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ABSTRACT

Good language users monitor and understand their own involvement in the learning process. They understand how language is used to make and reshape their world. Everyone needs to be allowed to test his or her personal theories of the world against practice and vice versa. Given the nature of society, it is important that conceptions of literacy begin with the notion of voice and the importance of hearing everyone's voice. Empowerment begins when each individual is able to name the world as he or she sees it. In naming the world through language, differences are noted and transformative conversations begin. From listening to new voices new anomalies can be identified, new conversations can be started, and potentially new behaviors can be explored. Classrooms organized on a theory of literacy that values hearing individual voices must be judged by a different set of performance criteria than has traditionally been the case. Strong communities are not formed on the basis of likeminded individuals, but rather on differences, where the different voices making up the community are heard and listened to. It is by hearing different voices that the resources available in a community of learners become known as well as transformed. Classrooms which place a priority on understanding the role that language plays in enhancing learning become communities of learners, as various examples of children's writing illustrate. New criteria for a good theory of language include (1) allowing each person to have a voice; (2) beginning needed conversations; and (3) providing a mechanism whereby those conversations can continue. (Twenty-five references and six figures of samples of children's writing are attached.) (MG)

WHAT EDUCATIONAL DIFFERENCE DOES YOUR THEORY OF LANGUAGE MAKE?

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We find it interesting that once we learn a new word or have a new insight, we constantly catch ourselves working it into conversations. The day before we didn't even have the term in our vocabulary; now, suddenly, it seems to be the most powerful concept we possess for explaining things. What's more, we suddenly notice that others are using the concept. We are certain that we had never heard the word used before yesterday. Now, we hear it everywhere!

After studying proficient readers and writers of various ages (Harste, Woodward, Burke, 1984; Harste, 1988; Short, 1986), we're beginning to understand this phenomenon. Good learners focus their attention on the new rather than on the old. When you think about this, it makes sense. There's more to learn.

We see learning as a search for patterns that connect. It begins with an anomaly -- something that doesn't click. It proceeds as we attempt to adjust our theories of the world in such a way that the anomaly becomes a pattern.

Interaction facilitates this process. Because language is inherently social, learning is enhanced through conversation. Conversation can create as well as resolve anomalies.

Good language users monitor and understand their own involvement in the learning process. They understand how language is used to make and reshape their world.

Our definition of learning explains why you suddenly find yourself perseverating on a concept. It's an effort to make connections between the new and the old; either to fit the new into your theory of the world or adjust your theory of the world to accommodate the new.

Please note that we're using theory in a personal sort of way. It's not something researchers have that teachers don't, for example. Separating theory and practice is dysfunctional. Both are part of a learning cycle.

The back and forward move from theory to practice and practice to theory is the essence of learning for each of us. As teachers we must invite everyone in our classroom to participate. As language teachers we have a special responsibility in helping learners understand the

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role of language in learning. We're going to argue that new conceptions of curriculum ought not be macro-theories but rather practical theories of literacy built from the individual voice upward.

Another way to say this is that everyone has to be allowed to test their personal theories of the world against practice and vice versa. Success is not a viable criteria to judge the adequacy of practice or theory. In fact, it is when application and explanation fail that a space is created wherein new meanings and potentials for literacy rise. Our society, we will argue, is enriched by increasing the number of such spaces.

The criteria we use for judging the adequacy of a theory of language is the sense of urgency it creates in us. What does it make us want to do differently? Embedded within the notion of urgency are concepts of difference and social purpose.

This paper argues that what a theory of language changes says important things about what the theory is as well as whether or not it makes any difference in the larger scheme of things. It might be dubbed the Marshall McLuhan theory of literacy. We will argue that the medium is the message; that not only what your theory is, but also how it is operationalized and what it changes are important. As such it is a call to language educators to make their politics explicit and to recognize their involvement in the process as something other than innocent.

These thoughts only came to us quite recently. They have changed how we operate. We hope sharing our thinking will foster new conversations in education.

EDUCATION: FROM VOICE TO COMMUNITY

Recently we had the opportunity to visit a Downs Syndrome classroom in San Bernardino, California. Pat Cousins had introduced the teacher, Michael Omen, to whole language. The teacher in turn had introduced predictable books in his classroom as well as mailboxes, a message board, a publishing program, and a reading-writing center.

As part of the curriculum the children had been reading our children's book, *It Didn't Frighten Me* (Goss & Harste, 1981). Hearing that we were coming to the town, the teacher invited us to visit the classroom as part of a year-long Authors Meeting Authors program within the curriculum.

As the teacher was being resourceful -- as whole language teachers are prone to be -- our visit was timed to coincide with Parents' Day. We were the outside guest speakers; the children were the featured authors. As part of the day, the teacher pulled the parents aside to explain the rationale underlying the curriculum.

As we walked into the room, 8-year old Sarah asked to read the book

It Didn't Frighten Me! to us. The parents came to observe. In the characteristic voice of the Downs Syndrome child Sarah read the book.

Although each word of the text was not articulated, it was clear to both the parents and us that Sarah was reading the text and knew what each page said. She was particularly pleased with herself. One might say in fact that she was aglow and that it was contagious.

As Sarah finished we proudly looked up at the parents. The father looked stunned. The mother, with tears in her eyes, grabbed and hugged Sarah. Turning to us she said with some desperation in her voice, "We didn't know that Sarah could learn to r ,! The doctors told us that she was brain dead!!"

Throughout the rest of the day the parents trailed Pat, the teacher, and ourselves asking, "But if she isn't brain dead and can read, what should we be doing?" There was a real sense of urgency in their inquiries.

We like this language story because it highlights the relationships among language and learning as well as learning and education. We think sometimes we forget what education is all about. This language story reminds us that it is about altered and altering social relationships.

Mr. Omen's introduction of predictable books into the classroom allowed Sarah access to literacy. She became a reader.

Being a reader changed Sarah's parents' perception of Sarah. Among the significant others in her life, Sarah changed her social standing. Although we have to question the wisdom of the parents in believing their doctor, the point is that they could no longer perceive Sarah, like their doctors had suggested, as brain dead. Sarah could read. Sarah could learn. They would have to interact with her differently.

As language teachers we know that literacy empowers. Sarah makes this empowerment concrete. To become literate means to change one's social standing, to alter one's position in the world, to have a voice, to be heard.

The empowering nature of language and literacy is why we and several others are such proponents of whole language. We see whole language as an attempt to operationalize what we currently know about language and learning. In classroom environments based on what we currently know we have repeatedly seen children who had been silenced gain a voice.

Given the nature of our society, we believe it is important that our conceptions of literacy begin with the notion of voice and the importance of hearing everyone's voice. In supposedly democratic societies we especially believe it is important to hear voices which have been previously silenced.

Scholars, scholarship, and theories of language must not be thought of as politically neutral. To take no stance -- to say what was good enough for us is good enough for our children -- is to maintain the existing social order. To take no stance is to empower those who have always been empowered and disempower the same groups that have always been disempowered. Politics is the language of priorities.

What a theory changes tells you a lot about what that theory is. Given the nature of our society, who our theories empower is important.

If you understand this, then you can understand why we are never thrilled to see a good whole language teacher accept a gifted and talented teaching position. While we believe these children too need good education, they already find the existing structure empowering. Educators as well as the theories of literacy they advocate must have a sense of social purpose about them.

Our criteria for a good theory of literacy is the same as for a good book. Does it create a sense of urgency in you? Sarah's language story reminds us of our calling by clarifying what we -- as educators first, and language specialists second -- are all about.

VOICE

Tom Fox, an ex-graduate student at Indiana in the Department of English, took as his dissertational topic the setting up of a composition classroom which would empower each of the students in his class (Fox, 1986). He was somewhat disappointed with the results in that he didn't think that he had moved the students far enough along.

We think this failure to recognize the progress that was made is an easy one to fall into. We tend to look for progress in our terms, we tend not to be able to listen; to hear powerful new voices telling us what difference our different learning environment has created.

A journal entry from one of the students in Tom Fox's composition class is telling. Think of the insight into language this journal entry represents. She's a Black graduate of a Chicago high school. She's only a freshman in college. We wish we had had her insight when we were her age:

"I used to keep a journal and write all of the time. I tried to write differently than I speak...like the teachers wanted. But that's not me. Lately I've come to realize that writing is my enemy."

At first blush an entry such as this does not warm the cockles of a composition teacher's heart. Yet, it should. What she is saying is extremely important. Her insight can begin a much needed conversation.

Put yourself in a Black history class. Under these conditions, would

it be so difficult to see yourself saying, "Lately I've come to realize that the way I grew up is my enemy."

"If the criteria doesn't change," she is saying, "I'll always come in last. We can't be equal on these terms. At best it is a game. It's not me. We have no true voice."

She understands things we and other language educators don't. She's suggesting that in the very way we structure classrooms and school we prioritize certain voices and simultaneously guarantee that others will be silenced. Until the rules change, she has no true voice.

She underestands why the state testing movements in Indiana, Michigan, Illinois and elsewhere are so misquided. She knows that since the rules haven't changed any educator who knows these states can predict which districts, which schools, which groups of children will come in first, second, third, and last. Another test prioritizing the same old things won't solve a thing.

Tom Fox's curriculum was successful. It did empower students. Empowerment begins when each of us is able to name the world as we see it. It means calling a lemon a lemon. We are suggesting that we begin here, too.

Language plays an important role in education. It is by naming the world as we see it through language that differences are noted and transformative conversations begun.

Language allows us to parse experience. In this process we make the subjective objective. The labels we create allow us to distance ourselves from the here and now as well as objectify our experience. We can turn it over, study it, reflect on it.

Giving expression to a chunk of experience affords us the opportunity to make our experience public. Because of its social nature, languaging sets up the potential for conversations and, again, via distancing and the new perspectives that others offer, reflexivity and more learning.

To be reflexive is to learn to use oneself and others as instruments for learning. To be able to interrogate, as Tom Fox's Black student was able to do, the social, historical, and political roots of the constructs by which she had been making sense of the world is to glimpse what role literacy might potentially play in service of societies such as ours.

The Writing-Is-My-Enemy language story highlights how education can take away voice as well as support its development. By understanding the latter, new conversations which transform thinking and education are possible. As such this language story illustrates the generative power of voice as well as the role voice must play in a new explanation of how language enhances learning. Sarah's San Bernardino language story demonstrates that when such new voices are heard and

acted upon the result is a changed social order. Together these language stories clarify the binding and important relationship between literacy and citizenship.

A good theory of literacy is like a good mirror. It allows us to see by putting things into perspective. It allows us to unpack the constructs we use and see them in socio-political historical time. In a democracy literacy goes well beyond competency, training, consumerism, or even indoctrination. To be truly literate is to have and make choices as well as use literacy to reposition yourself in the social order. It goes well beyond decoding or encoding print. It even goes beyond reader response. To be truly literate is to use reading and writing to transform your understanding by using yourself to outgrow your very self.

The Black student in Tom Fox's classroom has risen beyond false consciousness. She sees herself and old definitions of literacy as disabling. It is from her vision that the potential arises for new conversations and the erasing of false consciousness about our own work, the theories we propose, this conference, and what each politically represents.

CONVERSATION

The notions of voice and conversation we think are powerful. They have about them the sense of oral language. While written language can serve the same function as oral language, the distancing potential of language is highlighted. That's why it's so easy for others to think that they have dealt with your ideas once they have been written simply by filing them. Voice and conversation are what we see as primary terms in a new theory of literacy.

It isn't the case that we only have a single voice, however. The process writing movement has taught us that pieces are sometimes best served by single voice, not people.

We used to think that "role" was a more powerful construct than voice. Given a social model of literacy learning, we thought that what we needed to do was value collaboration for its ability to produce a group of likeminded individuals or thought collective. The role of the intellectual in such a collective was to articulate in theoretical terms the group's thinking.

The problem with this position is that we still were prioritizing the academic voice. It was the voice that could lend credibility to the workings of the group. The value of teachers and researchers working together was that the researcher could put what the teacher knew in academic terms, thus dressing up practical knowledge and making it presentable.

It took us a good long while to see this position as elitist. We now believe that neither we nor you can speak for others. Others must

speak for themselves. Nor is it the case that our voice is theoretical and the teacher's voice practical. It took an elementary classroom teacher to help gain this insight.

Heidi Mills, David Whitin, and Jean Anne Clyde are editing a book on whole language (Mills, Whitin, & Clyde, in preparation). Their idea is to have various teachers write profiles of their classrooms in hopes that readers will come to understand that whole language is a generative philosophy of language learning, not a particular approach to instruction. To this end they invited some ten whole language teachers to describe their classrooms.

Being recent graduates of Indiana University and victims of the position we were then taking, it is not surprising that they wanted whole language theory clearly articulated up front. To old ends they invited John McInerny, a first grade teacher from Indianapolis, and myself (Harste) to write the opening piece.

Their notion was that I would explicate the tenets of a whole language theory and that John, as a classroom teacher, would say which ones he found cogent and how he went about implementing them in his classroom.

Because deadlines still bother John, he took it upon himself to call a luncheon meeting at Mama Grisanti's, a local resturant, at which time he hoped that he and I could settle on what our chapter would be so that he could "get going."

In thinking about the chapter I had decided that what created in me a sense of urgency about whole language was people's limited definition of what they thought whole language was. To that end I had decided that what I wanted my part of the chapter to be was an explication of whole language as a theory of language, a theory of learning, and a theory of professional self-renewal. For each of these theses I had listed what I thought were the set of tenets or key assumptions that undergirded them.

John tape recorded the session -- a very dangerous activity as any contributing author can tell you. He even transcribed the tape and gave me a copy -- an even more crippling act.

At one point I say, "I want to know one thing. If I asked you what are the principles of language or insights into language that have guided you, what are they?"

He responds, "Insights into language??? See now, that's not my concern...Insights into language, hum. That would be something I would talk about in a college classroom. My only concern in the classroom is to do unto the kids as I would want to be done unto me. I've got to follow their lead to a certain point. Like I remember in school plenty of bad experiences, then in 8th grade, I was part of a group of kids that were very good readers and the teacher wisely decided not to put us through a basal and said do whatever you want.

Do whatever you want, read whatever books you want, just give us a report on it. And the report could be in any form. We did plays, standard book reports, anything at all. I was thinking about this this morning and thought we read *All Quiet on the Western Front, Of Mice and Men,* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* books we never would have touched until our junior or senior year in high school. We thought we were hot stuff so we tried them. That was the year in our life when I probably read the widest variety of materials. And it was because they just let us go.

JH: So, in some ways, what you're really saying is that when people start to talk to you about whole language there's a lot of resonance with your own experience.

[No one ever said I was a fast learner!]

JM: Yeah. Yeah, and just my attitude toward kids. I just want to treat them as people. I want to treat them as thinking people....

JH: If I'm reading you correctly, this conversation raises a concern. I think you are right. If I ask you what are the insights you've got about language that resonated with you from whole language you'd say, "What are you talking about?" Right? Or, you'd say, "I don't know...I don't think about it in that way."

JM: Well, the form of the question frames the context of the answer.

JH: And the other thing is that this book is really designed for teachers so it concerns me because I'm not sure to start off the book -- we're supposed to be chapter one, you know -- to start off the book outside the concerns of teachers....(pause)...There probably are other organizational styles...We could, I suppose, even consider doing a conversation.

JM: That was my first thought, was to have a conversation and annotate it later on.

JH: Do you think we could get to a point where we could give people a perspective of what whole language is?

JM: Yeah.

JH: From a conversation?

JM: Yeah. I think the format itself lends itself to whole language -- ideas passing among people. I think the format itself gives a message.

JH: How do you think we should begin?

JM: I kept thinking about the first time my wife met our relatives and how that relates. We were sitting and there were about fifteen of us at my aunt's house and my grandmother was making a typical meal for

our family -- it was something like leg of lamb and lasagna. No connection to each other, but they had them lying around so they cooked them. So, fifteen Italians sitting down, yelling and shouting, and Carol comes from sort of a Germanic background -- a bit more reserved. She's waiting for everybody to sit down to eat. My cousin starts to eat, then he gets up to go to a hockey game, our other cousin sits down in his place, and starts to eat off his plate, our grandmother is jumping up and down making sure everyone is served and Carol sits there waiting. And I said, "If you don't start eating, it'll all be gone!"

Am I stretching it to suggest that this is something like whole language? Don't hold back until it all just falls into place, you've just got to do it.

JH: I think that's a great place to start the article.

JM: I felt like Carol when I first started teaching. Now after four years, it feels much more comfortable, but it didn't feel very comfortable the first year.

JH: Well, you could cast yourself as a learner all the way through.

JM: Right, because I feel very uncomfortable casting myself as someone who knows a lot about this. I get easily embarrassed when people visit my classroom. I know where my classroom could be and I know where it is now. It's not where I want it to be. In that sense I prefer to set myself up as a learner....

You get the picture. We find the following observations more than just interesting:

(1) John seems to make his share of theoretical points: "Well, the form of the question frames the context of the answer." "We think the format itself lends itself to whole language -- ideas passing among people." These statements are extremely theoretical, if not academically abstract.

(2) Via metaphor he makes his thinking concrete and connectable. His story about his new bride meeting his Italian family is one with which teachers can connect and from which a sense of community can be developed.

(3) Our conversation confirms each other's thinking as well as transforms what the final product will look like. It's a matter of really listening and building from each other's thinking.

(4) It's clearly the case that we have a story to tell and that the profession is enriched with our conversation. Mine is an old story -- the value of front loading theory. His is the one that is fresh -- what that theory looks like when transformed into guidelines for practice.

As teachers and theorists we tend to problematize the world for others. Our course syllabi and theories decide which constructs are most useful, which perspectives should be taken, which ideas are most productively dealt with in which sequence.

We've begun trying to act differently. It's why we accepted an invitation to come to Mount Saint Vincent University and work for two weeks with an off-campus master's program. Andy Manning had designed the program around the notion of education as inquiry. The fourteen students were all teachers, supervisors or administrators in the Kings County District School Board. They had been conducting research projects in their own classrooms throughout the year. We were invited to speak to the group in the fall as they were about to start on their projects and again this summer as they were about to pull together and present what they made of their data. We accepted the invitation largely to explore how one really goes about supporting teachers as they gain their own voice. We were impressed with the quality of the these teachers' inquiries as well as their willingness to examine critically how their own involvement affected the results that they found. Several said they could never view teaching the same way again -- they'd be asking different questions, seeking different answers. As we're writing this piece we're not sure how successful this project will be. Both Andy and we have lots to learn. It's not easy supporting the development of other people's voice. We haven't had a lot of practice. Probably it is because we have been shouting.

We've also tried to put our own teaching house in order. Several graduate students under the direction of Egon Guba at Indiana University began a collaborative ethnographic research project to look at teacher education (Beverstock, Myers, Serebrin & Smitten, 1988). Their inquiry into my teaching (Harste) made me realize that I tended to treat 5-year olds and doctoral students quite differently than I do preservice teachers. Although I ended the course with an Expert Project in which the preservice teachers could choose any topic about the teaching of reading they wished to explore in depth, for most of the course I was pretty directive. I knew what they needed to know to become a teacher of reading and simply ran them through the paces. Because many sessions involved the students in small group discussions of topics of our choice I was happy even if they always weren't. The graduate students found that a lot of what I thought I was teaching made no sense to the students, that my demeanor intimidated them, and that often they did not feel they could ask me their real questions.

I'm going to begin and end the course with Expert Projects next year. It's a way for me to get to know what each student has to contribute to the curriculum. It's a way for me to extract myself from the center of instruction and begin to hear new voices.

These efforts are small, but have a sense of social purpose about them. We invite you to begin. By continuing to prioritize our teacher voices, we silence others. By listening to new voices we identify new anomalies, start new conversations and explore

potentially new behaviors. Who would have ever thought that learning to listen would have had such an educational comeback?

John's story teaches us that the prerequisite for such conversations about education is that we begin to hear new voices. It is our belief that real conversations begin by understanding and using difference. It is difference that forges community as well as connectedness.

COMMUNITY

Lynn Manning invited us into her split first and second grade classroom at The Head of St. Margaret's Bay in Nova Scotia, Canada. The children had a special treat for us, a *Jolly Postman*-type book (Ahlberg & Ahlberg, 1986) based on the various children's books that we had had a hand in authoring. *Our Icky Picky Sister* (Hazel & Harste, 1983) had made a great impression: "She rolled her eyes. She crossed her arms. She said she didn't like it."

Each letter of invitation was a Canadian original. Together they reflected a classroom environment where children were supported in their efforts to connect with books as well as explore the meaning potential of language through writing.

Sandy wrote us a letter, "Dear Jerry, Our sister bugs us when we work. Can you write us a book so our sister will settle down. If you give us it, we will read it to her" (see Figure 1).

Julia connected with another of our books, *Cats* (Burke & Harste, 1983). "Dear Jerry: We really like the way you make those little sayings like 'The ancient Egyptians thought that cats were sacred symbols of the gods.' We wanted a cat but dad hates furry creatures" (see Figure 2).

Patrick wrote his letter in code. Knowing of our interest in animals given the books we had written (*A Dog is to Love; Animal Babies; A Horse, Of Course*), he included a very clever "Animal Peka Boo Book" (see Figure 3). Erin and Amy collaborated together and wrote us a poem, "Roses are red, violets are blue, you are the best author I ever knew" (see Figure 4).

Several children asked us to write an equivalent book for little brothers. Kelly didn't ask, she wrote her own predictable "Icky Picky Brothers" book ending each page with "I wish we had a sister" (see Figure 5). "Sometimes my brother is a pain because he puts soap and lotion on my toothbrush before I brush my teeth.....I wish we had a sister (Page 1)! When I have a nap he wakes us up and says that it is time for lunch. I go out but lunch isn't on the table....I wish we had a sister! (Page 2)!

Lynn has what we would call a seamless curriculum. The children know what they have to do as well as what they want to do and get on doing it. Children move freely from one activity to the next.

Lynn worries that the children in her classroom do not finish everything they start. We told her not to, that what we were arguing was that educators and language theorists too need to take a fresh piece of paper.

Lynn has a pen pals project with a fellow class of first graders "in the valley." Julia's letter follows. It's a new form, a clever synthesis of what is currently on the floor of literacy in the classroom.

Her opening page reads: "To Patty, From Julia." She includes the date, "May 20," and not insignicantly, given that it's spring -- a kite. She decorates the kite with hearts to sign affection and friendship (see Figure 6.1).

Page 2 reads: "Dear Patty, I'm in grade 1. Our brother is 2 years old so he doesn't go to school or playschool. There's only one problem with us we HATE MY BROTHER!!!" It's important to note her variations of print. The "Dear" is flowery. The "We hate our brother" in oversized letters thus giving the effect of yelling. Her artwork, the disgusted face of a 7-year old sister, is masterful. If we asked you to take out a piece of paper and draw a face showing total disgust, could you do as well? We know we'd have trouble. She closes with "Sorry for yelling" (see Figure 6.2).

Page 3 reads: "We hope you understand because HE'S A PAIN IN THE BUT!!!!" She adds paranthetically "Sorry for yelling again." She embellishes this page too with art, though what makes it great is her intuitive understanding of the cooperative principles of language and how they can be broken in the service of communication (see Figure 6.3).

Page 4 reads: "Our brother walks on our stomach and won't share his stuff with us and gets a lot of attention AND we HATE IT!!!! Sorry again" (see Figure 6.4).

She closes with a simple "Love Julia H." (see Figure 6.5). Wow, don't you hope she someday gets a job for Hallmark?

We chose a community language story to illustrate that classrooms organized on a theory of literacy that values hearing individual voices must be judged by a different set of performance criteria than has traditionally been the case. To evaluate Julia's growth on the basis of spelling, grammar, genre or even more generically "development" is to impose old eyes on a new event.

Different environments support different learning. We need to explore new conceptions of literacy on their own terms, not in terms of constructs we used to make sense of an earlier definition.

It drives us nuts when people use convention as a criterion to judge a good whole language program. The really interesting things are

happening elsewhere. At best conventional control is a fringe benefit of the language process.

It is not insignificant that the letters coming out of Lynn Manning's classroom are a new genre. To judge them on the basis of the parts of a friendly letter is to miss their uniqueness, their difference, their fundamental challenge to extant definitions of literacy. There is no frozen genre form that could be set up as a criterion. They represent a variety of new genre as well as a variety of broader scrimmages between old and new forms. To use genre as the lens through which to make sense of Lynn's classroom is to distort, if not miss, the new literacy event.

If genre is important children will encounter it as they explore various contexts of literacy. It's like Dolch sight words. Since Dolch words are supposedly the most frequently encountered words in the English language, we need not use them as a curricular blocking variable -- children will encounter them naturally if we but let them read widely.

We sometimes think that socio-economic status, restricted and elaborated codes, class, role, genre, well-formedness, I.Q., developmental stages, and other constructs are simply blocking variables hallucinated by neo-behaviorists in linguistics, psychology, and sociology so that they would have something to run their statistical data against. They should have no a priori reality in a new theory of literacy. We all play many roles even in the same context. It depends on the mind of the beholder. Social class is a state of mind. Social class is more an attitude than a fixed state of being. Even yuppiehood can be outgrown.

To say this is not to trivialize social class nor the struggle that lies ahead in transforming our various societies. It is to caution us, rather, that we should not freeze this construct by front loading our theories of literacy with it. Good theories of literacy create realities as well as reflect them.

Development assumes continuity and connectedness between an old and new paradigm and hence, too, misleads. That's why emergent scales of literacy are misguided. They legitimize cataracts when 20/20 vision is needed. Tomorrow is another day for us as well as for those whose theoretical position differs from ours. New suspected patterns must be noted in pencil, not in ink.

We think it is worthwhile even to suppose that such things as ability and disability are a function of context, not genetics. We must assume differences and learn to explore what these differences are in their own right. To do otherwise is a failure to appreciate and explore the potentials that theoretical difference makes.

We still maintain that experience is a more viable construct for understanding language learning than developmental stage theory (Harste, Woodward, Burke, 1984). Sociolinguistically experience can

be operationalized as that which is highlighted in the language community at a given moment in socio, political, and historical time.

Julia's letter is a magnificent orchestration of the contexts of literacy she is experiencing. In her letter one can see the influence of the book *My Icky Picky Sister*, our visit to her classroom, our suggestion that they write the sequel *Our Icky Picky Brother*, her understanding of humor, of letter writing, of her pen pal and what she might enjoy. Yet, she too is not a free agent. She too is operating under constraints. If she wants to send her pen pal a letter, it has to be done now to be delivered prior to their Pen Pal Party next week.

If, as cognitive psychologists tell us, learning is a search for patterns that connect, then Julia's performance is significant. Her meaning making represents patterns that connect among experience and text, task and text, text and text. To see this effort as cute but essentially falling outside the mainstream of letter writing is to fail to appreciate the powerful theory of literacy that supported its blossoming in this classroom. It is also a failure to see learning as potential behavior and an excuse for not exploring the understanding a different view of literacy provides.

The problem is that not only do we use the wrong set of criteria by which to judge difference, but that we use much too narrow a set. A good language arts program expands communication potential rather than shuts it down. It is through the expansion of communication potential that new voices can be heard.

Julia's letter is a proliferation of signs. She effectively orchestrates art, layout, print, arrows, and various typefaces to communicate her message. Like good literature, there are layers and layers of meaning. There is the surface text as well as subtexts -- hearts for love, kites for spring. Together this orchestration communicates outward as well as inward -- who she is, what she likes, what recent events are important to her. The result says much about her; it communicates as well as connects.

Art, music, dance, mathematics, and other communication systems are languages too. We cannot and should not demand that artists speak English any more than we can assume other cultures speak English. We delude ourselves if we believe the verbocentric ways in which we teach math, art, music and even French in our French immersion schools adequately address the issue.

Schools should be places where various voices can be heard using various media. We assume that other sign systems function cognitively and sociologically much as language does and hypothesize that what we have said about language in a system of knowing, learning, and education holds for other communication systems. We do not believe that persons or cultural groups whose dominant way of knowing is something other than language are less literate or less logical than are those whose dominant way of knowing is language. Different cultural groups have different ways of knowing. By not opening up our

language arts curricula to these ways of knowing we reproduce the social order. By keeping our curricula lingua- or verbocentric we predetermine which voices will or will not be heard.

That Aborigines are and continue to be on the bottom of the literacy ladder in Australia, Samoeans in Hawaii, and the Native Americans in the United States and Canada, should give us pause. The push should not be to make them oreo cookies -- black on the outside; white inside. Rather we should be asking ourselves, "What kind of environment can we set up in our classroom so that these voices can be heard?" This is not easy but it is the stuff from which a more democratic model of literacy can evolve.

We found Shirley Brice Heath's work absolutely liberating when it first came out (Heath, 1983). She helped us understand context in a new way -- as part of the linguistic sign. We now operationally define culutre for ourselves as when we hear ourselves sounding like our mothers and we promised we would never sound like them. Context and culture are not things we can leave on the school house steps; they are part of each of our ways with words.

Yet to prioritize and never really question school literacy, as she and the townspeople teachers with whom she worked did, is a funny juxtaposition of literacy, schooling, and citizenship. The people of Roadville and Trackton have alternate ways of knowing which enrich both their lives and ours. She showed us this with stunning clarity. But she also shows us that both she and we have yet to learn how to value their voices as we move between practice and theory.

Karen Smith, a sixth grade teacher from Tempe, Arizona, begins to have her students explore culture by capitalizing on the various ethnic groups that make up her inner city classroom. Not only did this study give students a new respect for their own culture, but those of others. When we videotaped in their classroom for a new videotape series that we are developing (Harste & Jurewicz, in process), they were as interested in our German and Polish backgrounds as we were in their backgrounds. We became a classroom resource. A group of students reading *The Steppe* interviewed members of the camera crew in an effort to relate the experiences of the family in the story to American immigration and the experiences of their own families.

When we explore things that are of importance to us, we make connections at the level of values. It is from understanding difference that new opportunities for making connections is made possible.

In similar regard, we don't think we have the right to prioritize our voice about the future. If there is one thing we've learned lately it is only in conversation that we can overcome having had our hand in the cookie jar and the false consciousness which it induces. We think we must begin by allowing all voices to be heard and on this basis begin needed new conversations and collective action.

As many of you know we've been working in classrooms using an authoring cycle as a frame for organizing curricular experiences (Harste & Jurewicz, 1985; Harste, Pierce & Cairney, 1985; Harste, Short, & Burke, 1988). For us the authoring cycle is a metaphor for the learning cycle. Several scholars have attempted to develop heuristics which convey this cycle -- action/reflection/reflexivity; engage/connect/reflect; perceiving/ideating/presenting (Peirce, 1966; Smith, E. B., 1987; Snyder, 1986; Stephens, 1986).

After having started in classrooms with writing we began exploring what the authoring cycle might look like when reading as opposed to writing was the highlighted language system (Short, 1986). The result was Literature Circles where groups of children chose what books they read, kept a Literature Log of what connections they make, shared their connections and understanding in a group, and finally collectively decided, using any sign system they desired, which of all their understandings they would present to the group.

More recently we've begun to explore what the authoring cycle might look like when art or music or some other communication system is the highlighted system. Laura Westberg, a graduate student in Early Childhood Education, has been working in a 3-4 preschool room. Using what we learned from our work in literature, she begins by allowing children first to explore art widely. To this end she brings in fine art pieces and sets them around the classroom. Children live with the pieces and then decide which to study more in-depth. Laura gives them a journal. They record their observations and then come to discuss their findings.

After studying a post-impressionistic portrait of a woman, Victor wrote in his Journal, "She has a long neck. She has skinny eyebrows." In the group Laura explores whether or not they have ever seen people with such long necks, and if not, what they thought the artist was trying to say. Afterwards children explore the media by making their own creations.

Victor made a bull out of clay. He took his bull over and set it next to one that Picasso had made. We loved his comment, "Boy, Picasso didn't know much about making bulls, did he?"

Victor's comment personally connects him with the history of art that precedes him. His comment reflects membership in "the literacy club" (Smith, 1987). His voice is valued. He has make an entree to both conversation and community.

David Bleich and the senior author offered a doctoral seminar on "Social Perspectives on Literacy." Building off of the book *Women's Ways of Knowing* (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986) the course was organized so that the course instructors and the students might live the thesis that community and connectedness are the hallmarks of knowing. Instead of an adversarial model of literacy, collaborative workgroups were formed. Each session had a plenary session as well as small group work time in which students shared

two-page free write response papers to the readings that were being done.

Jing Tai, a doctoral student from mainland China, was a member of this class. Although he participated in small group discussion he had no public voice. Our task was to find a plenary setting in which he would be the expert. Knowing his background in literature, we invited Susan Gubar, a leading feminist on campus, to speak. We wanted her to critique and make public her concerns about our male efforts at creating a classroom environment where other voices could be heard, as well as talk about her scholarly critiques of supposedly great literature and the image and silencing of women she found they embodied.

Most students -- as well as at least one of the course instructors -- found the session overwhelming. Susan made the assumption that any doctoral student worth his or her salt would be as familiar with Elizabethian literature as she was. During the question and answer session, Jing Tai spoke up. He was concerned about the implications of her talk for what Chinese literature he should teach. He waited patiently to see if others had a question and then asked his second. "Explain what you mean when you say it is not just what literature is presented, but how it is interrogated that is important."

David Bleich interrupted one of Jing Tai's questions to ask his own. Jing Tai never went back to finish asking his question when the opportunity later arose. At break we badgered Bleich saying, "Don't you appreciate an historical moment when it occurs!?" He hadn't noticed, until we pointed it out, that Jing Tai had gained a public voice and an altered social position.

Strong communities are not formed on the basis of likeminded individuals, but rather on difference, where the different voices making up the community are heard and listened to. It is by hearing different voices that the resources available in a community of learners become known as well as transformed. If everyone thinks alike there is no conversation. It is from difference that real conversation begins.

In classrooms we have found that the more each person gains their own voice, the more of a thought collective we become. Face to face conversation is key. We like to set up workgroups so that initially the participants are eye ball to eye ball and knee to knee.

The function of curriculum is to give perspective. Classrooms which prioritize understanding the role that language plays in enhancing learning become communities of learners. To have a sense of urgency is to see curriculum in service of community and to understand politics as a language of priorities.

CONCLUSION

Our new criteria for a good theory of language is rooted in our beliefs about the nature of our society as well as our understanding of the role that language plays in a system of knowing:

1. Did we allow each person in the community to have a voice -- to name the world as they see it? The criteria we use to see if this is operationalized is whether or not at the end of a course we can point to one thing at least that each student has taught us.

2. Did we begin needed new conversations? The criteria we use here is the number of unanticipated conversations that were begun. One simple way that we monitor progress on this front is to ask what are we thinking about now that we weren't thinking about when the course began. What new sense of urgency do we have?

3. Did we provide a mechanism whereby those conversations can continue? This is tricky, yet it is the most important. In research terms we call this "pragmatic effect." What happens when we remove ourselves from the setting? This may be the criterion we all should use. It's an indication of what your theory changed, if anything. We've had some informal study groups that have gone meeting formally up to six months after a course. We take it as success that students who were at Indiana University at the same time still regularly communicate with each other, and that the most common complaint we receive from recent graduates is that their host institution is a "wasteland -- nobody to think with." We take it as a failure on our part that many of our students want to move rather than work at developing collaborative interdisciplinary thought collectives of faculty and teacher groups in their own area. We haven't communicated it well -- new conceptions of literacy take action as well as reflection.

In parting we want to point out that these performance criteria semantically reside in a different ballpark from those we've traditionally used -- convention and control. We see criteria such as these as having the potential for hearing new voices, starting new conversations, and becoming a reflexive community of language learners who act knowing full well how their theory of language can make a transformative difference.

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FIGURE HEADINGS

Figure 1. Letter (Sandy, Grade 1).

Figure 2. Letter (Julia, Grade 2).

Figure 3. Letter and "Animal Peka Book Book" Page (Patrick, Grade 1).

Figure 4. Poem (Erin, Grade 1; Amy, Grade 2).

Figure 5. "Icky Picky Brothers" Book Pages (Kelly, Grade 2).

Figure 6. Pen Pal Letter (Julia, Grade 2).

Figure 6.1 -- Page 1
Figure 6.2 -- Page 2
Figure 6.3 -- Page 3
Figure 6.4 -- Page 4
Figure 6.5 -- Page 5

Dear JARY My stsen BUGS me
Weh I WORK. can you Rite
Me A Book SO My stser
will sabbL Dodwn.
IF you Gave me it
I will reid it to Her

to Jrry

FROM sah~~y~~

Dear Jerry:

Iriley Like the way you mack thos littel sayings Like: the ancient egyqtians thought that Cats were sacred Symdolsfo their gods. I wontid a Cat but dad hats fery Criahcers.

from: Julia H

Dear Jerry her
is a kaoD for you to
fegr out. ↓

zd 1 3 11 21 9 15 18 11 1 13 9 14 7

Patrick

her is a anpmel 9eka
Bo Book

I am Wiat AnD
I ef KraBS?

a Seygal

roses are reds
Violets are blues
your the best auther
I ever now

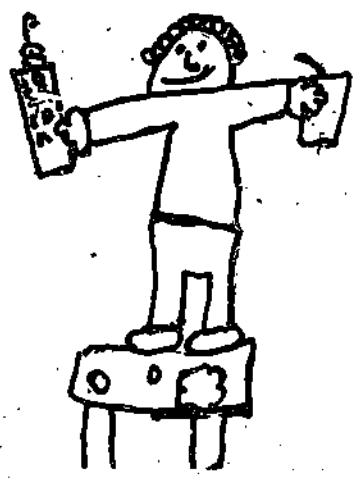
from
Erin
& Amy

Icky piKy Brothers

by Kelly

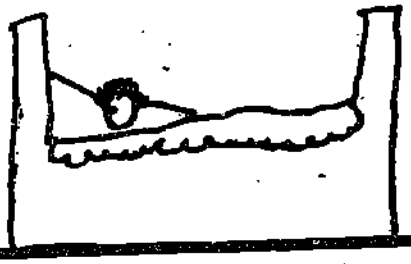
Sometimes my brother is a pane because...

He puts soup and loshin on my toothbrash befor I brash my teeth.

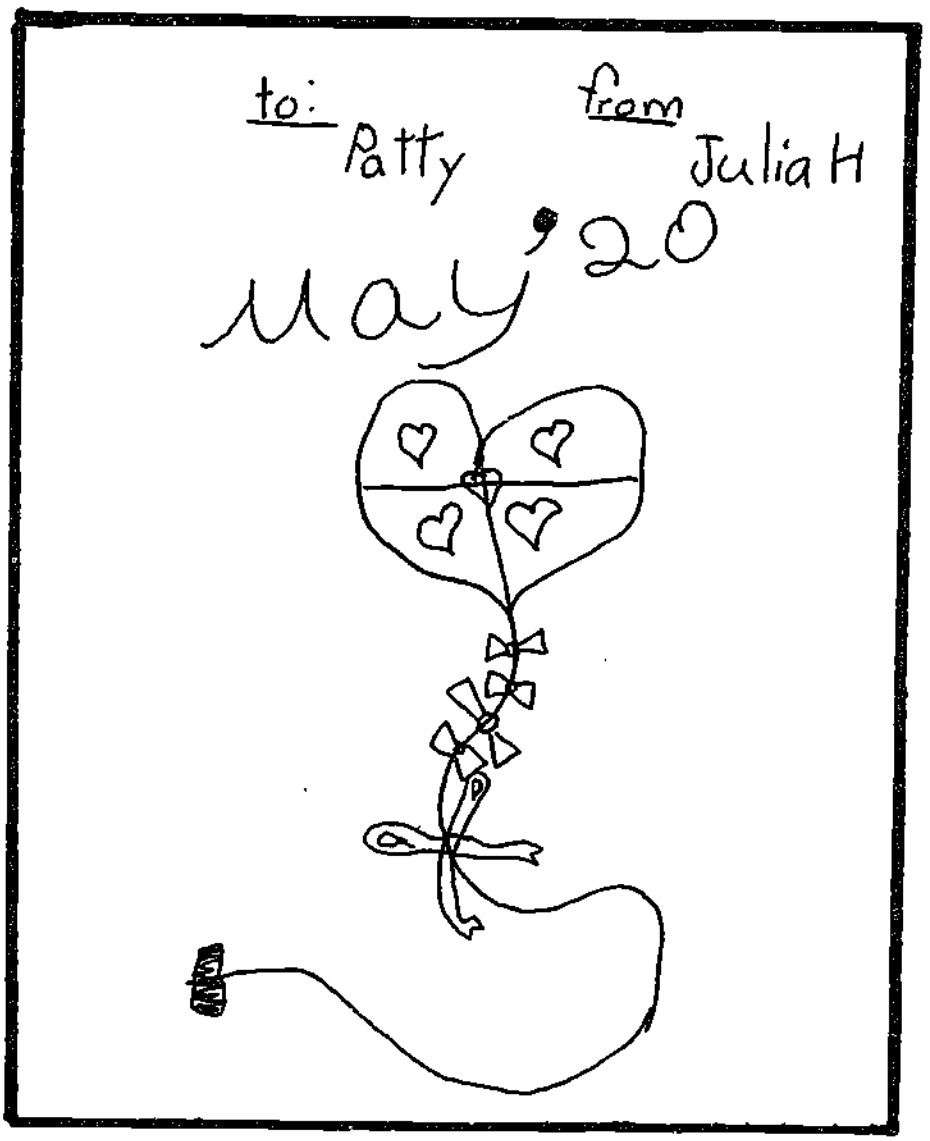


I wish I hada sister!

When I have a nape he wakes me up and Sise that It is time for lunch I go out but lunch isint on the table.



I wish I had a sister.


to: Patty
from Julia H
May '20

Dear. Patty

Im in grad 1. my Brother is 2 years old so he dasintgo to socll or playsocll. thers only oun problem wethe me

I HATE MY BOTHER !!!!

Sory for yelling.

I hope you donderstard becase

HE'S A 

PANE IN

THE BU TE

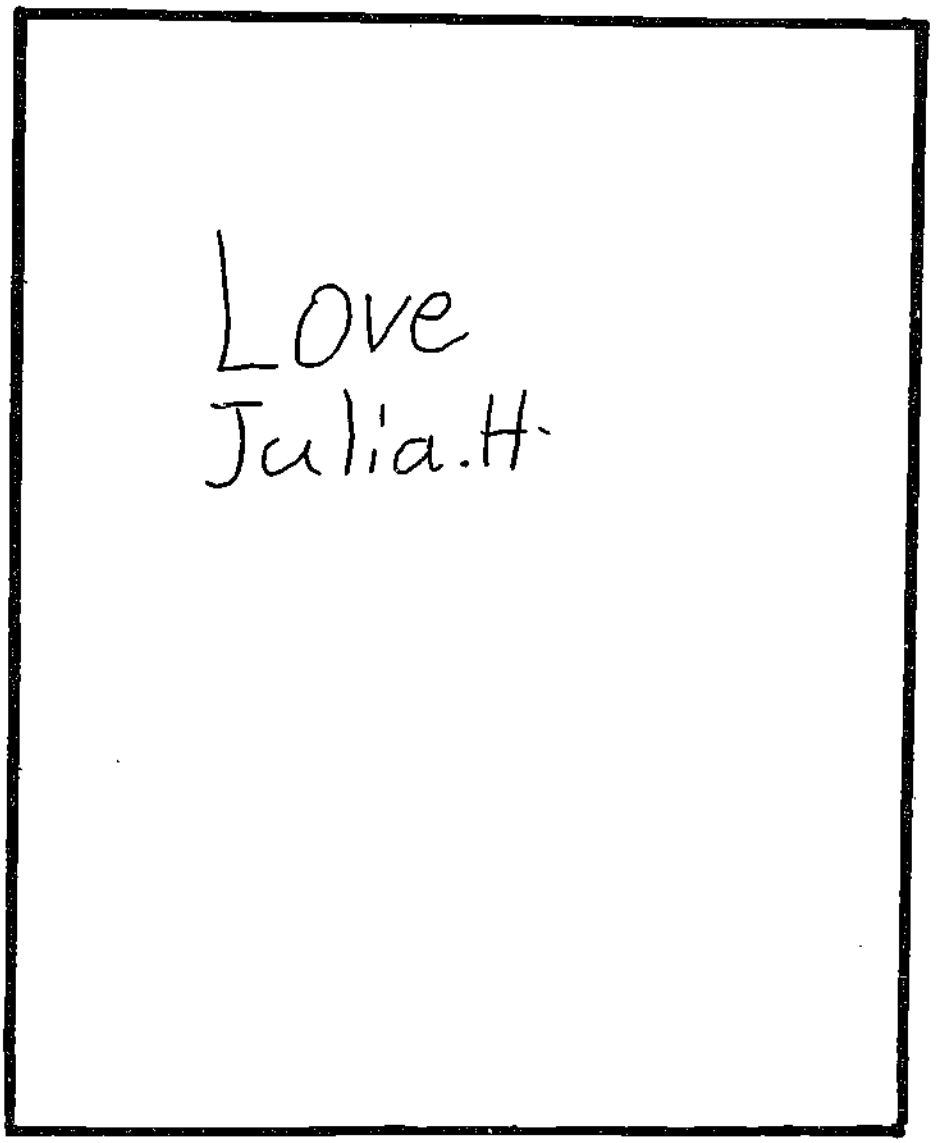
O O O O O O sory for yelling again.

my Brother wacks on Stomic he wont Sare his stofe with me and gets alot more atnchon

AND I HATE I T!!!!!

Sory again.

↑


Love
Julia.H.