

A Search For Meaning: Secondary ESL Students and Reader Response

by

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Abstract

This study, *A Search for Meaning: Secondary ESL Students and Reader Response*, involved a year long examination of two secondary ESL classrooms which had as their foundation a literature-based, response-centered curriculum. The research was concerned with what we can learn when we examine the use of a reader response approach within a secondary ESL classroom. In order to investigate this question a case study methodology was used.

The study involved two groups of Asian secondary ESL students who were enrolled in pull-out ESL classes in a suburban, senior secondary school. These students were designated through district wide testing as being Level Three (beginning/ intermediate) and Level Four (intermediate to advanced).

As part of the year-long curriculum both groups of students were involved in a variety of activities which supported personal meaning. The same belief system influenced the curriculum for both groups of students; however, a variety of factors influenced the degree of involvement and personal meaning making that the two groups of students exhibited.

Both classes achieved gains in terms of the complexity and commitment to personal response and meaning-making. However, the Level Three students made greater gains in their written responses.

Both groups were still at the emergent stages of making meaningful oral responses to poetry or prose.

In conclusion, this research indicates that secondary ESL students can benefit from a literature-based, response-centered program in terms of their written responses, given that key elements are in place. Some of these elements are: a sense of community, the use of instructional frameworks such as Readers' and Writers' workshops, implementation of dialogue and response journals, thematic units, and the on-going use of literature in the classroom.

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A Search for Meaning: Secondary ESL Students and Reader Response

Chapter I: The Problem

A. Introduction

The process which brings me to this page, to type these words, to make sense and meaning of my work as an educator, has been a path that in many ways I did not know I was on. As we are born not knowing that we are beginning a journey, so this paper is a creation that did not know it was coming into being. This journey of wondering and personal growth has not been clear and easy yet it has led ultimately to greater understanding about my pedagogical practices and of course has opened the door to further questions and provided the seeds of future explorations.

My beliefs about teaching are the roots from which this work has grown. The uniquely personal and at the same time socially-mediated nature of learning is one of my fundamental beliefs. Connected to this belief and drawing energy from it, I have come to value approaches to teaching such as the use of literature and the fostering of personal responses to what is read.

Vygotsky's (1981) perspective on learning with its attendant notion of the Zone of Proximal Development has also become part of my belief system. The belief that students can and should be engaged

in learning which takes them to a place where they are challenged (with support) has been at the heart of my decision not to use high-interest/low-vocabulary reading materials in my mainstream or ESL classrooms.

The transfer of these fundamental beliefs into my work in ESL classrooms was in many ways a seamless move. What was not as smooth was the implementation of approaches and strategies that matched these beliefs.

The "if...then" propositions often caused cognitive dissonance. If, for example, I believe in the social nature of learning, then students learning English need to be allowed to work in groups in order to talk, share and clarify issues and ideas together. Many of my students found group work, with its shared responsibilities and the expectation of dialogue, not only difficult but at times unnerving. All the students in my ESL classes were Asian and had come from traditional educational settings in Hong Kong or Taiwan.

The challenge I faced was to find ways to support these students as they engaged in group work and at the same time to respect the need for individualism. Meeting the students' needs while developing opportunities for shared learning experiences continues to be a challenge.

Which brings us to this work and the notion of reader response both as a theory and an approach. In terms of this paper reader

response theory refers to a pattern of thinking and talking that begins with the reader's primary response to what is being read. Response-based teaching begins with students' responses to the work and moves out to develop deeper understandings through closer readings, which now have a purpose for the reader.

My interest in reader response, though I did not know it by its name, began many years ago when I taught in mainstream classrooms. I valued my students' personal reactions to what they were reading and attempted to find ways for them to express their ideas in the classroom. I was and am, "attracted to the notions underlying a pedagogy of student thoughtfulness becauseit provides students with ownership of their own learning; motivates and engages them in making sense; and provides context for them to try out, negotiate, and refine their ideas in interaction with others" (Langer, 1994, p. 203) .

While working with ESL students I continued to believe that there was not only a place for a personal response to reading, but also a deep need. Again, the implementation of this transferred belief system to an ESL setting was a profound challenge. And so began "the search": the students and I, working together, to see how and in what ways the notion of personal response to reading could be made a part of their language learning. While this research does not focus on the transfer of attitudes, skills and knowledge into the mainstream classroom, it is my fundamental belief that the work I do in ESL classrooms should

ultimately be of benefit to my students when they transfer to mainstream classrooms.

This research study is the re-visiting of our work together. It will highlight in particular the use of reader response with Asian, secondary ESL students as they attempt to make meaning of poetry and prose.

The many factors which are at play in this setting will be described as part of this complex and multi-faceted context. A poetry/prose unit will be highlighted but is, in fact, just one illustrative example and part of an entire school year of learning in a literature-based, response-centered, secondary ESL classroom.

B. The Problem

What this research intends is to examine the use of reader response in terms of its utilization with secondary ESL students.

The use of the reader response approach to reading with students for whom English is their first language has its roots in the work of researchers such as Rosenblatt, (1976, 1978,) ; Probst, (1988, 1992) ; Purves, (1988, 1992) ; Dias, (1979, 1987, 1992) ; Langer, (1989) and Meek (1977, 1983). These scholars have shown the pedagogical efficacy of reader response with students in mainstream classrooms. Their research has made it clear that when "all students are treated as thinkers and [we] provide them with the environment as well as the

help to reason for themselves, even the most "at risk" students can engage in thoughtful discussions about literature, develop rich and deep understandings, and enjoy it, too" (Langer, 1994, p: 210) .

In my research I want to examine and describe what happens when ESL students are involved in reader response approaches in their pull-out ESL classroom. These responses will be examined within the context of an entire school year in a literature-based, response-centered classroom.

Metaphorically, these secondary ESL students and their educational setting might be compared to a vibrant, life-filled aquarium. My students find themselves surrounded by a complex environment which includes classroom norms and expectations as well as frequent conflicting school, societal and family expectations.

One could examine each of these issues separately or in a variety of groupings. In my research, I am choosing to dip into this life-filled liquid, to "scoop out" reader response, and examine it closely to see how the use of this theoretical and pedagogical approach influences my students within this complex environment.

Can a response-based approach to reading which so values

personal meaning making, be used with Asian secondary students for whom the experience of being called upon to express personal opinions regarding their reading is so unfamiliar? And further, is it possible or indeed even tenable to ask students to make responses both orally and in written form, in a language which is not their first language?

C. Research Questions

As an educator seeking to incorporate reader response theory into my work with secondary ESL students, several questions have arisen for me. My main research question is "What can be learned when Asian, secondary ESL students are called upon to make personal responses orally and in written form to their reading?"

The following sub-questions guided me in the collection of the data necessary to examine this issue.

1. What beliefs do secondary E.S.L. students hold toward making personal responses to reading both in written and oral form? Do these opinions change over time when students are given repeated opportunities to express personal responses?
2. What approaches or methods are most supportive of students as they work toward making personal oral

responses to reading? What form do these responses take?

3. What forms of written responses do Secondary ESL students make in their response journals when they have been engaged in a literature-based, response-centered program?
4. How does personal selection of reading material affect secondary ESL students' written responses?

D. Significance of the Research

There is an ancient Chinese saying, "May you live in interesting times." It is both a blessing and a curse. Educators in Richmond School District, where this research took place, find themselves in interesting times indeed. They must surely be feeling both edges of this two-edged sword.

As the following data from Teacher magazine (October, 1994) highlights so startlingly, Richmond is undergoing profound demographic changes which are of such magnitude that the effects are difficult to judge.

- Total E.S.L. enrollment: Richmond 8,686
- E.S.L. student numbers as a percentage of the district's total student population: 39%

- Percentage increase in enrolments between
1987-88 and 1993-94 2,581%

Clearly, with an influx of additional-language learners on the magnitude of two thousand percent, there are bound to be attendant stresses and strains on the system. It is important to note however, as the Teacher article points out, educators see many advantages to having these new (additional-language) learners in their classrooms. "Teachers welcome increased cultural diversity in schools; they describe ESL students as assets to the system" (pg. 1) .

It is also clear that these same teachers are feeling the strain of dealing with vast numbers of students for whom English is an additional language. Many teachers have not received any special training that would assist them in working with these students.

ESL students (seem to) present challenges to Richmond educators. Teachers recognize that students new to our country are not just learning "the stuff": knowledge, facts and content. Equally important are the emotional issues that students face. Students are being introduced to a new culture, both on a micro level within the classroom and school culture, and on a macro level with their adaptation to a Canadian way of life. In addition, teachers are seeking to provide not only rich experiences with language, but also opportunities for students to use this language as a vehicle for

learning the provincially mandated curriculum.

In Richmond School District non English-speaking students at the elementary level are enrolled in mainstream classrooms upon their arrival at the school. They are then supported, depending on their level of English language proficiency, through various amounts of either pull-out or in-class support by an ESL teacher.

At the secondary level students are mainstreamed to varying degrees, again depending on the amount of English language support they require in order to eventually be successful in a mainstream classroom. Levels of ESL support at the secondary level range from 12 blocks per week of pull-out ESL instruction for students just beginning to learn English to full integration for students who no longer require additional ESL support.

As is often the case when great change is upon us, an abundance of questions are raised. Teachers are asking, "How can I work with these language-learning students in ways that are supportive of their language and at the same time hold fast to the belief systems which are the foundation of my practice?" As Margaret Early says,

They question their own ability to assess the different linguistic and cultural schemata of their ESL students and choose suitable teaching methodologies. They want to plan learning experiences that will be appropriate to the intellectual level of all students

regardless of their present level of language proficiency" (1990, p. 567) .

E. Conclusion

During the three years I worked as an ESL consultant for the Richmond School District I was privileged to visit and work with many dedicated educational professionals. Innovation, both in terms of process and product, was the hallmark of many classrooms. Many Richmond teachers have embraced the notions of student- centred literacy events. While it would be overstating the matter to say that there was full agreement in terms of accepting reading, for example, as being a personal meaning making event, there are certainly many teachers seeking to use reading and reading events as opportunities for students to become more fully empowered. These same teachers, both ESL and mainstream, have legitimate concerns when it comes to implementing this vision (of what the reading process can be in their interactions) with their new language learners.

Although this research focuses on the use of reader response theory in terms of supporting student-centered learning it is only one of piece of the language learning program. Reader response acted upon this language program to enhance it. The students were involved with reading of a variety of texts and were encouraged to use their writing activities to promote self-awareness and personal expression.

I believe this research to be important as it is based upon a pedagogy which values and supports student thoughtfulness.

A reader response approach empowers ESL students to take ownership of their learning; encourages them in their own meaning making; and provides them with a structure within which to experiment and exchange new and developing perceptions.

The following chapters in this thesis will include:

The Literature Review

- i. An examination of the literature which surrounds sociocultural learning theories.
 - ii. Foundational information related to reading in English as a first language and the use of reader response
 - iii. The literature regarding foundational theories and language acquisition in English as a second language.
 - iv. The use of reader response in English as a second language.
- **Methodology**, which will also examine the issue of teachers as researchers in their classrooms.
 - **Findings of the study**, which will analysis and interpret the data gathered in this year-long study
 - **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Chapter II: Review of the Literature

Introduction: A Interwoven View

This chapter will provide a review of the literature related to the study and will be divided into four major sections.

1. literature related to sociocultural learning theories.
2. literature related to reading in English as a first language.
 - i. foundations: including historical roots approaches/methods and procedures
 - ii. classroom practice: reader response
3. literature related to English as a Second Language
 - i. foundations: history of language teaching and learning.
 - ii. language acquisition/learning
4. literature related to reading in English as a Second Language
 - i. connections between foundations of language teaching and learning and the teaching of reading in English as a Second Language.
 - ii. classroom practice: reader response

Review of the Literature

1. Sociocultural Learning Theories and Social Semiotics

Introduction

Sociocultural learning theorists provide us with a lens through which to view the reading process, a piece of the language learning picture. This view emphasizes the importance of the social and transactional nature of this teaching and learning , (Dewey 1963 , ; Vygotsky, 1978, 1981; Smith 1988) .

Connections will also be made with the area of social semiotics as it explicates the reading process in terms of its social meaning-making (Lemke, 1989) .

There are certainly other ways in which language and its meaning can be described. Chomsky and others, for instance, interpret language in a psychological manner and concern themselves with the way in which the brain processes language. However, I want to view language as part of a larger social structure. Most essentially it is the role of language in a social structure as a resource for meaning making that this paper wishes to explore. This view is taken because of the rich source of understanding this social dimension of language can provide (Halliday, 1989; Lemke, 1989; Wells 1986, 1990) .

Sociocultural Learning Theories

Gordon Wells (1990) identifies the way in which knowledge is constructed by individuals within a community. We are often deluded, he says, into believing that knowledge can be found in externals.

"Representations can be stored in physical objects such as books, journals, maps or floppy disks, it is easy to believe that these objects actually contain knowledge" (1990, p. 97). The danger with accepting this view of knowledge is that it can lead us to make the next step toward believing that knowledge can be given, as a complete entity, in a transmissional mode. It should be stated that this transmissional mode is the one with which secondary E.S.L. students are most familiar. However, Wells states, "Knowledge does not exist in packages that can be transmitted from one person to another. ...knowledge can only exist in the mind of an individual knower... And it has to be constructed" (1990, p. 97).

Crucial to this understanding of the constructive nature of learning is the notion that this is an active not a passive process, the learner must be engaged. The active nature of learning is explored by many writers such as Dewey, 1963,; Vygotsky, 1934, 1960, 1978,; Gutek, 1974,; Piaget, 1977,; Lemke, 1989. Dewey calls this active process "experience" and says that it is not just the experience that

matters but also the quality of this experience. He speaks of this quality as having two components. First, there is the immediate effect of the experience, and second, more importantly, is the nature of this experience as it causes the learner to connect with future learning. "Just as no man lives or dies to himself, so no experience lives and dies to itself. Wholly independent of desire or intent, every experience lives on in further experiences" (Dewey, 1963, p. 27).

As regards the socially constructed nature of this experience Dewey says,

Experience does not go on simply inside a person. It does go on there, for it influences the formation of attitudes of desires and purpose. But this is not the whole story. Every genuine experience has an active side which changes in some degree the objective conditions under which subsequent experiences take place. (1963, p. 39)

This "transactive" (Gutek, 1974) dimension of learning, which Dewey sees as a social interaction, can, as Piaget described, also be an interaction between an individual and his or her intellectual environment. Smith (1988) typifies the Piagetian approach this way: "His conclusion was that children learned, in their own way, all the time - by a process of interaction with the environment so natural he called it adaptation" (p. 119).

This interaction with people is important as it impacts upon the construction of knowledge.

Any function in the child's cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane, First it appears between people as an interpsychological category, and then within the child as an intrapsychological category. *Social relations among people genetically underlie all higher functions and their relationships.* (Wertch, 1981, p. 163) . (italics added.)

There is often a misunderstanding of this internalization process. Vygotsky is not claiming that these higher mental processes are mere copies of what we experienced on a interpsychological plane. Indeed, he states, "it goes without saying that internalization transforms the process itself and changes its structure and functions" (1981, p. 163) . It seems in any case that Vygotsky is speaking to the personal meaning-making that is the domain of the individual, and further that this personal meaning-making is supported by semiotically mediated social processes.

Lemke speaks of the view social semiotics holds with regard to reading and writing.

Social semiotics views reading and writing, like *all* meaning-making practices-even when carried on in temporary isolation from other people-as essentially *social*, for two fundamental reasons. First, they are possible only because we make use of a social resource for making sense: the particular written language and conventions that are characteristic of the community in which we live.Second, any use of written language will be socially meaningless unless to a very large extent it reiterates familiar semantic combinations of meanings in the course of familiar social activities. (1989, p. 290)

A study by Au and Kawakami (1984) sought to view processes in small-group reading from a Vygotskian perspective. Their study which involved young Hawaiian students who were considered "at risk" for reading, involved teachers and students in small group discussions related to their reading. From this Vygotskian perspective the authors achieved much success which they claimed may be due in part to "the effect of gradually transferring reading-comprehension skills from interpsychological to the intrapsychological plane of functioning" (p 212) . In addition, opportunities were provided so that more experienced readers could scaffold those less experienced. "What was once an external, group process then becomes an internal, individual one (p. 212) .

As interesting as Vygotsky's ideas regarding the social nature of learning are, it his approach to the assessment of children's intellectual ability and the evaluation of instructional practice that have so much to say about the ways in which we work with learners in our classrooms. Rather than looking only at what students are able to accomplish on their own and considering this their level of accomplishment, he speaks instead of a "zone of proximal development," ... "those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state (1978, p. 86). In addition to alluding to the potentiality of the learner, Vygotsky also sees the zone of proximal

development as a useful construct in terms of our instructional practices.

"Instruction is good only when it proceeds ahead of development. Then it awakens and rouses to life an entire set of functions which are in the stage of maturing, which lie in the zone of proximal development" (1934, p. 222).

These notions about development, teaching and learning have profound implications for educators. As teachers examine their own practice they must at the same time examine their *beliefs* about teaching and learning "because they underpin their concepts and expectations of schooling and of the orthodoxy by which school-based learning should be governed" (Wells, 1990, p. 98) .

Conclusion:

Embracing the notion of socially mediated learning causes us to look anew at the process we call reading. This most misunderstood area of school experience has been clouded and obfuscated. Reading is seen as a solitary event. Man against the letters. A lonely struggle best won through hard work, diligence, attention to detail, but most importantly as an independent activity.

What we learn from an examination of socio-cultural learning theory is that no learning is done alone, including reading. We not only want, but need, the input of others as we gain knowledge,

competence, and skill. Hence, the importance of processes such as reader response discussion groups which allow for personal response and expression in a setting which mediates this learning socially.

Learning and remembering are usually associated with the individual. We don't expect other people to learn for us, and we usually expect our own brains to remind us of what we want to know. But such an egocentric view is misleading. We are not responsible for most of our own learning or for jogging our own memory, except for the fact that we might put ourselves in situations where the learning and the remembering are invoked. We learn when we are engaged in activities with other people, - even if the other people involved might be as physically remote as an author or artist.... Learning and remembering are both social events (Smith, 1979, p. 119).

The next section of this review will examine the historical roots of reading in English as a first language. This background information is necessary if we are to note the implications of first language reading instruction on ESL reading instruction.

2. **English As a First Language: Foundations**
- i. **The Historical Roots of Reading Methods, Approaches and Procedures.**

Introduction

The research into reading in English as a first language has had an impact on the development of approaches to reading in English as a second language. Names such as Goodman, Smith, Rosenblatt, Langer, and Widdowson appear many times over in the research related to reading English as a second language. Clearly, the researchers working in the area of reading for ESL owe a debt to these researchers. This section of the review of the literature will present an overview of these influences.

Reader response theory and its impact on classroom practice will form the second part of this discussion. In other sections of this review connections will be drawn between the work on reader response theory with native English speakers and the use of this theory and related methodologies with English as a second language speakers.

This section of the review is not intended to be an exhaustive study of the history of curriculum research into reading methodologies but instead, will paint with broad strokes the seminal influences in this area and will indicate how and to what extent these influences have played themselves out in classrooms for English second language learners.

Tracing the Historical Roots of Reading Instruction

In making links between the sociolinguistic nature of language and the study of reading in English as a first language, it seems helpful to make clear that, as Holdaway states, literacy is a matter of language.

A traditional error of thinking about reading and writing was to see them as discrete subjects isolated from the world of language and spoken culture and then to teach them as if they had no relationship to listening and speaking.

(1979, p. 12)

The history of reading pedagogy is really then the history which traces the understanding that reading is part of a whole language experience and cannot be divorced from it.

Attempts to atomize the language and to reduce it to its constituent parts have their roots in early forms of reading instruction which were known as the alphabetic and then the phonetic approaches. These approaches made many assumptions about the basics of reading.

"The child cannot read accurately until they know all the words."

"Children must know their phonics before they can read." What was ignored was that although approximations in early speech are valued, they are completely disregarded in reading instruction. At any rate these assumptions have been shattered by research that validates the importance of approximation in reading (Clay, 1980; Teale, 1981;

Temple et al, 1982).

In addition to not allowing for approximations, there was an extreme paucity of type and amount that children were allowed to read, described by Holdaway as "criminal print starvation" (1984, p. 3) .

Reading instruction in Canada has been directly influenced by the perception of the reading process in the United States and England. At the turn of the century Samuel Worcester published his first primer in Massachusetts Worcester stated, "It is not, perhaps, very important that a child should know the letters before he begins to read. It may learn first to read words by seeing them, hearing them pronounced and having their meanings illustrated..." (quoted in N. B. Smith 1965, p. 86). So began the "look/say" approach, and the beginning of the debate over what should be the unit of focus in reading which continued for 100 years (Langer & Allington, 1992) .

Three competing views of the reading curriculum and pedagogy began to emerge during this time. The scientific movement which sought to establish the roots of empirical research in education, the management movement whose role was to see schools efficiently run, and the progressive movement which was seeking to find ways to make learning meaningful for students. The powerful combination of science and management techniques resulted in the negation of the progressive educators (Langer & Allington, 1992) .

The rise of the commercial reader was one clear indication of the rise of the scientific movement. These readers with their readability

formulas, for example Thorndike's Teacher's Word Book (1921), were founded on the efficacy of word frequency and sentence length and were seen as concrete representations of this scientific movement. The comprehension of these texts was seen as paramount; concern for meaningful content was not part of the discussion (Schrenker, 1986).

Combined with the advent of readability formulas was the development of workbooks to support these readers. The early workbooks were an attempt to support teachers, the first "teacher-proof" materials. These books were also meant to support a move away from oral reading to more silent reading and seatwork (Smith, 1965) .

In tandem with the workbook was the arrival of "the teacher's guide." This guide was a separate document and was meant to support teachers in the use of these more complex, "scientific" materials. The influence of these materials as they impacted on teacher's autonomy and decision making power is still being felt in the 1990's. These guides were not just direction signs; they were the road itself!

Reading from the 1940's through the 1960's saw a re-emergence of the debate over the appropriate unit of focus for reading instruction. Once again there were the voices of the those suggesting the letter, the word, the sentence as meaningful ways to proceed. The struggle for the hearts and minds of teachers raged between those who continued to support basal reading series and those who were calling for reading

programs which had literature as their base.

For some, the basal readers with their core of controlled vocabulary "changed the character of books for reading instruction in ways which distorted and impoverished the language quite grossly " (Holdaway, 1979, p. 28). Others echoed this concern for the quality of the selections available in these basal readers (Higgins, 1986; Eckhoff, 1983; Wells, 1986) . These researchers were not only at odds with the resources that were used in basal reading programs but also the philosophical and theoretical base upon which these programs were built.

The powerful and persistent appeal of these basal readers was hard to deny. In a study in 1988, Luke provided a detailed analysis of reading instruction in British Columbia between 1945 and 1960. Luke attempted to "identify the dominant assumptions of the authors and publishers of the curriculum regarding literacy, the role of literature in the curriculum and the optimal conditions for learning to read " (p. 64) . What he found was that the basal readers had become the reading curriculum. These basal readers were designed by publishers who claimed to be providing what schools needed (Langer and Allington, 1992) .

A third view of reading emerged during the late 1960's. Kenneth Goodman (1967) was suggesting a psycholinguistic approach to reading which was concerned not with word or phonic centred reading but

instead considered meaning as created by the reader as they interacted with the text. Goodman was concerned with maintaining the integrity of the text as a whole. He refuted the "common-sense" notion that reading was a "precise process" that entailed a phonics centred approach. Instead says Goodman,

Reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game. It involves an interaction between thought and language. Efficient reading does not result from precise perception and identification of all elements, but from skill in selecting the fewest, most productive cues necessary to produce guesses which are right the first time. (1967 p. 127)

Others, including Britton, 1970; Chomsky, 1970; Smith, 1971, were also focussing on the construction of meaning during reading.

Smith (1979) in his book Reading Without Nonsense, states clearly the paramount importance of meaning making. "Nothing can be taught unless it has the potential of making sense to the learner and learning itself is nothing but the endeavour to make sense. The effort to teach or to inform, therefore, can be nothing but an endeavour to make sense, to be comprehensible" (p. x).

Interestingly, it was the research into writing being conducted by Graves (1978) and others which created the further impetus to examine reading from a new constructivist perspective. "This new view of reading as an interaction between the reader and the text altered earlier schemes for depicting comprehension. Similarly, the traditional views of levels of comprehension were modified to reflect the role of the

reader" (Langer & Allington, p. 711).

In 1985 the Commission on Reading released its highly influential report Becoming a Nation of Readers. Among its many recommendations were calls for increased time for actual reading and writing, better designed reading materials, and less skill-sheet instruction. In spite of the strongly worded nature of this report, basal instruction continued apace.

In 1988 the Reading Commission of the National Council of Teachers of English released the Report Card on Basal Readers. The book was an attempt to indicate the influences that had created and continued to provide the impetus for the use of basal readers. In the chapter devoted to the nature of the contemporary basal, the authors address concerns such as the narrow focus on word identification, the inappropriateness of the comprehension questions, the insignificant role of unabridged literature and the "fracturing and narrowing of language" (p. 82). "In basal programs language is not likely to be authentic language; that is, it is not likely to be a functional cohesive text which has a communicative purpose for the reader and which is embedded in a real literacy event" (p. 83). In addition to the decontextualizing of vocabulary, the basals provide an extremely narrow vision of what reading is. The need to control the language of what pupils read resulted in texts which were synthetic and revised. Occasions of authentic literature were rare; often they were poems or

songs, and often were only in the teachers' guide, meant to be read aloud to students (pp. 85-87) .

The notion of meaning as evolving from an interaction between the reader and the text, (Rosenblatt , 1976) is denied by the use of basals with their focus on words and skills. "The focus on single-answer questions during reading makes meaning arbitrary (the text is always right) and the same for all readers" (Goodman et al p. 94) .

Conclusion

The history of reading instruction as outlined here is a history of competing forces. There was and continues to be a profound struggle between society's needs, and the role that education plays in supplying those needs.

In the beginning these needs were religious and reading was seen as an tool of inculcation. Perceived moves toward better instruction, and improved literacy resulted in a shift from oral to silent reading and to a strong emphasis on letter and word recognition. The advent of basal readers in the 1920's and their continued use today reflect a continued belief in the programmatic approach to reading. The proponents of this systematic, sequential, step by step approach believe that it leaves nothing to chance.

The future of reading instruction is unclear. The "back to basics"

clarion call is loud and clear. Witness the current interest in the phonics series "Hooked on Phonics." These tapes and accompanying workbooks hark back to a time that many in the public can relate to. Many, especially those successful readers, believe that it was the phonics approach which taught them to read. Space does not permit an extended argument about the features of phonics program as an appealing though ineffective approach. Suffice to say that the phonics approach has little to say about meaning and everything to say about decoding symbols into sounds. What many do not take into account is what Frank Smith says, "Of course many children learn to read despite exposure to phonics. These children make phonics look good.... Phonics is always easy if you already know a word" (p. 439 , 1992) .

2. English as a First Language

ii. Reader Response Theory

Introduction

The theoretical base for the use of personal responses to literature lies in the recognition of the active role of the reader in the meaning making process of reading. The notions surrounding reader response theory which support this belief will be examined in this section of the review.

In addition to examining the works of reader response theorists, this section will also highlight some current classroom practices that are attempts to actualize these theories.

It is clear that there is not complete agreement among these theorists. However, the issues of the unique role of the reader in relationship to a text, the role of the teacher in facilitating this meaning-making, and the part the literature plays in this powerful triad are of interest to all those working in the area of reader response.

A historical perspective on reader response is possible through an examination of the seminal work on responses to literature by Richards (1929). In his analysis of the responses of university students to thirteen poems he highlights the difficulties these students had in coming to the "correct" understanding and judgments regarding the pieces. There has been a traditional belief that there is single,

appropriate response to a text. This notion is in contrast to the theories of reader response which recognizes and explicates the personal and individual nature of responses to literature.

This survey of reader response theory will show encouraging trends and remaining challenges. In other sections of this review the focus will be on reader response theory as it is understood in English second language instruction.

Reader Response Theory

..... I learned to think of the literary text as an edifice. Almost a temple. Complete, autonomous, organically whole, sacrosanct. We approached it with reverence. We might make temple rubbings, and we were encouraged to explain how its arches carried its weight and to speculate on the organic relationship between its form and function. But it was an edifice and we were spectators before its splendours . (Nelms , 1988 , p. 1)

This view of text as sacred and untouchable typifies the study of literature as the passive reception of a text, a text whose meanings have already been decided by 'experts' and which merely wait for the reader to uncover. Reader response theory seeks to shift the focus to the interaction between the reader and texts, to the something unique that is created in that union.

When we examine the work of writers such as James Britton, Louis Rosenblatt, Judith Langer, Patrick Dias, Robert Probst and Allan Purves, what emerges are views of reader response theory that

hold the primacy of the reader and that reader's interaction with text, to be paramount.

Louis Rosenblatt (1978) is one of many to explain reader response theory as a critical and a pedagogical stance. She formulated the transactional response to reading which sees reading as an active meaning making process. The reader's response is to the "poem" that is evoked in this transaction. This poem is as Purves (1972) says the connection between the literature and "the individual psyche with its neurological movements and its constantly changing psychological states and constantly modifying sets of images and concepts.... The mind as it meets the book. The response" (p. 27) .

Probst (1981) is interested, as is Rosenblatt, in literature instruction "that begins with students' responses to the work so that they and their readings of the text become the central issue in the discussions" (p. 43) .

Connected to these notions of reader response is the distinction between what Rosenblatt (1991) calls "efferent" and "aesthetic reading. She is quick to point out that, rather than thinking of a text as either efferent or aesthetic, we would do well to consider the stance a reader takes in examining that text. It is not, she states, an either - or proposition, for clearly, different stances can be adopted even within the same piece. What is crucial is again the transactional nature of the reading. "Teachers need to remind themselves that reading is

always a particular event involving a particular reader at a particular time under particular circumstances" (p. 445) .

The range of responses is not static and arrived at by some direct point by point route. Instead, as Langer states (1985, 1987) , the reader's meaning making is built up through a process she refers to as envisionment building. The development of this envisionment, this personal understanding about a text unfolds as the reader moves through the text. This meaning-making process involves a series "stances" which are the reflection of the reader's changing relationship with the text. The four major stances involved in this active process of interpretation are:

1. Being out and stepping in
 2. Being in and moving through
 3. Being in and stepping out
 4. Stepping out and objectifying the experience
- (Langer, 1990 , p. 812) .

These stances, which take place for reading both informative and literary pieces, are recursive in nature and may vary depending on the interactions between the reader and text. Langer views these stances as meaning making strategies and sees their potential in helping to identify when and how to provide instructional support to students as they respond to a piece of literature.

Dias (1987) too, identifies patterns of reading which can also be

seen as possible strategies that readers use in making sense of a poem. These stances taken by readers who he identifies as, problem solvers, allegorizers, thematizers and paraphrasers are not hierarchical nor sequential. Dias suggests that these patterns can however, point the way in instruction that seeks to help students use a combination of these strategies in their responses.

Lest we become too uncritical with the vast array of research into reader response Aidan Warlow (1977) offers these cautionary and instructive words;

There has been a great deal of bad research on "response". The pitfall is to assume an identity between the inner response of the reader and the public critical utterance. We must somehow study response as a highly elaborate and mostly unarticulated element in the kinetic process of reading, which takes place both while one reads and, in modified forms, when one has raised one's eyes from the page or closed the book altogether." (p. 96)

Warlow seems to be speaking of that most illusive of qualities, trust. Trust *in* teachers that they will indeed be able to recognize and value the "unarticulated element." Trust *by* teachers in students that they will engage with the literature in ways that allow for an inner response, and trust *of* the literature and its powerful ability to create a response.

The Role of the Teacher in a Meaning-Making Environment

In considering the issue of pedagogy as it relates to reader

response what becomes clear is that the role of the teacher must undergo profound change. The teacher, "...must remain a leader, usually one with a far greater experience of literature than the others in the group, but s/he must also behave as just another reader - one among others - all of whom have legitimate and valuable interpretations to offer of any book" (Chambers, 1985 , p. 119) .

The teacher takes on the mantle of one who seeks to increase the reader's ability to evoke meaning from the text, and then aids the reader in reflecting critically on that meaning. "The teacher's task is to foster fruitful interaction - or, more precisely, transactions--between individual readers and individual literary works" (Rosenblatt,1976, p. 26) .

Chambers says that the teaching implications of a reader response theory require us to interact honestly and openly with our students in discussions, accepting our role as one member of the group and not the only voice which should be heard.

Ruddell and Harris (1989) compiled a list of the qualities of influential teachers based on interviews, observations and teacher awards. Possession of all or even many of these characteristics would certainly qualify one for being a "super-teacher!"

Still the importance of the key issues of energy, sensitivity to individual needs, enthusiasm, and strategy-oriented teaching cannot be denied. Squire (1989) concluded that "the task of the teacher of

literature...is to focus on the transaction between the book and the reader, on the literary experience itself, and on ways of extending and deepening it" (p. 9) .

Role of the Reader in a Meaning-Making Environment

As the role of the teacher has shifted, so too has the role of the reader. Now the study of the literature begins with the reader. This role of text creation is an active and vital one.

This act of recreation is not a smooth or continuous process, but one which, in its essence, relies on interruption of the flow to render it efficacious. We look forward, we look back, we decide, we change our decisions, we form expectations.... we accept, we reject: this is the dynamic process of recreation. (Iser, 1974 , p. 288)

Robert Ruddell (1992), is particularly interested in the reader's motivational processes in a literature-based instructional setting, a setting which is concerned with meaning-making. This motivation, "accounts for children's need to read - what I refer to as the "want to" of reading - and parallels their ability to read - the "how to" of reading." (1992, p. 614) . Like Rosenblatt, Ruddell is keen to point to the critical issue of "stance" in approaching literature. Too often in a school setting these stances are determined by the teacher and act upon the reader. Both "efferent" and "aesthetic" stances are needed in a

balanced literature based program. Ruddell however echoes the concern of many when he says,

In many classrooms today, however, and in many publisher-produced reading programs, the efferent stance toward literature is the main course, with emphasis on factual details and literal recall of story content. (p. 616)

In a perfect world all students would find themselves in situations that were compelling and motivating and with the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes to enjoy and benefit from the act of reading. However, the truth is that some readers come to the study of literature with vast differences in their ability to make meaning. As Margaret Meek shares in Achieving Literacy (1983) ,

We now know, in great detail, that inexperienced readers in secondary schools who want to learn to read have to subject themselves to a particular kind of metaphysical distress....the real condition of these pupils was not lack of desire to learn, or poor basic skills, but absolute conviction that they could not be successful no matter what they did. (p. 214)

Just as we can learn from the less than successful readers we also can examine what it is that expert readers do. One thing is clear, what they do has nothing to do with what they were taught in formalized lessons. According to Meek, it is the texts that readers interact with that teaches them. While these texts may not be considered "great literature" we need to accept them also if we hope to increase the range and variety of our students' reading. As Meek pointed out, the

students in her study ".....read comics, but as the skills they had learned in this reading had not been validated in school, they never went about reading anything else with the same active involvement" (p. 214) .

Texts in a Meaning-Making Environment

One value that has remained is the value of pleasure. Literature seeks to please the person who made it and the person who attends to it. Pleasure is not the same as laughter, but is a sense that what is written is as it should be. (Purves, 1972, p. 17)

In this quote Alan Purves is responding to the criticism that the value of literature has been lost in our attempts to validate the reader's response, and to question with fresh eyes the canon of "classic" literature.

In examining the role of texts in a meaning-making environment it must be stated that the choice of texts with which students are called upon to interact is crucial. To be able to claim that students are engaged in reader response we must also consider what they are reading. To have them engaged in this process around manufactured texts, or texts which lack the richness which will engage initially and sustain engagement fully, does a disservice to the process of active meaning making.

Research by Bradley, Ames, and Mitchell, (1984) examines the question of what we use and call literature in ESL classrooms. As these

authors note, the use of high-interest low vocabulary reading materials with secondary students who are experiencing difficulties reading is fairly common instructional practice. These texts which are modified, adapted, or written to readability formulas are also used widely with secondary ESL students. The reasons given for their use are that the plots are assumed to have appeal and the low reading level is within the reach of secondary students with reading difficulties.

What these researchers found in their large scale study of five hundred and seventy-six senior high school students was that "the quality of the story was found to be the important factor affecting appeal....It appears that if a story is a good one, students will like it despite its readability or length " (p. 190). These findings will come as no surprise to anyone who has laboured through one of these supposedly appealing texts. So much is taken out in modified or adapted texts, or not put in in written to formula texts, that there is no internal cohesiveness.

An additional consideration for secondary ESL students is the understanding of what is "interesting" in these "High-interest" books. Many of these students learning English as another language do not have the same interests as mainstream North American students and so the topics are not highly interesting. Some common elements such as relationship stories involving dating, horse or other animal stories, and the whole range of young-adult rebellion stories frequently do not

find resonance for secondary ESL students new to Canada.

Conclusion:

The previous two sections of this review have examined reading, its historical roots and classroom practice, as it relates to those speaking English as a first language. These sections have shown a vast array of belief systems surrounding reading as well as approaches, and methodologies.

The focus in the following two sections will be from an English as a second language perspective. As in the previous sections the foundations for reading and the translation of these foundations into practice will be examined, but now through the the "cellophane overlay" of English as a second language. The use of the image of a cellophane overlay is one I feel is useful in describing the set of circumstances under which we work with students learning English in our schools. The belief systems which underpin reading as a meaning-making enterprise and form the basis of reader response are equally applicable when interacting with ESL students. Learning English as another language, the "cellophane", does not alter nor diminish these beliefs, rather it adds another dimension which must be considered as we attempt to interpret these beliefs into our classrooms.

The undeniable influences of research about reading in English as a first language and related instructional practices will be noted in

the following sections as well as those areas in which ESL instruction has taken a different instructional path.

My research seeks, through this dual examination, to make clear the symbiotic nature of these two instructional worlds and to use this knowledge to inform the ways in which the research, a year-long study of secondary ESL students' interactions and reactions to a literature-based, response-centered curriculum, will be carried out.

3. English As a Second Language: Foundations

i. History of Language Teaching and Learning

Introduction

The route that language teaching and learning has taken will constitute this part of the review . What becomes clear from this retrospective look is that within the realm of language teaching various threads keep reappearing in the pattern of development. An enduring question is whether, when and in what manner, learners should be given explicit knowledge about the language they are hoping to learn. This study, as it examines the notion of personal responses to literature, enters this discussion and concerns itself most especially with the manner of reading instruction. It should not be a dichotomous debate. We err when we separate language from the experience which created it.

The tendency in much of the western intellectual tradition has been to dissociate language and experience, in such a way that language is seen as rather neutral, merely serving to "carry" the fruits of experience.....a conduit, subservient to experience in various ways. (Christie, 1989, p. v)

Early Influences

The key issues of relevance, social status and efficacy of approaches which have dominated the discussions around teaching and learning in a second language are not recent phenomena. As

Richards and Rodgers (1986) point out, the road to our current thinking about teaching and learning language has been long and involved. Rather like the yellow brick road in *The Wizard Of Oz* , there have been unexpected twists and turns.

The acceptability of the study of language as a mental exercise totally disconnected from the purpose of communication has early roots. Until the sixteenth century when French, Italian and English gained economic importance Latin had dominated as the language of education. As Latin lost its utility in spoken and written form it gained prominence as language to be studied for its own sake.

When once the Latin tongue had ceased to be a normal vehicle for communication, and was replaced as such by the vernacular languages, then it most speedily became a "mental gymnastic", the supremely "dead" language, a disciplined and systematic study of which was held to be indispensable as a basis for all forms of higher education. (Titone, 1968, 26)

This approach to the study of Latin formed the basis for the study of other foreign languages in schools. The Grammar-Translation Method which came into prominence by the nineteenth century, held the reading and writing of the foreign language as a focus with little attention paid to speaking or writing. The memorizing of rules and facts, as well as the deductive approach to grammar, were all key features in this approach.

Toward the middle of the nineteenth century there was a flurry of language teaching and learning innovations. A Frenchman, F. Gouin (1831-1896) developed an approach which he claimed was based on the observation of children's use of language. It is possible to see elements of this approach, such as having learners be physically active and mobile, in Situational Language Teaching and Total Physical Response which are in current use. In her book Teaching Language in Context (1993) Hadley explains Total Physical response as "[an] approach which is based on the belief that listening comprehension should be developed fully, as it is with children learning their native language, before any active oral participation from the students is expected" (p. 105). Language learning in terms of real situations is the hallmark of the situational approach. As Richards and Long (1987) describe it "several related grammar structures are presented at once so that only partial isolation occurs. A written summary or chart of the structures covered is included in the text, but this method is essentially inductive and grammatical explanations as such are a minimal part of the language learning experience" (p. 284).

Gouin, who along with others rejected the Grammar-Translation method, created the impetus for examining language learning and teaching in a new light. Wilhelm Viëtor (1857-1926) and other reformers developed principles which became the foundation for a systematic, linguistically based approach to language teaching. These

methods had parallels within the study of first language acquisition and came to be known by the generic term, *natural methods*.

Development of the Direct Method featured elements such as free and spontaneous use of the foreign language in the classroom and far less emphasis on grammar translations. It was assumed that learners would induce the rules of grammar from repeated exposure to the spoken language.

Rejection of the Direct Method, which was seen as an offshoot of the *natural method*, lay in what was considered by some to be a poorly developed linguistic basis. The Coleman report published in the United States in 1929, "advocated that a more reasonable goal for a foreign language course would be a reading knowledge of a foreign language, achieved through gradual introduction of words and grammatical structures in simple reading texts" (Richards, 1986, p. 11).

The start of World War II brought about a powerful impetus to provide individuals with the ability not to read but to have conversational fluency in a foreign language. The Audio lingual Method was developed in response to this need. Introduced toward the end of the 1950's, it was based on a structural analysis of spoken language, linguistic principles and psychological learning theory.

Some of its basic tenets were:

- language learning is habit formation
- the teacher is the center of all classroom activity and is responsible for maintaining attention and a lively pace.

- L2 learning like L1 should begin with listening and speaking regardless of the end goal of the learner.
- the basic unit of practice should always be a complete structure. (Savignon 1983, p. 20)

The audio lingual method, in spite of the optimism of its proponents, failed to be the panacea for all language teaching and learning.

Communicative Competence

The 1970's saw a quiet revolution in the area of language teaching and learning. The development of the concept of *communicative competence* came about in response to both theoretical and practical pressures. Dell Hymes (1972) suggested that the goal of language teaching should be "communicative competence." Hymes meant this term to contrast with what the mid-twentieth century linguist Noam Chomsky called *linguistic competence*.

Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech community, who know its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitation, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance.
(Chomsky, 1965, p. 3)

Chomsky's idealized view of a speaker - listener is in contrast to Hymes who is very much interested in the speaker - listener in real

social interactions.

Communicative competence from the British applied linguist H. G. Widdowson's view, (1978) is one in which "The learner's task [is] one which involves acquiring a communicative competence in the language, that is to say, an ability to interpret discourse whether the emphasis is on productive or receptive behaviour " (1978, p.144). He makes the distinction between linguistic skills and communicative abilities. Linguistic skills corresponds to what he calls "usage," whereas communicative ability is termed "use."

Usage, then, is one aspect of performance, that aspect which makes evident the extent to which the language user demonstrates his knowledge of linguistic rules. *Use* is another aspect of performance: that which makes evident the extent to which the language user demonstrates his ability to use his knowledge of linguistic rules for effective communication. (1978, p. 3.) (italics added)

Widdowson did not feel that focussing on skills resulted in communicative competence - "on the contrary, it would seem to be the case that an overemphasis on drills and exercises for the production and reception of sentences tends to inhibit the development of communicative abilities" (1978, p.67) .

Savignon (1983) identifies three general interpretations of the term communicative competence.

1.".....communicative activities as something to be added to existing

programs reflect a view of language learning a going *from surface grammatical structures to meaning*.

2."An analysis of language in terms of the *situations* or settings in which it is used and of the meanings or functions it serves in these settings provides the basis for establishing a communicative syllabus.

3."One first learns how to convey meaning, how to participate in speech events....In this way, then, language acquisition is seen as proceeding *from meaning to surface structure* (pp. 24-25) .

The first view as interpreted by Rivers (1972), and Valette (1977) sees the importance of going from controlled structure drills, the "skill getting" where accuracy is emphasized, to "skill using" actual interaction for communicative purposes. Valette provides a list of objectives and a specific order in which they should be presented. These objectives range from simplest behaviours to the most complex. Mechanical Skills, for example where the student performs via rote memory rather than by understanding, are considered Stage 1. It is not until Stage 4 that the notion of communicative competence is addressed. This approach to language teaching and learning indicates a need for careful monitoring, taking a measured approach, following a step by step progression. This belief system is expressed by Schulz and Bartz (1975): "In summary, the classroom teacher needs to institute a progression from artificial exercises to real language use, from discrete linguistic objectives to communicative objectives, and from discrete-

point tests to tests of communicative competence" (p. 67) .

The second view of communicative competence concerns itself not so much with the process of learning a language as the selection of which materials to use. According to Savignon (1993) "It provides a taxonomy of functions and notions, a list of program objectives, but does not provide the communicative teaching strategies to go with them" (p. 35) .

The third major approach to communicative competence differs from the other approaches described in not only its emphasis on language in use but also in its view of the role of the learner. The teacher is seen as the focus of control in other approaches, the one who decides what is to be taught, when and how and in what particular order with little regard for the particular needs of the individual learner. With the emphasis on communication rather than mastery of language forms, the learner takes on a much more active role. Breen and Candlin (1980) describe this more vital role:

The role of the learner as negotiator-between the self, the learning process, and the object of learning-emerges from and interacts with the role of joint negotiator with in the group and within the classroom procedures and activities which the group undertakes. The implication for the learner is that he should contribute as much as he gains, and thereby learn in an interdependent way. (p. 110)

This shift toward recognizing the importance of the learner in the ESL language learning process has also been accompanied by several instructional focuses. Two of these focuses are the use of a whole language approach as well as the recognition of the importance of contextualized, content-based language teaching.

In their book Whole Language for Second Language Learners (1992) Freeman and Freeman point out the importance of recognizing that whole language is not a method or a system but a rather a philosophy about teaching and learning. With this realization comes the understanding that, "....whole language is good for all ages: young children, teenagers, college students, and adults....For those students whose first language is not English, whole language is not only good teaching, it is essential." They go on to state most powerfully, "Whole language may be the only road to success for bilingual learners" (pg. 5).

Whole language teaching for ESL students expands the range of written texts for them to be involved in and encourages the expression of written ideas without necessarily having "mastered" spoken English.

Content-based instruction is founded on the belief that language must go beyond the level of isolated sentences and must involve the melding of both language and content. There

is a recognition that students' learning must continue to be supported as they learn a language. "....a common goal of such programs is the development of significant levels of language proficiency through experiential learning in subject-matter areas.

The challenge of these content-based programs is to find a balance between the teaching content and the language skills which are still so necessary. As Hadley (1993) points out "....simply teaching language through content or content through language is not enough. Rather, an integration of form-focused activities and content-based assignments is needed to achieve the best results, regardless of age or level of proficiency of the students.

The source of change in instructional practice in English as a first language classrooms has often come from the elementary school level. As the the students in these younger grades reach our secondary schools the teachers who work with them are often compelled to look anew at their teaching. So too with ESL instruction these changes to more holistic language teaching and well as content-based instruction had their roots in our elementary ESL classrooms. These methodologies are finding their way into our secondary ESL classrooms.

Secondary ESL students would not necessarily have been exposed to these new methodologies in the elementary grades of

their home countries. It was one of the challenges of this research to find a way to use more current ESL instructional practices in ways that were effective and at the same time respected the students' past learning experiences.

Conclusion

This section has outlined the profound changes which theories and instruction in ESL have undergone. This next section looks more closely at language acquisition and language learning and points out that while theoretical changes based on research may occur, classroom practice is less amenable to change.

3. English As a Second Language
ii. Language Acquisition/Language Learning Theories

A discussion of language acquisition and language learning theories allows for a framework from which to view language teaching and learning. As Richards points out (1986), "A learning theory underlying an approach or method responds to two questions: (a) What are the psycholinguistic and cognitive processes involved in language learning? and (b) What are the conditions that need to be met in order for these learning processes to be activated" (1986, p. 18).

Stephen Krashen's (1981) "Monitor Model" of second language development addresses both the process and the condition dimensions of learning. Krashen, in his model, uses the terms "language acquisition" and "language learning" to clarify what he sees as two separate processes. *Language acquisition* is seen as an unconscious process whereas *language learning* is conscious or monitored. "Language acquisition....requires meaningful interaction in the target language - natural communication - in which speakers are not concerned with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding" (p. 1). He states that error correction and explicit teaching of rules are not necessary to language acquisition. He makes clear the conditions for language acquisition to occur. There must be comprehensible input which is just slightly

ahead of the learner's present ability level. This input must be interesting and relevant to the learner.

Language learning he feels does benefit from error correction and the presentation of specific rules. "Error correction... helps the learner come to the correct mental representation of the linguistic generalization" (1981, p. 2).

In terms of communicative competence however, Krashen claims that language learning, the conscious focus on forms, is only helpful to a small degree. "Conscious learning makes only a small contribution to communicative ability" (1981, p. 5). Language learning is, he claims, only available as a "monitor."

Integral to Krashen's model is the notion of an affective filter which can be seen as interfering with language acquisition or language learning. This filter, which affects attitude, can have a profound effect on the language learner. All students can benefit in a classroom that is low in anxiety.

Krashen states that "conscious language learning need not be avoided, just put in its place" (1986, p. 38). Both he and Carroll (1977) see a place for language teaching. Carroll puts it this way:

Persons with limited sensitivity to grammar may be better off in courses that de-emphasize grammar and concentrate on exposing the learner to large amounts of the second language in actual use. Nevertheless, many of them will find it profitable to note carefully, and to try to correct, the errors they make in second language utterances. Others, as they use the language more and more, may find it

satisfactory simply to wait until a natural correction process takes over, somewhat the way children learn to speak their native language in increasing conformity with adult norms. (1977 p. 3)

In contrast to Carroll however, Krashen firmly states, "We differ only in that the Monitor Theory predicts that the acquisition rich environment is for everyone" (1986, p. 38).

Clearly Krashen (1981) , and Savignon (1983) see acquisition as crucial to meaningful proficiency in a second language. They also state that language learning is only a useful addition, (not available in all situations) to this primary language acquisition. Further, language acquisition rather than language learning is more directly affected by attitude. Savignon states, "Of the many variables in language acquisition...learner attitude is the most pervasive (p. 110) . Krashen agrees and says that there is a direct relationship between acquisition and attitudinal factors, "and if our major goal in language teaching is the development of communicative abilities, we must conclude that attitudinal factors and motivational factors are more important than aptitude. This is because conscious learning makes only a small contribution to communicative ability" (1986, p. 5).

Conclusion:

This portion of the review of the literature has shown the development of second language teaching and learning theories.

competence and its importance to current thinking about language teaching and learning. In addition, distinctions were outlined between the notions of second language acquisition and second language learning.

Links were drawn between language acquisition/learning theories and the role of communicative competence in second language learning.

Second language teaching and learning continues to grow and evolve. The use of reader response with secondary ESL students is part of this developing continuum. This research seeks to understand if the processes and ideas associated with reader response are important steps along this path.

4. Reading Instruction in English as a Second Language Classrooms

i. Theory and Practice

Introduction

Current pedagogy in the teaching of reading to ESL students is the result of a mixing and melding of many approaches, methodologies and belief systems from both first language and second language instruction.

This section of the literature review will examine this multifaceted picture that typifies reading instruction for ESL students. These views, which are in many cases derived from research into reading in a first language, have been brewed in a heady mixture of time and conflicting view points and have consequently taken on distinctly ESL "flavour."

The use of reader response in the secondary ESL classroom, which this research will explore, is based on the premise that such an approach will create situations, and settings that will ultimately result in more reading of a type that moves beyond text regurgitation and moves into a place where reading is personally meaningful and rewarding for students; a place where the pleasure of reading as a source of personal actualization can take place. In this setting reading would be supported by social interactions that allow students to see

their connections with a fellow readers. Students who are involved in a reader response, literature-based reading program would be free to ask questions that they need to ask and to seek, in collaboration with other learners, tentative answers.

As the literature review to this point has clearly outlined, there is a large and powerful force mitigating against this form of reading with ESL students. This section of the review will attempt to outline some of the conflicting views which are operating within the field of ESL reading instruction.

I have borrowed from David Nunan's (1991) use of focus questions to organize this examination of the teaching and learning of reading in E.S.L.

1. What is meant by bottom-up and top-down approaches to reading?
2. What is the impact of context on reading?
3. What are the characteristics of an effective E.S.L. reading lesson?

These key questions will allow for references to those most influential writers and researchers in the area of E.S.L. reading instruction; Richards, Nunan, Cambourne, Eskey , Carrell & Eisterhold, Widdowson, Clarke, and James.

What is meant by bottom-up and top-down approaches to reading?

Richards (1990) states quite clearly in his chapter on reading instruction in ESL, "Reading is no longer viewed as a process of decoding, but rather as an integration of top-down processes that are primarily text or data driven" p. 87. In his analysis of current practice in ESL reading instruction, Richards also recognizes the roles of schema and background knowledge to the reading process.

Nunan (1991) defines the bottom-up view of the reading process as one in which successful reading is a matter of decoding the individual sounds and then words and then sentences to finally arrive at meaning.

This powerful, "common sense" view of reading as a series of small incremental steps could also be explained in terms of a building metaphor. In order to create a structure (reading comprehension) it is necessary to start from the bottom-up. We prepare the ground, (learn the sounds), we build a frame, (read isolated words) we build the walls from bricks, (we connect words into sentences), we see the finished building (eventually encounter complete texts).

Cambourne (1979) uses the term "outside-in" rather than bottom-up when referring to the notion of reading as an exercise in decoding. He uses the following illustration:

Print → Every letter discriminated → Phonemes and graphemes matched →
Blending → Pronunciation → Meaning.

Nunan (1991) claims the abiding success of this approach in spite of much criticism lies in its appeal to **common sense**. This approach is based on the belief that readers have a well established oral vocabulary which they can use to help them decode written forms. No such assumption of a base of oral language can be made for second language learners, "for whom any form of reading instruction ought to be linked with intensive aural vocabulary development" (p. 64) .

What cannot be dismissed in all this discussion of a bottom-up reading approach is the fact that many students can indeed "bark at the print" but still derive no meaning from that print. Of course, if meaning is at the end of a long line of preceding steps then meaning is inherently not as important as being able to make the appropriate sounds. And so, although ample evidence by Smith (1978), and Goodman and Burke (1972) that this phonics approach is ill conceived and unfounded, the bottom-up approach continues in some ESL and first language classrooms.

In contrast to this bottom-up approach is a model of reading that emphasizes the role of the reader in the reading process. This top-down approach which is sometimes referred to as a psycholinguistic approach to reading, values and interprets as important not only the role of the reader but also that reader's background experiences as they interact with the text to create meaning. As Nunan explains,

The interaction of the reader with the text is central to the process, and readers bring to this interaction their knowledge of

the subject at hand, knowledge of and expectations about how language works, motivation, interest and attitudes towards the content of the text. (1991, p. 66)

A third approach to reading in second language which attempts to draw on components of the previous approaches has been called the interactive-compensatory model approach. This model suggested by Stanovich (1980) claims to address the deficiencies of the other models in that it allows readers to use higher processing reading skills such as syntactic and semantic knowledge to compensate for weaknesses at the grapheme and word level.

The term interactive was used by Widdowson as early as 1979 when he used the phrase "reading as an interactive process." Eskey (1988) explicates the term when he says,

....the term interactive is different from the top-down model as it does not presuppose the primacy of top-down processing skills, the gradual replacing of painful word by word decoding with educated guessing based on minimal visual cues, but rather posits a constant interaction between bottom up and top down processing in reading. (p.94)

An interactive approach to reading sees the importance of both top down and bottom up approaches.

In seeking to understand the reading process for ESL students there are additional issues to consider. As Grabe (1988) points out, there are concerns that we perhaps cannot use the same models of reading for ESL students as we do for native English speakers. There are issues,

such as literacy in the first language, which need to be addressed. In addition, even if literacy is established, we still do not know how these ESL students approach reading in their first language. He raises the question of whether or not the ESL student does indeed view reading as a social phenomenon. "Do they view reading as a major academic, professional, and entertainment activity, or do they read much less, for far fewer purposes" p. 57 .

Such questions deserve exploration. Certainly the question of the reader's personal view of the importance of reading is connected to this research into the use of reader response with second language learners.

Research conducted by Jobe and Sutton (1990) which used interviews of the teachers, teacher-librarians, parents and students in Grade One classrooms in a multicultural school district, found that among the Cantonese speaking community (largely the same community upon which this research will be based) reading was viewed as strictly utilitarian. "Their primary interest in books seems to be linked with what they can teach children. The book is just a piece of paper. It may explain things like the sky is blue, but it's not the same if you don't actually see it..... Reading will help us read maps and understand what the place is like before we go..." (p. 54) .

If reading is viewed only as a tool to finding out other information and not as a valuable activity in and of itself, there are

implications for how the students will enter into discussions about their reading. The influence of attitude in the reading process will be reported on in the section in this paper on research findings.

2. What is the impact of context on reading?

The importance of context in supporting E.S.L. students reading has been explored by many writers and researchers including Clarke & Silberstein (1977), Lopez (1977), Hewitt (1980).

Clarke and Silberstein found that more important than linguistic difficulty was students' possession of the necessary schematic knowledge. In other words they suggest that students who are asked to read text that contains material that is semantically relevant will be able to handle even difficult passages.

In the research by Lopez (1977) the claim that background knowledge is crucial to the reading process and facilitative of reading comprehension is once again highlighted. Significant numbers of words that were mispronounced in isolated reading lists were correctly read when they appeared in texts. More important however, was the finding that even if miscues did occur in the text readings, they were of the type that preserved meaning.

There is a tendency in remedial instruction for native English speakers to focus on low-level processes such as decoding and understanding of vocabulary and syntactic structures. This remedial

approach is often adopted for instruction of ESL students. What Hewitt's (1980) research into remedial instruction for 12 and 13 year old native English speakers identified was the power of focussing on higher level processes such as activating students' schemata and helping readers identify their inappropriate interactions between the text and their schemata.

What we can conclude from this research has profound implications for our choice of both reading materials and reading approaches. There is support for the use of challenging material that can be slightly beyond the reading level of students provided sufficient time is devoted to ascertaining prior knowledge, supplementing it where necessary, and allowing for interactions between the student and the text to move beyond the simple of answering of low level questions.

What are the characteristics of an effective ESL reading lesson?

What teachers do in classrooms is ultimately influenced by their belief systems and attitudes toward learning and teaching. The type of reading lessons which are currently being suggested as exemplars for ESL students are quite clear in their foundational beliefs. The following lessons documented by Richards (1990) and Nunan (1991) can serve as examples of what is considered by many, and certainly by

these two researchers and writers, as effective reading instruction for ESL students.

Richards states that, "what is missing in the growing literature on second and foreign language reading, however, is consideration of teachers themselves and what it is that effective teachers do in the reading classroom" (p. 87) . He decrys the lack of qualitative research into what role the teacher plays in the second language classroom. Richard's interest is in uncovering the higher level processes that teachers use when designing reading lessons for ESL students. The lesson described here is an example of what he considers to be an "effective" reading teaching.

This first lesson comes from one of the few ethnographic investigations that attempts to describe what is actually going on in a second language classroom. Richards (1990) describes the four phases of the lesson. Phase one involves the use of the SRA reading kit, focussing on inferencing skills, and later on rate building skills with an emphasis on the development of reading fluency. The use of a vocabulary text formed the third phase of the lesson. The lesson concluded with an activity which involved extensive reading of a lengthy article from one of the class texts.

In his reflections on the lesson Richards describes the principles which underlie this "effective" lesson:

1. Instructional objectives are used to guide and organize lessons.

2. The teacher has a comprehensive theory of the nature of reading in a second language and refers to this in planning his teaching.
3. Class time is used for learning.
4. Instructional activities have a teaching rather than a testing focus.
5. Lessons have a clear structure.
6. A variety of different activities are used during each lesson.
7. Classroom activities give students opportunities to get feedback on their reading performance
8. Instructional activities relate to real-world reading purposes.
9. Instruction is learner focussed. (pp. 95-97)

It would be difficult to argue with any of these principles. They seem as appropriate to first language reading as to second language reading instruction. It is however not what the principles espouse which is of concern, but rather what is missing from these principles. There is no mention of **what** the students are being asked to read. There is no questioning of the value of using SRA cards for "reading." No mention is made of reading as an activity that has any purpose beyond the decoding and inferring opportunities it provides. This is reading for the purpose of answering questions. The lack of interconnectedness between the activities is also an issue. And finally, one must question how meaningful and long lasting the learning of vocabulary out of context might be.

Of course, one would want the time students are in a classroom to be meaningful and appropriate; this it seems, is a given. But when the reading lesson is cited as being exemplary and yet no mention is made of the personal meaning making so necessary to full actualization as reader, then there is cause to ask, 'What is reading for ESL students? Should it be qualitatively a different experience than for students who speak English as a first language?

I would argue that reading for ESL students needs to be just as rich and contextualized an experience as it is for native English speakers. When we view reading for ESL students as a series of well planned "skill chunks" meant to supplement their weaknesses, we are in danger of viewing reading as nothing more than a set of skills to be learned in isolation. We risk seeing reading as a passive act, a matter of "getting the stuff" which lies within the text; the more effective at "getting the stuff," the better reader. In the case of ESL students this preparation for reading is seen as paramount. The notion of "Ready, Aim, Fire" taken to the ultimate. Much time is spent in the ready and aim sections. SRA cards, inferencing sheets, vocabulary quizzes, all meant to "ready the reader." Even the actual fire, (the longer pieces of reading material) are really just glorified skill sheets.

Perhaps another approach for these apprentice readers would allow us to consider "Ready, fire, aim." That is, make available those texts which are rich and worth reading. And, as the reader engages deal

with those concerns which might impede the reader's full enjoyment of the text.

A further example of an ESL reading lesson is provided by Nunan (1991) in his chapter called, *Reading: A Discourse Perspective* in a section headed "Reading for factual information."

"The students have completed a listening comprehension exercise in which they have listened to a dialogue between two people who are about to go on a sightseeing excursion. They have also done a language exercise focusing on - wh questions for obtaining information about travel" (p. 78) . This lesson, just as the one described by Richards involved tight teacher control. The teacher decided what was important to know and asked all the questions, and as Nunan points out, answered many of them as well. Nunan states that even though this was supposed to be a reading lesson it was really much more of listening lesson. Students listen to the teacher to find out what they should look for in the text, in this case travel brochures. While Nunan does have concerns that there is too much teacher control in this lesson he has no qualms about the material read, or the students' lack of choice. In fact what he sees as a positive feature, and one that should be encouraged is the "interplay between listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and it is clear that in a lesson which is ostensibly labelled "reading", opportunities exist for learners to develop their other language skills as well" p. 82. Once again we see reading as an activity

not important in and of itself but rather useful as a tool for supporting other skill development. As Probst says, " they all transform the act of reading into something other than literary experience, at least as that experience has been described by many writers " (1988, p. 19) .

Writers and researchers such as Richards, and Nunan are well respected and influential in the field of ESL instruction. Their voices are heard in many major ESL publications and their work is cited when seeking "expert" opinion. It is all the more distressing then to think that these educators are proposing reading instruction for the 1990's which is conceptualized upon what still seems a narrow skill based focus.

Conclusion

As stated at the outset there have been undeniable influences from the research in reading in English as a first language on instruction for reading in English as a second language. What I have found however, is that despite this research, classroom practice and beliefs around appropriate, effective, meaning based methodologies for teaching reading to ESL students continue to look less meaning centred than would be hoped for or expected. This is not perhaps so surprising when one considers that educational change is a complex and multifaceted process.

The area of reader response theory will be examined in the following section. Again, this literature is looking to English as a first language classrooms to see what is being done, why, how and by whom. Educators in English as a second language can hopefully look to the vast amount of research into reading and related classroom practices, to suggest theories, approaches and methodologies which educators in ESL can then further adapt to our particular set of circumstances.

4. **Reading Instruction in
English as a Second Language Classrooms**

ii. **Reader Response in the ESL Classroom**

Introduction:

In examining reader response theory as it relates to secondary ESL classrooms it appears that there is a silent, unspoken pact between teacher and student. The teacher agrees to run the classroom in such a way as to avoid the necessity of students making personal meaning of what is being read and sharing those perceptions with others, the student agrees to answer reams of questions to which there are already predetermined answers and they both agree to call this reading. This preference for a skills based approach to reading leaves little room for the use of a reader response approach.

The preceding section of this literature review looked at the ways in which reading is conceived in ESL classrooms. Given this rather skills based approach that fact that reader response appears to play such a small role should come as no surprise.

TheodoreSizer (1984), in his book Horace's Compromise speaks chillingly of the compromise that secondary students have made in order to survive their time in school.

Finally, students accept the system. As long as school is fun some of the time and rarely humiliating, they go along with it. They strike their bargain with teachers, and they value the

some of the time and rarely humiliating, they go along with it. They strike their bargain with teachers, and they value the rituals of going to school. For them, school is a rite of passage, and they accept it, even though they may be bored by much of it. The American adolescent is a remarkably tolerant animal .

The rather bleak picture he paints needs to be augmented when discussing the secondary ESL student's experience. In addition to all the systems which are already in place, they are dealing with cultural norms which demand a quick exit from the ESL classroom, which is seen as a barrier to overcome. Graduation with their peers, and a move to tertiary education is seen as the ultimate goal by many of these students, and if not by the students, then certainly by their parents.

Further pressure exists for these students who are not culturally familiar with expressing personal view points. "Five thousands years of Chinese history" (personal communication, Kam Tsang, U.B.C. Instructor- Beginners Cantonese, 1990) demands that they adhere to the words of past scholars. All important knowledge is written down, needs to be memorized, and if you are a truly dedicated student, given back as close to verbatim as possible.

Bi Bigin in the paper "Children's Literature and Research in China", (1991) speaks of these societal and generational considerations as they relate to Asian students,

Some of the drawbacks of traditional culture hinder social progress for generations;....For instance, some people are deeply influenced by some feudalistic concepts. Individuality and independent personality is obliterated by obedience to

behaviour. Accordingly, children are taught to be unconditionally obedient to parents and teachers; they are taught to be "good"; they are not allowed to have their own say" (p. 40) .

The vast amount of literature on the use of reader response appears to have had made only a very small dent in the armour which surrounds ESL reading instruction. At issue seems to be the notion of the purpose of reading instruction for ESL students. For most E.S.L. teachers reading is used as a vehicle to teach the skills of writing, listening and speaking. The value of a piece of literature, indeed whether literature is used at all, seems almost not to have been discussed.

Some researchers do tackle some of these thorny issues concerning the use of literature and reader response in ESL classrooms (Widdowson, 1981; Urzua, 1992; Hill and Parry, 1992; Zamel, 1992; Ali, 1993) .

Reader Response with ESL Students

Carole Urzua in the title to her article "Faith in Learners Through Literature Studies" (1992), highlights **trust** as the needed element if we are to attempt to use real literature and a reader response approach with students learning English.

Teachers who coordinate literature studies assume that everyone in a group, including those who are learning English

those connections will not only make the connections stronger but will also expand the connections as the discussion evolves. In addition teachers recognize that their own connections will be expanded. (p. 493)

This positive assumption of success is at the heart of the use of literature with students learning English. Urzua's conceptual framework for this type of literature studies is based on Edelsky's (1988) work which is grounded in a "transactional socio-psychological view of the literary process" (p.492). Unlike others who view reading in a utilitarian light, Urzua sees the purposes of literature study groups as two fold. They both draw on aesthetic responses including reactions to the physical world and the realm of emotions.

Analytic activities are also part of the process, these include "discovering the ways in which individual authors use language to disclose meaning about literary elements such as characterization, plot, setting, mood, theme, and symbolism" (p. 492). What should be of interest to ESL teachers is, although analysis was not the goal, it does occur as a natural outgrowth of the discussions. Now there is a real reason to go back and reexamine the text, to "take a second look."

Widdowson (1981) wonders where we went wrong in losing sight of the importance of literature in the instruction of students learning English as another language.

There was a time when literature was accorded high prestige in language study, when it was assumed that part of the purpose of learning a language, perhaps even the most essential part, was to

provide access to literary works (p. 203).

Now, Widdowson laments, literature has been banished, some feel that "literature contributes nothing to the utilitarian objectives of language teaching... language has no practical uses and so it is useless" (p. 203).

In addition to the arguments against the purpose of literature in an ESL program there are also contentions that have to do with the process of learning through literature.

Literature cannot be controlled, there are all those unknowables. The syntactic and semantic complexity is seen as problematic. These literary texts are not created from carefully monitored language and are as Widdowson says, "potentially disruptive."

The paradox that is uncovered of course is that once having rid the curriculum of literature, publishers then begin anew to write their own "literature", stories, and dialogues written to practice necessary phrases and predetermined vocabulary. There is no intent to engage the reader. But merely to provide a series of sentences written for their ability to provide practice in a particular structure.

Widdowson's greatest concern with this pedagogic presentation of language is that it is devoid of creativity, "And creativity is a crucial concept in language learning" (p. 211). He argues for the engagement of learners, opportunities to make sense, to become deeply involved in what is being read.

In attempting to reexamine testing of ESL students Hill and Parry (1992), also uncover the deep seated belief system around the act of reading itself that drives these tests. They quote Olson's (1977) view of autonomy of the text,

Ideally the printed reader (i.e. , a book used to teach reading) depends on no cues other than linguistic cues; it represents no intentions other than those represented in the text; it is addressed to no one in particular; its author is essentially anonymous; and its meaning is precisely that represented by the sentence meaning (p. 276) .

What Hill and Parry see as a concern is that this notion of autonomy of text is further reflected in tests for E.S.L. students and that these tests drive instructional practice.

The presumed autonomy of the skill of literacy is closely linked to the presumed autonomy of text. If text is considered as object rather than action, it can then be understood as the sum of its elements ("the very words") rather than as a means of human communication. (p. 442)

Hill and Parry view reading for ESL students in a different light from that of Olsen. They are concerned with the interaction between the student and the text. They view,

....reading as an act of communication, it becomes clear that more is involved than decoding words of the text and applying appropriate background knowledge. Readers must also draw on the communicative skills As they work with a text they must not only ascribe an identity to the writer but assume one for themselves; and they must then work with these identities . (p. 456)

These authors recognize, that the result of much current

pedagogy surrounding ESL reading instruction results in students constantly suppressing their own beliefs about what they have read for fear of coming up with an "inappropriate response" (p. 458) .

Vivian Zamel shares Hill and Parry's concerns about the view of reading for ESL students that currently seems to be holding sway. She says,

The way reading gets taught (and evaluated) in schools tends to keep hidden from students the sense making and exploration that makes reading possible and that, in turn, reading makes possible. What is practised in the guise of reading suggests to students that reading is a receptive, and static process, rather than an active, participatory one involving the dynamic contributions of a reader." (p. 464)

Reading instruction for ESL students "is often reduced to the act of finding a particular idea, as if this idea resides fixed and absolute in the text" (p. 464) . This approach to reading instruction finds its expression in the types of display questions which students are expected to answer. Every reading experience turns into a "mini" test. It is evident to students that there is a right answer, "There must be, these questions indicate that I must find it."

Zamel in her role as the director of the ESL program at the University of Massachusetts at Boston, clearly recognizes a need to move toward a more meaning-centered reading program. In her article she argues for reading instruction which works toward helping students understand reading and writing in a more critical way. In practical terms she calls for a reading program for ESL students which

makes connections between reading and writing for she says, "It is when students come to understand reading and writing in this critical way, as acts of knowing, that they come to see that reading lets us know writing, and writing lets us know reading" (p. 481) .

An example of reader response being used in an adult foreign language setting can be found in Soraya Ali's article on reader response in Malaysia. The author states that the methodology, that is the reader-response approach, "transcends languages, national boundaries, and student age groups" (p 288) . Her concerns were how to make a literature class more accessible to second language learners, and further in what ways could these literature classes, "be made an exploratory and reflective ground for human concerns and understanding of oneself" (p. 289) .

She constructed a framework for her methodology which involved five main features. They were: invoking schema, sharing of initial responses, repeated reflections in a reading diary, teacher intervention through group tasks, and enlightening projects. These features match closely those outlined by others in their work with poetry and secondary students, for example Dias, (1979, 1992); Probst, (1988 ,1992) .

Overall, Ali felt the use of a reader response approach with English language learners held great promise, "literature, if taught in a response-based manner, need not just act as a vehicle for language

teaching but can be a form of aesthetic enlightenment that enhances further the experience of reading in a second language" (p. 294) .

Alan Duff and Alan Maley might have difficulty with the views expressed by Widdowson, Hill & Parry, Zamel and Ali. Their book Literature (1990) is a methodology text for teachers of English as an additional language. The main purpose of their text is to use the literature as a vehicle for teaching language. The text is not meant as a course "in literature but rather as a set of interactive language materials based on literary texts" (p.5) . These writers have done away with the pesky decision of what sorts of literature might best be used with students,

Literary quality is not the only criterion for the selection of texts. Quite often "bad" writing proves more useful or stimulating than "good". These texts are not necessarily presented as models of good writing. Students are not required to approve of them, but simply to work with them. (p.6)

While they have chosen to use literature in their lessons these writers are clearly not attempting to engage students in making personal meaning of literature. Many pieces within the text are truncated, it is rare in fact to work with a complete selection.

The view of the use of literature as painted for us in this book is certainly in direct contrast with the authors previously quoted in this section. However, it would appear from a review of the literature that this utilitarian approach to reading and to literature specifically with

ESL students, is wide spread and pernicious.

Conclusion:

The review of the literature reveals very little in the way of actual use of reader response in literature study groups in ESL classrooms, elementary or secondary.

Except for the rare examples which have been cited, discussions about literary texts when they do take place are used instead as opportunities for teachers to check comprehension, a sort of "guess what I'm thinking is important" game.

Shifts in educational practice happen slowly over time and depend upon many factors. One of these factors is research. We build upon colleagues' theories and propose new ones that sometimes challenge the status quo.

This research which presents the use of reader response with second language learners, one part of a student-centered language learning program, is an attempt to examine current practice with respect to teaching reading to secondary ESL students. The knowledge gained through this research will benefit not only myself in terms of personal pedagogy, but will also attempt to add to the growing body of knowledge and sound pedagogy for students learning English as an additional language.

Chapter III: Methodology

A. Description of Research Methodology

Methodologists, working with both first and second language learners, are seeking answers to challenging questions about how to create classrooms where life-long learning is the goal, both for students and teachers. What is going on in our classrooms, those rich laboratories of reactions and interactions?

Historically, classroom teachers have looked to the "experts," the researchers to give us answers to these questions. There has been a shift in this research paradigm however because of voices who, as Atwell (1993) says "argued that educators must stop pretending that we can transfer scientific procedures to what are essentially social events and processes. Research that ignores context-real episodes from real classrooms in real communities - does little to help us become better teachers..." (pg. viii) . As Jack Richards (1990), well known in the field of second language instruction also states,

While classroom-based research has been more willing to acknowledge the teacher's presence in the classroom, the kinds of teaching behaviours that are typically investigated are restricted to those that are readily quantifiable or that can be described in units of linguistic analysis. Such research reflects a quantitative approach to the study of teaching. Hence much classroom research is reduced to frequency counts of moves and

transactions, interaction patterns, question types, and the like. other approaches are needed in order to broaden our understanding of the nature of classrooms of good teaching. This often necessitates more of qualitative approach, ...one that looks at the meaning and the value of classroom events. (p. 88)

The ability to work closely with these secondary ESL students in a classroom setting was a rare privilege. My classroom setting allowed me to observe the multi-faceted context in which the students were learning and provided valuable, daily, cumulative data in terms of my observations and physical artifacts the students were creating. I was not attempting through my study to test hypotheses. Rather my teacher researcher questions were "wonderings to pursue" (Bissex, 1987). I did not deliberately withhold particular teaching approaches from one group to see what results would occur. There was a synergy between my teaching and my research; each informed the other.

In order to take full advantage of this unique situation to study the reading responses of secondary ESL students, I decided to use an **ethnographic research methodology**. Ethnography is particularly relevant to this type of interactive research as I had an entire school year in which to observe, interview students, and other support personnel, collect relevant data in the form of writing samples and response and dialogue journals, and to record processes, (both mine and the students) as they occurred naturally in my classroom.

I feel this naturalistic inquiry is entirely appropriate as I view

myself as an educational anthropologist working in an exploratory way. It was not my intent to measure preconceived data, but rather to be a participant-observer in my classroom in order to understand how my students were learning and behaving in relation to my literature-based, response-centered curriculum.

Just as I spent this year supporting students in the development and clarification of their own meanings I too was systematically working to derive meaning from the events of my classroom. I began this year with a belief system in place which has been alluded to in Chapter One. However, I did not know what to expect in terms of my students' reactions to a literature-based, response-centered curriculum. I was able, over time, to paint a picture of my secondary ESL students interactions with literature and their responses to it. I was really seeking to understand my students' personal constructions, their meanings, their thoughts. I wanted to find out what they felt, what they believed and what they would do in this classroom environment which was so different from their previous educational experiences.

It has been my task to then interpret these behavioural elements and to state, as I will do in Chapter Four on the analysis of my research findings, what these multiple realities have to teach us as educators as we interact with secondary ESL students.

I have taken a naturalistic, discovery-orientation in my research because as the year progressed it became necessary to rethink initial

questions. I had begun with the intent of looking specifically at one group of students looking at a very short period of time, a month-long poetry unit, and then recording and reflecting on the responses of these students.

As the year proceeded, however, it became clear that much would be lost in not recording and responding to the other students with whom I worked as they provided rich comparisons and contrasts. In addition, the decision to expand my research to include observations, and data from the entire year rather than just the poetry unit has proved to be fruitful. The original question asked, "How does one group of secondary ESL students designated as intermediate to advanced, respond to a poetry unit." This question has been expanded to look at the whole range of oral and written responses that two different groups of students made in terms of a literature-based curriculum.

In order to take full advantage of my rich learning situation to study the responses of secondary ESL students, I decided to use a **case study design**.

Traditional ethnographic studies are a case study design, conducted at a single site composed of a number of participants, settings, processes, and activities.... case study refers to the one phenomenon the researcher selects to understand in-depth regardless of the number of settings, social scenes, or participants in the study. The "case relates to the research foci and influences what the research can state upon completion of the study. (McMillan and Schumacher, 1989 pg. 392)

Robert Yin (1989), in his book Case Study Research: Designs and Methods, suggests when a case study would be an appropriate approach. "The case study is preferred in examining contemporary events, but when the relevant behaviours cannot be manipulated" (p. 19). As Yin points out, however, the real strength of a case study, "is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence - documents, artifacts, interviews and observations" (p. 20).

I recognize that there have been traditional prejudices toward a case study approach. For example, concerns have centered around a perceived lack of rigour. I believe I will be able to address this concern through the many pieces of documented evidence I will be able to gather and report on with this research. Another concern that is often expressed is the difficulty of providing generalizations when using a case study. Yin counters this view by saying,

....case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a "sample" and the investigator's goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization. (p. 21)

It seems then that the use of a naturalistic case study is needed in the absence of theories or previous studies of secondary ESL students' attitudes and approaches to the use of reader response in a literature-

based, response-centered, language learning program. In addition, there also seems to be a currently acknowledged need to study learning strategies, of which reader response is one, in an ecologically-valid manner in the context of ongoing teaching practises.

As Chaudron (1988) points out, effective classroom research should be based on well reasoned theory and synthesis of previous knowledge, and further, this research should help us "determine the degree to which specific classroom processes or behaviours are sources of positive effects on second language learning" (p. 2) . We need to examine the behaviours of teachers and students in real classrooms.

The focus of this case study will be a year long examination of a literature-based, response-centered classroom. The case study approach is consistent with, and formed an integral part of my classroom based teacher action research. There is no conflict between Chaudron's view of classroom research and this unique genre of research. Patterson and Shannon (1993) point to the importance of teachers examining their own practice. They state that, "....teacher researchers seek to understand the particular individuals, actions, policies, and events that make up their work and work environment in order to make professional decisions [teacher action researchers] engage in moments of reflection and inquiry in order to take action that will help their students learn better." (p. 8) .

Schon (1983) helps to focus our thinking about the "problem

setting" stance that he feels teacher research provides.

With the emphasis on problem solving in most professions, we ignore problem setting: the process by which we define the decisions to be made, the ends to be achieved, the means which may be chosen. In real-world practice, problems do not present themselves to practitioners as givens. They must be constructed from the materials of problematic situations which are puzzling, troubling, and uncertain. (p. 40)

The very words "action research," imply a way of proceeding that suggests that we as teacher educators can appropriately look at our practice and effect change. Decisions are made after systematically reflecting on the day to day events in our classrooms in light of our underlying beliefs with the ultimate aim of developing new knowledge.

Reflection is at the heart of action research. This reflection works in concert with the on-going observations, reading, and other sources of data collection to create an ebb and flow of action, and newly informed, reaction.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) suggest twelve guidelines that will support teachers as they work toward "interactive professionalism." One of the key features they recommend is that teachers become action oriented in terms of locating their inner voice as educators. This location of a personal vision of teaching is made possible, they say, through a constant process of making our thinking about teaching more explicit, "through a continuous process of reflection in, on and

about experiences or practices in which we are engaged." "The concept of "reflective practitioner" as pioneered by Schon (1987) is seen as a way to describe and develop thoughtful approaches in professions such as teaching. What Schon and others are promoting is the important link between the vital reflection that teachers must engage in, and their practice.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) warn against superficial reflection and stress the need for careful collection of evidence upon which to base new ways of working with our students.

If we collected evidence more thoroughly from students, we would get better clues about what and how to improve. There are many ways to do this other than through personal impressions and test scores. Teachers can get more extensive feedback through the use of student journals; through systematic evaluations of courses or units of study; and through efforts to involve the students directly in the process of innovation. (p. 68)

This case study, which involved year long data collection, examined small groups of senior secondary ESL students making personal responses orally and in written form to poetry, art, and prose. As one part of the research findings, the results of students' responses to a specific poetry unit will be examined. However, rather than being the entire focus for this study, the poetry unit was one point on a continuum of learning for these students and is being highlighted to serve as an illustrative example of how these secondary ESL students

approached personal response after being exposed to this way of engaging with print throughout the school year.

Selected sessions of the poetry unit were tape recorded and transcribed and will form part of the triangulation I will use, in addition to my researcher's journal, my students' response journals containing year-long responses to a variety of student-selected and teacher selected poetry and prose, students' booklets of self-selected poetry/reflections, on-going reflective evaluative writing, and taped interviews with students and district multicultural staff. These methods of data collection will be in response to concerns regarding reliability and validity.

B. Research Design

I was initially compelled to begin this research in part because of my exposure, through a graduate level course, to the work of Patrick Dias (1987). I was captivated by the notion that it might be possible to expose ESL students to literature in a way which was consistent with my belief in the primacy of personal response in reading.

Sample Population

The study involved two groups of Asian, secondary ESL students at various stages of language proficiency who were enrolled in the researcher's pull-out ESL classes in a suburban, senior secondary

school. The students ranged in age from sixteen to twenty, and were from either Hong Kong or Taiwan.

These students were in two different classes and were designated through district wide testing as being Level 3 (beginning /intermediate) and Level 4 (intermediate to advanced) .

The number of students in the level three class ranged from a high of sixteen to a low of twelve. At all times there were more than twice as many girls as boys. Attendance in this class was fairly consistent, although several students left to join junior colleges, or semestered high schools. Two students had poor attendance during the entire year.

There were twelve students in the level four class, six boys and six girls. The attendance varied in the level four class throughout the year, the average number of students in attendance being eight. Several students had up to thirty days of absence per term. One level four student was connected with criminal activity and did not return after January, 1995.

The level four students received six hours of pull-out ESL instruction per week, three hours with me and three hours with another ESL teacher. The level three students received nine hours of ESL instruction per week with me as their only ESL teacher.

All students new to the district from outside Canada receive district testing and placement. The Gates-McGinitie reading test is used

and, in addition, depending on age, students are given a written, district-designed grammar test, as well as a test of oral language receptivity and production.

In the Spring of each school year all ESL students in the district take the Gates-McGinitie reading test again. These test results are used in conjunction with individual teachers evaluation of student progress. Movement to another level of ESL support, or exiting the ESL program, is made for the following school year based on these combined evaluations.

Nine of the students in the level three class had been at the school the previous year and had moved from level two to level three. The remaining six students were new arrivals at the school at the beginning of the school year and received their level designation at the district office.

All but three of the level four students, those new to the school in term three, had been at the school the previous year and had been moved from level three to level four. In addition, all these level four students, except the three who arrived in term three, have been in Canada a minimum of three years.

The range in age and of time in Canada, language proficiency, the mix of males and females, and number of students in the classes, are representative of other level three and level four ESL classes in this secondary school. The representation of only Asian students in these

classes is again consistent with the population of students in other ESL classes in the school. Asian students represent the highest percentage of ESL students in the school district.

These students were grouped for instruction into level three and level four classes and there was relative homogeneity within these classes with regard to racial mix, age, and time in Canada. There was, however, a considerable range within these classes, in terms of their language proficiency both in terms of receptivity and production, orally and in written form.

Students who find themselves in these various levels have expectations in terms of how long it will take them to exit the ESL program. Indeed, in the case of the level four students, it was clear from the first day of classes in September that they felt they were already inappropriately placed. The majority of these level four ESL students felt they should have been in a mainstream English class.

The level three students likewise had an expectation that, at the end of the school year, primarily due to time in the program, they would be moved to another level requiring less ESL support. The effect of these expectations on their ability and willingness to engage in a literature-based, response-centered curriculum will be discussed further in the findings of this research.

Written Responses

This research draws heavily on my students' responses both in their dialogue journals and their reader response journals. The dialogue journals were begun in October of the school year and discontinued in February. Reader response journals were introduced in November and were continued throughout the school year. I had been using a literature-based program with the students throughout the year so that the introduction of a poetry and connected prose unit (Appendix 1) was consistent with my year long literature-based and response-centered curriculum, the goal of which was to support ESL students, not only in their ESL classrooms but ultimately to be supportive of them in their mainstream classes.

The journal responses gathered during the poetry unit will be contrasted with journal responses which were kept throughout the year in order to examine issues surrounding personal selection as it relates to responses.

As Appendix 2, the outline for Readers' Workshop describes, the Readers' Workshop in my classroom called upon students to make written responses after reading their self-selected novels. Responses were also made to selections I had chosen for the students to read or selections I had read to the students. All journal responses made during the poetry unit were made after either large or small group discussion.

The responses, which were part of student-created, self-selected poetry booklets (Appendix 3) will also be referred to when addressing the research questions .

Oral Responses

Dias' research, in which he encouraged responses to poetry, used the following structure. Poems were read aloud twice and students in small groups gave uninterrupted individual responses. After allowing time for discussion the students then reported back to the whole group; consensus was not the objective. Rereading the poem and making written responses in a journal were then assigned for homework.

Throughout the school year both groups of ESL students had been encouraged in a variety of ways to orally express personal opinions on many topics including literature. These discussions were not structured according to Dias' approach. However, this structured approach was implemented for the poetry/prose unit. Students were invited to participate in whole group discussions in preparation for reading the poem or prose. This pre-discussion was followed by reading the poem or prose several times, followed by a written response. Students then used these responses to aid them in their structured small group discussions.

Although discussions had been part of the other poetry/prose sessions, these discussions were not structured according to any particular design. One of the level three students' structured small group discussions was tape-recorded. Two, of the level four structured small group discussions and one large group discussion were tape-recorded.

Classroom Context Leading to Research

As early as September of the school year it became apparent that these students did not view themselves as capable of making personal responses to literature. Their backgrounds, which have been described earlier, seemed to seriously inhibit them from making spontaneous responses. My students, it seemed, did not see the print on the page in any symbolic way. The words were there to be unlocked, the meanings discovered, and the right answers given.

It was not only their hesitation at expressing personal ideas which was at issue however. In October I administered a reading survey adapted from Atwell's In the Middle (1987). Most students, both level three and level four, did not indicate that reading was something they did well in English, perhaps not surprising since English is an additional language for them. However, of more concern were their responses to questions regarding the purposes of reading. Most of their responses indicated that they viewed reading as the act of getting information, basically an efferent activity. Many of these

students did not read for pleasure. "We read to get more information."
"People read because learning things will improve their knowledge
and hobbies." "Because they can get more information and knowledge
from a book." "People can get some reference and knowledge from the
book."

I wish to make clear that I recognize and value the role that
efferent reading plays in our curriculum. As Rosenblatt (1991) says,

It's the either-or habit of thinking that has caused the trouble.
True, there are two primary ways of looking at the world. We
may experience it, feel it sense, hear it, and have emotions
about it in all its immediacy. Or we may abstract generalisations
about it, analyze it, manipulate it, and theorize about it. These
are not contradictory activities, however. (pg. 445)

What I had hoped for my students is that they would be able to make
meaning in different ways depending upon their purposes for engaging
in reading.

Langer (1994) suggests that this process of meaning making can
be literary or discursive. She, like Rosenblatt, is keen to point out that
these approaches are not dichotomous. When reading or writing
students may indeed take one or other of the approaches to their
reading or writing at a particular time. However, Langer points out,
truly rich literary experiences are the result of the active interplay of
both approaches.

In both cases readers have a sense of the local meaning they are
considering at the the moment and also an overall sense of the
whole meaning they are reading, writing or thinking about; but

they orient themselves differently to the ideas they are creating because their expectations about the kinds of meaning they will gain or create are different. (p. 204)

Langers' term " literary orientation" could be compared to Rosenblatt's "aesthetic" stance. She characterizes it as "...exploring a horizon of possibilities. It explores emotions, relationships, motives, and reactions, calling on all we know about what it is to be human" (p. 204) . It is these possibilities which Langer sees as providing the circumstances which will create new, deeper and more complex understandings. Readers who engage in a literary orientation are constantly shifting between the whole and the parts which inform that whole. But, it is the notion of seeing beyond the particular text at hand that truly typifies the literary orientation. The reader is

...think[ing] beyond the particular situation, using their understanding to reflect on their own lives, on the the lives of others, or on the human situation and conditions in general. In doing this, they expand their breadth of understanding, leaving room for alternative interpretations, changing points of view, complex characterizations and unresolved questions - questions that underlie the ambiguity inherent in the interpretation of literature. (Langer, 1994, p. 205)

The other purpose for reading Langer calls reading for "discursive purposes" which is similar to Rosenblatt's "efferent stance." This discursive stance differs from the literary orientation in the sense that the reader now is no longer considering and reconsidering as they read. "There is thus an essential difference

between the two orientations toward meaning, a difference that can have a substantive effect on our understanding of critical thinking in education" (p. 205) .

In addition, questions are asked differently with each of these two approaches. The questions posed in a literary orientation have the effect of continually raising new questions about what one understands; there is tolerance for ambiguity. Within a discursive stance the questions have a different purpose. The far off goal of these questions is to find the "right answer."

What concerned me was that my students seemed to approach reading with such a total inability to take a literary or aesthetic stance toward their reading. Reading for them seemed to primarily mean finding correct answers and telling me what they thought I wanted to hear, basically a "seek and find" activity. Again, given what I know of their previous educational experiences, these expectations were not surprising.

Having said all this, I still must state that I trusted the literature and I trusted my students. I believed, and continue believe, in the power of good literature, and I trusted that students in a supportive environment would benefit from reading good literature and being able to make personal responses to it. I believed that when students are encouraged to engage in discussions about literature, to go back to the texts for a second look, to reconsider first responses, then they are

deeply engaged in the aesthetic, the emotional aspects as well as the efferent elements. I trusted that the literature would invite my students to explore new vistas, new possibilities of meaning. Literature, I felt, could connect students with the rhythm and beauty and power of the English language. Literature could show them the soul of the language and not just the shell that houses it.

This year has been an attempt to put into place practices that exposed my secondary ESL students in a wide variety of literature and encouraged and supported them while they made personal meaning of those literary experiences. The findings of this research are the reflections on the results of these initiatives .

C. Frameworks & Approaches to Enrich the Classroom Context

Throughout this year long study I have used the classroom as an environment in which to employ frameworks and strategies which seemed most supportive of the students as they came to understand personal meaning-making in reading. These approaches were intended to assist them as they moved the words from paper and ink to their minds where as Probst says, "they [can] come to life."

When I initiated the following frameworks and strategies in my classroom, I was unable to state which, if any, of these approaches would be beneficial in terms of developing a literary stance in

secondary ESL students. This research was my attempt, as Curt Dudley-Marling (1995) suggests, to ground my instructional practices on a strong theoretical base in order that the systematically gathered data combined with deliberate reflection on the day to day classroom context would provide information about some effective ways to proceed when working with secondary ESL students.

Although the same belief system was at play with both groups, I was prevented, due to time constraints, from applying as completely all the frameworks and strategies with the level four students. The results and implications of using of these frameworks and strategies less frequently with one group than the other will be discussed further in the Findings of this research.

Frameworks and Strategies Used With Secondary ESL Students

FRAMEWORKS

Literature-Based Curriculum:

It would have been meaningless to try to introduce a response-based reading program that had not been predicated on the use of literature. It was pointless to ask my students how they responded to a short selection from the SRA Reading Kit, or any of a variety of high-

interest, low-vocabulary materials which are available for use with ESL students. These short, often unrelated pieces do not provide the richness of language or experience that would elicit a personal response. Adapted literature, or High/Low books as they are sometimes called, have traditionally been seen as a way of using "literature" with ESL students. Never mind that in all too many cases there is little reward in such simplified fare. The choppy phrases and repetitive sentence structure do nothing to build the world of literacy for second language learners and, in fact, often actually interfere with rather than facilitate understanding. In addition, how can ESL students learn of the depth and variety of our language when presented with writing that is completely stripped of essence?

Throughout the year I attempted to maintain a balance between literature that I chose for the students, especially in terms of supporting a theme study, and literature that they chose to read during readers' workshop time. I have included in Appendix 4 a sample of some of the texts students were exposed to throughout the year as well as indications into which theme they were woven.

Many years in elementary school classrooms had exposed me to a great variety of picture and wordless books and these too were part of my literature program. These books were often sources of dialogue among individual students as they viewed them in the class library, and of course were spurs to other dialogue and writing when

introduced as whole class experiences.

The notion of accepting literature as the base of a secondary ESL program did not receive resounding support from other ESL teachers. My research, of the professional literature, which is outlined in Chapter Three, made clear that there are those writing in the field of ESL who support a more decontextualized, skill-based view of reading. This non-literary approach is also perpetuated by those who perhaps lack experience themselves with literary texts and so return to the safety of programmed materials.

There is also the common sense view of reading which was outlined in the literature review, that sees reading as basically the manipulation of parts into a whole. The belief that simplification is the answer to reading experiences for ESL students finds expression in the kinds of reading lessons presented for use with ESL students. These lessons involve breaking down reading into its small pieces believing they will make for more effective reading. However, as Bussis (1985) points out,

virtually any product of complex learning can be reduced to component parts by logical analysis, for analytic logic is a powerful invention of the mind. But a fallacy occurs when the analysis is automatically assumed to be the blueprint of how the learning was achieved in the first place. This fallacy is often devastating for instruction.... (p. 4)

My concern in choosing literature for the students and in

guiding them to make their own literature choices was to provide them with truly rich reading experiences. But more than an aesthetic experience, I wanted to highlight the role of literature in "the development of a sharp and critical mind" (Langer, 1990, p. 812). Literature, I felt, could provide a veritable bank of ideas, impressions, feelings and emotions, and at some point, perhaps impetus for the creation of their own writing. I wanted the use of literature to allow my students, as Rosenblatt (1991) says, to draw upon " a reservoir of past experiences with language and the world " (p. 445) .

Ruddell (1992) points to reader motivation as one important aspect of literature-based instruction. In addition to the aesthetic pleasure derived from reading he also says that

literature provides (in a cognitive sense) through *insight* into our own behaviour as we encounter a broad range of human behaviour and explanation of possible causes; through an awareness of people and other living things, events, and ideas... suggesting worlds not yet experienced. Literature proves an awareness of language as a powerful means of human expression by demonstrating the skilful use of imagery, drama, humour, and pathos. (p. 614)

What could be more important for my language learners?

The view of the ESL teacher's instructional role is part of this discussion. If ESL teachers sees their role as one in which they introduce the grammar of the language, then would they view literature, with its structural complexity and often unique use of

language as doing little to advance this goal.

The students also have to be convinced of the usefulness of literature in their curriculum for, on the surface, it does not advance either their academic or occupational goals. There are also those that would argue that literature with its cultural bias creates too great a conceptual load for students. My belief, grounded in the difference between use and usage, is that good literature allows students to see how to use the rules of grammar for effective communication. Still, the true power of literature lies in its ability to allow students to experience the beauty and possibility of life and language. Peterson and Eeds (1990) reiterate the point this way,

The possibilities of human life are illuminated, both the good and the evil, and we are free to explore, to take sides, to experience, to learn, but without the dire consequences we sometimes encounter in our physical world. When we read a story we truly merge heart and intellect. (p.16)

Thematic Units/Content-based Instruction:

Language learning takes time. My own experience tells me this as does research by Cummins (1981), Wong-Fillmore (1983) , Collier, (1987) . Many secondary ESL students, however, feel the pressure of time constraints. These students arrive at the age of sixteen or seventeen. They, as well as their parents, hope they will graduate with their peers and go on to university. Entrance to university requires completion of English 11 and 12. In order to take these courses the ESL

student must exit the ESL program. Consequently, some ESL students see the ESL program as a barrier to their success rather than a support. It is important therefore that these students feel that they are continuing their academic, content learning with the ESL program at the same time as learning language skills in order to ameliorate some of this pressure and desire to "move quickly through the system."

One of the ways I have found to support the academic learning needs of the second language learners in my classroom has been through the use of thematic units of instruction. These thematic units employed contextualised activities and language. In planning my thematic units I have been particularly careful to ensure that they were not merely correlations but true integration as Routman, (1991) says: "With integration...concepts identified are not only related to the topic or subject but are important to them. With correlation, the connections are superficial and forced, and there is no important concept development" (p. 277). Routman asks the question, and it was one which I was careful to attend to, "What are the educational objectives and goals of this unit?" (p. 208). To this concern for meaningful educational objectives, Early (1990) adds the need "...to plan learning experiences that will be appropriate to the intellectual level of all students regardless of their present level of language proficiency" (pg. 567).

Dialogue Journals:

I began dialogue journals with the level three students in September of the school (Appendix 5) . I was eager to create an avenue of communication between the students and myself. There were many opportunities for them to write during these early months but I was particularly interested in accessing the students' higher order thinking. I wanted to provide an outlet for expressive writing. Although my main incentive was not an evaluative one, I was able to see whether my students were able to use language in terms of fluency of ideas and appropriate use of structures. Primarily, however, this writing was for the students own language development. "Correctness is not the point; the learner's internal dialogue is. When students write to learn, they construct knowledge by writing about a subject in their own words and connecting what they are learning with what they already know" (Patterson, Santa, Short & Smith, 1993, p. 187) . I was hoping to create a learning environment that would, combined with the other structures I was putting in place, create a community of learners.

Dialogue journals were not used with the level four students. As I will discuss in the findings, this omission, along with other instructional decisions, had an effect on the level four students willingness to engage in written discussion in their response journals. I discontinued the use of dialogue journals with the level three students in January of the school year as I felt the use of the reader

response journal was creating a focussed avenue for discussion between the students and myself. In addition, a sense of trust and openness between the students and myself had been established by this point in the year.

Readers' Workshop:

Readers' workshop, which was established in November of the school year, provided opportunities to make visible the connection between reading and writing. The students were involved in Readers' workshop twice weekly for an hour. As with the writers' workshop students were able to make their own reading selections and through their response journals could respond to that reading in ways that made sense to them. As the outline the students received before we began the readers' workshop explains, the response journal, which was part of the readers' workshop approach was meant to provide tangible, on-going evidence of their thinking about their reading. The journals were not a test of knowledge.

Readers' workshop was intended to provide an environment that would also support my goal of developing a community of learners. I feel, as do Meek (1982) and Smith (1988), that in order for reading to be fostered, students must collaborate with others interested in reading, especially a significant adult.

....for all the reading research we have financed, we are certain only that good readers pick their own way to literacy in the company of friends who encourage and sustain them and that...the enthusiasm of a trusted adult can make the difference. (Meek, 1982, pg. 193)

Readers' workshop provides just such an environment of learning together, a "literacy club," Many ESL teachers view their students as unable to choose what they will read due lack of experience or language proficiency. However, as Probst (1981) firmly states, the making of these choices

...places a tremendous burden of responsibility on the student - it demands that the student think and decide, and those are awesome tasks. But there is not much point in working for less in the schools. (pg. 47)

The use of such organizational structures as readers' and writers' workshops makes powerful implicit statements to our ESL students. These are statements that demonstrate what we believe they are ready and able to do with others, the support of other students and a knowledgeable adult; statements about what is important to do during reading time and who has the power that real reading confers, as Frank Smith (1988) says so clearly,

...every reading/writing teacher should be a member of the literacy club. Many teachers are surprised when they reflect upon what they actually demonstrate about reading and writing during the day. (p.12)

My ESL students needed, I reasoned, to identify themselves with

people who read and write. Reading involves social relationships among teachers and students, among students and students, and among students and authors. The social relationships needed for reading do not just happen; the establishment of these workshops was meant to provide opportunities for social interaction with others. The gaining or maintaining of status and social position within the classroom can and should be facilitated through these groups. We all join clubs and other formal and informal associations because they are made up of people that we see ourselves as being like - or would like to be like.

Response Journals:

The use of response journals, which are different in intent and practice from other types of journals, formed an important part of my literature-based, response-centered curriculum. Parson (1990) outlines the components of a response journal as a combination of the reading and writing process. "Students reflect on what they've been reading, doing, and talking about and then reflect on how and why they respond as they do" (p. 3).

Response journals were introduced into my program after the use of dialogue journals which I viewed as an intermediate step.

These response journals provided another way for me to "dialogue" with my students but, rather than free writing or personal writing, the writing in this journal was meant to provide a focus for my students' questions, wonderings, reflections and predictions about what they had chosen to read during our reading workshop time, as well as stories and poems that I selected for them to read or had read aloud to them. The response journal would be a physical artifact which made visible my belief in the interactive and reciprocal nature of literature.

These journals were also an essential tool for the evaluation of process and product. They were handed in once a week, commented on and used as a communication tool between the students and myself as I worked to develop a clearer picture of their developing literary understanding.

At the beginning of first and second term the students were given open-ended response starters to support them in their writing. Response journals combined with these open-ended questions were intended to allow them to experience literature and to share their personal meaning making with me and their fellow classmates. As I explained to the students, these journals were my way I finding out what they understood about what they had been reading, and what they cared enough about in their reading to remark on in their journals. It had been my experience that my students were very good at answering traditional comprehension questions. They often worked

together to "find" the right answer in the selection. However, these answers rarely told me what was important or meaningful to the students related to what they were reading, what connections they were making to other reading they were doing, and to what extent they were internalising different styles of writing. As Langer et al (1990) point out, their extensive research showed that closed, so called "comprehension questions" give us, at the best, skewed data about *how* our ESL students are making meaning of what they read and what meanings they are making.

Used alone, such items seem to underestimate what bilinguals have understood from reading. Open-ended questions...may serve as a useful instructional bridge between contextualised student language and decontextualized school language and may also provide teachers with a better understanding of what their students understand and where strategic, content, or language help is needed. (p 464)

In many instances, the research findings have shown, response journals were used in the hope that they would support and also help to initiate discussions about what was being read.

The response journal was a vehicle to help students develop their understanding, and was meant to provide me with an alternative way to tap these understanding. I wanted to maximize their potential, and to heighten the contextualization of their reading experiences because I knew, as the work by Cummins (1984) points out, bilingual students do not do well on context-reduced tasks.

Writers' Workshop:

The structure of a writers' workshop approach in my classroom was founded on basic principles gleaned from writers such as Graves, (1978, 1983) and Atwell (1987) . At the heart of the workshop were the essential elements of time, ownership, and response. The predictable, twice weekly, hour-long segments were designed to allow for ideas to develop, to be shared, changed and rewritten. The expectations and organizational elements of the workshop were outlined, (Appendix 6) and reinforced through mini-lessons.

Mini lessons, which were an integral part of the writers' workshop, were attempts to address the issue of contextualization of language concepts. I was able, over time, to note the type and frequency of written errors my students were making, and then to approach them in short, meaningful and if necessary repeated learning sessions.

I believe the issue of ownership of topic is at the heart of a writing workshop approach. Over and over the students mentioned how much they appreciated being able to choose their own topics and how much easier it made it for them to pursue their writing to a satisfactory conclusion. The nature of this involvement will be discussed more fully in the analysis section of this study.

Response to their writing, which was a natural part of the writing process, happened in structured and unstructured ways. Students were provided with many opportunities to see editing

modelled; either by "listening in" as I worked with one student on a piece of writing or more formally as I took an unidentified author's work and modelled, using the overhead projector, how one could comment specifically and helpfully to a fellow writer.

Students were formally invited to sit down with a peer and to read, discuss and respond to each other's writing. Often students would spontaneously join with others to laugh, compliment, question and extend each other's writing during the workshop time. These dialogues also took place informally around our writers' publishing board which contained the most recent published pieces.

Important as well was the system of respect which was established through the workshop approach. This system was founded on the elements of listening and being listened to and a quiet respect for each other which connected to and was part of the building of a sense of community of learners. This sense of community was the underlying element at work with the level three students but unfortunately, for reasons which will be discussed later, was not present for the level four students. The implications of the extent to which there was involvement in the writers' workshop by one group and not another, as well as the reasons for greater commitment will be discussed in the analysis provided in Chapter Four.

LITERACY STRATEGIES

In addition to the instructional frameworks, the "superstructures," outlined above, the students were exposed to a variety of meaning-making strategies throughout the year. These strategies were the "nuts and and bolts" which formed the reinforcement to the framework structures.

For clarity of explanation I have divided these strategies into reading, writing, and speaking/listening. However, these divisions are somewhat artificial because in reality each strategy informs and supports the other. For example, inviting students to brainstorm elements in an art piece before expecting them to produce a piece of writing related to it is clearly supporting speaking and listening. At the same time students are provided with the impetus for personal written expression. In each strategy one aspect, for example reading, is brought to the foreground while each of the other learning modes moves temporarily to the background supporting, influencing and affecting the other learning modes. What was essential was that these literacy strategies occurred as part of whole texts being read or written.

Reading Strategies:

- "What to do when you come to "something" you do not recognize, know or understand as you are reading."
(Kucer, 1995, pg. 23)

Using mini-lessons as the main instructional vehicle, the students and I co-created a list of strategies that they could use as they were reading. Kucer suggests that these strategies can act to mediate for the students as they read. They were introduced in a systematic way rather than hoping or expecting that the students would "discover" these strategies on their own.

It had been my observation that these students, as rather emergent readers in English, were often unable to become involved in what they were reading as they focussed too heavily on semantic or lexical difficulties. Their over dependence on the "public" components, that is the "lexical, analytic abstractions" (Rosenblatt, 1991, p. 446) interfered in some cases with a deeper involvement with their reading. The reading strategies themselves are not new nor unique; what is crucial was that they were introduced as part of the on-going reading students were involved in and in many cases were identified by them after individual reflection, "pair/shares," or small group discussion. These reading strategies were posted on charts throughout the room and were also copied into students notes, to act as reminders for students that they could be in control of their reading.

- **Daily reading of prose and/or poetry**

The school year began with daily reading of prose and poetry and continued to be a key component for the level three students.

throughout the school year, and to a lesser extent for the level four students. The times for the reading varied, sometimes beginning the day, sometimes as the conclusion. I drew on a wide range of literary styles, authors and themes. The read-alouds frequently blossomed into further written or artistic activities. Sometimes the students were invited to sketch or write as I read, but most often they were encouraged to just listen to the language, and of course to ask questions as they arose. The list of some of the titles shared with the students throughout the year are in Appendix 4.

Writing Strategies:

The writers' workshop with its specified times for drafting, peer and group editing, student teacher conferences and the opportunity to publish their work resulted in many of the writing strategies I hoped my students would employ in their writing.

Of all the strategies which the students incorporated into their writing, the element of peer dialogue was most widely and effectively used. Often when students were "stuck" in their writing they would spontaneously take their piece to a student in the class whom they trusted would listen and give suggestions. Some of my ESL students lacked confidence in their writing abilities. It was an endless source of interest to me to hear them reading excerpts from their "work in

progress" for the express purpose of getting positive feedback.

Making visible, through writing workshop mini-lessons, the connections between what we read and what we write became evident as students chose to write "in the style of" one of the authors we were presently reading, or to actually "piggyback" on each other's ideas. "I'm going to write a story that has one of Bernard's characters in it, but it will be somewhere different and my character, not his, will be the hero." Less subtle than stylistic borrowings were students' use of vocabulary encountered in their reading, a strategy which was overtly encouraged as a meaningful route to vocabulary development which most secondary ESL students view as crucial.

Grammatical errors, which could not be ignored within the students' writing, were seen as opportunities for clarification of meaning. With student permission, selections were photocopied and, where an error was one which many students were making, addressed as a class problem solving exercise. For some students this less direct method of attending to errors was sufficient and resulted in fewer errors in their own writing. For other students a more focussed approach was needed. The structured conference time, as part of the writers' workshop, provided the setting and opportunity for directed student instruction. Although errors in writing were attended to, it is interesting, and worthy of further comment in Chapter Four of this study, that the students were much more comfortable with errors in

their writing than in their reading.

Speaking/Listening

Often speaking and listening are taught as discrete skills, as separate components in ESL classrooms. If teachers share the same class of students, then it seems clear, again in a "common sense" way, that dividing the teaching load along the lines of, "I will teach the speaking and listening, you do the reading and writing" may be a sensible way to proceed. My program, however, is founded on the belief that contextualised activities ultimately are more effective for students. Therefore, the speaking and listening activities were outgrowths of a thematic unit or connected with a piece of prose or poetry being shared.

There were speaking opportunities for individuals and groups. Some of these speaking opportunities were formal, practised and presented; others were more spontaneous and unrehearsed. Group presentations were often recorded and students were given the opportunity to listen to themselves to see how well they achieved the criteria set before the presentation.

The students, through their manner and comments, enjoyed these speaking opportunities. They could often be convincing and passionate about their topics. It was unsettling for me therefore to

witness the gap between these forms of presentations and the ability to discuss literature in small or large groups. The reasons for this apparent incongruence will be discussed further in the sections on oral responses in Chapter Four.

Conclusion

This ethnographic research, with its necessary broad strokes of contextualization, has given rise to this apparently unorthodox methodology section. The findings, which will be discussed in the next chapter, would lack contextual support without this rather complete picture of the classroom setting within which these secondary ESL students worked and learned.

Chapter IV:

Findings

"Reading is the relationship between a human being and a text, and the purpose of the activity involves the whole person. To ask what kinds of readers we hope our young people will become is to ask what kinds of human beings we hope they will become."

Louise Rosenblatt (1983, p. 118)

Introduction

The previous three chapters have established the context for this chapter on Research Findings. In Chapter One I communicated the focus of this research problem, the use of a reader response approach with secondary, ESL students, described the scope of the research questions and the significance of this research.

Chapter Two, the literature review, placed my research in a historical and associational perspective, and demonstrated the need for a study of the research as outlined in Chapter One.

The appropriateness of an ethnographic methodological approach and case study design, as well as an in-depth examination of the classroom context for the research were presented in Chapter Three.

The writing of Chapter Four, the findings of this year long study, has been like running in a wide open field full of colourful butterflies. Data gathered were bright, fascinating and worthy of close inspection. However, the amount and variety of data which flowed forth from a

year spent working closely with secondary ESL students has been overwhelming.

This chapter in the study will draw on those sources of data most salient to the study and, using the focus questions, will address the main research question which is, "What can we learn when Asian secondary ESL students are called upon to make personal responses orally and in written form to their reading?"

To those who might have concerns that the data examined here lacks rigour I would refer them to Atwell who says,

I called my notes, tapes and writing samples I collected by way of response my data..... my teaching and research went hand in hand. My admittedly subjective role as provider for and teacher of these students, which I was careful to describe, did not negate my findings. My role as teacher made my findings possible, it made them specific and context rich.... (1993, pg. ix)

Describing the Data

The following section will describe in the detail the sources of data to be discussed in these findings including how, why and for how long the various data were gathered. Sources of data outlined here will be selected to address specific questions; not all data will be addressed in all questions.

Question one, regarding the students' belief systems with respect to making personal oral or written responses, is foundational to the other four questions and of necessity will be dealt with the most

extensively. In answering sub-questions two through four it will be possible to reflect on data supplied in the first question.

Sources of data in support of Research questions # 1-4.

Researcher's Journal

This 109 page journal was kept on a personal computer throughout the year, (October 11, 1994 until May 9, 1995) in part for the purpose of chronicling my responses to the students' learning about the use of reader response in oral and written form. The journal was formatted to detail what approach or strategy was being initiated in the classroom. I used the headings, "What I Did," and reflections on those initiatives, "What I Think." I used the journal to focus my thinking over time, to record daily perceptions, and to take action based on what was actually happening in the classroom with the intent of making judgments based on observed critical events.

Reading Survey

A reading survey adapted from Atwell (1987), was administered to both groups of students.

Student Response Journals

The students were introduced to the use of a response journal in conjunction with the beginning of Readers' Workshop in November, 1994.

Level Three Students:

The journals were used on a consistent, weekly basis throughout the year by the level three students. Their response journals were used primarily to respond to their reading during Readers' Workshop. However, they were also used for end of term reflections, responses to videos, responses to a novel I was reading to the class and responses to a class novel.

Level Four Students:

The level four students used their journals as part of Readers' Workshop from November 1994 to January 1995. They were not used on a consistent weekly basis during that time. Beginning in January of 1995 we began a whole class novel study in place of Readers' Workshop. At this time the response journals were primarily used to write responses to their novel study. From April through May 1995 the response journals became the written forum for responses to our poetry unit.

Self-Selected Poetry Booklets

As part of the poetry unit begun in April 1995, the students were expected to create a poetry booklet including self-selected poetry and personal responses to the poems chosen.

Comments on Poetry Unit

Level Three Students:

For the level three students, who were in my classroom for nine hours a week, all the poetry activities, including the booklet, were one part of their on-going third term program.

Level Four Students

For the level four students, who were in my classroom for three hours a week, these poetry activities formed the major part of their program for April and part of May.

Taped Poetry Discussions

Level Three Students

One small group discussion was tape-recorded. The session will be reported on as it provides examples of types of oral responses to literature that these students engaged in.

Level Four Students

Two small group and one large group discussion were tape-recorded.

Taped Interviews

Six level three students, in two groups of three, were interviewed for approximately forty minutes for each group.

Five level four students were interviewed during a one hour session. Both groups were asked the same questions (Appendix 7).

A one hour interview was also conducted with a district multicultural home-school worker in order to determine current curriculum, methodologies, and parent/student expectations in Hong Kong high-schools from her perspective as a former high-school teacher in Hong Kong until three years ago.

Student Response Reflections

i. In January, 1995 both groups of students completed a form called "Making Personal Responses," in which they were asked questions regarding their thinking about making oral responses.

ii. In November 1994, the level four students completed a form called "My Perfect Lesson," in which they outlined what they considered to be an effective and enjoyable one hour ESL lesson.

iii. Both groups of students were asked to respond to a sheet called "Reflections on Responses" in April, 1995. This form asked them to reflect on a variety of topics concerning personal response (Appendix 8).

Selected Writing Samples

Throughout the year both groups of students were called upon to produce written pieces as part of their ESL program. Selected pieces from both groups will be referred to as they further clarify the role of personal response to reading and connected writing opportunities.

The Findings

For organizational purposes specific data will be reported separately as it relates to each question. It seems important however to clarify the issue of interconnectedness of the data. Each piece adds to the overall findings and it is really the interdependence of these pieces as they inform each other which is crucial and paints the clearest picture.

This next section will use the sources of data described above to examine each of the research questions outlined in chapter one and, through the power of the accumulated data and summative comments, address the main research question.

I will share data related to the level four students first and then that which is associated with the level three students. I will conclude each research question analysis with a reflection on the data as they relate to both groups.

Sub-Question One -

What beliefs do secondary ESL students hold toward making personal responses to reading both in written and oral form? Do these opinions change over time when students are given repeated opportunities to express personal responses?

In many ways this research question is the most complex to address. It is certainly ephemeral as it attempts to make visible for the reader students' belief systems regarding response. These beliefs are not something tangible unless we use, as I have done, visible data such as recorded in my research journal, taped interviews and discussions, and answers to surveys as evidence of those beliefs.

In addressing this question of belief it has been necessary therefore, to draw heavily on data which also relates to the other four research questions. For example, distinct boundaries between evidence of a belief system and evidence of response preferences are difficult to establish.

In an attempt to describe most comprehensively the secondary ESL students' beliefs regarding personal response, I have drawn data from the areas of oral and written responses, my journals in terms of approaches used and influencing factors, and students' reading survey, taped interviews, and response reflections.

Level Four Students:

The following notes are from my journal after first introducing literature response groups with my level four students. I began by asking them to write an individual response to the poem "Know Thyself." I read the poem with them several times and I then invited them to do a short, written response. I could see hesitancy, and very little writing was taking place. Hoping to increase their written responses through the use of dialogue, I then encouraged them to talk one at a time in a small group and then to appoint a group representative to speak to the class about what their group had discussed.

Resarcher's Journal

October 11, 1994:

Students were very reluctant to write their own perceptions. Seemed very unsure of what was wanted. Some students seemed bored. Some seemed to feel it an "unworthy" activity...Difficulty with one word "obsolete" this held them back somewhat.... When I was in a group and gave prompt questions some students would talk. Could not be called a discussion. Whole class feed-back limited. I attempted to capture some common themes or threads. There were no "ahas" or "I disagrees," or "I agrees." In fact I ran the discussions and directed the discussions. Not really what I think of when I think of reader response.

This first foray into oral and written reader response was not a stellar one.

I commented further in this entry,

It seems clear to me that it will take a lot of prodding and encouragement for these response groups to work... it seems quite obvious that these students are either not familiar with providing personal responses orally, or perhaps they don't enjoy it because it is such an unfamiliar way of representing what they understand about a piece.

Journal comments very similar to these were repeated frequently throughout the year as I attempted to understand why the level four students were so reluctant to speak or write about what they were reading.

Reading Survey:

On October 28, 1994, I administered a reading survey. My intent was to begin to determine students' perceptions of reading and the reading process. I believed that information about their mental model of reading would yield insights into their beliefs about responding to reading. The following comments are from this survey.

Note: All quotations from students are transcribed as they were written. In cases where meaning might be lost I have written the word correctly in brackets. I believe it is important to see not only what these students had to say but also how they were saying it. In terms of the level four students, the issue of grammatical correctness affected my reactions to their responses, a factor which will be reported on further when addressing sub-question four.

Why do people read?

- A: for increasing the knowledge and for pleasure
- R: gain more knowledge
- G: People read because learning things improve their knowledge and hobbies.
- J: They can get more information and knowledge from the book.
- W: People can get some reference and knowledge from the book.
- E: because they want's to learn more

Of the nine students who completed the form three mentioned reasons other than gaining knowledge,

- P: To spend their free time
- S: they want to improve their writing
- A: For fun, interest.

How does a teacher decide which students are good readers?

- A: The students who can read faster and understand more.
- G: Ask him/her is understand the stories talking about.
- J: understand the story
- S: A teacher can ask the content of the book.
- A: Usually someone has a good mark on the composition.
- E: How your reading

Two students did not answer the question. One student diverged from the common response and wrote,

- R: From their feelings of the books.

What does someone have to do to be a good reader?

- S: Find the meaning of vocabularies
- R: read as many as they can.
- A: Someone doesn't care to read any books
- W: Ask someone if you have questions in the book and gain more from the book.
- E: read more and listen more
- P: To read more books

A: read more often

Do you ever read a novel at home for pleasure?

Four of the eight students answered No. Of the other four comments were,

P: Sometimes in the summer

W: If I have time

A: Once a week

R: Depends on my time.

In general how do you feel about reading?

S: Reading is quite boring but it can help in my writing.

R: not really interesting

A: interesting

W: Reading can give me more experience and learn more

A: I will enjoy reading if I feel interested, but I will feel like suffering if I am not interested.

P: Fine, O.K. but if too long will make me bored

J: It is fine.

G: Good and improve my knowledge.

The results of the survey did not surprise me as I had noted in the first two months of school a decided unwillingness among the level four students to engage in reading during the Readers' Workshop time. Many students "forgot" their novels, or response journals. Individual discussions with students which were part of the Readers' Workshop indicated little or no reading was being done outside of class. They were generally unable to comment on what they were reading beyond plot retells. Journal entries were short, plot retells with

little or no personal connections were being made.

The survey showed that there was, in general, a utilitarian approach to reading . Very little pleasure reading was being done. There were mixed views about what you had to do to be a good reader . Four of the students said reading a lot would help; however, these same students said they never read for pleasure. Perhaps they were writing what they thought they should write. In general their view of reading seemed to be that it is a necessary evil, something to be tolerated but not cultivated. Somewhat encouraging, however, were their answers to the question:

Do you like to have your teacher read to you?

Eight of the nine students said Yes, perhaps indicating that the act of personal reading was too taxing cognitively but there was pleasure to be gained from listening to someone else read.

After reading Dragon's Pearl by Julie Lawson to the class I noted They seemed quite enthralled. I read to this group a great deal throughout the year. Most of these instances however, involved their reading along with the same text. This was reading aloud for the purpose of mediating the text, not as singularly pleasurable experience.

"My Perfect Lesson"

By November of the school year the discrepancies between my classroom goals in terms of engaging students in personal response and

the level four students expectations in terms of what would be useful for them in an ESL level four classroom were apparent. There was sporadic attendance and, at best, grudging participation in classroom activities. After three months of school we were no closer to creating a community of learners than on the first day.

Conversations with their other ESL teacher revealed that poor attendance in that classroom was an issue with only two students who were also not attending any of their other mainstream classes. The programs in our two classrooms varied widely. This difference need not have been an issue but, unfortunately, due to several factors which will be discussed further in these findings, the differing emphases between the two classrooms were, in concert with other factors, partly responsible for the general lack of commitment to personal oral responses and to a lesser degree, written responses.

In an attempt to open lines of communication and to uncover what beliefs students held regarding ESL lessons, I designed an activity called "My Perfect Lesson." The students used a formatted sheet which indicated spaces for Name/Type of Lesson, Materials Needed, Organization, Activities, and Evaluation to design a lesson that they felt would be beneficial and enjoyable for an ESL student.

One student suggested a lesson which involved a type of structured response to reading and writing. In addition to reading and discussing the poem, student K. also included "analysing" the poem as

part of the activities. It is not clear whose analysis he wanted to discuss. In other words was he talking about personal response or, and this seems more likely, did he want to hear the 'official' version of what the poem meant.

K: Use the rest of the time to analysis the poem, learn the skills to understand the poem.... It is a good challenge for the students to read the poem. Even though it is hard for us to read or understand it, it can give us the opportunities to analysis the poem. Because in the future, we need to read and learn the poem in the regular class.

Other suggestions were:

- J: Group story writing
- A: map reading,
- B: pronunciation activities
- W: Movie watching
- S: Listening activity
- R: Speaking/Drama lesson
- G: Group Story
- E: Drama on Racism

Interestingly, only one student B. suggested the pronunciation activity, which could be regarded as "skill-based." He wrote,

B: listen to an English audio cassette, then answer questions, at the same time fill in blanks (exactly what we are listening) learn idioms and practice orally (Canadian way of speaking), learn 5 to 10 vocabularies and memorize them quickly.

The responses to "My Perfect Lesson" activity seemed to indicate

that the students were looking for variety in their lessons and that they enjoyed group work. Two of the students' lessons involved students speaking together in a somewhat problem solving mode.

R: It is a kind of group work, each group should discuss together and design what type of presentation they are going to perform. They can do it like a drama and to have some interesting conversations and actions...

E: It could be individual work for some part and for some part it could work in a group. This activity is about racism (racism). How they work out from each other. How the student feel about different kinds of people.

Other than student K.'s example however, none of the students suggested discussing or writing about something they had read.

Because so many of the students had mentioned working in groups as an activity that they enjoyed, I continued to help students discuss prose and poetry in small and large groups as well as introduce many other activities which required group participation. However, what became clear as the year progressed, and as the data indicated, the notion of expressing a personal opinion about literature orally was not something they either valued or had the skills to carry out.

Researcher's Journal

October 18, 1994:

I need to do much more before reading the selection to encourage discussion after reading.

October 25, 1994:

In spite of all the pre-work their small and large group discussions were flat. In the small group they just read their

responses (which were very short) and didn't connect with each other. Most groups were unable to formulate a group response. It ended up, as always, with me asking leading questions.

January 18, 1995:

Asked them to use the two column response sheet which had been assigned for homework to hold a small group discussion about Chapter Two. We then had a large group share, supposed to be based on what the small group had thought was interesting. However, since I was with one group for most of the time, and the other group spent most of its time looking up words they didn't know, the subsequent large group discussion was fairly flat.

March 15, 1995:

When I asked them what was interesting in the chapters, C. and A. basically gave a plot retell. T. made some allusion to the fact that Petra will become important. Still it does not feel like a discussion. It feels like a question and answer period. I can't seem to get out of the discussion loop. If I let them discuss in a small group they just read what they have written and then sit and stare at each other. "I tell you, now you tell me." HOW, can I get them to respond to each other in a way that makes them think more deeply about what they are saying?!

When they indicated they enjoyed working in groups, it was not with the purpose of discussing their responses to poetry or prose. They felt they did not "understand" the piece enough to talk about it.

"Understand," according to these students, seemed to mean that they felt there was a right answer and that since they didn't understand every word of what they had read they could not possibly express, at least orally, their opinion on the literature.

Taped interviews which I will refer to next, combined with

results from a sheet asking for their opinion related to making personal response, and further comments from my journal indicate that some of the students could see some value in giving written responses, although the purposes for giving these responses were unclear. Indeed, some of the students seemed to enjoy responding in writing rather than answering comprehension questions. Reasons for this preference are discussed later. However, oral responses were never seen as an important, interesting or useful way of either sharing their own ideas about literature or of building on their current perceptions of what they were reading.

Taped Interviews

On May 17, 1995 I interviewed five level four students using the interview questions outlined in Appendix 7. I asked the questions of the group in general and waited for voluntary replies; therefore, not all questions were answered by all group members. I was concerned that if I interviewed them one at a time that they would perceive my questions as too inquisitorial. Therefore, I interviewed them as a group so as to create a more relaxed atmosphere and thereby gather richer, more meaningful information.

What is the difference between answering questions and giving a response?

T: I think the response journal, um, we have more free things to

think about. We answer the question we are only talk about the question, but we do the journal we tell our idea, but do the question only about the question.

W: I like the consideration, can explain, to you why, if you answer the question is more specific, the question.

S: When you write the response journal I can you show what I think, but when you answer the questions you must give the answer.

G: I want write the response journal. Because I don't know how to explain myself.

C: I prefer response than to answer questions, Because sometimes I can get other peoples' ideas and then I can know what other people think and I think I will think more specific.

Although the question did not specifically ask about written responses, the students all interpreted it to mean that. Their responses seem to indicate that, at least in terms of written responses, they enjoyed the opportunity to express their own opinions freely and they recognized that responses and questions were two different things.

Why do you think you are asked to give responses to what you read?

S: When I write a response I retell what I think, what I read.

T: I think, um, if we only answer the questions it can simply to find the answer to the question, but really needs to completely understand to do a response.

W: I think because we don't talk too much in class and you want to know what, you want to understand what we thinking inside.

G: I think you want to know what we learn.

C: I think is good because sometimes we just know the story but we didn't know the theme of the story, so response journal is good.

There is confusion concerning why they are asked to write responses. I had used mini-lesson opportunities throughout the year to discuss response, had shared my own responses to poetry and prose orally, and had shared other students responses to pieces of literature, but these attempts at clarifying the purposes of response had either not been internalized or were too difficult to express.

All five responses indicate that they think the response journal is in some way a check, an opportunity for me to tell whether they read the story and to what extent they understood it according to some teacher-held criteria.

In a discussion I had with them regarding response I noted the following in my research journal,

March 17, 1995

After discussing the charts I asked them to reflect on the process of working in small groups. I also pointed out that I rarely ask them "comprehension" questions. I asked them if they like answering comprehension questions or did they prefer working in groups to talk and then giving responses. They said they liked talking in groups and then giving responses. I told them I was surprised and so would most teachers be, because they believe that ESL students like answering clear cut questions.

The students' ideas about preferring to work in small groups and

then giving responses, as well as their comments in the interview about enjoying written responses rather than answering questions, appear to contradict what took place in the classroom where they were extremely reluctant to discuss literature orally. In addition, their response journals were completed with a general lack of commitment.

I next asked the students if they felt we had ever had a discussion in the classroom, they replied,

S. Yes, um, the game, the game we had last week.

T. Um, we play the survival game all the people in this class, all the people doesn't like people dead, so we talk.

I asked what constituted a discussion,

C. Opinions

W. Ideas

T. People

C. Express our feeling

The students seem to understand the *content* of discussions; what were missing, and was not achieved throughout the year, were the skills necessary to explore this content. Attitude, another important factor necessary for successful discussions, will be discussed later.

As so many of my journal entries indicated, participation in discussions about literature was limited throughout the entire year. I made no notations about successful literature discussions. And yet the students said they preferred to talk about a story and they enjoyed writing responses. Why the discrepancy?

Two explanations seem possible. First, they were simply telling me what they thought I wanted to hear. They knew, from the many times I had spoken about it, that I valued personal response and they simply wanted to 'please the teacher.' A perhaps more cynical interpretation might be that they were attempting to influence my opinion of them in order to exit ESL, a prime goal for all these students.

The second reason they might have stated that they enjoyed giving written responses is that they felt responses were somehow "safer" than answering questions to which they perceived there were right and wrong answers.

My level four students were not strong readers. Miscue analysis indicated them to be sound and word dependent, often to the detriment of meaning. Their journal responses, particularly during our novel study of The Chrysalids, which were more concrete representations of their current thinking about their reading than oral responses, often concerned me as they seemed not only to be unable to make personal connections, but indeed, not to be following the plot. I struggled all year with striking a balance between supporting personal response and the need to ensure that they were, at least, following the story events. I began to suspect that their vague responses were an attempt to hide the fact that they did not know what was happening in the novel.

January 17, 1995

I'm afraid I can't seem to help asking them fairly traditional questions as we are reading. However, in the asking I get more and more desperate because they seem to have so little idea what is going on. So, do I stop asking questions and just do a simultaneous translation as I read, and then look to see what sense they are making? I think I know in my heart that this is a better route to take. They are not going to 'get,' that is understand all the nuances of the story. So perhaps it is best to just expose them to a longer piece of literature and just allow them to make what sense they can of it. At least it is well written literature and not some story written so they can answer questions.

February 8, 1995

I read an article in Feb. 1995 Language Arts. The author spoke about being aware of not using literature to do a guided tour of a book. It got me thinking. I am desperately trying to not stop as we read The Chrysalids to ask display questions, which I was doing a lot of. I know on one level that I cannot "give" them the book. They must work with it themselves but a part of me needs reassurance that they are "getting" it. So now instead I have been trying to do a sort of guided tour of what we are reading. Not in terms of what to think about what we are reading, but rather tracing the events, painting the scene, summarizing.

A dilemma. I summarized my feelings this way,

Although the author of the article thinks this is not such a good thing to do. But I think in terms of working with ESL students it is a bridging step, freeing them to express what it is they think about what we just read.

I restated my concern a few days later.

February 14, 1995

I was concerned about P.'s responses the other day in not recognizing an important event. It strikes at the heart of a lot of this for me. I know they are not going to "get" all the events, so do I let this go and just concentrate on personal responses. I do not want the reading of this book to turn into a mini-test situation. "Retell all the events in the correct order! On the other hand how can they accurately respond to something they don't know happened, or don't know why it happened?"

February 18, 1995

Just reread something I wrote earlier in the year. I wrote that these students seem to feel there is one right answer. I think I need to modify that now that I have read their response journals for a few months. I still think, they think, I have the answer and they must give it to me... But in some cases, because they are such weak readers, they really are unsure of what to say so hence the rhetorical questions, the very vague and safe opinions. I think, they think I will accept something that is soft and fuzzy and nice sounding and basically repeats safe things that they know are 'correct.'

Later I wrote,

I wonder if I should ask them to give proof from the story to back up their ideas. Certainly it is always suggested that personal response does not just mean writing any old thing you think. You must have some proof. I guess in a way that is what I am doing in asking them questions at the end of their responses forcing them to go back to the story and find proof. I just don't want them to think, "Oh I was right there is one right answer and I didn't get it!"

Taped Interview (continued):

How do you feel about giving a response?

- W: Sometimes, sometimes not. Just depends on poem. If I don't really understand the poem, I don't know how to write the response to you.
- C: It's challenging.
- G: Not quite.

What would you do if you were the teacher and you wanted to find out what the students thought of what they read?

* in these interviews the researcher is indicated by the initials PJ.

- W: Ask more questions.
- T: I don't agree with the test, because um maybe students, will have the hard work for the students, but when we have on the test, but I do the project on the story.
- PJ: Oh you would like to do some kind of picture, or drawing like we did for The Chrysalids.
- T: Because is more easy to do.
- C: But not all people will do .

Some students would not answer with respect to how they felt about responses. Those that did gave mixed reactions. As often seems to be the case, their answers are polarized; they would either prefer test like situations, or picture drawing instead of response.

As problematic as their reasons for writing responses were, their reluctance to make oral responses was far more worrying. Further in the interview one of the students suggested the way to get ESL students to speak would be to force or punish them by taking away marks; another student said,

- T. I don't think it is any use, because people from Hong Kong, they Chinese, they are too shy the students don't speak to the teacher.

Further sources of data which outline the level four students' beliefs about personal response are to be found in the following "Reflections on Response."

Reflections on Responses:

In June of 1995 I asked the level four students to complete a form which asked them to think about and respond to their ideas about written responses. Only four of the students completed and handed in the form. The following comments are from those forms.

- R: Writing responses is one of the most boring things I've ever done. Whenever I was writing response, I always have to stretch my mind in order to make it more interesting. Sometimes there was really nothing you can write about, but you still have to response it. I found that totally useless.
- A: About writing responses, I enjoy most to give my ideas freely. I have a lot of responses that are not good, because sometimes I have to make up some ideas to write when I have read a prose or a chapter of a novel that doesn't give me any ideas.
- C: I like writing responses because I can improve my writing skills, organizations, spelling and express my personal feelings in my writing. Also, it gives me a chance to think more about the theme of the story after my teacher gives me some comments. But I think my writing about the "Mending Wall" is not good because I'm confused about the poet and the other people in the poem think about walls. Also, the expression of my own feelings isn't good enough for other readers read.

B: I enjoy most about writing responses is expressing my idea in the responses. The skills I learned in my responses are grammar and structure.... Sometimes I don't understand the story, it is very hard to write a response journal.

Comments by student R. were clear cut in terms of dislike of the response format. It is interesting to note the comment about "stretching my mind", and the perception that this was not a positive thing to be engaged in. Other students again referred to their inability to express themselves if they didn't understand the story. As well, the notion of the journals as being places that would help improve their skill base was reiterated. One student, A. mentioned that the journal gave him a place to express himself freely.

Positive comments such as, "I enjoy most to give my ideas freely," and "'I enjoy most about writing responses is expressing my idea in the responses,'" indicate that the students did seem to appreciate the freedom that a response journal provided, however, their perceived lack of skills and prevented them from using their journal effectively, "...the expression of my own feelings isn't good enough for other readers read."

Although we had been together for nine months at this point there was still minimal trust. Trust takes time to build, and is the accumulation of repeated opportunities to have confirmed what has been said, was really meant. Elementary-aged ESL students will hopefully have many experiences with teachers asking them for, and

validating their personal opinions on a variety of topics including literature. However, secondary ESL students arriving relatively late in their school career will have less opportunity for such validation. It seems possible, therefore, that one of the factors affecting the level four students' beliefs about personal responses could be their age on arrival in Canada. The level four students were in their mid to late teens when immigrating. Based on interviews with the students, our district home-school worker, and students' parents indicated that they had been immersed in an educational system that values the one right answer and conformity. It is possible that they found it too difficult to shake off this way of thinking about learning. In addition, their educational experience did not support open, frank exchange of ideas with their teachers. They had not been encouraged to express personal opinions and now obviously had difficulty in believing that making responses was necessary or worthwhile. Many of them had achieved excellence in their native countries without ever being asked to express a personal response to literature and therefore their belief that personal response was unnecessary to academic success had further support.

The April 24, 1995 taped interview I had with a district home/school multicultural worker gave further proof of the nature of the level four students educational background. I asked her,

What would students have experienced in Hong Kong in terms of small group discussions?

Ans. The teacher asks some questions about comprehension of the

book, and then they answer what the teacher asks, no group discussion, no chance to talk to each other, just sit by their own desks. The students are called on, they don't get to say, "I know," teacher chooses who will answer. No chance to discuss with four students, classes are very large, forty students, and the desks are anchored down, no space to move desk or chairs.

What about large group discussions?

Ans. Well, students are called on one at a time and stand up beside their desk and give their answer. Not many chances to say what they think about what they read.

Why do you think these students are having so much difficulty expressing their own ideas about stories and poems we read?

Ans. Because the most important thing for students is to get the higher marks, personal responses are a waste of time. They need to read a great deal and to memorize it, no time for personal responses. Passing examinations is very important, comprehension, composition, they do lots of grammar exercises.

What kind of reading do they do, how much reading would they do?

Ans. They are only required to read one or two books in a year. They do some comprehension exercises. They only read and do comprehension, or grammar. They only do a book report on Easter, Christmas, summer holidays, that is the amount of reading they do.

The comments from the multicultural worker were consistent with comments my students had made to me informally all year.

Perhaps more important than the type of experiences they had in school in terms of studying prose and poetry was the paucity of personal reading they were required to do. Again, the multicultural

worker's comments were borne out in conversations I had with students. Evidence of their lack of comfort in choosing and reading books of their own choice was evident from their lack of involvement in the Readers' Workshop, their reluctance to choose books when I took them to the public library and their difficulty in talking about any books they had read in Chinese or in English. The average number of books read in a twelve month period, as indicated on the October reading survey was two. One student claimed to have read fifty, and two others as twenty and eighteen respectively. Although it is possible that they had read that number of books, it seemed unlikely, since two of these students did not complete one novel during our Readers' Workshop time which lasted for two months.

There are other issues which could have affected these level four students' attitude toward response besides past educational experiences. When we compare the level three students beliefs about response with the level four students, we begin to realize that the level three students also came to Canada in their late teens having experienced the same educational background and yet their attitude to personal response is markedly more positive. So age on arrival in Canada is not the only factor to be considered, but rather is one in a series of interconnected and interdependent elements. For the level four students some of these issues seem to have had a more profound effect on their belief system regarding personal response.

Another reason the level four students may have been reluctant to involve themselves in making personal responses could be due to systemic issues. Three of the level four students had been allowed, after being tested on the Gates-McGinitie, and producing a written piece, to take English 11 at night school beginning in January, 1995. The testing and assignment of writing was done by their other ESL teacher. They had been instructed when doing their writing assignment to be careful, and to produce as error free a sample as they could. I was invited to read the samples and offer my opinion. I had to agree that the three students' samples were relatively error free. I voiced my concern, however, that the samples seemed to be lacking in those elements which I value in writing - richness of language, a sense of voice, attention to detail, and a sense that writing was for expressing ideas that were important to them. Of course, since the topics were assigned, lack of engagement with what they wrote is not surprising. Some of the students whose writing had been rejected as containing too many errors did indeed contain grammatical problems, but still on the whole seemed more fully realized and richer in personal involvement. A discussion followed in which, once again, the notion of what mainstream English teachers expect of these students was raised. I could not deny that there was an expectation that students be able to write like "native" speakers and that anything less was seen as a transgression. Consequently, these students were allowed to enrol in

the English 11 class.

Once these students were enrolled in the night class of English 11 it was clear that they no longer considered their ESL course necessary. They were not required to give personal responses in their English 11 class. Therefore they must have found my comments regarding the importance of personal responses to prepare them for mainstream classes somewhat incongruous. I commented in my journal,

February 14, 1995

I listen to the English teachers talk about tests they have created. These tests are all of a fact gathering nature. Name three ways Rosalind wasn't happy in the house? And in terms of poetry it will be name the poetic devices being used in... I claim to want to support students in mainstream classrooms, is what I'm doing really doing to help them when the kinds of questions they are being asked are the kind I am avoiding?!

The issue of supporting ESL students' transition to mainstream classes is an important one. In this case it seems that an approach which was being valued and nourished in an ESL classroom did not find corresponding support in some mainstream classes. It could be that teachers of night school English classes, which are composed of predominantly ESL students, feel that other areas are more crucial in terms of helping students complete the course requirements.

The issue of ESL students taking an ESL course and a mainstream English course simultaneously was problematic. In this

case the students were required to continue to take the course for two reasons. First, if they dropped the ESL course they would have had six study periods a week. We were already experiencing difficulty at the school in terms of the misuse of study periods. Second, the ESL department, myself included, felt that there were still benefits for these students in the ESL classroom in terms of support for reading and writing in their English 11 class. Once again, the system's notion of what was important for the students came in conflict with the students' perceived needs.

After working with the level four students for four and a half months we were still making little headway in terms of a greater willingness to engage in personal responses and I was certainly starting to question the validity of my approaches. As my comments in my journal indicated I was in turmoil about whether my sense of what was appropriate for my students deserved more consideration than the students' wants.

January 18, 1995

I can practically hear other secondary ESL teachers saying that what I am doing is a waste of time. Just let them answer straight forward questions. Maybe they are right. Am I really on the right track? Maybe they are better off left alone, to just do the stuff, fill in the blanks, answer the questions....They come to class with such reluctance, dragging themselves in dreading the fact that they are going to be called upon to speak. I feel badly about that and wonder if my pressing them to make personal response is partly responsible for their attitude.

At issue was also my concern as to how my methods would be perceived by other ESL teachers. These issues of systemic/student mismatch as they influenced the students' personal responses will be addressed more fully in the chapter on Conclusions and Recommendations.

Level Three Students:

In addressing question one in terms of the level three students, some similarities and differences between their beliefs with respect to personal response and those of the level four students become apparent as we examine similar sources of data.

Reading Survey

I had administered the Reading Survey to this group on September 21, 1994. The following comments, which reflect their notion of the purposes for reading, were very similar to the responses given by the level four students in answer to this question on the survey.

Why do people read?

- P. It was because they can learn many new things in the book, example=new vocabulary
- C. Increase knowledge
- C.L. To improve reading or read in spare time

- P. Because they want to know more things in the leisure time
- K. They want to learn English or they were boring
- J. Because people want to learn more knowledge included me
- P. People read because they can know more information of this world
- N. People read book because they wanted to learn something in the book
- I. They are boring or they have some information must to find out
- K. To get more knowledge that they want
- M. In the spare time or do the book report

Two students mentioned that reading might help them relax and that reading might help them be better readers. One student attempted to get at the notion of meaning making in reading.

- E. The words could let people know the message without talking.

Their responses point to a view of reading as a means to an end. Reading is not an activity that might personally enliven you, help you make connections with others, clarify your own ideas, question yourself, or any of the other myriad reasons why people might read, other than as an efferent activity.

Answers to the question related to teacher perception of good readers also contained elements of the notion that reading is basically understanding what was written. But there were hints that some of the students suspected something other than comprehension was at play. Factors such as speed, fluency and number of books read were all mentioned.

How does the teacher decide which students are good readers?

- E. If the student can read fast and understand the story or article well, then he is a good reader.
- J. It's depend on the student's reading if he/she reads very well then he/she is a good reader
- C. They understand are interest to read
- K. Do some book report
- N. Good readers can attention what they get or learn in their story.
- K. They could tell by students' influence, understanding the words
- M. The reader can get the commend and summary for the book

Some students mention oral reading as the teacher's measuring tool.

- C.L. Read smoothly and understand the main idea.
- P. They may decide whether they pronounce the word correctly , have the rhythm
- I. from their sound, fluent, and speed

Other comments included,

- D. length of time they read, how often they read
- B. Or ask them how many days can they finish a book/novel

One student hinted at the reading/writing connection,

- J. In students' writing expression, teachers can decide who is the good readers.

Student E. gave an honest response.

- E. I'm not a teacher, I don't know.

While this might seem a flippant answer it was in fact typical of the more relaxed interplay which existed between this group and myself. Even as early as the end of September a sense of trust had begun to build. Based on my knowledge of these students, their

answers to this survey in general were a more honest reflection of their own thinking.

Real differences between the way these students and the level four students viewed reading began to show up more clearly in the next question which asks them to consider the necessary elements for good reading.

What does someone have to do in order to be a good reader?

- J. Read the easiest books first then step by step after some time you could read more difficult books.
- C.L. Read a lot
- P. They will read a book or newspaper every day.
- K. I think the reader keeps on reading book in a good habit
- P. Read more
- D. Read more
- J. When he finds a difficult words, he guess this word from the sentence. He will learn more and to be a good reader

Already discussions we had in class about reading strategies were showing up. The notion of reading extensively as being helpful to effective reading was also mentioned several times.

Two students mentioned the ubiquitous book report as helping them to be better readers, while two other students cited learning new vocabulary as a something good readers do. One student hinted at the difficulty many ESL students experience with reading.

- I. They must practice, have endurance because a good reader must have much endurance.

Do you ever read novels at home for pleasure?

The answers regarding reading for pleasure were a direct contrast with the level four students. Of the sixteen (16) students who completed this survey, eleven (11) of them replied **Yes**, they read for pleasure; only five said **No**. I had asked the students to respond in terms of their reading in English which might account for some of the following answers from students who said they did not read for pleasure.

In general how do you feel about reading?

- E. It's painful to read in English
- B. Sometimes it is very boring
- T. Good but sometimes it is boring

The students who replied that they read at home gave the following responses.

- N. I feel reading is very interesting.
- I. I like to read
- D. Quite interesting but sometimes I feel boring about reading because I chose a bad book
- P. When I am reading I am very happy and I feel it can help me to get a good result in the exam
- M. Quite interesting when you get a book that is suitable for you
- K. I feel that reading is the best way to improve English because there is many vocabulary that you can learn in finding dictionary
- P. I like reading when I have the spare time
- C. As long as the book is interesting to me
- J. Not too bad
- P. I feel reading can improve my writing
- C. I feel reading can improve my English.

It appears that these students see the value of reading for utilitarian purposes such as passing exams, enhancing vocabulary, and improving their English. However, reading for pleasure is also mentioned. Once again, the students reminded me about the importance of book selection. This issue will be addressed further in research Question Four, personal selection of reading material.

Do you like your teacher to read to you?

Fourteen (14) of the sixteen students said Yes, they liked to be read to. At this point in the year I had already initiated daily read-aloud with the students. I had shared Shel Silversteins", Lafcadio, the Lion Who Shot Back, as well as several Roald Dahl selections as part of an author study. They had come to expect the read aloud as part of the daily routine. I have always enjoyed reading aloud, with its possibilities for dramatic word play, humour, relaxation and multiple opportunities to introduce students to authors they might not otherwise read. In addition, the students were engaged in listening to well written pieces which sparked discussion, questions, and laughter. The results of the survey therefore were not surprising, but they were affirming.

My perceived time restraints resulted in very little reading aloud to the level four students. They had indicated that they felt reading aloud was not "useful," and I, in an attempt to provide them with a

program that they felt in some way met their needs, eliminated read alouds, a decision I came to regret.

A holistic examination of the survey showed that although the level three students' perceptions of the purposes for reading were similar to the level fours', other factors such as personal reading, notions of what good readers do and pleasure in being read to all were moderating elements and created generally a more positive and receptive attitude toward the reading process. Consequently, there seemed to be a greater willingness, at least as far as written responses were concerned, to explore the notions of personal response to their reading.

Taped Interviews

As with the level four students the questions were posed to the group as a whole and students volunteered their answers.

What do you think is the difference between answering questions and giving responses?

- D. If you ask the questions right, it makes you think more, the response
- C. More thoughts about the story in the response
- K. If you answer the questions, you won't be a lot of thinking involved.
- E. Questions usually have a specific answer in a response you have your own opinions
- P. I think it depends on the teacher, what the teacher asks what the question is. Just like if the teacher asks your opinion how do you feel what the character looked like, then I think just same as

- our response.
- M. I think a response is better it give you more space to add your ideas.

The notion of personal opinion was expressed although there was some attempt to say that questions, if they are open ended enough, could act as a response. Like the level fours', these students seemed clear that there was a difference between answering questions and giving a response.

Why do you think you are asked to give responses?

- D. Make us think more? Because if you finish reading the story, then you think it more deeply inside.
- K. It shows how much you understand the story
- C. I wondered in my mind why we had to do it.
- M. Checking, you know what you have just read.
- P. Make sure we have read the story
- E. Or maybe we can say our personal opinion.

The students comments suggest that they view responses as a way for their teacher to check that they have read and understood the story. Some of the students' see some value in being encouraged to express personal opinions.

How do you feel about giving responses?

- E. So, so. Depends on the topic. I prefer to write on topics that I choose.
- P. I agree, so if we choose by ourselves then we really interested in and it is better for us to write the response.

Here the students were making a connection between their feelings about response writing to the importance of self selection. When the students mentioned topics here, they were not talking about teacher directed response questions but rather were referring to choosing their own reading material rather than stories or poems I may have selected for them to respond to. Further evidence of this is given later in the interview and in other sources of data such as their self-selected poetry booklets. These sources will be reported on in terms of Question Four, the effect of self selection on responses.

Do you prefer oral or written responses?

* In the interviews the initials PJ refer to the researcher

- E. I like all of them but I prefer not to write.
- P. I prefer to write, because we can express our feeling more deeply in writing than orally.
- E. If you talk, you can talk, you can think during talk, yeah, but if you write a response, you have to organize all this stuff, and rewrite and look for grammar mistakes, stuff like that, too complicated.
- P. I don't agree. Because if you write and talk you will not say any words, just in your mind and speak out right? I will think first before I speak.
- M. Sometimes I think before I speak in English. Also sometimes in Chinese.
- PJ. If you speak more English it sometimes helps your writing. Maybe that is why E. is such a good writer. He speaks a lot in English.
- E. Yeah, you don't have to translate in your head.
- D. I prefer written.
- PJ. Written, why not oral?

- D. Too embarrassed
K. I prefer both,
D. You can't prefer both
K. Actually oral. I can say what I want.
PJ. Can't you write what you want?
K. Sometimes difficult to get the words.

The group was evenly split between those who preferred oral and those who preferred written responses. Student E. who preferred oral was certainly one of the most confident English speakers in the room, although students D. and P. were both very strong orally.

Again, in spite of what some of the students said, the reality of the classroom was that they were very reluctant to speak about literature in small or large groups. For the level three students their written responses, examples of which will be examined later, were always much richer in detail and use of language.

It has been suggested by other teachers, and students themselves, that the reason they don't speak about literature with other students lies in their lack of confidence in their spoken English. While confidence in their speech might be a factor, my many opportunities to discuss their reading with them individually during Readers' Workshop time did not support this assumption. They were often articulate and involved in our one on one discussions. Of course, I was there to scaffold their remarks, fill in blanks, ask leading questions and generally challenge their thinking. Their fellow students did not have

the skills to carry out these type of discussions.

Why and how to develop the skills required to participate fully in literature discussions in authentic and purposeful ways will be one of the factors addressed in research Question Two.

Reflections on Responses

The level three students were also invited in April of the school year to share their thoughts regarding written responses.

What do you enjoy most about writing responses?

- D. I can write my feelings for this book, maybe you can share it with the readers. I always share my experiences with my friend and I like it. I don't want my feelings to stay in my heart, it is uncomfortable, that is why I share the experiences and feelings in the response and I really enjoy it a lot.
- R. The part of writing response that I most enjoy is write the personal response. In this way I could show or share my personal ideas to my teacher and may classmates, either. Most of the teacher always give few questions to students after reading the story I don't think this can help students to understand the story. I think most of students will have some answer of the question, so I rather writing the responses than answering questions.
- M. What I enjoy most about writing responses is they give me a chance to write on my feelings after reading.
- K. The part that I enjoy most are respond about the story that I have just read, it is interesting to tell a little bit plot in the part I have read and told some response and feeling about he story and the characters.

- J. The thing I most enjoy about writing responses is that I can share my ideas or comments with others on what I have read.
- E. This is the chance to tell somebody else what do you feel about the thing you read.
- P. I can share my feeling to someone else so if I read the book which is very good I hope through my responses they can attract others to read it also.
- B. I enjoy writing response in my own opinion without pressure, it really helps me to express myself into writing.
- C. The one thing that I enjoyed the most about writing in my journal is putting my ideas in the journal.
- L. The thing I enjoy most about writing responses is to share stories with others.

The level three students, in contrast to the level four students, had overwhelmingly positive comments to make regarding their use of response journals. The most frequent reason given was that the response journal provided a forum for personal expression.

What journal entry are you most proud of? Why are you proud of that response?

- D. I think it is 95.02.02, because I feel that response really described what I feel to come to Canada, the words in it described my mind after I been here for 2 years, sometimes you sit alone and think about something your mind is like a voiceless radio and recall your childhood. At that time I put my words from the heart in the response the feelings still in my mind are unforgettable, like a scene still in front of me. It is repeat, repeat and repeat again, if I feel sad about that, it is a mark in my heart. This is how I wrote this response and I am proud of it.

- R. The response about African Journey was my favourite response. It was because this response was my first time to write a new pattern in my responses. It's a chance that I could try to find the uncover of the story. Finally, I discovered some emotion of the story, and I wrote down what I thought in the response.
- M. The journal is written Feb. 3, 1995 about The Secret Garden. It is a nice and rich information piece about the book. I enjoy reading the descriptions very much as they help me to think or reflect on the same things in my life as in the book.
- K. I am proud of the piece I wrote about Alive! on Jan. 17. I am proud of that piece of writing because I was feeling so emotional about how the author have suscribed the whole event I think I've done a good job on responding to the story.
- J. I am proud of my journal entry on February 25, because I finished to read my first story book in Readers' Workshop. I think The Devils' Arithmetic is very difficult for me to read, however I finished it finally. Besides I like the response from Ms. J. because she encourages me when I met the difficulties.
- P. I am proud of the journal entry is The Snow Goose, which I wrote on fourteenth of April. I think this may be the shortest piece of my journal, this is good because I have tried to write a new thing that I did not write before. I tried not to retell the story, I tried to see the author's point this may help me to write more different kinds of responses.
- B. I am most proud of my journal entry was the one responded on The Diary of a Young Girl. It is because I had a very good time reading those pages of the novel. I could really catch her feelings as I read along because I had such experience before. That's why I had a lot of ideas to write on the response journal in that time. No need to squeeze something out of my mind on what I should respond.

The students' perceptions of well written response journal

entries indicated they used their journals for many purposes. For some the journal was a place to reflect on personal experiences similar to the characters; for others the journal gave them an opportunity to keep track of and to complete challenging reading. Other students used the journal to try new ways of responding beyond retelling. There are suggestions from the students that good journal entries are ones that flow easily, not needing to be "squeezed" out.

All the novel choices referred to were self-selections. The novels they had chosen might be considered challenging for students at this stage in language learning. However, it seems that the literature was rich and compelling enough that they were able to complete, and most importantly, able to respond to it in ways they found personally satisfying.

What do you see as the strengths of your response journal?

- M. The strength of my response journal is to analyse the authors' writing style. I always compare the writing style in different books to other authors. I find this very interesting.
- K. The strength of my response journal is my own opinion is quite powerful. I present my own thought. Sometimes it might be positive or negative, but I think personal opinion can be truly trustable.
- P. I have many different ways to write response journals. I make it more interesting.
- B. I put my ideas in the journal
- C. My strength is I put myself as a character role and usually I will

retell a little bit of the story

The students were given this response form to fill in with few instructions beyond answering it as honestly as they could. They recognized, perhaps because of the number of times it had been mentioned throughout the year, that personal meaning making is an integral part of reading. Their own opinions they feel, not only matter, but are essential, and they are, as student K. says most "trustable."

Conclusion to Sub-Question One - Beliefs

Oral and Written Response

i.) Neither the level four nor the level three students made shifts in terms of their beliefs about engaging in oral discussions of poetry or prose in small or large groups. It seems reasonable to say that their hesitancy to become involved in oral literature discussions might be linked partially to a belief, developed over time through exposure to an educational system that had not valued this mode of expression, that oral literature discussions are not a respectable, or time efficient way of displaying knowledge. And further, the notion of personal meaning making as an off-shoot of these discussions might not therefore be considered an important educational goal.

It should be noted that as the year progressed the level three students did become more involved with me in one on one, literature discussions which were a scheduled part of our Readers' Workshop. I

believe the provision of a Readers' Workshop framework is a positive step toward greater involvement in small and large group literature discussions.

Educational background experiences are certainly an element which could be partially responsible for the paucity of oral responses by the students. Other frameworks initiated throughout the year with the level three students seemed to have mitigated the effects of these experiences, at least in terms of their belief in the personal benefits accrued from engaging in written responses.

For the level four students the effects of these educational experiences, were overwhelming and ultimately resulted in few shifts being made in terms of their beliefs about the efficacy of oral or personal written responses.

ii) The students at both levels began the year by expressing opinions on the utilitarian or skill-based nature of reading. Self reporting, and classroom observation confirmed that little personal reading was being pursued by either group. A connection between their beliefs about reading and the usefulness of personal response seemed to exist.

Again, through the use of Readers' Workshop and other approaches which will be examined in Sub-Question Two, the level three students did increase the amount and type of reading they engaged in.

The level four students' personal reading did not increase. Their comments about personal response, both written and in interviews,

indicated that this approach was seen as an ineffective use of time and in no way helpful to them in terms of personal meaning making.

iii) Both groups of students appeared to need more practice with the process of discussion as well as the language to use in these discussions. Although the students enjoyed small group activities their preference was for such activities to be of a problem solving type; that is, activities in which the product was more important than the process, where what was said was subsumed by the need to produce something. Interestingly, when students were required to create some product, their dialogue was richer, less forced and generally more fluent.

When the content or substance of the discussion was more emphasized than the dialogue to express it, their oral interactions improved.

Some hope for increasing participation in oral literature discussions lies perhaps in building scaffolding for this process through the year long use of literature study groups, an issue which will be addressed more fully in the Final Chapter, Conclusions and Recommendations.

Sub-Question Two:

What approaches or methods are most supportive of students as they work toward making personal oral responses to reading?

My years as a mainstream classroom teacher had shown me that strategic activities were necessary to support student discussion and to provide a focus for written responses related to the literature. I felt, therefore, that if I hoped to develop and encourage literature discussions with my ESL students I would also need to initiate a variety of supports to these oral as well as written responses.

I have been able through reviewing the approaches and strategies I used throughout this study to see which approaches were instrumental in enhancing discussion and which had little or no effect. My research journal has proved enlightening in this regard, as have taped student interviews, taped student discussions, and student writing samples. I will reflect on the efficacy of approaches which were used first as they played themselves out with the level four students and then the level three students.

Approaches That Support Oral Responses

Over my years of teaching I have developed an approach to asking mainstream students questions in a form which I believe is

respectful of their need to make personal meaning. The questions are open-ended enough to allow for a variety of interpretations. Through these questions I was interested in supporting students' critical thinking. I valued the processes that they went through in order to come to a response, as much as the response itself.

Unfortunately, these same approaches were difficult for me to enact in oral discussions with my secondary ESL students. The gaps and silences common in any discussion with native English speakers had not given me difficulty as I had come to expect them as part of the process. However, with my secondary ESL students these gaps and silences were so much more pervasive, lasted longer and, I felt, were reflective of deeper problems. Hence, I was less willing to allow these silences to continue. I was fearful of what the silences indicated, and lacked confidence and perhaps the skills necessary to develop the discussions. The following data are reflective of some of these concerns.

Level Four Students

Researcher's Journal

My second journal entry of the study begins with a question which was repeated in different ways many times throughout the study. In mid October I was puzzled by the long, uncomfortable silences which accompanied any request for students ideas.

Purves and others suggest that a good question will sometimes create the spark needed to initiate a discussion. I was concerned that I was not giving them the needed support I wanted to in order to prepare them for a story discussion, so in my journal I recorded,

October 25/94

Began by asking a focus question, "Have you ever held an opinion of someone and then changed your mind? What caused this shift?" It seems they need a lot of time to respond to a piece. It is almost as if they need to go away and think about how they will say what they want to say. Then they can use these carefully crafted responses as the focus of the discussion. I will try giving them time to think about the question and then have the discussion. See if this works better.

Unfortunately, allowing them time to craft a written response to use in support of an oral response did not have any appreciable effect on the quantity or quality of these responses. In retrospect, I can see that I must have felt that improved oral responses depended primarily on my finding the right strategy or approach.

February 15/95

I really feel I might be the weak link in all this. My discussion leading techniques are not the greatest form. Yesterday for example W. actually made a connection between Rosie and Michael and The Chrysalids. I tried what I had been reading about, that is encouraging students to respond to each others ideas, I said, "R. do you agree with W." etc.. but I seemed to do all the talking. They would just respond with "Yes, I agree," or "No, I don't." I need to learn what to do when this happens, how to move beyond the yes/no stage.

Later in the same entry I puzzled,

Should I have made an interpretation of my own (i.e.), "I wonder if the author is talking about the limits of friendship and love?" And then, "What do you think?" or "Do you think there should be limits to friendship and love?" I suppose I will end up with more "Yes/No" answers.

After introducing a new poem as part of our poetry unit, I again reflected on an unsuccessful approach. The poem was written for two voices; I took on the role of one voice the rest of the class the other voice. I had hoped that the oral, dramatic reading might prompt some response from them when we came to talk about it.

March 29/95

We didn't really discuss the poem itself just, the vocabulary. It didn't seem, (at least from their comments) to mean much more than what it seemed to be, that is a poem about the life cycle of a chrysalis. More and more I start to believe that my questioning techniques are really not adequate. I just don't seem to be able to say the thing that will spark them to say something.

March 31/95

I am worn out trying to get them to respond orally. It really has come to seem to be an impossible task to get them to respond to an idea in an even remotely spontaneous way. Why? Do they not care? Is the topic not interesting? Are they too shy? Are they lacking in confidence? Does it seem unimportant? Do they think, "Why bother, it won't get me anywhere?"

Throughout the year I continued to believe that if I could just find the right combination of pre-discussion activities, thought-

provoking questions and different groupings that I might be able to effect an increase in students' oral responses.

April 4/94

Limited discussion in spite of leading questions. Assigned a quick write, meant to support future oral discussion: "What phrase or line from the poem made the strongest impression? What did these lines have to do with the poem?" Decided to take the bull by the horns and interject my personal input into the discussion. I hoped that if I took a strong stand that they would react. No, it didn't happen.

Since these approaches had not worked and thinking that it might be the grouping of the students that was hampering discussion I decided on trying a different tactic.

I think I am going to make name tags and put them on the desks to rearrange the class groupings for them. They always sit in the same places, which should be a good thing, but often isn't because they tend to goof off together. This way I can easily and quickly move them around for each class. I will keep a record of who sits where and see if it improves their participation.

Controlling where the students sat did not have an effect in terms of greater oral participation. It did, however, help to alleviate some personality clashes which certainly had not helped the classroom atmosphere.

The following attempt to support oral response to the poem The Mending Wall, by Robert Frost, through a pre-write also yielded few results. The following are an excerpt from my journal and the transcript from the tape recorded small group discussion which

followed the personal written response.

April 11/95

Read the poem to them two times, stopping at end to see if there was any vocabulary giving them difficulty (savage, boulder, mending). I asked for a volunteer, eventually I "volunteered" Rick. Had them do a 10 minute personal response to the poem. Then taped C., J., and I..

Taped Small Group Discussion

April 11, 1994 - **The Mending Wall** - (C., J., I.)

- C. From this poem I think is, is good for people to put up a wall because everyone has a secret and people have a right to hide their secret, also I guess the author also expressed that if the wall has gaps they will know each other and their weakness will show to the neighbours.
- I. J. what do you think? (in a flat, unnatural tone, different from his usual voice)
- J.: I think this poem means if we have our fences with our neighbours we can reduce our argue, fences can separate our places into two parts and then we have our responsibilities for our place if we have our fences then we don't need to get the neighbours argue they won't take their responsibility to the other.
- C: I. it is your turn.
- I: I think what this poem says..... (Unintelligible)

(Large gaps of time no talking.)

- J: What do you think his father said?
- I. Good fences make good neighbours,
- C & J (together)
Why?

- I: I told you already.
C: But I'm not sure...
C: What is your response?
I: Good fences make good neighbours, that means every one has their own secret, so they can live peacefully together, this is what good fences means
C: Do you think the father has the same opinion as yours?
I: Jacqueline what you think, about what good fences make good neighbours mean?
J: We can separate our places.
C: I think if we reduce the conflict between each other .
I: We finished our discussion already can I turn off the.... (speaking to me)

(Discussion lasted 4 minutes)

The discussion began with students C. and then J. reading from their journals. The written responses acted more as scripts instead of prompts to further dialogue. However, without the written response perhaps nothing would have been said. The bulk of the "discussion" centred on the students' reading of their journals. One student, C., a very diligent, conscientious girl, attempted on several occasions to keep the discussion going. In some ways she took over my role as the perceived question asker.

Most of the comments appear to focus on what the poem can teach us. These types of responses seem to be consistent with their belief, in general, about the efferent purposes of reading as discussed in

question one.

There was one spontaneous exchange when both students C. and J. , two females, were getting upset with student I. , a male, who they perceived was not taking the task seriously enough.

I have always felt that self-evaluation is a key element in learning. I began to wonder if the students really understood what an effective discussion might look like; what observable behaviours would be in place. They were given a form which asked them to reflect on such things as how they contributed to the group, whether or not they seemed enthusiastic, did they encourage others, did they add to other peoples' ideas and how often they were the one who suggested an idea first.

Nov. 22/94

Gave them a form dealing with class participation today. Had them rate themselves. I didn't really care what mark they gave themselves I was more concerned that they know, in a non-threatening way the areas that I will look at for participation and involvement in discussion.

As the year progressed I continued to use a variety of small group activities to promote dialogue in the hope that the ability and willingness to talk together would result in richer discussions about literature.

In January I chose the novel The Chrysalids to be the focus of our literature study for the second term. I chose this novel because it

was one of the few for which I could get a class set. I had hoped to utilize small literature study groups throughout the year but lack of novels made this approach unattainable. A whole class novel study seemed a reasonable alternative. I had reasoned that the novel would allow me many opportunities to share ways of talking about a piece of literature. While some of the students enjoyed the novel many did not. Some possible reasons suggest themselves; for example the structural complexity of the novel or the rather archaic language. I suspect that in many cases they did not have the background knowledge necessary to make sense of some of the references in the novel. I noted in my journal,

Feb. 21/95

They seem to have such little background knowledge of what I would have considered they would know about. The whole issue of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima was unknown to them except my new student T. I finally had to get really explicit with them. The black lands are black because a bomb was dropped. Tribulation, that is talked about all the time refers to the dropping of an atomic bomb.

I am not suggesting that knowledge of events of World War Two is absolutely necessary to an appreciation of The Chrysalids, however, in the case of my level four ESl students I do believe this absence, combined with a complexity of other factors hampered their own meaning making with respect to this novel, and therefore their

caused their inability to be involved in oral responses about it.

As the year progressed I did note that the students would engage in discussion if they felt there was an end product beyond the discussion. In my journal I noted the use of sentence strips as a focus activity.

January 7/95

I had them work in small groups first to sort and predict the sentence strips taken from chapter one of The Chrysalid in order to make predictions about what these characters would be like based on these sentences. They seemed to enjoy this activity.

Later in the study, as part of the poetry unit, I used a kit of art prints to create a visual focus for dialogue and poetry writing. This too resulted in discussion and the creation of related written responses.

In April I introduced a poem and story which I felt would work well as companion pieces. The poem, "The Immigrant" and the story, "Why My Mother Can't Speak English," both deal with young Asians whose mothers were unable, or unwilling, for a variety of reasons, to speak English.

Oral responses to the pieces as usual, were weak. Although the students had not engaged in a great deal of oral response, the literature did make an impression on them, evidence of which was reflected in their journals and will be referred to later in Question Three.

What needs to be acknowledged here was the importance of

introducing students to a wide range of literature. It is unlikely the students would have encountered a story or poem of this type in a workbook of structured "readings."

In terms of an approach then, I feel that part of my role as "teacher-facilitator" (Ruddell, 1992), requires me to share literature which will be most personally meaningful to my students. Rich pieces of literature are as an important prerequisite for building the motivation that could eventually lead to higher-level thinking.

My goal to help students in their personal meaning-making involved the juxtaposition of their prior experiences with current experiences to create these meanings. I believe in this instance that, although many of the students did not make oral responses, they were listening to and being affected by their peers' comments. This interest in their classmates' responses may be considered a valid form of response. As I remarked in my journal,

April 25/95

It is a very powerful story. It turned out P.'s mother's position is the same as the mother in the story. Her mother can't speak English and she also works in a restaurant with her father. The story was almost too close for comfort for some of them, too real. Although they spoke quite calmly about the story I wonder if any insights will come from their responses. I raised the issue of speaking English with their Asian friends and how they are received when they do. "Other Asian students say we are showing off, they call us banana."

Taped Student Interview - May 17/95

I had hoped that this taped interview, which has been referred to in examining Sub-Question One, would prompt the level four students to share some of their perceptions regarding what they felt would help them share their oral responses. I asked,

"Which do you prefer making? A written response or an oral response."

* The initials PJ refer to the researcher

W. I choose oral.

PJ. Um hum, why's that?

W. Because I know that sometimes I will talk with others so it is easier to response than to write.

PJ. Even in English?

W. If I have enough time I will write out.

PJ. Is it helpful to write your response first and then have a discussion?

W. Yes.

PJ. What about you G., do you prefer written or oral responses?

G. Written.

PJ. Written, because?

G. It is easier, I too nervous to speaking. Do a writing response is more time to think.

PJ. And you S., writing? (She nodded affirmatively) Writing, O.K. and you C. ?

C. Oral, because my writing is not so good, the organization of my writing.

PJ. Do the "Questions of the Week" and the chart of journal starters do they help you write more?

(Nods around the group)

I told the students that in my opinion we had never really had a discussion about literature and asked them why they thought this

might have been.

- S. Afraid of speaking. We don't have confidence in our speech.
PJ. Does the size of the group make a difference in how much you are willing to say. For example do you like a small or a large group?
T. Small group.
PJ. Why's that?
T. Too much ideas.
PJ. Um?
T. I think that small group needs four people

The students were divided evenly as to a preference for oral or written responses. Student W. did say that given enough time she would like to do written responses so she could craft her answer. Students G. and S. again mentioned a preference for writing which they claimed to be connected to their lack of confidence in their speech. From their comments it seemed that more discussion about literature should take place in a smaller group rather than a larger one.

Further on in the interview we discussed the amount of ESL instruction they were receiving. Two students suggested one hour a week would be sufficient. Their other concern had to do with the make up of their mainstream classes,

- T. I think we shouldn't have too many Chinese in the class. We should separate Chinese in Chemistry out. For example in my Chemistry class 75% Chinese.
PJ. What to do though?
T. So, we can't learn from talking
PJ. Can't you speak English with your Chinese friends?
T. I can but they won't!

It would appear that the students felt that interactions with native English speakers would be a helpful factor in increasing their spoken English. We had a native English peer-tutor in our class throughout the year. She came for the three periods a week that the students had with me and interacted with different students. Her presence was appreciated by the students and as one remarked in the interview,

- C. I want to speak English. Sometimes I can sit with J. (peer tutor), because we sit together and we are discuss something, but if I sit with Chinese then we speak Chinese too, 'cause if I speak English they will said I like to show myself.

Whether or not improvements in spoken English in other settings would translate into increased participation in oral discussions about literature is the subject for another paper.

By the middle of our last term I felt I had made a key finding and noted it in my research journal,

April 26/95

Oral literature discussions have not been a successful part of my program this year, for either group. I think I should have had discussions in a variety of other areas as well. Problem solving, playing games, debates perhaps. More opportunities to talk together for other purposes besides just about literature. I think they came to see it as something they couldn't do, and didn't do. I guess in some ways I needed to weave into the rest of the curriculum more effectively than I did. Literature study groups are effective and would have provided practice at oral interpretation that is needed.

In fact I had provided opportunities for discussion. What I had not been able to do, however, was to make explicit for the students the importance of transferring the skills and attitudes they displayed toward the use of oral language in other classroom activities with what I was encouraging them to do in their discussions about literature.

Consequently, the approaches I had initiated to develop small and large group discussions about literature such as pre-writing of responses before discussion, chart completion, use of focus questions and direct teacher in-put had not had the effect, even with a very broad definition of acceptable oral responses, of increasing either the quality or quantity of the level four students' small, or large group discussions about literature.

Level Three Students

In some ways the oral responses to literature made by the level three students closely mirrored those of the level fours. I used some of the same approaches with the level three students as I had done with the level four students. What I found was that when they did have structured exchanges about literature they tended to discuss the content of the piece and not their responses to it. Some differences in the level threes' oral responses did exist however as evidenced in my

research journal.

Researcher's Journal

April 6/95

Introduced "The Thread" to the 3's. I want to see if they give any more response to this poem orally than did the 4's and also what kinds of written responses they make to the poem.

Clearly, this is a challenging poem if you go beyond the most surface understandings. Just as I did with the fours, I interjected what I thought the author was suggesting. They had discussions within their small groups. They struggled to come to grips with the concepts, they were hesitant to share ideas. Large group discussion somewhat more involved than the fours' but still not a real exchange of ideas.

The level three students, as did the level four students, experienced difficulty discussing this poem. Up until this time I had always been hesitant to interject my notion of an author's intent. I had been careful to explain that mine was only one interpretation, and theirs could be just as valid. The tendency however was still to take what I said as the "right answer;" consequently, few other ideas would be suggested. It appeared that for these students my suggesting one response did not encourage discussion in terms of agreeing or disagreeing with that interpretation.

The real difference between the two groups response to the poem came the next day when they were asked to do a written/visual response to the poem. With these students, as with the level four students, I had presented a post-discussion activity. The poem "The

Thread" raises issues of connectedness, or lack of it, in our modern world. I had asked the students to draw and write about connections that they felt to others, either emotionally or physically. I used the example from the poem of the Korean factory worker who was connected eventually to a North American businessman. I explained that there are many ways to be "connected." They were invited to show a connection they might have through a series of lines and "stops" along the way, using words and illustrations.

The following comments, from my research journal reflect on how the level three students engaged so fully in this activity, in comparison with the level four students.

April 5/95

The level 4's connection sheets were poorly done. Although R. did seem to get it. I had a talk with him and had him clarify his thinking a bit. The rest of the class, except for W. were very surface especially when compared to the level threes'. The discussion among the threes' was varied and interesting. They helped each other to work on the task. Some emotional connections, very sophisticated. They were able to explain their thinking to me in detail. I can't get over the difference in the response to this activity between the two groups.

An example of one of the level three students' connection sheets involved her detailing, through captions and a series of circles connected by a "thread," how she felt results on an exam eventually connected her with many people: her teacher, whom she typifies as feeling responsible for the students' failure, the principal of the school,

who is concerned about the standard of the school, her family who she suggests might fall prey to financial problems as they take money needed for other things to hire a tutor, and finally returning to herself where she continues to do poorly because she is upset and can't pay attention in school.

It would appear that, while this strategy did not support oral responses directly related to the poem, it was successful in terms of providing an avenue for dialogue about the many ways we are connected, and did result in a written/visual response related to these connections.

As indicated in sub-question one related to beliefs, the students were more successful in discussing ideas when there was an end-product required as a result of their talk. The following successful support to oral literature discussions came about as part of their poetry unit. I introduced the stories "Why My Mother Can't Speak English" and "The Immigrant" to the level three students. At various points in each story I stopped and they were encouraged to do talk to each other.

May 9/95

Read story to class. Stopped periodically and they did a pair/share with the person beside them to do a perception check. Told them they could ask each other questions or tell the other person what they thought was happening.....Doing the pair/share really activated a lot of energy and talk and laughter. A good strategy for a longer story.

The notion of stopping to talk about a story with a partner, which in some ways mirrors a literature study group, was most successful as it allowed for talk about the literature "in situ," providing an immediacy which can be lost if all discussion is held until the story is finished.

When we started the poetry unit, just as I had done with the level four students, I used the art print kit to create a writing focus.

April 21/95

They entered into the activities with great enthusiasm. They liked the time limits, a little competition. They really searched for colour words, they talked a lot, some Chinese, but more English. Their captions were creative and showed greater flexibility in terms of production. These captions are their responses to the pictures. I gave them the same instructions as the fours' but I got so much more. Why?

Perhaps the richness of the written responses is partly due to the lively discussion which the students had been involved in as they produced their captions and poems related to the prints.

Taped Discussion: April 12/95 (K., E., P.) Level Three Students.

Three of the level three students engaged in a "discussion" around Robert Frost's poem, "The Road Not Taken."

The students had been given a focus sheet to help organize them in their discussion (Appendix 9). They were told that the questions were just a guide and that if other areas interested them more they

should feel free to pursue them. The following is from the taped discussion in which I am outlining for the students how they might proceed in their discussion.

* PJ indicates the researcher.

PJ. You can ask each other questions about the poem to help you understand each other more. You can discuss the title, or why choosing one route over another might make all the difference. Or which lines in the poem seem most important to you....But remember we always start off with each person having the opportunity to speak one at a time.

I then set the tape recorder going in a group with students K. , E. and P. The tape ran for twelve minutes; the following is the complete transcript of their discussion.

April 12, 1995

K. P. come on.

E. You can ask a question.

P. Ask question. My response, is ask the question. What happening when he write, wrote this poem?

E. You mean how did the author feel when he wrote the poem? How?

K. He feels satisfied.

E. That's it?

K. Yeah. Edward.

(Unintelligible mumbles....)

E. Yeah, it can represent the whole poem

Throughout the tape there were long silences, rustling of papers, scraping of chairs, and embarrassed coughs. These students were apparently completely at a loss as to how to proceed. During the taped interview which came later I asked why this had happened.

K. Nobody supervising us.

The students had been required to, and had worked successfully, in small groups around a task many times throughout the year, so the notion that they needed supervision seemed doubtful. What may be the case is that they needed me there to keep the discussion flowing, to move it forward, to supply the bridging language. I was reluctant however to stay with them because I thought they would be more open in their ideas without my being present. In addition, the many times that I had been in on discussions they always had turned into question and answer periods, something I wanted to avoid.

Taped Interviews May 16 & 17 1995

I was interested in this interview in finding out what the level three students would view as useful in supporting their oral responses.

- PJ. So what would help you to make responses orally? What would help you have a discussion?
- D. You first take down the notes what you are going to say. Then you talk others and ask their opinion.
- K. Talk one on one. Talk with a friend when you did it. Better in a pair.
- PJ. Do you think the size of the group makes a difference when you make your response?
- P. I prefer a small group, because if many people come together, they will hard to share their opinions. Not everyone gets to speak.
- E. Also embarrassed.

Pre-writing before expecting an oral response is again mentioned. With the level three students these written responses did act as discussion starters. However, in most cases they, like the level four students, were not able to maintain the discussion beyond reading their response.

Further evidence that a focussed activity would be more likely to spark discussion than a piece of prose or poetry was given in the interview.

- PJ. Do you think we have ever had a discussion, a whole class discussion?
E. Not a long one, short.
Me. Do you think you have ever had small group discussions? What did you talk about?
M. Survival, the zoo.

The two activities mentioned required the students to problem solve. In one case they needed to redesign a zoo to accommodate changing needs. The other activity involved making compromises in terms of what equipment to take to survive as a group. The student was correct a great deal of talk surrounded both these activities. There was no hesitancy; they used the language they had to make themselves understood. They occasionally lapsed into Chinese when clarification was needed, but spoke predominantly in English.

Conclusion: Sub-Question Two

A retrospective look at this year long study certainly indicates

the use of a plethora of strategies which support belief in a literature-based, response-centred curriculum. Why is it then that so few gains were made in terms of involving students in oral responses to literature. Based on the sources of data presented, several reasons present themselves.

i.) **Questioning**

I believed in and wanted to use open ended questions to support oral responses. I encouraged the student to share their responses to a piece. I would then ask questions which I meant to act as supports to their understanding, but which the students who lacked confidence in their own responses were reluctant to address. This reluctance to engage in discussion often resulted in my return to more structured questions which the students then, perhaps understandably, perceived as assessment instruments. A cycle was set up in which reluctance to engage orally resulted in my posing questions to "fill the gap." The students' belief that I had "the answer" was confirmed and they consequently were hesitant to share their ideas about a piece of literature.

Langer (1994) reports that even experienced teachers felt uncomfortable when students' responses diverge from the plan that they had conceived, and in fact "the teachers felt torn--as if departing from the plan involved digressing, rather than delivering good instruction" (pg. 206). In this study it was not so much the case that

the students responses caused me concern, as the fact that they made no responses. The end result was the same however. I too retreated to my "comfort-zone" of asking questions; unfortunately this approach, not surprisingly, did not result in increased personal responses.

Langer (1990) suggests guidelines for asking open-ended questions, beginning with initial understandings and moving toward elaborating and extending. This continuum of questions, which she says is "not meant to suggest an inviolable sequencing of question types" (pg. 815), seems helpful but still does not take into account a specific issue related to second language learners as outlined in the next point.

ii.) **Educational Background as it affects personal response**

Secondary ESL students who arrive in a new country in their late teens, as the students in this study had, find it difficult to set aside their past educational experiences. These Asian students were most familiar with, and comfortable in, deferring to the teacher and the text. They believed that, "The text sets the norms, dictates its own reading... The text is the container--or least the arbiter--of meaning, and the goal is to remove that meaning as completely and accurately as possible" (Probst, 1992, pg. 55) . They were not secure with the notion of stating personal opinions. The students believed, in part due to past experiences, that while their personal opinions, or questions might be

sought, ultimately they would be required to supply the predetermined "right answer." I had hoped to support multiple interpretations and I believed in the value of thinking about and defending a personal response, but my students seemed to lack what Frank Smith calls "sensitivity," that state in which there is openness and confidence that new learning is possible and will be supported. The issue of sensitivity as one of the conditions of learning as it affected my secondary ESL students will be addressed in further detail in the conclusions and recommendations.

iii.) **Focussed Dialogue About Literature**

The students did have dialogues throughout the year. The most dynamic and involved of these discussions occurred when the students were involved in discussions which required a finished product, whether this was captions for art prints, a redesigned zoo, creating survival kits or writing a group poem.

As I reflect on these activities I am impressed with the students willingness to focus on the task at hand and use their English to communicate and to simultaneously develop new language. When students say they are embarrassed to give oral responses, I have come to think that the source of this embarrassment is not so much their spoken English as their recognition that they lacked the specific language to speak about literature. In addition they needed greater

awareness of the dynamics of group process as they play themselves out in literature discussion groups. They needed to be taught explicitly how to turn take, how to interrupt, how to listen and participate actively as they respond to a piece of literature, and how to build on each others' ideas as they discussed the piece of literature.

Even though I had put in place the Readers' Workshop framework there were still not enough opportunities to have dialogues with each other about literature. Each student had the valuable opportunity of reading a self-chosen book and sharing it with me. There were very few same-title novels as the school. I was unable to set up literature study. Therefore, they did not have this same opportunity to dialogue about literature with their classmates in small groups designed for this purpose. The The novel study that both groups engaged in was an attempt at a shared text, but greater ties, and more powerful dialogue about literature, could take place in small groups around the same student-selected text. As Margaret Meek has written in On Being Literate, "When a number of people read the same book, discussions promote different kinds of reflection, the taking on of an others' viewpoint....It is easier to explore learning from the written word in a group than in solitude" (p.168) .

A literature study group could be a structure which provides a place for student interest and energy to work together to allow multiple meanings to be shared and valued. Literature study groups, developed

and nurtured with teacher support, could provide a focus for groups to learn the skills and language needed for literature discussion and a place to develop the attitudes which support oral responses.

Sub-Question Three: What forms of written responses do Secondary ESL students make in their response journals when they have been engaged in a literature-based, response-centered program?

The goals for my students in terms of their written journal responses were consistent with those I had hoped for in terms of oral responses. These goals, which are supportive of the response-centered curriculum I was hoping to foster, are closely aligned with the four objectives that Purves (1972) states as being at the heart of a response-centered program. They are,

- a. An individual will feel secure in his response to a poem and not be dependent on someone else's response. An individual will trust himself.
- b. An individual will know why he responds the way he does to a poem, what in him cause that response and what in the poem cause that response. He will get to know himself.
- c. An individual will respect the responses of others as being valid for them as his is for him. He will recognize his difference from other people.
- d. An individual will recognize that there are common elements in people's responses. He will recognize his similarity with other people.

I concur with these objectives as they focus on the personal and social nature of responses to literature. I shared these goals with my students, as I believed that their commitment to the use of their response journals would be far greater if they understood and were partners in the development of a classroom that valued personal meaning making and shared responses.

They were first formally introduced to the use of their response journal as part of the Readers' Workshop format. While many opportunities for written response were created throughout the year, the most frequent and consistent response-making opportunity for the level three students was through their response journals as part of their Readers' Workshop. The level four students, who were only involved in Readers' Workshop for two months, used their response journals mainly to record responses regarding their novel study and the poetry unit.

It is the response journal entries as well as comments from my research journal which are the sources of data presented in this section of the study. As in previous sections, I will be examining the forms of written-response of the level four and level three students separately so as to discuss and present some possibilities for similarities and differences in responses between the two groups.

Organizing Principles for Examining Written Responses

The following section will be organized under two main headings, beginning with a holistic look at my perceptions of the the written responses of the level four and level three students and then moving to examine student responses in terms of the stances taken. The purposes for which students used their response journals will also be analyzed.

Researcher's Perceptions Regarding Written Responses

The students' beliefs regarding written responses were examined in sub-question one. I will now use these perceptions and, together with this look at my perceptions, will describe the context within which to examine the forms and purposes of these responses.

Again, the value of a year-long study becomes clear as it has allowed me to trace my understanding of the role I played in supporting the students and to reflect on what effect my interventions, based on my perceptions of what should be occurring in the classroom, had on their willingness to engage in written response.

Level Four Students:

In retrospect I can see that I held somewhat unrealistic

expectations for these students in terms of the forms of responses I was hoping they would make. My research journal entries hinted at my preconceived notions of how the students should be responding to the prose and poetry we were reading and at the attendant frustrations when their responses seemed so insubstantial and lacking in commitment.

Researcher's Journal

October 11/94

Their responses were all quite similar. There was more re-telling of the poem than actual engagement with it. They were not making connections between the poem and themselves.

At issue was also the many surface errors which the students were making. I was surprised at the number and type of errors the students who had been identified as advanced language learners were making and, although I tried not to, they constantly distracted me. The level three students also made many errors in their writing. However, my perception was that errors at their level of language learning were more acceptable and a necessary part of their learning.

December 9/94

Read to the students as they read along. Then gave them the mind nudgers sheet. Allowed them in-class time to do a written response. Responses are still fairly limited in scope. I wonder if I am expecting the language to be more correct. If indeed I am

allowing their grammatical errors, syntax, to get in the way of my appreciating what they are saying. Is the "how" getting in the way of the "what?"

Early in the new year I began to see shifts positive in the students' journal responses. Typically, I attributed their responses to strategies I had initiated in the classroom. I continued to believe that it was my lessons which were ultimately responsible for the improved quality of their responses.

January 11,95

Completed reading The Chrysalids, Chp. One today. I had them do a brief five minute write. Giving them a short time limit actually seemed to encourage them to write. I guess they assume since they only have five minutes in which to write I won't be expecting too much.....Only one person did a retell. All the others looked at areas like their response to the characters, responding to how their predictions matched what they found out about the characters. In summary this write seemed to have most students zeroing in on the characters. Not surprising when I realize how much time (character building through scripts, discussions, writing description of characters after reading about them) we have spent on characterizations.

In fact, I believe the reason I perceived the students responses more favourably, was because they felt more focussed than what they had been writing without my input. The focus of course was mine, but I assumed that it was also theirs; after all they had written these responses. I feel I can be forgiven for being so excited about their response since it really was the first time that they seemed to be engaged emotionally as well as cognitively in their response writing.

Wanting to build on this success I had the students choose one of the many illustrated texts I had in the room. They were invited to write a response, and then share their response with another student. These responses were meant to provide a vehicle for discussion about how similar texts could generate different responses.

January 20/95

The written responses are fairly limited. I asked them to read each others and to comment. In spite of the many written responses they have from me in their journals they still wrote "good response" to their classmates.

After almost five months I was beginning to feel that my efforts to support personal written response were never going to bear fruit. And further, just as I felt my teaching was responsible when they did well, I also believed that I was the problem when their writing was less than what I had hoped for.

What I had not acknowledged then, but am able to see upon reflection, is the relative importance of the teacher/facilitator in the classroom as only one point in the triad of teacher, text, and context.

I commented later in the same entry,

Maybe I am trying too hard. Perhaps if I just relaxed a bit and did with them (level four) what I do with my other level three class I would have better results. I suppose I feel a certain time constraint. I really wish I had them for the entire six periods they get each week. Three hours a week, so spread out, is just not enough.

I raised the issue of time, or the lack of it, many times throughout the year. Demonstrating how to use response journals in meaningful ways during Readers' and Writers' Workshop required time that the three hours a week we had together just did not allow.

January 27/95

I am just now beginning to get to know these students a little bit. Their needs, their interests, strengths....I know how important it is to make a personal connection to them and yet for some reason this has not happened. Part of it is time. Three hours a week with long separations between classes has certainly not helped.

Creating a community of learners, as with all relationship building, takes time. With so little time available this commitment to learning and each other was difficult to create with the level four students. Without the sense of community, they were much less likely to trust that what they were being asked to do engage deeply in written responses would be of benefit to them.

Conclusion - Level Four Students

Certain perceptions toward the written responses of the level four students become apparent through this retrospective look at my research journal. Two main points were raised:

i.) I began the year expecting that the level four students would recognize the value of what I was suggesting in terms of written responses and be committed to it. I assumed that the quality of responses was in direct relationship with the quality of my instruction,

without taking into account the factors which were outside the classroom context over which I had no control, as outlined in sub-questions one and two. Also I was affected by the level four students' grammatical errors. I assumed, incorrectly, that they were enrolled in the level four class because they had reached a level of written communication that would have resulted in far fewer errors. I tended to be overly distracted by these errors because there was not the depth of commitment to the responses by most of the level four students.

ii.) I had assumed that the strategies I employed in the classroom were the most important element in terms of student responses. I came to realize that the most powerful teacher influence in a classroom setting is in terms of the tone which is established rather than specific interventions. Wonderful teaching strategies won't make up for a classroom where students do not feel connected to each other or the teacher.

It is necessary to recognize the element of time needed to create this learning community, time which the level four students and I did not have.

Level Three Students

Researcher's Journal

Many of the same approaches to poetry and prose were used

with the level three students as with the level four students. But, as alluded to earlier, the results were often quite different. While I was still attributing the quality of the level three students responses to strategies I had initiated, I think I was also coming to realize the power that the on-going classroom environment exerts upon students and their willingness to engage in written responses.

March 29/95

I have been introducing them to many types of poetry since the beginning of the year with Haiku, two word poems, descriptive poetry. Poetry has been a part of the year on an on-going basis so this introduction of Frost's poetry should come as no surprise.

I had the level three students fill in a Plus, Minus and Interesting chart in relation to the poem "The Road Not Taken" just as I had done with the level fours. I also encouraged a discussion before the writing of their response. I noted that,

April 28/95

The discussion was rather stilted although I think they enjoyed the poem itself. Their written responses were pretty much saying what we had discussed in the large group. However, when I was speaking to E. today about deciding on his next writing piece for Writers' Workshop he said, "I am at two diverging roads." Obviously the poem made an impression on him.

Conclusion - Level Three Students

From the beginning the level three students and I were able to build the learning community that was difficult to create with the level four students. Meeting as we did for nine hours a week, we were able to take the time necessary during Readers' Workshop to share a variety of ways of responding in their response journals.

While some of the level three students' written responses also contained errors, because their responses showed more commitment, I was able to put the concerns about grammatical correctness aside and focus instead on what meaning they were making in their reading. I viewed the level three students as neophytes and therefore was willing to accept many more tentative responses. Ironically, it was the acceptance and openness to their emergent responses which I believe set the tone that allowed, in a cyclical fashion, for on-going improvement in terms of their written responses.

Student Responses in Terms of Stances

When examining the written responses of secondary ESL students, as with any student, it is important to recognize that any written responses they make are best viewed on a continuum. In viewing this continuum of student responses it is not my intent to

claim that certain responses are "better" than others. However, I do recognize that there are different kinds of responses and part of what I am intending to capture in this section of the findings, is the range of student responses in terms of their depth of commitment and and their ability to respond is a variety of ways for many different reasons.

The notion of meaning making in reading as a fluid, process-oriented endeavour led me to consider Langer's (1990) approach to understanding students' responses to literature. Her theoretical framework for thinking about how students read and respond to literature is based on what she calls "envisionment-building," where understanding changes and grows over time (pg. 812) . I was particularly drawn to this approach as it supports ESL students as thinkers first, and further provided a way for me to examine their written responses in a way that valued the thinking their writing reflects.

I use the word *envisionment* to refer to the understanding a reader has about a text--what the reader understands at a particular point in time, the questions she has, as well as her hunches about how the piece will unfold. Envisionments develop as the reading progresses. (pg. 812) .

In the process of this envisionment building readers adopt particular stances, what Langer calls "changing relations toward a text." These stances are non-linear, recursive in nature, and shift depending upon the reader's interactions with the text.

The four major stances that Langer outlines, and which I will be using to examine the written responses of my secondary ESL students are:

1. Being Out and Stepping In
2. Being In and Moving Through
3. Being In and Stepping Out
4. Stepping Out and Objectifying the Experience

1. Being Out and Stepping In: In this stance the reader is interested in surface features such as characters, plot, setting and in asking themselves questions which will help them as they make initial contacts with the text.

2. Being In and Moving Through: Deeper understandings develop in this stance. The reader uses knowledge from the text as well as their own background knowledge to immerse themselves. Readers in this stance are interested in taking information from the text and moving to make inferences about why events or characters are playing themselves out as they are.

3. Being In and Stepping Out: In this stance the reader is interested in making statements about their own life or lives of others, or comments about the world in general based on their knowledge of the

text.

4. Stepping Out and Objectifying the Experience: The reader evaluates the text in this stance in terms of how well it meets expectations for this type of genre and its importance as a literary piece, and makes judgments about type, and content using either subjective or objective criteria.

In examining the students's written responses certain patterns of response became clear. In the conclusion to this question I will draw some inferences from the range of student responses identified.

Level Four Journal Responses

I will include journal responses from four of the seven level four students who handed them in at the end of the year. These four students are representative of the range of academic achievement within the group. As well, their journal responses are reflective of the types I received from the group this year. The responses which will be quoted are taken from their responses to self-selected stories, (during the time they were involved in Readers' Workshop) and poems or stories I presented to them.

In order to present most authentically the written response of the students, I will deal with each student separately and in so doing highlight the students' predominate stance(s). In addition, where

appropriate, some special purpose for which the students used their response journals will be identified. I will conclude by reflecting on key elements which can be gleaned from the responses.

Student # 1 C.

Background:

C. a highly conscientious female student took all assignments, including her response journal very seriously. The youngest student in the class, she was always the first in class, and had perfect attendance, even when illness should have kept her away. C. was a newly arrived student from Hong Kong, and had been given her designation of level four at the district office. Her spoken English in many ways mirrored her written style. Both were somewhat difficult to follow in terms of her reasoning, in part because of her tendency to use as many "big" words as possible. C. was very keen, as were all the level four students, to exit ESL. She however, unlike the others, often voiced her concerns about her abilities. She felt hard work was all that was needed. She held herself responsible for any errors she made.

Response Stance

Beginning with her first response and continuing throughout the year C. predominantly chose the stance of "Being In and Stepping Out." She was most interested in what a text could teach us, what

could we learn about life, as she frequently commented on how the piece reflected the human condition. The following are excerpts from her response journal from the beginning, middle and end of the year.

Oct. 11/94 (Response to poem: "Know Thyself")

In this poem, the author explain that the "great command" is knowing ourselves. Furthermore, peoples' mind are changing in different situation, so they might want to find themselves eternally. In addition, it remind us to look forward and make new discoveries about ourselves in our new life, we would be lost souls because we have deep impression about our personal doings and ourselves.

Jan. 1/95 (Response to book: I Wish I Were A Butterfly)

In this story the author show us that different creatures have their own beauties. I like the idea that he uses the creatures as the reflections of people. He also explains the importance of friendship and doesn't listen people who love gossiping. Everyone has a special appearance and we don't need to envy people who are better than him or her. He also explains that the kind insights are much more important and beautiful than the beautiful appearances.

April 27/95 (Response to story: "Why My Mother Can't Speak English")

It is a good story for me because the author share his idea that humans' feelings is always stronger than humans' logic. He also shows us that sometimes we might be affected our decision by the people and environment.

Other Purposes

Student C., like some of my other ESL students often used her journals to gently instruct me in her culture. C. expressed a deeply felt cultural belief regarding the transmission of knowledge. She saw the

role of elders and authority figures, such as authors, as having the responsibility to pass on their wisdom. The role of the reader is then to read and "understand" the lesson taught. Further in her response she explained this notion of transmission of knowledge particularly as it relates to the Chinese culture.

Indeed many Chinese woman think they should only speak Chinese not just because English is really hard, they all think that it is up to them to pass all the Chinese customs to one generation to another. Chinese words are very hard to speak and write, if the seniors don't have a high level of Chinese and don't pass their customs to their generations, it's a shameful act.

Student # 2 A.

Background

A. was a very formal student, both in her writing and in her interactions with me. As one of the oldest students in the class she took on the role of the "mother" and would try, often in vain, to bring other students in line. A. had been at our school for two years. She was enrolled in an English 11 night school class concurrently with her level four ESL class. She was concerned with compliance and therefore always completed her written responses, though the rather stiff, formal quality made them difficult to engage in. Only occasionally did she attempt to complete a written assignment with something that approached a relaxed attitude. Her journal was a place for her to

display obedience to the teacher, and perhaps, a place to show what she had learned. Somewhere in her education she internalized the notion that more complex words were better. Her meaning was often lost in convoluted sentences, the main purpose of which seemed to be to use as many of these "sophisticated" words as possible. It was not always possible to uncover her meaning buried as it sometimes was in this deluge of words.

Response Stance

A., like C., tended to see the text as an instruction manual and in general her responses reflected a "Being In and Stepping Out" stance. However, while C. often made sweeping comments about life in general, A. was more likely, as she did in her January and April responses, to reflect on the human condition and then to follow up and build on that statement to reflect on how it affected her personally.

Oct.11/95 (Response to poem - "Know Thyself")

I agree with the statement that everyone exists in the world, they must face many problems because they wait upon us to solve everyday. During the solution, we could know what the thing that we need and what we seek in our lives. We need to keep up trying the new things in order to gain more experience. Although we don't know what will happen in the coming days, we can't keep hands off until we die. We are necessary to grope our lives' goals.

Jan 13/94 - (Response to book -Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge)

In this story one word always appears. It is "memory". For me it is sweet and enjoyable but for somebody else, it is not happy things. In my opinion if something makes me unhappy I will not put it in my memory. At least I am not sad when I recall my memory.

April 25/95 - (Response to poem "Road Not Taken")

I always doubt my neighbours why their houses are surrounded by the fences or the walls. I understand they want to make boundaries between two separate houses but I don't understand why they build the fences or gates in front of their main door. In my life I need to meet many choices. However, there are no perfect in our world. Therefore, up to this point I think I only need to be responsible to myself. I don't need to consider many elements. The only things that I consider is the value of that choice. Is it worth it to me?

Other Purposes

When I read A.'s response journal it seemed as if she was instructing herself, she writes in the manner of a benevolent older voice. A., like many of her classmates, was in Canada without her parents. Perhaps the journal acted as a place for self-reinforcement of her traditional values. A place for her to say, "See I haven't forgotten how to think, act, and behave as a young Asian woman." In this sense I feel certain it served a valuable role for her.

Student # 3 B.

Background

B. was also enrolled in English 11 at night school. An extremely

shy young man, he rarely spoke in class all year. He often arrived late to class but would remain after, unasked, and straighten desks and pick up paper. He wrote conscientiously but briefly in his journal, perhaps to avoid errors. He did not seem to have the need that C. and A. had to use words to impress.

Response Stance

He, like others in the class, developed a pattern of response in his journal and with few exceptions used this pattern throughout the year. He would begin the response by taking a Stepping Out and Objectifying the Experience stance and then, having reflected on the content of the text, would move to "Being In and Stepping Out" and make statements about the human condition in general, but rarely himself in particular.

Oct.26/95 (Response to poem - "Mother to Son")

I like the idea that the author expresses. He describes life as a stair to climb. A life really has many difficult and uncertain times. We won't feel lonely because everybody has their own stair to climb. If we share these experiences in our own life, our stairs can be easier to climb.

Dec. 13/95 (Response to book - Gift of the Magi)

This story gave me a lovable and warm feeling as I read. The couples' most valuable gift for the Christmas was their expression of love. The girl sold her tresses to buy a new watch strap to the boy while the boy sold his old watch to buy a set of combs to her. It sounds like poor and stupid to exchange their gifts like that. But that's the most valuable gift in the world, love.

The last entry is one in which B. primarily chose to objectify the

experience, comment on, and evaluate the poem.

Apr. 25/95 (Response to poem - "The Road Not Taken")

Using roads as a metaphor for the ways in your life is very appropriate, because life is like a road to travel except that life is restricted by time. Once you have chosen a way to go in your life, you cannot turn back or imagine, "if I had chosen that way." This poem has a topic "The Road Not Taken, but it never tells about the road that is not taken. It shows an interesting style. While I guess the "I" is thinking about the road that he had not taken along his journey.

Student # 4 - S.

Background

S., a very capable student, both orally and in written form, went through a transformation as the year proceeded. She began as a somewhat belligerent, non-participant. In January of the school year her attitude changed and she became talkative, involved and committed to the class work. The change was noted by her other ESL teacher who was also unable to identify the source of the change.

Response Stance

S., more than any other student in this group of level four students, exhibited a variety of stances within and across the range of her journal responses. Within one response she would shift between stances sometimes asking herself questions, sometimes predicting, often commenting on how the piece reflected her own life or life in general and sometimes moving to the point of evaluating the text in

terms of content or style. In general her responses seemed to be genuine attempts to express her changing understanding of the texts she was reading.

Oct.226/95 (Response to poem -" Mother to Son")

I agree with the mother's idea which was mentioned above in the poem. Every people must get some problems or get into troubles when they go through their lives. We must face the problems. If we escape the problems and don't solve them, more and more problems come and you can not solve a whole bunch of problems as one. The best way I think is to ask your parents. They're older than you and so they have more experience than you too. The society is complex and we must walk carefully in order to not get into trouble.

S. began the response with the stance that has her Being In and Stepping Out, making a statement about life in general that life is hard. She then moves on to reflect more personally about how she felt it is best for young people to solve their problems. She concluded her response with a return to a statement about the human condition, "society is complex."

Jan.20/95 (Response to book - The Man Whose Mother Was a Pirate)

I like the pictures of this book. The pictures can make the reader to understand more. I am surprised that the little man in the story hadn't seen the sea before. It's ridiculous. I don't understand why the little man tells every that his mother is a pirate. Isn't that shaming himself. Why don't the people catch the little man's mother. It's unbelievable. It can only happen in a story not happen in a real life.

S. began by evaluating the illustrations, and in many ways,

through her rhetorical questions, evaluated throughout. S. was a very pragmatic young woman and she found the "unbelievable" premise of the story annoying. In effect, she used the stance of Being In and Moving Through to pose questions to herself and at the same time let me, the reader, know her opinion of the story.

May 9/95 (Response to poem - "Fire and Ice")

I think the poem reminds and alerts people to cherish the chance to survive and exist in the world. I think "fire" and "ice" must be bad things like violence....In the past, I thought that poems which emphasis on rhymes don't have too much meaning. However, after I read this poem, this idea doesn't exist in my mind anymore. I found that the words which are rhyme are meaningful. Although the author didn't tell what the meaning of the words are, he pointed out his point indirectly. So, it makes reader to think more about the poem.

As with many of her responses, S. takes the stance of Being in and Stepping Out, and she posits her idea on the nature of the meaning of the poem. Unlike many of her classmates, S. moves on and evaluates the style of the author. Her evaluations are generally subjective; in this case she is connecting with other rhyming poetry she has read and found that this poem by Robert Frost has important, though not directly stated, ideas to convey.

Conclusion ~ Level Four Stances in Journal Responses

In general the level four students written responses reflected greater commitment than did their oral responses. The seven students who handed in their journals at the end of the year were the ones who

had used them most consistently.

Several interesting elements can be drawn from examining these responses. First, it seems that most of these students adopted a primary stance within each response and, except in the case of S., maintained that stance through the year. It seems that each student found a way to respond that met their needs, in essence a formulaic response. While individual responses were often perceptive, what was worrisome was the lack of breadth and depth of responses.

Since the level four students were only engaged in Readers' Workshop for two months I was not able to trace fully their responses to a self-selected novel, may have been different the pieces I had selected for them to read.

Very few responses by these students were of the stance, Being In and Moving Through. It is this stance where the reader becomes immersed in the world of the text. In this stance the reader is interested in reaching deeper understandings. Again, the conferences the level four students and I had during Readers' Workshop confirmed this lack of connection to a piece of literature.

Generally speaking the level four students who did complete written journal responses seemed to be most interested in interpretation, telling what the poem or story "means." The meaning was meant to be uncovered, puzzled out like a mystery and then given to the teacher. It is not apparent that they embraced the notion of the

journal as a place to create their own meanings.

"They wrote *about* their reading, not *in response to* their reading"

(Harwayne, 1992, p. 63) .

Level Three Students Journal Responses

Four of the seventeen journals that the level three students handed in will be examined. As with the level four students the journals were chosen to provide insight into the range of written responses and academic achievement of the level three students.

The level three students wrote on average ten more entries throughout the year than the level four students, with each entry averaging one and a half pages in length, as compared to the half page entries written by most level four students. What is more fascinating however, was the wider range of responses.

Because their entries were short I was able to include in this research entire entries from the level four students. The longer length of the level three students entries required me to select portions of each entry which highlight particular points.

As with the level four students I will begin by briefly describing the student whose response is to be analyzed. Their responses will then be examined in light of the stance or stances taken. Where appropriate, any special purposes to which these students put their

response journals will be noted.

Student # 1 - D.

D. was the most prolific response journal writer among the level three students. She wrote the same number of entries as other students but each entry was an average three pages in length. D. was a bright, talkative student with opinions she was willing to share, though more with me in one on one in a conference setting than in small group discussions. She was achieving well in her non-ESL subjects. D. was new to our school having arrived in the summer before school began. She received her level three designation at the district office.

Response Stance

D. embraced the notion of keeping a journal from her first entry and maintained that enthusiasm all year. Some of her entries have a conversational style, as she saw the journal as a place to continue conversations we had had during Readers' Workshop conferences.

The most frequent pattern response D. produces in her self-selected pieces is to retell briefly what has occurred in the piece that she is reading and then to comment on some personal memory, or opinion related to the events, "Being In an Stepping Out." While this is her most common response, D. also posed questions to herself as a way to become more deeply involved in the piece, and often used the strategy of "Stepping Out and Objectifying the Experience" to evaluate

the content, style, or her experience with the piece. D. took risks in her journal trying out different formats, weaving details about the piece she was reading with connected ideas, comments, and personal asides. Her journal provided a safe outlet for her developing English language.

This first response was typical of D.'s and many level three students' responses. Details of the story were given first and then a personal connection was made, usually of the type, "This reminds me of..."

Nov. 11/95 (Response to book- Get Well Soon Mallory!)

After reading the first few paragraphs of this novel I felt that Mallory the main character in this novel has a very warm family . Although she has six brothers and sisters they live peacefully together. It is because the paragraphs describe that all the kids are discussing very happily about what kind of costumes they should wear on Halloween Day....I was impressed by those kids. They try to think of different clothes they have to wear on Halloween Day. In Hong Kong Halloween isn't an important day but foreign countries are different.

In this next response in addition to a strong personal response D. both evaluated the author's style and suggested that the author had a purpose in writing the piece and that she thinks perhaps she understands the intent of the piece.

Jan. 13/95 - (Response to book - Keeping Secret)

I like the style the Author write this book. He didn't tell exactly what is going to happen next but I knew what the author wanted to tell me. This is "showing not telling", Right?

Throughout reading this book I think the author was expressing one image to me, it's the way the children think of their parents and the parents think of their children. It's so different! So difficult to predict what they're exactly thinking.... Like the boy in the book I know my parents care about me but sometimes I think they care too much! I want to have my own world and then sometimes I think I want to have a world with my parents.

In this next entry D. tried something completely new as she pretended to be one of the characters in the the novel and told the events of the chapter through the eyes of that character. It is clear from her response that she was empathizing with the character and had understood the implications of the characters friendship. The level three students were often interested in character motivation and, although this response is unique in its format, is representative of a common stance, Being In and Moving Through.

Feb. 7/95 (Response to book - Breaking Smith's Quarter Horse)

Today is Nov. 2 sunny but really cold. What a long, cold winter we are having now! Every time when I walk down the road to the ranch my ears are frozen by the winter's wind, which seems wanted to take my ears off. The absolutely cold weather makes me feel tired and lazy. How long the winter will be over?

Throughout the long conversation I had with Ol' Antoine he agreed to help me breaking the quarter horse. I look forward to see this chestnut to be a cutting horse some day. However I'm not sure he can do that. He very old already. Oh, never mind Ol Antoine my good friend. I think he will try his best to help me.

D. connected powerfully with the emotions that Anne Frank felt and called to mind her own situation in an strange place and time. Being In and Stepping Out, she reflected on her own life situation.

Mar. 28/95 (Response to The Diary of a Young Girl)

I am moved by Anne Frank's writing.

(Here D. writes a quotation from the book).

I can really experience that I'm in the war too! Her writing impressed me a lot . The events are written with detailed description. As I read along I ask myself a question. Why I'm in Canada now? I tell you not because I like Canada. It is because I too want to escape from something. For Anne it is war, for me it is because of the day July 31, 1997, when China gets Hong Kong back from England's hand.

Purposes

For D., the strengths of her journal were the skills that she had learned to utilize. Each of the "skills" she mentions had been the topic of a Readers' Workshop mini-lesson, including the notion of variety in their responses. The following excerpt is from D.'s "Reflections on Responses" sheet.

Actually, I learn a lot of skills on how to do the responses. For example, predicting what you think will happen next, asking ourselves questions, discussing the author's "Big ideas" and so on. From these, I can have many different ways to do my responses.

Student # 2 K.

K. was a very athletic, quiet spoken young man; basketball was his true love. He was one of the few Taiwanese students in the class and had arrived in the summer before school started, receiving his level three designation at the district office. He received average to below average marks in his other subjects; his best marks were in ESL.

He did not immediately commit to the use of his journal. In fact, in December I was still writing comments to encourage him to write two entries a week and to use the correct format for the response (date, title, author, number of pages read). As the year proceeded however, he completed his journal weekly, sometimes staying after school to complete his two entries. K., unlike many of his classmates, used the "Questions of the Week" throughout the year. He seemed to benefit from the support they gave him.

Response Stance

The use of the "Questions of the Week" is partly responsible for the great variety in approaches to K.'s responses. Some of the questions caused him to be evaluative in terms of content or how he experienced the story, while others caused him to focus more on the actual events of the story.

Dec. 3/95 (Response to book - Just the Beginning)

Do you think the title of this novel is a good one? Explain?

I don't think it's a very appropriate title for this novel because the story is about a teenage girl who suffered a major problem with her family and the whole thing lack details, and too much nonsense. So I think the story has nothing to do with "Just the Beginning."

It is interesting to note how he did a mini retell as he evaluated the novel, a technique he used a great deal. We had used mini-lessons to discuss ways of telling what had happened without merely recounting events.

Jan. 17/95 (Response to book - Alive!)

This book is the most emotional story I have ever seen, a masterpiece of narrative. The story is about a disaster which was caused when an airplane crashed because of bad weather. Many would die in the natural disaster. It's something you just can't avoid to happen, so we better check the weather conditions every time we travel, and unless it's perfect conditions I'd rather stay home.

This was K.'s first response to a new novel. In the month it took him to finish reading it he continued to weave his retells with questions,

"Can you imagine how this picture of corpses will look like?"

feelings,

"I felt kind of depressed after reading the middle to the book."

and comments on life and people in general,

"It must have been wonderful for them when they were saved, I think

there is nothing more important than being saved that you didn't even expect. You might not be able to adjust your thoughts after all the things you have been through."

Purposes

K. enjoyed using and was surprisingly adept at weaving new vocabulary, and sentence structures into his journal responses. He was among a small group of level three students who were interested in not only what they were saying but also how they were expressing themselves. For K. the reading/writing connection was very evident. His responses were just as much an opportunity to develop his writing style as they were a place to express ideas about what he was reading.

Student # 3 C.

C. had been enrolled in a level four class at the beginning of the year, but in October was moved to a level three class as the teacher felt she had been inappropriately placed. She had been in Canada three years and had been at the school the previous year. C. was naturally resentful and angry at what she considered to be a demotion. Her attendance was poor in the beginning but gradually improved.

C. experienced difficulty in all aspects of her language learning. Her academic achievement in other subject areas was also poor. She read very little, completing only two very short novels in the year. Conversations with C. and her mother confirmed that she also read

very little in her own language.

In many ways C. is representative of a group of ESL students in secondary schools, angry, confused and achieving poorly often due to poor literacy skills. Fortunately C. did not drop out of school as many other students in her situation did. I believe that the gains C. made as the year progressed, most especially in terms of a more positive attitude, were due in part to a language program that valued different ways of showing knowledge.

Response Stance

Story retells were C.'s most common response. She remains most consistently in a stance of Being Out and Stepping In, though she does, as all readers do, even less proficient ones like herself, move through the other stances. However, her responses in these stances are less complex than those of most of her classmates. She was constantly trying to make sense, at a surface level, of the events and characters in the story.

Nov. 8/95 (Response to - The Great Fire)

I was impressed the story's main character who called Peter. He was a orphan. He lived in London with his dog Bruno. Peter was lonely child. His father was dead during a one dreadful night in their little house. I felt Peter was a poor child. He was only twelve years old but he needed to self-reliant.

C. would occasionally comment on her opinion of a character but evaluation of the novel in terms of its style or intellectual or emotional appeal was most often confined to "I like it/don't like it" with no supporting reasons.

Feb. 24/95 (Response to book- There's A Boy in the Girl's Washroom)

In Chapter Three, Bradley was just finished the school and he came home. He like animals very much. When he came home he ran to his room immediately. Many kinds of pets lived with him. All of them like to sleep with him. I think Bradley may be a naughty child but he very nice.

April 12/95 (Response to "Mending Wall")

One phrase in the poem I like it very much and agreed is, "Good fences make good neighbours." I believe it's the truth because I had this experience. Let me tell you about it. I knew my neighbours when they moved in. I remember they just came to Canada from Hong Kong. We always visited each other a lot. We helped each other too. I also became a friend between their sons. We're in the same school. We like each other very much.

In her next response the novel is a vehicle for her to ask a personal question. Many months of attempting to create lines of communication between us seem to be reflected in responses made toward the end of the year where she uses her journal as a forum to take risks in personal relations.

May 2/95 (Response to There's a Boy in the Girls' Washroom)

Did you ever mind the other person how to think about you?

Sometimes I like to think about the other people how to think me . So, I always ask my friends a same question again and again, "What do you think of me?" They said, "When I saw you at the first time, I got you a cool person and don't like to talk with other people. Later on when we become closely I got my thought was exactly wrong. You're a nice girl. Sometimes I felt your mind and character are as same as a little kid. So innocence!! I want to ask you Ms. J. "What do you think of me?"

Purposes

C. is the type of student with whom a teacher might be tempted to use a very structured reading program. Such attempts had been made in her previous three years of ESL instruction. However, the uses to which C. put her journal indicated that the journal provided an effective way for her to record her developing ideas. Instead of requiring one right answer which she was unable to give, C. was able to share her personal response to what she was reading. While C. read few books of her own, her journal was a place for her to record responses to literature I had used with the class. She was also able to use her journal as a focus for our discussions during Readers' Workshop. C. wrote on her "Reflections on Response" sheet,

I have learned the response journal is help me to reflect personally and thoughtfully about the novel in writing. Not to retell the story all the time.

She stated a goal for her responses when she wrote,

I will write more about the author's feelings and what does he mean, also why he wrote that.

The response journal, part of a program which supported personal meaning making, provided the context for C. to take risks in terms of her developing understanding of the reading process and her reactions to her reading.

Student # 4 - V.

V. , who began the year as a very quiet student developed greater confidence as the year proceeded. She was an academically average student and her achievement in our ESL class mirrored this standing. She was an active listener, taking in all that the classroom context had to offer. Comments and suggestions, especially about authors, given during mini-lessons were absorbed and responded to. She read widely drawing upon many genres. Her sense of humour ,which was not evident in the classroom, found an outlet in her journal.

Response Stance

V. could most accurately be described as an active reader. She constantly posed questions for herself. She was always very aware of and recognized the connection she had with the author of pieces she was reading. V. moved between stances as they met her needs for making sense of the text. When she was in the Being In and Stepping Out stance she rarely reflected on the text in terms of the larger human issues, but was much more concerned with how the text connected

with her own life experiences.

I had introduced the class to Roald Dahl through an author study. Other students sought out his books at the library also, but V. actually commented on his writing and chose to read other books by him.

Nov. 11/95 (Response to "Esio Trot")

This part of the story makes me very interested. I feel it is different than the other books. The author Roald Dahl make the characters live. He also let me feel the characters are true. At first when I saw the title I couldn't understand what it means. I tried to find it in the dictionary but I could not find these two words. Finally, I could understand what it means. I laughed and laughed. I thought what a smart guy. Now I think I like this book. Not only the story but also the author.

Jan. 5/95 (Response to book - A Clearing in the Forest)

Now I have read pg. 1-31 I feel it is just like a true story. I feel it is a little bit hard to read. Some phrase I don't understand. The "Mini-Lesson" tells us a lot of ways to solve it. This time I used "skip it". Sometimes I saw things I don't understand I just skip them.

V., like K., enjoyed writing and was able to see how her reading was affecting her writing. Her questions about where authors get ideas from eventually sparked a mini-lesson about sources of inspiration for writing.

Feb. 3/95 (Response to story - "The Fire Dog that Bites the Moon")

I think it is not easy to write a folk tale by myself. I still wonder where the authors' ideas come from. How can they write such good stories?

Did they collect stories from a lot of places or do they read a lot of books and connect them? I think this is why we have to read. Because we can get ideas from the authors and we can get more organization when we are writing.

Conclusion ~ Level Three Stances in Journal Responses

In general the level three students tapped into the meaning making potential of a greater number of stances than did the level four students. In addition, when they were in a particular stance they were more likely to build more complete "envisionments."

The level three students read a greater number and genres of books than did the level four students. They were able therefore to respond to many more ideas. The extensive reading the students engaged in meant that they were allowed the time necessary to read for their own sake. The reflections that then took place in their response journals were a natural outflow of their reading, and not something they felt forced to do. As Peterson and Eeds (1990) state in Grand Conversations, "Extensive reading is unobtrusive. This is not the time when reflecting on meaning holds sway. Interpretations of what we read will be made, but without conscious deliberation. Though nothing stops us from reflecting on our activity, we take no special note...We just read" (p. 11). Further, it was apparent from some of their responses that there was an understanding of the important connection between their reading of a published author's work and

their writing.

Throughout the year, the level three students from the most capable to the most emergent, steadily developed their sense of literary response. They increased the range and diversity of their reading and seemed to find greater satisfaction in works which challenged them. For some, these more challenging texts resulted in written responses which indicated internalized changes in their approaches to literature.

The richness and diversity of the responses written by the most of the level three students indicated that they were able to use their response journals to extend and support their understanding of the texts they were reading. Even students who experienced great challenges in their reading and writing made gains in terms of their understanding of the value of a written response. The vast amount of time spent engaging with literary texts also resulted in improved reading and writing skills.

Conclusion - Sub- Question Three - Forms of Journal Responses

I can reflect on the written response of the level three and four students in terms of the four goals of a response-centered curriculum outlined earlier.

The level three students did make gains in terms of a greater trust in their own responses and in doing so came to understand themselves better. Their written responses, which they were more

community of learners.

Community of Learners

It took time to build a community of learners based on mutual respect and trust. This community developed through a series of common experiences and shared understandings. The level three students flourished within the context of a classroom where a variety of ideas were encouraged and supported. They recognized and valued that their responses could be similar to and different from their classmates. Unfortunately for the level four students this community relationship never developed. Time constraints and their own personal agendas created a "rushed" classroom where the time necessary to develop a community which would nurture a range of responses simply did not occur.

Readers' Workshop

It also took time to develop and maintain a Readers' Workshop. This framework provided the context within which to talk about and share a range of possible responses from which students could build their own repertoire of responses. Within the Readers' Workshop the level three students came to see themselves as readers. They chose their own books, they had the time to read them in class, and they were able to respond to them in ways that made sense to them. The Readers' Workshop provided opportunities for personal meaning making and times to gain insights by talking to others. In this way the

Readers' Workshop both developed the community of learners and was part of it.

Within the Readers' Workshop the level three students were able to receive instruction through mini-lessons in a variety of areas such as book selection, ways of responding, reading strategies, and information about literary devices. As their teacher I was able to facilitate and support their learning without merely dispensing knowledge.

The level four students, however, were involved with Readers' Workshop for only a short period of time. This factor combined with a less developed sense of community resulted in students who felt less secure in their ability to use their response journals in ways that supported their own meaning making.

Sub-Question Four ~ How does personal selection of reading material affect secondary ESL students' written responses?

Organization of Question Four

To this point in the findings data have been reported separately for the level three and four students. The purpose in separating data was to clarify how differences in classroom context resulted in differences in responses. For sub-question four the level three and four students' responses will be reported together. Results of the findings reported so far indicate that the level three students benefited more

fully from the opportunity to make personal responses to reading in written form. Because both groups benefited from the opportunity to choose and read their own texts, the question regarding importance of self-selection of reading material is better understood in terms of the degree to which self-selection of text affected the different student responses.

The level four students made self-selection of texts for the two months they were involved in Readers' Workshop and again for the poetry unit when they were able to choose the two poems they would respond to in their Self-Selected Poetry Booklet. The level three students chose their own texts in the context of Readers' Workshop throughout the year. They too chose their own poetry to respond to in their Poetry Booklet.

Many of the students' journal responses have been reported already in sub-question three. For the level three students all but one of the responses were to self-selected texts. For the level four students the responses were chosen from self-selected and teacher selected texts.

Believing that the students writing speaks eloquently in terms of the importance of self selection I intend to use Appendix 10 to capture more complete student responses. These responses will all be to the poems they chose to read and respond to in their Self-Selected Poetry Booklets. In order to give as complete a picture of the kinds of responses students made in these booklets, I will use entries from my

researcher's journal to reflect on particular student responses from level three and level four and then will use different students' responses to include in Appendix 10.

I will use this question therefore to summarize some of the ways I see self-selection as supporting these responses as well as to consider the range of responses when students make their own choices of material to respond to.

Importance of Self-Selection

Atwell and others (Peterson and Eeds, 1990; Routman, 1991; Harwayne, 1992; Urzua, 1992), have written on the importance of personal selection of reading material as it relates to greater student commitment and motivation. "If we want our adolescent students to grow to appreciate literature, a first step is allowing them to exert ownership and choose the literature they will read" (Atwell, p. 161, 1987).

While all these authors recognize and value the necessity of students selecting their own reading material, they also recognize that selecting of books that will hold the reader's attention is not an easy task. I asked the students on the Reading Survey distributed early in the year how they decided which books to read. The following are representative samples of level three and four students' responses.

"the story is interesting"

"read the introduction first"

"find a book with less than 150 pages"
"read the introduction"
"after I saw the movie I choose the book"

The following techniques were mentioned several times by both groups.

"look for an interesting cover"
"reading the title"
"easy to understand"
"no difficult words"

Of the forty-two surveys I received, only one student mentioned choosing a book from the recommendation of others. One student mentioned reading the author's name as a way of deciding which book to read. Since the students were required to do so little personal reading before they came to Canada it is not unusual that they had a limited repertoire of book selection strategies.

As the year proceeded the level three students received support through Readers' Workshop mini-lessons on book selection. We discussed different ways of choosing books. I shared a variety of authors, in some cases reading excerpts. They told each other about books they were reading and enjoying and of course their response journals were a place for me to suggest further reading, either of a genre or an author. However, the level four students did not receive the benefit of these shared experiences. In spite of this their responses to materials they selected themselves were some of the richest they produced. Two reasons for their more developed responses present

themselves.

1. **Self-selection is empowering.**

The level four students were between sixteen and twenty years of age. Many of them were in Canada alone with little or no adult supervision. They were responsible for taking care of most aspects of their daily life. For many of them it was a profound change from their previous life. Some enjoyed the challenge, for others the new found freedom was overwhelming. In some ways school was an anomaly in their lives because it was the one place most decisions were made for them.

Therefore the opportunity to make choices about what they would read satisfied the needs of the students who were enjoying their new found freedom. For the students who were struggling with responsibilities, choosing their own reading material was one manageable element in a somewhat overwhelming experience.

All but two of the level four students were able to select two poems to respond to from the vast array of poetry anthologies and single author poetry books which were on display in the classroom during the poetry unit. The high success rate in terms of completion from a group that was known for non-completion of assignments is another indication that ownership affects students' involvement.

The poetry unit lasted for one month. During this time the poetry books were on display and class time was set aside for personal

reading. The dialogue which I felt was key to helping the level four students develop more complete responses, took place more fully during these "browsing" times than at any other time in the year. The students would take the books back to their desks and read to each other, laughing, talking, sometimes calling me over to ask a question or seek an opinion. As Peterson and Eeds point out, "When interpretations are shared with a community of readers, different people's interpretations enhance the potential for making meaning for all" (p. 18) .

Toward the end of each class I would choose different authors' poems to read. I purposely left these readings until just before the class ended, allowing time for reading but not discussing. I wanted them to leave the room with the author's words ringing in their ears with the intent of creating a hook for them to perhaps choose that author themselves.

The ability to do extensive reading of many poetic forms from a range of authors was in effect an micro-example of the reading environment which the level three students experienced more fully throughout the year. This environment was conducive to the effective selection of poems and deeper responses. In effect, I was able for a short period of time to create for the level four students the sort of climate I had hoped would have been there for them all year.

How Students Responded to Self-Selected Poetry

Level Three Students

As part of my Researcher's Journal I recorded my own reactions to the responses the students made in their Self-Selected Poetry Booklets. Many of my reactions to the level three students' responses were similar to those I had recorded previously. Because the level three students had been allowed to make self-selections of texts all year there were not startlingly different responses. However, I noted that the responses of some students seemed to be richer and more meaningful.

April, 1995

C. seems to be using her responses to come to grips with some of the issues she had been struggling with all year, especially her future, her life in general and the notion of maturity.

M. is using the poem to express a deep conviction about the difficulty of life. She seems to have found "proof" in the poem that it is as she always said, tough, it is meant to be, it toughens you up, easy situations don't make us strong.

K.'s confidence that she can express what she wants to say just shines through in this piece. It's as if she is trying to get all she feels and thinks into her responses. She seems to be learning about herself. She is not as didactic as usual.

Interesting that V. chose the Frost poem "Fire and Ice," she has a lot to say about it; of course she never said any of these things during our discussions. I'm glad she got them out here.

These comments, as well as the students' samples which I will include in Appendix 10, once again indicate students who were using their responses to meet personal needs. Having had a year in which to develop the notion of personal response they were comfortable in expressing how the poem affected them. I also noted the number of students who used metaphors in their writing, a poetic device we had talked about in mini-lessons and which had filtered its way into their responses.

Level Four Students' Responses

In many ways the very fact that all but two of the level four students completed this assignment is the strongest point in favour of self-selection of texts. This was the first time that such a high percentage of students completed and handed in an assignment.

It is not possible to completely reproduce the booklets that the students produced which is unfortunate because they reflected care and attention to content and presentation that had not be evident in previous assignments. Several students asked if their booklets would be on display as the level threes' were, the first time they wanted public recognition of their work.

In terms of the content of their responses, for the most part, they responded as they had done in their response journals. Students, who

in their journals, had primarily taken the stance of Being In and Stepping Out and thereby commenting on their life or the human condition in general, continued to respond in this way in their poetry booklets. More students did use their booklets to evaluate the poems than they usually did in their response journals. The following comments are my reactions to reading the level four students responses in their poetry booklets. In order to present as wide a spectrum of responses as possible, I will include my reactions to particular students' responses at this point and will record further level four student responses in Appendix 10.

April, 1995

Student W. like many of the others seems to have had visceral reactions to the poem. The poem is packed with many ideas, but they are unconnected. Her responses rarely connect back to the poem, they take her off on a stream of consciousness writing. She calls to mind old memories and feelings. There is a pleasure for her in these thoughts.

Student A. recognized the abstract nature of the poem but found it difficult to suspend his disbelief. He used the poem to confirm his beliefs, " I can't know myself except through the eyes of others:"

Student R. says he liked the poems because they dealt with teenage issues. "I've done the same things as the boy in the poem," he takes it one step further and wonders if the author is a teenager too, "... otherwise how does he understand what it feels like."

Student I. used lines from a Coles notes as his introduction. He doesn't trust his reactions, he's looking for the official response. He seems very aware of the poet, perhaps because of his time spent with the Coles notes.

"I believe the writer thinks that the evening is so holy, and he also believes God will wake up after the sunset. I guess he hopes that God can protect his daughter through his mighty and compassionate care."

Given the relatively few opportunities the level four students had to choose their own texts it would have been unreasonable to expect great shifts and changes in terms of the quality or quantity of their responses in their Self-Selected Poetry Booklets. More important perhaps is the recognition that the students' written responses are in effect their attempts to distil the cognitive and emotional experience they had with a text and to make this complex connection visible for others. What the reader reads is the end product of the process they have engaged in and to which the written response can only allude.

The limitations, real or imagined, that the students imposed on themselves because of their second language must also be considered.

Whether or not their teacher is affected by their grammatical errors, some of them feel the constraints of inexperience. While recognizing these constraints, it must also be acknowledged that the level four students were, for a period of time, surrounded by, and given the time to read, a rich selection of poetry. In order to make their choices many of them read more poetry than they had all year and, for some, it may be the only time they engage in such an experience.

Summary :

In his book Writing and the Writer, (1982) Frank Smith speaks of three "conditions of learning," demonstrations, engagement and sensitivity which may serve as a summary of the factors which I have outlined above.

Smith sees these conditions as being interconnected and dependent upon each other in a hierarchical manner. He describes the importance of demonstrations and says, "There must be a demonstration which, in effect, says this is how something is done" (p. 170). These demonstrations could be compared to the strategies which I introduced less successfully with the level four than the level three students.

As important as the demonstrations are however, they must be connected to what he calls engagement. "A demonstration shows us how something is done, but we will not learn without a complementary involvement on our part to be able to do or

understand the same thing ourselves. For learning to take place there must be engagement" (p. 171). Learning takes place when a learner and a demonstration come together. He is careful to point out that learning is not because of the demonstration, but will happen if, at the time of the demonstration, there is engagement.

The findings indicate that the level three students were engaged and therefore able to benefit from the demonstrations which I provided whereas the level four students rarely became engaged to the same extent.

The final and Smith feels pivotal condition is that which he calls sensitivity. When the learner is most unaware of learning is that state of sensitivity. "Sensitivity is the absence of expectation that learning will not take place" (p.174).

This condition of learning has direct applicability to my secondary ESL students. The level three students were indeed sensitive and ready to be engaged and hence the demonstrations (strategies) which I introduced them to did bear fruit in terms of their ability to respond personally to literature.

The level four students were not able to pay the price that sensitivity to learning calls for.

Learning has a price as well as a value, a cost in terms of effort, of alternatives given up of failure and error. We are unlikely to expose ourselves to an opportunity for learning if we think the possibility of success is remote or fear the consequence of error.....sensitivity reflects, I do not anticipate any difficulty

learning to do (or understand) this thing myself," a commitment with confidence to learning (p. 175).

Without the necessary sensitivity to learning, all the strategies which I had laboured over were without effect. Sensitivity cannot be taught, but it can be developed in a nurturing environment. Again, I am reminded of the importance of a classroom community within which students' sensitivity can indeed be fostered.

Conclusion

The sense of joy I feel at the great strides the level three students made in terms of the ability to respond personally to reading is tinged with sadness that the same kind of progress was not made by the level four students. In my research journal in January I wrote the following quote from Alan Purves' (1972) book, How Porcupines Make Love, it sustained me then and continues to do so.

One point must be made. It is those groups that seem to respond the least who need this approach the most. There are many classes in countless schools where youngsters have been taught that they are there to listen and to learn. After years of this sort of passive attention-paying and avid note taking, followed by giving it all back on a climactic test, it's no wonder that these students have little confidence in their own response, in their own intuition and evaluations....Of course it will take longer to get them to respond freely, will be harder for them to abandon their accustomed roles in the paternalistic school structure; but it's doubtful that time could be better spent. (1972, p. 78)

Chapter V: Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Introduction

In this final chapter I will briefly summarize the main ideas of Chapters One through Three, and, using the findings from Chapter Four as the foundation, present conclusions and recommendations based on my research. In drawing conclusions from this research certain key factors which both help and hinder personal meaning making by Asian, secondary ESL students have presented themselves. These research conclusions will be described under the headings; **Environmental Factors, Systemic Factors, and Teacher-Controlled Factors.**

Recommendations will be made regarding future research into ESL methodologies as well as recommendations in terms of improving some of the systemic factors which have played a role in the implementation of a reader response approach in the secondary ESL classroom.

This research was prompted by the need to examine student-centered approaches to the use of literature for Asian, secondary ESL students, in particular the use of a reader response approach. In Chapter One the need for the research was outlined as well as the underlying pedagogy which values and supports student

thoughtfulness. The use of a literature-based, response-centered curriculum has been shown to provide opportunities for students who speak English as a first language to engage in personally meaningful ways to what they are reading. What we need to understand is what can be learned when Asian, secondary ESL students are also called upon to make personal responses orally and in written form to their reading.

Chapter Two began by examining the area of sociocultural learning theories. These theories, which are built on a belief in the social nature of learning, provided the background for the other areas of the review which looked at the literature related to reading in English as a first and second language. I structured the review to look first at foundations of reading for both areas, as well as approaches and methodologies, particularly in terms of the use of reader response.

The review of the literature revealed that reading instruction in both English as a first and second language has undergone many changes in methodology. The pedagogy upon which reader response theory is based has had an effect on the teaching of reading in English as a first language. More English as a first language students are being exposed to literature and being engaged in making personal responses to their reading. The literature also indicated that some changes are being made in terms of reading instruction for second language learners; however, instruction still tends to be primarily skill-based.

Very little has been written on the use of reader response theory with Asian, secondary ESL students.

Therefore, in order to examine the use of reader response theory with ESL students, I conducted a year-long ethnographic case study with two classes of Asian, secondary ESL students. I collected data throughout the year from a variety of sources such as a personal research journal, students' response journals, surveys, taped interviews, and discussions. I then examined the data to see what could be learned about the use of a literature-based, response-centered curriculum with Asian, secondary ESL students.

In writing the conclusions my main purpose is to crystalize the many individual findings into a more holistic view of secondary ESL students' ability to make personal responses. I will not reiterate the details of those factors which have already been addressed in depth in Chapter Four.

B. Research Conclusions

While the analyses could be examined in many different ways I have chosen to look at them through three different lenses or perspectives, **environmental factors, systemic factors , and teacher-controlled factors**. As all the previous data have revealed, none of these groups of factors is more influential than another. An honest

appraisal of the use of a reader response approach with secondary ESL students requires an integrated examination of all three groups of factors.

Environmental Factors

Under the heading of environmental factors I include such issues as:

- the students' educational background,
- concern about the time spent in the ESL program
- age on arrival in Canada.

As was pointed out in the review of the literature the educational background of Asian students values compliance and gives few opportunities for personal meaning making. Consequently, the students were more comfortable with a great deal of structure, were unfamiliar with making personal responses in reading, and had little tolerance for the ambiguity inherent in a response-based curriculum.

Parental and student concerns regarding time spent in the ESL program were another environmental factor. Connected to this issue of course was the age of the students on arrival in Canada. Most of the level three and level four students came between the ages of sixteen and seventeen. The pressure to exit the ESL program and to enter mainstream English classes so as to graduate with their peers was

strongly felt by all the students.

At the outset of this research I felt that the environmental issues might be the most pervasive and influential of all the factors. In retrospect I believe it was because I worked so closely with the students on a daily basis that I came to believe that these factors were so crucial. As the research proceeded I came see that the environmental factors were just one element in a complex mixture. I had the opportunity to compare and contrast the level four and level three students who were being influenced by many of the same environmental factors. As the research has shown the level three students could successfully engage in personal meaning making even given the many environmental factors which had to be considered. I believe now that caution should be taken in overemphasizing the importance of the environmental factors and that they need to be viewed as integral to, but not wholly responsible for, the secondary ESL students' ability to make personal responses.

Systemic Factors

Under systemic factors I am including such issues as:

- **the testing methods used with ESL students,**
- **the scheduling of students' classes**
- **the overall issue of time spent with one teacher**

The initial testing of ESL students, with its resulting language

level designation, in many cases sets up expectations for students in terms of how long they should be in the ESL program. Students arriving at age sixteen, take the district tests and are designated as level three or four; they expect that one year of ESL instruction will be sufficient to meet their needs. Any time beyond this is seen as "marking time", creates a sense of frustration which is hard to ignore, and ultimately affects their willingness to engage in any meaningful way in their classroom activities.

While this screening may be necessary in terms of initial placement, the continued use of tests such as the Gates-McGinitie to decide student progress in the ESL program is problematic in terms of supporting a program that values personal response. The incongruence between the test with its one right answer and the daily encouragement to proffer their personal responses either in written or oral form caused dissonance and confusion for students. For the level four students, especially those who had been allowed to take English 11 at night school, the mixed message of adherence to correct answers and the injunction to respond personally was particularly disconcerting, and combined with other factors, was partially responsible for less commitment to personal response than was evident with the level three students.

The schedule or time-tabling in a secondary school should in general be supportive of the students. The level four students had six

hours of ESL instruction per week. The fact that this time was split between two teachers was challenging to say the least. Differences in pedagogy need not have been problematic; however, since it was very difficult to find the necessary time to communicate, it may have been that we were sending the level four students mixed messages in terms of how to achieve success in the ESL program. The level four students may have been confused about the purpose of reading. They generally assumed that the only purpose for reading was an efferent one; gather the facts, remember the details and give them back. This after all had been their previous educational experience. A primarily efferent stance did not allow them to relish the words, the images, the entire sensory experience which reading can provide .

Rosenblatt (1991) suggests that it is necessary to teach the difference between aesthetic and efferent reading. We cannot assume that they will automatically understand that there are two ways to read and that both are valuable. She says, "We communicate such understandings by what we do, by the atmosphere and the activities we associate with the two kinds of reading, and by the kinds of questions we ask and the kinds of tests we give" (p. 447) .

More effective communication between their two ESL teachers may have resulted in the level four students receiving more consistent messages about the different purposes for reading. They may then have been more willing to involve themselves in making personal

responses to reading.

In addition, if all six hours of ESL instruction for the level four students had taken place in my classroom, it would have been possible, as it was for the level three students, to put the Readers' and Writers' Workshop frameworks in place. The use of these workshops assisted the level three students in developing the confidence and skills necessary to make personal responses.

Teacher-Controlled Factors

Teacher-controlled factors are somewhat connected to the systemic ones already addressed since the teacher is part of the system. However, in discussing these factors, I wish to address specifically those issues over which I as a teacher had some control:

- **the distraction created by poor writing skills**
- **creating a community of learners**

In terms of **writing skills** both the level three and level four students struggled to use English to express themselves in written form and both groups of students made many grammatical errors. In the case of the level three students their responses were reflections of individuals who were actually engaged in what they were reading. They not only consistently wrote more but they also took more risks as they tried to put into practice the many ways of responding we had

discussed. I was not only able to use the errors that the level three students made as signs of increasing confidence but also as focal points for mini-lessons.

The written responses of the level four students in most cases indicated students who were "going through the motions." Except in two cases most of these students neither increased the length nor variety of their responses. My sense of their lack of involvement was also continually confirmed in student/teacher conferences. With this constant barrage of negativity it was often difficult to overlook the errors and move to a place where I could support deeper responses.

The most valuable and profound issue over which I had control was that of creating a **community of learners**. With the level three students the trust which was engendered through the development of this community resulted in students who were greater risk takers, and more willing participants in the response-based curriculum which was presented to them.

A retrospective examination of my researcher's journal certainly painted a picture of a teacher desperately trying to create the same environment with the level four students. I had initially believed that the answer lay in initiating just the right strategy. However, time, as well as all the other factors already outlined, created a critical mass of uneasiness which was too difficult to overcome. The fact that a real sense of community didn't develop is not only unfortunate but in

many ways an overarching factor with the level four students in terms of their overall lack of commitment to personal response.

In his article which discusses the merits of a variety of ESL teaching methodologies, N. S. Prabhu (1990) claims that what really needs to be considered is not the "best method;" instead teachers need to uncover for themselves what they really believe their teaching is achieving. When teachers have this clearly defined "sense of involvement" (p. 173) students will feel this greater confidence and a connection will be felt between the students and the teacher creating what I have called a community of learners and he names "teacher-learner rapport" (p. 173) . "I think there is a form of enjoyment arising from teacher-learner rapport that is less conspicuous but more integral to classroom activity, and more truly productive of learning" (p. 173) . Because I felt I was achieving far fewer results with the level four students, they may have had less confidence in me and my methodologies and therefore not have committed themselves as fully to the notion of making personal responses.

I think it is crucial to keep in mind that, even though this community feeling did not develop with the level four students, it was still important for me as an educator to take the risks necessary to try to enact that which I believed in. It is vital to be open to the changes in understanding which can occur when boundaries of knowledge are stretched.

In suggesting pedagogical recommendations and recommendations for future research, I am guided by the fact that I am a practising educator. Whatever recommendations I suggest are intended to support students within our classrooms by expanding our knowledge and confirming those aspects of the topic which are already known.

Future Research

This research has confirmed that given certain circumstances secondary ESL students can benefit from a program which supports and values personal meaning making. However, while the results of the research are interesting, because my research is a case study these results are not generalizable to a larger population and therefore many questions remain unanswered.

My research indicated less success with the development of oral responses to literature by the students. Therefore there are some questions regarding oral responses which are worthwhile pursuing. For example, what can we do to support greater oral response by secondary ESL students? Would the use of year-long, literature study groups affect secondary ESL students' ability to be involved in making oral responses to what they read? Within these study groups it would be worthwhile to explore the importance of student selection of

oral responses to what they read? Within these study groups it would be worthwhile to explore the importance of student selection of reading material.

An important question is also raised concerning the reading/writing connection. How can we assist secondary ESL students to make connections between their written responses and their oral responses? Are there particular writing strategies which have transference in terms of improving oral expression?

The role of the teacher in supporting ESL students in making personal responses is an important issue and raises questions about when and what type of questions teachers of secondary ESL students need to be asking if they wish to support personal response.

In terms of classroom dynamics, we can ask the question, are particular groupings more effective in terms of generating oral responses? For example, what role does gender play in terms of secondary ESL students willingness to involve themselves in discussing personal responses to literature?

The field of ESL instruction is rich and rapidly growing. In pursuing the answers to some of the research recommendations suggested we could enrich our understanding of how ESL students can best be supported in terms of their expression of responses to literature.

Pedagogical Recommendations

Use of Literature

There are hopeful trends within the ESL field in terms of the use of literature with ESL students. It seems, however, that the use of literature is still more prevalent at the elementary than the secondary level. One of the most positive aspects of my research, especially in terms of the level three students, was the benefits accrued to them through the use of literature as opposed to high-interest, low-vocabulary novels, or other decontextualized reading materials. The rich language, natural speech patterns, and variety in terms of the complexity of narrative structures are just a few of the reasons teachers should consider the use of literature with ESL students.

Peter Senge (1995) in his book The Fifth Discipline speaks of the importance of real learning, of the necessity for being open to new ideas, new perspectives, and new knowledge. He states that a fundamental shift is often necessary for this new awareness to take place. He uses the ancient word "metempsychosis" to refer to this movement of mind.

Real learning gets to the heart of what it means to be human. Through learning we re-create ourselves. Through learning we become able to do something we never were able to do. Through learning we re-perceive the world and our relationship to it. Through learning we extend our capacity to create, to be part of the generative process of life. (p.14)

In the area of reading instruction for ESL students perhaps what is needed is this shift of mind. For many years it was felt that ESL students would learn to read most efficiently by carefully controlling the material that they read. I would recommend a move away from a primarily skills-based reading program to the integration of literature into our instructional programs. We all want our ESL students to be confident, efficient readers of English. But reading in English, like any new skill, requires a great deal of practice. Our students are much more likely to apply themselves diligently to achieving new reading skills if they have some sense that these skills will bring them pleasure. It seems apparent that quality literature has a greater chance than simplified, sterile texts of maintaining the needed motivation to pursue the reading process in depth.

Readers' and Writers' Workshops

My research indicates that ESL students can benefit from these frameworks as much as students who speak English as a first language. I would encourage the use of readers' and writers' workshops in secondary ESL classrooms in whatever form best meets the needs of particular teachers and students. These workshops can provide the time for students to read in depth and to pursue writing topics. They

can also promote a valuable sense of ownership in terms of book selection and writing topics, and opportunities to have on-going responses to what they are reading from peers and their teacher. All these elements can combine to create an atmosphere in which the secondary ESL students come to see how a personal commitment to reading and writing in English is not only possible but enjoyable and ultimately helpful in terms of improving their ability to communicate in English.

Teachers as Learners

This next set of recommendations is intended to support teachers as we continue to grow in our understanding of how best to instruct our students.

In a recent article on teachers as learners, Hendricks-Lee, Soled, and Yinger (1995) support the belief that teachers, as much as students, learn best in socially mediated ways. "Ironically enough, although teachers work very consciously to structure their classrooms for social interaction supportive of student learning, little is being done to create the social interaction necessary for teacher learning" (p. 288). The isolation often connected with teaching in a secondary school seems to exacerbate the difficulty of connecting with other teachers so as create the community of 'teacher-learners' which is so needed. We are

separated and often have no one to share our concerns and questions as well as our triumphs. We stop seeing ourselves as learners and start to imagine that we should have all the answers. Insecurity in terms of what is going on in our classroom breeds further isolation. Hendricks-Lee et al. (1995) go on to say that "...when teachers see themselves primarily as learners, and not simply as teachers, they tend to create the intellectual environment, if not the physical environment, necessary for learning" (p.288) .

The stresses and demands on teachers, including ESL educators, are enormous. We need to come together as learners so that we can face the challenges, and the inevitable set backs that may occur. Small groups of teacher action-researchers coming together to talk about teaching and learning can make a difference. This coming together is not for the purpose of homogenizing but rather to support the individual as a learner, a learner who can, with support, enact meaningful change for the benefit of our students and ourselves.

Keeping a Journal

Having experienced first hand the joy and insights to be gained from keeping a daily journal of my classroom experiences, I would recommend it to other teachers. What emerges over time are patterns of response, insights, and of course further questions. The fast pace of

the classroom of today often leaves little time to reflect on the daily happenings. However, taking a few minutes at the end of a lesson or the end of a day to record the events of the day as well as emerging responses can prove most valuable. If we wish to take the stance of "teacher-as- learner," then, we must take the next step and be willing to examine our practice in light of what is happening in our classrooms. A journal provides the necessary focus for such examination and reflections.

D. Conclusion

My year-long study of the use of a literature-based, response-centered curriculum, founded on reader response theory, with secondary ESL students provided a naturalistic setting in which to see what could be learned about the ways the students make personal responses to literature. The use of two groups of students allowed me to compare and contrast how the same teacher-held belief system in a curriculum which is founded on the social nature of learning would play itself out over a years time.

What emerged were some understanding in terms of supporting personal meaning making in reading for secondary ESL students. All the students were engaged to some extent in reading and responding to literature. The level three students, with whom I was able to develop a

greater sense of community through the use of a variety of strategies and frameworks such as Readers' and Writers' workshop, made many substantial gains in terms of their written responses to literature, especially self-selected pieces. While the level four students did not make the same kinds of gains in terms of their written responses to their reading as the level three students, due to environmental, systemic, and teacher-controlled factors, they were able to listen to and read literature they might not have otherwise been exposed to.

The research showed that both groups of students experienced difficulty in making personal oral responses in a small and in a large group. It appears from the research that the students needed to have more opportunities to learn the language used in discussing literature. They were able to have successful dialogues in group settings which did not have discussion of literature as the primary focus. It appears that the students needed to come together more on an on-going basis to discuss what they were reading. I would recommend using literature study groups as one teaching vehicle for sharing a variety of ways to talk about literature, and to learn the necessary skills needed for this type of group dynamic.

Secondary ESL students, my research indicates, do benefit from a curriculum which values their own personal meaning making, encourages and supports their reading responses, and their transactions with literary texts.

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Appendix 1

THE POETRY UNIT

The following is the outline of the poetry unit. It was not given to students, but, rather it served as a planning and organizational tool.

- Fill the room with poetry books of all types. Allow some time for browsing. Students are to spend the last fifteen minutes of each class examining the books. Choose two that really say something about you. What do they say about you? Copy them. Choose one of these two to illustrate through any medium they wish.
- Read poetry to students in every class. Do this just before we leave, allowing time for the poetry to "percolate", before expecting responses. Use these poetry shares to expose them to many different authors and styles.
- Focus on narrative poetry, not just, but including Frost.
- Introduce narrative poetry - "archy the rat perishes"- do a choral reading
- Extending notions from The Chrysalids. Isolation/ Connection : Introduce the poem "The Thread." Why we feel separated from the rest of the world. How can we regain that connection? Share the poem with the students. In response journal record their thoughts and feelings about the poem. What phrase or line from the poem made the strongest impression?
Draw the connections that the poem describes through a series of lines and "stops" along the way.
- Turn prose into poetry: Have begun this already with The Chrysalids.
- "The Lunchbag"- read to class as they follow along. What would they put in a brown paper bag that would be important to them? Write their own poem and illustrate. Read their poems and explain their objects to the class.

- Use art reproductions to prompt discussions of words and impressions. Examine picture carefully. The picture is a frozen moment in time, what is the event, what happened just before this scene, what will happen next. Give the picture a caption.

Art Images - part 2- Use the sheets of words previously developed. Re-examine the picture carefully. The picture is a frozen moment in time, what is the event, what happened just before this scene, what will happen next.

Create a group poem which reflects each persons response to the print. Each person will be responsible for one stanza. Imagine themselves in the picture. Where would you be, thinking, feeling, do a web to generate ideas?

Write the verse in first person, combine together verses to create a group poem?

This poem will be students' response. It should tell other readers the groups' overall impression of the painting.

Appendix 2 READERS WORKSHOP EXPECTATIONS

1. During Readers' Workshop time you will have a book with you and you will read.
2. You will keep a response journal. The format for all entries must be:
 - Dated (two entries a week)
 - State title, Author and page read to.
 - Neat and legible
 - Minimum of a half a loose-leaf page in length

3. WHAT IS THE RIGHT RESPONSE?

Each novel is different and every person responds to novels differently. The journal will trace your thinking. The purpose of the response is not to test your novel knowledge but to help you reflect personally and thoughtfully about the novel in writing. No "right" response exists.

The content for all entries ...

1. Should **not** be a retelling of the plot of the novel
2. **One** entry each week must be in response to a "Question of the Week"
3. If you cannot think of how to begin your response you may use any of these openers:

I was impressed by... I noticed... I wonder about... Some questions I have.... I don't understand... I now undersand why/how/ what....
Something I noticed/appreciated/did not appreciate/wonder about a character... An interesting thought/sentence/word is... This part of the story makes me feel..

Appendix 3

Self-Selected Poetry Booklet

• You will have the last fifteen minutes of classes from March 10-16, March 27-31 and April 4-7, to examine and read the poetry books in our classroom.

• Please look through as many as you can.

• Choose two poems that really say something about you.

• Explain what these poems tell about you in a written response.
Minimum one page.

• Copy your two poems.

• Choose one of these two poems to illustrate through any medium you wish.

• Create a booklet which combines:
the two poems,
your responses to the poems
your illustration, which represents another response to the
poem

Appendix 4

Selected Titles Used With Students Throughout the Year

Poetry Books:

- Adoff, A. (Ed.). (1971). It Is the Poem Singing in Your Eye. New York, New York: Harper Row.
- Fleischman, P. (1988). Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices. Illustrated by E. Beddows. New York: Harper & Row.
- Hopkins, L. B. (Ed.). (1987) Dinosaurs. Illustrated by M. Tinkleman. San Diego, CA: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.
- Hopkins, L. B. (Ed.). (1993). Extra Innings: Baseball Poems. Illustrated by Scott Medlock. San Diego, Ca: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.
- Hopkins, L. B. (Ed.). (1983). The Sky Is Full of Song. Illustrated by D. Zimmer.
- Korman, G. & Koramn, B. (1992). The D- Poems of Jeremy Bloom. New York: Scholastic Press.
- Livingston, M. C. (1992). Light and Shadow. Photographs by B. Rogasky. New York: Holiday House.
- Merriam, E. (1966). It Doesn't Always Have to Rhyme. Illustrated by, M. Spooner. New York: Antheneum.
- Schmidt, G. D. (Ed.). (1994). Robert Frost: Poetry for young people. New York: Sterling.
- Silverstein, S. (1974). Where the Sidewalk Ends. New York: HarperCollins.

Anthologies

- Wowk, J. & Jason, T. (Eds.). (1993). Multiculturalism. The Issues Collection. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

Evans, K. (Ed.). (1993). Biography. In The Issues Collection. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

Novels and Short Stories

Babbitt, Natalie. (1975). Tuck Everlasting. Toronto: Harper Collins.

Dahl, R. (1979). The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar and Six More. New York: Bantam.

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Appendix 5

DIALOGUE JOURNALS

Dialogue journals, some questions and answers.

1. What is a dialogue journal?

It is a written conversation between yourself and Ms. Johansen

2. What do I write about in my dialogue journal?

You may write about:

- activities you are involved in at school or outside school
- school subjects, things you are learning or are interested in learning
- questions that you think I can answer
- concerns you have with your school work, or what we are doing in class
- anything that is interesting to you !

3. How often will I write in my dialogue journal?

You will write in your journal for 15 minutes twice a week.

4. Will you mark mistakes (spelling, grammar) in my dialogue journal?

No, this is a place just to get your ideas down. The journal is a place to practice the things you are learning about English in other classes. I will correct your English in other writing that will be published or in writing where we are practicing certain types of English grammar.

5. **What if I can't think of anything to write about?**

I will put up a sheet called "Journal Hints" and it will have suggestions for making your writing clear, understandable and interesting. Sometimes I will suggest topics, but you do not have to use those topics.

6 **How much must I write?**

As much as you can! The more you write the better you get at it.

7. **Is my journal going to be part of my class mark?**

Yes. You will receive marks for completing the necessary journal entries. You may receive bonus marks at the end of term if you seem to be putting a lot of thought and energy into your journal entries. Otherwise, your mark will be for participation.

Appendix 6

WRITERS' WORKSHOP - STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

1. You will keep all your writing drafts and published pieces in your writing file folder which will remain in the classroom.
2. You will write about topics you care about.
3. You will take risks as a writer, trying new techniques, topics, skills, and kinds of writing.
4. You will draft your prose writing in paragraphs
5. You will number and date all your drafts.
6. You will work hard at proofreading and self-editing your drafts. You will show your proofreading corrections and editing in a pen or pencil different in colour from your written piece.
7. You will maintain your skills list and use it to guide you in proofreading your work.
8. You will make final copies legible and correct with margins.
9. You will be reflective and make decisions about what is working and what needs more work in your writing
10. You will listen to, question and respond thoughtfully to other writers' pieces giving helpful responses.
11. You will not disturb or distract writers or me when I am working with a writer during workshop time.
12. We get lots of ideas to write about. Some you will try and then abandon, others you just won't like as much. You will have many drafts, you **do not** have to publish all your drafts, but you must keep them all in your folder.

13. You will publish at least one piece of writing a month. To publish means you will have already done a draft(s) which have been edited by another student and Ms. Johansen., proofread and rewritten with no errors.
14. All published pieces will be kept in your file folder after being displayed in the publishing center.

Appendix 7

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Background/Demographics

How long have you been in Canada?

How old were you when you came to Canada?

What is the biggest difference between our school and the one you went to before you came to Canada?

What has been the hardest thing about Canadian schools for you to deal with?

Responses to Reading

What do you think is the difference between giving a response to something you have read and answering questions about what you have read?

Were you asked to give responses to your reading before you came to Canada? How did you give those responses?

Why do you think you are asked for your response to what you read?

How do you feel about giving responses to what you have read now?

Do you prefer written or oral responses? Why?

Do you feel differently about giving written responses now than at the beginning of the year?

Does the size of the group make a difference to you when you make an oral response?

What helps you to make written responses to something you have read?

What helps you to make oral responses to something you have read?

Does having opportunities to read other students responses help you write your responses?

Why do you think you are asked to discuss what you have read in small student-led groups?

If you were the teacher how would you find out what your students were thinking about their reading?

Do you have any other comments, questions or suggestions that might help teachers working with ESL students?

Appendix 8

REFLECTIONS ON RESPONSES

We have been using responses in our reading for many months now. As we enter our third term it seems a good idea to take stock of how we have used our response journals and to set personal goals for this term.

Please think about and respond on a separate piece of paper to the following ideas about your responses.

- What do you enjoy most about writing responses?
- Which journal entry are you most proud of? (Tell the date you wrote it and what piece you were responding to). Why are you proud of this response?
- Do you have a journal entry that you think was not effective? Why?
- What are some skills you have learned to use in your response journal?
- What are the strengths of your response journal?
- As you look through your responses do you see any patterns in your responses?
- What goal(s) do you have for yourself in the use of your response journal this term?

Appendix 9

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Road Not Taken - by Robert Frost

In your group: After each person has had a chance to give their response.

Your group discussion may include all or some of the following ideas.

This discussion is meant to be an exchange of ideas, NOT a question and answer period. The questions I have suggested are just to give you some ideas of the kinds of things you can talk about if other ideas seem interesting to the group I encourage you to talk about them.

- You may ask each other any questions about the poem that will help you to understand it more deeply.
- You may discuss the title - what does it mean, is it a good title why/why not?
- Why would choosing one route over another make all the difference?
- Which lines in the poem seem most important to you? Why?
- Do you think it matters how old you are when you make choices?

Appendix 10

STUDENT RESPONSES TO SELF-SELECTED POETRY

Level Four Student Response to the poem, "I Pulled An "A" by G. Korman & B. Korman

I have got an "A" on a mathematics test last time but my family does not treat me as a VIP as the poem teller, Jeremy Bloom. My Father said, "You should get at least "A" in the test. If you get an "A" you should not be happy because it is your responsibility" I do not understand what is the meaning of his words until now. I really understand the meaning, that is we should study hard, and try our best on everything.

I think the reason that I got an "A" is similiar to the poem, it is not too hard for me. I learned most of the topic in Mathematics 11 here in Hong Kong. Therefore the Mathematics 11 is not too hard for me. I should have straight "A" until the end of the term.

Level Four Student Response to the poem, "I Dream'd In A Dream" by Walt Whitman

"Dream'd in a dream is far more abstract than just a dream. One has a dream that may not come true, but it has a certain possiblity to come true but a dream in a dream has a possiblity of near zero to come true. This almost impossible dream that is dreamed by Walt Whitman is a city of Friends. Whitman realized that the lvoe inthe real world is too weak to hold people together. People often have enemies more thanfriends and a robust love may not even exists among these friends. I have never dreamed this deam before because this city is hard to dream of and because it is too far away from the real world.

**Level Four Student Response to the poem, "Whole Duty of Children"
by Robert Louis Stevenson**

Robert Louis Stevenson wrote many books and poems and I feel touched after this poem because I was once a child. I agree with the sentence which states, "A child should always say what's true." because I think that a child has not been polluted by society yet. However, when the child grows older, this statement, won't be true anymore. It is because society is complex. Can a child speak when he is spoken to and behave mannerly at table? I don't think a child can do these things. A child is still too young to know how to have suitable manners at the table. However, it's not surprising that a child will do the above things if he or she is taught by his or her parents. I'm glad that I can do the things, which are mentioned in the poem which I have learned gradually through my life. These lines are interesting and I enjoyed reading them as a lesson is taught in a humourous style. "At least as far as he is able." The poem also reminds us all to respect other people and treat them as we would like to be treated. The poem is telling us to think of other people.

**Level Three Student Response to the poem - "Every Morning" by
Laurie Reid**

As myself, a teenager who is still growing up and have my own dreams to follow, I have the power and rights to catch my dreams. This poetry represents the feeling of most children in growing up process. Life is like a mountain where I see the sunbeam peers through the clouds. It means I'm not an child anymore. I am an adult. As I get older and older, I walk down the mountain till it's time to leave this world. When I was very young I always thought age seventeen is far, far away so I never thought of it. Now I am going to be seventeen soon. I can't believe time goes incredibly fast, everything just happened yesterday. It seems like there're many blanks in my life. Now I feel like I don't want to grow up anymore. Time goes faster as you grow older. I just wish I had a watch to stop time going too fast. But I still have a child's power to search my "elusive dream." And someday I'll find it.

Level Three Student Response to the poem - "Poem" by Langston Hughes

When I saw this poem for the first time, I felt a little shock from my heart. This poem is very special to me. The Author used "Poem" as the name of the poem, then at the end of the poem it ends with "the poem ends, soft as it began - I loved my friend." When the poem goes to "soft as it began - I loved my friend" then the poem starts from the beginning again and it never ends. It is just like I loved my friend forever. It also makes me understand how my friends feel and how they miss me when I moved to Canada.

Moreover, the poem said "There's nothing more to say." It is really a true thing. When your friend has to move to another place to study or work, you don't always know what to say to your friends. All you can say is "Goodbye and take care. So this poem really shows a thought from the bottom of my friend's and my hearts.

Level Three Student Response to the poem - "Rainy Day" by Michael Bulluck

I chose this poem because of my first sight in the book and I love it so much. I am a "first-sight-believable person." I always choose things by my first sight and will not change my decision anymore. Or, maybe I love rainy days. I love it because it gives me a sad but fresh feeling, it is also my first sight of the rain, never change.

Another reason I chose this poem is the description of the poem. The author describes the scene on a rainy day, so deep into it. Beside it, I like the words too. I think this poem can express my feelings about rainy days.