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A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS  
OF LANGUAGE AS AFFECTING THE DECISION-MAKING  
IN PLANNING AND EVALUATING STUDENTS' WRITING  
IN GRADES FOUR, FIVE AND SIX

By

Joseph Bernard Rubin

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Elementary and Special Education

1978

## ABSTRACT

### A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS OF LANGUAGE AS AFFECTING THE DECISION-MAKING IN PLANNING AND EVALUATING STUDENTS' WRITING IN GRADES FOUR, FIVE AND SIX

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Joseph Bernard Rubin

The question of this qualitative study emanates from the reality that teachers, while planning, instructing and evaluating, make decisions and judgments about the writing process and product of students. On what do teachers base their decisions and judgments of student writing? Is the nature of language as conceived by the teacher one criterion? Specifically, this study focuses on the teacher's conception of language, the conception's compatibility with the "self-awareness" or "back-to-basics" language movements and its influence on the teaching of writing.

Purposes of this field study were threefold: (1) to ascertain the level of awareness of a teacher's conception of language; (2) to identify and explain teacher's conceptions of language and; (3) to describe if and how a teacher's language conception influences decision-making in planning and evaluation of student writing in grades four, five and six.

In-depth interviews with ten teachers of grades four, five and six were conducted to discuss the teacher's conception of



language and their classroom writing experiences. Card-sorts were used as a means of facilitating teachers' identification, discussion and explanation of ideas. Questions were asked by the researcher to determine the reasons or rationale for what teachers said, as well as what they did not say. Following the interviews, each teacher was given four samples of writing by youngsters in grades four, five and six. Each teacher was asked to read and assess each piece of work according to whatever criteria s/he chose and to make comments directly on the writing samples. Upon completion of this assessment, the teacher was directed to indicate in writing what next steps should be taken for each student's writing development. The procedures followed were observed and recorded on tape by the interviewer. From these transcripts, a description of each teacher's language conception and its effects upon student writing using the card-sort categories as a guideline were developed. Key-informant interviewing and interpersonal process recall were the techniques used for acquiring teacher responses to the study instruments. These data were used to generate a set of ten protocols, one for each subject. A protocol contained a teacher's response to the three card-sorts, assessment of the four student writing samples by the teacher and suggestions of follow-up writing activities for the author of each sample of writing.

The major findings of this qualitative study indicate that these ten teachers did not have clearly defined conceptions of language. Most were not aware of how their language beliefs

affected their decisions about student writing. Although they were somewhat consistent in what they did in evaluating student writing samples, their evaluation was not based on a language conception and was often inconsistent with what these teachers stated as being important in the card-sorts.

The researcher assumed that teachers have a conception (understandings and beliefs) about language and its instruction and that this language conception influences decisions teachers make about teaching and evaluating student writing in grades four, five and six. The data of this study indicates that this assumption is not valid for these teachers. However, generalizing to other samples or populations of teachers is not inferred since this was a field study.

## DEDICATION

To the memory of Jeffrey, my twin, and to Jill  
and Haley whom I love dearly.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I wish to thank my good friends and colleagues Dorris M. Lee and Keith Goldhammer, who encouraged me to pursue doctoral study. Their belief in me as both a person and an educator has been extremely important to my personal development.

To the Department of Elementary Education I express appreciation for the opportunity of off-campus teaching assignments and for a graduate assistantship. To the Institute for Research on Teaching I am grateful for the training I received as a Research Intern. Without this College of Education support, a doctorate for me would not have been possible.

To my committee members, Dr. James Snoddy, Dr. Keith Anderson and Dr. Sheila Fitzgerald, I extend thanks for their friendship, expertise and educational leadership. To my chairman, Dr. Perry Lanier, I am indebted for advice, counsel, and for helping me during some difficult times.

To the memory of Helen Dunis, whose dream has become my reality, I am thankful for inspiration. To my mother who never had the opportunity for higher education, but wanted it for her children, I am appreciative.

Lastly, to Jill, my oldest daughter and roommate, I want to say "thank-you." She lived through this doctoral program sharing with me both the good and bad times, but always with a loving smile on her face.

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## CHAPTER I

### PROBLEM STATEMENT

#### Status of Writing

Most teachers want children to write. They often want them to write for themselves and for others. Some teachers want children to use writing for clarifying their ideas and for communicating appropriate and meaningful messages. It is generally accepted by most teachers that if children want or need to participate optimally in their world, written communication is necessary. Writing skills can permit children to communicate their own ideas and to receive the ideas of others. Opportunities for writing are available in classrooms; students are writing. But, it is possible that writing programs may differ in classrooms according to the teacher's understanding of what is to be taught, and why.

Historically, the instructional goal for writing has been one of requiring the individual to acquire command of the written forms and conventions of language or, of helping the individual acquire the desire and willingness to use written forms in a unique, creative way. This has meant that classroom writing focuses either within the bounds of grammatical propriety and/or creative expression. As Robert P. Parker asserts, there have been two different emphases for the writing process. Emphasis has been

placed on the process of writing where the individual is unconcerned with grammar or rhetoric where writing grows naturally out of personal experience, and writers are free to find a form appropriate to those experiences to be expressed.<sup>1</sup> Or, emphasis has focused on the product of writing where the concern is conventional pedagogy, and principles of good writing to be mastered and applied when composing.<sup>2</sup>

It can be assumed that some learners have experienced a focus on both the process and product of writing. It appears that one issue has become whether grammar or creative expression should be emphasized. While it is not necessary to set up a polarity between grammar and creative writing, teachers are required to make decisions on what and how to teach writing, and how to evaluate student work.

Publicity surrounding student's writing and the teaching of writing, now popularized by some as "the crisis in writing," has propelled writing into one of the most discussed issues of contemporary school curriculum. The word crisis may be strong, but as the Spring 1977 Student Member Newsletter of the National Council of Teachers of English states, " . . . it makes good copy, and there is sufficient evidence to say that the media have made it an event, a kind of palpable public issue."<sup>3</sup>

The media reminds us that writing skills are on the decline. Some evidence of this decline exists, but there is little of it. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

results indicate that the mechanics of student writing have actually improved over the last few years; however, the more substantive aspects of writing, such as coherency, organization and revision skills, have decreased in quality. Responses to NAEP results include articles, as Richard Ohmann's, where it is argued that the decline in literacy is fiction, if not a hoax.<sup>4</sup> Others, such as Dorris M. Lee, respond to this writing crisis as one of the periodic alarms about the state of education in this country, in which each part of the curriculum alternates for criticism every five years or so.<sup>5</sup> Opinions such as these may suggest that the media's concern about writing is not well-founded. Apparently this "writing crisis" is questioned, if not denied, by some educators and is not well supported by the presently available data.

Teachers' decisions about writing programs may be responses to the current media interest in writing performance and to the language movements of "Back-to-Basics" versus "Self-awareness." The latter movement proclaims that language is a part of culture, of race, and of self-discovery. Written language is for the purposes of self-understanding and understanding others, whereas "Back-to-Basics" stresses the teaching of grammar and technical skills. Most teachers work daily to expand the written language of their students. They should make decisions based not only on media pressures, but also on the growing body of linguistic information available to them. Some teachers may have clearly defined language conceptions upon which to make decisions, others may not.<sup>6</sup>

### Statement of Problem

Generally, the question of this study emanates from the reality that teachers, while planning, instructing and evaluating, make decisions and judgments about the writing process and product of students. On what do teachers base their decisions and judgments of student writing? Is the nature of language as conceived by the teacher one criterion? Specifically, this study focuses on the teacher's conception of language, the conception's compatibility with the "self-awareness" or "Back-to-Basics" language movements and its influence on the teaching of writing.

### Purposes of Study

The purposes of this study are threefold: (1) to ascertain the level of awareness of a teacher's conception of language; (2) to identify and explain teachers' conceptions of language and; (3) to describe if and how a teacher's language conception influences the decision-making in planning and evaluating student writing in grades four, five and six.

### Assumptions of Study

There are two underlying assumptions of this study.

1. A teacher's conception of language is a product of theoretical study, practical experience, or both.
2. A teacher's conception of language affects the design and implementation of a writing program in the school.

### Method of Study

In February of 1977, a pilot study was conducted that utilized five elementary teachers working at the intermediate grade levels. These teachers volunteered as participants and responded to the question of this study in the following way: Individual interviews including use of card-sorts, samples of student writing, assessment of writing samples by the subjects with a listing of suggested learning experiences to help the authors of the samples improve their writing ability. Questions were raised requiring teachers to explain their decisions and judgments about the samples. Interviews were tape-recorded while the interviewer recorded whatever additional information seemed pertinent on the form provided for this purpose (see Appendix F).

To help identify and explain a teacher's level of awareness of a language conception and its possible influence upon student writing in grades four, five and six, the investigator employed principles of interpersonal process recall. That is a form of interviewing that elicits systematic as well as accurate responses. Three sets of card-sorts that were designed for obtaining data were used. Specifically the cover card of each set explained the directions for using the other cards. There was one main idea to each card. The first sort dealt with identifying and explaining teachers' conceptions of language. The second sort dealt with guiding principles that could influence teacher decisions about children's writing experiences. The third card-sort dealt with the technical skills of writing (see Appendices A, B, C).

The card-sorts were developed with the help of two Institute for Research on Teaching teacher collaborators, five teachers working with grades four, five and six in Waverly School District, and three MSU doctoral students with language arts competence. The final evaluation of these card-sorts was made by Dorris M. Lee, Professor Emeritus of Reading and Language Arts, Portland State University, Portland, Oregon.

The investigator used personal judgment to try to identify and explain each teacher's personal awareness of a language conception. Also, the effect of this conception on student writing, whether clearly defined or not, was examined. It was expected that by following these procedures, descriptions of teacher thinking and behavior could result. These descriptions would become the basis upon which this researcher could determine the protocol or pattern for each subject in the pilot study. Specifically, it was felt that the data obtained helped toward inferring what is a teacher's language conception and that these inferences related directly to the three purposes of the study. From the pilot data, it was decided that protocols could be determined for each participant of the actual study.

#### Significance of Study

The identification of possible teacher's conceptions of language and their effect upon student writing could contribute to research on teaching or teacher education in the following ways:



1. An explanation of identified teacher's conceptions of language may be valuable to teachers, curriculum planners, material developers, and teacher educators for planning and evaluating lessons, materials and units of study.

2. An examination of the influence of differing teacher conceptions upon student writing could be useful to researchers in assessing the impact of variables. For example, origins of teacher conceptions will be explained and noted.

3. Future researchers studying teacher effectiveness may be provided with some useful information about why some practitioners behave as they do during language studies and student writing experiences.

4. Findings may be used to help teacher educators determine course content for both undergraduate and graduate studies.

5. Conclusions may be used to help school personnel to settle upon content for inservice and staff development courses.

### Influences Upon Teacher Conceptions of Written Language

#### Language Development

There are two predominate theories about the development of language in children: the genetic and the behaviorist. Probably these theories have had a major impact upon classroom procedures with their differences affecting teacher decision-making in planning, instructing and evaluating.

The genetic theory of language development, whose best known proponent is linguist Noam Chomsky, holds that children

possess innate language mechanisms that are responsible for most of what they learn about language. Essentially it is an intuitionist theory, suggesting that children have an inborn or intuitive predisposition for language.<sup>7</sup> The behaviorist theory, suggests that language is learned primarily through imitation and that children's speech is shaped by their language environments. B. F. Skinner is the main supporter of this theory, which opposes the innate view by claiming that everything is learned through external stimuli. Kean and Personke speak to the dichotomy with the following caveat:

Until such time as one side or the other achieves a breakthrough in our understanding of this complex process, the nontheoreticians among us--especially those who work daily with children--will probably do well to steer an openminded course between the two theoretical extremes.<sup>8</sup>

#### Language, Race and Cultural Awareness

In the last dozen years there has been considerable study of language, both oral and written. This extensive study has explored the interrelations, development and functions of language and cognition. At the same time an emerging emphasis has been placed on the importance of language, race, and culture to the development of personality and self-awareness. These ideas can influence teachers and teaching. Curriculum design and development, teacher education at both the undergraduate and graduate level often reflect this knowledge. But, varying interpretations of this information can add to the dilemma of developing language programs.

In their attempt to create a new philosophical base for language some theorists have possibly added to the problem facing teachers. Jenkins explains that language is an inextricable part of self, race and culture. This age is one of confrontation when we ask the questions, Who? How? What?, and perhaps most importantly, Why?<sup>9</sup> It is an age of student unrest, even in the lower grades, a time when students caution their parents and educators like IBM cards, "do not bend, fold or mutilate" me, because if you do, I will be destroyed. Students frequently let educators know they are not captive audiences. They no longer want to play the role of consumers--without choice. Jenkins further states that especially among minority groups, there has been a renaissance of positive feelings about finding and then maintaining identity, pride and culture. Some people view language and writing as a part of culture. "Our society has come to recognize that language is not the private preserve of teachers, that there is much, much more to language than being correct, proper and precise."<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, Jenkins continues:

. . . as soon as one takes the position that one's language or dialect is better than another we have taken for ourselves, and imposed on others, a stand which is elitist and absolutist. Today such a stand also can be accurately called racist.<sup>11</sup>

### Internal and External Language

Language may be viewed in relation to cognitive psychology which holds that the internal function of language facilitates the individual to create order from the environment into existing

patterns. James E. Miller sums up this approach to language in

Word, Self, Reality: The Rhetoric of Imagination:

What this book does attempt to do is to restore awareness of the mystery of language and respect for its ways and its possibilities. . . . For the truth seems to be that language-use owes more to the imaginative faculty of the mind than to the logical. . . . We create order linguistically out of the chaos of experience. . . . Simply by its sheer selective nature, language reduces the vast and awesome overabundance of life as daily encountered to manageable proportions.<sup>12</sup>

Language may also serve an external function of allowing one to reach out and communicate with the world for testing and validating discoveries. When writing serves this external purpose, a potential audience has been determined. At this point technique and style become important. At times writing may be experimental. It may be an end in itself. But, when writing serves an internal function, the process is not mechanical; it is organic, inextricably bound into language acquisition, maturation and self-awareness.

Language and Thought

The views of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky about children's language and thought have contributed to an understanding of cognitive development. While many of their findings are complementary, their differences are significant. From a Piagetian perspective, language is a principle factor in some types of learning and not a factor in others. Vygotsky's position is that language is a mediating factor in all learning. The first perspective emphasizes language learning in and of itself, as one type of learning among others, while the second considers language

as a guiding factor in every kind of learning. John M. Kean and Carl Personke think, "For the teacher, both approaches have merit and can, indeed, complement each other . . ."<sup>13</sup>

### Writing as a Process

Writing is one of the communication processes. It involves recording one's ideas, thoughts and feelings on paper. It cannot exist apart from thinking, and is interrelated with talking, a productive skill, and the receptive language skills of listening and reading. Writing is an individual activity and is highly dependent on the total experiences one has had.

Teachers often view writing only in relation to an end product and may fail to understand what is involved in the process. When writing is thought of as a process, rather than just a product, it enables teachers to consider what happens before and during the time of children's recording what they want to say.

Language plays an important part in helping children clarify their experiences. They must consider their past experiences and think about what they mean for future action. Through written symbols children can deal with events and ideas that extend their thinking to what is outside of their immediate perception, but within the area of their understanding.

Researchers and theoreticians are attempting to understand the writing process as it develops in children and describe it in terms of what people do mentally when they write. There are several approaches taken by educators to describe this process.

D'Angelo presents a theory of rhetoric, the study of effective use of language. He maintains that the rhetorical categories are "dynamic organizational processes, symbolic manifestations of underlying mental processes, and not merely conventional, static patterns."<sup>14</sup> He recognizes the need for basic research and focuses on a suggested list of twenty-one points, the first of which is "the study of the topics of invention and their relationship to underlying logical thought processes."<sup>15</sup> His theoretical basis is compatible with Piaget's.

Another approach is the building of models. Walshe suggests one consisting of writer, subject, audience, and technique, thus adding technique to the three often proposed.<sup>16</sup>

Koch and Brazil offer a third approach in Strategies for Teaching the Compositional Process. Writing is viewed in three segments, prewriting, writing and post-writing.<sup>17</sup> The prewriting includes experiencing a response leading to a desire to write, discovering or identifying a topic and an audience, and choosing a form of writing, e.g., narrative, description or other, and of organization. The writing includes using the form selected, making language choices, and languaging or the process of carrying out the language choices. Post-writing involves criticizing and proof-reading the written work.

These three examples are illustrative of the variety and concerns of professionals who are reaching for an understanding of the writing process that will help teachers help children express their thoughts on paper more effectively.

### Overview of Dissertation

In Chapter II, the pertinent literature is reviewed in relation to the dissertation purposes. The field research design and procedures used to obtain the data are discussed in Chapter III. In Chapter IV, the teacher protocols are presented along with teacher responses to the student writing samples. These data are analyzed both collectively and individually in the chapter. Chapter V contains the interpretation, conclusions and recommendations of the study, along with concomitant discussions of each.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Research and literature as related to the three purposes of this study (1) to ascertain the level of awareness of a teacher's conception of language, (2) to identify and explain teacher's conceptions of language and, (3) to describe if and how a teacher's language conception influences the decision-making, in planning and evaluating student writing in grades four, five and six, is less than abundant. Teacher language conceptions have not been studied by researchers. If these language conceptions do affect student writing experiences as provided by classroom teachers, there is no discussion or analysis to be found in professional writing.

In this chapter, the literature presented is mainly about writing in grades four, five and six. The organization of this topic utilizes five sections: theoretical conceptions of languages; the status of writing; the teaching of writing; the evaluation of student writing and; teacher decision-making. While these five topics seem broad, research and literature has focused on beginning writing or upon composition for junior high school, high school and college. Rarely can one find an article pertaining directly to teachers and students of grades four, five and six. Because this study deals with teacher decision-making, the final section presents



a brief statement about studies that make reference to the teacher as a decision-maker in planning and evaluating student work. There is little discussion or analysis about professional decision-making in the literature as it pertains to school writing.

### Theoretical Conceptions of Language

To assess teacher conceptions of language, a review of the theories of language acquisition and development is required. The two basic theories, those of the geneticists and the behaviorists, suggest very different views on how to develop language arts skills in children. The work in the geneticists field is dominated by Noam Chomsky and by B. F. Skinner in the theoretical viewpoints of the behaviorists. Men such as Vygotsky and Piaget have also influenced conceptions of language and added to what is known about language and how children learn language processes.

### Theories of Language Acquisition

The nativist or genetic theory is best described by Noam Chomsky. He believes that each child discovers individually how language works. Chomsky proposes what he calls "linguistic universals" which are in the broadest sense the basic meanings people express or the commonalities of all language. He also proposes that language is innate, which we interpret to mean that humans are innately able to develop and use a symbolic language. Further, knowledge of children shows that all children wish to express their thoughts. With these givens, children, experiencing the language

used by those around them and having thoughts and meanings of their own, gradually and relatively quickly discover how the language they hear works to express them.<sup>1</sup>

There have been two major traditions in modern linguistic theory: universal grammar and structural linguistics.<sup>2</sup> Universal grammar has been concerned with general features of all language structure instead of particular idiosyncrasies of individual languages. It made a sharp distinction between "deep structure," or the "abstract underlying form which determines the meaning of a sentence . . .," and the "surface structure" of a sentence, or the physical components and organization of words and phrases.<sup>3</sup> An underlying theoretical component of universal grammar is that the study of language should proceed within the framework of cognitive psychology, language providing the most effective means for studying the nature and mechanisms of the human mind.

Structural linguistics has been primarily concerned with language as a system of phonological units that undergo " . . . systematic modification in phonetically determined contexts"<sup>5</sup> that is, the distinct sound patterns of individual language. Analysis of language through systematic segmentation and classification of data identifies all types of elements and their constraints, that function in a particular language. This cataloging of elements constitutes a full grammar of the language.

A synthesis of the two traditions, Chomsky suggests, would provide insight regarding the nature of mental processes, as well as the mechanisms of perception and production, and the mechanisms

by which knowledge is acquired. This synthesis would result in a universal grammar based, like the traditional one, on a rationalist philosophy of mind, but one which includes study of idiosyncratic elements of particular languages as well. This general theory of linguistic structure would determine the form of grammar and is of particular interest for the information it offers concerning "innate intellectual structure."<sup>6</sup>

This intellectual schemata is the compound of linguistic universals, and credits the child with full knowledge of these parts. The important question for language learning and teaching is the specific nature of the innate schemata in the child, to determine not only what the universals are that make up the component parts, but also how detailed and specific the schema are. The schema must not be falsified by the diversity of languages, but on the other hand, must be " . . . sufficiently rich and explicit to account for the rapidity and uniformity of language learning, and the remarkable complexity and range of the generative grammars that are the product of language learning."<sup>7</sup>

The task of understanding how language is acquired, therefore, consists initially of writing a grammar that includes formal and substantive universals and that is sufficient to account for any utterance a child might make. The grammar is not a description of the performance of the speaker, but rather of his linguistic competence, performance and competence being two quite distinct things. The more profound question involves the kinds of

structures the person has succeeded in mastering and internalizing, not whether he uses them in practice, when he may be influenced by a myriad of interfering factors.<sup>8</sup>

Imitation, Chomsky explains, can explain only a small amount of language knowledge, particularly at the level of sentence formation when most of what the child hears and says is totally new to the child's experience.<sup>9</sup> A determination of competence cannot be derived simply from an analysis of performance. What is called for is experimentation that will draw out the true characteristics of the innate grammar. For example, the child's ability to repeat sentences and nonsentences might offer some evidence as to the underlying system he is using. In Chomsky's Aspects of the Theory of Syntax he describes in great detail the requirements for constructing an "acquisition model" for language.<sup>10</sup>

In a paper called "Linguistic Theory," Chomsky doubts whether the insights about language theory obtained in linguistics and psychology can be directly applied to language teaching.<sup>11</sup> However, he discusses four notions that may be significant for language teaching: creativity in language use, the abstractness of linguistic expression, the universality of underlying linguistic structure, and the role of intrinsic organization in cognitive processes.<sup>12</sup> But, in the final analysis, "it is the language teacher himself who must validate or refute any specific proposal. There is very little in psychology or linguistics that he can accept on faith."<sup>13</sup>

Chomsky's view of some basic learning matters as they relate to language acquisition in the teaching process can be summarized:

1. Capacity is genetically determined and realized by the individual's innate language schemata. It consists of his ability to select from this schemata the phonologically relevant features the utterance requires;

2. Learning involves building on already acquired knowledge of language;

3. Reinforcement is not significant for language acquisition although it may facilitate knowing better how to use the innate language structure by creating an awareness of the same, and;

4. Transfer implies using rule learning from the innate language structure in a variety of situations.

In relationship to writing, Chomsky would advocate writing experiences that allow students to explore and discover the writing process. He believes language learning is intuitive, and not directly taught. This language process transfers as children write and discover rules for writing. Writing is learned by writing. It is highly individualistic.

B. F. Skinner, a behavioral psychologist, advocated the imitation-reinforcement theory. Briefly, this theory proposes that children learn their language by imitating the speech of those around them. They continue to use the language that people react to in a positive way. Skinner's description of verbal behavior is behavior reinforced through the mediation of other persons, and as

such cannot be distinguished from behavior in general.<sup>14</sup> An account of the behaviors of the speaker and listener taken together makes up a total verbal episode. One interpretation of this interaction allows a causal analysis in which specific verbal behavior can be predicted and controlled by changing the conditions under which it occurs. This approach to verbal behavior satisfies the need for a science of verbal behavior that can be applied whenever language is used.<sup>15</sup> In the past, verbal behavior has been dealt with as events taking place inside of the individual, with emphasis on the use of words, meaning, ideas, and information rather than on the functional combination of these events.<sup>16</sup> The study of meaning in particular has always sought objectivity, although this has failed because of the effects of the speaker's intention, attitude, sentiment, or " . . . some other psychological condition."<sup>17</sup> When language is studied, independent of its interaction with the environment and consequently of the associated behavior, meaning cannot possibly be understood. Without taking into account psychological variables such as intention, the speaker's meaning is pure speculation.

The need for an alternative approach is great, Skinner believes, and the task must begin with a description of verbal behavior. This task fulfilled, the approach must offer an explanation of the conditions relevant to the occurrence of the behavior. This presents us with a repertoire of verbal behavior which then demands that we study the interaction of these parts and the effects of multiple causes. An analysis of the activities of the

speaker and learner, such as, in the abstract, thinking and understanding, leads us to the role of verbal behavior studied in the problem of thinking. Verbal behavior studied in its totality demands the same principles and methods for the study of human behavior as a whole.<sup>18</sup>

Skinner's hypothesis on language acquisition accepts two types of determiners, genetic and learned, that work together in a complementary, and not antagonistic way.<sup>19</sup> However, what is genetic may be observable only as a disposition toward language; what is learned is observable in every behavior. Language teaching must inevitably concern itself, therefore, with behaviors that show increased learning and with ways to encourage these behaviors. In instruction written materials and imitation in combination with interaction between teacher and students, are used to produce new verbal behavior.<sup>20</sup>

Skinner's point of view on some basic learning issues as they relate to language acquisition in the teaching process might be as follows:

1. Capacity depends on the structuring of the stimuli in the teaching environment;
2. Learning takes place when an individual responds to stimuli in the environment;
3. Reinforcement strengthens response probability;
4. Transfer occurs when there are common elements either in a response already reinforced, or in a reinforcer that has already provided reinforcing;

5. and goals in a Skinner classroom are behavioral objectives that facilitate the learning process, such as practice in transfer, discrimination, etc. Measurement consists of tests or observations to assure that specific behaviors can be accomplished.

In relationship to writing, school experiences would emphasize student language behaviors based upon teacher-selected models. These models would be incorporated into each author's style. A precise and exact use of language would be advocated. The teacher's role includes structuring of appropriate stimuli in the teaching environment. Teachers would need to use reinforcement to strengthen correct response probability. Measurement of learning is conducted through tests and observations to assure specific behaviors are mastered.

#### Conceptions of Language in Children's Thought

Some of the most influential work in language development involving school age children, as well as younger ones, is that conducted by Jean Piaget (1959). Much of his early work with language was in its relation to thought, which is published originally in 1926, and republished in 1957. In a more recent book, The Child and Reality he reports his new understandings based on his interim research. In this book he reports,

. . . when I believed in the close relation between language and thought, I scarcely studied anything but verbal thought. Since then there has been the study of the sensorimotor intelligence before language. . . . All this has taught me there exists a logic of coordinations of actions far deeper



than the logic related to language and much prior to that of propositions in the strict sense.<sup>21</sup>

While Piaget still recognizes a close relationship between thought and language, his more recent studies pinpoint a crucial issue. In relation to his levels of child development, he finds that children can and do operate on a level above that on which they can use language.<sup>22</sup>

Piaget reports another relevant finding in his The Language and Thought of the Child. Until about the age of seven, children think largely egocentrically. They carry on conversations in which they may seem to be sharing ideas but mainly each is talking about his own actions and thoughts. And further until about seven " . . . the child . . . is incapable of keeping to himself the thoughts which enter his mind. He says everything. He has no verbal continence."<sup>23</sup>

Until seven or eight, children make no attempt to be consistent in their opinions.<sup>24</sup> For this reason it becomes important gradually to develop this ability in youngsters at about that age and later. Further, Piaget found that because of the egocentric nature of the child until seven or seven and a half, real collaboration and a meeting of minds in abstract thought does not occur until after that time.<sup>25</sup>

The beginnings of Piaget's theory of intelligence are shown as he discusses the importance of a child moving from egocentric speech to socialized speech.<sup>26</sup> Other than his first book, Piaget hasn't written specifically about language. He deals with

language only as a factor in cognitive development.<sup>27</sup> Piaget feels that logical thinking is primarily non-linguistic, is derived from action, and that language makes its appearance when actions begin to be represented in thought and becomes clear only as ideas become more logical. He does not see language as an intrinsically necessary element of operational thinking.<sup>28</sup>

Intelligence then is "the regulating force of a living organization that tends towards a stable equilibrium between organism and environment. This tendency finds expression in development. One can distinguish more or less equilibrated stages along the evolutionary continuum as well as in early development. These stages are characterized by an overall structure within which individual behavior is coordinated so that higher stages incorporate the achieved regulations of a lower stage."<sup>29</sup>

The stages referred to reflect Piaget's view that intelligence develops in a series of four stages which follow in sequence. The first stage in Piaget's development of intelligence is called the sensorimotor period and is the period of infancy from birth to two years to age. During the sensorimotor time, preparation for some of the phonetic phases of language is found in early schemes of hearing, voicing, of reciprocal eye, ear, voice and movement coordination and time sequencing.<sup>30</sup>

The preoperational, or second stage is the preparatory part of the stage of concrete operations and is characterized by formation of the symbolic or semiotic function--that is a person's capacity to construct or produce a symbol for representing that

which the person knows and which is not present. This interiorization of actions takes time, because the child is reconstructing his actions at a new level. Reconstruction presupposes a continual decentering process.<sup>31</sup>

Piaget believes that the transition between sensorimotor behavior and symbolic or representational behavior is tied to the presence of imitation beginning at about six months, moving later to deferred imitation, symbolic play and mental images. This is the beginning of symbolic function which involves the function of representational thought and the acquisition of language. The first verbal utterances are linked to and begin with symbolic play, deferred imitation, and mental images as interiorized imitations.<sup>32</sup>

The stage of concrete operations at approximately the age of seven is the beginning of operational intelligence. A concrete operation implies underlying general systems of groupings such as classification, seriation, etc. This involves the growing use of the processes of interiorization, coordination and decentration which result in equilibrium. Piaget believes operational knowing is not inherently linked to any symbol representation, including language. Language and speech are a special symbol system, evolved for social communication and important for socialization. Language is required and used by the growing child in a manner similar to other symbolic instruments, but is not an indispensable medium for intelligence.<sup>33</sup> Sinclair-de-Zwart's research shows

that language can direct attention to pertinent factors of a problem and it can control perceptual activities. Language can prepare an operation but is neither sufficient nor necessary to the formation of concrete operations.<sup>34</sup>

Formal operations is Piaget's final period of intellectual development and it begins at about the age of twelve and is consolidated during adolescence. Piaget believes that the adolescent's system of mental operations reaches a high degree of equilibrium. Thought becomes flexible and effective and can deal with complex problems of reasoning. Thought is no longer tied to the concrete. Formal thought consists in reflecting on operations and thereby operating on operations. At the level of formal operations propositional operations are closely tied to the use of verbal communication. And Piaget states that it is hard to conceive how they would develop or reach an advanced stage of development without the use of language.<sup>35</sup>

Piaget sees language only as a factor in cognitive development and as only a part of symbolic functioning. He does not assign an important role to the use of a representational system. His descriptions of the preverbal stage, the use of personalized symbols and then the social use of language show the early stages of semantic development. Language makes its appearance when actions begin to be represented in thought, and language is not necessary for the development of operational thinking. At the stage of formal operations the ability to use language to encode abstract ideas seems to facilitate the utilization of formal operational

structures. In relationship to writing, Piaget would feel that use of natural language is essential for identifying meaning in one's recorded statements, and that the development of writing skills is unique to each individual. Teachers would provide materials and activities through which children could develop writing skills. Children at the intermediate level would be operating at the concrete and formal operation stages. This means they are beginning to develop a sense of audience in terms of what they say on paper. Teachers would assess on the basis of children's developmental levels in relationship to their ability to express thoughts on paper and their use of writing skills.

In Philip S. Dale's book, Language Development, he writes about young children having great difficulty in seeing situations from any other perspective than their own. Dale makes reference to Vygotsky's book Thought and Language concerning the special nature of written language in this respect. Vygotsky compares "inner speech," talking to one's self, with talking to others. "Inner speech can be highly abbreviated and rapid."<sup>36</sup> Dale continues by explaining it is something like talking to someone you know very well about a familiar topic; much can be left out. But talking to another person requires filling in much additional information. When Vygotsky considered writing, he realized that it is just that much farther removed from inner speech. The reader is not present, so we have no immediate feedback, either verbal or nonverbal. The writer may not even know who the reader will be. No assumptions may be made about the specific knowledge of the

reader. Dale explains that Vygotsky feels that one needs to change from compact inner speech to detailed written speech in order to communicate.<sup>37</sup>

In contrast to Piaget's emphasis upon language as an outside agent in the child's developing thought, Vygotsky's position emphasizes the language of the children and the adult teacher in the creation of thought. Vygotsky, according to Smith, Goodman and Meredith, shows great concern for the dialogue between children and adult teachers, in contrast with Piaget's concern for self-discovery before adult language is introduced.<sup>38</sup> But the early interaction between the child's complexes (similar to Piaget's notion of schemata) and the language of one's environment is crucial. The egocentric speech of the child becomes the inner speech that is the shorthand of one's thinking. Vygotsky closes his book with,

Thought and language . . . are the key to the nature of human consciousness. Words play a central part not only in the development of thought but in the historical growth of consciousness as a whole.<sup>39</sup>

If language is seen as a mediating factor in all learning, then through writing one's thoughts become internalized. This happens when student decisions are made as to what to write and how best to record it. The teacher's role is to help students formulate ideas and to show differing ways of presenting these ideas.

### The Status of Writing

The National Assessment of Educational Progress has reported on the achievements of youth in such subjects as reading, writing and science. John C. Mellon states that the writing component of this assessment indicates that:

Despite the rise of visual studies and broadside announcing the post-literate society, writing, the second R, continues to be viewed by teachers and non-teachers as one of the most important subjects taught in school.<sup>40</sup>

Paradoxically, however, Mellon feels there is widescale disagreement on its curricular definition.<sup>41</sup>

But whatever the definition used to plan student writing experiences, all NAEP student participants were tested as if there was a common definition. Therefore, it was found that in 1974 thirteen and seventeen year olds used a simpler vocabulary, wrote in shorter, "primer-like" style and wrote less coherently than their peers four years earlier. This repeat assessment found that "while those 1974 writers rated 'good' were as good as those in 1970, the poor writers were worse--and there were more of them."<sup>42</sup> The new data about nine year olds over a four year span showed, according to Mellon:

. . . of the nines in 1974 we may conclude that although they were willing and able to write more, they did so less coherently and in a manner that avoided awkwardness through the unfortunate expedient of immature sentence structure.<sup>43</sup>

But there was a general feeling as reported in the December 1976 NAEP Newsletter that the mechanics of writing--punctuation, capitalization, verb agreement, spelling--"seem to be well in hand."<sup>44</sup> A major concern, however, for both educators and the

public was the decline in coherency in student writing. Speculation as to reasons for this decline address themselves to society itself: (1) the influence of television and advertising language with its abbreviated, fragmented sentences and a continuity sensed visually, rather than through writing, (2) the basic assumption that the need to communicate through writing is being questioned by many young people.<sup>45</sup>

In the October 1977 NAEP Newsletter it was reported that American youths generally lack three essential writing skills: organizing their writing, making clear transitions between sentences and, improving their work through revision.

In surveying writing abilities of 9-, 13- and 17-year olds, National Assessment has found that students are willing to revise their written work, but the revisions are mechanical (punctuation and spelling) and stylistic or "cosmetic" changes that seldom improve the overall writing effort.<sup>46</sup>

Results of the first NAEP Assessment of writing along with a public concern about student's writing skill led a Newsweek writer in 1975 to state:

If your children are attending college, the chances are that when they graduate they will be unable to write ordinary expository English . . .

If they are in high school and planning to attend college, the chances are less than even they will be able to write English at the minimal college level . . .

If they are not planning to attend college, their skills in writing English may not even qualify them for secretarial or clerical work . . .

And, if they are attending elementary school, they are almost certainly not being given the kind of required reading material, much less writing instruction that might make it possible for them to eventually write comprehensible English.<sup>47</sup>



There can be little doubt that writing, an old discipline, has become both a societal and educational issue.

Ellen K. Coughlin in her article, "The Teaching of Writing: No Longer a 'Stepchild,'" maintains that concern over students' inability to write and falling registrations in literature courses brings new respectability for teachers of composition and soaring enrollments in their classes. She states:

The demand for writing teachers and the interest in teaching writing have been brought on by two developments:  
 -enrollments have been falling in traditional literature courses and rising in writing courses  
 -the widespread outcry over the reported inability of students to write coherently has forced departments to give greater attention to courses in composition.<sup>48</sup>

Donald H. Graves explains that the so-called return to basics "vaults over writing to the skills of penmanship, vocabulary, spelling and usage that are thought necessary to precede composition."<sup>49</sup> Graves claims that so much time is spent tackling drills that there is little time to play the real game, writing. In his latest Research Update labeled "We Won't Let Them Write," Graves says that writing is extolled, worried over, cited as a national priority, but seldom practiced.

The problem with writing is not poor spelling, punctuation, grammar and handwriting. The problem with writing is no writing.<sup>50</sup>

Graves concludes his article with the statement, "Children will write if we let them."<sup>51</sup>

In the elementary language arts curriculum, writing is one of the areas of skill development. Its scope relating directly to

writing as an issue ranges from handwriting skills to expressive writing activities.

William H. Rupley states, "the easiest language areas for both teacher and student to deal with are those which both explicitly identify the processes involved in teaching the skills and also evaluate the student's product with well established criteria."<sup>52</sup> Rupley claims that within a language arts program writing skills can be ordered in terms of their explicit structure as they relate to both teaching process and evaluation of students' written expression.<sup>53</sup>

### The Teaching of Writing

Dorothy Grant Hennings and Barbara M. Grant make the assumption that when learning to write, children need to learn to construct meaningful ideas for communication. They direct teachers' attention "to focus both on the substance of writing--the ideas to be expressed--and on the process of writing--the medium through which ideas are communicated."<sup>54</sup>

Richard Gebhart feels that in language arts classes, teachers should learn and help their students to view compositions as "a process of growth and development, beginning in creativity . . . and moving toward discipline and craftsmanship."<sup>58</sup>

Elisabeth McPherson states that good writing places concentration on communication rather than correctness. Her opinion is that writing becomes a matter of coming to terms with experience. "Writing forces form on what has been amorphous,

makes precise and permanent experience that has been vague and fleeting."<sup>56</sup> She believes that "Good teachers of writing see the product . . . as part of the process, an attempt to understand and control experience."<sup>57</sup> McPherson feels that a satisfactory product cannot be developed through knowledge about writing, usage drill, and punctuation rules alone.

James Britton argues that since the primary purpose of writing is communication, "one important dimension of development in writing ability is the growth of a sense of audience."<sup>58</sup>

Carol Sager, in her article, discusses Vygotsky's point of view that writing is remote from the purposes of children, and that children need to develop a sense of what writing is for and what it is like if they learn to do it. Vygotsky's\* position, according to Sager, is that vocabulary, elaboration, organization and structure are major factors which contribute to effective, interesting communication.<sup>59</sup> Sager, acknowledging that little has been established scientifically, claims contemporary literature reveals agreement amongst authors regarding factors that influence improving writing in the middle grades. These factors are: (1) children must have a self-felt purpose for writing; (2) children must develop a sense of audience; (3) children need an understanding of the major factors which contribute to effective writing; (4) and children must become actively involved in evaluating their own writing.<sup>60</sup>

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\*Lev Vygotsky, Thought and Language, Translated by E. Haufmann and G. Vakar (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1962).

Graves reports that a way of teaching writing is the process-conference approach.<sup>61</sup> Teachers using this method initiate brief individual conferences during the process of writing. A single completed paper may require six or more conference of from one to five minutes each.

Miles Myers in his article describes five theoretical approaches to the teaching of writing. (1) The models approach assumes that a child can develop a skill through imitation before he has the power of sustained thought. It also assumes that reading can introduce students to ideas and structures that cannot be generated from one's personal experiencing. (2) The steps approach does inform students about process. This technique assumes that writers go through three distinct steps in the process of writing--prewriting, composing and editing--and that writing is aided more by heuristic procedures than by rules. (3) The sentence-combining approach shares with the models approach the assumption that one can learn a skill by imitating structure, and it shares with the steps approach the assumption that students can edit each others work. Students are to begin with the sentence as it provides discrete boundaries for looking at the basic principles of composition. (4) The relationships approach emphasizes relationships between the writer and the audience and between the writer and subject. (5) This last approach says that students must have some theory of the world in order to write effectively. Students can also be taught how to shape their world and their writing through instruction in predication and visual models.

Myers concludes the article by stating that "the wise teacher uses something of each of the five approaches, choosing that which is appropriate for the student."

### The Evaluation of Student Writing

Lois Arnold feels that assessing student writing requires careful consideration of what kind of evaluation is actually helpful to students. She states, "intensive evaluation has little or no effect on improving writing unless writers find it meaningful."<sup>63</sup>

Patrick Groff reviewed studies on the effect of teacher's criticism about student writing. He concludes that research does not support the committee findings of the National Council of Teachers of English Commission on Composition that the quality and originality of student's writing will be reduced by negative teacher commentary.<sup>64</sup> Rupley responds that, " . . . the value of negative

criticism may be open to discussion, teachers do still need to evaluate students' writing to determine the effectiveness of their instruction and the areas of the students' strengths and weaknesses."<sup>65</sup> Arguments are advanced that criteria for the evaluation of creative writing are possible to formulate. Dixon states that "When the main purpose of writing is seen as discovery, the job of the teacher shifts from laying down rules and formulas to finding ways that will help those discoveries take place."<sup>66</sup>

Lundsteen explains that "Evaluation of children's writing is a topic that will challenge or threaten, depending on the evaluator's personal philosophy. It is usually a challenging

topic to educators or researchers, for they need to find ways to measure children's growth in writing."<sup>67</sup>

Cooper and Odell maintain, " . . . that there is no mechanical or technical solution to the problems posed in evaluating writing." Because these writers view writing as an expressive human activity, it is their belief that the best response to it is " . . . a receptive, sympathetic human response."<sup>68</sup>

But, Ronald L. Cramer, in his chapter entitled, "Evaluating Children's Writing," states that a fair marking system seeks to achieve three objectives:

1. to provide children with a feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction from writing.
2. to give children a sensitive and knowledgeable instructional criticism that will foster growth in writing and,
3. to assign grades using criteria which emphasize clarity of thought, language, sincerity, extent of improvement, and general writing standards.<sup>69</sup>

While the chapter presents a wide range of exercises which might aid teachers in gaining better understanding of children's writing, there are four purposes of analysis of children's writing presented:

1. to gain therapeutic insight into children's thoughts and feelings,
2. to gain information that will enhance instruction in writing,
3. to discover diagnostic information that will direct future instruction more precisely and,
4. to make marking decisions regarding children's relative progress in writing development.<sup>70</sup>

Wagner claims the first and most popular technique used by teachers in all fields, and not just writing, is to avoid the drudgery of grading. She states further that assigning grades is

the least effective in accomplishing any learning about written communication for students. In discussing the alternatives to grading student writing, Wagner suggests that, " . . . The dual grade was the first attempt to escape the evils of the comprehensive system (that is, placing a grade value on every little thing)." <sup>71</sup>

Additional approaches are the process of grading by selective criterion, random grading and the blanket grade. The first meaning " . . . that one element of an assigned composition is singled out for evaluation . . ." <sup>72</sup> while the reader actually ignores other aspects. The second approach requires a teacher to select a few papers for comprehensive, dual or selective criterion grading. The third is a kind of pass/fail system of grading, " . . . the blanket grade is given to those who complete the assignment" <sup>73</sup>; those who do not complete the assignment receive no grade, which most often is the same as a failing grade.

Wagner continues by suggesting that students evaluate each others work as well as self-grading. These evaluation techniques, she warns, " . . . should be reserved for students who are very much at ease with their own writing ability." <sup>74</sup> However, Wagner does identify the need for a teacher role in relation to evaluating student writing. "The non-grading system is conceptually rather simple; it substitutes comments for corrections." <sup>75</sup>

### Teacher Decision-Making

Since actual classroom experience requires a great deal of professional decision-making, several writers have suggested that such behaviors be analyzed to help prospective teachers learn how to make competent choices. Bruce Joyce and Marsha Weil discuss two central concepts in the decision theory model: prediction system and value system.<sup>76</sup> Value judgments inherent in choicing are seen by Robert S. Harnach as a function of the teacher's "basic knowledge of the foundations of education (related to) the classroom setting."<sup>77</sup> The teacher as decision maker is a current theme in the reexamination of teacher training programs by Dale L. Brubaker.<sup>78</sup>

In the N. I. E. Panel 6 report, "Teaching As Clinical Information Processing," the participants report their concern with "improving knowledge about the mental life of teachers which is considered to be an 'important' determiner of teacher behavior."<sup>79</sup> It is their opinion that

Innovations in the context, practices, and technology of teaching must be mediated through teachers' minds and motives. Teachers must not only possess relevant instructional skills; they must also be able to diagnose the situations in which a particular set of skills should be used.<sup>80</sup>

Michael J. Dunkin and Bruce F. Biddle constructed a model for classroom teaching that enables one to organize the findings of research on teaching. Two of the four variables they have identified are presage and product. Presage variables concern the characteristics of teachers that may be examined "for their effects



on the teaching process."<sup>81</sup> Generally, Dunkin and Biddle believe that such variables have a potential for control by school district administrators or teacher educators. Teacher formative experiences, which include "every experience encountered prior to teaching,"<sup>82</sup> teacher-training experiences including the college or university attended, courses taken, attitudes of instructors, experiences during practice teaching, and inservice, etc. and teacher-properties which are the measurable personality characteristics the teacher takes into a teaching situation are the components they would examine in studying the process and presage variables.<sup>83</sup>

Product variables according to Dunkin and Biddle concern the outcomes of teaching. "Those changes that come about in pupils as a result of their involvement in classroom activities with teachers and other pupils."<sup>84</sup> These variables taken from the Dunkin and Biddle Model for Research on Classroom Teaching discussed here are pertinent to decision-making in planning and evaluating student writing, as well as studying teacher conceptions of language.

### Summary

The two basic theories of language acquisition and development reviewed result in very different language programs for students. Conceptions of language in Piaget and Vygotsky also have implications for teacher application to classroom writing programs. Although several ways of evaluating student writing in the

intermediate grades are discussed in the literature, relatively little research has been done relating decision-making of teachers to student writing programs. These programs may or may not be based on teacher's language conceptions, and if they are, there is no research that describes this relationship. While student writing is receiving much attention, little is to be found in research to assist teachers of grades four, five and six in the decision-making in planning and evaluating as they respond to the current media interest in writing performance and to the language movements of "Back-to-Basics" and "Self-awareness."

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

Few studies have attempted to identify or explain teacher conceptions of language. Assuming teacher language conceptions influence classroom writing experiences, this effect has not been researched and is not described in professional literature. The purposes of this study were threefold: (1) to ascertain the level of awareness of a teacher's conception of language; (2) to identify and explain teacher's conceptions of language and; (3) to describe if and how a teacher's language conception influences decision-making in planning and evaluation of student writing in grades four, five and six.

To address the purposes of this study, the following were investigated:

1. sources that potentially influence the development of teacher conceptions of language;
2. guiding principles that affect teacher decisions about school writing experiences;
3. technical skills recognized by teachers as ones that equip students to become effective users of written language;
4. decisions teacher make when planning student writing experiences;
5. and effect of teacher's conception of language on planning and evaluating student writing.

The study focused upon what A. Jon Magoon calls "constructions,"<sup>1</sup> which this researcher labeled conceptions. These conceptions were looked at in terms of (1) the origins of a teacher's language conception, (2) the identification and explanation of a language conception and, (3) the influence of an existing conception in making decisions about student writing. R. E. Snow wrote about teachers being active constructors of knowledge and rules.<sup>2</sup> In the current study the knowledge and rules specifically pertained to language and writing. Snow discussed teacher acts based upon knowledge and rules. These teacher acts are discussed in Chapter IV of this dissertation in terms of decision-making in planning and evaluating student's writing in grades four, five and six.<sup>3</sup> To obtain the information for meeting the purposes of this study, a design for gathering qualitative data was developed. This ethnographic technique allowed the researcher to try to understand other teacher's thinking. Support for this approach came from Harry Wolcott who felt that ethnographic means could be used to obtain qualitative data for studying virtually any aspect of human social life.<sup>4</sup> He stated that "The ethnographer's unique contribution is his commitment to understand and convey how it is to 'walk in someone else's shoes' and to 'tell it like it is.'"<sup>5</sup> Wolcott felt that the ethnographic technique of "key-informant interviewing," taken from Pertti Pelto's Anthropological Research, The Structure of Inquiry (1970), has significance for information-gathering purposes. He commented,

The notion of key-informant interviewing, referring to expanded interviews with one or a few members of a group rather than brief interviews with numerous "subjects," is a characteristic of anthropological fieldwork and appropriate for researchers concerned with teacher action and behavior.<sup>6</sup>

Frederick Erickson added, "What qualitative research does best and most essentially is to describe key incidents in some relation to the wider social context . . . "<sup>7</sup> The examination of student writing was studied in relation to the teacher's beliefs and ideas about language. This relationship is described and explained in Chapter IV of this dissertation.

The following books and articles using qualitative design provided a basis for looking at and examining teacher's conceptions.

1. Bussis, Chittenden and Amarel, in their book, Beyond Surface Curriculum: An Interview Study of Teacher's Understanding, described teacher's conceptions of schooling. These descriptions were obtained through indepth interviews.<sup>8</sup>

2. Wolf and Tymitz, in the article, Ethnography and Reading: Matching Inquiry Mode to Process, as they were concerned with defining variables carefully and thoroughly, emphasized the need for future research on reading "which falls within an ethnographic paradigm."<sup>9</sup>

3. Hunt, in his book, Teachers are Psychologists Too: On the Application of Psychology to Education, used a variation of the Kelly, Role Concept Repertory Test to identify conceptions of teachers.<sup>10</sup> Subjects were asked to work with ideas on card-sorts.

4. Wilcox, in his book, A Method for Measuring Decision Assumptions, identified conceptions of brokers by utilizing a variation of the Kelly, Role Concept Repertory Test.<sup>11</sup> Again, subjects worked with the forced-choice card-sort.

What these authors hold in common is an emphasis on what people need to know in order to do what they do. Erickson stated, "The emphasis is placed not on behavior but on the knowledge necessary to produce the behavior."<sup>12</sup> Ernest Rothkopf indirectly supported this idea with the assertion that "educational researchers frequently try to measure and manipulate variables that have not been adequately described."<sup>13</sup>

### Research Design

#### Definition of Terms

Conceptions.--For purposes of this study the definition of conceptions is the same as that of Schroeder, Karlin and Phares. They wrote, "Each person perceives and responds to the world in his unique way."<sup>14</sup> Kenneth Goodman supported this definition by stating, " . . . the sum of a persons' beliefs and ideas concerning something are conceptions."<sup>15</sup>

Language.--Language is defined in this study by Kean and Personke " . . . as a social system of oral-aural symbols."<sup>16</sup> Lee supported this idea, but stated, "Language is human thought, either produced or received. It is the most common system of communication."<sup>17</sup>

Conceptions of Language.--In this study conceptions of language are defined as ways in which teachers privately thought about and dealt with language. Combs, Blume, Newman and Wass added to this definition when they stated, "Whether a teacher will be effective depends fundamentally on the nature of his private world of perceptions."<sup>18</sup>

Writing.--Writing in this study is considered the recorded statement of a student, focusing upon both its content and craft. According to Lee, it is not merely handwriting and mechanics, but a form of communication--to one's self, to friends, to family, to others. It is a symbolic way of sharing experiences, ideas and information.<sup>19</sup>

#### Population and The Sample

Participating in this study was a group of ten teachers, nine women and one man, of fourth, fifth and sixth grade students. The teachers, from a mid-western suburban school district were volunteers. Each teacher had a minimum of three years classroom experience. They were selected with self-approval and approval of their building principals. All indicated in informal conversation they were interested in language arts and willing to participate in this study. The pilot study was conducted in the same district in February, 1977, using these same procedures with five teachers who did not participate in this study proper.

Information was obtained by: individual interviews including use of card-sorts; samples of student writing; assessment

of these writing samples; and a listing of teacher-suggested learning experiences to help the students of the samples improve their writing. Questions were raised requiring teachers to explain their decisions and judgments. Interviews were taped, and the interviewer recorded information that seemed to explain constructs on the recording sheet created for this purpose (see Appendix F).

### Instrumentation

Three sets of card-sorts were developed. The cover card for each sort gave directions for using the other cards. One main idea was entered on each card. Each card-sort focused on a specific theme as related to the three purposes of this study. The first card-sort dealt with identifying and explaining teacher's assumed conceptions of language. The second sort dealt with guiding principles that can influence teacher decisions about children's writing experiences. The third card-sort dealt with technical skills of writing (see Appendices A, B, C). The card-sorts were developed with the help of two Michigan State University, Institute for Research on Teaching teacher-collaborators, five teachers working with grades four, five and six in a local school district, and three doctoral students having extensive language arts backgrounds. The final evaluation of these card-sorts was made by Dorris M. Lee, Professor Emeritus of Reading and Language Arts, Portland State University, Portland Oregon.



### Assumptions and Limitations

When inquiring into teacher's conceptions of language, the researcher assumed that teachers have understandings and beliefs about language and its instruction. Further, it was assumed language conceptions influence teacher decisions on student writing in grades four, five and six. It was also assumed teachers hold understandings and beliefs about teaching and evaluating writing related to their language conceptions.

Limitations of the study are:

1. The researcher's judgment was used to identify the language conceptions, general principles, and technical skills listed on the card-sorts.
2. The use of the three sets of card-sorts required of the teachers a forced choice from the conceptions, principles, and technical skills listed.
3. The cards, when being used by the participants, may have become instructional and may have altered previous thinking.
4. The authors of the writing samples were unknown to the teachers. Commenting on and evaluating papers of students that one does not know, for an assignment that one did not make, is a simulation.
5. The information generated for describing behaviors and judgments may be impossible to interpret even with anthropological techniques.<sup>20</sup>

6. The stimulus-recall techniques used during the interviews may assist in determining factual data, but it is not fool-proof. Information is subject to truthful cooperation of participants.

7. The results of the study may contribute to knowledge of teacher conceptions of language and writing in the intermediate grade classroom only.

8. The interviewer will identify teacher conceptions of language by extrapolating from the data. These extrapolated conceptions may reflect interviewer bias or prejudice.

### Procedures

#### Interview and Card-sort Discussion

In-depth interviews with ten teachers of grades four, five and six were conducted to discuss the teacher's conception of language and the classroom writing experiences. Card-sorts were used as a means of facilitating teachers' identification, discussion and explanation of ideas (see Appendices A, B, C). Questions were asked by the interviewer to get at reasons or rationale for what teachers said, as well as what they did not say. Interpersonal Process Recall: A Method of Influencing Human Interaction was studied under the guidance of Norman Kagan, Professor of Counseling, Michigan State University. Specifically the task was for the interviewer to learn the two concepts of exploratory and listening responses. The two modes facilitated interview communication.<sup>21</sup>

### Decision and Judgment of Writing Samples

Following the interview, each teacher was given four samples of writing by youngsters in grades four, five and six (see Appendix D). The teachers were asked to read and assess each piece of work according to whatever criteria they chose and to make comments or notations directly on the samples. Upon completion of the assessment, teachers were directed to indicate on a separate paper what next step(s) should be taken for each student's writing development (see Appendix E). Questions requiring teachers to explain their decisions and judgments were raised.

The procedures were recorded on tape. Also, this interviewer recorded nonverbal cues and messages and/or whatever additional information seemed appropriate (see Appendix F). From the tape recordings and the transcripts the interviewer wrote a description of each participant's conception of language and its effect upon student writing using the card-sort categories as a guideline. Attention was directed to how teachers plan and evaluate children's writing.

### Summary

Teacher notions of language about student writing in grades four, five and six were described. What a teacher claimed as beliefs about language, its uses and functions, was obtained by conducting interviews and using three sets of card-sorts designed to help teachers identify and explain their ideas. Teacher judgments of student writing samples were compared with

and added to the information on teacher beliefs. Key-informant interviewing, and interpersonal process recall were the means used for describing and interpreting teacher responses to the instruments. These resulted in a set of ten protocols, one for each subject, which may or may not support the assumptions of the study. A protocol contains a teacher's response to the three card-sorts, assessment of the four student writing samples by the teacher and suggestions of follow-up writing activities for the author of each sample.

## CHAPTER IV

### TEACHER PROTOCOLS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data for this study of teacher conceptionalization and resulting behavior was collected through use of individual interviews using three sets of card-sorts, and from teacher's written assessments of student's writing samples. These assessments included a listing of learning experiences suggested to help develop student writing. Participants in the study were ten elementary school teachers of grades four, five and six. All taught in the same school district, but in five different elementary buildings. Nine of the participants were female and one was male with ages ranging from 25 to 61 years. All were tenured teachers with a minimum of three years teaching experience. All indicated an interest in language arts and a willingness to participate in the study. The individual interviews and writing assessments were, for the most part, done in the school setting, either before or after school. Teachers 5, 9, and 10 were interviewed in their homes, outside of the school setting. Each session ran from 90 minutes to two hours and was taped. The interviewer recorded additional information that seemed pertinent on a recording sheet (see Appendix F).

All ten teachers were asked to respond to three sets of card-sorts. These sets of card sorts were developed for use during

the teacher interviews. The first card of each set gave directions for using the other cards. One main idea was stated on each additional card. (The three complete sets of card-sorts can be found in Appendices A, B, and C.)

The first set of card-sorts dealt with identifying those factors that influenced the development of the teacher's assumed conceptions of language. The cards in the set were constructed to reflect influences that were experiential and those that were theoretical in nature. The second card-sort contained guiding principles that can influence teacher decisions about children's writing experiences. These principles related to the content of writing in communicating to others through writing and developing self-awareness through writing. The last set of cards was concerned with the technical skills of writing including the mechanics of writing and the use of written expression.

Each card-sort is described in detail. Ten teacher responses to each card-sort set follows this description. Placement of the teacher protocols within this chapter was determined by the order in which each participating teacher was interviewed. These teacher responses are analyzed both individually and collectively according to the constructs of each card-sort. The children's writing samples and the teacher's assessment and recommendations are described. These teacher responses are also analyzed individually and collectively. The chapter ends with an overall analysis of the teacher responses relating the teacher's assumed

conceptions of language to the resulting decisions made about student writing.

#### Assumptions Card-Sort

The first card-sort deals with two major assumptions:

(1) a teacher's conception of language affects the design and implementation of a writing program, (2) a teacher's conception of language is a product of theoretical study, practical experience, or both. Each of the eleven cards cites a possible source that influences the development of a teacher's conception of language. The two major categories of influences are those of a practical experiential nature and those that result from theoretical study. Within the construct of experience, seven cards reflect influences from college study and professional sources or from sources related to work or employment as a teacher. In the area of college and professional organizations, four cards (a, c, j, k) list pre-service education, graduate study, local, state and national professional organizations and professional writings including reports, journals and books. Three cards (b, d, i) contain influences from work experience and include: teaching experience, colleagues, years of experience, inservice, staff development workshops and curricular committees, and teacher's manuals, district guides, and state directives. In the category of theoretical influences, there are four cards. One statement (card e) relates to behaviorist theory and the other three (f, g, h) deal with the genetic theory of language development and statements from the

works of Vygotsky and Piaget. Each teacher read all the cards and then selected those that had been a major influence on their decisions about a writing program. The teachers then explained their card selections and made comments on the contents.

Their individual responses appear as given during the interview. Table 1 (page 81) summarizes the distribution of sources that have been major influences on the development of teachers' conception of language and decisions these teachers made about writing programs. The teacher responses are then carefully analyzed by constructs.

#### Assumptions Card-sort: A Description

##### Teacher One

"As I look over these cards, I think of two things. First, I'm more experiential oriented. Whatever works, I use! If it doesn't work, I try something else. Second, theory is for the birds! I'm just not interested in what theoreticians have to say about teacher conceptions, or anything. Let them try to put into operation their ideas. Fourteen years I've been teaching and I just wonder how long these educational leaders--these notables, really taught kids--if ever at all. I don't think that theory helps a teacher either in undergraduate or graduate classes. So, I will immediately discard cards e, f, g and h."

"Preservice training equipped me with few skills. Well, I learned about lesson plans and how to set up ability groups, but



nothing that really helps me now, or even when I started. So, I'll toss out card a."

"This is the one--card b. District inservice has been the major influence in the development of my conception of language. The workshops over the years have been very practical. I guess I would call them useful, not like college classes where you get credit but do not learn how to apply ideas into real teaching situations. I'll not choose graduate study as a major influence on my conception. The classes I took over ten years ago when I got a Master's degree just missed the boat. I mean you didn't learn a thing. When we have had supervisors to help us, they always gave us more help than college professors. I've served on many curriculum committees that have prepared some good guides for teachers. But, I never really thought, and I don't think most teachers I've work with, ever felt that advanced studies really helped. You just get credits and degrees. If you move on, perhaps this study is helpful, but I've known a lot of principals who think their degrees have been a waste of time, too."

"Card d helps. I learn by doing. Over the years I have picked up a lot of good ideas from my colleagues. But, I read the journals regularly. That's where I get new ideas. Yes, card j has been good to me!"

"I despise teachers' manuals. Some people follow them like they were the Holy Bible. Probably one of the worst things that has ever happened in American education is teachers' giving up their creativity and own ideas for the sake of a guide. I know

some need to follow them, but good inservice can help teachers to cross over the bridge--you know, get away from following them step by step. So, I'll get rid of card i, too."

"I joined and quit many organizations because their publications just didn't give enough practical ideas like Teacher and Instructor. But I'm told Language Arts, which should be called Elementary English, is getting better. Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ said the last few issues had some good learning situations for kids. I need to take a look if I have time. Some professional organizations try to get us to operate on a theoretical level, but they don't really understand kids, or the problems we teachers are faced with today."

"You asked if I had the opportunity to study the work of Piaget and Vygotsky and the genetic and behaviorist theories of language acquisition, would I be willing to also examine the implications of these theories into classroom practice. I suppose this means in a college setting--so my answer is no. I might do it through inservice if I had released time for it. I guess I'm just not willing to give the time for it. Just fill the journals with practical articles!"

### Summary

Teacher One selected two cards (ab, ad) as having had a major role in influencing her development of a conception of language. She felt practical experience to be of much more value than theoretical study. Within the construct of experience, she

felt those items relating to work were of more importance than those relating to college study of professional organizations. In the explanation of her card selections, she cited district inservice training as the major influence in the development of her conception of language. She also discussed her own teaching experiences and the ideas of colleagues as being important.

#### Teacher Two

"As a beginning teacher, I had no theory upon which I would build a language program. College classes talked mostly about doing things with kids, rather than why these things were to be done. I'm sure a teacher's conception of language does affect the design and implementation of a class writing program, but I doubt if I have ever really thought about my own conception. I am sure that both practical experience and theoretical study have contributed to any decisions I have made about a writing program. I have a Master's degree and have studied much about teaching."

"Theories of learning I know, but never were the works of Piaget and Vygotsky known to me in terms of language learning and cognitive learning. So, for me, cards g and h have introduced me to new concepts. From what I've seen right here, I'd go with Vygotsky--his theory makes sense. In a sense, card h adds to my conception."

"Graduate study and preservice training, cards a and c have not really been major influences upon what I do. Most language arts classes talk about generalities. If you do talk about

a rationale, it usually has to do with reading. I don't think many language arts classes include much discussion about writing, just ideas for topics for kids to write on and words games, etc."

"Inservice has been the most valuable to me as I'm thinking about these cards, but card d has been a major influence upon what you would call my language conception. The years of experience I've had working with people who try hard to service kids has been invaluable. We get together and trade ideas. We try to help one another. I don't choose card k because most state and national organizations are not concerned with curriculum. You know, they work for teacher rights, benefits. Sometimes kids don't seem important."

"I don't really like Skinner so I'll toss out card e. I sometimes model words for my students who are sort of lacking words for describing their real thoughts. I don't have any opinion about Chomsky, so card f really means little to me. I don't understand the idea of possessing innate language mechanisms."

"I don't have the time to keep up with the professional writings about language and writing. Teacher has good ideas, so does Elementary English, which I think has a new name. I read a book called A Circle of Quiet where the author had a lot of excellent comments about writing as a process, but it wasn't really addressing itself to teaching. It seemed to have more to do with people writing on their own, sort of self-teaching."

"I don't really care for manuals and guides as they are too limiting, but I think our district has a committee trying to

put one together. You've probably heard about it. They've been working on it for two years."

### Summary

Teacher Two stated that both practical experience and theoretical study contributed to decisions he makes about a writing program. He selected two experiential cards, inservice and teaching experience along with his work with colleagues (cards ab and ad) and described them as being invaluable in the development of his language conception. Although he mentioned theoretical study as having been important to the decisions he makes about children's writing, he did not select any cards from the theoretical construct, and indicated no knowledge of the works of Vygotsky and Piaget.

### Teacher Three

"Looking over these cards makes me feel as if I know very little about my personal conception of language. I don't ever think about it, but apparently I should. I'll accept Assumption 2, but I really don't know about Assumption 1. I don't think an over-all concept of language affects my class writing program. But, these cards help me to better understand myself."

"I'll choose cards b, g, j, and i as those having been a major influence on the decisions I make about my children's writing. I almost put in card d because during my first year of teaching I had to rely upon other teachers to give me ideas. I got out of

college feeling unprepared for teaching. I had a degree, but was not secure in knowing what or what not to do in a classroom. When I think about writing, all my preservice training dwelled on handwriting--penmanship. We never really talked about language or creative writing. I remember the instructor once told us that writing ideas were a dime a dozen--so don't worry! Well, I didn't really have any so I patterned after the teacher next door. Now that I have six years of experience I don't need to rely upon her anymore."

"District inservice has been valuable in that released time has been given to committees to produce writing guides. There have also been workshops that give creative writing ideas. One of our teachers is really clever in getting kids started and whenever she does a workshop, I am in it. I always come away knowing some new ideas. She is just great and her workshops have helped many of us."

"As I said, we have a district guide. It's excellent. I use it all the time. It is available to help us all. However, most teachers don't use it, but card i has been good to me. And we have to use it. It's required!"

"I keep up with the current literature through professional writings. I just read Sylvia Aston-Warner, and I like Language Arts as I get ideas. But I don't think I've ever read anything on teacher decision-making, maybe some on reading. Never have I found these ideas. Research articles are not practical. Give them

to the administrators! They write our programs. The Guides reflect what they want."

"You ask why I think little has been written on teacher conceptions. I don't know. Would a study of language theory help me? Yes, I chose card g because Piaget always makes sense to me. But, I don't even think I've heard of Vygotsky. That is why I didn't choose card h. I'd like to know more. I need to know more, but I just don't have the time. Thirty-two students this year, no aide and over half are reading below grade level."

"Yes, I think they all have ideas to share, but their technical skills for writing are so poor that they are embarrassed. I would be too. Their writing skills are closely related to their reading skills. Some of them do have good ideas, but they just don't write on their own."

"I once thought about a Master's degree. But I like short, practical courses taught by teacher-types, not university professors who have been away from the real world too long. How do I know this? Too many people say this about their advanced work. I know there are exceptions, but the number of these people are few and far between. I'm sorry--but this is how I feel."

"You are fortunate in that your advanced studies at the university have been so rewarding, so useful."

### Summary

Work related experiences were a major influence on the decisions Teacher Three made about her children's writing. She felt other teachers, inservice, workshops, and School District Guides (cards ab, ad, ai) had contributed to her conception of language. She also cited professional writing (card ad) as having had an influence on her conceptional development. From the theoretical study sources, she indicated Piaget (card ag) as having been helpful to her.

### Teacher Four

"The assumptions interest me. I am sure that most teachers conception of language affect student writing programs. I'm sure my conception is a product of both theoretical and practical experience."

"These cards are interesting. Where do I being because I know I read a lot. And I compare my own views with studies, books and ideas that can add to my data bank. So card j is the top one. It provides me with a wider variety of ideas. It helps me to fill a bag of tricks to take into the classroom."

"Tricks are student learning experiences and teacher knowledge that could influence decisions about a writing program. I am convinced that ideas are only as good as the teachers who present them. Also, if they don't fit into a rationale that is defensible, then I usually discard them. Learning experiences need



to fill some purpose. I try to provide meaningful activities for the students."

"Card b is significant in that inservice provides an opportunity to learn something new and practical. Many of our teachers are very skilled in language. Inservice is almost always useful. It is definitely aimed at helping teachers do a better job. Card c has particular significance as I have had excellent courses that have helped me to clarify my understanding. These, however, are mainly classes that stress theory and philosophy. I'm a part-time doctoral student in reading. Inservice gives me practical help in the classroom and graduate study equips me to understand more about my subject. I need both to make it as a teacher. Teaching experience has been invaluable in terms of decision-making. You learn from experience, from other teachers. You learn by doing. I made mistakes. I made the wrong decisions. Some of my judgments were wrong, but I learned from them. I didn't have a rationale from which to work, like writing poems, letters, short stories. But their writing was teacher-directed, rarely self-initiated and was very impersonal."

"I'll also include Piaget as a major influence in relation to what I believe. I like his ideas on abstract symbolic reasoning. I don't agree with Vygotsky. Language and thought are not one. So cards b, c, d, j and g are those I pick. The others I'll not consider a major influence."

"Preservice was not a major influence, and professional organizations have good publications, but they haven't really considered teacher-decision-making when it comes to curriculum."

### Summary

Graduate study and professional writing (cards ac, aj) are major influences that affect Teacher Four's language conception and the decisions she makes about student writing. Work related experiences that have been important to this teacher are: teacher inservices; and teaching experience, including work with colleagues (cards ab, ad). This teacher valued theoretical study and felt the work of Piaget (card ag) on an abstract symbolic reasoning had had a major effect on her beliefs.

### Teacher Five

"I agree. A teacher's conception of language arts does affect the implementation of a writing program. Probably, for teachers who go into advanced studies where theory becomes important, assumption 2 is also true. But for me I'm sure that my conception, which I think is the way I view language, is experiential based."

"Preservice training did not ever focus on decision-making. Actually the only language arts study I had was combined with a social studies component. The two studies were offered in one, three credit course. Apparently neither subject was considered that important. I remember the instructor saying to us that all you need to do is follow the manuals. It made sense then, but not

when I first got into the classroom. So the manual became my conception. I followed it step-by-step. The language arts in my classroom gradually expanded as other teachers shared their ideas with me. Initially card i was the most significant influence. Card d soon came into the picture. District inservice was available, but I was sick of classes. I never took a class for the first two years I taught. So card b was a bust, too."

"Cards e, f, g, and h meant nothing to me then, and about the same now. The trouble with theories is that no one shows you how to implement them."

"Over the years I've read journal articles in Teacher, Elementary English and Instructor. They often have ideas that I try to fit into my classroom structure. Some of them are good, some I never use again. So card j is okay. I mean it contributes to my conception. But, we are expected to use the district guide and the manuals for the textbook adoptions. My principal requires us to use them. I guess I really haven't changed in the six years."

"I don't really spend much time with writing. I grade all their written work and probably once a week we write creatively. I usually give them a choice of three topics to choose from. Sometimes I require everyone to write on the same topic."

"You ask if I have any definite feeling about how children acquire language. I guess card e comes closest. Skinner assumes the everything is learned through external stimuli. He's usually right. I didn't realize that he knew anything about language. You know--these cards are instructional."

"No, I don't want to comment on the others. But, card k is okay because these groups are concerned about helping teachers. By help I mean working with us to improve conditions for more learning to take place. No, not teacher learning, but mainly children."

### Summary

This teacher felt her view of language was experientially based. She selected other teachers (cards ad and ai) work experience and teacher's guides and manuals as being the most significant influences on her development of a conception of language. She stressed the importance of teacher guides and manuals in making decisions about student writing programs.

### Teacher Six

"These cards make me stop and think about things that I know are important, but can honestly say very little of my time is spent thinking about my conception of language and how it influences our class writing program. First let me explain that I run a student-centered classroom. That is why I called the writing program our program. Decisions are usually made together although I admit to setting up the framework for this teacher-pupil planning and evaluation to take place. I have some definite beliefs about language and I've held them for many years. They're sound, and they work. Over the years they have been proved effective. So for me, card d has been a major influence."

"Cards a and c probably contribute the most to my language conception. My preservice training was not in this country. It was intensive--yet both practical and theoretical. We not only studied Piaget's writings, but learned to implement them in the classroom. We were expected to know and show evidence in a laboratory setting what we had learned. Knowing wasn't enough. Doing was the goal. So the two went together."

"I worked with the same group for five years taking them to the next grade year after year. I knew the children well. I was familiar with their language. I helped them acquire and develop it. So, of course, I knew them."

"At this time Skinner's work dominated our language development curriculum. They taught that children's speech is shaped by a language environment and that most everything is learned through external stimuli. And what we did reflected this thinking. This lasted as long as I was there. It was a lot like the TESL and ESL programs today. Modeling, patterning and imitating. So card e was a major influence, and still is."

"But after coming to this country, I was told by my principal and by the college people to let things happen more naturally and intuitively. I was directed to not tamper with the children's writing. Leave it alone, talk about the ideas, but don't interfere with their creative expression. I asked if I couldn't support their creativity by talking with the students about what they said on their papers and at the same time help each to develop techniques or skills that would enhance the

communication. But, I was told to leave their writing alone, or I'll destroy the children's creativity."

"So for years creative writing was free of correction, when it could have been more precise--more communicating. The other work I could correct. Creative writing was taboo. Just let them write. I often wondered if the decision-makers and noted experts ever thought about writing as a developmental process. You know, today's errors become tomorrow's lessons. I wondered when would children realize that a sense of audience is necessary to deal with when writing. Isn't writing social, too? It can't always be personal. Just think of all the writing we do."

"And even though I taught skills, grammar, and made a fuss over it, there was very little carry-over-transfer to their writing in social studies or science. Probably there was none at all when they did creative writing."

"I took a Master's and consider it very valuable in helping me to think about language and writing. I try to blend some of Vygotsky's ideas with Piaget. My rationale broadened during this degree. I have never studied Chomsky, but here is where all that intuitiveness comes. I like his ideas on surface and deep structure, but I can't say that card f has been a major influence. I guess I need to study more."

"I like to write. The Bullock report says non-writing teachers produce non-writing students, or maybe its reading. I'm not sure. But both skills are inter-related. When my children write, I often write with them. Occasionally, they suggest

topics to me, but there is always a choice. The students in our class write about whatever they decide."

"I'll not consider cards i and k. Professional organizations don't help me with students. The district guide is okay, but it doesn't really help me with planning. It gives ideas."

"I rely on professional journals and books for keeping-up. I haven't had much time for workshops or inservice as I just finished my Master's degree. It seems that with this "Back-to-Basics" emphasis, the literature is loaded with the do's and don'ts of teaching. I think it is impossible to design a program where writing communicates, and not just expresses thoughts. After all, isn't communication the purpose of language?"

### Summary

Teacher Six's development of a language conception and decisions about writing programs were strongly influenced by both experience and theory. The major influences in the experiential construct were the preservice training and graduate study of this teacher and her years of teaching experience (cards aa, ac). In theoretical study the works of Piaget and Vygotsky (cards ag, ah) played dominant roles in the teacher's understanding of language development. This teacher also stated the work of Skinner was a major factor in her undergraduate training and in her understanding of the role of environment in the development of language.

Teacher Seven

"The teacher's guide for our language arts adoption plus the district guide have been the main influences on the decisions I make about the class writing program. Card i is the major influence."

"I don't have much background in language arts. My undergraduate training emphasized reading and phonics, not writing. I don't write much, so because I needed help as a beginner, I asked other teachers to help me. My colleagues were very cooperative, and I think they too were and still are a major influence. So card d is also one I choose. My first principal was a good writer, and he assisted the staff in designing a school program. This is before our district put out a curriculum guide which included writing."

"You ask what I do with the guide. Well, I supplement the language textbook with activities from the guide. No, the guide does not include any language theory, just "starters," motivators, activities to get kids going. It really doesn't talk about planning for or evaluating student writing. They, the district, leave this up to the teachers. Teachers are expected to implement the guide using the text and whatever sources needed."

"Inservice is helpful, but I don't think they've done much in writing. I definitely do not plan on a Master's. I'm only taking courses required to maintain my certificate. Graduate courses are not practical. They are not geared to the problems



we teachers are faced with daily. They are theoretical. I can't see what good Piaget, Vygotsky, B. J. Skinner and Chomsky are to me. How can they help me make sure my students can write a proper sentence? Do their theories include teaching strategies? I don't really know. So, I'll discard cards c, e, f, g, and h. As for card j, I don't read much. When I have spare time I prefer to relax. I read and write so much at school that I need a change when I come home. Card k--I just don't think most of these groups care much about language--except NCTE."

### Summary

The teacher's guide (card ai) and colleagues (card ad) have been the major influences on Teacher Seven's development of a language conception and decisions made about student writing. All sources cited were from work-related experiences. Theoretical study was not felt to play any role in this teacher's design and implementation of a writing program nor her conception of language.

### Teacher Eight

"These are interesting, but I've not really considered how my language conception developed. You ask what are the possible sources--I will think out loud as I examine these cards."

"Card A - I didn't learn anything in language arts about what to do in a classroom--just grammar and rules to teach kids. The subject was combined with reading methods. So, that is what was emphasized."

"Card B - Inservice has been helpful, but anything in writing had to do with techniques, rather than creativity."

"Card C - Graduate study does not assist teachers with problems connected with teaching school. Classes are theoretical, not practical, and taught by people who no longer know what kids are like. Maybe they never even taught. College professors have ideas but do not help you put them into practice!"

"Card D - Yes, I've learned what experiences or activities are good. Which ones work, those that don't. Sometimes what works with one class doesn't work with another. So the notion that the lesson or activity is only as good as the teacher who presents it, just isn't so. My colleagues and I share ideas. They cooperate well with one another. Over the years I have learned a lot. Well, I've learned that writing can be viewed in two ways: expressive or technical. I try to find a balance. Some days we work on the rules, other days we work on expression. So many of them don't know what to say, or how to say it."

"Cards E and F - Skinner makes sense; I don't know Chomsky. I guess language can be developed according to these cards in different ways. You know, I'm learning something. I think Skinner has had a big impact upon bi-lingual programs where a lot of modeling is done."

"Cards G and H - I don't really think these theories could help me. I know they haven't yet. They're for graduate studies."

"Cards I - We have a district guide. I use it. It was a "God-send" when I first started teaching. It doesn't include a

writing plan, just a collection of ideas. It will be nice when the committee comes out with the new one. Teacher's manuals are useful. I follow many sections page-by-page--other parts I don't even look at them. How do I decide? I look at each child's written work. Then I determine what skills need to be taught and assign the appropriate sections from the text."

"Card J - I read some of the journals occasionally. I don't have much time. The practical ones are the most useful. The theoretical ones are for the college people."

"Card K - I definitely don't see how any professional organization could influence my writing program. I only am a member of MEA. Their concern is not language arts."

"It looks as if card d was the major influence. Should there have been more than one? Maybe card i was just as influential as the other."

### Summary

Teacher Eight valued district guides, teacher's manuals, her teaching experience and her colleagues (cards ai, ad) as the major influences in her development of a writing program. The two cards cited by this teacher were experiential in nature and related to work experiences. Theoretical study was not viewed as having played a role in her language conceptions or program development.

Teacher Nine

"I am sure these assumptions are important to you, to the profession. Number 2 seems obvious, but I think most of us would have trouble connecting how one views or thinks about language and implementing a writing program."

"There are several cards that have been a major influence on my decisions about a language program, but they are not the cards based on language theory or acquisition. I don't know if Chomsky or Skinner have affected me. I am aware that commercially developed materials, even textbooks, are often built upon one of those conceptions of language acquisition. I've used many sets of materials. So, indirectly they affect me. But we're talking about direct influences. I will have to reject cards e and f. They were not part of my preservice or graduate studies. The same is true for Piaget and Vygotsky. Their work is admirable. Both are concerned with language learning and cognitive learning, but I've never directly studied in the implications of these ideas for teaching writing in relation to my personal perspective regarding language. In my graduate language arts class, there was nothing mentioned about their work. It's funny! Most people say college classes are too theoretical. You know methods classes are considered impractical because you never get down to the basic question of what this all means for children. Well, mine did. I was fortunate. So, I will choose cards a, b, and c as having been major influences on decisions I make about a writing program."

"Card A - Our college was growing rapidly and my language arts and reading courses were over-load sections. The university was under-staffed and recruited from the local district teachers who had reputations for having excellent understandings about school experiences. One of these people had done graduate work with Roma Gans and the other had studied with Dorris Lee, two outstanding language arts people. While my instructors did not hold doctorates, they worked daily with youngsters and each had studied with a prominent person. Both saw their studies with their mentors as vital and significant. This was evident in their style and modes of teaching. While an emphasis was not placed on theory I'm sure many of their ideas came from a theoretical base. They were excellent classes, and they were taught by elementary teachers."

"Card B - The district provides all kinds of workshops and inservice classes. Again, these are taught by teachers who work directly with children. This gives the students the advantage of working with someone rather than for someone. I remember feeling while in college that my professors didn't really care if I learned, or not. This is true of Colleges of Education, too."

"Card C - My graduate studies during my Master's were better than I thought. While not all courses were useful, my language arts classes were taught by teachers who were working on advanced degrees. These people were student-oriented, creative and worked to assure that we would get a lot out of the classes. Too much time was spent on objectives, but my knowledge of a total

language arts program widened. I sure learned how to broaden the scope of writing experiences. Previously, I placed too much emphasis on personal writing. I needed to expand activities where students would write for others."

"I kind of ignore manuals and guides. Occasionally I look at one just to check a few particulars--like district expectations. So, I reject card i."

"Experience as well as one's colleagues are not necessarily the best teacher. I'll not consider card d. I don't look to professional organizations for much direction. NCTE and IRA have journals that I sometimes read. So, there go cards j and k."

### Summary

Cards relating to theoretical study were not chosen as major influences on Teacher Nine's views of language nor her decisions on student writing. The strongest influences identified by this teacher were experiential and related to her college study (cards aa, ac) and her work experience and sharing with colleagues (card ab).

### Teacher Ten

"I find myself thinking about things that I just took for granted. I accept assumption 1, but don't accept 2 because of the theoretical study. You want me to talk about my writing program and my decisions, right?"

"As far as I'm concerned, there are three cards that have been a major influence on what you call a language conception."

"Card B - When I first started teaching, I received a lot of help from those teachers working next door and across the hall. They kind of watched to make sure I could keep things going and get through the first year. I didn't know much about language or writing. They gave me many creative writing ideas. I made a card file of ideas and kept adding to it year by year. Now, it has over 100 ideas. Years of experience and my colleagues have certainly been a major influence."

"Card I - The teacher's manual always had something in it about writing. Again it never talked about theory. I rejected those cards because theories are not practical. Their implications are not brought out in college courses. So, I'll not consider cards a and c--preservice and graduate study. They didn't help me much to decide anything about language conceptions as affecting writing. We have a writing section in the district Language Arts guide. We're expected to follow it. It's mandated. I know that the pressure of the state is on us--so obviously, our district policymakers are trying to make sure we cover what is necessary."

"Card J - I like to read some of the journals. Often the articles give me new ideas, like the "Writing Marathon" discussed in Language Arts. When I was a primary teacher, I thought that Learning to Read Through Experience was a most helpful book on writing. I don't know of a good professional book for the intermediate grades that is on the subject of writing."

"I'm willing to admit my language concept is cloudy. It might always be that way unless I decide to do something about it."

Where, when or how I just don't know. Writing is a big issue. Lots of people are concerned. I think the District Guide is being revised. Now writing is really important in the curriculum. But is it as important as listening and speaking? These are the skills we need to develop for today's living."

"I sometimes wonder if I'm supposed to teach how to write or just provide opportunity for my students to express their ideas."

### Summary

Experiential influences of work and the help of colleagues, teacher's manuals and district guides (cards ab, ai) were described by Teacher Ten as having been major influences on the design and implementation of her student writing program. She also stated that professional writings (card ai) were sources of influence in her program. No cards were selected from the theoretical construct by the teacher.

### Collective Summary of Teacher Protocol on Assumptions Card-Sort

In the Assumptions Card-sort the two major assumptions of this study are dealt with. Overlying constructs of this card-sort are experiential and theoretical. The experiential construct is divided into two groupings: college and professional training and work related experiences. The theoretical constructs are grouped according to the behaviorist and genetic theories of



language learning. (For detailed description of each card, see Appendix A.)

In the college and professional training area of the experiential construct, two out of ten teachers selected preservice training (card aa), three out of ten teachers identified graduate study (card ac), and four out of ten chose professional writings (card aj) as influences upon the development of their language conceptions and decisions about a writing program. Professional organizations (card ak) were not considered influential by these teachers. Six of the ten teachers selected inservice, staff development workshops and curriculum committees (card ab), eight of the ten identified teaching experience, colleagues and years of experience (card ad), five of the teachers considered the teacher's manual, school district guides or state directives (card ai) to be a major influence on the development of their conception of language and resulting decisions about student writing.

In the theoretical constructs one teacher felt she was influenced by the behaviorists theory of language development (card ac). Three teachers indicated being influenced by the genetic language development theory; of these three, two were influenced by the work of Piaget (card ag) only and one teacher felt both the work of Piaget and Vygotsky (card ah) had aided her development of a conception of language. No teachers selected Chomsky (card af) as major influence on a language conception or upon writing program decisions.

There is little theoretical agreement among these participants. Work related experiences in the experiential construct lends itself to more similar thinking among teachers than does training at the preservice and graduate levels. The following table focuses upon this representation.

### Principles Card-Sort

The second set of cards identify guiding principles that can influence teacher decisions about children's writing experiences. The thirteen statements in this card-sort relate to the content of writing and utilize two categories. These are communication to others and the development of self-awareness through writing. Seven cards (a, d, g, i, k, l, m) contain principles relating to communicating to others and include: communication occurs when written thoughts and feelings are understood by one-self and/or others; writing without an idea to communicate produces a sequence of empty words; writing skill develops through involvement with materials and activities which are perceived as valuable; writing ability develops through the need for others to understand one's recorded statement; when writing revision develops a more standard way of expressing meaning; the audience needs to be identified when writing; and writing requires a precise and exact use of language. The category of development self-awareness through writing contains the following six principles (cards b, c, e, f, h, j): the development of writing skills is unique to each individual; much about writing is learned intuitively; and is not

Table 1.--Assumptions Card-sort

Constructs		Teacher									
College and Professional		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Experiential	Card aa - preservice						X			X	
	ac - graduate study				X		X			X	
	aj - professional writing	X		X	X						X
	ak - prof. organizations										
	Work Related										
	ab - inservice	X	X	X	X					X	X
	ad - experience, colleagues	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
	ai - manuals, guides			X		X		X	X		X
	Behaviorist										
	ac - Skinner						X				
Theoretical	Genetic										
	af - Chomsky										
	ag - Piaget		X	X			X				
	ah - Vygotsky						X				

Each X indicates a given teacher's selection of factor(s) that influence his/her own development of a conception of language or decisions related to the teaching of writing.

directly taught; material language usage is essential for identifying meaning in one's written expression; thoughts become internalized when decisions are made as to what to write and how best to record it; constructive writing experiences can promote self-confidence as a writer; and literature can provide models for personal writing.

All ten teachers read the cards and sorted them into two or three groups according to principles that were most significant to them, those that were less significant than the first group, and those principles they would not consider. Again, comments and explanations were recorded as the teachers discussed their groupings. The responses are given for each teacher. Tables 2a, b, c (pages 99-101) show the distribution and principles by groups and by teacher, that have influenced teacher decisions about student writing experience. Collective analysis of this data follows.

### Principles Card-sort: A Description

#### Teacher One

"I think all these cards are important, but there are definitely two groups. I won't have a group containing principles I would not consider. I'll sort them by thinking that the first grouping includes principles that affect before writing skills. These are all things kids should know as they learn about writing. I work hard to establish real purposes and understandings about expression. I'm creative and I hope some of it rubs off on the

students. I particularly like cards b and f. Literature does provide models for personal writing; I read to my kids all the time and try to motivate them to read, too. I think your format and style is affected by what others think, or really use. They model theirs for us! Card f really hits the nail on the head because a lot of what I learned about writing was not directly taught. It came to me intuitively. So, I think these two cards relate. They work well together."

"The second grouping has to do with ideas students, the kids, need to know after they have become independent writers. They seem to follow the others. I like card h because each of my students is an individual and his/her skills develop in differing ways. However, card d is important, but I have known students who never did develop the need for others to understand their recorded statements. I guess this means that language is symbolic. But, wouldn't it be social, too?"

### Summary

Teacher One thought all of the principles on the cards were important. She selected literature models and learning to write intuitively (cards bb, bf) from the Self-Awareness construct as principles that affect children's writing before they apply writing skills. All principles from the communication area (ba, bd, bg, bi) were second in importance to her, as were bk, bl and bm (self-confidence, need for others to understand, uniqueness of individual

writing, and the internalization of thought (bc, bf, bj) in the self-awareness category.

### Teacher Two

"As I think about these guiding principles, it seems that there is nothing here that I would flatly not consider. In other words, all these cards can influence a teacher's decision about children's experiences in writing."

"I'm going to use two groups. Cards b, k, h, i and e are the principles most significant to me. I think that too many of my students don't really think about what they want to say, why they want to say it, or even consider their audience. They start out by writing, rather than thinking."

"I wish I knew how to get them to determine for whom they are writing. I don't think they write very often to clarify their own thinking. So, card k is the one I really work on with kids. I think choice of words must be appropriate to the group you are addressing. For example, I tell my kids that I used a different language in the Army than I do in our classroom."

"My children don't read enough. So, I read aloud to them. Often I take passages from the pages and write them on the board and ask the children to pattern their writing upon what they see. I liked card b."

"I truly believe in the uniqueness of each student. The development of writing skills is individually unique. No two students learn in the same way--but I know I don't always act upon

this notion. Not many teachers really do. We never really put into operation all we believe. Writing skills, we assume, will just happen to develop at the same time for each student. It's really not true."

### Summary

The self-awareness principles of much about writing being intuitive, use of natural expression, and literature models for personal writing (cards bb, be, bh) were put into the most significant category by Teacher Two. In this first grouping, he also included two principles relating to communication, revision for more standard meaning, and identification of the audience (cards bi, bk). All of the remaining principles were considered of lesser significance. This teacher considered all the principles to be significant.

### Teacher Three

"I'll divide these cards into two groups, and there is a fine line between them. I don't see any cards here that should not be considered, so I won't have a group C. It's hard for me to separate these cards. But, the one card that is most significant is card b. It is important for me to read aloud to my children as they have a tendency to read the same kinds of books over and over. I think about something my first principal said: 'If you only give them scrambled eggs, how will they ever find out how cereal tastes?' I try to share many formats and writing styles so they'll be familiar with them. It seems as if this is important

to their writing. Card a makes sense. I try to motivate their writing by explaining that writing is personal and sometimes it helps to put your ideas on paper."

"I like to write when I have something to say. I guess I don't write often. Does this mean that I have nothing to say? I once had an article accepted. It was teaching spelling. I felt that good spellers learned to spell because it was important to them, not because the words were directly taught. How can you teach spelling anyway? It's all done individually! Card f says the same thing to me. Writing is learned intuitively. Do you think if I wrote during class writing time, this would be a good model for kids?"

"Card a makes me think of writing as being both personal and social. I like that! You know, these cards are instructional. I've never really thought about language this way!"

"I really need help. I need the time to get at my language conceptions. It really does influence writing in my classroom. I know that language is learned primarily through imitation. Isn't children's speech shaped by a language environment? Skinner is right."

### Summary

Three guiding principles were selected by this teacher as being most significant. She felt communicating thoughts and feelings through writing to oneself and others, using literature as a model for personal writing and much about learning to write



being intuitive (cards ba, bb, bf) were the most important principles. The remaining ten principles, six in the communication and four in the self-awareness category (ba, bb, bf) were ranked as important but less significant than the first group of three. Teacher Three did not make a category of principles she would not consider.

#### Teacher Four

"This group is more difficult to deal with. I'm having a problem about what I should say, rather than what I want to say. You said I could think out loud, so here goes."

"I see three groups. Let me begin with principles I would not consider. Cards d, f, and j. First writing ability can also develop for individuals who try to understand themselves. So I reject this card. I don't know why I am bothered about internalizing thoughts--but I don't really like this concept or principle. It just seems confusing even though I think it is true. Card f makes me angry as it seems to underestimate a teacher's ability to help students learn."

"Group A cards are one's I operate upon. These are cards l, m, g, i, and k. But so are those I've placed in Group B. I operate on these, too. You ask how I decided which group to call A--I don't know. It just seems intuitive. I know that student's writing without a formulated idea is worth more to me than card b which says literature provides models for personal writing. It is difficult to explain which process I used to decide. What are my

criteria? Does this decision-making mean I'm confused? You say, it doesn't necessarily mean confusion. Am I seeing too many interrelationships? Am I thinking too much?"

### Summary

Teacher Four selected all but two cards (ba, bd) of the seven principles (cards bg, bi, bk, bl, bm) in the communication construct of the content-principle sort as being the most important. Four out of the six principles in the self-awareness category (cards bb, bc, be, bh) and communication through writing (card ba) in the communication category were considered important, but less significant than those in the first group. Developing writing ability through the need for others to understand one's recorded statement, intuitive learning about writing and the internalization of thought through writing (cards bd, bf, bj) were cited as principles this teacher would not consider.

### Teacher Five

"I don't really understand all these so called principles. They look like they were written by some scholarly type. I know a teacher didn't write them because they are not that practical. They are too theoretical."

"I can see I'm going to learn from this pile, too."

"I'll make three groups. In group A I'll put a, b, c, and g. A explains itself, b is important because I read aloud to my class. I mainly did it for listening experiences, but I know that some of my students have copied formats and styles as well as

written about timely subjects relating to the ills of society. Card c is okay because students all need self-confidence. I work toward that. Card g is one that is significant because if students do not perceive their activities as valuable, their writing will not develop. Nothing will except negative feelings."

"No, I don't have anything to say about cards d, e, h, k, l and m. They're in Group B, and are less significant to me. I'm not sure why. But Group C is three cards. Revision is too time-consuming for kids; I don't really believe in intuitive learning and I am not sure how thoughts are internalized. Cards f, i and j I would not consider at all."

### Summary

In grouping the most significant principles, Teacher Five included the communicating principles of communication through understanding the feeling and thoughts of others and development of writing skill through involvement with materials and activities (cards ba, bg) and the self-awareness principles of writing promoting the self-concept through writing and using literature as models for personal writing (cards bb, bc). She included six principles (cards bd, be, bh, bk, bl, bm) in her second grouping, but did not give any reasons why. Revision for more standard meaning, much learning of writing being intuitive, and the internalization of thought (cards bi, bf, bj) were not considered to be important.

Teacher Six

"I've read these carefully. I can't really group them. They are all good. I hope I consider them in our class writing experiences."

"Before I came to America, card b was probably the most significant. I'd put cards a, d, h, and l with it. Now, I've taught, had years of experience and find them all worthy. Maybe I'll choose card f. Isn't that Chomsky? Of course a is the goal. When understanding takes place, communication has occurred. Sometimes kids think of agreeing and understanding as synonymous. They're not."

Summary

Teacher Six only made two groupings. She felt all the principles were important and should be considered. In her most significant category she included six principles, three from each of the constructs. In communication she selected understanding oneself and others through written thoughts and feelings, development of writing ability through need for others to understand one's recorded statement and the need to communicate ideas (cards ba, bd, bl). From the self-awareness construct, she chose the uniqueness of individual writing skill development, intuitive learning and the use of literature models (cards bb, bf, bh). Her second group contained the seven remaining principles (cards bg, bi, bk, bm, bc, be, bj).

### Teacher Seven

"I'll make three groups. Group A principles are cards d, h, k and m. These are self-explanatory. To me they are very important."

"You ask why they are the most significant, or how I separated them from Group B. I don't know. Cards a, c, e, g, and l. Maybe the others in Group A are more simply stated and just match better. For example--I'm not convinced constructive writing experiences have any connection with one's self-confidence. Just what does this mean?"

"Group C. I don't agree with these at all. Revision is unimportant if writing is exact to begin with. Writing is taught--intuitive learning I question. I'm not even certain what literature means as a model. The authors of children's books are expert. My kids aren't. Card j is as hard for me to deal with. I don't like it. It's not a principle I would consider."

### Summary

Three groupings were made by this teacher, dividing the principles as follows: most significant--four cards (bd, bk, bm); less significant--five cards (ba, bg, bi, bc, be); and five she didn't consider at all (cards bi, bk, bb, bf, bj). Three communication principles, understanding thoughts and feelings, precise and exact use of language, identification of the audience along with the uniqueness of the development of writing skills (bd, bk,

fm) from the self-awareness category were selected as being the most important.

### Teacher Eight

"The first look at these cards makes me think that except for cards f and b, all of them are significant. All are true. They fit what I believe about writing. They're practical, useful. But b seems to suggest something I don't really understand. Literature to me belongs with reading. I see writing as more of a productive skill. Literature belongs with reception. We receive from the writing. Card f seems to see us as less important than children as self-instructors. Intuition cannot take the place of a trained teacher!"

"If these principles are significant, then perhaps I need more understanding, more study. They don't seem practical. I'd like to know what others think about them."

"Now, let me explain the difference between Groups A and B. It's not easy. I sense that e, g, i and j do not match my perspective on writing and language as closely as do the others. I feel good about saying that because I find this whole experience stimulating. But, it's also discouraging because it really shows how little I know. This conception business interests me!"

"More research needs to be done. Is that why you're looking at what you are? I'll be interested in finding out your results--the outcomes. Sometimes I feel so confused by all that's happening in language. There is so much pressure on us to produce.

The state is responsible. You know, the assessment and identified competencies. Right?"

"A few general comments about Group A principles. My first choice is because as I told you--they seem to describe what I believe about writing."

"Card h - reminds me of language experience. I once read Lee and Allen. It made sense, but I couldn't implement it because I was told to use a basal reader."

"Card c - if I had more confidence as a writer, I'd write more today. So I say to my students--write, and learn how it feels!"

"Card d - when you want others to know your thoughts, then writing becomes important. Why? Because you usually get a larger audience than when you're talking."

"Card m - I like this card. I tell the children to write only when they have clearly decided what to say. Then, use the best words to say it. They need to know who they are addressing and card a is the goal."

"This excites me!"

### Summary

Teacher Eight felt three communication and two self-awareness principles were the most important guides for her classroom writing program. For inclusion in her first group, she choose the principles of understanding thoughts and feelings through writing, of the need to understand one's recorded statement, use of

a precise and exact language, the uniqueness of a person's writing and the promotion of self-confidence through writing (cards ba, bd, bm, bc, bh). Less significant were four principles, two from each construct (cards bk, bl, bb, bf). Four principles (cards bg, bi, be, bj) were not considered to be of any importance.

### Teacher Nine

"All these can influence teacher decisions, but some are more important to me than others. I'll build two groups. It is hard to explain why or how I made these separations. Group A includes cards a, d, h, i, k and l. Group B holds the others. I wonder if I would divide these the same way again. That's a bit of a bother. Group A cards are simply stated and seem to be more universal. I can almost say that they are unarguable! They are practical. I'd expect to see them in a guide or manual. I love card l. So many times my students don't really know what to say. It's hard for them to write just because it's writing time. I give them assignments in writing, but they can be done anytime before the due date. I also spend class time on helping kids to formulate ideas for writing."

"Card k is an 'all-right' card as I feel it's necessary to decide who you're writing for. When it's others, you'd better do a good job if you want others to understand your message."

"Card a kind of bothers me. Communication is the goal, but how important are the skills in relation to the main idea? I



don't know whether to emphasize creativity which promotes self-discovery, awareness or to work on technical skills that the State is so concerned with. Do I grade their work or leave it alone? What do I grade, if I do; skills only? I don't know what to do with their writing. When I emphasize skills, their next papers are less imaginative. When I comment on expression, their next papers are less technically correct. It's such a problem!"

### Summary

All of the cards were considered to influence teacher decisions according to Teacher Nine. So two groupings of principles were made. This teacher saw five (cards ba, bd, bi, bk, bl) of the seven communication principles and one self-awareness card (card bh) as being most important to the decisions she made about student writing.

### Teacher Ten

"You want me to explain how these fit or do not fit into my thinking. I'll just talk about the ones I understand. Obviously, there are principles here I would not consider. These are cards l, e, f and j. They are probably ones that I don't get. Okay? Group A I understand. Cards a, c, d, h and k. These five cards seem to work well together. I think when you write, it's important to know what is the reason you are writing. It could be to share an idea, or to clarify your own thinking. It reminds me of an Hebraic saying. Translated into English, it means 'Know before

whom you stand!' Consider your audience. That determines whether you write for yourself, or others. Know your audience!"

"When you want to be sure people understand what you're saying, then you work on your writing skills and develop an ability. You try to be a better writer. I work hard to help my students to understand this. They and I know that each individual develops differently as a writer--different rates, modes, styles, etc."

### Summary

Teacher Ten selected communication of thoughts and feelings, understanding of recorded statements, identification of the audience (ba, bd, bk) and promotion of self-confidence through writing and the uniqueness of the development of individual writing skills (cards bc, bh) as being the most significant guiding principles. Four principles were felt to be of no importance to her decisions. Three of the self-awareness principles: internalization of thought, intuitive learning of writing and use of material expression (cards bj, bf, be), and one communication guide, on the need to communicate ideas through writing (card bl), were not considered to influence her decisions about children's writing.

### Collective Summary of Teacher Protocols on Principles Card-sort

In the Principles Card-sort two major constructs were identified which related to the content of writing, communication

to others and self-awareness through writing. The constructs are viewed as guiding principles that can influence teacher decisions about children's writing experiences. (The detailed description of each card can be found in Appendix B.) Teachers were asked to divide these principles into either two or three groups depending on how they thought. The three possible groupings are: principles most significant; less significant; and, those not considered.

In the communication construct thoughts and feelings (card ba) were considered most significant by six of the ten teachers. Recorded statements (card bd) was selected as most important to five of the ten teachers. Materials and activities (card bg) was chosen by two of the ten participants. Revision (card bi) was identified by three teachers. Consideration of one's audience (card bk) was viewed most significant by five of the participants. Ideas (card bl), was selected by three of the ten. Precise and exact use of language was chosen by three teachers to be the most significant principle that can influence teacher decisions about student writing experiences.

In the self-awareness construct, literature models (card bb) were seen as important by five teachers. Self-confidence (card bc) and intuitive learning (card bf) were each found the most significant principle by three teachers. Use of natural language (card be) was identified by one teacher. Uniqueness of the individual (card bh) was viewed by six of the ten teachers as a major guiding principle. No teacher selected the internalization

of thought (card bj) through writing as being most important in this study. The following Table (Table 2a) shows the principles selected as most significant. Table 2b shows the principles considered important but less significant by the participants in this study.

Five of the participants in this study identified constructs they would not consider as guiding principles that can influence teacher decisions about children's writing experiences. In the communication category, revision (card bi) was selected by three teachers to not be significant. Four other principles, recorded statement (card bd), materials and activities (card bg), ideas to be communicated (card bl) and audience (card bk) were selected by one teacher each as being not significant.

In the self-awareness construct, the five teachers identified five of the six principles as not significant in at least one case. Literature models (card bb), self-confidence (card bc) and natural language (card be), were each selected by one teacher. Four teachers chose intuitive learning (card bf) and five teachers cited internalized thought (card bj) as not significant of consideration of guiding principles that can influence teacher decision making. Table 2c shows these principles as not being significant.

#### Technical Skills Card-sort

Card-sort three relates to the technical skills or craft of writing. This sort contains six cards in which two categories

Table 2a.--Principles Card-sort Most Significant

Constructs		Teacher									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Communication	Card ba - thoughts and feelings			X		X	X		X	X	X
	bd - recorded statements						X	X	X	X	X
	bg - materials and activities				X	X					
	bi - revision		X		X					X	
	bk - audience		X		X			X		X	X
	bl - ideas				X		X			X	
	bm - precise and exact				X			X	X		
Self-Awareness	bb - literature models	X	X	X		X	X				
	bc - self-confidence					X			X		X
	be - natural language		X								
	bf - intuitive learning	X		X			X				
	bh - uniqueness		X				X	X	X	X	X
	bj - internalized thought										

Each X indicates a given teacher's selection of guiding principles considered most significant influences upon his/her decisions related to the teaching of writing.

Table 2b.--Principles Cart-Sort Less Significant

Constructs		Teacher									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Communication	Card ba - thoughts and feelings	X	X		X			X			
	bd - recorded statements	X	X	X		X					
	bg - materials and activites	X	X	X			X	X		X	X
	bi - revision	X		X			X				X
	bk - audience	X		X		X	X		X		
	bl - ideas	X	X	X		X		X	X		
	bm - precise and exact	X	X	X		X	X			X	X
Self-Awareness	Card bb - literature models				X				X	X	X
	bc - self-confidence	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	
	be - natural language	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	
	bf - intuitive learning		X						X	X	
	bh - uniqueness	X		X	X	X					
	bj - internalized thought	X	X	X			X			X	

Each X indicates a given teacher's selection of guiding principles considered less significant influences than those in Table 2a upon his/her decisions related to the teaching of writing.

Table 2c.--Principles Card-sort Not Significant

Constructs		Teachers									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Communication	Card ba - thoughts and feelings										
	bd - recorded statements				X						
	bg - materials and activities								X		
	bi - revision					X		X	X		
	bk - audience							X			
	bl - ideas										X
	bm - precise and exact										
Self-Awareness	Card bb - literature models							X			
	bc - self-confidence								X		
	be - natural language										X
	bf - intuitive learning				X	X		X			X
	bh - uniqueness										
	bj - internalized thought				X	X		X	X		X

Each X indicates a given teacher's selection of guiding principles not considered significant influences upon his/her decisions related to the teaching of writing.

of writing skills are identified. The first group contains the mechanical skills of writing and includes four cards (ca, cd, ce, cf) identifying the skills of spelling, handwriting, editing and capitalization and punctuation. The second group contains those skills related to the use of written expression. These two cards (cb, cc) list skills of word usage and language structure. Participants in the study looked at each card and then grouped together those skills they felt were most important. Their explanations of what they thought about these skills were recorded. Table 3 (page 113) shows the distribution of technical skills that teachers identified as being most important in student writing programs. Then, teacher responses to this card-sort follows and are analyzed as a group.

Technical Skills Card-sort:  
A Description

Teacher One

"The skills that are the most important are cards b, c and d. Word usage is of vital importance. I stress this group of skills. For example, agreement of subject and verb. If kids would just listen to the sounds of language, they would have no problem with this agreement. But, I find that their language structures, as you labeled this card c, are poorly developed. They just don't care. They tell me I'm old fashioned and that it's the communication that counts. I guess I usually respond by explaining that communication increases when writing is technically correct. I chose card d because I guess I'm a die-hard. I still



feel punctuation aids one's writing. I have a couple of students who are bright and creative. Their attitudes are that commas are unnecessary--only periods and question marks count. These students have ideas and I can understand their writing. But it could be better. I guess it could be more grammatically correct."

"I don't worry about revision. If I get a piece of writing--great! If I ask them to revise it, I'll probably never see it again."

"Well, I gave up on handwriting long ago. If I can read it--fine. I really don't teach it anymore. Why, some of my kids still print, and I accept it!"

"I can't find much carry-over from the weekly word list to creative writing."

"No, I can't see where a clearly defined understanding of language theory would help me with these problems."

### Summary

Teacher One doesn't feel a clearly defined understanding of language theory would help her in working with students on the technical skills of writing. Capitalization and punctuation (card cd) were the only mechanical skills she saw as being important. She felt both cards (cc, cb) in the written expression category were of vital importance.

### Teacher Two

"All these technical skills are important. They work together. I wish kids could spell better. I don't teach

handwriting, but each card does relate to the others. Technique is lacking. Students do not write well. They are creative, but the mechanics are lacking."

"Revision is not always seen as part of the writing process. It usually is viewed painfully. Children don't like editing their own work."

### Summary

All of the technical skills (cards ca-cf) in both categories of mechanics and written expression were important to Teacher Two. He stressed the importance of spelling and editing.

### Teacher Three

"I don't like card f. Revision or editorial skills are unimportant for most kids. Only the advanced students need these skills. It's expression that counts!"

"All the other cards are important. I teach them all. All technical skills are part of my program. I evaluate their work according to these cards."

"Handwriting and spelling are quite important as if a paper looks good, it makes a better impression. You agree, don't you? Do you think teachers are influenced by how writing looks rather than what it says? But I said, expression is what counts! Both are important. Right? Is there any research on these questions? I guess this study will help answer this dilemma. What do you think?"

Summary

Teacher Three believes teachers are influenced by how writing looks rather than what it says. She selected all cards (ca-ce) in the technical skills area, except editing (card cf) as being important. She stated editing and revision were only for advanced students.

Teacher Four

"I know the students write mainly because they have to complete their assignments. I am interested in their thoughts and ideas, but if it isn't understandable, what good is it?"

"Cards e and f I do not consider important. I don't see much value in developing editorial skills. I know Hennings and Grant differ with my point of view, but I'd kill my writing program if I taught skills and required kids to use them. They would stop writing, and that would defeat my purpose. About handwriting, I don't care how it looks as long as I can read it. I even accept printing if a student prefers to do it that way. Slant, style, proper placement--these things are cosmetic. But I do want spelling to be correct, and I take off for poor spelling."

"Take off means my thinking less of the piece of writing if one or more words are not correctly formed by letters. This means it affects the comments I make on the paper. I don't grade."

"Cards b, c and d are all your old traditional skills that State Assessments include. I have to teach them. They have been mandated. Unfortunately, what happens is that I tend to minimize

the content, because of these skills. I feel badly, but I can't ignore them. My students often feel what they say isn't considered. They think I'm insensitive and only interested in finding errors. I'm caught in an evaluation trap. How can I tamper with a student's personal expression? How can I not?"

### Summary

State assessments and mandates per self-report influenced Teacher Four's writing program. She felt spelling, capitalization, punctuation, word usage and language structure (cards ca, cb, cc, cd) were the skills she had to teach.

### Teacher Five

"I guess in terms of the former grouping I need to be consistent."

"The most important card is c. I stress these heavily during language. The text is pretty good on this topic. For me one of the problems is that the kids learn the rules and complete their assignments; but, when they write, like in social studies or science, there is no carry-over. Card f is critical. It's hard to get them to do it. How do you get kids to revise. First, I think we had better figure out how to get them to proof-read. For some, how do we get them to write?"

"Handwriting is not really critical. As long as I can read it, I accept it. Spelling is a problem. I give the words, they learn them and then spell them wrong when they write them."

"The weekly list comes from all of our units of study. Everyone learns 30 words a week. The idea about children needing to spell the words they write is sound, but what if they don't ever write?"

### Summary

Teacher Five felt language structure (card cc) was the most important skill of the technical skills. She selected editing and spelling (cards ce, cf) as being critical in the mechanics of writing category.

### Teacher Six

"I've built three groups. Group One is card f all alone, no others with it. If we can help students to do editing, then they and we have arrived. They've written, they care about what they have communicated, they want to have used language effectively. It's really a form of self-evaluation. I believe this is the most important skill of all. I have known many sixth graders to be excellent editors."

"Group Two is spelling and handwriting. The cards fit together and each, as card e says, depends on the other for communication. I give less importance to handwriting than spelling. If I can read it--fit. But, I do believe spelling correctly is an aid rather than a hinderance to a writer. We can't be perfect spellers, but a dictionary sure helps."

"Group Three. Cards b, c, d. This grouping had to do with grammar and rules. In spite of the transformational proponents

and the structuralists, your traditional grammar is what is measured by standardized tests, so that's the grammar I teach. Card c, which deals with language structure, is very meaningful to me. Again, I think literature models are an excellent resource for studying forms, styles, construction. Isn't that what Bill Martin's stuff is all about?"

### Summary

All the technical skills were viewed as important by Teacher Six. However, she sorted the cards into three groups by order of importance in her writing program. Her first group stressed the skill of editing in the mechanics construct as being the most important technical skill. This teacher's second grouping of skills included the mechanical skills of spelling and handwriting (cards ca, ce). Group three had to do with grammar and rules, and included word usage, language structure, capitalization and punctuation (cards cb, cc, cd).

### Teacher Seven

"These process skills are what kids are lacking. They are the ones I promote. All their writing is graded for technique. I'll toss out card f. Kids are not editors, we want them to be writers. Their expression is my goal."

Summary

Expression is the goal of Teacher Seven's writing program. She selected all the technical skills (cards ca-ce), except editing (card cf) as being important.

Teacher Eight

"I stress technique as well as content. All these cards are important. I've given up on handwriting. If I can read it--fine. I no longer drill on cursive writing. Some students still print their work. That's okay as long as I can read it, and it says something."

"Card f is a new idea for me. It goes beyond proof-reading. If only I could get them to read over their work. It should be a part of the writing process. Someone once said if they care about what they are saying, they will read it over."

Summary

Teacher Eight felt spelling, capitalization and punctuation (cards ca, cd) in the mechanics area, and both language structure and word usage (cards cc, cd) in the written expression construct were important. She stated her program stressed content as well as technique.

Teacher Nine

"I have one main response. Card f is the most important. If we could get our students to proof-read, this might be a first step toward editing, self-revision. The other cards are necessary

and many teachers build their programs upon them. But, often the message of the piece of material is lost when one is concerned mainly with what you call process skills."

"I think we need help in knowing how to deal with children's writing. Sometimes I feel as if I should not touch it. It's not mine to tamper with, but then I wonder if that's really my role."

#### Summary

Editing (card cf) was the only technical skill selected by Teacher Nine. She felt it was the most important skill in and of a writing program.

#### Teacher Ten

"You call these process skills. These are the techniques that are used to make your writing grammatically correct. I think all of these are useful. Cards a to d I would place together as being important. They are ones that I promote. Handwriting is not emphasized anymore. I try to get them to keep a consistent slant. Most kids could do well to learn to edit, but how do you get this started?"

#### Summary

Teacher Ten selected two cards from each of the constructs of mechanics and written expression as being the important technical skills in a writing program. She felt spelling, capitalization and punctuation (cards ca, cd) were the important mechanical skills.



Word usage and language structure (cards cc, cb) were both considered important.

Collective Summary of Teacher Protocol  
on Technical Skills Card-Sort

In the Technical Skills Card-sort, two constructs were identified: mechanics and written expression. The mechanics construct contained four cards--spelling, capitalization and punctuation, handwriting and editing. Written expression constructs were language structure and word usage. (For detailed description of each card, see Appendix C.)

Spelling (card ca) was identified by eight of the ten teachers as pertinent to the technical skills of writing. Capitalization and punctuation (card cd) were selected by eight of the ten teachers as being among the most important technical skills. Handwriting (card cc) was an emphasis in the writing programs of four teachers. Editing (card cf) was viewed as an integral part of the writing process by four of the ten teachers.

Language structure (card cc) was found by nine of the ten teachers to be pertinent to the development of technical skills. Word usage (card cb) was grouped by eight of the ten teachers with those skills considered most important.

In the constructs of written expression, there is a general agreement among these teachers that language structure and word usage are significant skills in the development of student writing. In the mechanics construct, there is less agreement in

relation to handwriting and editing than is to be found in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. This information can be viewed in Table 3, which follows.

### Writing Samples

Each teacher was given the same four samples of writing by students in grades four, five and six (see Appendix D). Sample #1 details a description of a meal eaten at a favorite restaurant. Colorful words create a feeling of great pleasure for this writer. Sample #2 is a message to be conveyed. It creates both happy and sad responses. Sample #3 talks about the writer's nephew, apparently someone who has poor manners. Sample #4 presents a factual statement about a Russian psychologist by a writer interested in conditioned reflexes. The teachers were asked by the interviewer to read and assess each piece of work according to whatever criteria they chose and to make comments directly on the samples. Upon completion of the assessment, teachers were then directed to indicate what next step(s) should be taken for each student's writing development. These written responses are organized by the teacher for each of the four writing samples, and appear exactly as they were written by the teachers. All participants combined both tasks into one written response. General comments are made from both the individual and collective teacher responses to all four writing samples.

Table 3.--Technical Skills Card-sort

Constructs		Teacher									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Mechanics	Card ca - spelling		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
	cd - capitalization and punctuation	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		
	ce - handwriting		X	X			X	X			
	cf - editing		X			X	X			X	
Written Expression	Card cc - language structure	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
	cb - word usage	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X

Each X indicates a given teacher's selection of factors that influence his/her own development of a conception of language or decisions related to the teaching of writing.

Responses to Writing Sample 1:  
My Favorite Restaurant

Teacher One

"I would not correct one thing. It's absolutely marvelous. I would suggest writing about a restaurant that you did not like. This paper is graded: Excellent."

Teacher Two

"An example of exceptional imagery. See me. I want to offer you literary criticism as opposed to correcting the errors here. I will show you examples of imagery in published writing and would request that you try to find some of your own examples."

"Grade: A."

Teacher Three

"Only the spelling errors need correcting. The other errors are not that necessary in order to understand this written message. Good use of creative expression."

Teacher Four

"Very good sequential description of your evening on the town. Describe why the place looks elaborate--does the furniture look elaborate? Would more accurate descriptors be more appropriate? Let's work on a different sentence to end this! Need some homonyms. Correct spelling."

Teacher Five

"Spelling errors and words that don't always make sense.

Paper needs correction. Grade: C."

Teacher Six

"I enjoyed reading about 'The Refectory.' You obviously like using good descriptive words that bring the scene to life. Continue exploring for adjectives that 'say' what you feel."

"I'd like to show you some ways to combine some of your sentences. Does the expression, 'and then' used at the beginning of your last three sentences add to the meaning? Think about it!"

Teacher Seven

"Your ideas would be better if you made the following changes--correct spelling, check for unnecessary words, proper punctuation. Remove 'The End.' You need to learn to proof-read."

"Grade: C."

Teacher Eight

"You have used language in an interesting way. Good use of description. Some words are mis-used even though they sound good. Correct errors and re-submit for me to look over. Need any help?"

"Grade: Content A; Technique C."

Teacher Nine

"Sounds like a good place to me! You are an observant person and quite descriptive in your language."

"Let's talk about a few suggestions I have to improve the grammar in a couple of places."

Teacher Ten

"Grade: B. Some technical difficulties. Good description. Correct errors."

Responses to Writing Sample 2: Hi

Teacher One

"You did not really know your main idea to be shared. Spelling errors need to be corrected. Grammar is poor. Poor choice of words in second paragraph. Corrections needed."

"Paper is to be graded: Poor."

Teacher Two

"A piece of work that needs revision. You need to re-think this topic and then, rewrite the piece. A good idea, but poor technique. See me. You ought to work with lessons on word usage followed by drill on language structures."

"Grade: D."

Teacher Three

"A very immature statement, but cute. Paper needs to be re-written correcting all technical as well as content errors. The Bahamas are not in the Pacific. Paper is not acceptable in present form. See me."

Teacher Four

"A cute idea, but lacks coherency. Did you proof-read? Are the Bahamas in the Pacific? I like your title. Please see me and we'll work on this piece together!"

Teacher Five

"Writing is organized, but lacks coherency. Punctuation is weak. Re-do if you want credit for this assignment."

"Grade: No Credit."

Teacher Six

"Try to decide the main ideas you want to convey after you read over the paper. Here is a help for you--there are two descriptions, one of Julie and another of the island. Find all the thoughts that fit together. Then rewrite the story using two paragraphs. I will be glad to help."

Teacher Seven

"Please sit down with me and explain what your last statement means. Correct all errors in spelling and punctuation. Then, re-write paper to turn in for a grade."

"I plan to give you some exercises in how to organize ideas. You need work in paragraphing."

"Grade: 0."

Teacher Eight

"I like your ideas. I think you have two descriptions here. Some of your statements are confusing. Read your story aloud and see if you can find places you'd like to change or improve."

"I'd like to help you in developing topic sentences. See me."

"Grade: Content B; Technique D."

Teacher Nine

"Read over your story one more time. Is there anything you'd like to add or change" Please schedule a time to talk about your organization."

Teacher Ten

"Grade: D. You have not organized your ideas clearly. Clever idea. Correct errors."

Responses to Writing Sample 3:  
(untitled)

Teacher One

"I will mark this paper down for poor technical skills as it lacks punctuation, proper phrasing and the capitalization is poor. Corrections to be made. It is to be graded: Average."

Teacher Two

"Cute and clever, but lacking punctuation. You need drill on sentence structure, capitalization and punctuation."



"Grade: C."

Teacher Three

"A nice idea, insightful. You need drill on capitalization and punctuation. Corrections need to be made before paper can be accepted. Go to it!"

Teacher Four

"Capitalization is missing at the beginning of several sentences. I don't understand the ending. Please explain it to me. Can you think of a title? Make changes and corrections."

Teacher Five

"You need to proof-read. All sentences start with a capital letter. Brief, but descriptive. Please correct errors."

"Grade: D."

Teacher Six

"I'm very anxious to hear you explain more about your nephew's fit. You write a very fine description of him."

"There are some mistakes I'd like you to correct. Look for these carefully. Think about punctuation and capitalization. You can do it!"

Teacher Seven

"Work on your sentence and paragraph structure. Correct errors and re-copy. Grade: C."

Teacher Eight

"Read your story very fast. Read your story very slo-o-wly. Are the ideas continuous? Or do you need to work on punctuation and capitalization?"

"Grade: Content A: Technique D."

Teacher Nine

"It sounds as if you and your nephew disagree over a few things. Capitalization and punctuation need checking."

Teacher Ten

"Grade: D. Your paper lacks punctuation and capitalization. What does the end mean? Correct mistakes."

Response to Writing Sample 4:  
Ivan Pavlov

Teacher One

"This paper is outstanding. It is factual and well-organized. I would suggest it be followed by an oral report (to the class) on the same topic. It will be graded: Outstanding."

Teacher Two

"Excellent work. Impressive."

"Grade: A."

Teacher Three

"Well-organized. Informative. Where does the information come from? Bibliography would be the next step in your writing

development. But, very few of my kids care about citations. Excellent work. I hope you care."

#### Teacher Four

"A very find, factual statement. Good organization. Would you like to have known Pavlov? Why, or why not? Please see me about a report I'd like for you to prepare. Thanks!"

#### Teacher Five

"Wow! A terrific report about a very fine man. Try writing this same report in first person as if Pavlov was speaking."

"Grade: A."

#### Teacher Six

"You have explained the information carefully and effectively. I compliment you. If you would be interested in studying more about Pavlov, please see me. The library would be helpful. Perhaps, there is a biography. Encyclopedias are only one source of information."

#### Teacher Seven

"Excellent paper. Try writing more biographical statements. Good Job! Grade: A."

#### Teacher Eight

"You write in an interesting way. This paper is excellent. Why not write and read more biography? Have you seen Odyssey of Courage by Wojciechowska? Grade: Content A; Technique A."

Teacher Nine

"A very informative statement. Perhaps you might like to read more about Pavlov. Try writing an article about something Pavlov did that would follow a newspaper format."

Teacher Ten

"Grade A. Excellent work. Try more biographical writing."

Summary of Individual Teacher Responses  
to the Four Writing Samples

Teacher One

Teacher One responded to three of the four samples with a statement regarding technical skills. Two of the comments were critical in nature, one was complimentary. The samples were graded by a choice of one word describing the over-all opinion of each piece. The next steps on two of the samples required corrections. Others were new assignments, one utilizing the same topic, the other a similar one.

Teacher Two

The responses of Teacher Two varied from sample to sample. Three of the four samples were concerned with technical skills, one was complimentary, the other critical. Letter grades were assigned to each piece of writing. Three samples contained follow-up suggestions, specifically one identifying a teacher role. The other two suggestions indicate needs.

Teacher Three

Teacher Three commented on the idea to be shared on each sample. The four samples also included statements about technique. One of these commentaries referred to other student's writing. No letter grade or written grade was given. Further assignments were identified for each piece of writing. These relate to correcting errors in three cases, and to both the content and to the process skills for the fourth sample.

Teacher Four

The responses of Teacher Four all include a reference to the main idea. Questions are used as part of the assessment response. These relate in three cases to the content or to the craft of writing. In the other case, the question refers to content only. Grades are not found on any of the samples. Follow-up activities are identified for each sample. These involve both the teacher and student in three cases, in the fourth corrections are requested. Three of the responses include a compliment.

Teacher Five

Teacher Five responded to four samples with reference to technique and to content. Each paper was given a grade, although one referred to this teacher's non-acceptance of the work. Letters were assigned to the other three. Next steps are included, three referring to corrections and one requesting a re-write.

Teacher Six

Teacher Six commented on the main idea and technique of the writer on three of the samples. The fourth comment makes a reference to technique as a next-step to be taken. The commentary is directed to the subject of the paper. No grades are assigned. Follow-up activities are focused on technical skills, re-writing to enhance meaning. Teacher's comments show interest in each student as a writer.

Teacher Seven

The responses of Teacher Seven are directed to technical skills for three of the samples. The other is concerned with technique only. Grades are given for each sample, one which is a zero, as contrasted to letter grades on the others. Follow-up activities refer to correction in three cases, and to literary style for the fourth sample.

Teacher Eight

Teacher Eight responded to both the main idea to be communicated and to the way it was communicated. The four samples contain a separate grade for both the content and craft of the paper. Next steps are related to technique in three of the samples; the other sample suggests becoming more familiar with biography as a form of writing.

### Teacher Nine

No letter grades or word grades are given in Teacher Nine's commentaries. References to the message to be conveyed is apparent in all four samples along with critical references to writing style for three of the samples. The fourth sample suggests a new writing to the student. Follow-up focuses upon correction and improvement of technical skills for three of the samples.

### Teacher Ten

In brief responses, Teacher Ten indicated on two samples references to technique and main idea, one sample referred to technique only and the fourth sample did not specifically address itself to content or craft. Letter grades are given on each sample. Follow-up activities in three of the samples are requesting correction of errors or mistakes; the other suggested activity referring to writing format.

### Collective Analysis of Teacher Responses

Participants in the study were asked to read four language samples written by fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students and make comments directly on the samples. They were then to indicate what the next steps should be for each student in terms of writing development. All participants combined these two activities into one set of comments. Six of the ten teachers also added a letter grade or evaluative statement to their comments. Four of the writing samples were not accepted by four teachers. Sample Two

was unacceptable to three teachers. Sample Three was not accepted by one teacher.

Collective statements follow by writing sample:

#### Sample 1

Responses vary in terms of constructs identified on the card-sorts. Most commentaries pertain directly to technical skills. Some are addressed to the idea to be expressed. None relate directly to the Assumptions Card-sort in terms of language development theory. Six of the ten teachers included a positive statement about the students writing, four did not. In nine of the ten comments, follow-up activities were aimed at technical skill development.

#### Sample 2

Responses are less varied in this sample than in Sample 1. The paper was generally considered to be of poor quality. Three teachers found it unacceptable. All teachers were concerned with the main idea to be shared. Next steps were identified by all teachers, but two indicated their willingness to work with the student on revision. The other teachers' next steps included revision to be done independently. Four of the ten teachers included positive commentary.

#### Sample 3

Responses to this sample were not varied. All teachers were concerned with writing technique distracting from the main



idea. This paper was not acceptable to one of the teachers. Four of the ten teachers included positive commentaries in their critiques. Three teachers included only negative statements. Next steps were directed at corrections of mechanical errors.

#### Sample 4

There was a general agreement that this paper was considered better than average quality. Responses were both brief and lengthy. Teacher comments were enthusiastic and complimentary. Follow-up activities were addressed to technique and extension of this writers' familiarity with both the reading and writing of biography. Half of the teachers included a letter grade.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study focused on ten teachers' conceptualization of language and the specific problem of if and how this language conception influences teacher decision-making in planning and evaluating student writing in grades four, five and six.

Although several ways of evaluating student writing in the intermediate grades are discussed in the literature (Cooper and Odell,<sup>1</sup> Wagner<sup>2</sup>), the research that has been done relating teacher decision-making to student writing programs is miniscule. These writing programs may or may not be based on teacher's language conceptions.

Student writing is receiving much attention and publicity. Concern for student's writing and the teaching of writing has propelled this skill into one of the most discussed issues of contemporary school curriculum (Shiels<sup>3</sup>). Little is to be found in research or journal articles to help teachers of grades four, five and six in their decision-making for planning and evaluating.

Teachers' awareness of their language conception relating to student writing in the intermediate grades were studied. What

each of the ten teachers believed about language, its uses and functions, was obtained by conducting interviews. Also, the interviewer used three sets of card-sorts designed to help the teachers identify characteristics of and explain their conceptions. Teacher judgments of student writing samples were compared with and added to the information on these teacher beliefs. The notion of key-informant interviewing and interpersonal process recall (Kagan,<sup>4</sup> Pelto<sup>5</sup>) were used as a means of acquiring and for interpreting teacher responses. This resulted in a set of ten protocols, one for each subject.

Purposes of this study were threefold: (1) to ascertain the level of awareness of a teacher's conception of language; (2) to identify and explain teacher's conceptions of language and; (3) to describe if and how a teacher's language conception influences the decision-making in planning and evaluating student writing in grades four, five and six.

Assumptions of the study were:

1. A teacher's conception of language is a product of theoretical study, practical experience, or both;
2. A teacher's conception of language affects the design and implementation of a classroom writing program.

### Interpretation

Given the problem, the purposes of the study and its assumptions, the data has been interpreted according to the constructs in each card-sort.

### Assumptions Card-sort

The Assumptions Card-sort identified possible sources of influence in the development of a teacher's conception of language. Each card related to one of two constructs, those influences that were of a practical experiential nature and those resulting from theoretical study. Teachers in this study indicated that experiential factors played a more important role in determining their language conceptions than did theoretical understandings. First, their years of teaching and their colleague's teaching experiences had the greatest influence upon their development as teachers. Second, inservice programs provided by their local district were considered a source that influenced the development of a language conception. It is noted that only one of the teachers who selected local inservice as being important found district guides to be an influence as well. It would appear that these two cards (ab, ai) would have consistent responses. The fact that none of the teachers indicated professional organizations as being influential in the development of their thinking, while four teachers indicated professional writing as being influential, suggests a lack of understanding of the role of publications in professional organizations. Only three teachers found their preservice training and/or their graduate study valuable. Questions about the content of preservice and graduate training experiences for developing understandings of language as well as decision-making abilities about classroom writing programs for children need to be raised.

As reported, theoretical study played a role in only one teacher's conception. It is interesting to note that her pre-service training took place in another country. In her discussion, this teacher felt she possessed a clearly defined conception of language. Two other teachers selected the work of Piaget as being an important influence. The other teachers were not familiar with his work, or the works of Chomsky, Skinner and Vygotsky. Since none of the teachers were familiar with Chomsky as a theoretician in the area of language development, a gap seems to exist between what is known about language and what teachers know about language.

#### Principles Card-sort

This set of cards contained statements of some guiding principles that can influence teacher decisions about children's writing experience and can reflect a possible underlying conception of language. The Principles Card-sort dealt with the content of writing through the constructs of communication to others through writing and the development of self-awareness through writing. Teachers in this card-sort dealing with the content of writing seemed to value communicating one's ideas to others more than developing student self-awareness through writing. The guiding principles of identifying an audience and understanding the written statement of another, were considered the most significant. Less significant principles as reported by the teachers were involvement with materials, precise language use, and expressing one's ideas.

The one principle in this construct not seen as significant by any of the participants was using revision to develop writing. This shows a lack of teacher understanding that to communicate effectively, writers need to express meaning in a way that is understood by many. Clarity in writing ability is developed through revision.

The self-awareness component of this card-sort is most intriguing. None of the teachers saw the internalization of thought as a most significant principle. Half viewed this card as having no significance at all. Again, this appears to show lack of understanding of children's language and cognitive development. It suggests teacher confusion about the relationship of language and thought. These choices, however, are consistent with implied lack of theoretical understanding indicated in the Assumptions Card-sort by these teachers.

Another interesting response dealt with the principle of learning intuitively. Only three teachers found it of major importance, three saw it less important and four considered it of no significance. This seems to indicate lack of knowledge about children learning to write, along with teacher's not understanding how children learn language as a developmental process. Teachers viewed the use of natural language in the same divided way. Again, this seems to show confusion in terms of teachers' understanding the developmental nature of children's writing.

Most significant principles selected were literature as a model for one's writing and recognition of the uniqueness of

individual writing development. The selection of these as being most significant appears somewhat inconsistent with several of the related cards, as the internalization of thought and use of children's natural language were viewed as not being significant to the teachers.

#### Technical Skills Card-sort

The third card-sort relates to the technical skills or craft of writing. Two categories of writing skills are contained in this set of cards, the mechanical skills of writing and those skills related to the use of written expression. Spelling, capitalization and punctuation were viewed as the most important skills in the mechanics construct of this sort. Most of the teachers placed them together. Apparently handwriting and spelling are viewed as different technical skills and may not be seen as similar in their roles. Editing is not viewed as important. This response is consistent with the teacher choices found in the Principles Card-sort.

Sentence construction, writing style and literary form are seen as important by all but one of the teachers. The fact that writing skills develop through editing and revision is apparently not understood by many of these teachers. However, literary form in this card-sort is consistent with teachers using literature as a model for writing which was most significant in the Principles Card-sort. Word usage definitely appears to be a goal of a writing program, but by fewer teachers than language structure.

Again, there is an inconsistency with teacher's not selecting use of precise and exact language in the communication construct of the Principles Card-sort as being most significant. Collective data from the card-sorts follows in Table 4.

### Writing Samples

Each teacher was given the same four samples of writing by students in grades four, five and six and asked to read and assess according to their chosen criteria, and to make comments on the samples. After assessing each writing, teachers were to indicate what next step(s) should be taken for each students' writing development. Each teacher's response to the writing samples is interpreted in relation to their card-sort selections.

Teacher One - Each paper was given one word as an evaluative statement. Next steps range from correcting technical errors to suggesting an oral report and writing another paper. While samples #1, #2, #3 all contain incorrect spelling as well as other mechanical errors, there is a statement on #1 that the teacher would not correct one thing. Is the student to correct the errors, or are the errors going to be overlooked because the teacher thinks the paper is "marvelous?" What criteria was used for the other samples as opposed to this one? Does the teacher know? Is she aware of her decision to use different criteria for different children? Teacher comments are consistent with responses on the card-sorts, but apparently editing and revision are seen



Table 4.--Collective Card-sort Table

Constructs			Teacher									
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Experiential	Card	aa - preservice						X			X	
		ac - graduate study				X		X			X	
		aj - professional writing	X		X	X						X
		ak - professional organizations										
		ab - inservice	X	X	X	X					X	X
		ad - experience, colleagues	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
		ai - manuals, guides			X		X		X	X		
Theoretical	Card	ac - Skinner						X				
		af - Chomsky										
		ag - Piaget			X	X		X				
		ah - Vygotsky						X				
Communication	Card	ba- thoughts and feelings			X		X	X		X	X	X
		bd - recorded statements						X	X	X	X	X
		bg - materials and activities				X	X					
		bl - revision		X		X					X	
		bk - audience		X		X			X		X	X
		bl - ideas				X		X			X	
		bm - precise and exact				X			X	X		
Self-Awareness	Card	bb - literature models	X	X	X		X	X				
		bc - self confidence					X			X		X
		be - natural language		X				X				
		bf - intuitive learning	X		X			X				
		bh - uniqueness		X					X	X	X	X
		bj - internalized thought										
Mechanics	Card	ca - spelling	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
		cd - capitalization & punctuation	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X
		ce - handwriting		X	X			X	X			
		cf - editing		X			X	X			X	
Written Expression	Card	cc - language structure	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
		cb - word usage	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X

Each X indicates a given teacher's selection of factor(s) that influence his/her development of a conception of language or decisions related to the teaching of writing.

differently from self-correction. Three of the four papers request student correction.

Teacher Two - Each paper was given a letter grade. Sample #1 was not evaluated in the same way as samples #2 and #3. Follow-up assignments are suggested on three samples. Apparently, nothing is to be done by the author in response to sample #4. Is it because his work was impressive? Are excellent papers considered different from poor papers? Is she someone who helps all writers to learn or just poor writers? Responses on the papers are consistent with card choices.

Teacher Three - None of the papers were graded. They include comments only. Two of the four samples were not acceptable to the teacher. They were refuted because of poor technique. While paper #1 contains several errors in word usage as well as other mechanical errors, only spelling needed to be corrected. Why? Was the teacher concerned more with creative expression on #1 than on #2 and #3? All four papers contain something positive from the teacher about the writing. Revision and editing were ignored by this teacher in the card-sort choices. Does she not see how these skills could assist her students to develop better written products? Responses to the writing samples are consistent with card-sort choices.

Teacher Four - Writing samples were not graded by this teacher. General comments are written that both criticize and compliment each piece of work. Follow-up requests are made for all four writers ranging from independent to teacher-pupil

activities. Both the content and the craft of writing was looked at by this teacher. One inconsistency is found in the card-sort responses in relation to these writing samples. Editing is not considered as important as other mechanical skills, but this teacher is concerned with proofreading. Are these one and the same, or does this teacher view them differently?

Teacher Five - Each writing sample was given a letter grade. This teacher found one of the four papers unacceptable. Follow-up assignments are suggested and range from error correction to using another literary form. While this teacher did not choose revision and editing, it appears that these are skills valued as she comments on coherency, proofreading, mis-use of words, etc. Also, the concern for word usage is expressed, but it was not selected as being important in the technical skill card-sort.

Teacher Six - Writing samples are not graded by this teacher, but personalized comments about each writer's technique as well as messages are given. Comments are complimentary and involve next-steps that definitely indicate that this teacher is willing to work with each writer to improve the piece of writing. One gets the feeling that the teacher cares about writing and hopes to help the students write better. The comments are in agreement with the card-sort choices.

Teacher Seven - Each writing sample was given a letter grade. Comments are aimed at the mechanics of writing, although the teacher did not choose revision as a significant principle

or editing as an important skill in the card-sorts. There is nothing mentioned other than mechanics in three of her comments. Follow-up is suggested in all samples ranging from correcting, re-copying and writing more examples using the same literary form. One suggestion indicates the teacher's willingness to help the student learn something about writing.

Teacher Eight - A letter grade was given for both the content and technique of each paper. Three of the letter grades for technique were "Ds" and for content, three "As" and a "B" were given. Next steps were suggested to each of the writers. These are related to technique in three of the samples and to another writing experience using the same literary form. Comments are very personal and include both compliment and criticism. Even though the teacher works toward helping students understand both aspects of a writing process, one wonders if she minimizes teaching in terms of skill development? Or, does she value technique over content? But, the content grades are above average. How can this be explained? Responses on writing samples are consistent with card-sorts, except neither revision or editing were selected. Once again, are these skills seen as something that just naturally develops, or are they taught and developed through carefully planned learning experiences?

Teacher Nine - No letter or word grades are given in this teacher's commentaries. On three of the samples, there is critical commentary about writing style. Reference to the message

conveyed is apparent in all four samples. In terms of next steps to be taken, sample #4 suggests a new writing format while the other comments request teacher-pupil discussion or correction of error. In relation to card-sort responses, a great inconsistency is shown in the technical skills card-sort as only editing is considered important. This suggests one set of beliefs and a different basis for judgment for evaluating writing.

Teacher Ten - Each sample of writing is given a letter grade accompanied by a brief statement. Follow-up activities range from correcting errors in three of the samples to working with a new format in writing. Responses to the card-sorts do not include revision or editing. Why is this so? Are these skills that are not taught, but learned indirectly?

Overall, a general consistency among card-sorts exists except for the guiding principle of revision and the skill of editing upon examining teacher choices in relation to their comments to the writers. However, Teacher Nine claimed not to be as concerned with the craft of writing as with the ideas to be shared; however, her responses to the student samples do not support her card-sort choices. The following questions need to be raised:

1. Would teachers respond to the card-sorts a second time in the same way?
2. Would teachers evaluate the student writing samples twice in the same way?

### Conclusions

The second purpose of the study was to identify and explain a teacher's conception of language. From the selected cards in each of the three sorts and the responses to the student writing samples, the following inferences are made about each teacher's conception of language, and relative position to "Back-to-Basics" and "Self-Awareness" language movements.

Teacher One - Teacher One responds to both language movements and does not have a clearly defined conception of language. Her beliefs are a product of practical experience.

Teacher Two - Teacher Two responds primarily to "Back-to-Basics" and does not indicate a well defined language conception. His beliefs are a product of practical experience.

Teacher Three - Teacher Three responds to the "Back-to-Basics" movement and does not hold a carefully defined language conception. Her beliefs are experientially based.

Teacher Four - Teacher Four responds to both language movements and does not have a clearly defined conception of language. Her beliefs are a product of practical experience.

Teacher Five - Teacher Five doesn't appear to respond to either language movement to any great degree. She indicates a confused understanding of language. Her beliefs originate in experience.

Teacher Six - Teacher Six responds to the "Self-Awareness" movement and has a clearly defined conception of language. This conception is a product of theoretical study and experience.

Teacher Seven - Teacher Seven responds to the "Back-to-Basics" movement and does not have a well defined language conception. Her beliefs are experientially based.

Teacher Eight - Teacher Eight responds to both movements and does not hold a definite language conception. Her beliefs result from teaching experience.

Teacher Nine - Teacher Nine doesn't clearly respond to either language movement. She shows a confused understanding of language. Her beliefs are a product of experiences as a teacher.

Teacher Ten - Teacher Ten consistently responds to both language movements. She does not have a well defined conception of language. Her beliefs are experientially oriented.

Only one of the ten teachers had understandings and beliefs resulting from both theoretical study and practical experience. As these teachers appear to respond to both language movements, it seems they may be unable to articulate their beliefs. On the other hand, in relation to the third study purpose, they do not indicate their level of awareness of a language conception. The idea of teachers making decisions about student writing based on clearly defined language conceptions, is held by only one teacher.

On the basis of the data generated, in relation to the second purpose--to ascertaining the level of awareness of a teacher's conception of language, the following can be concluded about the subjects in this study:

1. Teachers do not have clearly defined conceptions of language;
2. Teacher beliefs about language derive from teaching experience, rather than theoretical study;
3. Teachers' formally stated beliefs about language do not seem to influence decisions about student writing programs;
4. Teachers are unsure as to how and if student writing is to be evaluated;
5. Teachers are not in agreement as to what criteria to employ when evaluating student work;
6. Teachers evaluate the same piece of student work differently from one another;
7. Teachers are inconsistent with follow-up activities in relation to student writing development. (Many teachers see letter grades or correction of errors as part of this developmental writing process. Others suggest experiencing additional language structure and word usage as next steps to be taken.);
8. Teachers are not sure how to combine both the content and craft of writing into a functional classroom program;
9. Teachers do not view graduate study as useful as inservice for staff growth and development;
10. Teachers do not look toward professional organizations as helpful resources in relation to their decision-making processes and;
11. Teachers do not see preservice training as valuable preparation for language arts teaching.



### Discussion of Conclusions

In examining the obtained data, the assumptions and limitations of this study need to be kept in mind, as well as considering the questions raised by the information presented. The researcher assumed that teachers have a conception (understandings and beliefs) about language and its instruction and that this language conception influences teacher decisions made about planning and evaluating student writing in grades four, five and six. The data in this study indicates that these assumptions cannot be made about these teachers, as the underlying assumptions did not hold. In this study teachers did not have clearly defined conceptions of language. Most were not aware of how language beliefs affects their decisions about student writing. Although they were somewhat consistent in what they did in evaluating student writing samples, their evaluation was not based on a language conception and often was inconsistent with what they saw as important in the card-sorts.

The results of the study can make a contribution to the knowledge about teacher conceptions. As characteristic of a field study, these conclusions cannot be generalized. The following questions are pertinent.

### Discussion of Instruments and Methodology Appropriateness

1. What information would be obtained using cards developed according to a different researcher's judgment?

2. The card-sorts required forced choices by the teachers. What information would be obtained from use of open-ended questions with written responses?
3. Were the cards instructional to the participants and did they alter previous thinking?
4. What would be learned from examining teacher evaluations of writing samples from students that are known to them?
5. How effective are anthropological techniques in describing and interpreting the behaviors and judgments of teachers?

### Recommendations for Practice

From the extrapolated data, I would recommend that:

#### Teacher Education

1. Undergraduate language arts classes focus upon building a teacher's rationale for instruction. This includes a clearly defined conception of language, its theories, its development.
2. Inservice classes in language arts be offered to equip teachers with knowledge of language, its theories, its development, and to extend this knowledge for those teachers who already have a basic understanding.
3. Graduate study emphasis upon theoretical knowledge of language as it relates to cognition.
4. Language arts courses, inservice or college and university, include an emphasis upon the relationship of language development and acquisition to thinking and writing.
5. All language arts courses, inservice or college and university, require participants to demonstrate a clear

understanding of classroom writing experiences (planning, evaluating written work, developmental processes).

### Teaching

6. Teachers selected to help children learn about language be active participants of language themselves.

7. School districts establish criteria for teaching language, and establish selection procedures for employing the most qualified teachers of language arts.

### Recommendations for Future Research

On the basis of the collected information, conclusions and recommendations, I am listing questions that need investigation:

1. When in their stages of development, are teachers ready to move from a limited knowledge of language arts to a broad, interdisciplinary view of this subject?

2. When is it appropriate for teachers to begin to analyze and extend their manner of operating from practice rooted in custom, to practice affected by hunches, to practice determined by principles, to practice based upon language theory?

3. How can inservice or graduate programs help teachers become fully functioning professionals characterized as possessing an adequate knowledge of language, its theories of acquisition and development and its relationship to children's thinking?

4. How can inservice or graduate programs prepare teachers to understand conflicting points of view as these relate to instructional practices in planning and evaluating student writing.

5. Can means be designed to select prospective teachers who

--use language actively, rather than passively?

--experience the "participant" rather than the "spectator" language role?

--engage in language activities as writing, reading, speaking and listening?

6. Will prospective teachers be more successful in classrooms when they exhibit the above qualities prior to pre-service training?

## FOOTNOTES

## FOOTNOTES

### Chapter I

#### Problem Statement

<sup>1</sup>Robert P. Parker, Jr., "Focus in the Teaching of Writing: On Process or Product?" English Journal, December 1972, p. 1328.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 1329.

<sup>3</sup>H. Thomas McCracken, Letter From the Editor, Student Member Newsletter, (National Council of Teachers of English, Spring 1977), cover page.

<sup>4</sup>Richard Ohmann, "The Decline in Literacy Is a Fiction, If Not a Hoax," The Chronicle of Higher Education (October 25, 1976), p. 32.

<sup>5</sup>Opinion expressed by Dorris M. Lee, Professor Emeritus, Portland State University, Portland, Oregon, in an informal discussion, April 17, 1977.

<sup>6</sup>Conclusion found in pilot study conducted by Joseph B. Rubin, Michigan State University, College of Education, Institute for Research on Teaching, doctoral candidate, February, 1977.

<sup>7</sup>Noam Chomsky, Language and Mind, (New York, Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968), p. 76.

<sup>8</sup>John M. Kean and Carl Personke, The Language Arts Teaching and Learning in the Elementary School (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1976) p. 50.

<sup>9</sup>Opinion expressed by William A. Jenkins, past president of National Council of Teachers of English, in an address ("Goals of Language Instruction, 1970's") at Atlanta, Georgia, November 27, 1970.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>James E. Miller, Word, Self, Reality: The Rhetoric of Imagination, (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 3.

<sup>13</sup>Kean and Personke, op. cit., p. 98.

<sup>14</sup>Frank D'Angelo, A Conceptual Theory of Rhetoric (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop, 1975), p. 57.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>16</sup>R. D. Walshe, "A Model of the Writing Situation," College Composition and Communication, 28 (1977), p. 384-386.

<sup>17</sup>Carl Koch and James M. Brazil, Strategies for Teaching the Composition Process (Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1974), p. 108.

## Chapter II

### Review of the Literature

<sup>1</sup>Noam Chomsky, Language and Mind (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1968), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>J. P. B. Allen and Paul Van Buren, editors, Chomsky: Selected Readings (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 3-4.

<sup>5</sup>Noam Chomsky, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>7</sup>J. P. B. Allen and Paul Van Buren, op. cit., p. 139.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 129-130.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>10</sup>Noam Chomsky, Aspects of the Theory of Syntax (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1965), pp. 27-37.

<sup>11</sup>Noam Chomsky, "Linguistic Theory" Reports of the Working Committees, Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (New York: MLA Materials Centers, 1966), p. 152.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 155

- <sup>14</sup>B. F. Skinner, Verbal Behavior (New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1957), p. 2.
- <sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 3-5.
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 5-7.
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 8.
- <sup>18</sup>Arthur W. Staats, Learning, Language, and Cognition (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1968), pp. 138-144.
- <sup>19</sup>Kenneth McCorquodale, "On Chomsky's Review of Skinner's Verbal Behavior," Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior, 1970, 13, pp. 83-99.
- <sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 98.
- <sup>21</sup>Jean Piaget, The Child and Reality (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1973), pp. 109-110.
- <sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 118-121.
- <sup>23</sup>Jean Piaget, The Language and Thought of the Child (New York: World Publishing Co., 1955), pp. 58-60.
- <sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 91.
- <sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 90.
- <sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 64.
- <sup>27</sup>Hans G. Furth, Piaget and Knowledge: Theoretical Foundations, 1969, p. 11.
- <sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 32.
- <sup>29</sup>Herbert Ginsburg and S. Oppen, Piaget's Theory of Intellectual Development, An Introduction (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1969), pp. 246-247.
- <sup>30</sup>Furth, op. cit., p. 45.
- <sup>31</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>32</sup>Hermine Sinclair-de Zwart, "Developmental Psycholinguistics," Studies in Cognitive Growth (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 330.
- <sup>33</sup>Furth, op. cit., p. 60.



- <sup>34</sup> Sinclair-de Zwart, op. cit., p. 332.
- <sup>35</sup> Jean Piaget, Psychology of Intelligence (New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams and Co., 1966), p. 82.
- <sup>36</sup> Philip S. Dale, Language Development, Structure and Function, 2nd edition (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), p. 232.
- <sup>37</sup> Lev Vygotsky, Thought and Language. Translated by E. Hanfmann and G. Vakar (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1962), p. 47.
- <sup>38</sup> E. Brooks Smith, Kenneth S. Goodman and Robert Meredith, Language and Thinking In School, 2nd edition (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), p. 135.
- <sup>39</sup> Vygotsky, op. cit., p. 153.
- <sup>40</sup> John C. Mellon, National Assessment and the Teaching of English (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1975), p. 14.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 14.
- <sup>42</sup> "Education '76: A Mix of Ups and Downs," Spotlight, December, 1976, unpagued.
- <sup>43</sup> John C. Mellon, "Round Two of the National Writing Assessment - Interpreting the Apparent Decline of Writing Ability: A Review," Research In the Teaching of English (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, Vol. 10, No. 1, Spring, 1976), p. 70.
- <sup>44</sup> "Education '76: A Mix of Ups and Downs," op. cit., unpagued.
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>46</sup> NAEP Newsletter, "Writing Skills Lacking 'Essential Trio'" (Vol. X, October, 1977, No. 5) cover page.
- <sup>47</sup> Merrill Sheils, "Why Johnny Can't Write," Newsweek, 8 December 1975, pp. 58-65.
- <sup>48</sup> Ellen K. Coughlin, "The Teaching of Writing: No Longer a 'Stepchild,'" The Chronicle of Higher Education. January 31, 1977, p. 3.

<sup>49</sup>Donald H. Graves, "Balance the Basics: Let Them Write," the first report in a series called Papers on Research About Learning. Ford Foundation, 1977.

<sup>50</sup>Donald H. Graves, "We Won't Let Them Write," Language Arts, May 1978, p. 636.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 640.

<sup>52</sup>William H. Rupley, "ERIC REPORT: Teaching and Evaluating Creative Writing in the Elementary Grades," Language Arts, May, 1976, p. 586.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 587.

<sup>54</sup>Dorothy Grant Hennings and Barbara M. Grant, Content and Craft (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), p. xii.

<sup>55</sup>Richard Gebhart, "The Timely Teetertotter: Balancing Discipline and Creativity in Writing Classes," Language Arts, September, 1977, p. 677.

<sup>56</sup>Elisabeth McPherson, "Changing Content in the English Curriculum (Section D)," The Teaching of English, ed. James R. Squire (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 178.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>58</sup>James Britton, Tony Burgess, Nancy Martin, Alex McLeod, and Harold Rosen, "The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18)," (London: MacMillan Education, 1975), p. 58.

<sup>59</sup>Carol Sager, "Improving the Quality of Written Composition in the Middle Grades," Language Arts, October, 1977, p. 761.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., pp. 760-762.

<sup>61</sup>Donald H. Graves, op. cit., unpagged.

<sup>62</sup>Miles Myers, "Five Approaches to the Teaching of Writing," Learning, April, 1978.

<sup>63</sup>Lois V. Arnold, "Writer's Cramp and Eyestrain - Are They Paying Off?," English Journal, January, 1964, p. 14.

<sup>64</sup>Patric Groff, "Does Negative Criticism Discourage Children's Composition?," Language Arts, October, 1975, p. 1032.

<sup>65</sup>Rupley, op. cit., p. 589.

<sup>66</sup> John Dixon, Growth Through English (Reading, England: National Association for the Teaching of English, 1967), p. 16.

<sup>67</sup> Sara Lundsteen, "The Challenge of Evaluation," Help for the Teacher of Written Composition K-9, (National Conference on Research in English, 1976), p. 52.

<sup>68</sup> Charles R. Cooper and Lee Odell, Evaluating Writing: Describing, Measuring, Judging (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1977), p. xii.

<sup>69</sup> Ronald L. Cramer, Writing, Reading and Language Growth: An Introduction to Language Arts (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., A Bell and Howell Company, 1978), p. 102.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Eileen N. Wagner, "How to Avoid Grading Compositions," English Journal, Vol. 64, March, 1975, p. 76.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>76</sup> Bruce Joyce and Marsha Weil (eds), Perspectives for Reform in Teacher Education (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), p. 123.

<sup>77</sup> Robert S. Harnack, The Teacher: Decision-Maker and Curriculum Planner (Scranton, PA: International Textbook Co., 1968), p. 124.

<sup>78</sup> Dale L. Brubaker, The Teacher as a Decision Maker (Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown Co., 1970), pp. 4-5.

<sup>79</sup> Lee S. Shulman (Chairperson), Teaching As Clinical Information Processing (Washington, D.C.: N.I.E. Conference on Studies in Teaching, Panel 6, 1975), p. 51.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Michael J. Dunkin and Bruce J. Biddle, The Study of Teaching (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1974), pp. 39-40.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., pp. 42-43.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., pp. 44-45.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., pp. 46-47.

### Chapter III

#### Research Design and Procedures

<sup>1</sup>A. Jon Magoon, "Constructivist Approaches in Educational Research," Review of Educational Research, Fall 1977, Vol. 47, No. 4, p. 656.

<sup>2</sup>R. E. Snow, "Theory Construction in Educational Research." In R. M. Travers (Ed.), The Second Handbook of Research on Teaching, (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1973), p. 16.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>4</sup>Harry Wolcott, "Criteria for an Ethnographic Approach to Research in Schools," Human Organization, Vol. 34, No. 2, Summer 1975, p. 111.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>7</sup>Opinion expressed by Frederick Erickson, Harvard University, in a paper ("Some Approaches to Inquiry in School/Community Ethnography") at Monterey, California, July 23, 1976, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup>Anne M. Bussis, Edward A. Chittenden and Marianne Amarel, Beyond Surface Curriculum: An Interview Study of Teachers' Understandings (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1976), p. 10.

<sup>9</sup>Robert L. Wolf and Barbary L. Tymetz, "Ethnography and Reading: Matching Inquiry Mode to Process." Reading Research Quarterly, 12 (1976-1977), unpagd.

<sup>10</sup>David E. Hunt, Teachers Are Psychologists Too: On the Application of Psychology to Education (Iowa City, Iowa: The American College Testing Program, 1976), p. 5.

<sup>11</sup>Jarrold W. Wilcox, A Method for Measuring Decision Assumptions (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1972), p. 5.

<sup>12</sup>Erickson, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>13</sup>Ernest Z. Rothkopf, "What Are We Trying to Understand and Improve? Education as Leelaufreaktion," Educational Psychologist 10 (Spring 1973), p. 58.

<sup>14</sup>Harold M. Schroeder, Marvin Karlens and Jacqueline O. Phares, Education for Freedom (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1973), p. 26.

<sup>15</sup>Opinion expressed by Kenneth Goodman, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona, in an information discussion, October 16, 1977.

<sup>16</sup>John M. Kean and Carl Personke, The Language Arts Teaching and Learning in The Elementary School (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1976), p. 7.

<sup>17</sup>Opinion expressed by Dorris M. Lee, Professor Emeritus, Portland State University, Portland, Oregon, in an information discussion, April 17, 1977.

<sup>18</sup>Arthur W. Combs and Others, The Professional Education of Teachers: A Humanistic Approach to Teacher Education, 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1974), p. 21.

<sup>19</sup>Lee, op. cit.

<sup>20</sup>Stephen Wilson, "The Use of Ethnographic Techniques in Educational Research," Review of Educational Research (Winter, 1977), p. 253.

<sup>21</sup>Norman Kagan, Interpersonal Process Recall: A Method of Influencing Human Interaction (Office of Medical Education: Michigan State University, 1975, 1976), Chapter II.

## Chapter V

### Conclusions, Recommendations and Questions for Further Study

<sup>1</sup>Charles R. Cooper and Lee Odell, Evaluating Writing: Describing, Measuring, Judging (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1977).

<sup>2</sup>Eileen N. Wagner, "How to Avoid Grading Compositions," English Journal Vol. 64, March 1975, p. 76.

<sup>3</sup>Merrill Sheils, "Why Johnny Can't Write," Newsweek 8 December 1975.

<sup>4</sup>Norman Kagan, Interpersonal Process Recall: A Method of Influencing Human Interaction (Office of Medical Education: Michigan State University, 1975).

<sup>5</sup>Pertti Pelto, Anthropological Research, The Structure of Inquiry (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDICES A, B, C

### CARD-SORTS

## APPENDIX A

### CARD-SORT

Assumption 1. A teacher's conception of language affects the design and implementation of a writing program.

Assumption 2. A teacher's conception of language is a product of theoretical study, practical experience, or both.

Each of the following cards cite a possible source that influences the development of a teacher's conception of language.

Read each card carefully and then select those that have been a major influence on your decisions about a writing program.

---

Concept of Language aa

Preservice training in an institution of higher education

---

Concept of Language ab

Inservice, staff development workshops, curriculum committees

---

Concept of Language ac

Graduate study in a university or college setting

---

Concept of Language ad

Teaching experience, colleagues, years of experience

---

ae

---

Concept of Language AcquisitionBehaviorist theory of language development

Language is learned primarily through imitation and children's speech is shaped by their language environment.

Skinner, B. F., is the main source of this theory today which assumes that everything is learned through external stimuli.

af

---

Concept of Language AcquisitionGenetic theory of language development

Children possess innate language mechanisms that are responsible for most of what they learn about language.

Chomsky, Noam, is the best known advocate of this theory which suggests that children have an intuitive inclination for language learning.

ag

---

Concept of Language in Children's ThoughtThe work of Piaget\*

"Verbal language is not the stuff which logical thinking is made." Language is secondary, at least in young children, to what Piaget calls abstract symbolic reasoning. The two eventually become closely tied to one another and may function almost simultaneously.

\*Furth, Hans. Piaget for Teachers (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970) pp. 66-69.

ah

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Concept of Language in Children's ThoughtThe work of Vygotsky\*

Language learning and cognitive learning is viewed as a unitary process. Thought processes are essentially verbal, so that "thought is born through words." This theory holds that thought and language are one.

\*Vygotsky, Lev. Thought and Language (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1962) p. 132.

---



<u>Concept of Language</u>	ai
Teacher's Manual, School District Guides, State Directive	
<u>Concept of Language</u>	aj
Professional writing - reports, journals, books	
<u>Concept of Language</u>	ak
Professional Organizations - local, state, national	
Association for Childhood Education International	
National Council for Teachers of English	
National Education Association	

## APPENDIX B

### CARD-SORT

These cards identify some guiding principles that can influence teacher decisions about children's writing experiences.

#### Procedure:

1. Read each card carefully.
2. Divide these principles into either two or three groups depending on how they fit your thinking.

Group A. Principles most significant to you.

Group B. Principles having less significance to you than those in Group A.

Group C. Principles you would not consider.

---

ba

Communication occurs when written thoughts and feelings are understood by oneself and/or others.

---

bb

Literature provides models for personal writing.

---

bc

Constructive writing experiences can promote self-confidence as a writer.

---

bd

Writing ability develops through the need for others to understand ones' recorded statement.

---

---

be

Use of natural language is essential for identifying meaning in one's written expression.

---

bf

Much about writing is learned intuitively, and is not directly taught.

---

bg

Writing skill develops through involvement with materials and activities which one perceives as valuable.

---

bh

The development of writing skills is unique to each individual.

---

bi

When writing, revision develops a more standard way of expressing meaning.

---

bj

When decisions are made as to what to write and how best to record it, one's thoughts become internalized.

---

bk

When writing, one's audience needs to be identified.

---

bl

Writing without an idea to communicate produces a sequence of empty words.

---

bm

Writing requires a precise and exact use of language.

---

## APPENDIX C

### CARD-SORT

These cards all pertain to the technical skills of writing.

1. Look at each card carefully.
2. Group the skills placing those most important together.

---

ca

#### Process of Writing

Spelling - the correct forming of words with letters

---

cb

#### Process of Writing

Word usage\*

Examples: agreement of subject and verb

employment of past, present, and future forms of verbs

selection of the appropriate participle form

use of double negative forms

usage of specific words

\*Hennings, Dorothy and Barbar M. Grant. Content and Craft.  
(Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 157.

---

cc

Process of Writing

## Language structure\*

Examples: Sentence construction

Writing style

Literary form

\*Donoghue, Mildred R. The Child and the English Language Arts,  
Second Edition. (William C. Brown Co. Publishers, 1975),  
pp. 289-290.

cd

Process of Writing

## Capitalization and Punctuation

Examples: Capitalization of first words of sentences

Capitalization of proper names

Selection of appropriate punctuation at the end of a sentence

Use of quotation marks or underlining in titles

Use of period after abbreviations

ce

Process of Writing

Handwriting - Interrelated with spelling is handwriting, for each depends on the other for communication. When letters are correctly proportioned and words are properly spaced, the composition is more readily understood.

Donoghue, Mildred R. The Child and the English Language Arts,  
Second Edition. (William C. Brown Co. Publisher, 1975), p. 288.

Process of Writing

## Editorial Skills

Examples:      Insert a word, punctuation mark, or sentence

                 Capitalize

                 Delete a word, punctuation mark, or sentence

---

**APPENDIX D**

**WRITING SAMPLES**

## APPENDIX D

### WRITING SAMPLES

#### Directions

1. Read each piece of writing. Intermediate grade youngsters (4, 5, 6) wrote these when a choice of reading or writing was available during classtime.
2. Evaluate the papers according to your personal criteria or standard.
3. Indicate on a separate piece of paper the next assignment that would be appropriate in each student's writing development.



## APPENDIX E

### FOLLOW-UP WRITING EXPERIENCE

APPENDIX E

FOLLOW-UP WRITING EXPERIENCE

Assignment Sheet

---

SAMPLE #1

---

SAMPLE #2

---

SAMPLE #3

---

SAMPLE #4

---

**APPENDIX F**

**INTERVIEW GUIDE**

## APPENDIX F

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

Teacher's Name \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

---

#### Pink Cards

a   b   c   d   e   f   g   h   i   j   k

---

#### Blue Cards

a   b   c   d   e   f   g   h   i   j   k

---

#### Green Cards

a   b   c   d   e   f

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