing activity.

Modeled Writing in First Grade

Mrs. Miller firmly states that she "never sends students to write until (she has) written." As a result she has designed her writing period so that she first

commodels writing for students, then students spend the rest of the day on their own texts. Writing occurs every day, one and one half hours each afternoon. After the children return from outside playtime, they enter the classroom excited in anticipation of writing. Often, they announce "I know what I'm gonna write about today" as they are taking off their jackets. Without direction from Mrs. Miller, students go to the restroom, get drinks of water, and head toward the carpet area to await her arrival for writing.

The modeled writing activity itself is divided into six discrete segments: topic selection, picture drawing, writing the story, "I likes," questions/revision, and student topic announcements. During the topic selection segment, Mrs. Miller uses opening phrases such as "I have s:o many ideas floating in my head today" followed by a list of the current options for story topics to designate the beginning of the writing time. Students frequently remind her of the items on their evolving list of topics if she has omitted one. After she selects her topic (which she does not publicly announce), she writes the date at the top of the page and begins to draw a picture as a clue for students. Students enthusiastically guess at what she might be drawing. Writing follows this segment. As the following examples will illustrate, this text is actively co-constructed by both students and teacher. Students call out her next words, offer each other assistance in understanding different words, and point out conventions. The fourth segment, termed "I likes" by Mrs. Miller, follows writing and consists of a sharing of what students like about her story. Frequently students point out writing conventions in her story that they are working on in their own writing (spacing, story length, punctuation). The questions/revision segment consists of students asking Mrs. Miller questions about her story upon which she either revises the story or answers directly depending on the nature of the question. In the following section, examples of topic selection, writing, and questions/revision will be provided using one representative day of modeled writing.

Topic Selection

In the following excerpt, Mrs. Miller has settled into her chair next to the easel at the front of the carpet area. Students are seated on the carpet in front of her and on the couch (the "couch potatoes") at the rear of this sectioned area of the classroom. As students settle in, she frames (Goffman, 1974) the upcoming writing sequence by stating, "I have s:o many ideas floating in my head today." Students focus their attention on her as she repeats this statement, then begins to list the topics that have been suggested on previous days.

Excerpt 1.1:

1	Teacher:	I have.
2		(1.0)
3		**so: many ideas floating in my head today**
4		((*sitting down facing students, looking around at students*))

5		(1.6)
6	John:	Turn it up a little bit more
7	Teacher:	**I have so many ideas floating today**
8		that I've been having a
9		<real hard> decision=
10		((*leans back in chair*))
11		(1.0)
12	Melissa:	**So do I**
13	Teacher:	=having a decision
14		((*looks upward*))
15		a dilemma
16		((*shakes head*))
17		(1.0)
18		I don't-
19		I could write-
20		((*looks down, begins to count on fingers*))
21		I could write about-
22	Students:	General chatter with increasing loudness
23	Teacher:	My turn
24		((*points to her chest, nods head*))
25		(1.0)
26		my turn
27		((*points to chest, nods head*))
28		I could write about
29		I went to the
30		(0.6)
31		[theater last night
32		[((*pulls down on left little finger*))
33		(0.4)
34		[I saw Phantom of the Opera
35	Students:	[.hhh
36	Teacher:	I could write about
37		(0.6)
38		the- the fog and the animal story.
39		(0.6)
40		I could write about my giant te↑eth problem story with-
41		with um (.) Mary Jo
42		o:r
43		((*looks up over the students heads*))
44		(0.2)
4546		°and this is the one I think I (this one)°
47		((*raises left hand, looks at marker box in her hand*))
48		(2.0)
49		Mr. Miller
50		((*shifts legs to right*))
51		<has. a.> te:rrible yard problem
52		((*takes marker out of the box in her lap*))
53		and you haven't met Mr. Miller yet

		((*looking around at students*))
54	Bill:	I have
55	Teacher:	Mr-
56		y- you have
57		((*points to student*))
58		Mr. Miller is very particular about his ya:rd.
59		((*waving marker in front of her*))

By modeling topic selection in this way, Mrs. Miller makes explicit an author's initial steps in the writing process that are often implicit and consequently not understood in other classrooms. Further evidence of students' understanding of the topic selection process can be seen in the second student turn (line 12) as she corroborates Mrs. Miller's sentiment that this process is a "real hard decision" by stating, "So do I." We can also see evidence of Mrs. Miller's community building strategy in this excerpt. By sharing her personal life though these stories, she lets her students in on who she is and what matters to her.

After a brief transition, Mrs. Miller begins to draw a picture that provides clues to her upcoming story. This technique builds on notions from whole language that pictures can serve as one of the cueing systems for students to construct meaning in the context of text. As the teacher draws her picture, the students become increasingly excited about what the story might be. A flurry of guesses ensues as each picture unfolds.

Writing the Story

By the time the story writing begins, students are completely focused on the text. They excitedly await the unfolding tale. Mrs. Miller begins to write, carefully saying each word as she goes (see figure 1). What is remarkable about this segment is the complex nature of the interaction between the "author" and the "students." Students, while ostensibly designated as listeners, serve principally as co-authors (Duranti, 1986). They actively co-construct the story while the teacher writes by calling out words for her to insert into the story. Within the first sentence of the story we can see this interactional achievement as a student contributes the word "in" to the text.

Excerpt 1.2.1:

92	Teacher:	O:kay.
93		((*looks at easel, rests hand on upper support bar*))
94		(4.0)
95		[Mr. Miller
96		((*writes words as she slowly says each word*))
97	Students:	[Mr. Miller
98		(2.0)
99	Teacher:	<was workin'>
100		((*writing*))



Figure 1

101	Student:	**in**
102		(3.0)
103	Teacher:	in
104	Jim:	Hey, (0.2) <u>working</u>
105		((*points up to word on easel*))
106	Teacher:	.hh̓h o↑h
107		((*stops writing, turns to look at student*))
108		that's another one we get to add to collection huh.
109		((*points to word*))
110		(0.4)
111		Mr. Miller was working (.) <[in (.) the (.) yard>
112		[((*writing*))
113		(4.0)
114		((*looking at paper*))
115		H:e,
116		((*writing*))
117		(3.0)

118		>Mr. Miller was working in the yard<
119		((*rereading the text*))
120		<he (1.0) was po↑unding>
121		((*writing*))
122	Ellen:	ing another ing

Incidents of filling in upcoming words in the text occur frequently in the data. These comments are included in the text without mention by the teacher as she simply continues to write. As the interaction progresses, one student points out that Mrs. Miller has written an "ing" word in her story. The class is in the process of constructing a list of "ing" words as part of a mini-lesson. Each time an "ing" word is spotted, either the students or the teacher will write the word on the list. I frequently observed students referring to this list when they needed help spelling one of the words they knew was there or adding another word to the list when it had been discovered in one of the books they were reading.

The normative classroom script constructed in this classroom tended toward what Gutierrez (1993) has termed responsive collaborative[4]: that is, the classroom participation framework is more flexible than in a context where the teacher tightly manages the discourse. Interaction proceeds conversationally throughout the writing segment except for three occasions during which the teacher shifts to an IRE (Interrogation, Response, Evaluation: Mehan, 1979) discourse pattern for more explicit instruction, as illustrated in the excerpts below. The first shift to IRE occurs in lines 169-176 below as the teacher instructs them on the purpose of quotation marks, i.e., to indicate direct speech.

Excerpt 1.2.2:

154	Teacher:	<He: (1.0) was (1.0) angry.>
155		((*writing*))
156		((*sits back in chair and looks at paper*))
157		(2.8)
158		>he was po↑unding the ground with a rake< (.) he was angry
159		((*rereading the text*))
160		<I (.) went (1.0) >to the door,<
161		((*writing*))
162		(3.0)
163		and said
164		((*writing*))
165		(3.0)
166		I'm gonna put some,
167		((*writes quotation marks, then points to them and turns to look at students*))
168		(1.0)
169	**Students:**	**Talking marks**
170	**Teacher:**	**Right**
171		((***nods head, touches head with left hand***))

172		**so who do you think he'll be talking to**
173		((***looks back toward the easel and points to paper***))
174	**Students:**	**You,**
175	**Max:**	**you**
176	**Teacher:**	**Right**
177		((*nods head*))
178		>I went to the door and said<
179		((*reading as she follows text with her finger*))
180		(3.0)

In the second occurrence (lines 241-244), the teacher models crossing out as a revision technique (rather than erasing) by asking, "what do good writers do when they mess up?" The student response ("cross it out") is quickly evaluated ("right, just cross it out") and the story continues. In this way, various processes writers use, as well as writing conventions and tools, are made explicit for the students in the talk.

Excerpt 1.2.3:

228	Janet:	More talking marks
229	Teacher:	More- >more talking marks<
230		((*looking at paper*))
231		I sa:id.
232		(2.0)
233		I SAID
234		((*leans forward and begins to write*))
235		can I he↑lp
236		(1.0)
237		I-
238		(1.8)
239		oops,
240		((*sits back*))
241		**what do good writers do when they mess up**
242	**John:**	**Cross it out**
243	**Teacher:**	**Right.**
244		**just cross it out**
245		((*crosses out word*))
246		ca:n I: (.) >can I help,<
247		((*writing*))
248		I (.) ca:me
249		((*writing*))

The third shift occurs in the following excerpt as the teacher instructs students to continue to a second page instead of simply ending the story because the page ends. Writing beyond one page is a much celebrated event in this classroom. Each time a student or Mrs. Miller extends a story to more than one page, students call out in pride at each other's accomplishment.

Excerpt 1.2.4:

255	Teacher	Mr. Miller
256		((*writing*))
257		(2.0)
258		pound (2.0) down (2.0) the (1.0) dirt,
259		((*writing*))
260		(1.0)
261		wow (.)
262		well I guess my story's done huh,
263		((*sits back in chair and looks at text*))
264		(2.8)
265		Mr. Miller [pound down the dirt,
266		[((*turns to students*))
267		(2.0)
268	Students	No,
269	Teacher:	Well (.)
270		((*reaches toward paper*))
271		is it done (.) do ya think,
272	Student:	[Yeah]
273	Student:	[You can] write sma:ll
274	Teacher:	I could write small
275		((*raises eyebrows, turns to look at paper*))
276		what else could I do
277		(1.4)
278		**what do you do**
279		((*tilts head upward*))
280		**(0.6)**
281		**when you get to the end,**
282		((*brushes hand along bottom of page*))
283		**(1.0)**
284	**Student:**	**Put a caret**
285	**Teacher:**	**Carets would-**
286		((*points to section of text*))
287	**Beth:**	**>DO A TWO-PAGER<**
288		((*quickly sits up and points forward*))
289	**Teacher:**	**.hhh very good**
290		((*raises head, points to student*))
291		do a two-pager
292		so (.) I need to put page two over here
293		((*stands up and starts to turn the page*))

The "I likes" segment of this activity follows immediately after the story is written. Students share what it is about the story that they like most. Students are thus socialized to think first about what they appreciate in an author's text before beginning a critique. On this particular day, students share that they liked how she used spaces, that they got the mole, that she wrote a two-pager, and that she used

quotation marks. Students' comments during this portion of the activity typically followed this mixed pattern of appreciating conventions and story content elements. What a student shared tended to mirror her/his own writing development. For example, if a student is working on spacing, she/he will comment most frequently that she/he "likes your spaces." Thus, this classroom's language and literacy practices construct a context in which the whole-to-part of text are in dialogic relation.

Questions/revision

The question/revision segment of the writing activity is significant as it provides the students with an explicit opportunity to co-author Mrs. Miller's story. Furthermore, the kinds of questions authors ask themselves while revising text is modeled in joint participation. In the following excerpt, Mrs. Miller takes eight questions from students, four of which lead to revision of the text. The excerpt includes the first question that led to revision.

Excerpt 1.3:

508	Teacher:	Alright (.) I'm ready for questions
509		((*holds both hands up, palms open*))
510	Student:	>Wait wait wait ( )<
511	Teacher:	I'm ready for questions
512		((*puts hands behind her back*))
513		yep
514		((*points to Lisa*))
515	Lisa:	What day was he doing this
516	Teacher:	O:o
517		what day was he doing this
518		((*licks finger, turns to look at easel*))
519		that would be an important thing to put in
520		((*starts to turn page on easel*))
521		(2.0)
522	Student:	yeah
523	Teacher:	I bet you could probably guess
524		((*turning page*))
525	Students:	°Sunda:y°
526	Teacher:	If he was outsi:de,
527		((*looking at paper, runs hand down the page*))
528		(1.0)
529		and he was working in the yard
530		((*runs hand up and down the page*))
531		and I was ho:me,
532		couldn't have been today huh,
533		((*turns to look at students*))
534	Students:	( ) Saturday, yesterday, Saturday
535	Teacher:	was working on the ya::rd

536 ((*looks at paper*))
537 (2.0)
538 <on (.) Saturday>
539 ((*writes a caret and inserts the words*))
540 (2.6)
541 any other,
542 ((*turns back to students*))

The teacher repeats each student's question as she turns to look at the text, turning back to whatever page in the story she thinks a revision could be made. As she adds text, she models editing tools such as carets or crossing out as she enters new sentences or words. Mrs. Miller revises the story when student questions add context or descriptions that she had forgotten or that the class feels contribute to the story's depth. Questions whose answers she does not know or that she decides are not relevant to the story are not used to revise. Thus, an author's right to maintain a text as she/he wrote it is also modeled for students.

The modeled writing activity comes to a close as students each tell Mrs. Miller what they will be writing about before they go to their desks. Students who are having difficulty thinking of a topic, usually one or two students, sit on the couch for a few minutes to think. Mrs. Miller comes to sit with them and asks various questions designed to focus them on a topic. As each child selects a topic, she/he goes over to the paper supply table to pick up a clean sheet, then settles down for the afternoon of writing.

DISCUSSION

It is premature at this point in the study to reach definitive conclusions in the analysis or to fully answer the research questions. Data collection continues; therefore, more complete analysis will follow the completion of the study. I have videotaped the student writing period immediately following modeled writing, putting a lapel microphone on both the teacher and on individual students. This has proven to be an exciting process as the consequences of the language practices used in modeled writing are now seen in the students as they talk while writing. In this paper, I have discussed the preliminary findings based on analysis of ethnographic data of modeled writing activity in this first grade classroom Initial coding has indicated that Mrs. Miller explicitly models her own writing process thereby making a clear connection for students between what "real writers" do and what they as students write as they develop their own writing processes. The language and literacy practices of this classroom make the dialogic relation between the whole and the parts of text explicit. As a result, the so-called "basic skills" advocated in the back-to-basics backlash are integrated into a larger composition activity.

In sum, this study offers teachers and researchers a deeper understanding of current practice and how teachers use an ecology of approaches in the

tion of language arts curricula. In this paper, I have described how participation in literacy activity influences literacy learning in the context of a rural/suburban first grade classroom. Patterns of participation in literacy activity control meaning, i.e., how meaning is constructed in schools, by whom, and for what purpose. By understanding these profoundly social processes, teachers can then gain a deeper understanding of how participation in literacy activity mediates this learning process. Furthermore, this study may help teachers construct literacy curricula that more effectively addresses the tension they have experienced within language arts pedagogy. By understanding the practices of real teachers, we will be in a better position to enter the public debate over the strengths and weaknesses of both whole language and phonics pedagogies by providing evidence of how teachers merge process and skills in their classrooms.

NOTES

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[3] The following transcription conventions are used in the examples given:
Colons denote sound stretch ("s:o"); Brackets indicate overlapping speech; Equal signs indicate closely latched speech, or ideas, for example:

Teacher:	[I came]=
Student:	[More t]alking marks
Teacher:	=outside and helped Mr. Miller

Intervals of silence are timed in tenths of seconds and inserted within parentheses; short, untimed silences are marked by a dash when sound is quickly cut off ("Mrs-") or with a period within parentheses (.). Rising intonation within an utterance is marked with an arrow ("he≠lp"); Falling intonation at the end of an utterance is indicated with a period ("said."); Descriptions of speech or gesture are italicized within double parentheses ("((*leaning into easel*))") Single parentheses surround items of doubtful transcription; and **boldface** indicates items of analytic focus.

[4] See Gutierrez (1993) for full explication of this concept. Responsive collaborative script is characterized by flexible participation boundaries with increased student responses within and between teacher-student initiations and responses. The teacher frames and facilitates the activity but does not rigidly control turn selection and topic expansion. Both teacher and students generate questions to which there is no specific correct answer. The implied goal is a shared understanding of knowledge.

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