

AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN
THE DEVELOPMENT OF LETTER-SOUND CORRESPONDENCE
IN WRITING AND BEGINNING READING

by

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates literacy-based behaviors and their development in a Grade One classroom. It examines in detail the strategies children used to make reading and writing connections in emergent literacy. It focuses on one particular stage of writing when children first begin using letters to represent sounds and its relationship to beginning reading in the context of a classroom. Current research on emergent literacy provided the theoretical framework for this study.

The teacher as researcher used a linked case study design to investigate the development of reading and writing in five children within the context of twenty-four children in the Grade One class. The children were observed participating in many varied activities, over a ten month period. To facilitate the collection of detailed descriptions on the case studies another teacher came into the classroom four days a week to assume classroom responsibilities and free the researcher to concentrate on the case study child at this particular level of emergent writing and reading.

Fieldnotes on the direct observations of emergent writing and reading of the case study children formed the primary source of data. The children's writing samples were collected daily along with documentation of their growth in reading. An analysis of the data revealed the observations fell into the categories of initial letter strategy, children's literature, literacy play and collaborative talk. These categories seemed particularly significant because they were observed so frequently across all case studies. The results of the study isolate the use of the initial letter strategy as a significant developmental marker and an important connection between reading and writing which signals a critical time in a child's developing awareness of literacy. Additional findings highlighted the use of names and children's literature as reading/writing connections.

The study concludes by presenting practical implications for instruction and the educational context which may be useful for classroom teachers.

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DEDICATION

For my dear dad and beloved mom for supporting and encouraging learning as a lifetime pursuit.

CHAPTER 1

Recognition of the importance of literacy development in the early school years is growing. Recent research in language acquisition, psycholinguistics and early literacy is providing many new insights into how young children acquire literacy (Smith, 1973, Graves, 1983, Harste, Burke and Woodward, 1983, Wells, 1985). There have been many breakthroughs in understanding the development of children, the development of learning and the environment that nurtures it. The challenge teachers now face is to translate this new theory into developmentally appropriate practice. The British Columbia Ministry of Education has issued a new curriculum guide for the primary grades which became effective in September 1990. This curriculum takes a new approach and provides for ungraded primary programs which focus on individual learners and allows them to progress at their own pace. Young children develop at varying rates and schools need to allow for these differences. Each child is unique in his/her intellectual development and teachers should be aware of the need to establish nurturing classroom environments and use instructional practices that are appropriate for the individual child's stage of development.

There is a strong connection between reading and writing. In recent years there has been an increase in investigations into the area known as Emergent Literacy which includes reading and writing. The early research focused first on the writing process (Graves, 1983) then the reading process (Sulzby, 1985) and now there is a great deal of interest in the connection that is unfolding between reading and writing (Tierney, 1985, Teale and Sulzby, 1986). To gain a greater understanding of this connection between reading and writing more research needs to be done in natural settings at all levels of reading and writing but particularly at the level where a child begins to read. Observations of emergent reading in classrooms is making it possible for researchers to document the strategies young children use to learn to

read. Traditionally, teachers have taught beginning reading first and then moved on to teach writing. However, recent research in emergent literacy has shown that children work out their strategies in writing and the reading of that writing before they are independently able to make sense of conventional print (Dobson, 1987). Teachers are asking how does emergent writing affect reading and vice versa? What conditions are necessary in a classroom environment for emergent reading and writing to flourish? In order for teachers to make informed decisions about implementing new ungraded curriculum they need to understand emergent literacy and know when a child is developmentally ready to learn to read and write. Educators need more knowledge about children's cognitive development at this stage of beginning reading and how to nurture it in the classroom. Hopefully, improved understanding of the reading process will lead to better methods of introducing literacy and help teachers establish classroom environments that encourage literacy.

Statement of the Problem

There has been a great deal of controversy over the years about when a child is developmentally ready to read and write. Thirty years ago it was believed that children should have a Mental Age of 6.0 (Russell and Karp, 1951) in order to be successful in learning to read. Recent research in emergent literacy has shown that given the proper conditions it is possible for young children to have prior knowledge of reading signs, words and conventions of print before formal instruction in reading in the first grade (Clark, 1976, Meek, 1982, Teale and Sulzby, 1986). The purpose of this study is to examine the connection between beginning reading and writing at one particular developmental stage (Dobson, 1987) the stage when young children first begin making an alphabetic match between speech and print. A child uses the alphabetic principle when he/she begins to systematically use a letter to represent a specific sound. The researchers experience in the classroom, suggests there is a dramatic cognitive growth spurt at this stage because once the child becomes aware of this connection, he/she soon makes sense of print and learns to read.

The researcher read recent research in learning to read and write (sometimes referred to as emergent literacy) and set out to implement what she had learned in her Grade One classroom. In this study, the researcher states her goals in setting up the classroom teaching program and how those goals were implemented by establishing a whole language classroom.

Within this classroom environment the researcher closely observed children's literacy-based behaviors and their development. The particular focus for this study was children who were just beginning to use the alphabetic principle in writing their own messages. The researcher reports her observations of five of these children within the context of the

twenty-four children in the class. This investigation will attempt to discover common patterns of development in reading and writing behaviors that emerge at this stage in a whole language classroom and then draw instructional implications. Within this particular environment, in this critical stage of beginning reading, the question to be explored in this study is:

What are the initial strategies children use to make
reading/writing connections in emergent literacy?

In an effort to fit theory to practice, this research will examine this developmental stage in the context of a classroom and then make inferences about curriculum and programs that provide appropriate activities for beginning readers.

Definition of Terms

Emergent Literacy	The combined learning processes of emergent reading and emergent writing.
Emergent Reading	Any interaction between the child and printed text.
Emergent Writing	Any attempt by the child to make marks on paper that are intended to signify language.
Whole Language	A holistic child-centered approach to literacy development that is facilitated when reading, writing and talk are interrelated. The key theoretical premise is that children acquire a written language in much the same way they acquire an oral language.
Alphabetic Principle	The relationship between sounds and letters.
Play Reading	Invention of text from memory or illustrations.
Literacy Play	Symbolic play which includes reading and writing activities
E.S.L.	English as a Second Language.

Rationale

The concept of emergent literacy is a relatively new way of thinking about literacy development. In reading education, research of the past decade has provided unprecedented insights into developmentally appropriate ways of fostering growth in preschool and kindergarten children (Teale, 1986). More research and knowledge is needed about learning to read and write in the primary grades. This study will focus on the interdependence of reading and writing at a critical stage for beginning readers, the development of the alphabetic principle in their writing. Although reading and writing will often be discussed separately, any division between reading and writing is artificial because growth and development occur simultaneously in language — reading, writing, listening and speaking. This investigation is grounded in the theory of emergent literacy. It arises out of earlier joint research on the developmental stages of writing (Hurst, Dobson, Chow, Nucich, Stickley & Smith, 1983) and out of Dobson's research (1987) on the connection between reading and writing in Kindergarten and Grade One children. This study narrows the focus to investigate one particular stage of writing — when children first begin using letters to represent sounds and its relationship to beginning reading in the context of the classroom. Each child is viewed as unique and moving along his/her continuum of literacy learning. A close look at this stage will also bring deeper understanding to the age old teacher's dilemma regarding the relative importance of phonetic and/or visual strategies in learning to read.

An understanding of the interdependence between reading/writing and the strategies children use to make connections at this stage has significant implications for teachers setting up classroom environments. It can be argued that if there is a cognitive developmental sequence in learning to read and write then it should be reflected in the curriculum. In other words, how do teachers put their new knowledge about how children learn into practice in the classroom? What are the important teaching/learning connections

that teachers need to be aware of in order to help beginning readers make meaning of print? From a teacher's perspective, what are the critical factors in establishing a classroom environment that encourages literacy in young children? The purpose of this research problem is to establish that if use of the alphabetic principle is a significant marker for all children then this knowledge will help teachers know when and how to encourage beginning reading in their teaching and in the new ungraded primary programs. Timing and instructional practice are important because each child proceeds at his/her own pace. Too many children in our schools are still being labelled slow or learning disabled if they are not reading by the middle of Grade One. For teachers to be more successful in the future, we need to learn more about the beginning stage of reading and then provide appropriate classroom programs.

Theoretical Assumptions

- 1) Learning to read and write are independent processes of language acquisition similar to learning to speak and listen.
- 2) Children have prior knowledge of reading and are already on a continuum of learning before beginning formal instruction in the first grade.
- 3) There is a positive relationship between the level of achievement in emergent writing and performance in emergent reading of storybooks.
- 4) Children learn in an integrated, holistic manner and are continuously shifting strategies back and forth from whole to part, visual to phonetic and using a combination of semantic, syntactic, and graphophonemic cues.
- 5) Children learn by using approximations in both reading and writing and gradually refine them until they reach the conventional form.

Operational Statements

This descriptive study will focus on the developing literacy in young children in the natural setting of a classroom. In naturalistic studies the researcher does not control the experimental setting but focuses on the child's spontaneous responses to oral and written language in the child's natural environment or classroom. The focus of this study is on discovering what children in the process of acquiring literacy actually do and how they make connections between reading and writing. The research design is a linked case study against the background of all the students in a Grade One classroom. Ethnographic strategies are used to investigate early literacy learning through participant observation.

In this particular investigation, there were several advantages for the participant observer doing the research in her own classroom. At times the researcher was able to get an insider's view (informant) and at other times an outsider's point of view (observer). This combination provides a wealth of interesting data. The teacher as researcher was able to observe the children five hours a day over a ten month period; that is, their full Grade One year. Each day the children were observed participating in many varied activities rather than in a single, isolated task. This holistic approach to research in beginning reading would be impossible unless a researcher were able to spend an entire year in a teacher's classroom. To facilitate the collection of detailed descriptions of the five case study children another teacher came into the classroom four days a week for a forty minute period to assume the classroom responsibilities and free the researcher to concentrate on the case study child at this particular level of emergent writing and reading. The extra help in the classroom each day made it physically possible to collect detailed observations and probe deeper into this stage of literacy development. The quality of the data gathered was enhanced by the opportunity for intensive observation and interaction.

The classroom environment in this investigation was another advantage of this approach to research. The classroom reflected the author's views of a suitable context for literacy learning. It is the teacher who establishes the learning environment in any classroom so the author had a certain amount of control over the setting. It is this investigator's belief that young children learn best in a nurturing environment. Thus, this Grade One classroom environment was set up following the guidelines of the Principles Which Nurture Literacy (Hurst, 1985) revised from the original principles Hurst (1982).

- 1) Provide a warm social setting.
- 2) Immerse learners in a literate environment.
- 3) Accept and encourage successive approximations of literacy.
- 4) Expect self-selection of materials and of topics.
- 5) Respond to intended meaning as the absolute priority.
- 6) Emphasize the process rather than the product.
- 7) Expect hypothesis-testing and self-correction.
- 8) Expect a developmental progression along the learning continuum.
- 9) Evaluate individually and longitudinally.

Limitations Of The Study

In order to gain a deeper understanding of this stage of development of emergent reading and writing, it was necessary to limit the number of case studies to five. It was impossible to do more in the time frame of one school year. All twenty-four children in this Grade One class with one exception went through this stage at some point in the year. However, it is not possible for a teacher-researcher to collect detailed observations on each child in a classroom because several students are passing through this particular stage at the same

time. It is acknowledged that the case study individuals may not be the most interesting but they were chosen because they were the next child in the class beginning to experiment with using letters to represent sounds.

The learning environment may be another limitation in this study because the author was responsible for creating the learning environment in the classroom where the research was conducted. As discussed earlier, this can be an advantage but it is also a disadvantage. The findings will need to be considered within the context of this particular classroom and the type of program. However, the research should produce results which will generalize to all students in genuine whole language programs which include daily writing.

Significance Of The Research

The importance of research in this area was discussed earlier in this chapter. In the past few years, there has been an increasing emphasis in the literature on linking reading and writing in the curriculum. The new B.C. Primary curriculum reflects the recent theories in emergent literacy. However, the task of interpreting these theories and putting them into classroom practice has become the responsibility of individual teachers. The next few years will tell if teachers can find ways of making their instructional practice fit the new theory. Any research, particularly in the context of a regular classroom, which can give some insight into the beginning reading stage of reading will be useful for teachers struggling to implement the new curriculum. The new ungraded primary program calls for teachers to have increased background knowledge in order to match a child's developmental stage with appropriate instructional practices. It is also important for primary teachers to know teaching/learning interactions that enhance growth at this critical stage of reading development. New programs are needed in our schools to accommodate the individual

learner and the wide range of differences in reading and writing development. Research which provides in-depth data on the connection between beginning reading and writing within the classroom environment will be of use to kindergarten and Grade One teachers as they plan their new programs and learn how to put theory into practice.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In recent years research has provided many breakthroughs in understanding how young children learn, the processes of reading and writing and the importance of a nurturing environment. There has been an explosion of knowledge in the area known as Emergent Literacy in the past fifteen years and recognition of the fact that young children develop at varying rates.

“Researchers have investigated the not-yet-conventional ways in which these children write and read, seeking to understand the nature of their behaviors, the contexts out of which they arise, and their significance for continuing literacy development” (Teale and Sulzby 1986, p. vii). This new perspective of emergent literacy is becoming widely accepted in theory and the related body of literature is rapidly expanding. A survey of the literature in emergent literacy raises a number of issues that are relevant to this study. This review presents studies that focus on the writing process, the reading process, and the relationship between learning to read and to write. As certain environments are more conducive to literacy learning than others, this review of the literature continues with investigations that examine contexts through the use of literature, literacy play and collaborative talk.

The Writing Process

Research studies in oral language acquisition laid the foundation for more recent investigations into the writing and reading processes. The research of New Zealand’s Marie Clay made a significant contribution to the area of early literacy and helped establish that writing acquisition parallels language acquisition in that it involves the refinement of

approximations. Her work described in the 1975 book What Did I Write? first links early writing to learning to read by showing that writing acquisition occurs simultaneously with efforts to acquire reading. Clay's observations of young children experimenting with the writing task have done a great deal to change existing beliefs about how, and at what point children begin to acquire writing skills. She formulated thirteen principles which described the exploration of making marks on paper but avoided identifying a sequence because she believed the child may be acquiring several aspects of the form and conventions of print at any one time. It is interesting to note that Clay's observations do not include a discussion of invented spelling.

Read's (1970) investigation of pre-school children's phonological knowledge of English laid the foundation for extensive research in the area of invented spelling. He found that each child first learned the conventional names of letters of the alphabet and used this knowledge to represent the sounds in words to write messages and stories. Read believed that the use of approximations and development in spelling over time showed that the young writers were using logical strategies to systematically, not randomly, construct the writing system. Gentry (1978) in his investigation expanded on Read's research and provided a general framework for an understanding of invented spelling. He identified five stages of early spelling which he labelled deviant, pre-phonetic, phonetic, transitional and correct.

In the last decade naturalistic research methods have opened up new fields of inquiry. Investigations (Bissex, 1980; Calkins, 1983, 1986; Graves, 1983; Harste, Burke and Woodward, 1984; Henderson and Beers, 1980) have shown that writing is a process that begins with scribble and invented spellings. The young writer gradually refines these approximations to the conventional form. The longitudinal case study by Bissex (1980) described how her son spontaneously worked out the writing and the reading system by

himself. This detailed account shows how the boy actively engaged in learning to write with meaning being the central focus. Since then, researchers have observed many children following a similar pattern of development when learning to write.

Research by Henderson and Beers (1980) investigated the growth in spelling during the school years. Their results supported Read's earlier study (1970) on preschoolers and found that the spelling patterns of school children proceeded at different rates but appeared in a relatively constant sequence, regardless of the instructional approach. They found that children move from one to one correspondence between a sound and a single letter to adding silent letters and vowels. The combined findings of Read (1970) and Henderson and Beers (1980) substantiate the developmental theory of learning to spell.

Significant investigations in actual classrooms (Calkins, 1983,1986; Graves, 1983; Graves and Stuart, 1985) have revolutionized our understanding of the writing process.

Traditionally in our schools children learned to read first and then write. These large research studies have focused on children's development as writers that begins at the early stages with invented spellings and approximations that gradually shift to the conventional form. Graves and Stuart (1985) believe "when children write first, reading comes more easily" (p. 2). Graves (1983) reported that "Children want to write. They want to write the first day they attend school" (p. 3). The findings of these researchers suggest that children become proficient writers in nurturing classrooms where children are encouraged to be actively engaged in writing by taking risks, choosing their own topics and maintaining a sense of ownership over their own writing.

In Calkins' (1983) longitudinal case study in a grade three classroom, she reported that although she had focused her research on writing development, she concluded that reading and writing were inseparable (p.153). Her research provided evidence that children spent

30% of their writing time reading what they had written . One six year old, while in the process of composing, had actually read his sentence twenty-two times.

Research by teacher-researchers (Hurst, Dobson, Chow, Nucich, Stickley and Smith, 1983) corroborated the findings of the researchers discussed in this survey of the literature. They collected and analyzed the writing of Grade One students for an eight month period and identified a sequence of developmental stages that children pass through as they move along a continuum of learning to write. These stages are a useful frame of reference for practitioners and researchers alike because some children may skip a stage while others take weeks or months to work through it. Every child is unique and moves along his/her own continuum not only at different rates but also by slightly different routes (Wells, 1986). This is, of course, an indication of the holistic nature of language learning.

The Reading Process

The reading process is a natural language process and similar to all language learning. Research in psycholinguistics has made a significant contribution to the understanding of the reading process and how young children learn. The work of psycholinguists Frank Smith (1973, 1986, 1988) and Ken Goodman (1969, 1986) has resulted in a new theoretical base gaining wide acceptance that reading acquisition parallels oral language acquisition. Throughout Smith's work he reinforces four ideas — the child's ability to learn; we read for meaning; reading is not decoding print into speech; and only a small amount of information is contained in the actual print. Smith (1973) believes that children learn to read by reading (p. 184) when they are immersed in a literate environment. While reading the child gradually gains control over unfamiliar vocabulary by using a variety of strategies to test hypotheses and formulate rules. In contrast to language acquisition theory,

traditional reading programs viewed reading as decoding. The latter suggests that children should be taught the letter names, letter-sound correspondence and many of the 166 phonic rules (Smith, 1973) so that they can break the code.

Goodman's important research on Miscue Analysis (1969) provided many insights into the reading process. His research showed the value of observing the errors readers make in order to identify their use of strategies and cueing systems (grapho-phonemic, syntactic and semantic). His findings from several studies showed that errors are a normal part of learning to read. He developed a taxonomy that helped to classify and clarify the nature of reading miscues. "From this research Goodman has identified reading strategies as what the reader does when the eye hits the page: the reader samples print, predicts what is coming, confirms those predictions, corrects if necessary, and integrates new with old information" (Weaver, 1988, p. 258).

Clark's (1976) study of young fluent readers in Scotland investigated the development of early literacy. Detailed observations were made of twenty boys and twelve girls who were already reading fluently when they entered school at the age of five. To qualify as a fluent reader the child had to be able to read some books independently, read twenty-five words from a Word list and be able to spell twenty out of forty words correctly. Although few children had formal instruction, the research clearly showed that the parents of these fluent readers were very interested in their children's development and that the children enjoyed a large amount of dynamic verbal interaction in a warm, accepting, pressure free environment. These children were encouraged to make choices and self-select books. In Clarke's study several of the boys began reading from environmental print before the girls but later studies have not confirmed any gender differences in the reading of environmental print. Unfortunately, Clark refers to the significance of play in fluent readers but does not include a discussion of literacy play or emergent writing in her research. Other researchers

in different parts of the world have also been investigating how young children learn to read before formal instruction in school (Doake, 1982; Y. Goodman, 1980; Holdaway, 1979; Sulzby, 1985). Their research supports Clark's findings on early readers. It is evident that early readers have several common experiences. They are read to, often the same book over and over, and they have access to a supportive adult who provides positive, quality interactions.

Y. Goodman's research on early literacy focused on finding an answer to the question of when does reading begin. Her findings suggested that the beginnings of reading often go unnoticed in the young child. Neither the children nor their parents may be aware that reading has begun (1980, p. 9). She suggested that curriculum developers need to acknowledge that children already know a great deal about environmental print when they enter school and that they need to be allowed to continue learning naturally in a print filled classroom setting. Y. Goodman coined the phrase 'Kidwatching' (1985) to describe careful observations of children, their interaction with peers and their environment. Her research, based on detailed observations of young children learning to read, has provided many new insights into 'The Roots of Literacy' (Y. Goodman, 1980).

Sulzby has made several contributions to the understanding of literacy development. Her research provides further evidence that literacy development does take place prior to formal instruction and thus supports the findings of other researchers in the field (Bissex, 1980; Clarke, 1976; Doake 1979; Y. Goodman, 1980; Harste, Woodward and Burke, 1984; Holdaway, 1979; Mason, 1980; Taylor, 1983; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Her 1985 study indicated that literacy development of young children is benefitted by storybook reading and that there are important implications for storybook reading in the home and primary classrooms. An analysis of the data indicated the existence of broad classification categories of emergent reading/storybook reading behaviors. When comparing a child's

reading behavior across books Sulzby found the classification fairly stable and concluded that young children can formulate rules and generalize. Their reading behaviors are conceptual and not just a stimulus response to a particular book. In this research, there appears to be evidence for a developmental sequence of reading behaviors. Sulzby acknowledges that the data has been collected from only twenty-four children. However, this study is significant because it provides a wealth of information and enables researchers and teachers to discuss, understand and examine the parts of a very complex process.

In the literature on early literacy, a few studies focus on the child's use of the initial consonant when learning to read (Mason, 1980; Ehri, 1989; Ehri and Wilce, 1985). These researchers investigated the role of letter-sound correspondence at the early stage of emergent reading. Mason's (1980) and Ehri and Wilce's (1985) studies both focus on word identification and the question of when reading really begins. These studies shed some light on the age-old controversy of phonics versus sight methodology. Mason (1980) set up her research to determine whether word or letter focused instruction helps beginning readers remember the words. Forty four-year-olds were divided into two classes with one class receiving letter-focused instruction and the other word-focused instruction. Both groups were taught six words and their recall retested five months later. The results showed no difference for word retention between the two methods. From Mason's perspective, the major finding of her study is that there are three developmental levels that describe beginning readers — context dependency, visual recognition and letter-sound analysis. She believes these stages were sequential and this research supported her hypothesis that letter knowledge, sign reading and copying letters are important readiness activities for learning to read. Invented spelling was not discussed but Mason made an interesting observation in footnote two.

“A number of instances of hypothesis generation activity were evident. Many parents reported the use of a spelling strategy before a sounding out strategy; many children tried to guess words on a list by sounding out the first consonant before using all consonants or vowel and consonant information. Instances of hypothesis generation include children who first tried to use number names for letter symbols, a child who began to read a list of words as if it were a story, another who attempted to use the first sound of the c consonant name (“sss”) to help identify stop, and one who tried to include a short ‘a’ vowel sound for nearly every word in a list” (p. 224).

Six years later with the added insights of invented spelling, Mason and Allen (1986) reexamined the data from Mason’s original study (1980). Children who “guess at words” were unable to read words without context clues. The responses of these children were entirely unrelated to the graphic structure of the words. However, several months later many children applied an initial letter-sound strategy by using the name-sound of the first consonant of the word as the principal cue. For example, in Mason’s study (1980) one child read “may” as “mister” and another said it was “mom”. When these children tried to spell, they applied the same strategy of focusing on the initial sound of the word (p. 30). Thus, the strategy of using the first letter is an important one in both reading and writing.

Ehri and Wilce’s study (1985) looks at the same research question in a different way. They cite Mason’s 1977 research at some length. But whereas Mason observes that children use the first letter strategy in a footnote, Ehri and Wilce, with the added insight of psycholinguistic theory, look deeper into why children use the initial consonant. They collected evidence regarding children’s use of visual and phonetic cues when they first begin reading words. This research was based on the hypothesis that children use letter-sound processing at the outset of learning to read. They begin to identify words by accessing phonetic associations that have already been stored in their memory. For this

study, the authors divided a group of beginning readers into three levels according to their identification of single words. Pre-readers were unable to read any words, novices could read a few and veterans could read several words. The subjects were 56 middle class preschool and kindergarten children. The children were given five tasks — tests for phonetic and visual words, identification of uppercase letter by their names and sounds, a passage from the Gray Oral Reading test and recall of initial or final letters in words. The findings of this study show that word reading requires a shift from visual to phonetic cue processing. It is this shift that enables young children to begin reading words accurately. Thus, the evidence in this study supports the hypothesis that children use letter-sound processing at the outset of learning to read. The novice and veteran readers focus on phonetic cues, while the pre-readers use only the visual code. In contrast to Mason's findings, Ehri and Wilce believe there is a point where children begin processing letters as symbols for sounds which should not be called visual recognition but rather visual-phonetic. This research provides strong evidence that young children can generate and test hypotheses and even shift strategies as needed. It seems all readers including beginning readers employ both strategies, shifting back and forth and integrating in order to make sense of the printed word.

The role of the initial letter in names is significant in both early writing and reading. When learning to write, young children represent their own names and those of family members using the first few letters of their names (Sulzby, Barnhart and Hieshima, 1989). At this stage children's talk indicates a growing metalinguistic awareness about letters: e.g. "K is Kristen's and M is Mommy's". As children learn letter names, they learn about letter features and begin to use special ways of talking and thinking about letters. Environments that support alphabet learning provide opportunities for children to be actively involved in the reading and writing of children's names, games and other playful activities (McGee and Richgels, 1990). Cunningham's (1990) study investigated the reading of names as a tool to

obtain information about children's ability to decode words. The Names Test consisted of a list of thirty-one first and last names and was administered to 120 students in grades two, three, four and five. Her findings suggested teachers can get valuable diagnostic information based on the pattern of errors. Younger students used the first letter strategy and guessed "Kevin for Kimberly" or "Chuck for Chad" ignoring the rest of the word.

There is a strong interdependence between reading and writing. Recent investigations are examining the relationship between reading and writing at all levels. The new perspective derived from the body of research on emergent literacy now makes it clear that reading and writing develop concurrently and that each child is on a unique continuum of learning. Close observations by researchers (Harste, Burke and Woodward, 1984; Teale and Sulzby, 1986; Wells, 1981, 1986) and their use of the child as informant have shown that young children are active participants in their own learning at home and they continue to generate questions, test hypotheses and solve problems in order to learn. When school instruction in reading and writing treats children as "passive recipients of information" it works against the natural strategies children have used to make meaning of reading and writing before they went to school.

The research of Harste, Burke and Woodward (1984) has made an important contribution to our understanding of the reading and writing processes. Their findings described a synthesis of eight patterns derived from data collected in the natural learning environments of home and classroom. These patterns were not meant to classify young children's behavior but rather combine to give a general definition of literacy learning and focus on organization, intentionality, generation, risk, social action, context, text and demonstration. This analysis by Harste et al (1984) described a language user handling many levels of information at one time and stressed the interactive nature of these patterns. According to Harste, Burke and Woodward the decisions children make are "orchestrated" and that

semantic, syntactic and grapho-phonemic decisions are not made sequentially as in stage development theory but simultaneously. These researchers believed that the whole of language is definitely greater than the sum of its parts and that all language learning takes place in a social context.

Research by Teale (1984; Teale and Sulzby, 1985; Teale and Martinez, 1989) has increased our understanding of the concept of emergent literacy. Teale and other researchers have attempted to look at literacy in natural settings from the child's point of view rather than the adult perspective. Teale and Sulzby (1985) reported that reading and writing are not separate in a child's learning, nor do they develop sequentially. Instead, the two processes are mutually supportive and are intimately related to oral language (p. 11). Literacy is no longer regarded as simply a cognitive skill but as a complex activity with social, linguistic and psychological aspects. While attempting to implement a developmentally appropriate kindergarten program in Texas, Teale and Martinez (1989) discovered three types of writing connections linked to reading. These connections are connecting writing to (1) functional purposes, (2) children's reading of their own writing and (3) connecting kindergarten writers to each other (p. 177).

More recent studies have focused on the connection between children's writing and their reading of that writing (Dobson, 1988; Sulzby, Barnhart and Hieshima, 1989). Dobson's investigation was a two year study that traced the development of beginning writing and reading through the kindergarten and Grade One years. A major finding of this study was that children initially develop print-related strategies in writing and the reading of that writing. Her evidence supported the thesis that reading and writing are mutually supportive and connected at each step to learner's knowledge of the system of written language and how it works.

Sulzby, Barnhart and Hieshima's study (1989) also traced writing development in conjunction with the rereading of that writing by students in kindergarten and Grade One. They reported that, although the number of children using invented spelling by the end of their kindergarten year was not overwhelming, they were all using it to write readable stories by the end of first grade. They also found the use of invented spelling did not signal a clear cut shift to alphabetic reasoning and conventional reading (p. 47). Children's rereading of their emergent writing paralleled the way children read from favorite storybooks (Sulzby, 1985). Her article has several significant implications for curriculum developers. Teachers should not expect all or even most kindergarten children to invent spelling or that all children should be able to reread their invented spelling stories accurately at first.

Rubin and Hansen (1984), discussing an earlier research study by Hansen, Graves and Blackburn (1983), say "Since both reading and writing are complex, knowledge about the process by which they are combined aids proficiency (p.14). They generated several implications about the relationship between reading and writing which are important for instruction. They found children must compose messages frequently and choose their own topics so they feel committed to the writing. Secondly, the teacher and peers must accept the children's composition attempts in both reading and writing. Finally, children must share books and their own writing with their peers and the teacher. (p. 17 & 18).

Role of Literature

A survey of the current research in emergent literacy reveals the significant role of literature in both the home and classroom context. Books provide an important bridge into literacy and reading aloud to children encourages emergent reading behavior (Doake, 1979;

Holdaway, 1979). Research consistently indicates that being read to is one type of experience that delightfully and effectively ushers a child into the world of literacy (Teale, 1984, p.120). From many experiences with literature young children learn the strategy of prediction by using cues in the pictures, text and story structure as well as the conventions of print such as left to right and top to bottom progression.

Holdaway's (1979) research began moving psycholinguistic theory into actual classroom practice. In his efforts to teach Maori children in New Zealand to read, Holdaway discovered that applying the model of bedtime story reading in the classroom setting gave the children an opportunity to practise reading in a safe setting which allowed for as many repetitions of a story as the child desired. In this way children had the opportunity to derive for themselves many of the rules and structures of book language but always in the context of a meaningful story. Holdaway chose stories for their interest level and the presence of rich vocabulary and natural language patterns. As a result of this research on shared reading activities, Big Books and enlarged print became popular as instructional tools in classrooms. These books have brought lap reading into the classroom and helped teachers create a social situation conducive to reading and talking about stories, poems, songs and rhymes.

The significance of reading aloud to children was the focus of an ethnographic study by Doake (1979,1981,1985). In this research, Doake examined the effects of book experience on the reading development of preschool children. His findings support Holdaway's (1979) research on the growth of reading-like behaviors. Listening to a parent read a story can be a deeply rewarding, warm, human experience. It lays the foundations for the continued development of a powerful inner drive to gain independent access to the experience they enjoy so much (1985, p. 84 and 85). His findings showed that children gradually learn to handle books and use them in independent play activities. When the

parents selected highly predictable books and invited the children to participate they soon began to reproduce stories through reading-like behavior. The evidence from this study suggested that children could take the initiative and direct their own learning just as they did in language acquisition. Doake's observations showed that children have a natural ability to absorb story structure and always use meaning as the central focus when retrieving stories. Emergent readers were not so concerned with the exact words as with making their version make sense.

Research findings indicate a high correlation between listening to stories and success in schools. The major evidence for this theory comes from Well's (1981) research which found a high correlation between listening to stories and performance on reading tests at the age of seven. Stories that are read aloud enhance language development because they present children with access to the conventions of written language and to a way of using language that depends for its effect on the manipulation of language rather than context (Hall, 1987, p. 35). An analysis of the data from Well's (1981) longitudinal Bristol Study showed that children who have the ability to use language in a decontextualized way to explore ideas have the advantage in conventional schooling. However, Wells (1985) firmly stated that the greatest value in reading books to children lies not in the story itself but in the quality of the collaborative interaction between parent and child.

Teale (1985) cited findings from an earlier study (1981) which did not support Well's contention of a strong relationship between being read to and success in learning to read. His study of fifty low income families showed that being read to during the preschool years is not a necessary prerequisite for literacy development in school. Some children who had not been read to became above average readers in school.

Literature played a significant role in the lives of the children. Investigators (Applebee, 1978; Hardy, 1968; Rose, 1982; Wells, 1986) have revealed the value and power of the story and storying as a cultural universal. Wells (1986) argued that the constant internal and external storying helps human beings make meaning of their environment. Hardy (1968) saw narrative as a 'primary act of mind' (p. 12). Rosen (1982) supported and extended Hardy's argument with his theory that it is a predisposition of the human mind to narratize experiences (p. 9) in order to construct a meaning of the world.

Applebee's (1978) landmark study supported the theory that a child's sense of story is cognitive and moves through several developmental stages toward a greater complexity. At the early stages the children in his study simply retold the story in either oral or written form then gradually shifted to a more sophisticated analytic or interpretive approach. An important implication for teaching is that children need a wide variety of experiences with stories and should not be required to analyze the details of stories before they are developmentally ready. In other words, instructional practice needs to mesh with the child's concept of story at his/her developmental stage.

In the last decade, the emphasis in children's literature research has switched from the text to the reader, and his/her response to literature (Rosenblatt, 1982,1985; Hickman, 1981). The transaction between reader and text creates a unique experience, which Rosenblatt (1982,1985) calls a 'poem,' which is not the object but a lived-through process. This theoretical framework contributes to an understanding of the value of literature in the classroom, and how the reader brings to the text a network of past experiences in literature and in life (1985, p. 35) to make meaning from the printed word.

Hickman's studies (1981, Hepler and Hickman, 1982) added another dimension to the research on children's literature by focusing on the social aspects of responding to

literature. Her research findings indicated that children's responses are not just personal or developmental, but also social, because the young child experiences a supportive adult or peer. The observations from Hepler and Hickman's (1982) study showed that children's ideas about books are influenced by other people. In a collaborative environment, literature provides a vehicle for children to become critical thinkers by reflecting on stories, sharing many varied responses, and examining alternative interpretations. Behind one child lost in a good book stands a community of other children and interested adults who help the reader choose, respond, and enjoy (Hepler and Hickman, 1982, p. 282). Hickman's naturalistic study (1981) in three classrooms reported observations that strongly suggested that the development of children's response to literature is tied to setting and context. The findings indicated teachers have considerable power to manipulate their classroom environments through selection of available books and the amount of collaborative talk about books. Another finding was that the books which generated the most talk and greatest variety of responses were ones that had been introduced to the class by the teacher.

Literacy Play

Recent expansion of research in the area of play and its effects on early literacy have provided some interesting insights. For the purpose of this study, the researcher has defined literacy play as symbolic play, which includes reading and writing. Researchers in this area have depicted play as a fundamental and universal activity of children and educators need to recognize the significance of play in the lives of children. Weininger (1979) says "Play is an integral part of the child's being. It is the business of childhood and it has a unique and vital role in the whole educational process" (p.10).

Play is not a simple activity but a very complex one and a facilitator of cognitive development. Over the last several decades, the Montessori idea that play is the child's work has replaced the Freud/Piaget view that play and work are separate and complementary activities (Elkind, 1988, p. 198).

Piaget's research in the 1920's into the thinking and behavior of children led to a theory of child development. According to Piaget, children's thought and knowledge develop from infancy to adulthood by moving through a sequence of distinct developmental stages, characterized by ever increasing sophisticated levels of thinking. Two important principles are: First, children actively construct knowledge of the world by their own actions, and with their interactions with others, in a series of progressive approximations to adult reality. Second, children think qualitatively differently about the world than do adults. After careful observations of children at play, Piaget distinguished three kinds of developmental play: practice play, symbolic play, and games with rules. He said that when children use the symbols of the alphabet or numbers, they are engaged in symbolic play. In this way, they combine and practice the concepts they have already assimilated. Symbolic play is an importance stage of development in early literacy for it enables the child to develop the understanding that one thing can represent another.

Research in Emergent Literacy has increased our understanding of families as environments for literacy (Jacobs, 1984; Leichter, 1984; Taylor, 1983). It has shown that many kindergarten children are already involved in the processes of learning to read and write before they reach first grade. The findings of a study by Jacobs (1984) reported that play is an important context for literacy skill development and literacy behavior activities among Puerto Rican youngsters. In this study, approximately half of the children's literacy activities occurred during play. The research reported that 48 percent of the children of their own accord took part in literacy activities such as reading, writing and counting, during

play. In 92 percent of the literacy activities that were observed, the children were actually involved in performing, not observing or imitating. The very nature of play calls for active participation, and these Puerto Rican children used some of their play activities as an opportunity to practice and elaborate literacy skills. The researcher raised the following questions: How do these literacy activities during play contribute to children's literacy development and at what stage in children's literacy development are literacy activities incorporated into play and vice versa? Chapter Four of this study presents data on literacy play activities collected from children who have begun to use letter sound correspondence in their emergent writing.

Literacy-oriented family environments are increasing in the Western world. The volume of print is expanding rapidly and children are coming in contact with more and more print at an earlier age. Leichter's study (1984) and those of her colleagues used naturalistic observations to examine family homes as environments for literacy. Her findings on preschool children showed that 'instruction in literacy was embedded in activities that were meaningful in their own right' (p. 42), and part of normal, daily interactions between parent and child. This evidence suggested that families rarely center an activity around literacy, but that it was an integral part of many family activities.

Literacy events are part of normal everyday family life and the young child's experiences at home. Taylor's research (1983) supports Leichter's (1984) findings on literacy in the home environment. In her study, Taylor described in detail the literacy activities of several case study children. All the homes were different, yet the literacy play activities of the children were similar. Of particular interest is the finding that literacy play activities were frequently reflected in their play as part of a larger event. In Taylor's words, 'Many of the children's writing activities pass unnoticed as the children's momentary engagement merges with the procession of other interests,' and 'Even when I showed the mothers the

scraps of paper collected from their homes, they were uncertain as to whom they belonged or, for that matter, when they had been produced' (p. 56). This researcher rescued many pieces of paper from waste paper baskets in the home and included them in her data collection. Parents frequently dismissed children's emergent writing as play, and often threw out valuable evidence on scraps of paper. Taylor's qualitative research methods and detailed observations over time have added significant insights to our understanding of the learning that is taking place during play in home environments .

Emergent writing is symbolic play to the young child. Scribble is an early form of emergent writing and an important part of literacy play activities. Children as young as two years old scribble in isolation or include it as part of a drawing to communicate a message. Head-Taylor's (1984) study examined and documented writing samples of 225 first grade students and found that children used scribble for a variety of purposes and, in so doing, worked out directionality and fine motor control. Children gradually integrated letters of the alphabet with their scribbles and then moved on to symbolic play with strings of letters and worked out the letter sound correspondence in their writing. This particular literacy activity extends a child's natural ability to learn through play.

Symbolic play satisfies a deep inner need and helps a child discover how to make sense of the writing system. Rensenbrink's (1987) article, 'Writing as Play,' noted, 'when their play becomes their work, children find it particularly meaningful and satisfying' (p. 602).

Resinski's (1988) informal case studies described the progress of his two children learning to read and write. He reported that interest, purpose and choice need to be at the heart of the literacy curriculum at all levels (p. 400). Bissex's (1980) son Paul was in charge of his own learning, and wrote on his own accord as a literacy play activity. Bissex observed that once Paul felt he had enough information to proceed on his own, he did not want interference from his parents, but returned with questions when he needed answers. From

the perspective of play, emergent writing allows children to bring their own interests into the classroom by encouraging them to choose their own topics, write about them in their own way, and set their own pace.

Pretend play episodes frequently include literacy play activities. Roskos' (1988) study investigated literacy at work in play. She made detailed observations of reading and writing behaviors of eight children aged four and five years, and was surprised by the quantity and quality of the literacy activities in the pretend play context. Roskos observed 450 distinct reading and writing acts during the sustained pretend play of the eight children. During this play the children were developing their narrative abilities by inventing stories and pretending. These pretend play episodes were used as a framework to engage in the story-making process. Roskos put forth the idea that 'children who actively and frequently participate in pretend play episodes as a kind of story-making may have a "leg up" on literacy learning as they enter the school doors' (p. 563). It appears we are just beginning to understand how children's play is a vehicle for literacy development and how it can be incorporated into the environments of primary classrooms.

Other researchers (Hill & McCune-Nicolich, 1981) looked at the relationship between cognitive development and pretend play in Down's syndrome children. This study on 30 children contributed information about the symbolic play development in Down's Syndrome children. The findings suggested there is a stronger dependency relationship between level of symbolic play and Mental Age than between level of symbolic play and Chronicle Age.

Pellegrini's (1980) observational study investigated the relationship between kindergarten children's free play and their achievement in reading readiness, school language and word writing fluency. His findings suggested there is a hierarchy of cognitive levels of play, and

those who engaged in dramatic play the most scored the highest on the Metropolitan Readiness Test. Clarke's (1976) research supported this finding on play as the parents reported that their fluent readers had many interests and particularly enjoyed playing with other children. Pellegrini's (1985) review of the literature suggested that symbolic play and literate behaviors used similar mental processes, in that children generate decontextualized and role-appropriate language, and construct narrative scripts in both play and school-based literacy events (p. 119). It appears, however, the experimental studies in his survey of the literature did not support this hypothesis.

Weininger's (1990) research made a significant contribution to understanding the value of a play-based curriculum. His work based on Piaget's theoretical framework, viewed play as a starting point for cognitive development but also in conjunction with the acquisition of social skills and emotional maturity. In his longitudinal study in Ontario, Weininger followed the progress of children for five years in classroom environments that had varying amounts of play. This study provided strong evidence that children in a continuous play-based curriculum in the primary grades were better learners, greater risk takers, had more positive self-concepts, greater desire to learn and higher scores on reading comprehension tests. Even one year in a play-based kindergarten program enhanced the social and emotional development of these children. He defined play from a child's point of view, 'If a child chooses an activity or controls it, then it is play, but if the teacher chooses or controls an activity, then it is work' (Weininger, 1990). Another critical finding in this study was the amount of teacher involvement and skill in interacting and elaborating or thinking during a play activity.

Collaborative Talk

In the last decade, research has created a new awareness of the social, collaborative nature of literacy, which places new emphasis on nurturing classroom environments. Literacy is no longer regarded as a cognitive skill, but a complex activity with social, linguistic and psychological aspects (Strickland, 1990, p.19). Young children first learn to reason by engaging in conversations with their parents or caregivers. Research in early literacy has documented that learning to read and write also involves interactions with supportive and responsive others (Bissex, 1980; Meek, 1981; Strickland, 1990). Through the use of 'child as informant' and naturalistic research methods, researchers have recently been able to analyze collaborative classroom talk and the children's interactions with parents and teachers (Calkins, 1983,1986; Harste, Woodward and Burke, 1984; Wells, 1981,1983,1986,1990). Their findings indicate children learn in a nurturing environment where interactions offer the child encouragement and support, yet let the children control the pace and be in charge of their own literacy development.

Harste, Woodward and Burke's (1984) large study provided evidence that we learn written language the same way we acquire oral language. Their findings and considerations suggest the importance of providing a language learning environment in classrooms. Children do not learn to read in a vacuum but in a nurturing classroom. In this setting, the child is encouraged to take risks and has many opportunities for verbal interactions with a supportive adult, so that the child is able to 'discover language from the inside out' (p. 230). In low-risk environments, children can generate and test hypotheses and engage in literacy learning at their own pace and level. These researchers suggested that teachers need to demonstrate literacy in meaningful ways, and respond thoughtfully to children's questions just as parents do in the home. After a detailed review of the literature, Hall (1987) stated:

The emergence of literacy demands provision and intervention Parents or other adults provide contexts for the experience, demonstration and practice of literacy. They also intervene to discuss, evaluate and develop the literacy base of that experience, and they do so in sensitive ways. In looking at the development of a context for emergent literacy, school teachers must aim to intervene in similar ways (p. 81).

The literature is reflecting an increasing awareness of the powerful impact of the learning environment (Hall, 1987; Hurst, 1985; Wells, 1990). Teachers can have a strong influence on learning, not only in terms of approaches, emphasis and materials selected, but also in terms of the character of their human interactions. Hurst (1985) revised her original review of the literature (1982) to identify the following nine principles for nurturing the development of the language learner.

- 1) Provide a warm social setting.
- 2) Immerse learners in a literate environment.
- 3) Accept and encourage successive approximations of literacy.
- 4) Expect self-selection of materials and of topics.
- 5) Respond to intended meaning as the absolute priority.
- 6) Emphasize the process rather than the product.
- 7) Expect hypothesis-testing and self-correction.
- 8) Expect a developmental progression along the learning continuum.
- 9) Evaluate individually and longitudinally.

She constructed these principles to provide guidelines for classroom teachers attempting to put theory into practice in the schools. As outlined in Chapter Three, Hurst's (1985)

principles formed the theoretical framework for the classroom environment of this present study.

Nurturing, child-centered classrooms encourage social interactions and collaborative talk. There is a growing awareness among educators of value of collaborative talk. Whenever children share a literacy experience with each other or an adult, meaning is the central focus as they collaborate in an attempt to make sense of their world (Wells, 1981). Forester and Reinhard's (1990) experience and research in the classroom suggested 'Sharing and interaction are the vital components of a climate of delight. Discoveries, new learning, the sheer joy of accomplishment demand expression' (p. 18). These researchers found that children will learn literacy in their own way if they are immersed in an 'empowering environment' with a teacher who provides sensitive interactions. These classrooms are not silent. Ashton-Warner (1963) described her nurturing classroom for the Maori children in the following words.

All this, of course, takes time and involves noise and movement and personal relations and actual reading, and above all communication, one with another: the vital thing so often cut off in a schoolroom. And it is while they are teaching each other, far more effectively than I could teach myself, that I call each one to me separately to get his new word for the day (p. 47).

Dyson's (1986,1987) naturalistic study focused on spontaneous peer interactions in a classroom during the writing time. The children used talk while drawing and writing to create imaginary worlds in their journals (1986). Talk during writing is important because children use talk to elaborate their writing and become more familiar with words, ideas and comparing processes. As children write together, they address literacy concerns in authentic, child-like ways that might seem to be insignificant when listening solely from an adult's perspective (Daiute, 1989, p. 657). An analysis of Dyson's data (1987) revealed

that collaborative talk is frequently playful, and often a catalyst for intellectual growth. Play emerges when children are free to work collaboratively. The social, laughing, teasing, correcting and chatting that accompany children's academic work are byproducts of the need to link with others and be recognized by them. Dyson's observations suggested that the 'academic' and the 'social' are not simply — or profitably — separated (p. 417).

Daiute's (1989) study on the use of play as a thinking strategy supported Dyson's research on collaborative talk. Her analysis of audiotapes while children wrote showed them playing with language, reality, composing, knowledge, imagery and each other.

Well's (1981,1983,1986,1990) research in England has made a significant contribution to an understanding of children's language development and the value of collaborative talk. He and his colleagues collected a large amount of data over a twelve-year period. They analyzed samples of children's conversations in home and school settings, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The study revealed significant differences between talk at home and talk at school. At home, children frequently initiated conversations and the parents naturally and intuitively encouraged collaboration. However, in the school, it was the teacher who initiated most conversations and did most of the talking and decision-making, thus limiting the child's participation in conversation. For no child was the language experience of the classroom richer than that of the home, not even for those believed to be linguistically deprived' (1986, p. 87). Another finding of the study discussed earlier in this chapter was that listening to stories read aloud at home was the best predictor of school achievement. Based on this research, Wells (1990) encouraged teachers to create classroom environments where a community of thinkers are involved in meaningful, collaborative literacy activities. His research provides support for an apprenticeship model of learning which is an extension of Vygotsky's (1978) 'zone of proximal development' , or 'What the child can do today in cooperation, tomorrow he will be able to do on his own.'

Teacher-student interactions take on new importance in an Emergent Literacy classroom. Teachers need a great deal of background knowledge and focused observations so they can tune in to the reader or writer's level of development and respond appropriately. The widespread use of writing conferencing is calling for new instructional techniques for teachers. To respond to student writing simply means to react to a paper openly and directly as a 'person,' rather than as a teacher (Judy, 1973, p. 74). At the primary level, an oral response is preferred, because the dialogue between teacher and child is crucial. Teacher-researchers Chow, Dobson, Hurst and Nucich (1991) have used the words connect, confirm and extend, to describe interactions with students which build self-esteem during reading and writing conferences. First, the teacher connects with the child about the content of his work. Second, the teacher confirms what the child knows, and only then moves on to extend the child's thinking. In contrast to Well's (1986) findings in the school setting, this instructional technique provides a framework for the teacher to sustain conversations, simplify conferences and negotiate meaning, while following the child's interest. These researchers also suggest teachers follow 'the 3 R's — respond to content, restrict themselves to one point, and refrain from taking control of the student's writing' (Chow, 1985).

Teacher-student interactions are a key ingredient in promoting higher level thinking skills. Kotcher (1989) documented the interactions of two teachers, L. Dobson and M. Hurst, with their students during reading and writing conferences. Kotcher observed that a child-centered approach and teacher-guided interactions were at the heart of instruction during the reading and writing conferences. Meaning was always the central focus and children's efforts were treated with respect and dignity. She analyzed the data on interactions in the following categories — framing, formatting, verbal scaffolds, accountability structure, and semantically contingent utterances. These findings encourage teachers to follow the

'apprenticeship' model of teaching and to help young writers and readers become aware of what they already know. Wasserman's (1987) research on teaching for thinking supported the significance of teacher-pupil interactions. She and her colleagues discovered that several categories of teacher responses actually terminate or limit students' thinking. For learning to flourish in classrooms, Wasserman argued for teaching strategies that choose meaningful activities, ask open-ended questions, and provide reflective responses.

Geneshi, McCarrier and Nussbaum's (1988) study also focused on the critical factor of dialogues between teacher and child. Their analysis found change and development in both oral and written language when dialogue is sustained and linked from day to day. A child-centered classroom is carefully planned and organized by the teacher, but the curriculum is negotiated and enacted by everyone. The soul of the enactment is the dialogues in which teachers and children inform, err, question, correct, self-correct, think ahead, repeat, make sense — in other words, develop together (p. 190).

In our contemporary society, many children have been hurried into reading. Elkind's (1988) research in children's cognitive and social development has supported the theory of developmentally appropriate practices in our classrooms. In such an environment, children learn at their own rate and are not expected to read or do math before they have the necessary mental abilities. When too much is expected too soon, as was often the case in traditional classrooms, many children became stressed and experienced a series of demoralizing failures. For these children, self esteem diminished and they began to see themselves as worthless. Elkind noted that children's learning of rules is limited by their level of cognitive understanding. He believes young children do not learn rules of language and social behavior through verbal instruction, but rather through demonstrations in real-life situations. His work cautions educators and parents to follow the child's lead and to allow and also encourage each child to move along his unique continuum of learning.

Conclusions

This review of the literature has confirmed the need for asking the research questions, rather than providing the answers to them. The study of emergent reading and writing with a focus on the child as a self-directed learner is only fifteen years old. As the theoretical framework for Emergent Literacy moves on a larger scale into classroom practice, there is a need for investigations to determine such critical factors in literacy learning as the strategies children are using to make early reading/writing connections, and how to create classroom environments that facilitate teaching/learning connections. The overriding evidence from this review of the literature is that children acquire literacy in a nurturing, language-rich environment by generating and refining rules through approximations, social interactions, and shared adult-child participation in reading and writing.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

Many researchers who are questioning traditional assumptions about the growth of reading and writing are choosing research designs that are descriptive rather than experimental. In the last decade, naturalistic research methods have opened up new fields of inquiry and have increased the knowledge of how children learn to write (Bissex, 1980, Calkins, 1983, 1986; Graves, 1983; Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984). In this type of study, researchers do not control the experimental settings; instead they focus on the child's spontaneous responses to oral and written language in the natural environment or classroom and the data reveals the child's development over time. The focus of this study is on discovering what children in the process of acquiring literacy, actually do in the classroom as they come to use the alphabetic principle and begin making connections between reading and writing. The design of this study is to observe children involved in emergent reading and writing activities and record what happens. This holistic approach will take into account various interactions with the teacher and classmates that may affect the child's performance.

Sample

This research was conducted in a Grade One classroom in a large elementary school in Vancouver. The total school population was close to five hundred throughout the school year. The author of this study was the full time, regular classroom teacher for Grade One. There were 28 students at the onset of the study — 15 boys and 13 girls. However, one boy moved from the school and another boy and two girls transferred to another classroom when a new teacher was hired in February. All the children were five to six years of age at the beginning of the study. The five case study informants were three boys and two girls

and include a mix of first language background and ability. Two of the children were learning English as a Second Language (E.S.L.) and one boy was Native Indian. The selection of the informants for case studies was not pre-selected but followed a procedure described later in the chapter that was set up at the beginning of the study. The selection was controlled by the timing of when a child first began using letters to represent sounds in his/her daily writing. Case study A was the first child in the class to begin letter-sound correspondence. The researcher focused on one child at a time and, as that child moved through this particular stage, the researcher then moved on to make detailed observations of a child who was just beginning to use letters to represent sounds. For the remainder of the school year, noteworthy observations on the case study children A, B, C and D were entered in the field notes.

This class like the rest of the school had a high English as a Second Language population with a wide range of abilities and ethnic and language backgrounds. The students spoke a variety of languages in their homes and all the E.S.L. children were at different levels in learning English from beginning to fluent speakers. The children spoke the following as first languages — Chinese 6, Punjabi 4, Hindi 3, Spanish 2, Portuguese 2, Yugoslavian 1, Singalese 1, English 6. The English speakers included the two Native Indian boys. Many of the interviews at report card time were conducted with the help of interpreters. The parents are hard working and many were employed as truck drivers, janitors and clerks. Several mothers were home during the day but worked the graveyard shift as janitors at night. There were many extended families living in one household and frequently the grandparents could only communicate with the child in his/her mother tongue. Their previous kindergarten teacher described the group as low-average with several children displaying behavior problems.

Description Of Educational Settings

Classroom

The research was conducted in a regular classroom in a large, fifty year old school. The Grade One students sat face to face in desks that were pushed together to form three groups of six and two groups of four. This arrangement of desks encouraged social interaction and cooperative learning. One wall was all windows and the other three walls displayed a combination of children's art work, stories, charts, poems, alphabet, number line and seasonal classroom decorations. One large art mural dominated the classroom where the children had made large paintings of themselves wearing seasonal clothing. Each figure was unique and bold. Colorful decorations hung from the ceiling on strings. At the front of the classroom, there was a carpet area where the children gathered several times a day. The teacher's desk and a small round table were at one edge of the carpet against the windows. Another teacher came into the classroom, facilitated the program and conferenced the children when they had finished their writing while the regular classroom teacher turned researcher and observed one of the case study children. At the back of the classroom, there was a house corner with a stove, sink, tables and chairs and dress up clothes. There were many, varied manipulative materials and games visible on low open shelves. In this classroom, there were hundreds of books gathered from many sources. The Ginn Story Box books and Troll Fairy Tale Series were prominently displayed in book racks. Five plastic totes filled with a good selection of children's literature sat near the edge of the carpet and many open shelves including a library book stand held some two hundred books. Several big books and many enlarged texts were within easy reach of the children at the edge of the carpet.

Teacher

The teacher plays an important role in the context of any classroom. This researcher had twenty years experience in teaching the primary grades. Most of the experience had been at the beginning reading level or Grade One but also several years experience teaching K/1, 2, 3, 2/3 and most recently K/1/2. For the past several years, the researcher had been moving away from traditional instructional practices and experimenting with a new approach consistent with the recent theory in emergent literacy. From reading of the literature, university courses and a great deal of “teacher-talk” with colleagues, this researcher has made a conscious effort to create a classroom environment that puts theory into practice.

Environment

In this classroom, the teaching of literacy was theoretically based in a Whole Language philosophy. What teachers and researchers believe about language and literacy is important. Because beliefs affect what child behaviors we value and encourage in our classrooms, our assumptions affect curriculum (Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984). In order to understand the educational setting, it seems necessary to outline several beliefs of this teacher-researcher. In the words of Roger Shuy (1984) “the instructor has an innate belief that language is a constructionist activity, that function is more primary than form, that language must be contextually relevant, and that not everything a child says, reads or writes is subject to evaluation or correction”. Social growth was as important as academic achievement and children shared their ideas in many rich language social interactions each day. In keeping with this researcher's beliefs, this classroom was a child-centered environment where students were expected to value and respect their classmate's work and ideas. Most of the time children were free to talk quietly and move around the classroom if

they were not disruptive to others. The children were encouraged to be responsible, take risks, think for themselves and helped to realize that errors are a natural part of learning. In this classroom, the teacher frequently took the role of facilitator with the children. Although the classroom appeared informal on the surface, the teacher had established a strong underlying structure and a familiar routine. However, as in all normal classrooms with young children, frequently there were days when the unexpected happened.

Description of the Language Arts Program

The opening hour and a half each day brought fresh opportunities for the teacher-researcher to create a nurturing environment and provide interesting open-ended language arts activities in order to meet the needs of the individual students. All the children seemed to enjoy the daily routine. In this classroom, children gathered on the carpet at nine o'clock for a half hour of oral activities that included shared reading and shared writing. Then the children moved to their desks to independently write their story for the day. The framework of this program remained constant but the activities vary according to the needs and interests of the children.

The language arts program consisted of four components — shared reading, shared writing and independent reading and writing. In order to understand the context of this research, each component will be discussed separately but they are closely intertwined. Each component overlaps and affects the growth and development of all four components. The entire language arts program was based on the Principles Which Nurture Literacy (Hurst, 1985 revised from her original formulation) described in Chapter One.

Shared Reading

Shared book experiences allowed the teacher to create many of the conditions which are important in language learning. It replicates as closely as possible in the classroom the bedtime story which Holdaway (1979) found was important in the development of young children's reading. It is really a form of instruction but one that allows children to control what and when they learn something just as they do when learning to talk. In this class, the shared book experiences in the first half hour were an enjoyable time for the teacher and students and seemed to set the tone for the day. All the children, regardless of language background or level of language, benefited from experience with talk, rhymes, songs, chants and good literature. The children, each at their own level, were encouraged to join with the teacher as they repeated old favorites and were introduced to new material. The children saw this time as play and many of the E.S.L children joined in the rhymes and rocked back and forth to the rhythm of the language. In this relaxed, home-like atmosphere children acquired an appreciation of language as they heard its sound, rhythm and intonation.

Role of Literature

Literature played an important role in this language arts program. The children enjoyed at least one story during the opening half hour and the teacher usually read to the students at least three times a day. Even when the children did not understand all the words, books provided an introduction to literacy. The children seemed to fill in the gaps by telling themselves the story using the context and illustrations. Stories help children make meaning of life and sense of their world (Applebee, 1978, Rosen, 1982, Wells, 1985). The results of the longitudinal Bristol study by Gordon Wells (1985) supports early experience

with stories as a strong predictor for success in school. As many of the parents could not read English or had few books in their native language, this teacher-researcher allowed time for many story reading experiences in the classroom. Following the reading of a carefully selected children's book, the children read along with the teacher from either a big book, or a song or rhyme from the collection of enlarged texts. The children participated with enthusiasm and frequently requested a favorite. Everyone participated in the reading with the more able taking the lead. Although beginning readers were play reading, it was a valuable experience because shared reading helps children learn about text and illustrations. It also encourages left to right eye movement and gave them an opportunity to make the connection between the marks on a page and the spoken word. From these shared experiences, the children learned that text has meaning and can also be enjoyable. Later in the day, the children could select materials and play read or read either alone or with a friend during the emergent reading time. As quoted by Margaret Meek (1982), James Britton says, "The child who opens a book and pretends to read a story is actually nearer to the heart of the matter of reading than one who recites lists of words, however correctly."

Shared Writing

Shared writing experiences helped children develop strategies for making sense out of written language. Morning news printed on the blackboard each day is a shared writing and reading activity. In the role of teacher, the researcher modelled writing for the whole class at this time. While the teacher was writing the message for the day, the children were encouraged to participate by guessing or predicting the next word before actual reading took place. In order to sustain interest, the teacher sometimes employed cloze techniques and left out a word or part of a word. The children were invited to fill in the blanks or dashes so that the sentence made sense. Many of the children loved to pretend read and

joined in with the others who could actually read. During this daily ritual the teacher showed children how to use strategies for working out unfamiliar words — predicting, omitting a word, using initial letter, and context. The students were frequently reminded that what they read had to make sense. The morning news topics varied each day and ranged from the loss of a child's tooth or pet to a world event that interested the children. As the teacher wrote her message and modelled writing she often discussed the form and showed different ways of expressing the same idea. The skills involving punctuation, use of capitals, phonics, word order and endings were talked about as they occurred in the whole message. Risk-taking, independent thinking and making meaning from print were encouraged. Children began to see new words as a challenge to be figured out and their ability to predict improved. As the year progressed, the children whose development was slower gradually joined in the game the early developers found so exciting. Then, they too became thinkers and took an active part in their own learning. At other times of the day, writing was shared during language experience stories which were composed together and the teacher simply recorded them. The teacher and the pupils discussed what to say and how to say it. Even though the emphasis was on the content, shared writing provided an opportunity to discuss interesting words and the mechanics of writing with the whole class.

Independent Writing

Writing is a key ingredient in a successful language arts program. This study arose from the author's experience with emergent writing and her interest in the connection to this beginning stage of reading. Emergent writing allows young children to discover and work out the writing system for themselves. It enables children to continue learning and acquiring literacy at school in the same way they acquired language at home. In other words, they learn writing as a process right from the beginning of kindergarten. Most of

the children in this study attended the kindergarten the year before and participated in a writing program three days a week.

Following the shared reading and writing activities, the children moved to their desks for independent writing. For many students this seemed to be their favorite activity of the day. How can E.S.L. children write a story before they are fluent in English? They begin by drawing a picture and adding a few letters. Although children learning in a second language may be at an early level and make slower progress for a time, it does not alter the nature or pattern of growth (Chow, 1986). Thus, all the children in the class explored the writing system and over time gradually worked out the letter-sound correspondence moving towards conventional spelling. Several years ago the researcher, working with colleagues in a Vancouver school, developed a writing program that puts theory into practice in the classroom. This writing program is explained more fully in "A Program to Foster Literacy: Early Steps in Learning to Write" (Hurst, Dobson, Chow, Nucich, Stickley & Smith, 1983). These classroom researchers field tested a daily writing program as an alternate route to early literacy instruction. The results were exciting and the improvement in the children's reading was an added bonus. Experience with the writing program showed that when children are learning to write they move through a developmental sequence (Appendix E).

This program helps the regular classroom teacher provide individual instruction for all students — E.S.L., the Native child, students with learning problems, and those deserving enrichment. Each child is unique and moves at his/her own rate along the continuum of literacy learning. The case studies in Chapter Four will highlight the similarities but will also show the differences in overall growth and development. All the children in the study participated in daily uninterrupted drawing and writing on topics the children chose.

Teacher/pupil interactions occurred following the guidelines in Hurst, Dobson, Chow, Nucich, Stickley & Smith (1983).

Independent Reading

Learning to read should be an exciting adventure for every child. The author believes reading is a process and each child is somewhere on the continuum of learning to read when he/she enters Grade One. We live in a print filled environment and children are exposed to advertising for example long before they enter school. The beginnings of reading development often go unnoticed in the young child. Often neither children nor their parents are aware that reading has begun (Goodman, Y., 1980). In this classroom, the signs of the environment provided excellent reading material for the beginning readers. So right from the beginning of September children read for meaning and learned functional literacy. The teacher followed the steps outlined in "A Program to Foster Print Awareness: A First Step in Learning to Read" (Dobson, Hurst, 1982). The children were pleased to find familiar signs in the two small sign books which help bridge the gap from the environment to print with words such as "STOP" and "McDonald's".

Word cards were used to introduce the concept that words have meaning. For the first two weeks, the children chose a word each day and added it to their collection of very own words (Ashton-Warner, 1963). The children illustrated and copied the word into a booklet. Soon the children enjoyed making sentences with their word cards on the carpet in a similar fashion to Breakthrough to Literacy (MacKay and Thompson, 1970). The sentences had to make sense in order to be correct and the children had the opportunity to touch and manipulate each word card many times. Each child progressed at his/her own rate and the variations were accepted as normal by the teacher. Words were written on

discarded library catalogue cards and were large enough for little hands to manipulate easily. In this class, the children treasured their word cards and were eager to add basic vocabulary words that were necessary in order to make sentences.

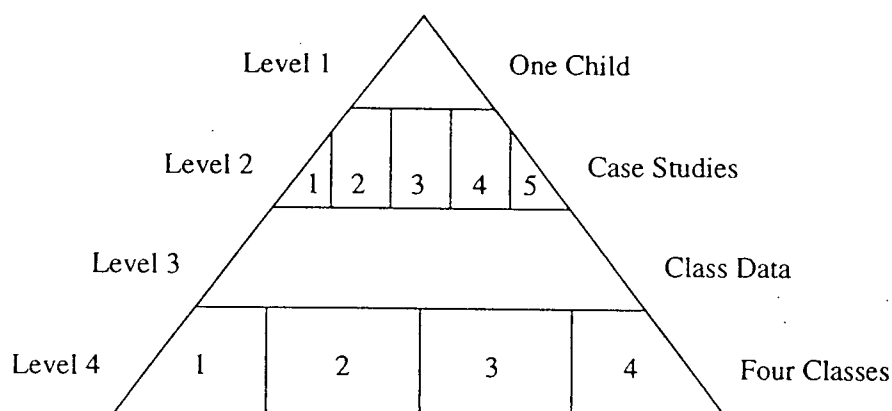
The children in this program read a great deal during the first year in school. The researcher's observations showed that the more they read, the better they became. Following lunch each day, time was set aside for Sustained Silent Reading (S.S.R.). Two or three times a week the children read or play read a book to the teacher. The children selected their own books and at the beginning usually picked one from the Story Box series or another classroom favorite. The teacher recorded the book on the child's 3" x 5" reading card. During this time, the children came across many new words which they were encouraged to predict or guess as long as it made sense in the sentence — eg. Daddy for Father. Some children had as many as 50 books recorded on their cards by the end of the year. All the children in the program also read several readers from different series rather than reading through one series (Appendix D). The experience of wide reading broadened the vocabulary they were exposed to. All the readers used were selected because of their natural, predictable language and their appeal to young children. In this reading program, children were not taught to sound out new words or drilled with flashcards. Instead children were encouraged to try new words independently using all their strategies but were then free to ask the teacher to supply the missing word. The children read individually to the teacher until they felt confident about reading and then they often read in flexible groups of three, four or five. The children were encouraged to take their books home to read to their families which also gave them a lot of positive feedback. In this approach to beginning reading, the emphasis was on the individual child and his ability to learn rather than on the teacher and instructional materials. The flexibility of the program helped a teacher willing to change to accommodate the individual learner. The teacher was

responsible for providing the setting, the modelling and the materials which enabled the child to learn.

Research Design

The research design, in a broad sense, is a linked case study that uses ethnographic strategies to investigate early literacy learning through participant observation. The detailed case study observations will be used as examples to highlight the trends and patterns of the progress of the Grade One class. Donald Graves (1981) says this new type of research design is needed to add depth to the knowledge of the writing process in the 1980's. An example of this design is contained in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - Design of Study



This investigation collected data on levels 1, 2 and 3. Following this design, data was gathered simultaneously on three levels. The case study informants were investigated through direct observation of their emergent reading and writing while they were working through the early letter-sound correspondence stage. Their progress was documented for the remainder of the school year. Data on the full context of the reading and writing

episodes was gathered on these informants during the forty-five minute sessions four days a week from September to June.

The researcher gathered the data for this study by participant-observation. This method enables the researcher to not only observe but also to participate and experience the activities directly (Calkins, 1983, 1986; Jacobs, 1984, Sulzby, 1985). Doing ethnographic fieldwork involves alternating between the insider and outsider experience (Spradley, 1980). The presence of another teacher freed the classroom teacher to observe closely and make extensive field notes during each observation session. For the rest of the day, the classroom teacher was responsible for the students and a full participant in the setting.

The credibility of this research is provided for in several ways. There were four observations a week occurring over the extended period of ten months. The large number of observations helped the researcher gain an understanding of this critical stage of emergent writing and reading. The fact that the five case study children were observed individually going through this stage of development against the background of an entire Grade One class adds to the dependability of the study. All the children in the class with one exception went through this particular stage at some point in the school year. In order to confirm my observations, there were daily discussions following each observation with my teaching colleague, and periodically consulted with the other Grade One teacher in the school, and two other Grade One teachers in the district. These teachers were using a whole language approach and following the same daily writing program. However, the learning environments and the amount of direct instruction varied. The transferability in naturalistic research refers to being descriptive of a specific context. On the other hand, experimental research concerns the generalizability to many contexts. In this study a thick description of the setting and classroom program will enable others to replicate the study to determine if the findings are transferable to their own classrooms.

Data Collection

Fieldnotes on the direct observations of emergent writing and reading of the case study children formed the primary source of data. Detailed entries were made during the focused observations and throughout the day when the current case study informant asked a revealing question or showed evidence of literacy. The details of reading and writing conferences and collaborative talk were also recorded. The researcher made a verbatim record whenever possible. If events occurred over and over again, they were described each time so that the repetition became evident. Teaching partner Dobson's impressions and insights into the progress of the other children in the class were discussed regularly with the author during the recess break.

The daily writing of all the children in the class formed the secondary source of data. The collection is composed of 81 exercise books and 8 writing folders which contain approximately 175 samples of writing per child. Each story was dated and a translation in cursive writing was recorded during the conference at the end of the writing episode until the researcher was able to read the story easily. Details of significant teacher/pupil interactions were recorded along with the translations. The data include poems, songs, notes and small books written by the case study children and some interesting samples of the other children's work. Evidence of literacy activities that were done by the case study children during free time was also collected.

Records of the children's development in reading formed another secondary source of data. Three checklists (Appendices A, B & C) were used and they will be discussed in the following section on instruments. Records were kept on the readers and books that each case study child read to the teacher. Audiotapes recorded samples of the case study informant's emergent reading and teacher/pupil interactions. The researcher's daybook that

outlined the day's activities and lessons taught was included in the data because it provides information about the timing of phonics instruction and whole class activities. Tests and report card comments were also part of the data.

Instruments

Although the participant-observer was the key instrument, the researcher also used several other measures in an attempt to gather as much information as possible on the sample. The results of the Kindergarten Screening Test given the previous year were available for four of the case study children. This test included the scores for the Beery and Peabody subtests. In the middle of September, this researcher administered a Letter and Sign Knowledge Test (Appendix A) to each child in the class. The researcher had developed this test to establish a base line for the study. Every two months throughout the school year the children were assessed on tasks appropriate for their stage of development. In sequential order those tasks are letter names, names of classmates, letter sounds, number of sight words on the Breakthrough to Literacy word list (Appendix C) and for children who are reading, the standardized Slosson Oral Reading Test. Samples of the case study child's reading on audiotapes showed the development in reading over time and the teacher/pupil interactions. All this information on beginning reading was used in conjunction with the examples of daily writing in an attempt to understand the link between reading and writing at this early stage.

Procedures

Letters of permission were sent home to the parents of all the children in the class in September. It was impossible to select the case study informants ahead of time so permission was needed from them all. The researcher made observations four days a week from September to June of the Grade One year. A teaching colleague came into the classroom for a forty minute period each day so the classroom teacher was free to become a researcher and make fieldnotes. This researcher's role fluctuated between participant and detached observer depending on the events in the classroom. The other researcher sat at the same table each day and maintained a constant role of teacher and interacted with most of the children in the class as they read their stories to her.

Each observation session followed the same routine from 9:45 to 10:25 each day. The observation began with all the children drawing a picture in their story exercise books. The children were given the instruction to draw a picture and write about it. During each observation session, the researcher sat near the current case study informant to take notes; however, she also responded to other children as the teacher if they approached her. The researchers tried not to interfere with the children when they were working independently or in groups if they were on task. When the case study child completed the writing he/she read it to the participant-observer who responded first to the content of the story. If there was a significant change in the form that reflected increasing awareness the researcher may have asked probing questions that encouraged the child to make explicit what he/she had just written down. In this way, the researcher probed for further information on how a child works out the writing system. Once the case study child had read his/her own story to the researcher the child moved around the room and selected a book to read for emergent reading. The child then read independently, with a friend or group of classmates. The researcher in the role of observer moved and settled within hearing distance of the child and

recorded the books, sequence of literacy activities and the conversation. When the recess bell ended the session the two researchers had a few minutes to share experiences and discuss progress of individual children.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, some of the data analysis takes place during the study. Researchers go through the cycle of asking questions, collecting data and analyzing the data. It is an ongoing cycle that is repeated by asking more questions and collecting more data.

The researcher used a Domain Analysis (Spradley, 1980) to analyze the large quantity of data in the field notes. This model is used when a researcher wishes to identify the dimensions of a particular concept. The observations in the field notes were reviewed and the researcher identified episodes, incidents or accounts of conversations and wrote each one on a separate piece of paper. The observations for each case study child were identified with a different color to ease analysis across children. The researcher then began a coding process comparing incident to incident. In order to develop categories, similar episodes were placed on a single sheet of paper. Sheets of paper were added as categories formed and increased in size. The observations fell into five main categories which were later labelled as reading, use of the initial letter strategy, literature, literacy play, and collaborative talk. There were a total of 458 separate observations on slips of paper. From this analysis it was possible to see the common features across the five key informants and also their differences.

The children's daily writing and progress in reading were also analyzed. The daily writing of the case study children was examined in conjunction with their progress in reading. The

data from the base line test (Appendix A) were analyzed for the whole class and scores on reading classmates names, word lists (Appendix C) were plotted at 6-8 week intervals throughout the year. The writing of all twenty-four children was examined to identify the dates they started using the alphabetic principle in their writing. Records of emergent reading behaviors (Appendix B) were also examined in conjunction with the child's progress in writing that day. The results were compared, contrasted, synthesized, discussed and some conclusions drawn that may shed some light on the early connections between beginning reading and writing.

CHAPTER FOUR

INTRODUCTION OF FINDINGS

In this naturalistic study, the focus for analyzing the qualitative data was the question generated during the study. There was a large amount of data collected from the twenty-four children during the ten month period. The data collection included 93 student exercise books and 7 writing folders, phonic tests and checklists (Appendices A and B). Progress in reading was documented by the reading of books (Appendix B), classmates names and a word list (Appendix C) which was repeated at six to eight week intervals throughout the year.

The researcher used a process of discovery to analyze the field notes that captured in detail the reading and writing behaviors of the key informants. After reviewing the field notes, the researcher identified 587 descriptions of episodes, incidents, activities or conversations concerning emergent literacy behaviors and recorded them on “post it” notes. The observations for each of the five key informants were recorded on a different colored “post it” note so that similarities and differences across children could be readily identified. At this point, the researcher began the coding process or taxonomic analysis outlined in chapter three. The observations quickly fell into five main categories which were then labelled as word for word reading, use of the initial letter strategy, role of literature, literacy play and collaborative talk. These categories seemed particularly significant because they were observed so frequently and across all five case studies. Table 1 shows the number of episodes recorded in the data in each category.

Table 1 - Categories

use of initial letter strategy	59
role of literature	206
literacy play	77
collaborative talk	63
word for word reading	128
other	54
Total	587

The categories were not mutually exclusive so there was some overlap. When an observation could have been recorded in two of the categories, the researcher made a decision on which category seemed more appropriate. It is acknowledged that the overlap in categories may cause the figures to vary but they do give an indication of the general distribution. To avoid repetition, the word for word reading category was not analyzed in detail because the development of reading was examined in the other four categories.

The daily writing of the key informants was then examined in conjunction with the observations of their progress in reading. As the study progressed, the researcher noted when each child in the class first began using letters to represent sounds, thus, meeting the criterion for this study. At the conclusion of the investigation, the researcher double checked the dates and compared them to the data on each child's progress in reading. Although the sequence of development was consistent, the rate of development varied greatly between children.

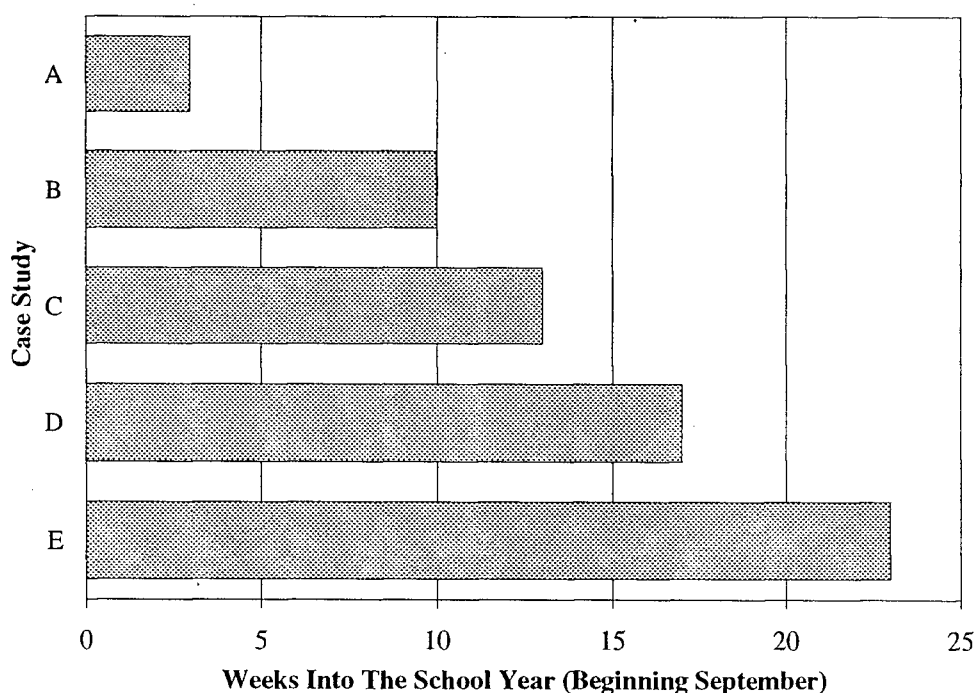
What follows in this chapter is an in-depth description of the findings of the study at this particular point in a child's development from the observations of five case study children in first grade. The research question on the strategies children use to make reading/writing connections focuses on the use of the initial letter strategy in the development of reading and writing, the role of children's literature, literacy play, and collaborative talk.

Reading/Writing At The Outset

All the children with one exception developed letter-sound correspondence in writing during the Grade One school year. The one exception will be discussed in detail in the analysis of the findings. Each child developed at his/her individual rate.

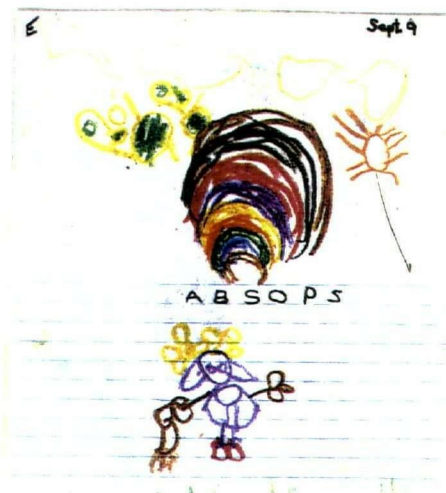
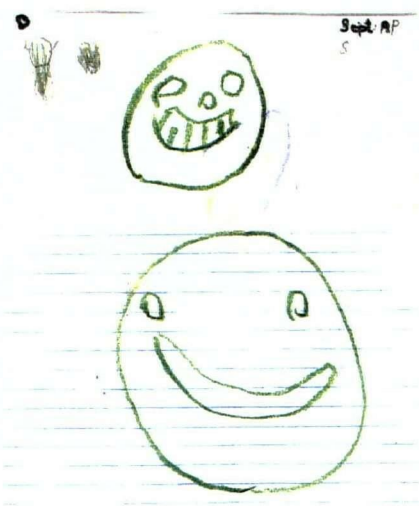
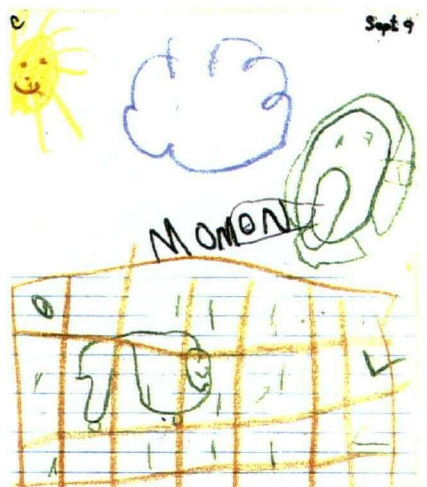
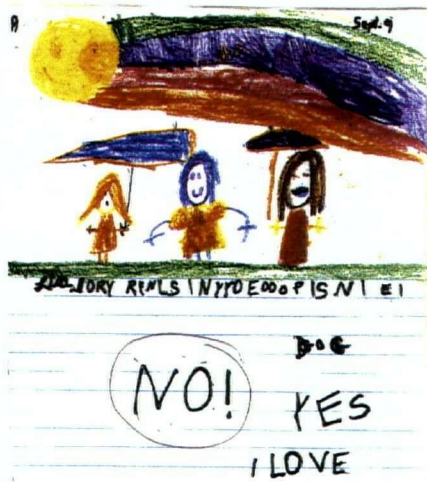
During the study, the observations in emergent reading and writing focused on the case study children as they began using the letter-sound correspondence as an initial letter strategy. For easy reference, the five case study children will be identified by pseudonyms in alphabetical order according to the sequence of when they first began using letter-sound correspondence in their writing. The first case study child to use letters to represent sounds is referred to as A for Andrea followed by B for Beth, C for Carl, D for David and E for Evan. Figure 3 shows the sequence and timing of this particular stage of development across the five case study children.

Figure 2 — Sequence of Development of Initial Letter Strategy in Writing



All the children began the daily writing process on the first day of school.. The children were given the instruction draw a picture and write about it. Figure 3 shows examples of each case study child's writing on the first day of Grade One. Although there are many similarities, each child entered the study at a different point on the continuum of learning to write as is illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3 — Five Samples of Writing(Case Studies) on First Day Of School



In this particular Grade One class, none of the children knew how to read when the school year began. In order to establish a baseline and determine the children's knowledge of letters and signs (Appendix A), the researcher gave all the children in the class a test in the middle of September. The children were not asked to recite the alphabet as is customary in our district but instead to identify the letters of the alphabet in an order that had been selected randomly. Table 2 shows the results and the extent of knowledge for the case study children at the beginning of the year.

Table 2 - Knowledge of Letters and Signs

<u>Names</u>	<u>Letter Names</u>	<u>Signs</u>	<u>Prints Letters</u>
Andrea	26	9	10
Beth	16	3	6
Carl	13	1	8
David	24	1	7
Evan	7	0	9

All the children began the daily writing process on the first day of school. The children were given the instruction, draw a picture and write about it. Figure 3 shows examples of each case study child's writing on the first day of Grade One. Although there are many similarities, each child entered the study at a different point on the continuum of learning to write.

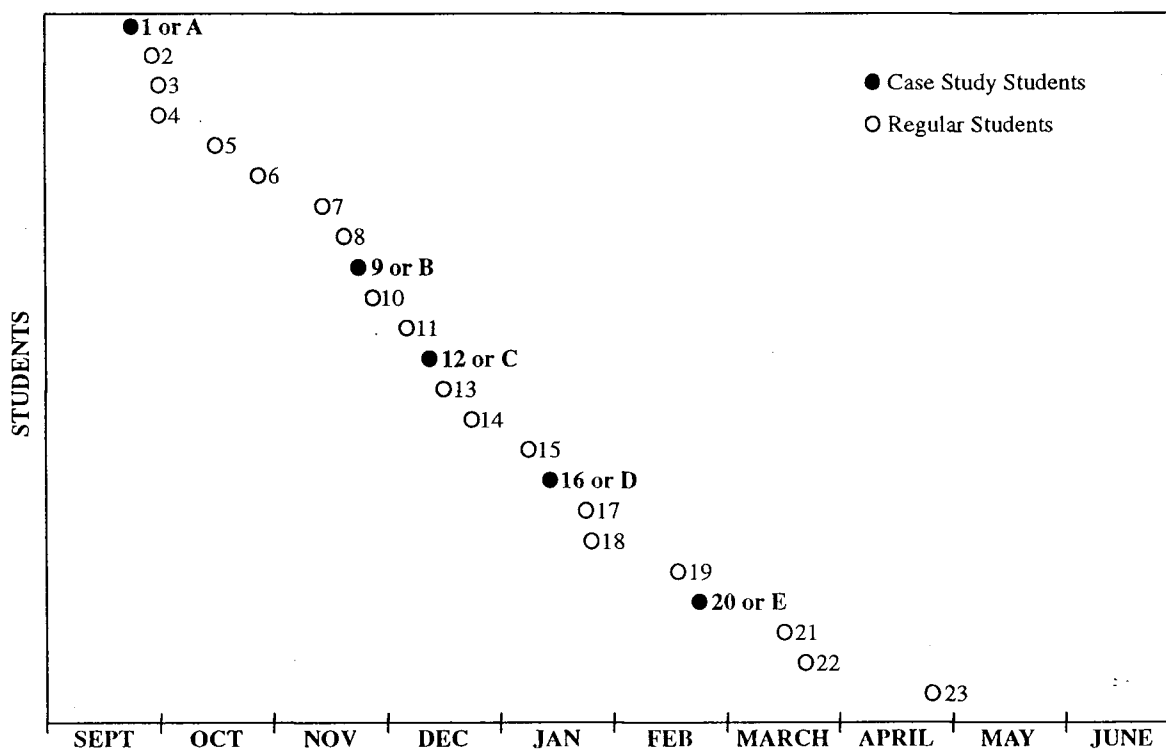
Use Of Initial Letter Strategy

The findings of this study reveal that children at this particular point in establishing letter-sound correspondence consistently use the initial letter strategy to help them make sense of both writing and reading.

Writing

Figure 4 shows the development during the Grade One year of letter-sound correspondence in writing by the twenty-four students in the Grade One class. The position of each case study child within the class is identified by the letters A, B, C, D or E.

Figure 4 — Development of Initial Letter Strategy in Writing of Grade One Class



Halfway through the study the researcher compared the data from this classroom to two other Grade One classrooms with similar programs. Table 3 illustrates the consistency of children across classrooms (number 3 was in another school) in the development of the initial letter strategy in writing. All classrooms had similar language arts programs and a high percentage of E.S.L. students.

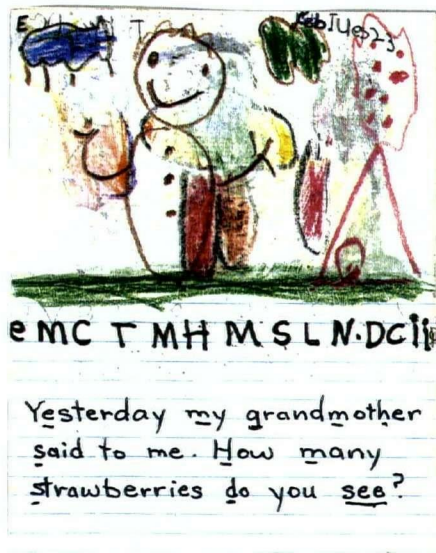
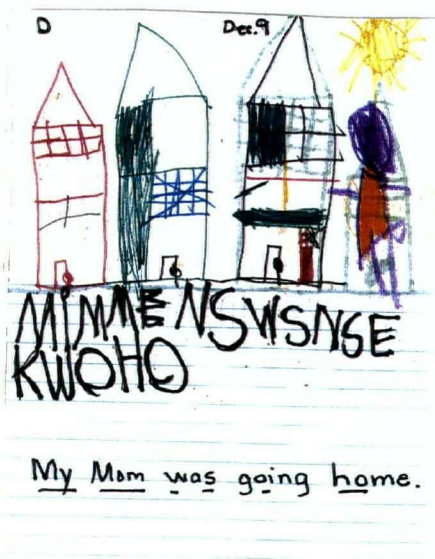
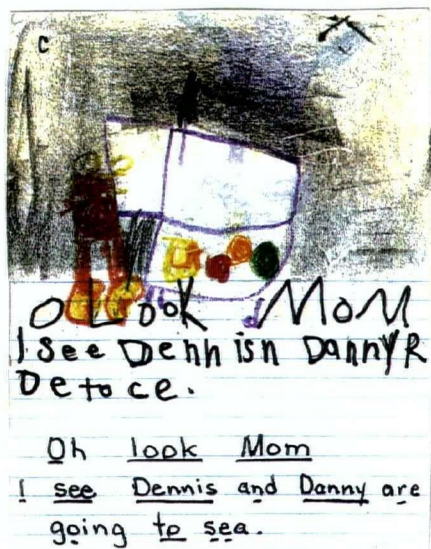
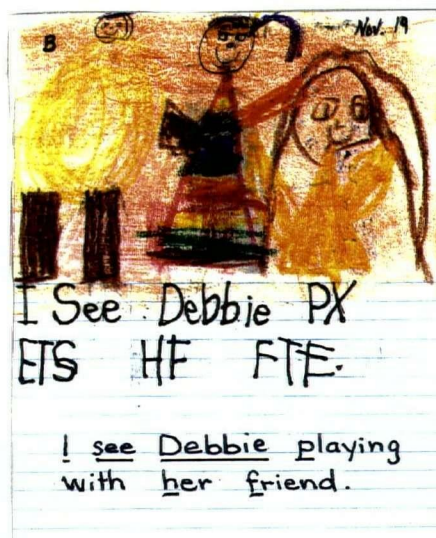
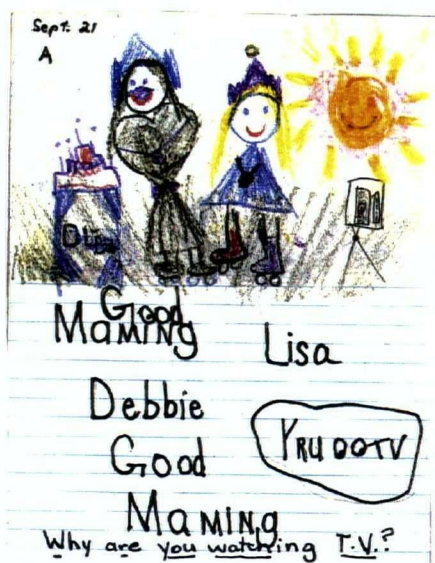
Table 3

Jan. 30 — Use Of Initial Letter Strategy In Writing In Three Classrooms

<u>Classroom</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1 (target)	20/28	71%
2	10/14	71%
3	13/17	75%

Figure 5 shows writing samples of the case study child's first match in letter-sound correspondence.

Figure 5 — First Match in Letter-Sound Correspondence



When the first match appeared in their writing, numerous observations were also made of the children mouthing the words, looking at the alphabet chart on the wall and talking their way through the first letter as they wrote their message. The following observations were recorded within one month of their first matching of letter-sound correspondence.

Andrea: *"I sound out the first letter and just write it down..Most of the time I'm right."*

Beth: *"I did it all by myself. You can read it too. I just write down the words I know and then the ones I don't I just write down the first letter."*

David: When his neighbor Andrea is working out a word out loud he leans over her desk and says "w-w-w" trying to help her work it out. (This verbalization seems to help him clarify his own developing thought process)

Evan: The researcher observed this child writing the story of the Three Bears. He worked diligently and sounded out each letter as he wrote. However, which was often the case at this early stage, Evan was unable to retrieve the story past the first line when he read it to the researcher as soon as he had completed it.

The researcher gathered data on the case study children on the emergent reading checklist (Appendix B) to determine the child's reading ability. Soon after the child began using the letter-sound correspondence in his writing the records of the children's emergent reading development show the following findings. All the children were familiar with book handling — direction of pages, pages in sequence and left to right sequence. At this point in time the children self-selected the following books — Lazy Mary, The Carrot Seed, Rudolph, and Bonnie McSmithers. All the children chose books they were familiar with because the teacher had read these particular books to the class during shared reading time (Sulzby, 1985). All five children invented the text using the illustrations as cues to trigger a recall of the story from memory. At this stage, David was the only case study child to use his finger to sweep along under the lines as he invented text and to end with the print. None of the children were hesitant to read and enjoyed the opportunity to read to the

researcher. Andrea's words on September 28, illustrate her confidence and ability to take risks "*I forget this part*" but continued on inventing text from the illustration with "*I'll be back in a little while*". At the end of the story she said "*It's so easy! I'm doing a real good job of reading. I already told my mom I know how to spell 'see'.*"

The children used a lot of book language in their versions of stories. On March 22, one month after beginning to use letter-sound correspondence in his writing, Evan read *The Gingerbread Boy* to the researcher. At this point his emergent reading consisted of inventing the entire text from the illustrations using book language and a very rich vocabulary.

Use Of Initial Letter In Reading Names

Children began using letter-sound correspondence as an initial letter strategy and frequently used it in the writing and reading of names. In writing, the children seemed especially interested in representing their own names and the names of other significant adults (See Figure 5 — Debbie, Lisa, Santa Claus, Mom and grandmother). Table 4 shows the development in the reading of their classmates names within one month of making sense of letter-sound correspondence in writing.

Table 4 — Initial Letter Strategy in Writing and the Reading of Names in Classroom

Child	% on Previous Names Test	% on Test after using initial letter strategy
5		85
6		100
7		92
9 (B)		60
10		100
12 (C)	60	82
13	67	96
14		71
15		96
16 (D)	31	75
17	64	85
18	60	78
19	28	96
20 (E)	21	50
21	17	79
23	64	95

The researcher observed the children were reading each other's names when giving out exercise books two or three times a day and anytime their names were included in the daily chalkboard story. She recorded the number of classmates names the children could read every 6 - 8 weeks. At an early stage they confused names beginning with the same letter suggesting that they were using the first letter of the name to identify it, even though formal phonics instruction had not been initiated. The data show that if children only knew a few names they were not yet to the point of confusing the initial letter when they attempted to read names. Once they could read several names they frequently confused David for Darlene, Charlotte for Chuck, Joanne for Joshua and Peter for

Patrick and vice versa then continued on adding names until they could read all their classmate's names. When the researcher examined their writing, she found that the children were using a similar strategy to represent the sounds of words. Six weeks after David started using the initial letter strategy in his writing he had the following conversation about reading names with his classmate who was giving out arithmetic books.

David: (to Charlotte) *"No, that's Chuck's"*

Charlotte: *"No, this is mine. (David looks confused) She starts spelling her name out loud "C-h-a-r..."*

David: *"Chuck spells his name like that."*

Teacher: *"David, the first letters are the same in Chuck and Charlotte but the end of the name is different."*

Within a few days of this observation, David achieved 100% accuracy in the reading of his classmate's names.

Reading/Writing Connections

Case Study B

On November 19, the day Beth first matched letter-sound correspondence in her story writing, she could read 60% of her classmates names and was inventing text in many familiar storybooks. Figure 13 shows Beth's first story on November 19 using letters to represent sounds and then gives the verbatim conversation that followed.

- Beth: *"I bet you can read it."*
- Researcher: *"Let's see what you have to say today." (Fortunately, the researcher could read 'play with her friends') "Oh, Beth this is wonderful - now I can read your stories."*
- Beth: *"I can write terrific stories now, don't I? (turning to her friend Andrea in the line) You just have to write down the first letter of the words, right?"*
- Andrea: *Yes, that's right (noticing the researcher was recording the conversation she said "Beth's story isn't that long."*
- Researcher: *"Of course not, you did a fine job!"*

Two weeks later the researcher recorded another conference on audiotape with the same child.

- Researcher: *"Can you tell me how you wrote your story? How did you do it?"*
- Beth: *"Because I put the first letters and I put the other letters ummm.... some and maybe I could have put the real letters and really known but I don't really want to I just want the first letter to be on."*
- Researcher: *"How did you know how to write morning?"*
- Beth: *"I just figured it out! I just sounded it out - like that MMMM (uses letter name)."*
- Researcher: *"Morning is a big word for a Grade One to write."*

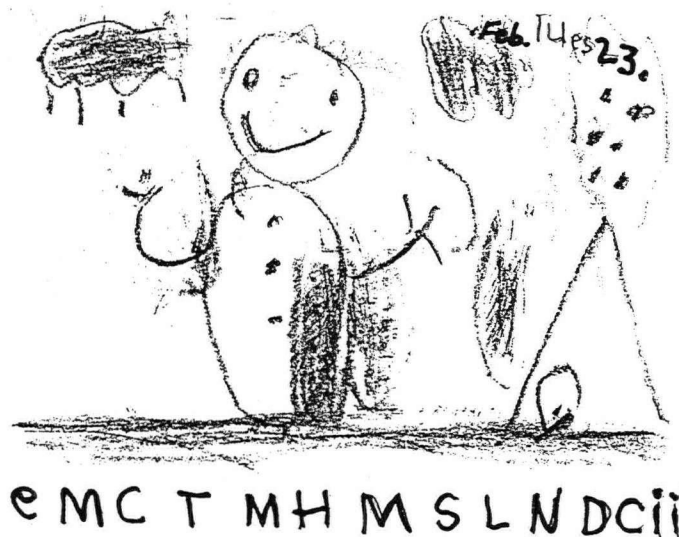
This child developed another strategy of incorporating sight words she knew into her story writing. She was now integrating phonetic and visual strategies and shifting back and forth between strategies to come up with the word she needed. In the conversation which follows she explains how she uses both phonetic and visual strategies in her writing.

- Beth: *"I did it all by myself. You can read it too. I just write down the words I know and then the ones I don't I just write down the first letter*

Case Study E

Halfway through his Grade One year on February 23, the alphabetic principle appeared in Evan's writing. He was reading 21% of his classmates' names.

Figure 6 - Initial Letter Strategy - First Match



After completing his message he made the following comment to his teacher.

Evan: "I like matching up stories now."

Teacher: "You really know how to do it too. That's the way we learn to read."

Two days later he wrote the following example and said each word out loud as he put down the initial consonant. He literally talked his way through the whole story of the three bears.

Figure 7 - Initial Letter Strategy - Three Bears

V D D L L L g L S e D C
 V S C R S T D L L T D H
 L D V C B D
 M C D H C V C S D D T M
 D L O P N N V B r r
 D M N

Although Evan said each word as he wrote it down, he had difficulty retrieving his story after the first line. The researcher had observed him mouthing and recording the initial consonant of every word as he wrote it down but in the retelling he got mixed up and lost his original wording as the story was too long for him to recall accurately.

Six weeks later on a recognition test of classmates' names Evan identified 80% of the names and wrote the following nursery rhyme. At this time he had no trouble reading what he had written. On May 4 Evan consistently used the initial letter strategy to record the rhyme in Figure 8.

Figure 8 - Initial Letter Strategy - Rhyme



On the same day, Evan was reading the Ginn Storybox book *The Rose Garden* in the library corner during emergent reading time.

Teacher: *"Come and read your book to me.*

Evan: *I can't read it.*

Teacher: *Just come and pretend to read it and I'll tape record it."*

Examples of miscues indicating use of graphophonic strategies

plucked for picked
 go for gone
 here for happy
 said for something
 singing for said

At this stage in his reading development Evan relied solely on the initial letter strategy but was also searching for a word that had the same initial letter but made sense in that particular sentence. The researcher was very surprised that Evan was able to read this book so accurately and used the initial letter strategy so frequently. The reading conference concludes with the following comment.

Teacher: *"You said you couldn't read that book. You did a beautiful job. You can read it really well. Do you want to take it home to read to your mom? I think she would like it."*

Once the children were feeling confident about their reading, the researcher asked them to identify sight words on a word list (Appendix B) and then again every six weeks. The progress of each child in the class was documented along with the strategies the researcher observed the child using. The following Table 5 indicates the number of initial letter miscues and the number of words identified. The shift to an increase in using the initial letter and then its decline as a strategy is statistically significant in this study.

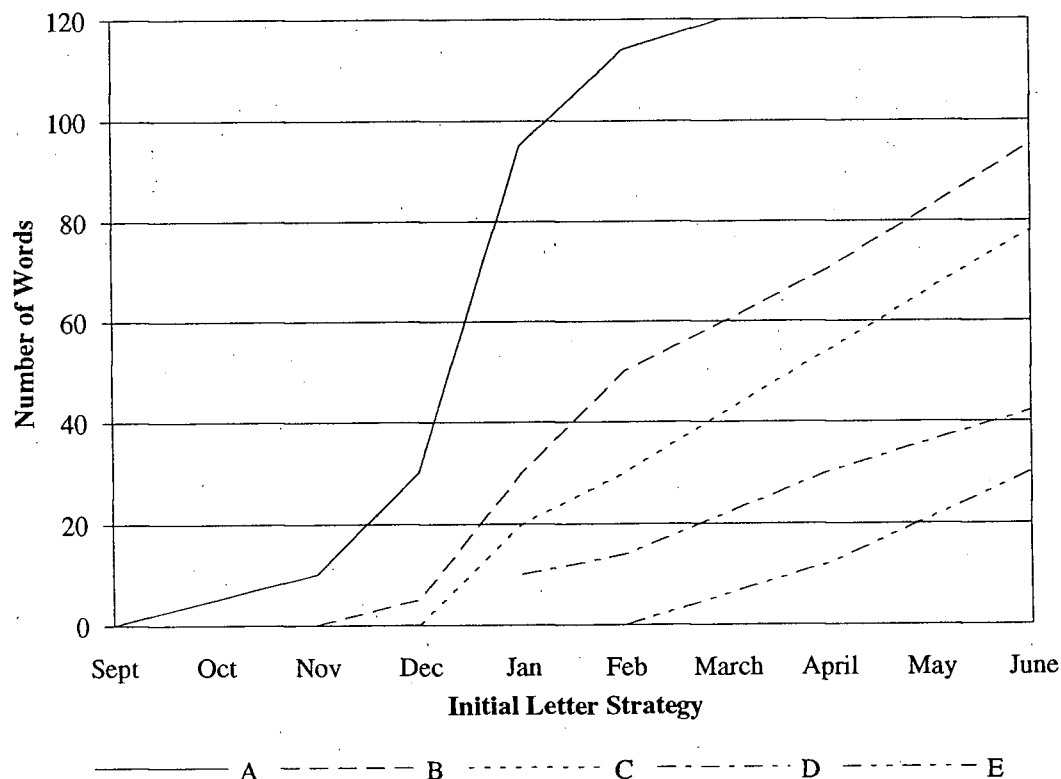
Table 5 — Use of Initial Letter in Word Identification *

	APRIL		JUNE	
Child	Attempts	# of Words	Attempts	# of Words
A 1	0	*		
2				
3	0	*		
4	0	*		
5	0	121		
6	0	*		
7	0	118		
8	0	*		
B 9			4	93
10	0	103	0	114
11	0	113	0	118
C 12	40	53	0	79
13	1	109	0	118
14	18	56	22	84
15	17	97	5	111
D 16	8	31	17	42
17	3	39	6	67
18	15	30	16	40
19	16	41	18	65
E 20	8	13	16	25
21	3	9	15	45
22	4	12	7	16
23	2	28	5	41
24				

* Breakthrough to Literacy Word List (Appendix C)

The data showed that the children began to increase their reading sight vocabulary once they started using the initial consonant in their writing. The following graph Figure 9 on the case study children shows the growth in reading vocabulary for these children once they had begun to use the initial letter strategy in their writing.

Figure 9 —Relationship of Initial Letter Strategy and Development in Reading Vocabulary



The evidence includes scores of the standardized Slosson test which was administered several times during the school year. At the conclusion of the study in June, the range of the whole class on the Slosson Test was 0.0 - 5.0. Throughout the school year all the children gradually increased their scores with the exception of one non-reader. Table 6 shows the increase in scores of the case study children on the Slosson test while the * indicates the timing of their first use of letters to represent sounds in their writing.

Table 6 — Slosson Test

Child	Nov	Jan	Feb	April	June
A	*0.2	1.2	2.3	3.4	5.0
B	0.0	*0.6	1.1	1.3	1.2
C	0.0	*0.3	0.3	0.4	1.0
D	0.2	*0.3	0.4	0.5	0.5
E	0.0	0.0	*0.2	0.4	0.5

* First use of initial letter strategy in writing

Figure 10 shows the growth in writing of the case study children. Writing samples of each case study child's first solid use of letters to represent sounds is followed up with samples of writing at six week intervals. The children began incorporating more visual strategies over time for identifying whole words.

Figure 10

First Match

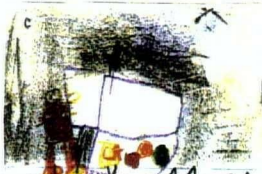


Good Morning Lisa
Debbie Good Morning
You do it

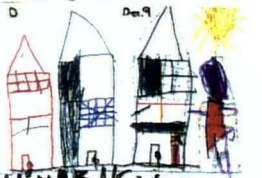


I See Debbie PX
ETS HF FTE

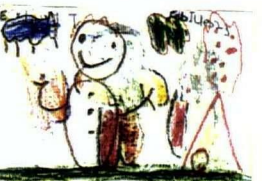
I see Debbie playing
with her friend.



Oh look Mom
I see Dennis and Danny
are going to sea.



My Mom was going home.



Yesterday my grandmother
said to me. How many
strawberries do you see?

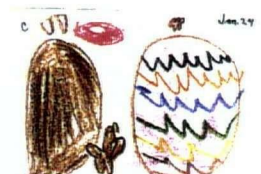
Six Weeks



The tropical fal
over on the swol
Bas sanc Bau
a play on at RA to
the Dec. 27th a Rave album



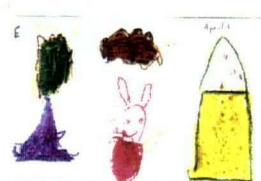
The wedding with Peter
Wrec and HX
work to be dismattat



I Like estas
Hee BTis
Danny Mom Dennis



SBRAM Mom



V R P r T B S B k D R H S

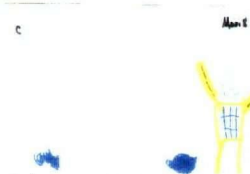
Three Months



Santa-callas
Gos down the
cemrey on sin dey nit
to PET the PRESENS
DAWN
The End



I WOAXZ go ing
TO HAV A VALENTINDAY
PTEE DTER MY MOM
COD HER MTD VO I
AOC MY MOM WYO Ctt
WE HAX A WAX PATT
B GOZ



the Boy
Wat awt
the warbowasGin



I MoM Bot
ERACAS
TeN



BADS H M VES
T P P V M T V P B
VFL B H L D + N

The Role of Literature

An examination of the data revealed the extensive use these children made of the variety of children's literature in their Grade One classroom. The five case children had 206 recorded episodes that focused on either a book or the enlarged text of a song. The following table shows the number of times each case study child was observed interacting with a children's book or song book during the daily emergent reading time.

Table 7 - Emergent Reading Events

Andrea	42
Beth	42
Carl	34
David	21
<u>Evan</u>	<u>67</u>
	206

When the children first began using letters to represent sounds in their writing the evidence shows all the children already using the strategy of inventing the text of a book which is characteristic of this particular stage of reading development. Within two weeks of using letter-sound correspondence in writing the Emergent Reading Records (Appendix B) show all five case study children inventing the entire text of a favorite book and using the illustrations to trigger their memory of the storyline. The children all took their reading seriously, used book language, kept their eyes on the print pretending to read and with one exception (Carl) did not use their finger to follow the print. The following comments were recorded during Andrea's reading of a favorite book illustrate that although she is not able to make meaning from the print she does feel confident about her ability.

Andrea: *Do I turn the page now? I forget this part (so continued inventing story). It's so easy! I'm doing a real good job of reading. I already told my Mom I know how to spell 'see'.*

Two weeks later the fieldnotes indicate Andrea has begun matching line by line and in some places word by word on a familiar storybook.

The data from the observations show that Beth selected *Lazy Mary* from the Ginn Storybox series three times to read to the researcher. It is interesting to observe her growth in reading during this time period of three months.

Table 8

- 1) Nov. 4 - no match of words to print
Nov. 16 - first use of letter-sound correspondence in writing
- 2) Dec. 2 - no match of words to print
- 3) Jan. 26 - 1/2 and 1/2 -combination of inventing text and word match to print
- using initial letter strategy to identify unknown words
- 4) Jan.27 - read every word of another favorite book "Inside Outside, Upside Down"
- thinking of the meaning and using her finger to point to each word

A review of the data in this study reveals interesting information on the wide variety of self-selection of children's literature by these five and six year olds. During the emergent reading time the researcher noted the title of each book the case study child read. In this classroom, the children had a choice of books, enlarged texts of songs or big books. The fieldnotes indicate all but two of the books listed below had been read to the class at some point in the year before the child selected it. Books that are marked with a star had been read to the class by the teacher that day or the day before. The children sometimes selected a book they had used in an earlier session so the lists indicate the repetition with a 2x or 3x.

Figure 11

BOOK SELECTION OF CASE STUDY CHILDREN

Case Study A - Andrea

How Do You Say Hello to a
 Ghost? - song
 Smarty Pants
 It's a Small World - song
 Who-oo Likes To Read - Big Book
 Nursery Rhymes Big Book 2x
 Pete the Magic Dragon
 Brown Bear
 The Secret Message 2x
 Three Little Pigs
 I Know An Old Lady 2x - song
 Sounds I Remember 2x
 Chicken Soup With Rice
 The Carrot Seed
 Curious George
 One Fish, Two Fish
 Mortimer - *
 Walter the Lazy Mouse - *
 Who's in the Shed? - Big Book
 Cinderella
 Don't Eat Spiders - *
 Five Elephants Went Out to Play - *
 Lazy Mary - *
 Winnie the Pooh
 Pinnochio
 Bingo - song
 Excuses
 Three Little Kittens - *
 Don't Eat Spiders - *
 What Goes Up?
 What is Little?
 Red, Yellow - song
 What Goes Fast?
 Off To School

repeats	8
songs	6
same day	7
Big Books	3

Case Study B - Beth

Nursery Rhyme Big Book
 Sleeping Beauty
 Cinderella 2x
 Ira Sleeps Over
 Secret Birthday Message 2x
 Snow White
 Bonnie McSmithers
 Smarty Pants
 Three Bears
 Grumpy Elephant
 I Know An Old Lady 2x - song
 Who's in the Shed? - Big Book
 Red is Best
 Walter the Lazy Mouse - *
 Sounds Around the Clock
 Mulberry Bush - * - song
 Skip To My Lou * - song
 Off To School 5x
 What Can Fly?
 In a Nest
 Lazy Mary 3x
 Down By The Bay - song
 Happy Birthday Moon - Big Book
 Thing From Somewhere - BigBook
 Madeline's Christmas
 Love is Something - song
 On Top of Spaghetti - song
 Round the Mountain - song
 Down By The Bay - song
 Red, Yellow - song
 It's A Small World 2x - song

repeats	16
songs	12
same day	3
Big Books	4

Case Study C - Carl

What Goes Fast
 Red and Yellow - 2x - song
 Nursery Rhymes - song
 Rudolph
 Snow
 Secret Birthday Message
 Ziggy
 Under the Orange Umbrella
 Lazy Bear
 Charlie Brown - *
 Fox in Sox - *
 I Know An Old Lady - 2x - song
 Berenstein Bears Go Camping
 Love Is Something - song
 Red is Best
 Shark Book
 Little Red Hen Big Book
 Hungry Giant - 2x
 On Top of Spaghetti - 2x - song
 Who's in the Shed? - Big Book
 Gingerbread Story
 Ida and the Wool Smugglers
 My Shirt is White
 Go Dog Go
 Mortimer
 The Three Bears Big Book
 Are You My Mother?
 Obidah
 Look at This
 Animals Should Definitely Not Wear Clothing
 Whales

repeats	4
songs	8
same day	2
Big Books	3

Case Study D - David

Nursery Rhyme Big Book - 2x
 Knave of Hearts
 Chicken Soup With Rice
 Little Nut Tree - song
 From Somewhere - Big Book
 Old MacDonald - Big Book
 Three Bears - Big Book
 Round the Mountain - song
 Red is Best - 2x
 Top of Spaghetti - 3x - song
 Little Red Hen - 2x
 Who's in the Shed? - Big Book
 Red Riding Hood
 Carrot Seed
 Down By the Bay - song
 Snow

repeats	5
songs	6
same day	0
Big Books	6

Case Study E - Evan

Spiders - 2x - *
 Book of Cockatiels
 Strega Nona's Magic Lesson - *
 Animals Should Definitely Wear Clothing
 The Quarreling Book
 Good-bye House
 First Comes Spring
 Love is Something - song
 Mulberry Bush - 2x - song - *
 Baby Farm Animals
 Happy Hippopotami - Big Book
 Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears
 Alexander and the Horrible Very Good Day
 Mrs. Wishy-Washy - *
 Deep in the Forest
 The Gingerbread Boy
 Amy's Wish
 Who's In The Shed? - 2x - Big Book
 Why Can't I Fly? - 2x
 Henny Penny - 4x
 The Lion and the Mouse
 The Rose Garden
 Skip To My Lou - song - 2x - *
 House That Jack Built

Nursery Rhyme Big Book - 3x
 Dreams
 Three Bears Big Book - 10x
 Bears Counting Book
 New Baby Calf
 Tale of Peter Rabbit
 Lion and the Mouse
 Chicken Soup With Rice
 Ugly Duckling
 Ah Choo
 Happy Birthday Moon
 How to get Rid of Bad Dreams
 Thing From Somewhere - Big Book
 Peter Cottontail
 Over in the Meadow - song - *
 Spilt Milk
 It's A Small World - song
 I Am A Pizza - song
 Alligator Soup
 Monster
 Mud Puddle - 2x
 The Chick and the Duckling - *
 Farmer Joe's Hot Day - *

repeats	29
songs	8
same day	9
Big Books	7

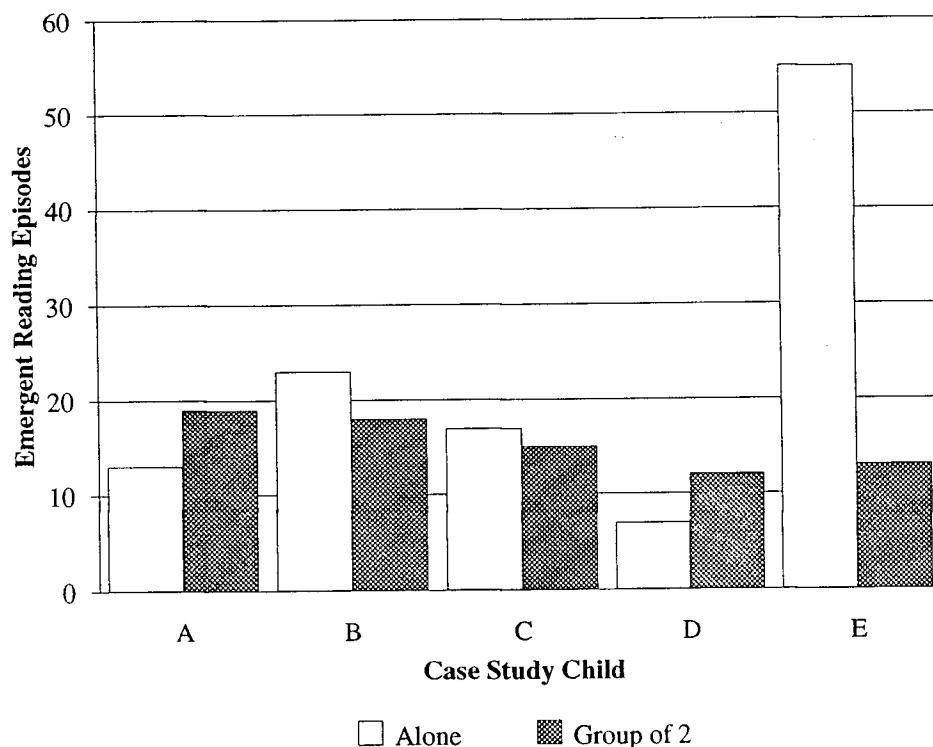
These book lists of the case study children provide a source of rich data for the role of literature in a classroom environment. The lists show the number and wide variety of books selected by the children during the short space of time of an average of 37 observations per child. A closer examination of these lists reveals the following information about children's choices when selecting books from a wide variety of children's literature in the classroom. The following table indicates the total number of choices made by the case study children when they selected books during the emergent reading time.

Table 9 - Selection of Books

repetitions	62 (29 by E)
songs	40
read same day as teacher	21
Big Books	23

In this particular Grade One classroom, the evidence shows a high degree of collaboration among the students when they were left entirely on their own to do their emergent reading. The emergent reading incidents that were recorded show the children sitting either alone, in groups of two or three on the carpet, on small chairs or in their desks. The field notes contain descriptions of a total of 206 emergent reading episodes — child alone - 104, a group of two - 75 and a group of three - 14. The following graph indicates the number of interactions with a book that each case study child had either alone or in a group of two.

Figure 12 — Collaborative Emergent Reading



Examples Of Emergent Reading Episodes

Case Study A

On Oct. 5 two girls singing It's A Small World on the carpet and using a small pointer to point to the words and moving down the page but there is no match with the words.

Friend: *The numbers are upside down.*

Andrea: *They are not numbers they are letters.*

On Feb. 29 when Andrea had finished her emergent writing she sat on a little yellow chair at the front of the classroom and read the next chapter of the book Walter the Lazy Mouse by Marjorie Flack which the teacher was reading to the class. She read the entire chapter out loud oblivious to everything else around her.

Case Study B

On November 17 Beth calls the teacher *Mrs. N., Andrea is teaching me how to read the reading book.* (She tracks with her finger while the other child reads)

On February 2, Bernadette calls *Andrea, do you want to be in my class? Everybody has to have a book.* A group of three children sit down on the carpet and sing two songs from the enlarged text that Andrea holds.

Case Study C

On January 21, Carl calls to a classmate (one who has had very little experience with books) *Tyler, help me read this one.* Tyler flops down on the carpet and both boys lie down and turn the pages.

After a few minutes Carl gets up and moves to a chair and reads more books to Tyler by inventing the text from the illustrations. All the books he chooses are ones the teacher has read to the class. Tyler moves around restlessly but continues listening. Carl concentrates on his reading and ignores the restless movements. He then calls to the teacher and says "*I read six books to Tyler*".

Case Study D

On March 21, the day David wrote a whole sentence that used letter-sound correspondence in writing. Then he sat on the carpet with a friend who was not yet at this stage of development in writing or reading. Looking at the book, David invents the text of the story of Little Red Riding Hood out loud in a big voice and discusses the story with his classmate who seems very impressed.

Case Study E

On April 7, Evan read the following books during emergent reading time.

- 1) Book of Cockatiels - (sitting alone on a chair)
- 2) Dreams - (Joined by a girl who sat on a chair next to him but read her own book. The two children chat then continue reading their own books side by side.)
- 3) Spiders - sings it out loud on the floor
- 4) Big Book of Nursery Rhymes - read it together with the girl holding the pointer

A review of the children's writing in the data collection shows the strong influence of children's literature on topic choice in daily emergent writing. Children frequently wrote a retelling of a favorite story or sometimes wrote their own version. A detailed examination of Case Study A's writing reveals children's literature as the source of many of her stories. Some of the stories, poems or songs were accurate retells but this child particularly enjoyed playing with language and writing her own versions of familiar stories.

Reading/Writing Connections

Figure 13

Case Study A - Emergent Writing Using Literature as a Source

BOOKS

Rudolph
Kitten
Curious George
Three Bears
Mortimer
Walter the Lazy Mouse
Peter Rabbit
Sleeping Beauty
Rapunzel
Balloon Tree
Snow White
Cinderella
Mud Puddle
Noisy Nora
Little Red Riding Hood
Are You My Mother?
The Mixed Up Chameleon
Chicken Soup With Rice
Peter Pan
Alice in Wonderland
The Three Billy Goats Gruff
The Magic Fish

RHYMES OR SONGS *

Let My People Go (hymn) *
There Was An Old Lady *
Happy Birthday *
Blue Cow *
This Land *
When I Was One *
Two Little Dicky Birds
Baby Bunting
Little Peter Rabbit *
I Had A Little Nut Tree *
Lady Bird
Old Mother Hubbard
Bananas in His Eyebrows *
Humpty Dumpty
One, Two Buckle My Shoe

On December 16, the teacher read the story the Curious Kitten to the class. Later that day Andrea wrote the following story about a kitten which was the first time she used literature as a source for her stories.

Figure 14 - Kitten Story



Lisa's first kitten.
 Lisa gots a kitten
 on Christmas.
 Santa left his hat
 The clown put it on.
 The End

On January 27 Andrea read Robert Munsch's "Mortimer" and read it accurately and only asked for help twice for the words "tremendous" and "know". On February 22, Andrea retold the story of Mortimer and made it into a small book. Figure 15 is the cover of the small book that she made.

Figure 15 - Author and Illustrator

Feb. 22

Mortamr.
 Aothr Andrea
 Petchr's By Andrea

On April 29 Andrea began the following retell of Cinderella. She worked on her version of this story for three days.

Figure 16 - Cinderella - Case Study A

Wans in a far
away Land There
lived a butaful
little girl named
Cindrlla Cindrlla lived
With her fathr and Mother
The years past and
cindrlla's mathr bided
So The man
Desided to marry agin
He Chosed a Wido
But after a fuy Yers
He bided and Cindrlla
Gro up

Oun boy a
Latr Came
and The Stap
Mithr cald
Drathala and Anathra
Sha She had
To Othr Childrn
and Then She
Red it
The king is Crring
A Ball To Nith
his Son The Prins
Will Chas a Wif
to many

Part four
That Nigth Cindrlla
Sied may I go to
YOU Side The
Stap mathr's
Dotrs and They
laft with Gley
So She had
To Work all
Nigth Before Thed
Say Yes but it
Sems That
There was all
Wes Oun mor

Thing to Be Done
Port Three Sondly
The Clook Strak
500 are you
Redy Cindrlla
No Side Cindrlla
Sadly So They
Want with
Owt Cidrlla Sanly
Pof a cach come
and cindrllas brs
Chaged and she
got in to The
cach as she

The evidence includes several comments by children that refer to the authors of children's literature. Andrea made the following oral and written comments about two authors.

Figure 17 - Letter to Author - Case Study A

Andrea: *"Mrs. N. do you want to read this to the class because it is by Raymond Briggs and you've read a lot of books by him?"*

I Wish
 I wish that rodrte munch
 was my father X tat bosint
 mena I like my father but
 I wode like to have a
 canq. Song.
 I like to have a chang in
 my Live some times.
 The end

=====

Literacy Play

An analysis of the data reveals a high incidence of literacy play activities in this Grade One classroom. It raises the question of what are the common literacy play activities evident in the environment of a first grade classroom? Children participated in these activities on their own accord when they had completed their daily writing and were encouraged to spend a few minutes of hands-on time with the wide selection of books in the classroom. The teacher referred to this time as emergent reading time. As mentioned in the earlier section on literature, the child could choose to spend time with a book alone, with a friend or in a small group. If the case study child was observed taking part in a literacy play activity during choosing time, these activities were also recorded. The following figure indicates the total number of literacy play episodes of the case study children.

Table 10

Literacy Play Events of Case Study Children

1) Andrea	16
2) Beth	24
3) Carl	4
4) David	6
5) Evan	27

In the context of this Grade One classroom, the literacy play data fell into three main categories - playing school, playing games, and play at home.

A) Playing School

The children gathered in groups of two or three with one child sitting on a small yellow chair being the teacher or kneeling on the carpet around a book, Big Book or an enlarged text of a song. The

teacher of the moment frequently had the little yellow pointer in hand and used it to point to the words in the text.

Examples of Children's Comments:

- * *Just play read - that's what I do*
- * *Lisa is teaching me how to read*
- * *I'm teaching Natalia "Off to School" - (Natalia would read a word and pause and then Andrea filled in the missing word.) Okay, I'll read to you just like your Mom reads you a story.*
- * *Mrs. N, Andrea is teaching me how to read the reading book (Beth is tracking with her finger while Andrea reads).*

Example of a Play Episode — Beth, Jan.11

Beth pretends to be the teacher and sits at a small table with her friend Andrea.

The girls joyously sing two songs Coming Round the Mountain and Down by the Bay using the enlarged texts. Beth sings the lead while Andrea repeats the copy cat part.

Examples of Activities

- * Two girls sitting reading the Three Little Kittens together from the pictures - (disagree) so each gave their own version and then turned the page.
- * Three girls chanting a rhyme from Bill Martin's "Sounds I Remember" then make up their own version.
- * Writing and playing with language. The child writes Andrea loves Dad and then reverses order and writes Dad loves Andrea.
- * Beth walks around holding book proudly under her arm. She approaches a group of four children and asks the best reader in the group for help.
- * Writing down names, addresses and phone numbers of friends.
- * Using enlarged texts to sing songs. Andrea is the teacher and Beth does the copy cat part.
- * Evan reads to himself on the carpet. He particularly enjoys the wordless books and tells the stories out loud.

- * Reading 20/25 names in the class to a friend. The child confused the first letter three times.
- * Enlarged texts of songs are very popular as focus for small group interaction.
- * Evan stayed engaged in task and moved through five different books - Peter Rabbit, Bad Dreams, Mrs. Wishy Washy, Big Books - Nursery Rhymes and The Three Bears.
- * Andrea is sharing the enlarged text of the song Bingo with Bernadette. They are having a great time laughing and singing together.
- * Spontaneous Christmas Carol singing. Andrea, Bernadette and Charleen started singing with song books and the group gradually grew until the whole class stood together and sang We Wish You A Merry Christmas and Frosty the Snowman. They were all looking at their books and smiling as they sang.

B. Playing Games

The children frequently chose to play a game with a friend during their daily choosing time.

Examples of Games

- * While playing a phonics game two children came and asked for two sounds they needed on small cards.
- * Two boys jumping down an alphabet strip on the carpet singing A,B,C,D song.
- * Three girls are playing Consonant Bingo.
Bernadette - *I'm missing a "Y?"*
Kelley - *What's this one a "D"?*
Andrea - *Lion starts with a "L"?*
- * Two girls are playing a brief game of Consonant Bingo. When two boys joined them the girls left and asked for paper to make Christmas cards with "I love you" messages.

C. Literacy Play at Home

While collecting the data, it soon became apparent to the researcher that the children were involved in many literacy play activities at home. Any comments pertaining to literacy play activities at home by the case study children or their parents were recorded in the fieldnotes. Some of the children brought notes, lists and letters they had written at home and these were added to the data collection.

Examples of Literacy Play at Home

- * Beth - *I write long stories at home sometimes four pages. I copied a letter from my sister's boyfriend then brought it to school.*
- * Andrea wrote a long story about *my mom making Christmas cookies.*
- * Carl - *Mrs. N., did you know, I wrote a book?*
 Mrs. N. - *A book - where is it? at home?*
 Carl - *No, I sent it to my Poppy in Ontario.*
- * David - *I always write Jan. in my coloring book at home so I know which one I did.*

The following transcript from an audiotape describes one of the girls literacy play activities with the kindergarten child next door.

- R: *What do you play with Monica? to her house after school.* R - *What do you do with her?*
- A: *We turn out all the lights and play with our flashlights and pretend we are hunting in the jungles.*
- R: *What else do you do at your house?*
- A: *She has fat felts and we draw and then we draw funny pictures for the jungle . (to herself) What else do we do? Play with our flashlights outside and make snowflakes. I have to teach her of course*
- R: *What else do you teach her?*
- A: *I teach her how to spell words. I tell her how to spell her Dad's name which is easy - sometimes I call him Peter Pan - I also told her how to spell January and Jan. for short also Dec. and Oct.. I just tell her the short ways cause I don't know the long ways. She should get a calendar.*

Role of Collaborative Talk

Interactions play an important role in the classroom environment. The data collection for this study contains many observations of the power of thoughtful response between the teacher/student and student/student. As participant-observer this researcher's aim was to observe and record the children's responses as readers and writers. In the majority of instances she responded only to the meaning of the children's communications. However, when the children's responses suggested a major change in understanding, the researcher probed for further information about children's thinking.

An analysis of the data on interactions shows the content of the responses fell into the three categories of Connect, Confirm and Extend (Chow, Dobson, Hurst and Nucich, 1991). The following examples illustrate the important role of dialogue and response in a primary classroom environment that help to encourage children to become independent readers and writers.

Examples of Interactions That Connect

- * E: Feb.16 - *Can I read to you now?*
- * A: Dec. 14 - *I read the whole book to my Dad on the week-end.*
 R: *The whole book?*
 A: *Starting at the beginning.*
- * C: Nov. 13 - *Will you teach me to read?*
 Can you teach me to read after school?
- * A: Jan. 6 - *This is going to be an interesting story for you - it is all about January.*
- * C: Dec. 7 - *Who's name is that?*
- * D: Jan. 26 - (as child is drawing picture) *Mrs. N., the car is stuck in the mud - a big rock went and broke the window.*
- * B: Dec. 10 - *My name starts with a B too, it is B* (says letter name "B").

- * B: Nov. 30 - R - *Oh isn't this exciting, now you can write me he stories just like you told me before.* B - *Oh, it's not hard - you just write down the first letters.*
- * B: Jan. 6 - *I can spell milk. Do you want to hear? M..i..K.*
 R: *How did you learn that?*
 B: *I see it on the milk cartons all the time.*

Examples of Interactions That Confirm Thinking

- * A: Jan. 30. T - (re - messy work) *That's O.K., I'd sooner it made sense.*
- * C: Feb. 2 - T - *I'm sure we can figure this out.* Fieldnote observations on this date state this child seemed to enjoy the teacher's confidence in him as a writer.
- * D: Jan 25 - (classmate to David) *Beautiful, David!*
- * B: and E.. Feb.19
 B: *I just love school.*
 E: *Same here, I love school.*
- * E: April 28
 T: *Did you tell your Mom how many words you knew yesterday?*
 E: (nodded and a big smile)
 T: *What did she say?*
 E: *She was very happy.*
 T: *I'm sure she was proud of you. I know you are going to be a good reader.*
- * C: Nov. 9 - C - *I'm going to learn how to read.*
 T: *You already know how to read eleven names of your friends in this class.*
- * A: Oct. 26
 T: *Where did you get the word tap?*
 A: *I saw it on T.V. ... Sesame Street ...t - a - p sounded it out) and I just remembered it. I read a whole book at home from the library. I just sounded it out.*
- * B: Nov. 16 - *First, I get to print off the blackboard and then now I can read. Will you write this on my reading card?*
- * D: Jan. 26 - *Mrs. N. can read my stories now.*
- * B: Nov. 30 - *See it says boat cause it starts with a "B" (uses letter name).*

Examples of Interactions That Extend Thinking

- * B: Oct.16 - *Oh, YOU can put it in* (the child went off and inserted a word in the correct place to make sense).

Nov.26 - (Conversation with teacher about teaching her mother to read English)

B: *I'll know the words and my Mom won't.*

T: *That's okay lots of boys and girls I've had have taught their mothers how to read.*

Dec. 7 - *Your story was so long yesterday you may have to use two pages* (the next day she did).

- * A: Oct. 2 - (Andrea brought a color worksheet to the teacher.)
A: *I can't find the word "orange" and "brown".*
T: *I'm sure you can figure it out* (as she had already colored one object orange and one brown).
A: Silence. Long pause.(She then matched each letter in orange with a display of color words on the wall.) Silence. Long pause. (Looking very carefully at the wall display she then matched every letter in the word "brown" and colored in the brown objects without saying another word.)
- * A: Oct 27 - *I don't see any brain work just copying.*
- * E: June 2 - *I see you put two letters for rainbow RB. Soon You will be able to hear more letters in all the words you write down* (child smiles and nods his head).

June 9 - *My Mom said the story Three Bears in I Know A Story was too hard for me but I read it and now I'm up to Billy Goats Gruff.*
- * D: Jan. 25 - Teacher ran her finger along the line as the boy chanted a Brown Bear story he had just written.
D: *another one?*
T: (nodded)
D: continued writing two more lines

May 31 - D - *I'm writing Aiken Drum.*
T: *You are ...oh, that will be great.*
- * B: Dec. 10 - (When Beth read this story to her teacher it did not quite make sense.)
D: *I think I'll attach some more, okay?*
T: *Sure, just make sure it makes sense.*

Dec. 14 - (While reading a book Beth gets stuck on a word and requests help from the teacher.)
B: *What does this word start with?*

Dec. 14 - (Two girls are singing Frosty the Snowman.)

B: sings *thumpety thump*

A: *No, not yet we have to wait till we get to this page, see it says PP... thumP.*

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The naturalistic approach to research holds great promise for it enables researchers to make explicit the distinctions children are making daily in the classrooms (Spradley, 1980). The manipulation of the learning environment by the participant observer may alter the study somewhat but it also leads to in-depth observations over time. Although generalizations cannot be made for a large population from this study, the researcher will attempt to explain ways in which this research may be transferable to other settings. The following discussion will look at the question raised in the first chapter. In response to the question the discussion will touch on the four category headings used in the data section. It is hoped that the separate discussion in each section on the implications of this research will provide practical suggestions for classroom teachers who are responsible for planning programs at the kindergarten, Grade One level.

The question focuses on the strategies children use to make reading/writing connections at the emergent stage of their development within this particular environment during the critical period of beginning reading.

A) Use Of Initial Letter Strategy

The major finding of this study is the widespread use of an initial letter strategy in both reading and writing. The children worked out letter-sound correspondences and used them first to write then transferred this strategy to reading words in their physical environment especially names, and words in familiar storybooks. At the beginning of the school year none of the students in this Grade One class used this strategy but during the school year

all the children, with one exception, used initial letters to identify and represent words. Table 3 places the results of the target classroom using letters to represent sounds in writing in the larger context of three Grade One classrooms halfway through the school year. At this time, nearly 72% of the students in all three classes were already using the initial letter strategy in their writing. These consistent results indicate the generalizability of the use of the initial letter strategy when the reading/writing programs are similar. The timing of the development of this strategy in writing varied across all the children in the class and in the case study children from Sept. 21 to February 23 (Fig. 4). Therefore, the conclusion is that children who are not yet using letter-sound correspondences midway through their Grade One year will learn to read in their own time but will continue to need many meaningful experiences with print.

On February 23, Evan, the last case study child to begin using letters to represent sounds could read 25% of his classmates names. Six weeks later, on May 4, Evan was able to read 80% of the names, wrote an entire nursery rhyme (Fig. 8) using the initial letter strategy and could read the entire nursery rhyme to the researcher. On the same day he repeatedly used the initial letter strategy to read unknown words. He frequently overused this graphophonic strategy (Table 5) but used syntax and picture cues to help him predict the word. The conclusion to be drawn from these data is that the initial letter strategy is a key to word identification and a significant reading/writing connection for beginning readers.

Use Of Names

The writing and reading of names appears in the data to be another early and consistent reading/writing connection. The findings suggest all the children in the study were using the names of classmates and other significant people (Fig. 5 - Mom, Santa Claus) to help

them make sense of written language. The emergence of this initial finding came as a surprise to the researcher but the strategy became more apparent as observations revealed the five case study children consistently writing names in their stories (Fig. 5) and using their knowledge of reading names to pass out notebooks and papers in the classroom. The development of letter-sound correspondence in writing coincided with a dramatic increase in the reading of names (Fig. 4). Within one month of using the initial letter strategy in their writing, the case study children's reading of names increased from 45% to 77% without any direct instruction. This finding suggests that children are focusing more closely on print at this time and formulating rules of letter-sound correspondence which help them make sense of reading and writing.

Names are significant words for human beings and their use appears to satisfy an inner need to be recognized. Being able to read classmates' names appeared to give the children a certain amount of control and status with their peers. The task of passing out notebooks is a purposeful activity and one which provides instant feedback. When children confuse names beginning with the same initial letter the teacher knows they are focusing on the initial letter(s) only. Opportunities to practise the reading of names help beginning readers formulate rules and test hypotheses that go beyond the initial letter. The children gradually refined the use of the initial letter strategy by looking at the end of words which began with the same initial letter as shown by their 100% identification of names. A similar pattern emerged in the data of reading sight vocabulary.

Metalinguistic Knowledge

The analysis of the data revealed a great deal of talking out loud and collaborative talk about the use of the initial letter in writing. Children spontaneously identified initial letters and frequently talked about the use of such strategies in comments like "I sound out the first

letter and just write it down. Most of the time I'm right." This verbalization seemed to help them clarify their own developing thought processes. Reading is a more internal process and so the children were not as likely to talk about reading strategies but the "Chuck" for "Charlotte" miscue gives us a significant insight into how children first begin to read names or words in their environment. In this case the teacher/student interaction played an important role. The teacher recognized, confirmed and extended the child's metalinguistic knowledge about the use of the initial letter strategy. During this conversation the teacher connected with the child's level of reading development, acknowledged the child's logic and pointed the direction to the next step of examining the ending of words that have the same initial letter.

The use of the initial letter strategy ties in with research findings in the area of emergent literacy. The results of this study corroborate the research on the writing process by Bissex (1980), Graves (1983) and Calkins (1983; 1986). It is also consistent with research on the reading process by K. Goodman (1969; 1986), Y. Goodman (1980), Smith (1973, 1986, & 1988) and Sulzby (1985).

Findings on the reading and writing connections support the work of Harste, Burke and Woodward (1984) and Teale and Sulzby (1986). They further develop the use of the initial letter put forward by Mason (1980) and Ehri and Wilce (1985). The use of names is consistent with the observations of McGee and Righels (1990), Sulzby, Barhart & Hieshima (1989) and Cunningham (1990).

Implications for Teachers — Letter-Sound Connections

A daily emergent writing program enhances growth in beginning reading. It provides time for practise and allows the child an opportunity to work out the initial letter strategy on his

own developmental timetable which helps the child make sense of the graphophonic system and assures success for the beginning reader. When the children are inventing their own spelling in emergent writing they appear to call up an image of the word they want to write which seems to help them focus on the identifying features. The results of this study suggest a similar process in early reading just as in emergent writing. Children formulate the hypothesis about the initial letter, test it out, overuse it when attempting to read new words, and then move on to incorporating more visual strategies. The use of the initial letter in writing provides a connection to reading which dramatically increases growth in reading words. These observations over time indicate a common pattern and suggest the initial letter strategy is a powerful learning strategy for beginning readers and helps to explain the sequence of a developmental shift in cue systems from visual to phonetic to the more mature integration and the constant shift back and forth between phonetic and visual strategies in conjunction with syntax.

The findings of this study caution against rushing a young child into a reading program that calls for young children to memorize isolated reading vocabulary before they have an understanding of letter-sound correspondence. Carl's mother supported and celebrated his success in learning to write and read because his previous teacher felt he would be a boy with reading problems unless he was taught by a very traditional phonetic program to improve his auditory discrimination. In the past, too many children have had this experience in Grade One of being expected to know their sounds before they actually reach this stage developmentally. The hurried child becomes the stressed child, shuts down and loses confidence. To make matters worse, the worried teacher often begins to drill the child on his sounds and reading vocabulary. In contrast, the children in this study were not pushed into reading until they had worked out the letter-sound correspondence in their writing. At this point, they were nudged into more formal beginning reading activities. The

timing of reading instruction is critical and it appears from this evidence that a few short months can make all the difference to the Carls in our classrooms.

The data and conclusions generated by this investigation lead to several instructional implications. In light of these findings on reading/writing connections, the following practical implications for instruction and educational context may be useful for classroom teachers.

Implications for Teachers — Initial Letter Strategy

- 1) Understand the significance of the use of the initial letter strategy in both reading and writing.
- 2) Observe and record children's use of this strategy over time in both reading and writing. It begins at different times and is sustained for different lengths of time.
- 3) Use knowledge of this critical stage of development to connect, confirm and extend children's learning in teacher/student interactions.
- 4) Allow time and permission for collaborative talk in classrooms during the reading and writing time. Silent classrooms are not developmentally appropriate for young children because they use language in order to develop their language and reasoning abilities.
- 5) Find meaningful ways to involve children in reading names as often as possible in the classroom. They could pass out notebooks, play name games and read blackboard stories.

- 6) Observe and record children's growth in reading classmates' names.
- 7) Present all new reading vocabulary within the context of a story.
- 8) Be aware of children who are not using letters to represent sounds midway through the Grade One year. Monitor their development and provide these children with many literacy play activities and meaningful experiences with print which include the reading of signs, emergent reading and the reading of names.
- 9) Timing, availability, quantity and quality of reading materials are critical factors at this stage of development. Once teachers observe children using letter-sound correspondences in writing they can encourage reading of primer level reading material that contains stories that use natural, predictable language. If the material is appropriate, children's sight vocabulary will increase rapidly.
- 10) Hurrying children into readers and drilling isolated words will only result in frustration if the child is not already using the initial letter strategy in their writing. Knowledge of this strategy will result in a reading/writing connection and success in matching word for word reading.
- 11) Model reading and writing strategies and make them explicit during shared writing activities. When children read cooperatively they are willing to take risks and soon see reading as a challenge.

- 12) Document the use of the initial letter strategy in writing as it is a significant marker. Include this information on a child's report card as it indicates when a child reached this critical stage of development in reading and writing and may need to be taken into consideration when evaluating progress in beginning reading and writing in kindergarten, grades one and two.
- 13) Encourage beginning readers to use the initial letter strategy to help predict a word from the context. It is developmentally inappropriate to ask children at this particular stage to "sound out" words or make a detailed phonetic analysis.
- 14) Follow the child's lead by recognizing that children will gradually focus on letters other than the first letter as they begin to incorporate more visual strategies in reading.
- 15) Link the establishment of letter-sound correspondence in writing to the timing of an interesting reader with natural predictable language.

B) Role of Literature

Children who are just beginning to make initial letter-sound correspondences reveal remarkable similarities in other aspects of reading. All the children handled books in the conventional manner and confidently invented text using book-like language. They all used illustrations as their major cue to meaning.

Access to literature played a significant role in enabling children to make reading/writing connections. The observations revealed a tremendous amount of reading or “hands on” time with books for children at this age level. The “easy access” to a wide range of books at various reading levels contributed to the growing knowledge of children’s literature. The teacher fostered this love of books by providing the good selection and then allowing time, even insisting that children spend time reading or looking at books. The amount and variety of reading by the case study children during this time is evident in Figure 11.

It appears from the data that self-selection is a key factor in empowering children to make reading/writing connections. When children are given a choice in book selection, the findings show they frequently reread a favorite storybook. Table 8 records Beth’s growth in reading development using the same text *Lazy Mary* at intervals. Within the short time frame of two and a half months of beginning to use letters to represent sounds, Beth moved from inventing the entire text to a half and half combination of invention and word match using the initial letter strategy for unknown sight words to a word-perfect reading of a story much more difficult than *Lazy Mary*. All the case study children frequently selected a book they had read before (Fig. 11). Because books were available in the classroom on a long term basis, children could return to their favorites again and again so they were able to refine their approximations and over time came closer to the text. Songs and big books were popular classroom reading material for the Grade One children (Fig. 11). The extensive wide reading described in Figure 11 took extended periods of time which was built into the timetable. The case study children had the time and resources to follow their own interests in their own time.

The children frequently selected a book which the teacher had read to the class that very day. They frequently chose to read the book the teacher had read to them during the shared reading time (Fig. 11). It appeared that whatever the teacher valued enough to read aloud

triggered a rereading response by the child. Thus, repeated experiences with stories enable children to retain the meaning and some of the wording which they then integrate with their developing story and phonetic awareness to come ever closer to the text as written.

The children's story writing pointed out the influence of literature and highlighted a strong connection between what they read and what they write. An analysis of the children's topic choice in writing revealed that they frequently took their ideas from stories that had been read to them or they had read themselves. Many of the stories, song or poems were accurate retells and suggested that the children were expanding their ability to write using the structure of familiar stories. At this stage, it seemed they could concentrate on the form if they already knew the content of the story. The more they read, the more varied and fluent their writing seemed to become. Near the end of the Grade One year many of the children were beginning to write retells of stories and some of the more advanced readers moved on to writing their own version of a familiar story.

Wide reading influenced children's choice of topics when they were writing. Case study A used many sources from literature as springboards for writing topics (Fig.13). She became an avid and independent reader and Figures 14, 15 and 16 show how she used literature as a source for her writing development. Her wide reading nurtured her growth in storytelling, interest in authors and illustrators (Figures 15 and 17) and use of book language. This was very evident in her version of Cinderella (Fig. 16) which was written seven short months after she made her first match in using letters to represent sounds. The knowledge children had of children's literature influenced not only their talk but also their writing (Fig.17).

Collaborative Reading

In this classroom environment, there was a high degree of collaboration among the students during reading. Sometimes the children chose to be alone with a book but frequently chose to be with a friend or in a group of three. The graph in Figure 12 indicates that the experiences of A B C and D were fairly evenly divided between being alone or with a friend. Case Study E with his intense love of books was the exception, and he happily read most of his books alone sitting on a chair and reading out loud.

In the collaborative situation, the researcher repeatedly observed children asking better readers for help with an unfamiliar word. The Case Study examples provided the following comments "Andrea is teaching me how to read." and "Tyler, help me read this one." There was much informal peer teaching and co-operative learning going on. The children learned a great deal about reading from each other. Once the children began reading the text as written their self-confidence increased and they appeared to be much more in control of the reading situation. At this point the child moved from being a seeker of information to an authority for other children. It came as a surprise to the researcher how children recognized and consistently sought out readers who were more advanced and used them as a resource.

In this study, the use of books and stories as a connection between reading and writing tied in with recent research in the area of children's literature. The value of reading aloud to children was consistent with the findings of Doake (1979), Holdaway (1979) and Teale, (1984). The children's interest in and use of stories supported the work of Applebee (1978), Hardy (1968), Rosen (1982) and Wells (1986). The observations of Hickman (1981; 1985) and Hepler & Hickman (1982) on the social aspects of responding to literature were well supported in this classroom environment.

The following implications are linked with the findings and conclusions generated by this investigation on the role of literature.

Implications for Teachers — Role of Literature

- 1) Choose appropriate and interesting books for the classroom. Both the quality and quantity of children's literature are important.
- 2) Select a wide selection of books at several different reading levels for classroom libraries.
- 3) Keep books in the classroom on a long term basis in order to encourage repeated readings of books and the development of favorite storybooks.
- 4) Include texts of a variety of songs in classroom resources.
- 5) Choose materials carefully to read aloud to the class as selection is a key factor in the success of a literature program.
- 6) Enjoy reading aloud to children. The modelling is critical because the children will choose those particular books to read again and again.
- 7) Reread quality stories the children enjoy in order to develop class favorites. The children will begin reading on their own from these books.

- 8) Allow and encourage the inventing of text or “pretend” reading before children can actually read.
- 9) Permit collaborative talk during emergent reading as well as writing.
- 10) Include blocks of time in the timetable for extended reading everyday.
- 11) Support wide reading including non-fiction.
- 12) Encourage the self-selection of books. Choosing books is a learning process that takes place over time.

C) Literacy Play

Literacy play illuminated another aspect of reading/writing connections. This research shows that children learn as they play and thus indicates the importance of literacy play activities in the classroom. These observations make the reader aware of the common literacy activities taking place in this first grade classroom. Table 10 shows the number of literacy play episodes during the observations of the case study children. Case studies A, B and E who had the higher number of literacy play activities also learned to read faster once they began using letters to represent sounds in their writing. Perhaps, they were more playful and willing to take risks and also may have spent a lot of their free time learning literacy through play at home. The data on literacy play fell into the main categories of playing school, playing games and playing in home environment.

The evidence showed children playing school on their own accord. It appears children at this age particularly enjoy role-playing as teacher and when they do so often share their new understanding of literacy with those not yet at their stage of development. Three children used the word "teaching" in their comments whereas their teacher generally used the phrase "I'll help you learn....". The children seemed to feel a sense of power and control when they take the lead, use the word "teaching" and articulate their knowledge to an underling in the pecking order. One child role-played the teacher singing a song while the other child repeated "copy cat" style. Singing, writing and reading appeared to be the popular activities while playing school. Playing school elicited collaborative talk and the conversation seemed to chiefly focus on literacy events.

Once children reach a stage of producing letter-sound correspondence in their writing it seems to spark an interest in choosing games that focus on letter names or sounds. At this point in time, literacy play activities with classmates become more important.

Children's play at home frequently includes literacy activities. The children often eagerly described play at home which the teacher-researcher included in the field notes. Carl confidently talks about the book he has just written and sent off to his Poppy in Ontario. His literacy play at home and at school helped build his confidence as he worked out an increasing understanding of literacy.

Children use literacy play activities to make connections between reading and writing. The progress of the case study children confirms the observational studies of Pellegrini (1980) and Weininger (1980) which suggest that children who participate more in literacy play activities score higher on reading tests. The findings of Heald-Taylor (1983), Resenbrink (1987) and Resinski (1988) support the theory that emergent reading and writing are

symbolic play to the young child. The observations in this study showed all the children eagerly participated in literacy play activities of their own choice.

The following implications are linked with the findings and conclusions generated by this investigation on literacy play.

Implications for Teachers — Literacy Play

- 1) Allow literacy play in the classroom.
- 2) Encourage and validate literacy play by providing free time and access to materials.
- 3) Carefully observe children involved in literacy play to add to observations made during more formal instruction.
- 4) Participate in collaborative talk with children during literacy play activities.
- 5) Have in the classroom a selection of children's games that use letters or numbers in the classroom.
- 6) Display the names of classmates in the classroom so they are available for use in literacy play activities.
- 7) Create a psychological classroom environment where children are free to take risks and test hypothesis about how literacy works.

- 8) Become familiar with the value of play (British Columbia Ministry of Education's curriculum guide, 1990).

D) Collaborative Talk

Spontaneous talk and social interactions facilitate reading and writing connections for a child. In this nurturing environment children were learning from each other in a variety of ways and were allowed and even encouraged to use language to talk about reading and writing. The teacher responses took the child seriously, encouraged thinking, followed the child's lead and always helped the child see himself as a capable person that could do things. When the teacher has an understanding of beginning reading and writing and provides an appropriate response at the right time, then the child's thinking will be extended and his/her self confidence increased. Listening and responding to students carefully gave them the message that they were significant and had something worthwhile to say. Quality interactions are a powerful educational tool. An analysis of the data revealed that the connect, confirm and extend responses encouraged growth in both reading and writing. In these interactions the social nature of literacy learning was apparent. Perhaps it is this atmosphere of sharing that motivates youngsters the most and facilitates the desire to learn to read and write.

The evidence showed numerous examples of students connecting with the teacher and with each other. A child's accomplishment was recognized in conversation. It was sometimes as simple as a nod of the head or asking the right question as "How did you learn that?" The child had an opportunity to connect and have his/her thinking confirmed. The teacher consistently modelled positive responses for good thinking. After awhile the children began using responses such as "Beautiful, David!" with their classmates.

Acknowledgement of a child's increasing understanding of literacy by the teacher and classmates influenced the child's growth in reading and writing. The child felt supported before proceeding with anything challenging. It was at this point in time that extensions in thinking were apparent.

This new perspective on literacy places increased demands on teachers for thoughtful open-ended responses. Quality interactions seem to be a critical factor in facilitating beginning reading/writing connections and there is definitely a need for more research in this important area.

The use of collaborative talk in the classroom ties in with the findings of Dyson (1987), Calkins (1983, 1986), Harste, Woodward and Burke (1984). The observations supported Well's (1981) research that meaning is the central focus as children collaborate and attempt to make sense of their world. The research confirms the findings of Elkind (1988), Wasserman (1987) and Wells (1986) that the quality of interactions can promote children's self-esteem and even extend their thinking to a higher level.

The following implications are linked with the findings and conclusions generated by this investigation on collaborative talk.

Implications for Teachers — Collaborative Talk

- 1) Allow talk in the classroom during reading and writing.
- 2) Cluster desks or use tables to encourage collaboration.

- 3) Listen to and participate in children's conversations.
- 4) Respond to children as a "coach" rather than a "teacher".
- 5) Celebrate the child's understanding of literacy at his/her level.
- 6) Create an environment where children respect each other's ideas.
- 7) Model positive responses to children's reading and writing.
- 8) Focus on improving questioning techniques and responses.
- 9) Ask probing questions carefully in order to elicit more information.

Conclusion

This investigation showed beginning readers are actively involved making reading and writing connections. It isolates the use of the initial letter strategy as a significant developmental marker and an important connection between reading and writing which signals a critical time in a child's developing awareness of literacy. While the children all began at different levels, developed at varying rates throughout the year and responded in various ways, they progressed in a similar fashion. The results of this study enhance our understanding of the way beginning readers use the initial letter strategy to make sense of reading by formulating the rule, overgeneralizing for a short time and then integrating it with visual strategies. Daily emergent writing during the Grade One year seems to strengthen and solidify the reading/writing connection for children. The study provides evidence that children are eager to read the names of significant adults and classmates and do so by using the initial letter strategy. The findings on collaborative reading and literacy play point to all the children moving from being a seeker of information to an authority for another child. The children on their own accord used the more advanced readers as a resource.

The implications of this present study indicate a need to provide a classroom environment that enables children to make these reading/ writing connections. In such an environment, children are free to be individuals, develop at their own rate and learn in different ways. By establishing a nurturing social context that values books and wide reading, literacy play activities and collaborative talk, teachers can maximize the individual potential of every child and empower learners.

This research has attempted to provide practical assistance to teachers in terms of identifying reading and writing connections that young children make as they begin to read

and write. Education should be a meld between theory and practice. It is hoped that teachers will find the practical implications in the final section useful for putting theory into practice.

If reading this research has encouraged teachers to be researchers in their own classrooms, then this work will have served another useful purpose. The trend towards collaborative teaching opens up new opportunities for this type of research in our schools. Teachers can be effective researchers in their own classrooms. Teachers as researchers can have the unique experience of answering for themselves how to best assist the learners in their classrooms. As a teacher-researcher, the author was in a good position to observe longitudinal development in reading and writing. It was also possible to observe how the classroom setting influenced the children's learning and how all the participants within the classroom environment affected each other.

Throughout this investigation, all the children were actively engaged at their developmental level learning to read and write. The range of differences in reading and writing development is one of the realities faced by teachers of young children. Providing programs that accommodate this range of differences is a challenge for teachers. New instructional techniques are evolving as teachers and students learn from each other. The future looks promising for young children as primary teachers strive to implement the vision of the Year 2000 by providing developmentally appropriate instruction in a nurturing environment.

Implications for Further Research

A number of possibilities exist for further research arising from this study. Further research is needed to articulate the nature of these reading/writing connections at all levels and in actual classroom contexts. The quality of response during teacher/student interactions needs to be examined. Several questions remain unanswered for the author. How is children's development in drawing interrelated to their development in reading and writing? Are there other developmental milestones occurring in a child's life around the time he/she makes sense of letter-sound correspondence and begins to read? It still remains unclear if there is a dramatic cognitive growth spurt at this time. Do developmentally delayed children follow a similar pattern and make these same reading/writing connections? Replication of this research using similar programs and methods and a different group of case study students would be helpful in demonstrating that the results were not unique to this particular group of children.

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APPENDIX A

Name _____

Date _____

LETTER AND SIGN KNOWLEDGE OF GRADE ONES IN SEPTEMBER

1) Alphabet Names

T _____ I _____ D _____ W _____ B _____ P _____
 X _____ R _____ U _____ S _____ F _____
 K _____ Q _____ H _____ E _____ J _____
 M _____ Z _____ L _____ C _____ N _____
 G _____ V _____ O _____ A _____ Y _____

Score _____

2) Signs (*Source – I Can Read Signs*)

Stop _____ Fire _____ Come to the L.A.C. _____
 Office _____ Boys _____ Exit _____
 Kindergarten _____ Girls _____ The End _____

Score _____

Comments _____

3) Prints Name _____

4) Prints Letters

S _____ C _____ E _____ P _____ X _____
 M _____ B _____ T _____ R _____ O _____

Score _____

Comments _____

5) Writing

APPENDIX B

Name _____

Date _____

RECORD OF EMERGENT READING

Book _____

Book Handling

Direction of pages _____

Pages in sequence _____

Left to right page sequence _____

Tracking

Sweep with finger _____

Line by line _____

Word by word _____

Fluent with finger _____

Word by word - voice _____

Self correction _____

Matching Oral to Print

Oral to illustration only _____

Begins with print _____

Ends with print _____

Matching words as units _____

Attention to first letters _____

Single words identified _____

Self-correction _____

Comments _____

Alphabetic

Sounds aloud _____

Asks for a word _____

Strategies Observed**Emergent Writing**

APPENDIX C

Name _____

Date _____

BREAKTHROUGH WORD LIST

___ home	___ brother	___ teacher	___ morning	___ cat	
___ mum	___ sister	___ school	___ night	___ dog	
___ dad	___ boy	___ picture	___ day	___ shop	
___ television	___ girl	___ story	___ time	___ car	
___ bed	___ children	___ book	___ birthday	___ and	___ a
___ baby	___ friend	___ house	___ party	___ very	___ the

___ pretty	___ happy	___ you	___ am
___ big	___ new	___ me	___ is
___ little	___ all	___ it	___ are
___ good	___ lot	___ we	___ was
___ bad	___ this	___ our	___ his
___ naughty	___ I	___ my	___ he
___ some		___ they	___ she
		___ him	___ her
			___ will
			___ been
			___ be
			___ can

___ do	___ have	___ play	___ want	___ yes	___ down
___ did	___ has	___ walk	___ got	___ no	___ up
___ work	___ had	___ run	___ get	___ es	___ by
___ make	___ come	___ jump	___ sleep	___ s	___ on
___ made	___ go	___ skip	___ kiss	___ s	___ to
___ read	___ came	___ watch	___ love	___ ed	___ not
___ write	___ went	___ see	___ like	___ ing	___ n't
___ paint	___ said	___ saw	___ cry	___ ?	___ out
				___ for	___ at

___ of	___ what
___ there	___ with
___ why	___ after
___ because	___ but
___ when	

APPENDIX D**SEQUENCE OF READERS – selected from several series**

Off To School

Meet My Pals

Take a Peek

Helicopters & Gingerbread

Once Upon A Time

May I Come In?

I Know A Story

Up the Beanstalk

It Happened One Day

APPENDIX E

AN EVOLVING MODEL OF THE CONTINUUM OF EMERGENT LITERACY

LEVEL 1 (Precommunicative)

- scribble
- shapes
- linearity
- symbol-like
- random letters
- unstable direction
- prints own name

LEVEL 2 (Semi-phonetic)

- single letters - knows must be specific
- direction controlled
- complete message represented
- semi-syllabic, letter-name strategy
- short vowels not represented

LEVEL 3 (Phonetic)

- approximating short vowels
- sight words appearing
- most surface sounds represented as perceived

LEVEL 4 (Transitional)

- beginning to represent vowels conventionally
- beginning of inflectional patterns (ing, etc.)
- increasing use of visual patterns

LEVEL 5 (Conventional)

- vowel markers
- inflectional patterns
- derivational patterns

Dobson (1987) based on Gentry (1982).