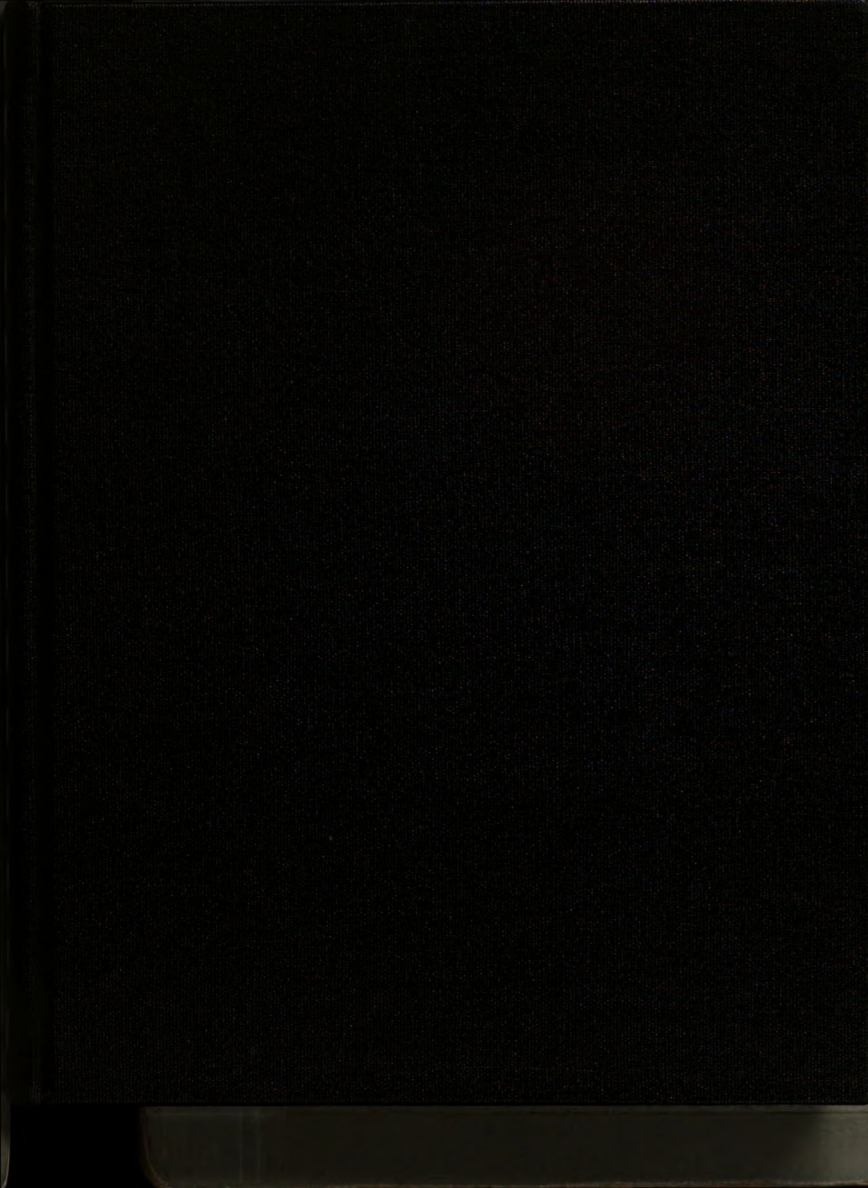




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PARTICIPATION, LEARNING, AND A TRAJECTORY
OF DEVELOPMENT: A CASE OF LITERACY (DIS)ABILITY

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Patricia A. Edwards
Major professor

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PARTICIPATION, LEARNING, AND A TRAJECTORY OF
DEVELOPMENT: A CASE OF LITERACY (DIS)ABILITY

VOLUME I

By

KaiLonnie Dunsmore

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
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Department of Teacher Education

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ABSTRACT

PARTICIPATION, LEARNING, AND A TRAJECTORY OF DEVELOPMENT: A CASE OF LITERACY (DIS)ABILITY

By

KaiLonnie Dunsmore

This dissertation research, a longitudinal study (grades 1-3) of a special education student, analyzes literacy development in a multi-age inclusion context. Analysis of interview, observational, and artifact data gathered over three years, specifically examines the role of tools, activity norms, and discourse practices in mediating cognitive development. To that end, this study tracks the development of a focal student, Alita, over events and across activity settings in order to examine how participation in literate tasks develops and changes over time and across contexts.

Initially identified in kindergarten as *learning disabled*, Alita raises problematic aspects of classroom based literacy apprenticeships. Despite the significant transformation in her classroom participation from peripheral to more varied and central roles, at the end of three years her status is, nonetheless, re-defined as *educably mentally impaired*. She became competent in the literate practices of the classroom learning community while simultaneously demonstrating mental practices that were more significantly “disabled.” The data gathered and analyzed for this study involve describing the changing nature of one special education students’ participation in the cognitive routines accompanying socially mediated literacy activities. It involves close analysis of the ways in which she learns to use the tools and roles associated with literacy practice transforming both the nature and function of her own participation in the

community of practice as well as the character of her literate performances and textual products. Competence and ability are explored through examining the relationship between individual participation, classroom activity, and cognitive development. In other words, this study examines the situated nature of literacy ability and the meaning of competence for one student in a single community of practice over three years.

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DEDICATION

To my parents and
Constant supporters,

Ken and Sharon Dunsmore

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
List of Figures	x
List of Pictures	xi
 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	 1
 CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	 9
Introduction	9
Socio-cultural theory of learning	9
Activity theory	11
Implications of sociocultural theory on how literate competency is analyzed	21
Limitations of Other Models of Development	29
Cognitive models of learning and development	32
Sociocultural models	35
Literate competence as situated meaning making	38
Disability and Competence	44
Competence as a sociological phenomenon	46
Competence as a discursive phenomenon	50
Competence as a cultural identity	55
Competence constructed through sociocultural activity	57
Purpose	61
 CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	 63
Three Design Features for Analysis of Literacy Development	63
Genetic analysis of literacy development	63
Learning as a social phenomenon	65
Mediation	67
Ethnography and Sociocultural Theory	70
Critical ethnography and discourse	76
Units of Analysis: Discourse, Tasks, Learning	77
Analysis of discourse	78
Analysis of tasks	82
Learning as changing participation	85

11

Research Role	88
Researcher as subject	90
Researcher as resource	93
Researcher as classroom participant and member	95
Respecting teachers' subjectivity	98
Videotaping in the classroom	101
Data Collection Process	103
Year one	104
Year two	105
Year three	106
Viewing session	108
Selection of case student for this dissertation	109

CHAPTER FOUR: THE CLASSROOM, THE CURRICULUM AND ALITA	112
Community (Classroom, Teachers, Students)	114
School	114
Institutional culture	116
Arrangement of people and resources	120
The Teachers	121
Teachers' beliefs establish classroom norms	125
The Curriculum	136
Curriculum philosophy	136
Repetitive activity structures	138
Multiple access points	141
Participation was the central curricular objective	142
Literacy as a process of engagement not an outcome	145
Meaning is the criteria for successful participation	148
Expertise resides in the community	149
Alita	151
Participation – attendance – economics	154
Family – school dynamics	156
Parental involvement and economic instability	158
Alita's mobility	159
Extended families	160
School History	161
Discussion: Macro-level Influences on Micro-level Participatory Opportunities	168

CHAPTER FIVE: ALITA'S DEVELOPMENT OVER TIME: DISCOURSE, TASKS, AND LEARNING	175
Alita in First Grade	176
Classroom context	176
Influences of institutional resources on learning: Year 1	178
Language and culture	182
Attendance – Year 1	186
Reaching and writing – Year 1	186
Reading	187
Knowledge of letters	189
Word consciousness	190
Letters, words, stories	191
Phonemic awareness	191
Writing	196
Alita in Second Grade	197
Attendance: Year 2	197
Engagement	198
Writing, Year 2	199
Reading and the role of economic and pedagogical resources	201
Alita in Third Grade, from Learning Disabled to Mentally Impaired	209
Institutional arrangement	209
Writing	212
Special education labels, testing, and development	214
Classroom Discourse as Apprenticeship	221
Orienting physical behavior	224
Book discussions	225
Two months later (end of January)	230
Six book discussions again later	233
Seven book discussions later	238
Learning Through Morning Message: Transformation of Roles.	
Acquisition of Norms, Appropriateness of Tools	243
The nature of the task	243
Morning message as a practice	245
Participation Structures and Distinct Cognitive Spaces	253
Whole class morning message, Year 2	254
Acquisition spaces	260
Small group – appropriation space	262
Small group – March, Year 2	264
Individual space – internalizing and making policy	271
Cognitive affordances in different participation structures	273
The Affective Dimension of Sociocultural Interaction or the Distribution of Expertise in a Community of Practice	279

Literacy Ability as Situated Performance	288
Morning message versus writing workshop	297
Discussion: narrative genre as situated reality	301
Discussion of Morning Message	311
What counts as participation?	311
To What Extent Is Peripheral Participation a Legitimate Entry into the Community of Practice	319
Introduction of a specific language or discourse for thought and action	322
Development of an interactive discourse	325
Changes in Alita's participation	325
Discussion	328
Joint-Engagement: Literate Tools Define Participation in Thematic Units	332
Thematic units	334
Snapshot of collecting data – Year 1 – fall	337
Snapshot – Year 1 – winter	341
Snapshot of Alita in Year 1 – spring	345
Joint engagement, tool use and scientific practice	354
Varied Forms in which Joint Engagement Assumes	355
Learning community	355
Bird unit highlighting	356
When don't know teachers suggest strategies	358
Bird unit	360
Day 1 bird unit, May, Year 3	360
Day 1 bird unit: highlighting	361
Day 2 bird unit: highlighting	363
Day 3 bird unit: highlighting	365
Day 4, notetaking on own topic	366
Day 7 bird unit: Terri reads a book	367
Day 8: notetaking	369
Day 10: notetaking	370
Day 11: composition	373
Day 12: composition	373
Discussion of bird unit	374
 CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUDING DISCUSSIONS	 382
Assessment and participation	383
Special education, competence, and sociocultural community	385
"Specialized" education	393
Final thoughts	401
 REFERENCES	 405

LIST OF FIGURES

	<u>Page</u>
1.1	6
1.2	7
1.3	8
2.1	12
2.2	13
2.3	14
2.4	43
3.1	78
3.2	104
4.1	113
4.2	137
4.3	138
4.4	147
5.1	176
5.2	193
5.3	194
5.4	245
5.5	245
5.6	294
5.7	299
5.8	299
5.9	328
5.10	345
5.11	345
5.12	345

5.1
5.2
5.3
5.4

LIST OF PICTURES

	<u>Page</u>
5.1	326
5.2	326
5.3	327
5.4	327

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Four students are leaning over their desks, which are grouped into a square, and peering at the large chart paper covering almost the entire desk space. Alita, the focal student of this study, is holding a black magic marker and appears to be leading the activity. She's the "writer," recording the personal narrative that Jason is dictating. However, her task involves more than a mere scribe. It is she who conducts the activity of the group. She tells Jacob when to dictate more information and, then, when to stop. She lets Jordan, the youngest member of the group, know when it is time to add punctuation to the text. She also, though, participates in marginalizing his involvement by colluding with Shaquia, another third grade girl to do the task for him. Shaquia's job is to make corrections in the text. Using a blue marker she crosses out the text Alita originally wrote and makes alterations to reflect the conventional discursive features of the morning message activity in this classroom. Some of the changes deal specifically with text conventions associated with narratives in this classroom. Others involve grammatical or content changes that deal more globally with academic prose. When Jason needs to add punctuation he must borrow a marker from one of the two girls. Because Alita and Shayla have markers that are their own, they wield the most power in the group. Alita, though, is clearly in a leadership role in the group. It is she who coordinates the participation activities of the other students. The fact that the group nominated her for this position is indicative of the perception by the other students that

212

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Alita had the pre-requisite abilities necessary to accomplish the literate tasks embedded in the morning message activity.

Holding the pen, serving as the group “writer”, is a highly valued role in group morning message activities. Groups often have difficulty in deciding the roles each will fulfill. Students all like to hold the marker, in part it seems, because by doing so they get to assume the leadership function of the group.

The quickness and ease with which the group came to consensus about roles for each member indicates as well the facility of the group as a whole to use and assume the social interaction norms of the activity. Although a special education student, Alita was positioned as competent and as abled in this literacy activity. It was her third grade year and it was also her third year in this multi-age inclusion setting. When asked, Alita perceived herself to be “good” reader and writer. Other students as well identified her as one of the good readers and writers in the class. The teachers frequently commented that, “if you listen to her discourse, it’s amazing how much she’s developed.” Alita was perceived by herself, her classmates, and her teachers as a student who had shown tremendous development in literacy ability and was becoming highly competent in classroom literacy activities. What is particularly surprising about this, is that this perception occurred simultaneous with the district’s decision to alter her special education label from *learning disabled (LD)* to *educably mentally impaired (EMI)*, thus implying that she had much more severe mental difficulties than the testing three years earlier had indicated.

This dissertation presents Alita’s personal journey through literacy development that characterizes her experience in a particular classroom community. As a case study,

her story is unique. However, the problems and possibilities for literacy development that are reflected in her experience also represents a larger trend in the United States: growing attention to creating instructional environments that support the apprenticeship of all students into the literacy practices of value in a society in which literacy demands are high, and highly contingent upon the use of specialized tools, vocabularies, and social interaction practices. Alita's story speaks to the education of children of poverty in decaying urban communities that are characterized by high unemployment, low educational skills, and fragmented school experiences. It also speaks to the education of children of color. In an increasingly diverse society where children of color, whose lives, cultural norms, and discourse practices may be very different or unfamiliar to their predominantly white, middle class teachers (Florio-Ruane, 1997).

Finally, Alita's story speaks to the education of children with disabilities. Given a climate of high stakes testing in which waivers and accommodations for students classified with disabilities are being significantly reduced, it becomes of paramount importance that the educational community consider the role of external measures of literacy performance and the nature of classroom learning and instruction. This study focuses predominantly on the ways in which one student, who was identified on nationally-normed psychological and performance indicators as "learning disabled" and then three years later as "educably mentally impaired", develops competency in the cognitive routines and literate practices of her classroom community. Recent attacks on the presumed IQ- achievement discrepancy formula for identifying learning disabilities (see Siegel, etc.) raises the question about the empirical validity of having a category of learning disabilities at all. Some (e.g. Blachman, 1999, Wasik, 2001) suggest that there

is a common neurological component to reading difficulties that requires direct instruction of phonological patterns to remediate. However, Scanlon & Velluntino (1998) suggest that “good” early elementary reading intervention can significantly reduce the incident of students in the special education population. They suggest, therefore, that instruction plays a significant component in the subsequent cognitive profiles, which lead to categorizations that a child has a learning disability. Given the large and, particularly in urban centers, growing numbers of students classified with a range of cognitive disabilities in our public schools, we must ask an important question: to what extent are our schools successful in providing all students access to the cognitive routines and literate practices necessary for full participation in our communities. The *Mathews Effect* (Stanovich, 1991) refers to the fact that students who experience early difficulties with learning to read and write are likely to experience even greater failure in school and be further removed from their peers in performance as the emphasis switches on teaching reading in the early elementary grades to using reading to support learning. Thus, differences in performance become exaggerated as early difficulties in literacy performance come to assume greater onus for the struggle that comes to characterize these students school performance. The vignette presented at the beginning of this chapter will be analyzed in greater detail later in the text to explore the ways in which Alita’s participation in a specific activity setting is both enabled and constrained by the interactions present in the classroom activity setting itself.

This dissertation, then, describes the relationship between the child, the classroom community, and the literacy curriculum for the purpose of exploring the ways in which competence and abilities are constructed through participation in collective activity. The

relationship is expressed in Figure 1.1 in which ability is situated in the nexus of the child-community-curriculum relationship. In the following chapter (Chapter Two) a discussion of the theoretical framework for this study is provided which specifically explicates this relationship and legitimates a study of the development of literate abilities through examining the interplay of the individual in the sociocultural context. Chapter Three provides a discussion of the methodological tools and units of analysis that allow this relationship – expressed in the overlapping portions of the circles- to be revealed. The research findings presented in Chapter Four (and represented in Figure 1.2) involve analysis of the influence of macro-level features of the activity triangle (i.e. classroom community, child, literacy curriculum) on Alita's literate participation. Chapter Five (Figure 1.3) presents the data, analysis, and discussion, involving microanalysis of Alita's participation in three years of classroom literate activities. It attends to the role of classroom discourse, the situated nature of literacy tasks, and the ways in which learning to use the roles and tools associate with literate activities each contribute to supporting the development of individual literacy.

The data gathered and analyzed for this study involve describing the changing nature of one special education students' participation in the cognitive routines accompanying socially mediated literacy activities. It involves close analysis of the ways in which this student learns to use the tools and roles associated with literacy practice transforming both the nature and function of her own participation in the community of practice as well as the character of her literate performances and textual products. Competence and ability are explored through examining the relationship between individual participation, classroom activity, and cognitive development.

Analysis of interview, observational, and artifact data gathered over three years, examines the extent to which material tools and social practices provided Alita with access to discourse forms that promoted apprenticeships in socially valued cognitive activities. In other words, this study examines the situated nature of literacy ability and the meaning of competence for one student in a single community of practice over three years.

Figure 1.1

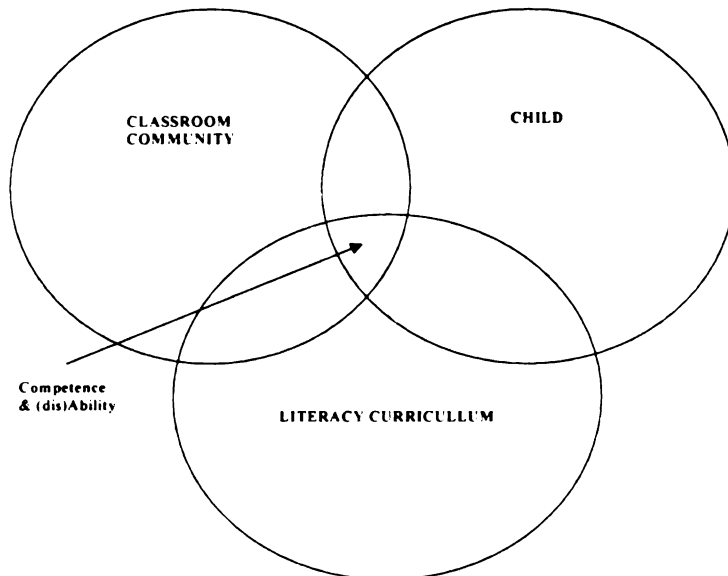
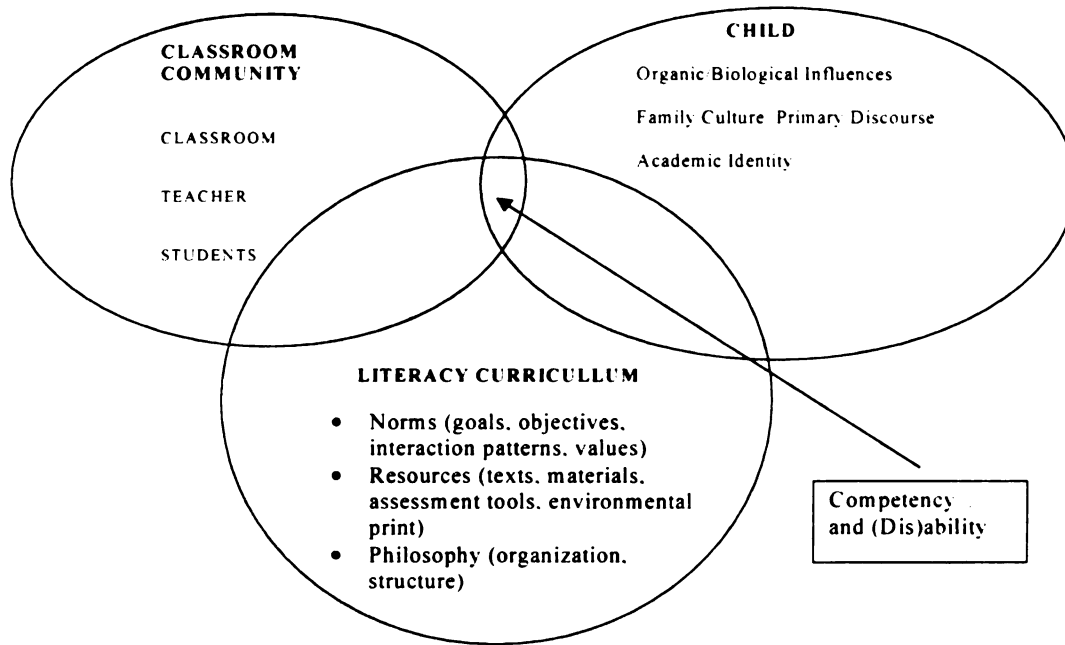
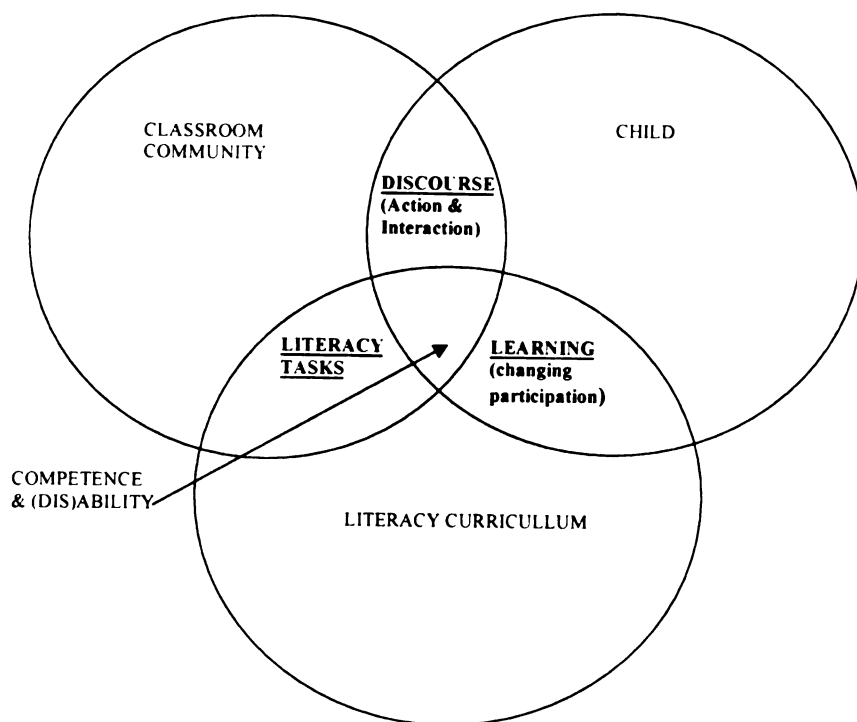


Figure 1.2



Key: **Classroom Community** includes "Classroom" (School and Community Demographics, Physical Arrangement of People and Resources; Institutional Culture which includes Goals, Activities, Interaction, and Collaboration of School Personnel.), "Teacher" (Beliefs and Practices which includes Classroom Management, Literacy Instruction and Development, Etiology of Disabilities, Experience and Expectations, Professional Relationships) and "Students" (Demographics; Prior Knowledge and Expertise, Peer Status and Interaction Norms.) **Child** includes "Organic Biological Influences" (Genetic Endowments, Environmental Influences), "Family Culture/Primary Discourse" (Income, Education, Ethnicity, Discourse Patterns, Literacy Practices), and "Academic Identity" (Social Interaction Patterns, Literacy Knowledge and Experience, and Peer Status and Self-Efficacy).

Figure 1.3



CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction: This study is concerned with understanding the relationship between an individual student's classroom activity and her subsequent literacy development viewed over time. From the perspective of sociocultural theory, this study involves analysis at the microgenetic level of literacy activity (development resulting from moment-to-moment interactions in an activity setting) in order to understand and explore a child's literacy development at the ontogenetic level of analysis (involving the cognitive life history of an individual). Specifically I want to explore how the literate abilities and disabilities of an individual child are situated in the norms, routines, roles, cognitive opportunities afforded in elementary literacy tasks such that it influences her developmental trajectory.

Socio-cultural theory of learning: This study explores the sociocultural aspects of ability and disability within an early elementary classroom community. By "sociocultural" I mean the historical, cultural, and social dimensions of an activity that shape what it means to know and do within specific literacy contexts. The contexts in this study are situated in classrooms that are defined not merely by the interactions of the people and materials present but also by institutional norms, values, and goals. Analysis of classroom life, from a sociocultural perspective, includes explicit attention to the ways in which the material and ideational tools present (and participation structures, genres, and practices are all tools in this sense) are artifacts of previous cultural activities. Thus,

exploring the sociocultural aspects of (dis)ability requires an historical dimension of analysis that is manifested both in a longitudinal research design as well as in the analysis of the function and meaning of discursive genres and literacy practices within the classroom community itself that mediate both the written and oral discursive acts of classroom participants¹.

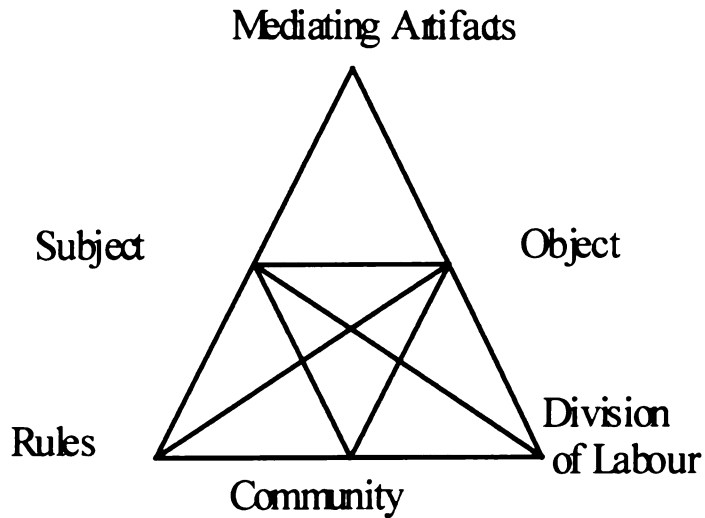
Socio-cultural views, originating in the work of Vygotsky (1986) and subsequent translation and interpretation by Wertsch (1991), Rogoff (1993), Cazden (1988), Cole (1996) and others suggest that learning proceeds development through participation in joint activity with others. That is, through participation in social practices, children acquire both competence in the use of cultural tools that mediate human cognition as well as assume the values, goals, and habits of mind (i.e. dispositions) that guide activity. Thus, acquisition of new roles and responsibilities in accomplishing socially valued practices mediates individual cognitive development. In order, then, to explore the nature and process of students' individual development, it is necessary to study change in their participation in culturally meaningful literate activities. In other words as they *learn to use* the tools and discourses requisite to competent performance in classroom literacy practices, they come to *develop* the cognitive processes which are afforded through participation.

¹ The following quote from Wertsch (1991) further clarifies my selection and use of the term "socio-cultural" within this text, situating my study of Alita's cognition within a line of research that attends to the historical, cultural, and social milieu. Wertsch writes, "I use the term *sociocultural* because I want to understand how mental action is situated in cultural, historical, and institutional settings. I have chosen this term rather than others (such as *cultural* or *sociohistorical*) in order to recognize the important contributions of several disciplines and schools of thought to the study of mediated action. On the one hand I wish to recognize the contributions made by Vygotsky and his colleagues (although he typically used the term *sociohistorical* rather than *sociocultural*). On the other, I wish to recognize the contributions made by many contemporary scholars of culture (although most of the scholars I have in mind do not use the term *historical* in descriptions of what they do). In a sense, a term such as *socio-historical-cultural* would be more accurate, but it is obviously much too cumbersome" (p16).

In this study, I trace the literate development of Alita, a special education student, across three years within the same multi-age inclusion classroom in order to analyze the social and individual aspects of ability (and disability) as well as the public and private meanings surrounding her literacy activity. The central question and the corollary ones around which this study revolve involve the relationship between the classroom milieu and individual literacy practices. Embedded within these questions are assumptions about the origin and nature of cognitive development that situate my study within a theoretical framework that legitimates the study of activity as a method for tracing individual development.

Activity Theory: In particular, this study draws from the conceptual and methodological framework employed by activity theorists analyze and study development over time (see Engestrom, 1999). Activity theory, an extension of sociocultural theories of learning and development, explores “the structure of activities as historically constituted entities. Their [activity theorists’] pedagogical focus is on bridging the gap between the historical state of an activity and the developmental stage of a person with respect to that activity” (Wenger, 1998, p.280). In other words, activity theory provides an analytic lens for studying the person-context relationship that both preserves the meaningfulness of it in its entirety as a cultural phenomenon as well as allows examination of the features that constitute it (Figure 2.1). Because altering any part of the system transform the activity itself, cognitive “differences” thus becomes a phenomenon of relationships; therefore *learning* becomes available for study.

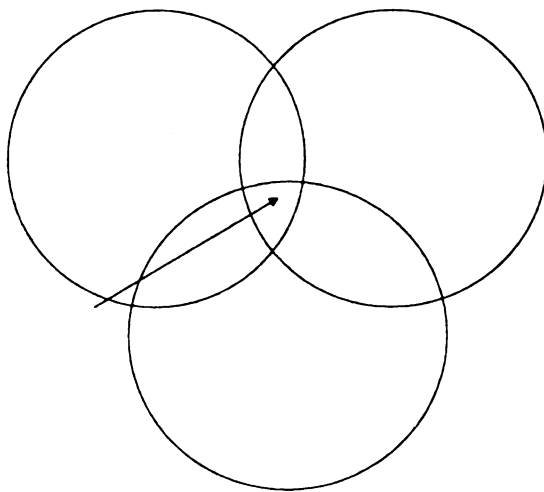
Figure 2.1



Activity theory is most frequently associated with the research and writing of Engeström whose model (Figure 2.1) of an activity system had been extended by others (e.g. Cole, 1996) to represent the ways in which “mind” is “stretched across” (Lave, 1993) the subject-mediator-object relationship (top part of the triangle in Figure 2.1). This level of analysis reflects the ways in which subjects transform objects through acting upon them, which ensues through the appropriation and use of cultural artifacts. This means that Alita’s (i.e. the “subject”) interactions with the literacy curriculum (the object) is mediated by cultural tools and artifacts. The “mind” that Lave (1993) referred to is indicated in Figure 1.1 by the overlap in the three circles where literacy (dis) abilities are manifested (see Figure 2.2). That is, the mental routines associated with literate knowledge, occur only in relationship to other elements of the system, as action is always situated within cultural contexts where rules/norms, roles or division of labor and people (i.e. “community”) define individual goals, practices, and behaviors. Intra- and Inter-mental activities are constructed through the nexus of relations between the subject-

object-community. The activity setting is thus the theoretical framework that defines the unit of analysis as well as locus of mental abilities and practices of the individual.

Figure 2.2

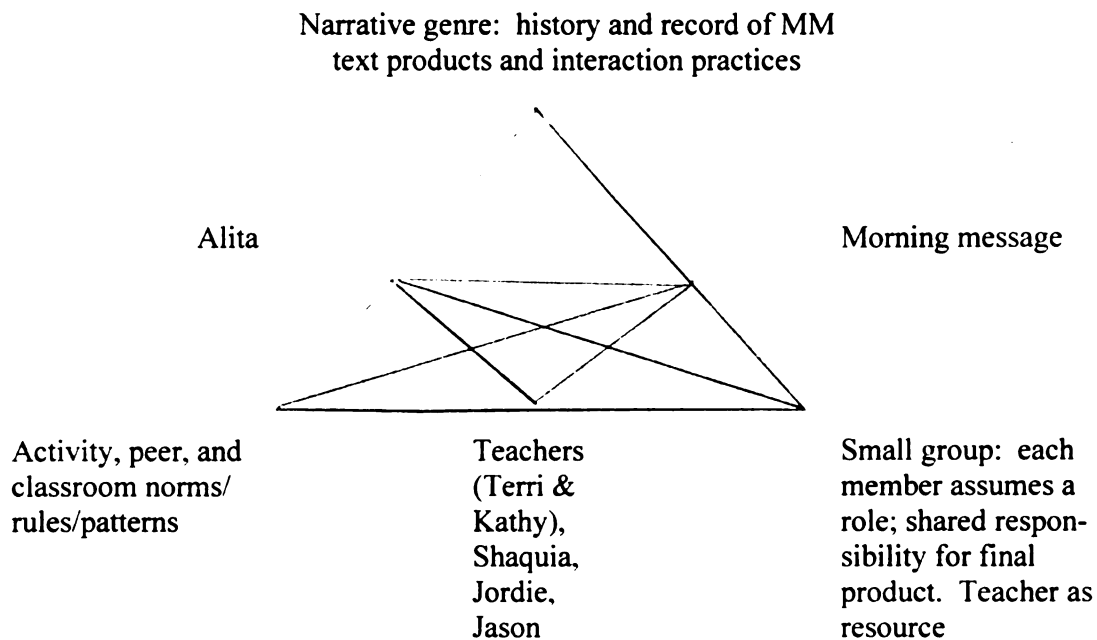


In this study the community refers both to the classroom more generally as well as to the specific participants whose actions are coordinated in order to accomplish a particular task. Therefore, in a small group morning message, the community may refer to only the specific students in a single group as well as the teacher who moves in and out of their actions. Rules include both the explicit norms governing action and interaction, that are defined and sanctioned by the teachers, as well as the often hidden conventions that regulate how and what people do. How work or “labour” is distributed in an activity has significant impact on the roles that individuals assume as well as the subsequent cognitive tasks in which both the individual and the rest of the community engage. In

this study, analysis of the division of labour occurs through a focus on the ways in which different participation structures alter the literate task in which Alita engages.

Specifically it examines how the knowledge of community members scaffolds and supports Alita's participation. Figure 2.3 provides an example of how the activity theory framework can be used to frame the analysis of the small group morning message activity discussed in the introduction.

Figure 2.3



An illustration of how an activity theory framework influences the unit of analysis: When examining, as I do in later in this text, the science report on birds that Alita wrote at the end of her third grade year, the activity triangle draws attention to how the report itself (object) was constructed through the mediation of both material and ideational cultural artifacts such as graphic organizers and scientific genre. Alita's report

analyzed as both a process and product of activity leads attention to the ways in which the actual labour for creation of the final report was divided (or distributed) among teachers, myself, her partner Darren, other classmates, particularly the two sitting at her table who helped with spelling and decoding at several points, and the collective history of the report itself where specific linguistic features of the text were “borrowed” and recontextualized by Alita in her own writing. Rules governing how students engage in the report construction as well as how to interact with one other both enabled and constrained the process whereby Alita composed her text. Finally, the community itself had specific features that engendered unique goals and literacy practices framing the nature and purpose of this report writing activity. From an activity perspective, then, analysis both of Alita’s literacy products is inextricably connected to actions and sociocultural context within which it is constructed.

Activity theory is particularly useful for this study because it provides a framework for attending to the role of tools, material objects, and social participants in studying the specific cognitive practices at play in a setting. Theoretical perspectives on learning which attribute cognition as solely the property of individuals, typically view teachers actions and classrooms settings as incidental to the mental processes of a child. That is, while instruction, interaction, and engagement define the nature and form of literacy performance, cognitive structures, if innate and individual, are thus unfolding rather than dialogically responsive to the classroom context. Disabilities, viewed as an individual phenomenon, isolate the student case as independent from the activity within which the student operates. This becomes particularly problematic given qualitative and empirical research describing the influence of social class and ethnicity on disability

status in schools (Trent et al, 1998), the historical variability in how children are identified, labeled, and educated (Franklin, 1989), and influence of instructional practices on the number of students identified with disabilities and their educational trajectory (Vellutino, Scanlon, Reid, 2000). Additionally, cognition viewed solely as an individual property does little to explain the nature and meaning of *learning* as a central facet of *cultural* life nor does it provide a justification for the continued efforts of society to institutionalize and support it as an intentional human endeavor.

Rogoff & Chavajay (1995) points out that development has traditionally focused either on the individual (that is, how children construct knowledge or how adults teach children) or environmental conditions that affect learning as if these were separate entities and could be studied independently. She adds that:

It is incomplete to focus on the relationship of individual development and social interaction without concern for the cultural activity in which personal and interpersonal actions take place. And it is incomplete to assume that development occurs in one plane and not in others (e.g., that children develop but that their partners or their cultural communities do not) or that influence can be counted (e.g., parent to child, child to parent, culture to individual). (pg. 141)

An activity theory framework for a case study of individual development requires that study of the individual be constantly situated within an “activity” as a unit of analysis because it suggests that it is through engaging in goal directed behavior in an activity setting that learning occurs. This case study, therefore, rests upon analysis over time of Alita’s interactions and practices within distinct activity settings over time. Tharpe and Gallimore (1988) describe activity setting as contexts in which children and adults are engaged in accomplishing a task where adults provide “assisted performance” in helping students achieve and understand goals which are beyond their individual reach.

This implies that curricular events such as book discussions, morning messages, and expository texts created in thematic units have both social and local meanings where cultural knowledge is appropriated and transformed. Activities are places where public discourse and private mental functioning engage in a dialectic of transformation. Studying and understanding reading and writing from an activity theory perspective, where text forms are seen as dialogically created in situated sociocultural contexts, helps us understand the historical and cultural contingencies of any particular written text (Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1993). For example, in Alita's classroom the daily whole class personal experience text², authored by one student but revised and edited by the entire class itself, represents a narrative form that is both representative of certain cultural story forms as well as situated in the social and cognitive competencies of students in the classroom. Additionally, in the book discussion activity, what children notice in the text, how they "chain" their responses to those of others, the questions they raise and explore, are all a function of the situated practices surrounding the use of text in the classroom and the situated cognitive processes employed in various activities and spaces. The ways in which Alita reads and comprehends text grows out of a history of participation in such activities.

Thus, in this longitudinal case study, "change" in performance is understood in light of the participation practices and activity goals within which she has learned to engage and make sense of text. That is, the cognitive routines enacted in reading and talking about text are embedded and made meaningful within the sociocultural activities of the classroom. In short, activity theory, with its attention to the relationships between

² In this classroom, the activity is referred to as "morning message" and is specifically discussed as a curricular activity in Englert, Raphael, & Marriage (1994). Christie (1993) provides a description and

the material world, social practices, and cultural contexts allows close examination of the relationship between Alita's cognitive development and the classroom contexts within which, and from which, it emerges³.

An exploration of literacy development through the lens of activity is consonant with work in the sociocultural tradition where analysis and description of the cognitive processes that people employ are viewed as inextricably embedded within the social practices that give rise as well as meaning to them. Research on cognition, from this perspective, must include not merely the isolated skills but rather the larger activities, goals, and practices which give both origin and meaning to them. The nature and goals of such research include analysis of:

. . . the characteristics of memory and thought, not as they appear in isolated mental tasks, but as they function in the larger, purposive life activities in which we engage.... Memory and thinking in daily life are not separate from, but are part of, doing. We understand cognitive tasks, not merely as ends in themselves but as means for achieving larger objectives and goals; and we carry out these tasks in constant interaction with social and material resources and constraints.... To discover the functional properties of thought in action requires that we take a look at the actual phenomena under natural conditions. (Scribner, p.354-355).

Psychological analysis of mental activity, then, views as genetically antecedent the physical and material world and the social arrangements that give rise to individual thought. Sociocultural theorists talk of thinking as a *situated* phenomenon and by that they mean that mental tasks are always part of the ways of knowing and doing located in

analysis of a similar kind of literacy activity.

³ The work of Wolff-Michael Roth (1998) provides an example of how activity theory contributes a useful methodological and theoretical lens for analyzing classroom-based learning. Roth studies a seven week unit in a fifth grade classroom which engaged students in designing buildings as a way to support the learning of mathematical concepts. His analysis of the role of tools (such as glue guns) and of social interaction patterns demonstrates how children's ways of knowing and doing are mediated by the people, practices, and resources available. Additionally, it traces the ways in which innovation occurs in practices as children appropriate artifacts and activity structures, making them their own in ways that allow for novelty and change.

13

13

real, live, human activity. Therefore, the cultural goals and values that define an activity serve to stimulate the development of specific mental practices. Individual cognition is, thus, more aptly viewed as processes-in-performance than processes-as-properties. That is, mental processes arise through and for the purpose of engaging in meaningful human endeavors rather than being acquired and existing in isolation as though employed solely at the discretion of the individual and without influence of the surrounding context.

In a moment, I will talk more about the relationship between the social and private aspects of thinking, specifically in relationship to knowledge and practice. Here, however, the central point I wish to make is that the mental processes of Alita (the focal student of this study) that are relevant to reading and writing are deemed as inextricably connected to the tasks and activities in which she participates. Additionally, as the quote by Scribner above notes, study of Alita's thought processes occurs within the context of engagement in the literacy practices themselves in order to understand the origin, development, and trajectory of her knowledge. Development becomes meaningful only when considering the cultural practices *within* which she participates. Becoming literate, from this perspective, involves cognitive development that is not solely an individual mental property but is situated as well in the socio-cultural contexts within which it is demonstrated and performed. Mental processes are tied both to the means (tools, artifacts) as well as methods (norms, routines) of cooperative activity and the social interaction surrounding it (Wells, 1999; Leont'ev, 1981). By engaging in the language surrounding cultural activities, children learn to use the semiotic tools that mediate the social interaction and the performance of the activity itself. All higher order mental functions are internalized social relationships and practices (Wells, 1999).

Implications of sociocultural theory on how literacy is defined: Literacy

definitions reflect the theoretical model of learning and development that frame the study. In this study, the focus is *literate* activity as opposed to individual reading or writing behaviors. The significance of utilizing a conceptual category entitled "literacy" rather than smaller units of analysis (such as decoding proficiency or specific strategies children employ when reading and writing) emerges from a theoretical stance that posits a recursive relationship between the individual literate "moves" of students and their meaning and function within the socio-cultural environment. In order to understand the actual knowledge, skills, and understanding that both enable as well as constrain participants' behavior, "literacy" rather than merely "reading" or "writing" is the more appropriate unit of analysis.

The term "literacy" attends to the social and political meanings specific behaviors hold and not merely the isolated cognitive skills that are demanded by a task (Cole, 1996, Langer, 1987). Literate ways of knowing reflect learned behaviors that accrue through participation in the language use and practices within which such ways of knowing and doing have meaning. They are thus "typified social actions" (Christie, 1993). The shift in focus from the study of *reading* to conceptualizing and exploring *literacy* more broadly defined reflects growing awareness of the ways in which individual reading processes share an essential link to the construction of meaning surrounding all interactions with text that involve both reading and writing (Pearson, 1991).

Additionally, the influence of the social context on the purpose and practice of reading have led to scholars to explore to the ways in which cognition is situated in the ways of using language to *do* things within ones socio-cultural milieu. The study of

literacy creates a conceptual category for activities surrounding reading and writing practices that assume a conceptual link between composition, comprehension, as well as context and social practice.

Literacy is more than an accumulation of discrete skills but rather the ways of knowing and doing that constitute cultural practices that have situated meaning and utility. Englert and Palincsar (1991) explain that “conceiving of literacy in terms of cultural practices means that we must understand the political and social as well as cognitive dimensions of literacy” (p.226). In other words, the study of literacy acquisition and development involves a unit of analysis at the level of activity that attends to task structures and goals, social interaction patterns, the material and ideational tools available, and the meaning of literate moves within the classroom community. Defining literacy in this way, thus, requires a unit of analysis where knowledge and abilities is examined through attention to the activity setting within which specific cognitive practices are employed. Therefore, in this study of Alita’s literacy development, I explore not just what she does with text but how she participates in - and the meaning of - the discourse practices within which particular reading and writing activities are meaningful.

Implications of sociocultural theory on how literate competency is analyzed:

There are important philosophical aspects to sociocultural theories of learning, as well, which influence how literacy competencies are analyzed that I’ll briefly consider now. Competency refers to (a) the way an individual uses knowledge to supports the role he/she plays in the enterprise as a whole; (b) the way in which social and cognitive

behavior is functional in particular activity settings; (b) the way in which tools mediate mental activity.

First, individual knowledge is *situated* in the literate activities in which it is employed. Analyzing what Alita knows and can do (or not do) involves studying competence not as an individual or phenomenon that is isolated from her interactions with others but as inextricably connected to the activity settings within which she assumes particular literate roles and tools. The Vygotsky space (Figure 3) suggests that there exists a recursive relationship between an individual's literacy knowledge and participation in social practices. Implicit in a sociocultural model of development is an epistemology in which knowledge has both an individual and social dimension. Knowledge is not an endpoint but rather a process of participation in the group; it is situated in sociocultural activities rather than discovered by and through them. This is not to say that individual knowledge has its *origins* in the environment, in some sort of reverse Cartesian system. Rather, what an individual knows exists within and through cultural practices that are mediated by symbolic and material tools. Through participation in the conversations that accompany activities in which children are engaged, the individual learns to use the semiotic tool of language to develop meanings that are both the product of interaction as well as the process by which further action takes place. The literate practices (including social patterns, physical actions, and cognitive routines) associated with the comprehension or construction of texts are meaningful only within a system of dialogic interactions where knowledge is jointly constructed. Children learn about and through language (Wells, 1999) and, thus, knowledge is inescapably discursive (Harre, 1994).

Wells (1999) provides a useful analysis of the variety of forms of knowledge that can exist as children engage in an activity. (a) *instrumental knowledge* involves competency in use of tools to mediate activity. This form of knowledge is available through participation in joint cultural activities. As novices participate in cultural practices they gain facility and intentionality in the use of cultural tools to mediate their action that leads to: (b) *procedural knowledge* that involves the conscious demonstration by more skillful members. Initially it is achieved through mimicking or imitating the pattern of activity of more skillful members. However, as students gain in expertise they are then able to model, demonstrate, or tell less skilled members how to engage in the practice. (c) Students with *substantive knowledge* are able to explain and justify their action, coordinate with others, explain and justify the relationships (including causes and consequences) of tools and interactions in the performance of the practice. Participation in an activity is likely to involve an individual in all of these modes of knowing simultaneously or successively.

What is evident in the delineation of knowledge forms provided by Wells is that knowledge is both an outgrowth of as well as a tool for continued activity. Therefore, analysis of a child's literacy knowledge means attention to the contexts and purposes surrounding the employment of particular literate competences. When a child demonstrates a particular literate skill or practice, the unit of analysis must include attention to the ways in which community norms influence the nature and purpose of the activity; the ways in which social interaction mediates the role assumed by the individual; the ways in which available tools and artifacts available support his/her performance. The activity triangle (Figure 2.3) again proves a useful representation of the ways in

which knowledge is situated in the activity accompanying the unique interaction of individuals in a sociocultural context.

The first implication, therefore, of sociocultural theory to analysis of individual competency is that studying what a child knows must occur in the process of actually doing and using literacy; it must maintain the essential connection between the activity setting and the particular literate tools were employed. Competency is defined then in terms of what the child understands and is able to do within clearly defined activity settings. Because the behavior of the individual is oriented towards participation in the whole enterprise, even though the individual may be on the periphery of the activity. His or her actions have meaning only when analyzing the structure of the activity as a whole. The demonstration of individual competency, therefore, must be analyzed within the context of understanding the role of the individual within the enterprise as a whole.

Second, competency is behavior that is functional and meaningful when participating in specific sociocultural activities. Competency is always defined with respect to a specific community rather than a list of goals and objectives abstracted from the values, norms, goals, and purposes of people engaging in literacy practices. Literate competency involves analysis at the level of activity as it has both individual and social characteristics. In describing an epistemology of knowledge that acknowledges the dual facets of knowledge as both personal and public, Von Glasersfeld (1984) proposed that we consider individual knowledge as “matching” rather than “fitting” reality. This moves us again towards a functional rather than an ontological description of individual knowledge. He argues that just as many keys may open a particular lock and tell us little about the nature of the lock itself other than what is functional within it, so too do our

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efforts to understand and develop meaning in the world reveal not what really exists but rather what works in operating with a material world. Competency then refers to how an individual employs the cultural artifacts associated with the literacy of a particular community where rules, norms, available tools govern engagement in daily activity. Because individual activity itself has meaning only because of the actions and interactions of others, competency is mutually constituted by the interaction of the individual with the collective in the process of joint engagement in literate activities.

Third, competency is the integration of biological and cultural lines of development. Literacy, as was earlier pointed out, includes both the physiological skills associated with visual perception as well as the cultural patterns of knowing and doing. Cognitive routines involve the realization of organic possibilities in the sociocultural activities and the subsequent reorganization of mental patterns. Research done from a cognitive model of development demonstrated the way in which children's understanding of the world evolved and transformed. For example, in Piaget's laboratory experiments, children believed (i.e. thought was reality) that the shape of the container influenced volume. Thus, what we see is that the cognitive structures of the individual create parameters that define beliefs about and perceptions of the world. Experimentation and maturation interact to enable the child to construct a new reality that acknowledges the veracity of stability of volume regardless of changes in container shape or size. However, as mentioned earlier, cross-cultural research attempting to extend Piaget's research raised questions about the inviolability of children's progression through these "universal" stages of reality. Many scholars who began their careers attempting to replicate Piagetian tasks in culturally diverse settings (see Cole, 1996 and Rogoff &

Chavajay, 1995 for a discussion of this) became dissatisfied with the way in which Piagetian developmentalists described human-environment interaction, namely as *external* influences on the realization of latent developmental processes.

The third implication, then, of a sociocultural model of development to the study of individual competency, is that intrapsychological literate mental practices are viewed as interpsychological in origin. This means, in particular, that biological abnormalities are not in and of itself sufficient to explain differences in the cognitive routines of individuals. Rather, attention to the way in which the individual employs mediational tools when engaging in sociocultural activities is a central facet of understanding his/her mental competencies. Asserting a dialogic relationship between context and cognition implies that the nature of the activity in which an individual engages, and the tools and social interactions which accompany it, are directly involved in the cognitive functions that she constructs and employs. The unit of analysis must include both the individual and the sociocultural context not as merely outcome measures or independent variables of the literate mental practices of the individual. Rather, literate performance must be seen as interdependent with the goals, meanings, and cultural practices which organize mental action. By moving “beyond the head”, so to speak, competency in the use of the cognitive routines associated with reading and writing are seen as inextricably connected to the material and ideational aspects of the activity itself. Thus, a child’s literate abilities are situated in the nexus of individual action and the social practice towards which it is directed. Literate competencies are thus local, immediate and inescapably discursive.

In deciding what features of the sociocultural setting are significant for analysis, I draw heavily from the work done on mathematical tasks by G. Saxe (1991), J. Lave

(1991), Scribner (1985), and others. These scholars have contributed to a growing body of evidence that mathematical thinking is a function of the mind-in-situated-action and not merely the efforts of isolated mental problem solving activity. For example, examination of adult's mathematical problem solving at work (Scribner, 1985) or when engaged in daily tasks like grocery shopping (Saxe, 1991), children in school (Lave and Reed, 1999) as well as schooled and unschooled Brazilian street vendors (Saxe, 1998) has directed attention to the ways in which the nature of the mathematical task is mediated by the knowledge of participants, the way in which knowledge is distributed throughout the system, the organization of information and resources, and social norms. That is, the mathematical problem with which children or adults are wrestling is defined by the affordances and constraints of the sociocultural context. Prior knowledge becomes a component rather than a prerequisite for cognitive engagement. Thus, in studying the kind of literate tasks in which Alita engages, I must examine the curricular activity not as if the assignment holds inherent possibilities for provoking particular forms of thought but rather as creating a system of interdependent relationships between people, objects, and cultural models that allows for great variability in the meanings and actions which are legitimated within the activity setting itself.

Roth's (1998) study of children's design processes when engaged in a fifth grade bridge building activity provides a framework similar to that employed here for examining the way in which cognition is situated in activities which have temporal, spatial, and material dimensions. His close analysis of the nature and process of children's cognition when engaged in a design activity suggests that the cognitive activities of children are:

characterized by their heterogeneous nature wherein multiple elements including tools, materials, community standards, teacher-set constraints, current states of the design artifacts, individual preferences, and past discursive achievements were networked to allow the emergence of the design artifacts....[these] did not have any absolute ontology – that is, singular meanings and applications – but were *interpretively flexible*. In this environment, children learned to recognize and exploit in productive ways the interpretive flexibility of materials, discourse, tools, design artifacts, and teacher-set constraints...Problems did not exist in any absolute sense but emerged as interactive achievements.

Literacy “problems,” which I refer to as “tasks”, are defined not by the assignment itself but rather come into being in the moment-by-moment physical and discursive actions (and interactions) of the children themselves. A literate task is not a stable feature of a curricular assignment or classroom practice. Rather, the literate forms of mental and physical behavior are mediated by the multiple facets of the activity setting. Alita’s cognitive processes are thus constructed and instantiated within the public arena of literate engagement.

McIntyre’s (1998) study of emergent readers participating in literacy activities, which utilized an activity theoretic perspective as well, uncovered the ways that students “read” the cues of the context and employed different cognitive practices to accommodate these contextual features of the literate practice. She argues that prior knowledge, text features, participants, and norms and conventions influence emergent readers selection and use of literate strategies. Her study, however, examined the curricular activities as distinct tasks. Here I examine how the goals that frame Alita’s cognitive behavior are mediated by tools, artifacts, knowledge which is influenced by the curricular practice but enacted within the unique moment-to-moment discursive activity.

Exploring the situated nature of (dis)ability involves attention to the ways in which culture mediates the acquisition of literate ways of knowing and doing. The

concept of “culture” has assumed a centrality in my research as *both* an anthropological *as well as* psychological analytic construct. It is this integration of the social and individual, the material and the ideational that shapes analysis of “diversity,” “difference,” and “culture” beyond what is seen by one to what is shared between. Because this study uses activity as the dominant unit of analysis, the construction of this case study entails exploring the situated nature of Alita’s literate moves in the classroom as well as the meanings such actions have and subsequent responses that are called for within the community of practice. In the following chapter, I will discuss in greater depth the methodology employed to construct this case as well as the relationship between the theoretical framework and the methodological stance employed. What is sufficient here is to note that a sociocultural model of development requires that studying change in the cognitive competencies of the individual requires analysis as well of the sociocultural activities within which mental practices are first constructed between participants and then come to be assumed by the individual herself.

Limitations of Other Models of Development

Attending to the sociocultural context as an integral component of cognitive activity is a relatively recent addition to the study of human development. In the past, psychology was dominated by biological models of change that emphasized the role of maturation on cognitive change (Lerner, 1997). Environmental features were believed to influence only secondarily the development of higher thought processes. Cognitive development was thought to proceed almost along a trajectory of inevitability. For example, Piaget’s research on stages of cognitive transformation emphasized the

universal aspects of mental development implying, then, that learning followed development. In fact, during the early years of cross-cultural research in efforts to replicate Piaget's work, the observed difference in developmental stages was attributed to cognitive delays caused, it was suggested, by inadequate nourishment or cultural stimulus (Rogoff & Chavajay, 1995). A hierarchical and linear model of cognitive development had been created to describe human cognition that was largely inattentive to the conditions under which particular mental skills were functional (Cole, 1996). It was continued investigation attentive to cultural differences, particularly with respect to everyday mathematical expertise (see Saxe⁴, 1991) that revealed the highly complex nature of people's mathematical practices that while divergent from school based methods were nonetheless meaningful within the activities of people's daily life.

In contrast to biologically based models of learning, which emphasize the natural unfolding of latent and pre-determined mental processes, sociocultural theories view learning as the interaction of biological and cultural lines of development. Activities, thus, become a site for inducing the kinds of cognitive changes that make use of physiological possibilities for supporting psychological transformation. Cognitive development *follows* the learning of cultural routines and practices. For example, Scribner and Cole's (1981) analysis of the relationship between the literacy practices of the Vai and their cognitive abilities as demonstrated on tasks is illustrative of a sociocultural approach where cultural activities can be shown to play a central role in

⁴ It was efforts to situate mathematical routines within practices which were relevant and "ordinary" within the lives and activities of people, that contributed to growing understanding of the relationship between meaningful practices and cognitive routines. Cole (1996) studied estimation and proportion through the use of rice in baskets, Scribner (1985) examined how workers in warehouses estimated the number of milk crates in loads, Saxe (1991) examined complex ratios with Brazilian street vendors, Lave (1991) examined American children's algorithms in group activities with and without the teachers presence. Each of these

organizing, inducing, and representing cognitive change. In contrast to many previous developmental studies,⁵ Scribner and Cole demonstrated that it wasn't merely the acquisition of literacy per se that led to the development of particular cognitive skills but rather the *use to which* the literacy practices were put.⁶ Their study highlighted the way in which even the early work of Vygotsky and Luria conflated differences in the nature of literacy among particular communities with *socio-cultural* patterns of literacy use, thus imputing less sophisticated mental development to people for whom the cultural practices supported *different* mental development.

Sociocultural views of learning have become important in educational research, in part, because they provide a useful explanatory model for understanding difference as

studies reveals the way in which the structure of the activity itself, particularly as identified in the Engström's model, influences the actual mathematical task in which the students engage.

⁵ See, for example, Rogoff and Chavajay, 1995 and Cole, 1996 for a discussion of how cross-cultural differences were initially interpreted as indicative of development delays or deviances in what was thought to be "normal" developmental processes. Additionally, the correlation between literacy and poverty has a long history in the US of influencing both policy and educational ideology regarding the nature and development of ability. It was particularly highlighted in the 1966 World Congress on Literacy as well as "liberal" educators advocated for an increase in literacy related educational programs to provide the requisite knowledge and skills to promote personal and national economic development. The relationship was thought to be uni-directional, however, as illiteracy *caused* poverty. The implication was that people were poor because they lacked the knowledge and skills, accrued solely through the acquisition of literacy, to enable them to think and act in ways that promoted economic prosperity.

⁶ Olson, 1994, provides an extremely insightful critique of this interpretation which limits the conclusions which can be drawn from this study about literacy as a significant human tool. He has argued that the development of literacy in human evolutionary history served an extremely important function in transforming thought. For example, the development of numerical systems for classifying information, he argues, provided the tools that enabled societies to move from agrarian to trade societies thus facilitating the flow of information and ideas. Additionally, the ability to record ideas enabled humans to engage in the kind of metacognitive analysis as well as synthesis of ideas not possible in a strictly oral society that relied upon memory and face-to-face interactions. Orthography, thus, serves as a cognitive tool as it makes possible ways of thinking and doing impossible before. His critique of Scribner and Cole's findings is not that the tools of literacy can and are differently employed in the use and development of cognitive processes. Rather, he suggests, that their findings in no way diminish the argument that literacy, as such, provided the tools necessary to create new ways of thinking. He points out that the society in which Scribner and Cole's study took place *had already* been transformed by the entrance of literacy. Thus, while individual appropriation of these tools might currently be a function of participation in particular social and institutional practices (e.g. letter writing or schooling), this did not imply that orthographic systems themselves were not requisite for the development of new modes of mind in the history of human development. Literacy, Olson might say, is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the realization of new cognitive processes.

both a psychological and cultural phenomenon. The actions of the individual are studied as social performances embedded within a socio-cultural milieu. This means that in my case study of one individual child, I attend to her development not as an isolated phenomenon but as embedded within the social fabric of the classroom. Similarly, her cognitive behavior is rendered meaningful only through an analysis of the activities which give rise to it. As Wertsch (1991) noted, “a fundamental assumption of a sociocultural approach to mind is that what is to be described and explained is human *action*” (emphasis mine). He adds that “in trying to understand mental functioning, one cannot begin with the environment or the individual human agent in isolation....[instead, a sociocultural approach views] action and interaction as basic analytic categories and views accounts of the environment and human mental functioning as emerging from them” (p.8-9). Thus, in order to explore the nature and meaning of Alita’s literacy abilities and disabilities, I must attend to the actions of Alita within the context of the multiple social practices that make up the school day.

Cognitive models of learning and development. Theories of reading emerging from cognitive models of learning were characterized by a similar disconnect of the sociocultural context from the actual literacy practices of individuals. They did, however, address the inadequacy of earlier models which were completely inattentive to context and had focused almost exclusively on the biology and neurological wiring of the individual. For example, perceptual theories of reading had focused on the ways in which eyes, in particular, but also the ears “naturally” learned to attend to the features of text, print, code and the phonological character of English orthography. Remediation that attended the physical aspects of perceiving (hearing and seeing) attended the treatment of

differences in children's literacy performance. Such theories explained the differences in literacy performance of large groups of minority and poor children as consequences of inadequate or deprived home environments that interfered with normal biological development. But they did not well explain either the individual variability within cultural groups or the varied function of literacy in societies.

Cognitive theories of reading, on the other hand, had great utility for explaining the ways in which signs and sign systems mediate cognition, particularly with respect to the ways in which strategies and mental representations mediate interaction with text. They also attended to the role of instruction and experience in supporting development. What they failed to do was acknowledge the ways in which the knowledge that children accessed and the problem solving approach they employed was shaped by the moment-to-moment interactions that defined a context as it was occurring. Difficulty in transfer of literacy skills within and across contexts was particularly problematic in cognitive models of learning that did not adequately account for the ways in which tools, practices, and social interaction patterns also mediate any individual act of cognition. Thus, while accounting for the ways in which mental representations are symbolic abstractions of experience, cognitive theories of reading that attended to isolated moments of literate behavior did not address the material and social distribution of expertise, engagement, and experience reflected in real life literacy practice (Gavelek & Palincsar, 1988).

When literacy is situated within an activity, the negotiation and sharing of material and symbolic tools becomes more evident. Equally as important is the relationship between the social and personal aspects of meaning making and the public and private dimensions of goal setting involved in any literate task. That is, when the

unit of analysis shifts from an individual child reading or writing a particular text to the activity setting within which this performance occurs, literate knowledge and abilities becomes more than just an aspect of the individual's cognitive repertoire but a function of the activity setting as whole. Mediation of cognition is a central facet of sociocultural theories of development whereby the sociocultural context stands between and is inextricably connected to the cognitive routines of the individual. Daniels (1996) points out that there are three types of mediators (1) signs and symbols; (2) individual activities; (3) interpersonal relations. Studies of reading and writing activities emerging from a cognitive perspective typically address the first of these mediation devices. For example, strategies, algorithms, genre patterns (all signs and symbols) provided students with procedural routines from which individual cognitive routines could be examined as the outcome. What was neglected was the role of the social context. That is the ways in which cultural activities give meaning and differentially support the acquisition and use of specific mediational signs and symbols as well as the ways in which interpersonal relationships alter, support, transform the roles and routines of the individual.

For example, the dominant framework for content area literacy instruction as determined by popular texts and the nature of research in the early 80's involved the direct application of cognitive strategies for text understanding. What it neglected however was the role of the social context in mediating how and when particular strategies were selected and applied. In discussing the applicability of cognitive models to content literacy instruction, O'Brien, Steward, and Moje (1995) point out,

Content literacy strategies target students as cognitive processors, but students receive the strategies as social beings, deciding how to adapt or modify each step as they go, trying to figure out how to short-circuit the process to get the work done, weighing the value of the time they take with each approach against their

priorities for spending the time in the class period. Each strategy plays out differently with each group of students.”

Sociocultural models: Cognitive models of development as applied to literacy research accounted for what students did with the knowledge they had acquired as well as explained both the idiosyncratic as well as culturally resonant facets of individual organization of knowledge structures (Pressley, 1995). However, it did not well explain cultural variability in developmental trajectories (Chavajay & Rogoff, 1995) or the ability of individuals to move between multiple communities as constructed meanings that had both local and global features of language use practices. Research within a sociocultural context, on the other hand, has studied the nature and development of situated (such as, school based) communities of practice and the subsequent roles, responsibilities, and participation practices of individual members. In particular it attends to the role of the individual activity and interpersonal interaction as mediators of cognition, in addition to the role of semiotic mediators.

The cognitive practices of students become, then, less of an isolated, individual phenomenon but rather a system of interdependent relationships. In a similar way, expertise resides not in the individual, but within the community as members organize available resources rather than disseminate and control them (Roth, 1998). A sociocultural model of development leads to intentional analysis of the social aspects of ability and competence within the broader collaborative community. This means that competence (or ability) is defined within the context of joint activity as the individual participates in the practices and roles valued by the culture. Through participation in joint activity, individuals assume socially valued roles and cognitive practices that are

enacted with others. Competence is defined through the enactment of roles, participation in cultural routines, employment of tools, and negotiation of interactions with others while engaging in socially meaningful activity.

As an illustration of how a sociocultural view of competence and ability contrasts to one emerging from cognitive models of development, I return to research within content area literacy to see how both the pedagogical and theoretical models include an emphasis on social practice and not only the individual internalization of mental models. In contrast, then, to content area literacy research from a cognitive model, the work emerging from a sociocultural model attends both to the social contexts of learning as well as the social purposes for the use of specific cognitive strategies. Acquisition is not, then, simply an individual process of internalization of decontextualized strategies but rather refers to the individual's ability to assume social roles and strategically employ cognitive and material tools when engaging in culturally meaningful activities. Student's literacy knowledge, explored as both a social and cognitive activity, is particularly reflected in strategy instruction research on comprehension or composition of expository text that involves theorizing about the relationship of text comprehension processes and social practices (e.g. Palinscar and Brown, 1985; Englert & Raphael, 1994). Reciprocal teaching (Palinscar and Brown, 1985), for example, provides an instructional program for the explicit teaching of cognitive routines associated with reading and comprehending expository texts that rests upon a theoretical model in which the social plays a genetically primary role to individual development.

In this pedagogical program, teachers model, scaffold, evaluate, and support students' employment and use of four cognitive roles identified as central to comprehension of expository text: predicting, summarizing, connecting, questioning. Through teacher modeling, teacher-student interaction, student-student interaction, individuals engage as well in the modeling, scaffolding, evaluating and supporting participation in a discourse for talking about the text and with one another. Occurring initially within a socially situated instructional context, students gradually internalize and make these cognitive routines, occurring amongst themselves, as aspects of their own individual literate practices. The language through which students engage with each other and with the text is not merely the medium through which the cognitive routines associated with comprehension occur but is an essential component of mental activity. Thus, modeling, scaffolding and supporting students use of specific language to talking about text simultaneously involves apprenticeship into the mental processes associated with literate ways of knowing and doing. Language and discourse are not only the medium through which students engage with one another and the text, it also provides the set of cognitive tools associated with the meaning and use of literacy in situated contexts.

The efficacy of Palinscar and Brown's pedagogical program contributed to a growing recognition within the field of literacy research of the role of classroom discourse in apprenticing students into the cognitive routines associated with effective literacy performance and development. Attention to the function of discourse and language which individuals employ when reading and writing was expanded to include the ways in which sociocultural activities themselves apprentice people into ways of using, understanding, and interacting with text through social engagement in goal

directed activities. All interaction with text involves appropriation of cognitive tools and strategies that have situated utility. Reciprocal teaching involved identification of those routines that are valued in school contexts and providing intentional experiences where students could learn and use these as tools to initially support social activity among peers. As students developed greater competence in the social and cognitive roles associated with the comprehension strategies, the roles they assumed in the reciprocal teaching process were transformed. The acquisition of new cognitive routines was accompanied by the ability to engage in new social roles and practices. Ability, thus, can be observed through the transformation of students' participation over time in the sociocultural activity of reading, talking about and comprehending. Learning to engage in the social and cognitive roles associated with particular activities creates identities of competence for students as their participation in the practice moves from novice to expert (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Literate competence as situated meaning making: Competence as a social identity as well as cognitive practice shifts attention to the way in which literacy routines are situated in the cultural activities. Instruction and apprenticeship of novices becomes of central concern when considering the abilities of individual children. What is particularly important about Palinscar and Brown's work and other empirical studies of cognitive strategies from a social cultural model (e.g. Englert et al, 1994; Coles, 1996) is the explicit recognition that children must *learn* how to make sense of texts and this occurs when using literacy to engage in social practices which have both public and private dimensions. Competence is, thus, nested within activity. The central goal of literate

ability, implicit within a sociocultural model, is for the individual to develop meanings that lead to further participation in social activity. Palincsar and Brown's work provides an illustration of this because they analyzed the development of interpretive procedures of reading informational text (particularly in classroom settings with their associated assessment measures) as a cognitive process that was situated in the social practices surrounding texts.

This suggests that children's acquisition of the strategies employed within the reciprocal teaching model in a school setting has value to the extent that it fosters cognitive practices that have utility in the literacy activities of their classroom. Reading and writing are cognitive activities and the mental processes which children engage in when comprehending or composing text are integrally connected to (and emerge out of as well as grow towards) social practice. "Composing of both oral and written texts (i.e. planning, responding, revising) is a distinctly sociocultural process that involves making decisions, conscious or otherwise, about how one figures into the social world at any one point in time." (Anne Haas Dyson, 1992, p. 433). Children employ cognitive processes that characterize the cultural purposes surrounding the use of tools in a community. In other words, texts can only be said to be constructed or comprehended poorly or well in light of a *system* of shared beliefs about the purposes and process of reading or writing any specific text and the meanings it contains⁷.

Comprehension of any text requires protocols for understanding the relationship between words in the text, personal experience, and the function of the text within the socio-cultural activity of the child. In other words, plausibility is perspectival. That is,

⁷ See Scholes, 199x for a discussion of reading as the development and use of *interpretive protocols* based upon the nature and function of language in situated discursive communities.

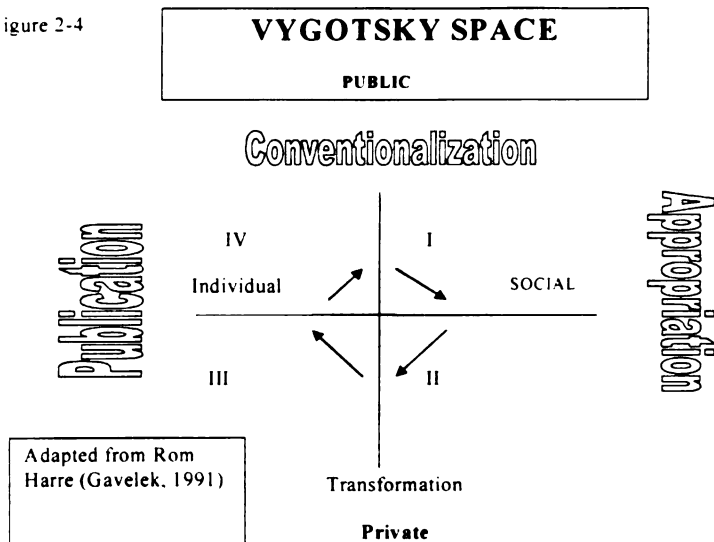
comprehension requires an assumption both of the intention of the speech activity of the other as well as an analysis of its functionality within a system of meanings which have both personal and public dimensions. What is “sensible” (Harre and Gillett, 1994) is defined not by the individual alone but by the subsequent speech activity of other participants. Evaluating the fit or utility of the cognitive tools that children employ to mediate their experience requires analysis of the context-specific purposes and practices that govern text comprehension and assessment.

In speaking of reciprocal teaching in this light, Cazden (1988) reminds us that the models provided in pedagogical instruction emphasizing strategies are samples to learn *from*, not samples to learn. In other words, the research and teaching should be oriented towards creating educational contexts that support the acquisition of the cognitive routines that have sociocultural viability as opposed to searching for inherent, or innate developmental patterns. It is only because the interpretive stance towards text that is supported in the reciprocal teaching model is meaningful in most American classroom contexts, that the cognitive routines are valued individual and social mental tools. Reciprocal teaching highlights both the socially situated nature of interpretive procedures as well as the social origin of cognition. It is through participating in the model activity, that strategy instruction purposively engenders specific mental processes. Reciprocal teaching as served as a pedagogical model for how to intentionally construct activity settings where students have the opportunity to observe, practice, and be assisted in the use of specific literate tools and practices that have situated utility in particular academic contexts.

Understood in terms of Harre's (1984) Vygotsky space (Figure 2.4), what we recognize is that the cognitive tools that provide the framework for individual meaning making are not merely appropriated in whole from the social sphere of activity. Rather, comprehension is a joint construction resulting from the transformation of individual and community discursive actions. Each example of individual publication reflects the participation of the individual in social activity as well as provides new possibilities for action of and within the social community. Attention to a student's competence in this meaning making process, then, is on the functionality of a child's discursive activity, not on the ontological reality of the meaning constructed. That is, when reading, a child constructs meanings that reflect the discursive goals, purposes and values of the community surrounding the use of language rather than copy or discover meanings that reside as objects in the language itself. This is, in part, what Bahktin meant by the term "revocalization". Students' use of language is both representative of the history of prior interactions as well as in anticipation of the further interaction with others in the group. Meaning making as revocalization both reflects the way in which language has been used with the community as well as provides affordances for new meanings in subsequent speech activity. Activities are sites of both individual invention as well as appropriation of the artifacts and tools – and language is a fundamental semiotic tool of human activity - embedded in the practice. The Vygotsky space models a recursive process of individual and collective in a dialect of transformation. As individuals construct meaning from text they do so in a sociocultural context that is situated in activities that have historically, temporally, and geographically delineated parameters which influence the values, tools, goals, and purposes for language use and literacy practices. The data gathered and

analyzed for this study involve exploring the mental practices of activities in quadrant I and IV in order to make hypothesis about the nature of the cognitive routines occurring in quadrants II and III. In quadrant one the individual through participation in a community of practice is acquiring the tools and roles associated with literacy practice. In quadrant II, she is making these tools her own and transforming them (quadrant III) where they then are publicized through further and perhaps novel participation in the cultural practice. Individual participation in the activity is transformed as symbolic and material tools are used with greater expertise, intentionality or with new purpose. The activity itself can be transformed as the individual changes how and why she interacts with others and in the task itself.

Figure 2-4



Disability and Competence

A sociocultural theory of learning can be categorized as an interactive model of disability speaking to the public and individual dimensions of literacy development. Interactive models suggest that disability is a combination both of what the individual brings to any specific encounter as well as the norms, routines, and tools afforded in the educational context. In contrast, explanations of literacy difficulty residing in the individual (sometimes referred to as “deficit” or “intrinsic” theories) find the etiology of literacy difficulties in the cognitive, environmental, or cultural aspects of the individual child. Research, mentioned earlier, which suggests that learning disabled have a genetic origin because of the prevalence of reading disability across generations with a family or that which suggests that early difficulty in perceiving phonological differences in sounds are examples of intrinsic theories of disability, where it is differences in the individual child which account for manifestations of school difference. Extrinsic theories, on the other hand, view disability as a cultural construction and have less to do with the individual child than the norms governing social interaction and defining normative cultural practice. For example, the work of Hugh Mehan (1993) and Bill McDermott (1995), discussed below, shed light on the ways in which innate differences become debilitating only within the context of particular social activities and cultural settings. From a sociocultural, perspective, however, interaction posits more than a joint ownership of the manifestation of literacy difficulty but rather that knowledge and ability of the individual are mediated by the tools, resources, and practices of the activity setting

itself. Abilities are constructed within and through social interaction and come to influence the developmental trajectory of the individual.

An illustration disability research that employs sociocultural theories of learning to study disability as an interactive phenomenon is found in the work of Elinore Ochs (2002) who is exploring the development of moral reasoning in autistic children. Preliminary findings in this work suggests that difference in the developmental patterns of autistic children are not a direct consequence of their organic impairment but rather emerges as the abnormalities in social interaction caused by the autistic behavior influence the ways in which people respond to autistic as compared to non-autistic children. An interactive model of disability, then, within a sociocultural theory of development, thus attends to the ways in which literacy performance is situated in the curricular practices within which it is situated. It is not that there are not differences with organic or biological components between children but rather what is important is the significance of these differences on the individuals participation in a social activities.

In this chapter, thus far, I have discussed the theoretical model that frames how literacy abilities and competence are defined. What follows is a brief discussion of several frameworks for studying academic competence (or ability and disability) in educational settings employed within the research literature, aspects of which are relevant to this study. That is disability and competence as: (a) a sociological phenomenon; (b) discursive; (c) and as a cultural identities. Research following into these categories does not preclude attention to that of the others. For example, a sociological analysis of disability and competence may address to some degree the identity of the individual that is constructed in and through cultural practice. However, the distinction is necessary to

foreground the predominant theoretical and epistemological framework that defines the locus of disability and the nature of individual competence. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the framework employed for this study, that of competence constructed through sociocultural activity.

Competence as a sociological phenomenon. This section addresses the ways in which competence is situated in socially contested contexts that render viable specific ways of knowing and doing. Included in this section are studies that are ethnographic in orientation and discuss the ways in which differences becoming meaningful through activity. Sociological research on disability seeks to explicate the ways in which what “counts” as a disability, and the meaning it has in specific social setting is defined by the practices, values, and allocation and use of cognitive and material resources which are uniquely situated historically, geographically, and ideologically in cultural contexts. Various referred to as the social construction of disability or as disability studies (Skirtic, 1995). Researchers working within this field of study, while employing a variety of methodologies including historical analysis (e.g. McDermott, 1995; Franklin, 1994), interview (e.g. Gable, 2001), classroom observation (e.g. Mehan, 1993), are typically explicitly ethnographic in orientation. That is, a central focus on making sense of disability is exploring the meaning of behavior within specific contexts. The concept of disability as socially constructed emerges from an epistemology that sees behavior as inextricably connected to systems of knowing and doing that embody culture groups. Such research has led us to attend to the meaning of particular behaviors in particular

times and places and how that positions individuals differently with respect to use and acquisition of social goods and relationships.

Mehan (1993) and McDermott (1995) have developed particularly salient portraits of children whose identity as “disabled” within a school context reflects to a greater degree the combined response of school perception and subsequent adaptation of interaction norms than any individual or innate difference in the child. Their work in particular provides insight into how the environment is constructed such that opportunities and access to particular forms of academic practices are limited, denied, and different for individual children based upon the perceptions of those around them. Mehan examines closely the process by which children are identified, studied and then referred for special education. He argues that observation of children in classrooms suggests that the differences in children’s behavior that are described by school personnel do not in fact prove a significant explanation for subsequent identification as disabled. Rather the attribution by the teacher and other educational professionals that particular behaviors on the part of individuals are indicative of a learning disability creates an immutable perception that such a child is significantly different from others even though analysis of actual classroom behavior of students does not warrant that conclusion. This according to Mehan et al is indicative of the social construction of disability. In relationship to activity, Mehan’s work (1988;1993) show that (1) competence in performance is not an absolute property of the individual but rather is contingent upon the perceptions of other members of a learning community; and (2) the roles of various stakeholders in describing the behavior and practices of a child differentially affect the perception that gets sanctioned by the school.

McDermott and Varenne (1985) suggest that disability is situated within the community itself, having origins in the beliefs and practices of the culture rather than existing as abnormalities in individuals. They traced the role of deaf people in a community on Martha's Vineyard at the turn of the 19th century. The absence of hearing acuity led not to social marginalization when the rest of the residents of Martha Vineyards were able to use sign language to communicate. They fully participated in the life of the community. Thus a "real" biological condition, such as hearing loss, is disabling only to the extent that it inhibits social participation. Notions of failure presume a definition of success. Definitions of what constitutes competence (ability) in literacy are dependent upon the activities and tasks within which individuals are expected to perform.

McDermott and Mehan talk of disability as a social construct (i.e. invention) because it involves marginalizing or limiting individual participation through codifying specific definitions of success or normal participation. McDermott explains that

the problem in assuming that there is one way to be in a culture encourages the misunderstanding that those who are different from perceived norms are missing something, that it is their doing, that they are locked out for a reason, that they are in fact, in reality, disabled.....In every society, there are ways of being locked out. Race, gender, or beauty can serve as the dividing point as easily as being sighted or blind. In every society it takes many people – both disablers and their disabled – to get that job done (p.7).

McDermott, in fact, argues that "disabilities are approached best as cultural fabrication". Similarly, McGill-Franzen and Goatley (1997) argue that it is when literacy bursts upon the economic and civil landscape in the early part of this century that concern about disability with respect to literacy began to emerge in the educational research. In fact, in the decade of the late 1800's American educators had great hopes of eradicating illiteracy

by the turn of the new century; changing expectations for literacy acquisition and use led to a subsequent revision of this great hope and the construction of a new crises of illiteracy. Others have examined the ways in which democratic aims of schooling to equalize society acting in concert with nationalistic endeavors to Americanize immigrants conflicted with competitive forces of educated classes as well as scarce resources. Labaree (1992) suggest that civic-minded goals of public elites which supported the creation of public education, and thus help the poor, has often been counteracted by the desire to preserve economic advantages for themselves and their children. As Labaree did, Franklin (1994) also does an historical analysis of education in one city and suggests that (a) that there has been a relatively stable presence of students in classrooms who fall below the expected norm of performance, knowledge, and skill; and that; (b) this presence of students perceived to be educationally disabled is correlated with the cultural and social diversity in community populations which is reflected in schools; (c) how schools label and educationally address such problems reveals the epistemological conflict inherent in American pedagogical beliefs and practices surrounding the role of the individual versus the social in ability and learning.

Research on disability from this perspective leads us to attend to the ways in disabilities are social constructs. In relationship to this study in particular, it leads me to attend to the ways in which (a) Alita's individual performance is meaningfully defined as different from the expected only because there exists a system of beliefs about what counts as "normal" literacy performance and the formal and lay theories held by students and teachers alike which explain and give meaning to the actions and "differences" of individuals; (b) Alita's interaction in the classroom is a social phenomenon. That is, what

she says and does in a specific literacy activity is defined by her own goals and skills *which are brought into being* within a system of ideas and practices which sanction and support and thus create the social and performative mind of the individual. The social and the individual are thus dialogically related.

Competence as a discursive phenomenon. Research that examines the discursive aspects of meaning making further problematizes sociological explanations of disability that treat culture as a variable within, rather than a constituent of, mental representations. It is only by attending to the materiality of artifacts that we can explore the way cognitive processes are dependent upon the social and physical practices which both enable and constrain the meaning potential of an individual. Empirical results regarding the relationship between socio-economic status (SES) or ethnicity and academic achievement led to cultural deficit theories particularly prevalent in the 60's which ignored the functionality of discourse practices in situated contexts (see for example Cole, 1996 for a review of this work)

Heath's (1982) research, however, revealed the way in which language practices by differing speech communities offer students different (not less) ideational and material artifacts that mediate their understanding and experience of any text activity. Heath's exploration of difference in literacy performance from a linguistic perspective through ethnographic and discourse analysis forces consideration of the contexts within which literacy is employed and the ways students' use of language and text is mediated by the values, activities, and discourse patterns of multiple communities of practice. It reveals as well the ways in which the school contexts of literacy use may differentially conflict

with, support, or develop alternative understandings and uses of literacy from those held by other communities within which students move. Other scholars who have employed ethnographic and sociolinguistic lenses to the study of home-school relationships (e.g. Au, 1990; Laureau, 1989; Gee, 1993, Erickson, 1977) support the notion that the resources and discourses available in students' home environments provide students access to *ways of knowing* that are consequential to their access and use of privileged school discourses.

Such research has forced a redefinition of "culture" from intact containers that all hold the *same* tools, which are merely uniquely colored, to a view of culture as a community of practice that provide different tools shaped to the specialized goals, values, and activities within which people live and find meaning in their lives. Viewed from this perspective we focus less on what kids don't *have* and more on how what they *do* supports (or hinders) their understanding and participation in the activities we do in school. It is not that one culture is better than another, but rather it is in the fit of expectation and practice between what one culture offers and what another community demands that give rise to problems. *All* cultures "buy" their participants many things but they do so at the expense of others (McDermott, 1995). Struggles with learning school tasks can be viewed as a manifestation of larger cultural conflicts that kids must negotiate to find meaningful the goals, language practices, participation structures, and topics that teachers assume to be *neutral, but that may tangential to the child's everyday life tasks*. This hides, Delpit (1988) points out, the essential power structures that instantiate as "right" certain ways of knowing and doing over others. Referring to students as "developmentally delayed" or "not adequately prepared" for the activities of school,

involves judgments that reflect cultural expectation for what and how students should know. Conflict between values and norms in different communities of practice (such as home and school) can lead students to subtly resist the instructions and practices of teachers (Ogbu, 1996; Finders, 1996).

Research which explores student resistance as a cultural phenomenon speaks to the ways in which our “good” teaching practices requires attitudes on the part of students that often conflict with those supported by their peers. Being a “good” student may require a way of being that threatens the very identity that students are struggling to construct. An illustration of this is found in Margaret Finders (1996) study of four seventh grade girls who were considered to be “good” students (never got into trouble and did well academically). She closely observed two sets of best friends with each set belonging to very different social networks for a year. Her study revealed that the girls used literacy to protect the public presentation of themselves. Thus, for example, two of the girls refused ever to share their writing with others despite the requirement of the teacher who wished students to develop a sense of audience and purpose. Believing that it was dangerous to reveal your “real” self to others, they changed pen colors and forged a peer’s response rather than exchange book journals. Additionally, all four of the girls in the study were very careful about which books they brought to class, what they recorded in their book journal, and what they discussed with others. Expectations surrounding what books were appropriate for members of their social network governed how and what students publicly read and shared. Presentation of self governed participation. Finders notes that there were two literacies present. Those literate practices that dealt with schooling and are recognized and supported by adults she refers to as “sanctioned

literacies,” but those that attempted to subvert official practices and expectations she called the “literate underlife.”

What is relevant about her work to this study is the ways in which the socio-political aspects of the girls social lives (beliefs and values surrounding interaction with others and presentation of self) led each of the focal girls to respond in ways different from and at times in opposition to the teachers goal and intention. Dispositions and values both of the individual and the peer culture mediated the norms that the teacher attempted to create. Analysis of the literate tasks in which students *actually* engage requires attention to the activity structure as it exists psychologically for the students.

Another avenue in which research attending to the psychological character of classroom life has taken is exploring the ways in which classroom instruction itself contributes to subsequent differences in student performance. Such a conclusion seems obvious - teachers make a difference in what and how children learn. However, the concept of a learning disability as an individual phenomenon has taken such a hold on the professional, policy, and public educational landscape that it has proven particularly resilient to criticisms of it’s validity and legitimacy (Allington, 2001). Research, therefore, which seeks to describe or create “best practices” in literacy instruction and analyze such practices on students’ developmental trajectories, addresses the ways in which individual psychology is nested in multiple social contexts.

For example, the large scale longitudinal research of Vellutino & Scanlon (2000) suggest that the predominant population of children identified with learning disabilities could be eliminated or significantly reduced given the right early instructional contexts. They argue not that disability is a social construct (as in fabrication) but is a creation (i.e.

consequence) of instructional practices that inadequately provide early and important skills to some students. While not directly addressing the locus of disability (innate and biological versus socially constructed difference in cognitive structures), they do suggest that the disability status of the majority of students identified as learning disabled can be influenced by the instructional practices of schools. They argue that “instructionally disabled” may be a better etiological explanation for learning disabilities than others that focus on biological or neurological differences.

Others as well have examined the ways in which students identified as learning disabled are given reading instruction different than that of their unidentified peers and is more likely to offer less rather than more opportunities to experience instruction based upon research based proposals for effective reading instruction.

Life history research provides further insight into the ways in which the sociocultural conditions of people’s lives affect psycho-social development. Elders’ (1984; 1982, 1979) longitudinal study of children and adolescence during the American Depression provide insight into the ways in which social roles affects the construction of psychological identities as well as developmental trajectories and adult participation practices. Additionally, research on the role of cultural models in influencing the activities of individuals within social contexts (D’Andrade, 1992) provides further support for analysis of individual development through exploring the ways in which the larger social network mediates the perception of self and subsequent activity.

What is important, then, for this study is the intersection of individual and school organization and instruction in analyzing psychological aspect of literacy development. Viewing learning as an individual phenomenon which is inextricably situated in social

activities, one begins to see the importance of a social psychology which has both methodological and theoretical tools necessary to explore how mind is shaped through the organization, goals and practices of the classroom. Communities of practice (Lave, 1991) becomes both a conceptual and analytic category where roles, resources, and activity norms help to explain the differences in the cognitive functions and tools which individuals employs across activities. This, then, leads to exploration of the ways in which such practices shape children's perception of themselves and their subsequent ability and willingness to assume identities of competence within literate practices.

Competence as a cultural identity. When examining communities of practice, competence becomes a feature of the activity system itself and not just of an individual member. If learning involves changing participation (Rogoff, 1993) that is acquiring and performing in new ways under new roles within a specific place as part of a cultural process, then competence involves an "identity of participation" (Wenger , 1998, p 214). Because "learning transforms who we are and what we can do – Learning is an experience of identity. It is a process of becoming... We accumulate skills and information, in the service of an identity." (Wenger, p. 214). It is through participation in such communities of practice and acquiring new skills in the service of performing culturally meaningful roles that competence can be meaningfully analyzed and described.

Competence, on the other hand, refers both to the performative aspect of knowledge-in-use as well as its intelligibility both to the speaker and the perceiver. Thus, this case study involves analysis of the behaviors, and practices of the individual within the context of the activity system in order to explore the ways in which ability, as a

description of the knowledge presumed in the head of a child as well as her ability to know when to apply are embedded in the fabric of the social and cultural life of the classroom community.

Competence is *situated* not in the head alone but in the distribution of meaning through participation in activity settings. Socio-cultural perspectives, which highlight the dialogic nature of knowledge in situated activity, are an extension of the long-standing relationship between studies of classroom patterns and practices and exploring individual knowledge . Analysis of the material and ideational characteristic of artifacts (Holland and Cole, 1995; Cole 1996) suggests that human cognition is mediated neither solely by what's in the head nor what is in the world. This study, thus, rests upon two related assumptions about the need for conceptualizing the origins of individual ability and the development of literate competence: (1) we must move beyond the head - competence is embodied and materially instantiated in artifacts, practices, activity settings; and (2) competence does not originate within the individual –but the origins of what is commonly described as “ability” are to be found between individuals’ situated in their interactions with each other. In this case study, literate abilities are viewed as mediated, distributed, and situated.

Attention to the situated nature of learning within specific communities of practice, reveals how affordances and constraints inherent in the nature of the tool itself mediates the expertise of individual students and thus the cognitive processes they are able as well as choose to employ. Availability of social and material scaffolds across classroom contexts influences the trajectory of development through leading students to

participate in new ways and with new people as they develop identities of competence (Wenger, 1996) through their engagement in the literate practices of the community.

Competence constructed through sociocultural activity: While attending to the ways in which knowledge and competence are constructed in and through sociocultural activities, this study does not focus on the sociological character of (dis)ability but rather the psychological aspects of it. Research in disability studies (Gable, 2000) attends to the sense others make of a child's behavior, but it doesn't adequately explore how such practices are internalized and/or related to those held by the individual child. A sociocultural view of disability explores the implications the interactions of the child and the community has for mental development. Disability as a social construct takes on new meaning from a psychological rather than a sociological perspective in this study. Difference in social interaction is examined to explore the ways in which deviations in how individuals participate in sociocultural activities alters the developmental trajectory. Specifically, it assumes that individual organic or biological impairments/abnormalities are significant for understanding the nature and development of literacy abilities and classroom competences only to the extent that they are seen to alter the participator role of the individual in classroom practices.

Sociocultural theory, in fact, emerges from efforts to describe and explain the psychological development of children with organic disabilities. Vygotsky (1986) argued that mentally impaired people do not exhibit less developed mental processes but rather *different* mental processes. Development according to Vygotsky is the integration of socially learned practices with the process of biologically maturation. The socio-cultural

manifestations of disability come primarily through differences in the participation of students in the cultural practices to which biological differences contribute. This is not merely another way of saying that biologically different children develop differently but rather that any constitutional abnormality is consequential to the psychological development of a child only to the extent to which that difference alters the social relations, interactions, and normal participation practices necessary for apprenticeship in the cognitive routines of the cultural community.

It is important to clearly delineate the relationship between ability or competence as an individual property and the social practices which mediate action. Vygotsky argued that the cause of observed cognitive differentiation of individuals is not the direct result of organic impairments that have its origins in biology (what he refers to as primary defects), but rather the ways in which these abnormalities alter the individuals' interactions with the physical and social world. Thus, "secondary defects" refer to difference in development of higher psychological functions as a consequence of transformed sociocultural activity. Difference in participation practices may become the origin of subsequent cognitive differences among individuals to the extent that they alter participation in sociocultural activities. Gindis (1995) explains that because "learning is a shared-joint process in a responsive social context.....A disability is perceived as an abnormality only when it is brought into the social context. The primary problem of a disability is not the sensory or neurological impairment itself, but its social implications." Since secondary disabilities arise through differences in sociocultural participation caused by primary disabilities, intentionally use of new or different mediational tools and

interaction patterns can alter the social interaction and thus remediate the trajectory of students' mental development.

Elinore Ochs (2001) study of moral development of autistic children, mentioned earlier, provides an example of how the biological and cultural planes intersect. In contrast to previous research on the moral development and autism, Ochs argues that the physiological characteristics of autistic children are much less consequential in understanding their development of moral reasoning than exploring the ways in which other people in the socio-cultural community interact with them. In other words, neither the sociocultural community nor their biological make-up, examined as separate entities, are sole causes of observed differences in the moral reasoning practices of autistic children. Rather, the ways in which autism manifests itself in the sociocultural community leads to different kinds of interaction practices and thus an altered developmental trajectory for autistic children. Difference in participation practices, becomes thus the origin of subsequent cognitive differences among individuals.

Vygotsky argues, therefore, that students with disabilities require changes and support in sociocultural participation in order to provide them with access to participation in the culturally "powerful" cognitive practices even before competence is gained or realized. Through social and symbolic mediation schools can provide activities that alter the developmental trajectory of child with a disability. In other words, what is necessary for understanding the psychological development of students with disabilities is attention to the interplay of the child and the sociocultural context when engaging in activity. Through examining the subject-object-community relationship enacted through sociocultural activity the psychological implications of organic impairments becomes

evident through divergent participator roles. Since literate routines at the intramental level arise through intermental interaction, organic variations of an individual are consequential only when they vary the cognitive routines established through social interactions. This implies, then, that by strategically altering the ways in which students with primary disabilities engage in sociocultural activity, educators can intervene in the trajectory of individual literacy development (e.g. through selectively providing mediational tools or redistributing labour through altered participation frameworks or class norms).

This sociocultural understanding of literacy is reflected in criticisms of reading pedagogy that lack attention to the way in which student literacy development is mediated by the social and cultural tools of the community. A repeated criticism of remediation programs for struggling readers is the emphasis on repetition of skills decontextualized from the kinds of activities within which such skills are meaningful and valuable (Klenk & Kibbey, 1999). This is implicit in Allington's (1991) criticism of remediation programs in reading which involve "more of the same" and argued that they should more appropriately involve "re-mediation" that is the efforts to engage in new, alternative mediational practices for students who were finding learning to read difficult within the traditional instructional contexts. Rather than more of the same, smaller doses of it, or given in a more individual or isolated settings, Allington argues that we need to reconceptualize the ways in which students encounter the tools of literacy and engage in reading and writing practices. Compensatory education from a sociocultural perspective involves intentional efforts to support the development of the higher psychological functions that characterize human activity.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore the way in which literate abilities and competencies are developed through participation in activities and how the roles, tools, and social practices within the context of the literacy activities of the curriculum influence the developmentally trajectory of a student's cognitive repertoire. This dissertation involves microanalysis of the literate participation of one student, identified as cognitively disabled, to describe how social relations mediated her performance, as well as how these relations were internalized, transformed, and adjusted by the students and teachers in classroom activity settings. Through longitudinal analysis of one child, whom the school has formally identified formally as mentally disabled, I explore the ways in which (dis)ability is situated in the activity setting itself. The purpose, therefore, of this study is to study change in how one student participates in literacy routines in order to understand the role of classroom activity in supporting the development of literate competencies.

In this chapter, I have described the theoretical framework that influences how literacy and competency are defined and provided a selective review of research that informs how this study has been conceptualized and the unit of analysis defined. As a study of the development of literate ability through attending to her participation in activities over time, the methodological lens employed attends to the meanings and goals of activity from the perspective of individual as well as the other participants in the activity. The dialogic nature of knowledge, as defined in this study, requires that careful attention be given to the role of language in shaping how students construct meaning. This is an ethnographic study that includes data drawn from interviews of the teachers, Alita and her classmates as well as observation of her activity in the classroom.

Additional data is drawn from analysis of the textual products of her literate activity in this classroom and the collection of information included in her official school record (e.g. social worker, school psychologist, teacher reports). The relationship between a sociocultural model of development and ethnographic methods of analysis are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodological framework for this study by describing: (a) analytic implications in a sociocultural study of development; (b) the nature and process of ethnographic research; (c) the unit of analysis; (d) my role as a researcher in the classroom; (e) data collection process and focus over the three years. Several examples of research that illustrates the nature and focus of this study are provided in these sections to more clearly delineate the theoretical and methodological relationships that influence the design and interpretation of classroom activity.

Three Design Features for Analysis of Literacy Development

There are three central features of socio-cultural theory (Wertsch, 1991; Daniels, 1996) that inform the methodological design of this study. These are that: (1) research on development requires genetic analysis along the interconnected planes which relate to personal and socio-historical dimensions involving human biological life and cultural, institutional and social forces; (2) there exist social origins of all individual mental life; and (3) individual physical and mental action is mediated by signs and symbols. individual activities, and interpersonal relations.

Genetic analysis of literacy development: Genetic analysis occurs on four planes: that of the individual, the cultural practice, the institutional, and the human evolutionary.

Vygotsky argued that a theory of psychological development must understand how these planes intersect. In this study, genetic analysis is revealed through exploring the role of social practice in supporting individual cognitive development. A central component of my analysis involved exploring the nature of social and individual participation in literacy practices that have private as well as public meaning and utility. It explores literacy development through analysis of changes in Alita's participation in school based literate practices over time. Additionally, I explore the relationship between school based activities and more global literacy practices problematizing traditional conceptions of (dis)ability that ignore the role of the sociocultural context in the development of individual cognitive routines.

My focus on a student with a learning disability arises in part out of my interest in those children who find learning to read most difficult. It also occurred, however, through an intentional focus on a child for whom the role of cultural mediation would be most significant in exploring cognitive change. Therefore, this study attends to the ways in which social organization of classrooms mediates the learning of one special education student. It illuminates the ways in which microgenetic aspects of classroom participation of one individual affects her ontogenic literacy development. In other words, the ways in which norms, routines, practices engaged in the moment hold potential for the subsequent literate development of the individual, development.

Genetic analysis is concerned with uncovering the ways in which sociocultural interaction defines the developmental patterns of students' mental lives. The central methodological goal of this study, then, is to describe, analyze, and understand the meaning of Alita's performance at the micro level of analysis (microgenesis) to explore

her literacy development over time (ontogenesis). This case study, therefore, involves microanalysis of the apprenticeship of a special education student in a series of nested contexts moving from the task to classroom to school to society. It examines how individual literacy activities constrain some cognitive patterns and supports others providing insight into (a) the way in which competence and literate abilities are situated in the nexus of the student-context relationship; and (b) the role of curricular tasks in supporting cognitive transformation.

Learning as a social phenomenon: According to Vygotsky, cognitive development involves internalization of the social practices which organize, guide, and give meaning to cultural activity. A study of individual literacy development requires attention to the way that personal meaning making reflects the internalized patterns and practices of a socio-cultural community. Vygotsky's "general law of cultural development" argues that the origins of individual cognitive processes must be located in an examination of social practices and relations.

Any function in children's cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an interpsychological category and then within the individual child as an intrapsychological category...social relations or relations among people *genetically underlie* all higher functions and their relationships (emphasis mine, cited in Wertsch, 1996, 110-111 and in Vygotsky 1981, p163).

Cognitive development occurs as a consequence of participating and making these activities one's own. Thus "participation" in the social practices *precedes* and *sustains* mental development. Correspondingly, attention to a child's interactions and participation in the social practices is necessary to uncover the development of higher

order thought and mental functions within the social community. From a sociocultural perspective then, a study of Alita's literacy development must explore the relation between past and present experience and account for the ways in which each encounter with text is both novel and conventional through seeking the origin of mental practices in the social.

The metaphor of "apprenticeship" as utilized by Rogoff (1993) and others is useful because it focuses attention on the ways in which participation in the activity itself develops the ways of knowing and doing that teachers (and more broadly, society) value. As was stated, sociocultural theory argues that *all* learning *first* comes from the social and *then* moves to the personal and private. Attention to learning as *apprenticeship*, reminds us that children *can not* learn what they have not seen *and* participated in over long periods of time. Learning requires multiple opportunities to engage in, try out, get feedback on, and assimilate into a personally meaningful form the ways of knowing and doing that an activity embodies. Because learning *precedes* development, individual cognitive changes can be studied through an analysis of changes in students' roles and participation in tasks (Rogoff, 1993).

This has important methodological implications for analyzing learning as sociocultural apprenticeship. First, attention to learning as a social phenomenon requires the opportunity to observe children engaging in the same activity over time. A longitudinal perspective was required to study Alita's changing participation in both individual and social activity; Alita was thus observed, videotaped, and interviewed over the course of three years. Secondly, a research project that attends to learning as "changing participation" requires the opportunity to observe the subjects' participation in

routines that are functionally similar in the classroom in order to make a valid statement about the nature and process of the changes in her participation. Because Alita remained within the same multiage classroom over three years and engaged in highly similar literacy practices over time (including their corollary participation structures, discourse practices, and activity goals), it was possible to analyze changes in the nature of her participation and access to and use of cognitive tools and resources. Thus, a definition of learning as “changing participation” could be employed to examine the relationship between *tested performance* and *situated participation* to study the meaning of development in the activity settings of one classroom over time.

Mediation: The third tenet in a sociocultural theory of mind is that mental activity is mediated by symbolic as well as physical “tools” which both assist in the performance of the task as well as define it. That is, tools are not merely aids in support of activity, but come to define the very essence of the cognitive act itself. Tools create a vision of what is possible as well as are built into the very act of performance through providing affordances and constraints for imaginable and feasible activity. This requires an examination of the participation structures and interaction patterns that delimit the task, as well as analysis of the material and ideational tools that mediate performance (Cole, 1996).

Tools that mediate activity are neither solely in the head nor in the environment (Holland and Cole, 1995). That is, while this study provides an analysis of Alita’s literacy development, it looks at *independent* performance not as an isolated phenomenon but rather as the appropriation and use of tools that are nested within the interplay of

social practice. Alita's performance on reading and writing tasks is not circumscribed only by her relationship to a particular text but also by her participation in the discourse practices surrounding it. Therefore, any act of cognition is both situated in the transaction between individual and text as well as distributed throughout the series of relationships and practices within the socio-cultural environment that gives meaning to actions of the one.

Tools as mediational systems operate at two levels. They provide affordances and constraints to the development of new sociocultural practices as well as are integrally tied to (and thus assist in) the individual performance of the task. For example, writing provides cognitive affordances that would be impossible apart from an orthographic system of recording information that enables reflection upon thought itself. Over time, *what* an individual thinks is shaped by the social and material tools *with which* she thinks or writes. This implies that research methods must be sensitive to the ways in which tools themselves are integral to task performance. This requires a methodological focus on observation of students' use of cognitive tools in situ.

In my study of Alita, this includes attention to the availability of tools for her use in literacy activities, her effectiveness in using them to support her literate moves, and the ways these tools are sanctioned by others. Reading and writing genres within the classroom are explored as semiotic mediators as well because they bring to the fore the relationship between forms of speaking and forms of thinking (Wertsch, 1991). An example of this is found in Chapter Five, where Alita's use of inscription systems such as graphic organizers are analyzed as both a real, material object as well as a text structure and genre. In this case, the concept map simultaneously represents and defines the

written genre as well as organizes her physical actions when engaging in the writing process.

Participation structures are analyzed as material and ideational tools through close analysis of Alita's performance in the a writing activity setting across three spaces – involving whole group, small group, and individual composition. Hicks (1997) points outs that “each form of classroom activity has an associated set of *participant structures*, ways in which participants in the activity socially and linguistically orient themselves to one another and to the activity at hand” (p.66). Thus, changes in participation structure alter the nature of the activity system itself. Additionally, changes in the goals that guide the task alter the cognitive practices afforded. Consideration of the subject-object relationship represented in the activity triangle (presented and described in Chapter Two – Figure 2.3) explain how different participation frameworks engage students in distinct cognitive routines (Wells, 1999).

The analytic framework employed to analyze this feature of the activity system is supported as well by empirical work examining the relationship between participation structure and cognition specifically as measured by formal comprehension assessments so favored by schools. For example, Janice Almasi's (1995) research, which examined socio-cognitive conflicts in peer and teacher led book discussions, provides, as stated, important insight into the way in which participation structure affects the cognitive practices that are available for students to engage. However, it also finds the origin of cognitive patterns of the individual in the social interactions of the community. Almasi analyzed six weeks of discourse in teacher led book discussions and compared it with 6 weeks of discourse in student led discussions around the same two books. She found

(using quantitative methodologies to compare the coded discourse) significant differences between the two groups in the nature of the conflict students had in making sense of text as well as the process they went through to resolve student understanding about the intentions of characters, the meaning of actions, and the relationships among ideas in the text. Correlation between what and how students engaged in book discussions and their subsequent performance on comprehension tests revealed the central role social practice plays in cognitive performance. Almasi suggests that differences in the cognitive processes which students employ when comprehending text can be traced back to the social practices in which students participate in making sense of and using text.

Analysis of the tools that mediate Alita's cognitive performance is a central feature of this study because it reveals the ways in which "ability" and "disability" is situated within the interplay of person-context relationships. Vygotsky's work suggests that research on how children with disabilities learn should make central the role of mediational tools in the development of performative abilities and competence. Children with disabilities may require tools and other mediational devices, he argues, that "normal" children don't in order to perform a task and participate in the social activity. Analysis of Alita's literate abilities, thus, assumes that tool use can alter the trajectory of her participation and subsequent cognitive development.

Ethnography and Sociocultural Theory

This case study employs an ethnographic perspective in order to explore the development of literate (dis)abilities of one student through analyzing the relationship between the child, the community and the curriculum. Ethnographic research, which

frames activity as cultural participation, views the activities and practices of individuals as part of a system of shared beliefs and practices (Erickson & Schultz, 1977). In studying cognition from an ethnographic perspective, therefore, the individual is inextricably connected to the community through the shared meanings constructed through joint participation in cultural activities. In ethnographic inquiry, efforts to understand the meanings and knowledge of the individual can never focus solely on the demonstration of particular skills or the representation in artifacts of knowledge (such as written texts), divorced from analysis of a cultural community which renders individual activity meaningful. The unit of analysis at the level of activity is supported both by the theoretical perspective on learning (discussed in Chapter Two) and that of ethnographic methodologies, which are discussed more fully in this section.

While the definition of what exactly constitutes ethnography varies (Atkinson & Hammersly, 1995), such work shares a focus on understanding the nature of a phenomenon and its meaning for participants within a specific context. It's often represented as the telling of a story that captures in some essential way the experience of the observer and that of the other participants in the experience. An ethnographic perspective brings to bear the epistemological and methodological tools of the social scientist to study a phenomenon in the situated context of its use (Gee & Green, 1996). This has important implications, they note, for the collection and interpretation of data. Theoretically, scholars studying cultural systems are denied the ability to use and search for an epistemology rooted in absolute "truths" about a situation. That is, the meaning of an action for an individual is sensible only within a system of beliefs and practices. Therefore, uncovering the norms, resources, goals, and values of a *specific* cultural

community is a central part of what educational ethnographic entails, not the search for generalized patterns of human development. The actions of the individual, then, can be understood through explication of the facets of the larger community life that give meaning and purpose to solitary behavior. Wells (1999) argues that a major flaw in most studies of classroom learning is that they explore the meaning of teaching and learning from the perspective of a researcher, who lacks an experiential understanding of the history and local context of the classroom communities involved. Using the epistemological framework of the ethnographer, thus, attempts to ameliorate this error through primary emphasis placed on seeking the meanings of actions and activities from the perspective of the teachers and students themselves. A key consideration then in framing my study was (a) using a longitudinal research design that enabled sufficient time to understand and test hypothesis about the nature and meaning of literate performance in a specific context; and (b) the creation of a researcher role that enabled extended opportunities to observe as well as participate in the classroom activities, including engaging in conversations with participants to test and refine interpretations of classroom activity. This study, therefore, pursues the meaning of specific literate performances from the perspective of the community itself to understand what “counts” as literacy and how competency is defined and participation of the individual further supported.

A second related methodological implication of ethnographic research involves, the inescapable subjectivity of the observer. Hammersley and Atkinson point out that “all social research takes the form of participant observation: it involves participating in the social world, in whatever role, and reflecting on the products of that participation”

(p16). Thus, in my description of the setting, its participants and their activities, my own role in the classroom - my beliefs, values, and actions – is an important aspect of the story. Described in greater detail later in this chapter, reflexivity about the cultural contexts that influence what I observe and how I make sense of them, is a central facet of doing, reading and interpreting ethnographic research.

When working from an ethnographic framework for research, the definition of “culture” employed influences the unit of analysis as well as the questions considered of legitimacy for educational inquiry. Culture, as defined for this study, refers to activities that organize behavior and in particular “culture is the ‘way of life’ of a people, the constant and complex process by which meanings are made and shared among us” (Fisk et al, 1987, ix-x). Humans organize themselves on the basis of shared values, goals, and practices. Ethnicity, geography, age, social class among other demographic markers can each contribute to create distinct cultural communities. Yet, participation in social clubs, work teams, sporting events, religious groups or any of the many varied activity centered groups which make up children’s lives offers as well multiple opportunities to develop discursive practices which are unique to membership (see Heath, 2001). In this study, Alita’s ethnicity, socio-economic status, and gender serve merely as a backdrop for exploring the relationship between classroom communities and cognitive development. It is her participation in the contexts of the classroom which are the primary focus of Alita’s cultural life. In fact, I avoid the use of culture to refer to the home/school or ethnically distinct contexts in which Alita’s lives, and employ instead the term *communities of practice* (Wenger, 1998) to refer to the social organization of people with

goals, beliefs, norms, social interaction and language patterns that are shared through joint participation in situated activities.

Wenger suggests that it is in the communities of practices, which are an integral part of our daily lives, that identities and knowledge are constructed and transformed. Viewing classrooms as communities is based on the premise that learning occurs as people participate in shared endeavors with others (Rogoff, 1994), and that people learn and change through transforming their participation in activities of the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Practices according to Roth (1998) are:

Patterned activities which people enact to get the things done that matter to them; they are specific to the physical, social, and technological situations in which they occur; and are continuous so that there cannot be distinctions between non-linguistic and linguistic, or material and discursive practices. Practices are complemented by resources, tools, materials, word information, and everything else that is necessary for engaging in practice.

Practices, thus, form a primary milieu in which to examine literacy development.

Literacy activities of students are analyzed, then, as situated phenomena that are layered and include multiple audiences and participants in order to investigate the socio-cultural nature and function of cognitive and personal tools in apprenticing students, individually and collectively, in communities of practice which can extend beyond the classroom uses of reading and writing. For example, learning to engage in the classroom morning message routine simultaneously apprentices the individual in the classroom practice as well as in the narrative form valued in the privileged discourse of western story telling. Such students may be participants in multiple contexts where the function and framework of a “story” has many different linguistic functions and frameworks (e.g. the discourse styles of the various ethnic communities which may surround students out of school life;

the unique genre's associated with popular media in cartoons, the internet, comic books; or religious motifs associated with story that may accompany home based uses of narrative).

By analyzing an individual's participation over time in a particular community of practice, it is possible to explore development of expertise in the classroom based cultural activities without ignoring or disparaging the many possible other communities which make up a child's life. Additionally, understanding the role of the individual in classroom communities does not require thorough analysis of all the other possible cultural contexts which make up a child's life since the central focus of ethnographic research is understanding how meaning is constructed in *particular* contexts.

The current movement in educational research away from both laboratory based study of learning as well as large scale quantitative studies which generalize from particular contexts to that of careful observation of specific classrooms reflects a growing recognition of the meanings of contexts for exploring the ways in which the cognitive practices of the members of particular communities are shaped by their own participation (Pressley, 1995; Nuthall, 1990). Therefore, ethnography enables me to explore the construction and transformation of tools, discourses, and individual identities within the classroom as a series of nested and intersecting contexts that are both multi-vocal and yet act in concert to define a single community of practice.

An ethnographic lens when paired with a sociocultural theoretical framework is particularly salient for the study of cognitive development because it creates a psychology of context that explains the relationship between the social life of classroom teaching and learning and individual mental practices. Jacob (1997) noted, in fact, that

much of educational ethnography, which operates apart from a theoretical framework for learning, falls into the error of separating context and cognition. That is, anthropologists study the context of school without addressing cognitive learning while educators (and psychologists) study the process of learning without attending to the context within which particular cognitive practices emerge. She argues that the sociocultural theoretical tradition has rendered the tools of the anthropologist that are reflected in ethnographic inquiry (i.e. analysis of discourse, descriptive, sociological exploration of the meanings of participants) particularly salient to the study of psychological phenomenon (learning and change). Thus, in exploring the role of experience and the competing and complementary interpretations and actions by participants and observers, such research highlights the means by which communities of practice apprentice novices as well as transform their participation through the development of shared goals and collective activities.

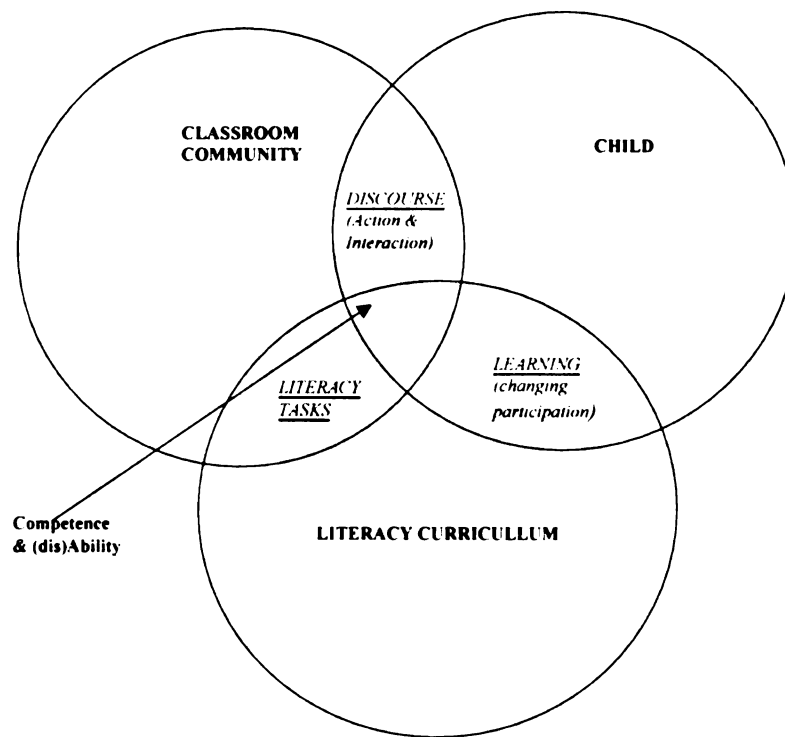
Critical ethnography and discourse: In this study, Alita's development is manifested through varied ways of participating in literate discourse communities and in exploring the subsequent developmental trajectories, personal life goals and expectations that are suggested. This, according to Luke (1998) is what a *critical* ethnography does. It provides an essential link between micro-analyses of speech activity and situated behavior and the macro structures of society. Socio-cultural theory, in its focus on action, assumes an integral connection between the cultural, historical, and institutional values and practices and the cognitive strategies which individuals employ. Discourse analysis thus provides a useful set of theoretical and methodological tools for exploring

competence as a social construction because it retains an essential connection between what an individual knows and how it is perceived, used and responded to within the situated context of its use. Ability is measured dialogically by participation in performance. Move A is sanctioned, rejected, ignored, praised. And this has consequences for Alita's literacy development. This study closely analyzes the meaning and role of Alita in the discourse embedded in literacy activities that are connected through the fabric of cultural life to the actions, performance, and subsequent practices of the community. Alita's literacy development is explored through the seamless thread of participation in the same activities over time. Analysis of discourse (semiotic behavior) in the specific literacy tasks provides a framework for studying individual learning as changing participation in sociocultural activities.

Units of Analysis: Discourse, Tasks, Learning

In analyzing the subject-object-community relationship for this study, it's necessary to develop a unit of analysis that allows description of the ways in which Alita, the curriculum and the classroom community interact when engaging in literacy practices. Figure 3.1 provides a representation the methodological framework employed for capturing the interplay in activity. Discussed below, "discourse", "tasks", and "learning" are all conceptual units that provide a lens for examining specific aspects of the activity setting. Methodological tools for describing the ways in which mental activity arises out of sociocultural interaction are presented in this section and examples from educational research are provided to further illustrate the validity and utility of these analytic units for this study.

Figure 3.1



Analysis of Discourse: In seeking to understand how knowledge develops through participation in literacy activities and transfers across settings, it is necessary to delineate the relationship between what children themselves bring to a situation and how it is shaped by the surrounding social practices. As I delineated in Chapter Two, a sociocultural perspective of learning assumes that learning is both an individual and social phenomenon. Thus, in order to explore the intra-mental functioning of the individual it is necessary to explore the inter-mental practices between people. Because discourse involves the material aspect of mediated activity (Holland & Cole, 1995), a

primary form of analysis in this study involved recording, deconstructing, coding, and interpreting classroom discourse.

Discourse analysis approaches have been developed to examine ways in which knowledge is socially constructed in classroom and other educational settings...Specifically...[the] ways in which opportunities for learning are constructed across time, groups, and events; how knowledge constructed in classrooms (and other educational settings) shapes, and is shaped by, the discursive activity and social practices of members; patterns of practice simultaneously support and constrain access to the academic content of the “official” curriculum (Gee & Green, 1993).

Attention to patterned uses of language helps to explore the ways in which cognitive practices are both situated locally as well as intertextually linked to the more global and disciplined based meanings and practices. Analysis of how tools, goals, values, and social practices are shared in communities of practice sheds light on how individuals develop abstract cognitive structures through participation in local (“everyday”) experiences. That is, analysis of classroom discourse over time enables one to observe cognitive transformation through systematically recording change in the social discourse and participatory roles accompanying literate activity.

Discourse analysis requires a theory of language that posits a relationship between the material world and the speech acts we use to describe, interact with, and manipulate it. Language is always dependent upon context (Bruner, 1960). Therefore, meaning is the *use* to which we put our signs and not merely representations of it (see Wittgenstein, 1961, 1980). This shifts our attention from “objective analysis divorced from [context]...to exploring how we use signs to engage in purposeful activity in and with the world” (Harre & Gillett, 1994, p. x). *Sensibility* rather than *ontological reality* becomes the criteria for establishing validity. Language embodies systematic meanings that

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emerge through the transaction of people in and with experience. What this means is that “discourse” is a conceptual category. It means more than speech, in its written or spoken form. It goes beyond, as well, analysis of semiotic mediation, the system of visual, grapho-phonetic, linguistic signs through which human communication arises. From a socio-cultural perspective, analysis of discourse means accepting an essential integration between the talk, activities, social patterns, and cognitive practices that connect an individual with a context that is both essentially material as well as social and cultural. It, therefore, involves:

... exploration of the intersubjectivity of conversational structures, organizations, devices, and the like. Whilst the stable and organized properties of conversational activities are independent of the psychological or other characteristics of particular speakers, nevertheless these organizations are intersubjectively ‘meaningful’ to speakers on the particular occasions of their use. (Drew 1999 in Smith, Harre & Langenhove, p. 76-77)

In other words, in a focus on the functionality and meaningfulness of particular speech activities, discourse analysis relies upon a theory of human behavior that presumes both a systematicity and relationship between physical and semiotic action. It is a particularly relevant methodology, therefore, for a study such as this which rests upon a model for learning which asserts an essential connection between private and public aspects of meaning making and the nature of all semiotic behavior as a social phenomenon.

When considering meaning in terms of its function in everyday discursive activities, we recognize that meaning can only be understood from the perspective of the participants and from understanding the rules governing the social practices that give meaning to any individual action. Yet, the rules one subscribes to change moment by moment, therefore, exploring the meaning of any individual encounter requires

participating in the event itself. "This understanding of human activity requires us to interpret the behavior of another according to some appreciation of the self-positioning of the subject within the complex structure of rules and practices within which that individual moves" (Harre and Gillet, 1994, p.20). Analysis of the meaning of particular speech events is possible, therefore, through exploring the patterns of language use in the classroom that govern the moment-to-moment moves of individuals. Activities (such as a single morning message event) are analyzed with constant attention to the interactions between the purposes and goals revealed by individual speech acts and the norms, participation structures, and values of the community. Thus the activity triangle presented earlier (Figure 2) represents the way in which distinct features interact to create an enterprise that gives meaning to the individual components.

Discourse analysis involves attending to "what people *do* with their talk and writing (*discourse practices*) and also with the sorts of *resources* that people draw on in the course of those practices (the devices, category systems, narrative characters and interpretive repertoires which provide a machinery for social life)." (Potter & Wetherell, 1999, p.81). A conceptual fit, thus exists, between the theoretical perspective undergirding this study (activity theory) with the methodological tools employed in analyzing the system itself. In other words, in my study of Alita's classroom participation and the speech acts which surround it, discourse analysis "buys" me an analytic tool kit that remains attentive to the socio-cultural fabric of classroom life.

A primary aspect of data analysis in this study, involved engaging in a systematic process of constructing relationships between the function of language in one context to analyze the meaningfulness of discourse in another. In qualitative research this is

generally referred to as “triangulation” (Bogden and Biklen, 1998), where interpretations are based upon multiple data sources that support and extend hypothesis formulated from one data set to create conclusions warranted by a pattern of interpretations in others. Therefore, Alita’s participation in specific literacy activities over three years was videotaped, transcribed, and systematically analyzed. Attention was given to the ways in which her discursive moves were constructed by through the interactions of the specific social context as well as the participation structure and norms of the literacy activity itself. The multiple opportunities to analyze Alita’s discourse practices over time and across multiple contexts supports the validity of the conclusions made about the nature and meaning of her individual transformation.

Analysis of tasks: Discourse analysis is employed to analyze the semiotic activity of children engaged in classroom tasks. For the purposes of this study, however, tasks are defined not as episodes of activity but rather as conceptual units of analysis which account for both the psychological and material features of activity. Specifically, I draw from ethnographic studies of learning based upon children’s mathematical activity (Saxe, 1991 for examples). Such work serves as a guide for how close attention to children’s everyday activity provides insight into the cognitive processes that children develop.

In his model for children’s learning of mathematics, Saxe’s (1991) analysis of children’s learning of mathematics supports the assertion that cognitive development is the consequence of children’s active engagement in and efforts to make sense of and perform mathematical tasks that are encountered in “routine cultural practices.” When attempting to understand how a task is both situated in a material as well as idealized

world, he suggested that you need to analyze four features of the task in order to understand the nature of it: (a) the activity structure of the task; (b) prior knowledge of the children; (c) the artifacts and conventions used in the practice; (d) the social interactions participants have with each other while engaged in the task. Thus, as children interact in contextualized situations the knowledge they bring to the task and the affordances and constraints of the socio-cultural interactions act as intellectual tools which mediate the nature of the problem as much as the physical resources which are brought to bear.

Janice Almasi's (1997) analysis of two book discussions - one teacher led and one student led provides insight into the way in which participation structures affect the psychological affordances in literacy tasks. She demonstrated that the participation structure created in the two different contexts provided students with quantitatively different opportunities to engage in conversations where they had to confront, examine, and challenge their own confusion about meanings in the texts. She linked this with pre/post test data to make a convincing argument that the nature and process of a literacy activity in and of itself contributes significantly to what students learn from engaging in a literate practice.

Saxe's task features as well point to what students themselves bring to a task – prior knowledge - as playing a significant role in constructing its psychological nature. Numerous ethnographic studies have elicited ways in which students demonstrate alternate and often contradictory competencies from those asserted by their official school identity (see for example, Heath, 1983; Michaels, 1990; Ogbu, 1996). What is

important from the perspective of task analysis is the ways in which literate identities affect the trajectory of participation in classroom tasks.

With respect to literacy, Margaret Finders (1996) study, mentioned in the previous chapter as an illustration of how the psychological aspects of curricular activities mediate student performance, also illustrates how literacy tasks are mutually constituted by teachers and students alike. Her study of classroom tasks provides a similar lens to that which I employ through examining the cognitive affordances in an activity system. Finders observed her four case students in class, interviewed them informally after activities in their language arts class, formally interviewed their parents and them at several points through the year, collected work samples, and writing done not as part of school assignments (in particular she collected “hundreds” of letters, the kind adolescent girls everywhere send themselves). A central goal of this study she stated was to “describe the nature and purpose of literacy both in and out of the school context” (p.101). While Finders engaged in no analysis of the ways in which particular socio-political practices affect student *learning*, her research makes clear that individual beliefs, values, and self-presentation affect how classroom based literacy tasks are understood and practiced.

Application of Saxe’s model to literacy tasks, then, enables me to explore the ways in which the task itself is defined not by an objective analysis of the cognitive possibilities inherent in any particular encounter with reading and writing, but rather how the task itself is constituted by the affordances of the material objects (e.g. a book, paper, word wall), by the socio-cultural norms within which the activity occurs (peer assistance, group work, teacher modeling), as well as by students expectations for and understanding

of the purpose and process of literate practice. I specifically, therefore, employed the four analytic features described above to examine the relationship between tools and participants in the construction of cognitive routines in the classroom.

Learning as changing participation: Implications for how and what children learn emerge as significant when recognizing that the psychological nature of the task is only partially constituted by the actions of the teacher or resources of the classroom; what students themselves bring to it are an important facet on the learning possibilities afforded by any activity system. Additionally, identities of competence must be explored from the perspective of the participants themselves. Competence is situationally defined. Literate abilities are constructed over time through participation in specific activity settings. Analysis of performance over time is required to describe how students become apprenticed in the ways of knowing and doing unique to that community of practice and understand the meanings that particular behaviors and practices have for members themselves.

This suggests that Alita's actions "in the moment" and the ways in which they are sanctioned and woven into the goal directed activity of others are consequential to her cognitive development. That is, her participation is both a consequence of and precursor to her acquisition of literate ways of knowing and doing reflecting changing competence in the use of literate tools. A problem, with an understanding of literacy that focuses solely on the cognitive aspects of reading and writing, is that student mental activity becomes divorced from real material experience. We privilege literacy, and to some extent language, as if it is divorced from use and practice. Language is a way of *doing*

things in the world. It is tied to material tools and social practices. Comprehension or composition of written texts involves both symbolic and social dimensions.

Tasks are psychological constructs, merging both cognitive and social facets, because task engagement entails privileging particular semiotic behavior. "Privileging refers to the fact that one mediational means, such as a social language, is viewed as being more appropriate or efficacious than others in a particular sociocultural setting" (Wertsch, 1996, p.72). Wertsch argues that he uses "privileging" rather than "dominant" because:

in contrast to *domination*, which is closely tied to the study of social structure, its [the term privileging] focus is psychological processes. It is concerned with the fact that certain mediational means strike their users as being appropriate or even as the only possible alternative, when others are, in principle, imaginable...[privileging] is dynamic in part because sociocultural settings do not mechanistically or unilaterally determine mediated action; in many settings it is at least possible for participants to define the situation in new, unexpected, or creative ways. Thus, there is a degree of dynamic negotiation involved. A major source of this dynamic derives from the fact that patterns of privileging are accessible to conscious reflection and hence, to self-generated change. Often, only comparative analysis can confirm the fact that alternative mediational means might be used in a particular setting (p.125)

Evaluating the fit or utility of the physical or cognitive tools which children employ to mediate their experience requires analysis of the context-specific purposes and practices which govern literate action, such as text comprehension and assessment. Rosenblatt (1978) reminded us that the "what for" question always is present in any act of reading. She notes that to this question "there are as many answers as there are individual personalities, stages of development, and changing needs and interests" (120) and to this I add changing societal purposes. Constructing meaning from text is essentially a process of engaging in purposeful activity. In other words, "what" we are

using the meanings “for”. Doing things in the world is engendered with intentionality, interest, motivation, goals, as well as social rules and cultural patterns.

Understanding that cognitive activity in any single instance is mediated by both the ideal as well as the material aspects of cultural artifacts (such as literary texts), directs attention to the ways in which individual motivations, intentions and the rules governing social activity reflect the essentially dialogic nature of meaning making. That is, written texts may be real material objects, but how they function within a classroom practice and the range of meanings that are possible is determined within the activity system itself. In this study the methodological tools of discourse analysis highlights the reciprocity of meaning making while psychological analysis of tasks attends to the functionality of word meanings. Both locate individual meanings within situated dialogic encounters. Additionally, written artifacts are viewed as collective tools with histories and functions that are continually modified within social practices serving to mediate human cognition.

Marrying discourse analysis with a sociocultural theory of learning legitimates analysis of interpersonal relationships (such as power, group norms and values) that affect task participation as consequential to student learning and cognitive development. In order to have something useful to contribute to the field of education, Harre (1994) has argued, psychology must explain how the values and beliefs of people contribute to the mental processes of individuals. It is not merely enough to develop fine-grained sociological analysis that point out differences in how gendered expectations alter classroom interaction (e.g. Fine,1996) or how children from different linguistic communities understand the purpose of questions in science (Michaels & O’Connor, 1990), a psychology of thinking must explain how these differences contribute to

cognitive differences among individuals and over time. Studying individual learning involves observation of changing participation in classroom based literacy activities. This requires an analytic unit that enables description of changes in the way tools, discourses, interaction patterns support what and how a child engages in literacy practices of the classroom community.

Thus, discursive activity (it's nature and purpose) becomes the focal point for analysis of development. I utilize ethnographic methods to analyze the ways in which Alita's development is led and her participation supported through interaction with students who use multiple tools and processes to construct and negotiate the meaning of text. Consequently, studying Alita's cognitive routines employed while reading and writing includes attention both to the ways (patterns and practices) in which she thinks and with what (the tools and texts) she thinks. Socio-cultural perspectives of learning argue that learning first occurs on the social plane and then becomes internalized in the public. However, internalization is not a transfer of knowledge from the public domain but rather the construction of new planes of understanding at the private (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Wertsch, 1991; Cazden, 1988). Learning involves changing participation structures at the inter-individual level in order to create new cognitive structures at the intra-individual level (Cazden, 1988). Longitudinal analysis as well as microanalysis of her performance across multiple tasks provides insight into the changing nature of her performance and the role of the activity system in this developmental process.

Researcher Role

I was present in the classroom as a participant observer - in other words I hung out and surveyed as well as interacted with the students and teachers. While in the

classroom, I videotaped literacy activities, wrote fieldnotes, collected samples of student work and teacher or class produced text and notes. engaged in conversations with teachers about literacy practices where we looked at student work, discussed difficulties or successes in specific activities, or viewed videotapes of their classroom instruction. In observing Alita, I consciously attended to both my own interpretations as well as forced myself to evaluate them. An essential methodological process in observing and analyzing classroom behavior involves recognizing the ways in which my experiences as a teacher and my own cultural values and interpretations of “appropriate” and “normal” behavior influenced how I saw and made sense of classroom phenomenon. As a participant in the research process, an important characteristic of ethnographic inquiry involves a conscious reflexive repositioning of myself as both recorder and participant in the classroom life.

Because this study involves the activity system as a unit of analysis my presence as a researcher was an important feature of the classroom context. My role had multiple facets that often became entangled during moments when I found myself both observing student activity as a researcher and then being called to interact with students in support of this learning. The other complex aspect of this role involved finding ways to use what I was learning by observing to help the classroom teachers implement new curricular practices or modify existing ones to better support student literacy acquisition.

Regardless of how “detached” I may have tried to be as a researcher from the talk and work of the classroom, my presence was a facet of the subject-object relationship that is important to consider in any analysis of what “really happened” in the classroom.

Engstrom (1999) writes, in fact, that the “researcher constructs the activity by selecting a

subject member of the local activity through whose eyes and interpretations the activity is constructed.....the dialectic between systemic and subjective-partisan views brings the researcher into a dialogical relationship with the local activity under investigation. The study of an activity system becomes a collective, multi-voiced construction of its past, present, and future” (pg. xi). In other words, the activity exists because (1) the researcher chooses the vantage point from which to make sense of an activity and thus imposes a framework on a fluid multi-faceted phenomenon; (2) the researcher thus becomes a participant in the activity setting itself through defining the limits of the system for the purposes of study; and (3) the researcher encapsulates the phenomenon through representing the past, present and future trajectory of the activity. A consideration of my role in the classroom, my beliefs and values, and my own identity, thus become of central concern in the interpretation of classroom activities and Alita’s performance within it. In the following section I describe the multiple roles I played in this classroom and how it influenced the stance towards analysis of classroom life that is included in this study.

Researcher as subject: My early fieldnotes, memos, recollections, and conversations with others about Alita indicate my fear that she was a child that wasn’t going to “make it”. I wrote of her short attention span, her unwillingness to engage in the task, her efforts to constantly find someone else to do written work for her. I also wrote of my concern about my difficulties in separating my observations of Alita’s role in this classroom and my tacit theories about teaching and learning. Of course I was careful in writing my fieldnotes to differentiate between my “interpretations” and “observations” - drawing a line down the page (or creating columns on my laptop) to separate my running

commentary on what I was seeing and hearing in the class and the thoughts, questions, conclusions that were popping unbidden into my mind. I was clearly uncomfortable with assuming that a child wasn't going to "make it" – meaning, I suppose that I thought she would remain academically unsuccessful and thus become further alienated from school participation and opportunities for socioeconomic advancement. I was vigilant in following the methodological parameters guiding ethnographic fieldnotes that require a conscious effort to demarcate direct observation from interpretation. However, clearly my own history -beginning as a co-teacher myself in an elementary multiage classroom and then moving to what became my niche as a middle school language arts teacher – influenced the behavior I considered important to observe and the ways I interpreted Alita's actions.

While a teacher in the public school, I had become extremely suspicious of special education programs and highly concerned about the educational trajectory of students who never became proficient in school based literacy. By the time such students reached middle school, I often felt we had "lost them" meaning that they had become disenfranchised to the goals, dispositions and skills necessary for school success. I had found that students, who had struggled with literacy all through elementary school, were deeply distrustful of their own abilities to ever acquire the skills and thus had become resistant and resentful of teachers. Issues surrounding their own self-esteem led them often to work against or merely ignore instructional goals and practices. I saw a disproportional number of these students drop out of school early, leave the traditional program, and often lose opportunities to gain any kind of vocational training since their low academic abilities often prevented participation in district vocational education

programs. Therefore, when I entered the classroom as a researcher on this study, I was particularly interested in how Alita was positioned with respect to the standards and roles expected of other students.

I also struggled to make sense of the teacher discourse in ways that reflected the cultural norms in *that* classroom community. Reflexivity of researcher as subject demanded that I consciously use the contrasts in my own discourse and routines to uncover the values and norms that constructed the activity setting in the focal classroom. Attention to the Alita's physical appearance was an early identification marker. I realized that her unkempt appearance bothered me because my experiences in teaching adolescents had led to a particular concern for children who look different from others. As a teacher, I'd found that adolescent student culture was often unforgiving of difference in physical appearance. I think, as well, that one of the things I had learned from having taught children from first through eighth grade, was that those students who were seemed to be a bit "misfit in first grade had greater possibility of becoming pariah's by middle school, becoming the butt of jokes or the target of teasing and ostracism. Coupled with academic struggles, such students became more and more alienated from the work and play of school. It was hard for me to look at Alita and not see the faces of students I had taught and watch stumble through the academic and social practices of school life.

It was particularly important for me then to test my interpretations on the pattern of behavior in this classroom. I did this in three ways. First, I tested my analysis through "member checking," that is, selectively sharing my hypothesis with members of the community itself. This occurred informally when engaged in conversations with

Kathy and Terri as well as Alita herself and occasionally with other students in the classroom when I asked opinions, perspectives or sought a response on a personal hypothesis. It also occurred more formally when I did individual viewing sessions with the two teachers, Alita, and several of her classmates.

Second, I shared preliminary data analysis with other scholars both those familiar with the project and my work and those who weren't. It was especially significant that I solicit feedback from other researchers familiar with research done in urban school settings as well as those who could speak to issues of African-American education.

Third, I tested hypothesis over multiple incidents of classroom interaction. My frequent presence in the classroom and the long-term nature of my participation allowed for many and varied opportunities to test and explore relationships, observations, insights.

Researcher as resource: As a requirement of the larger research project of which my work in this classroom was a part, Kathy and Terri met bi-weekly with the other researchers and teachers to discuss issues of practice, talk about a shared reading, or share a video tape of one of the project teachers efforts to develop a new instructional practice. The model of teacher change was based upon reflection that occurred through collaborative professional communities (see Englert, 1998 for a discussion) where teachers constantly engage in a recursive process of action, reflection, and transformation of practice. The teachers commented that this was both frustrating and exhilarating. Frustrating because they wished that "just once I wish we could use last years curriculum again" (personal conversation with Kathy, 2000). Terri and Kathy's constant efforts to "do better" and "be more effective" led them to read, rethink existing practiced and try on

new classroom practices. Yet, they enjoyed this process and frequently commented upon how rewarding and how much they valued their participation in a research project that allowed them to hear other perspectives, engage in personal reflection, and have the opportunity to think more systematically about their classroom pedagogy.

My role on the larger project was to collect classroom data through student interviews and testing as well as through videotaping classroom activities and debrief teachers. Part of my role as well included creating opportunities for conversations with Kathy and Terri where we would think about the teaching and learning occurring in their classroom. Additionally, I tried to help them “mine” their teaching for incident or ideas to bring up in the teacher-researcher study group suggesting videotapes for them to share with the group or making a connection in the conversation that drew them in to talk about their own practice and dilemmas. A large component of my presence involved, then, the potential to support the professional development of the teachers. Often this was through pointing out things I had heard or seen children do and help them reframe the sense they were making of a student or an activity. At times there were issues of practice that I wished to think about with them and I would bring up only to find no uptake on their part. I’d let it go and then sometimes several weeks or months later, one of them would bring up herself and the occasion would arise for the conversation about practice that I had been mulling over.

The teachers came to me as well with questions or problems of practice, that I would either bring up in our researcher community or find articles or other resources to help us all think about this. For example, during one of the half days off of school late in the spring of that year, Terri came on to campus to meet with me to talk about possible

curricular practices for her the reading instruction time next year with her upper level students. She was concerned that the classroom “meet the needs of the third graders making sure they are ready for fourth grade and that we’re not holding them back because we have first and second graders.” When she met with me, she was quite confident in the literacy support that the curriculum provided during activities such as writing workshop, thematic units, book discussions, and morning message where there were multiple entry points for student participation and unlimited avenues to support development. However, what to do with the time called “reading” was problematic to her. We looked at curricular resources I had available, talked about literacy development, and then developed a preliminary draft of instructional objectives for students.

My work as a “researcher” then involved efforts to closely attend to the discourse and practices of the classroom and gather data that was fodder both for the thinking and learning of the group (and I was a member of this study group) as well as for more systematic analysis and presentation in academic settings. It also though involved efforts to transform practice and if needed help teachers consider how to alter the activity settings to better support student learning. This research, then, involved the dilemmas of studying a dynamic sociocultural context in which the development of Alita occurred within a context that was also constantly changing.

Researcher as classroom participant and member: As a regular participant in the classroom, I learned the norms and activities of the class and was occasionally folded in by the students and teachers to help in the performance of a task. This, however, was much more rare and the teachers and I were rather careful not to position me as a

“helper” in the classroom. In fact, students were quite conscious of my presence as a “researcher,” having been told that I was there to study “how kids learn so at MSU we can help people be better teachers.”

I intervened but did so with reluctance and discomfort. Typically I ignored infractions, letting them slide by unnoticed unless severe or I saw that students noticed and seemed to judge my silence. I intervened only when I saw a child marginalized or disengaged for an extended period of time in a single activity. Typically, however, one of the two teachers would either see or be called over by the students themselves to address this issue. When I did choose to intervene, my participation in such occurrences took two forms (a) talking to the child and reminding of class norms; (b) directing the teachers attention to the problem. That is, I was another set of eyes and ears but rarely a mouth. The following memo describes an incident in which I employ both methods of participation. The incident is also videotaped but the comments below were written as a memo when reflecting upon events later that day:

Daniel and Jason were having difficulties working together as partners. Daniel became more withdrawn and finally the two were not interacting at all with Daniel just sitting there looking around. Jason was working intently ignoring Daniel completely. I went up and asked what the problem was. Daniel was gone the day before. Jason had a lot of notes that he had collected himself during Daniel's absence. I asked Daniel, "What should you be doing?" and suggest to Daniel that he copy notes from his partners chart to his own. Daniel said that they "Weren't supposed to copy." I went over to Terri and asked what the deal was. Daniel wasn't working and he said he wasn't allowed to copy. Terri came over and asked what the problem was. Daniel said, "I can't keep up." Terri asked, "Did you tell your partner that you couldn't keep up." Daniel, "No." Terri, "Did you ask him to slow down?" Terri then asked Jason what he could do. Ended up with Jason reading his notes to Daniel and Daniel recording them on his own chart.

I didn't wish to position myself directly to the students as a teacher, perhaps, in part, because I know that I'm not an "authority" in the classroom in the way the teachers are. I've never sanctioned behavior through use of the behavior management system. I'm certain as well that just my mere presence often acted to mediate the kinds of interactions that would or could have occurred were I not present. Nor do I wish to. Yet, by observing behavior that I felt contrasted with the teachers expectation for this activity and then bringing it to the teachers' attention, I assumed a pedagogical responsibility for Daniel's learning that could be perceived as in conflict with the role of a mere observer and recorder of student activity. While the two students were collaborating I was in fact sitting off to the side of the video camera trained on them, taking fieldnotes. They had looked up briefly when I set up the camera and moved a chair for myself a little off to the side but then resumed their interaction. Clearly my physical proximity didn't prevent them from engaging in behavior that was not sanctioned within classroom norms.

When I analyzed this segment of my interaction in the actual transcript of the event, I commented in the margins, " "So what happened? I saw what was going on and knew that it wouldn't work. Watched for a few minutes to see how long Daniel would sit passively by then I asked him to get out his notes." My decision to intervene mediated the learning context directly in this situation. However, at other times, the mere fact of my presence seemed to refocus students on the pedagogical task at hand. In this case it didn't and my efforts to engage him in the task indicate my own sense of responsibility for helping students to participate effectively in classroom tasks. However, the fact that I didn't pursue the matter beyond the initial, and apparently, unsuccessful attempt indicates limitations placed upon my assumption of a teacher role in the midst of my observation.

It was difficult at times to manage the competing claims of the researcher and the participant. This in part stems from the nature of ethnographic research – deciding to “hang out” and study a classroom setting requires responding to the ebb and flow of daily life rather than imposing expectations of regularity upon a dynamic system or demands that it respond to my personal data collection preferences.

Respecting teachers subjectivity: Kathy and Terri had been on the project for a year and a half prior to my joining it. Kathy, however, had been on a previous research project for three years with the primary investigator on this study. Kathy and Terri later joked with me about their initial refusal to let any activity be videotaped without “trying it out” for several days to perfect it. In an early interview in the fall of my first year in their room (they’re second on the project together) they both mentioned that they didn’t want any videotaping done the first time they tried something new. Several months later when implementing reading workshop for the first time, they were expressed doubts about “how good” the activity would be, however, they let me videotape anyway. Despite their earlier comment they never did ask me not to videotape. Occasionally they rolled their eyes and commented about how “rough” a new activity went, but never did they ask me not to tape it. During the first two years that I was in the room, they did at rare moments ask me to shut off the tape when they wished to “yell at the class.” By my third year in the room, though, they had stopped even requesting that. In fact, towards the end of year three, I pointed this and they remarked that since I had “seen it all anyway, what was the point?” (semi-structure interview, spring 2000). Knowing that both I and the primary investigator on the project used videotapes of their practice in the

university courses we taught, they added that it was good for teachers to recognize that they were teaching in “real” classrooms and that “best practice” always took place amidst the chaos of teaching (i.e. kids hitting each other, interruptions over the announcement system. forgetting materials, etc.).

I sensed that the confidence they had acquired stemmed in part from their assessment of the effectiveness of their curriculum and pedagogy in improving the academic performance of students in their classroom relative to students in other rooms. Quantitative data gathered and shared with them each year as part of the project supported this as did the significant number of students who were discontinued from special education services after spending 2-3 years in their room. By year three of the study the predominant concern Kathy and Terri displayed when I told them I was showing a clip of their classroom in an academic setting was how “fat” they appear in earlier years, how “ugly” their clothes, or “weird” their hair looks. Terri, in particular, cringes when she sees herself at her “fat” stage in that “hideous” white outfit that she “wore all the time.” In short, Kathy and Terri shifted from concern about what happened in any single moment of classroom teaching to a shared interest in what “we” were learning about how to create curriculum that supported students with disabilities in inclusion contexts. Through talking and working with preservice and inservice teachers as well as allowing their work to be shown at both professional conferences and in university courses, they began to view research involving collection and analysis of their classroom life as an accepted and expected part of their professional identity.

As a teacher myself, I was very concerned about the “fit” of my presence in the classroom and of the nature of my relationship with Kathy and Terri. A primary concern,

above any kind of in-the-moment data collection demands, was my relationship with the project teachers. Although I entered and left the classroom at will, I never forget that I was invited into the classroom and that the success of the intervention and observation study depended both upon ongoing access as well as teachers' trust in sharing their thinking and practice with me. Having engaged in action research on my own teaching practice that led to public presentation, I am quite conscious of the risk that is involved in sharing with others insecurities, dilemmas, and "failures" of teaching.

I viewed myself, in some respects, as a "collaborator" with Kathy and Terri. This often involved efforts to reposition myself from "researcher" to classroom teacher, by sharing of my own struggles and frustrations about classroom teaching. This is particularly evident in the transcripts of our lunchtime conversations where our talk would move back and forth from analysis of classroom activities and student learning to sympathetic "whining" sessions where we complained about administrators, unions, or even parents. I was concerned as well that the public presentation of data from the classroom be framed to reflect the teachers pedagogical principles and goals or the realities of classroom life. Thus, when a fellow researcher wanted to share publicly at a professional conference, a "bad" example of a classroom activity (i.e. an early effort to "try" out a new teaching activity), I was very concerned that critique of practice not be reduced to criticism of individual teachers. It is not that I wished to "hide" problematic aspects of practice, but was quite concerned that what was analyzed and learned about classroom life reflect acknowledge teacher learning as a process of ongoing transformation.

This concern of course influenced my actions as a researcher in the classroom. Turning off the videotape to hide problematic aspects of practice influenced the nature of the final data set. One way I dealt with that was by taking copious fieldnotes as well as writing memos during and after my time in the classroom. My long-term presence in the classroom helped to mitigate this problem— as I stated their increased comfort with me and the research process over time eliminated the requests to not record an event. However, my relationship with them also created other dilemmas as I sought to balance friendship and camaraderie with scholarly investigation and analysis. It is impossible of course to know how my growing status as an insider may have precluded my ability to see particular features of the activity setting. However, as has been noted by others, there is no outside to subjectivity (Derrida, 1982; Kant, 1964; Scholes, 1992). Reality is constructed with respect to the values and perspectives of some stance. The tools of the ethnographer attempt to create a perspective on experience in which the subject and the observer engage in a dialectic of inquiry. What is of concern, then, to the validity of my interpretations is the process by which I attempted to methodically record and examine students' and teachers' actions in light of the systems of meanings at play in the activity setting in *that* classroom.

Videotaping in the classroom. I'm often asked about the kinds of distractions caused by my videotaping and writing fieldnotes on the laptop in the midst of normal class behavior. It's difficult to convey how "normal" my presence was and how fairly oblivious children quickly became to these practices. In fact, students became quite adept at moving the sound grabber for me to be more centrally placed in a group. Rarely

as well did the presence of the camera seem to inhibit behavior that clearly broke class “rules” and norms. Occasionally, a student would say something derogatory and another would remind him/her of the presence of the camera. However, most seemed quite oblivious to its presence and engaged in “off-task” and socially inappropriate behavior without consideration of the camera as a potential spy. In part, this may have been because they never were given the opportunity to observe the tapes, nor did I comment to them later about what I observed on tapes made apart from my immediate presence. Thus, the videotapes never became a vehicle for sanctioning behavior, though, on a few rare instance students would remind one another to get back on task by pointing out to the camera “eye” that was on them. Generally, however, students seemed to ignore the presence of the camera or draw it rather unconsciously into their activities such as when they picked up the sound grabber and moved it so they could better position paper or books on their desk.

Because I was in the classroom two-three days/week for three to four hours each time with the video camera always in sight (but not always turned on), students seemed to regard it as an ordinary aspect of classroom life. This was particularly true, for those students who spent more than a year in the classroom. As a multi-age K-3 inclusion classroom, many of the students’ conception of “what school is” were shaped primarily by their membership in this room where the myriad aspects of data collection and observation was an ongoing and overt aspect of classroom life.

Data Collection Process

The subject-object-community triangle was presented early on as theoretical and methodological framework for analyzing the development and manifestation of literate abilities. Previously in this chapter, the analytic unit for examining the relationship between Alita, the literacy curriculum and the classroom community was discussed. Specifically, the theoretical framework for studying classroom *discourse*, literacy *tasks* as individually unique forms of cognitive engagement, and *learning* as changing participation was provided along with corollary methodological applications. In this section I present the ethnographic data sources identified earlier, the process and protocols for gathering it, and the specific focus of collection and analysis. Figure 3.2 provides a representation of the methods used to gather data informing each aspect of the subject-object-community activity setting. What follows is a linear description of the process and protocol for data collection and analysis over the three-year time frame of this study.

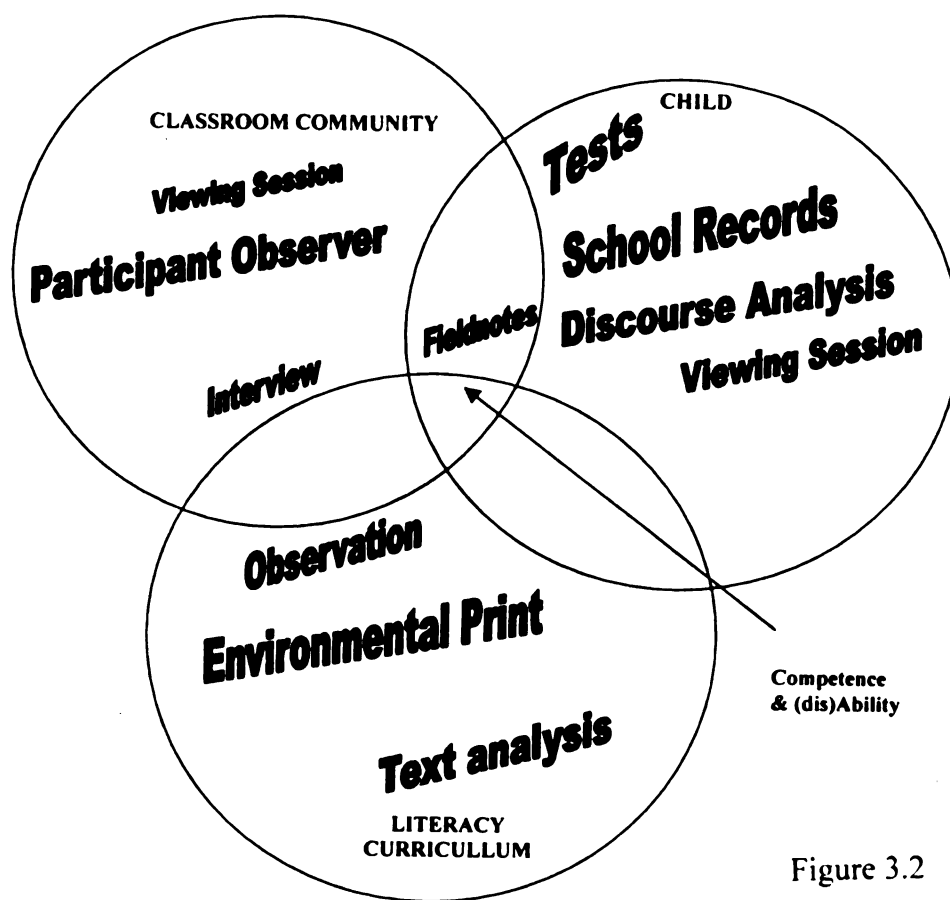


Figure 3.2

Year one: During year one my goal was to ensure that I recorded and studied all the activities within the classroom at periodic intervals – typically every two weeks. I wanted to understand the range of literacy practices in a school day and how they developed over the course of the year. Additionally, I wished to study the ways in which teachers and the activity systems they constructed scaffolded the engagement and participation of students. Thus, I attended to Alita’s behavior in more isolated sequences of activity. I spent approximately ten hours/week in the classroom (alternating morning and afternoon and days) in order to capture the range of curricular tasks. I had project yearly scripted interviews with the teacher, however, most of my conversations were off

the cuff questions about activity purposes, goals, or efforts to clarify my own sense of student activity. I gathered samples of students work, but at that point was more interested in getting the range of student responses and looking at difference across students and over time than targeting particular activities.

Year two: By year two I, I was quite comfortable with the class routines as well as my relationship with Kathy and Terri. There was enough trust and easy camaraderie between us that I could quickly flip on the audiotape that was always present and begin recording conversations that began as lunchtime social chit-chat and crossed over into reflections about pedagogy or students. Additionally, because I had begun making presentations and writing conference proposals based upon the data from this classroom, preliminary efforts to conceptually organize and theorize from the myriad of data gathered were underway. Conference presentations done this year allowed for recursive analysis of data with the collection process and ongoing member checks with teachers. Additionally, bi-weekly researcher meetings forced me to articulate what I was learning about teaching and learning by closely attending to the data gathered. Therefore, I was becoming more intentional about the relationship between my questions and what I was observing during my classroom visits.

My understanding of the theoretical principles about learning undergirding Kathy and Terri's pedagogy led me to refine and focus my data collection; my attention to the relationships between literacy tasks became more systematic. I was concerned not merely with capturing the tasks but of capturing all the features of the activity system itself. This required that I study the way in which changes in participation structure

altered the nature of the task as well as how norms and routines, which changed over the course of the year, altered how students engaged with each other and with classroom resources when reading and writing. On average I still spent the equivalent of eight to ten hours in the classroom, but I thought of this more as a monthly rather than weekly average. There were weeks when I was in the classroom every day and other weeks when I was in almost not at all. I was concerned for example to get every day of a thematic unit in social studies and then later in science in order to be able to talk about the ways in which text composition and comprehension functioned in disciplinary inquiry. Furthermore, I became attentive to the pattern of tool use and literate engagement that occurred not only across the curriculum but also within the activity system itself. This led me to be much more responsive to the students' activities to guide the days in which I was collecting data rather than imposing my schedule upon it.

Year three: The teacher-research community had ended by year three of my study. I no longer spent weekly time in the classroom for the project and the teachers no longer met to discuss their classroom instruction. My focus on Alita during years one and two of the study provided a significant opportunity to continue exploring the nature of development and the meaning of ability and disability within situated contexts of performance. Two of the focal students that I had selected from years one and two were still in the classroom, and I focused almost entirely on Alita as well as another learning disabled student, Darren, for my data collection efforts during the third year of my study. Analysis of data from years one and two led to pay greater attention to the features of the activity setting in influencing the individual literacy performance of my focal students. It

was particularly helpful in this round of data collection that my presence in the classroom was so accepted and comfortable. At times, I brought in two video cameras in order to capture the speech activities and interaction patterns of each of the children when working individually or in separate small groups.

The ease, with which Kathy, Terri, and I collaborated in the research process, as well, provided further assistance in creating occasions for data collection that allowed me to explore the role of participation structures on student performance. Kathy and Terri willingly regrouped students so that I could observe Alita and Darren's literate behavior in the "same" activity but with different participants. Additionally, they set up the video camera and let it run when I couldn't be in the room but wished to capture the second half of an activity begun the day before. I consciously as well engaged students in conversation about their work and recorded the sense they were making about texts.

Because I was concerned that the students not realize that I was focusing on Alita and Darren, I often had the videotape set up but not running even during activities which I wasn't focusing. I also moved around the room and interacted with many students. This was particularly true during "free time" or "recess" when students often wished to read me stories or show me work they had done. Additionally, because the students predominantly worked in flexible groups, students would have no way of knowing that the choice of groups to focus on reflected the constitution of its members. In the spring of year three, I spent every day in the classroom for six weeks in an effort to collect the range of ways in which Alita and Deajon engaged in literacy over the course of a day and week in the classroom. I was particularly interested in the cognitive skills they might employ in one context but did not demonstrate in others.

I had come across a dissertation by McIntyre (1992) who studied a first grader engaging in reading across different literate contexts and analyzed the ways in which the skills she employed changed based upon the nature of the instructional goals and expectations. This is consistent with an activity theory perspective which argues both that cognition is dispersed across the system itself as well as that changes in any specific feature (e.g. goals, norms, participation structure) alter the system as a whole. Thus, I became interested in seeing how literate ability and disability were constituted by the various features of the system itself. The design experiments where I grouped and regrouped students and had them engage in the “same” task, along with having Alita and Darren read and write for different purposes and under varying social conditions was one attempt to explore more deeply cognition as situated performance.

Viewing session: It was at this point as well that I selected video clips from previous years of data collection and created a videotape for each of the children in which were episodes of their past and current literacy interactions. I created a viewing session (Erickson & Shultz, 1986), in which I attempted to engage students in conversations about their own literacy development (how they learned, how they were different now, what was good about what they were doing in a scene, etc.) in order to explore their own beliefs and perceptions of self as literate beings.

At the close of year 3, I had very good data sets on both Darren and Alita and partial ones on Alita’s cousin, Daniel. I have an enormous data set (videotapes, interviews, viewing session, masses of written work from each of the three years, standardized assessment measures, and school records and reports). In order to do

justice to the range and complexity of data existing for each of the children. I knew I had to narrow my focus to one, if I wished to keep the child as the focus and not switch to the activity itself.

Selection of case student for this dissertation. As I describe in Chapter Two, the activity system is the unit of analysis, however I am doing so in order to speak meaningfully about the development of one child. In choosing to write up this study, I decided to focus on Alita alone for several reasons. First, she provides an interesting case and useful informant, particularly about her own cognitive practices. During year three, she still vocalizes often when writing and so I was able to get insight into her cognitive processes while she was “thinking aloud.” She also is quite verbal when it comes to sharing her opinions and perspectives. Unlike Deajon, during the viewing session she had an enormous amount to say and was quite voluble about her beliefs and perspectives of her literacy development. Her school folder as well was quite voluminous and provided insight into the kinds of information that the school system valued when composing a profile of Alita that was both descriptive as well as explanatory.

The most salient feature of the data set, however, was the change in label in which Alita underwent at the end of year 3. Both Darren and Alita were considered to be competent, proficient, and skilled literate members of the classroom. They had assumed a great many new participatory roles over the course of their three years in the classroom and both at times acted as leaders of activities. However, at the end of year 3 Darren was discontinued from receiving compensatory services in all areas except mathematics, whereas, Alita’s classification labeled changed from learning disabled to educably

mentally impaired (i.e., in one sense she “got worse” after being in the class for three years). Darren, of course, provides an interesting case of study regarding the permanence of a disability. Alita, though, provides a salient opportunity to explore the situated nature of ability and disability. Because she is a child for whom there seem to exist “real” organic difficulties affecting performance, I can not explore disability merely as a social construct but must struggle with the relationship between culture and biology in the development of abstract thinking processes.

Alita, in fact, provides a perfect opportunity to explore Vygotsky’s (1978) argument that it is not the child’s organic impairment which has its origins in biology that lead to cognitive differentiation but rather the ways in which these abnormalities alter the individual’s interactions with the material and social world. Disability as a social construct takes on new meaning from a psychological perspective as difference in socio-cultural participation alters the developmental trajectory that shape the acquisition of higher level cognitive processes and the literate identities that students create.

To that end, this study tracks the development of a focal student, Alita, over events and across activity settings in order to examine how participation in literate tasks develops and changes over time and across contexts. This dissertation research, a three-year study (grades 1-3) of a student identified in kindergarten with learning disabilities, emerges from a long term interest in both case methodology, genealogical analysis of disability, and attention to the role of context and mediational tools in supporting the acquisition and development of literacy. I constructed a longitudinal case study data on Alita in order to attend closely to the role of tools, practices, and artifacts in mediating cognitive development. In chapter 1, I briefly introduced Alita in the midst of an activity

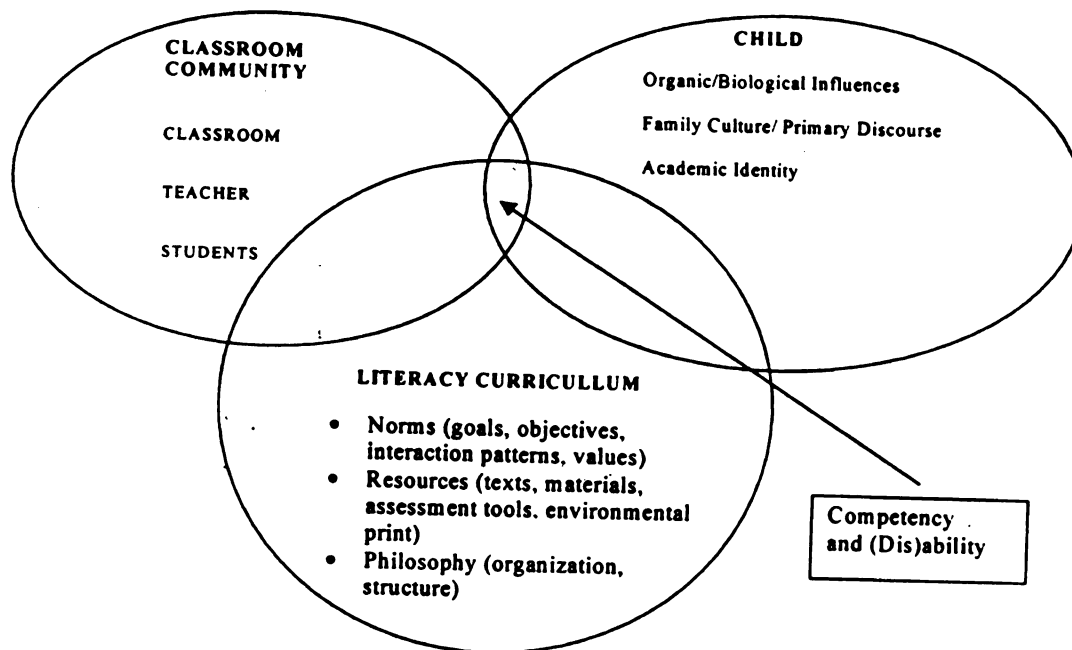
in which she is both positioned as a leader and expert, encounters a peer interaction that attempts to question her expertise, which she responds to both by referring to her status as a special education student and then by drawing upon the class activity norms to legitimate her role. The activity setting briefly described in chapter one provides the lens through which competence and (dis) ability are explored in this study. In Chapter Two, an explication of the theoretical framework for studying learning and development through activity as the unit of analysis was presented. Ethnographic methods of inquiry and its relationship to sociocultural theories of learning was discussed in chapter three along with the specific instantiation of these methodologies in this study. In subsequent chapters, analysis of the data gathered for this study and pertinent to the questions raised in chapter one and the presentation of the case study will be provided. Figure 3.2 provides an illustration of the research findings presented in subsequent chapters. Chapter Four provides a description of the classroom, the teachers' pedagogical beliefs and practices and the classroom curriculum and the relationship of these aspects of the sociocultural setting to understanding the meaning of Alita's (dis)abilities in this classroom. Chapter Five is focused on Alita from the perspective of the school and its records and then as captured over three years of my own observation. Included in this section, is a description of her engagement and participation in the activity settings of the classroom and the ways in which tool use mediates performance. Chapter Six, then, discusses that data presented in the previous two chapters and analyzes the ways in which Alita's literacy development is situated in the nexus of personal and social cognitive routines. This chapter closes with implications for further research and study.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CLASSROOM, THE CURRICULUM AND ALITA

This chapter is about the individual character of each component of the subject-object-community relationship namely, the classroom, the curriculum, and Alita's family and academic background. In the following chapter, the interaction between these three components is analyzed directly in terms of Alita's literacy activity. However, here in chapter 4, the features pertinent to understanding Alita's participation over three years in the classroom activity settings are described. Figure 4.1, described in this chapter in each of its distinct components, illustrates the data discussed in this chapter. In describing the characteristic features of the activity triangle, this chapter, involves analysis of the influence of macro-level features of the sociocultural community on the literate activity settings in which Alita participates.

Figure 4.1



In Part I of this chapter, the classroom community is discussed through illuminating the neighborhood and institutional characteristics, professional relationships, and pedagogical resources that operate at a macro-level. These features of the classroom create parameters for the form in which Alita's literate activities take place. That is, the milieu of the school influenced the literate opportunities and participation practices afforded her. Part I, then, sets the stage for the later analysis of Alita's participation at a micro-level of analysis through describing the particular kind of sociocultural community within which activities take place.

In Part II, the literacy curriculum is described with respect to the classroom norms, resources, and pedagogical beliefs that together create possibilities for both the hidden and explicit curriculum with which Alita engages. The ways in which the subject-

object-community relationship is defined begins to emerge in this section as the enacted curriculum is seen to be both constrained and enabled by the institutional and professional flavor of the school.

Part III of this chapter presents Alita – her family and home background, evidence that supports her academic status as disabled, and pivotal aspects of her academic history. In this section, the ways in which home, family, and academic characteristics mediate Alita’s participation in literate practices is in the foreground. Particular relevant in this discussion are the ways in which her performance is directly influenced by the nature and character of the neighborhood and family culture.

Community (Classroom, Teachers, Students)

School: Westwood Elementary school is in an older neighbor, once fairly middle class with large, two-story homes, built in the 1920’s and 30’s, with sidewalks and old walnut, oak, and maple trees lining the streets. The streets now have a rather disheveled and rakish appearance as most of the original single-family dwellings have been carved into poorly maintained, low-income rental units. The school is red brick and had been built at a time when a fireplace with a beautiful wooden mantle was an appropriate office fixture. It was one of the buildings the district continually cited as “out-dated” and “not up to code” in part because while a two story structure it lacked the elevators rendering the library and some classrooms handicapped inaccessible. The floors were tiled and the walls dark stained, wood paneled halfway up the wall. The multipurpose room, used now for art classes and faculty meetings, was the old student dining room and had a glorious high ceiling, hanging chandelier, and richly stained wooden walls. Clearly it was no

longer well maintained – walls cracked, peeling and scarred; floor spattered and dull; ceiling flaking – but you could see the remnant of room that must have once been quite elegant. Students now ate breakfast and lunch in the tiny gym which was the size of half a basketball court. The playground was quite small as well. It had a small cement rectangle with a basketball hoop at one end and a gravel covered square area that contained two swing sets and a few jungle gym sets. No green space. No trees. The parking lot next to it only had space for 7 cars and the staff and parents predominantly parked up and down the streets surrounding the school. The growing deterioration throughout the building, cramped quarters especially in the office (designed before copy machines were standard equipment), inadequate regulation of heat and cool air, and limited handicap accommodations made it high on the list for potential closure that was posted by the district in the spring of each year. However, since the neighborhood student population remained at an appropriate level and voters continued to veto additional spending for new buildings, there was little serious talk of closing the school in this neighborhood.

Most of the students walked to school and early morning safeties, fifth grade students who arrived early, donned the bright orange reflecting vests, monitoring crosswalks on the corners surrounding the school to help ensure safe passage. Although at the end of the school day, there were always a few parents and grandparents waiting outside the school to walk or drive students home, especially on rainy days, most walked to and from the school in groups with friends or siblings. Nearly all the teachers in the school were white and few lived in the district itself or for that matter sent their children to any of the schools in the district.

Institutional culture: The principal was African-American; it was he who often walked or drove students home when they were ill, in trouble, or had left behind homework that needed to be gathered. He dropped in periodically in the classroom, would sit and observe what went on but didn't interact with the teachers at that time or later about what he had observed. While he seemed quite aware of what was happening throughout the school, there seemed to be a fairly laissez-faire governance of the staff and the curriculum. Teachers followed – or were assumed to follow- the district-mandated curriculum, but there was little close supervision of how it was enacted. Decisions about how and where to spend money were typically made by a majority vote of the staff, a practice which occasionally infuriated Kathy and Terri since they often perceived these decisions as determined by the convenience of the teachers rather than with the academic needs of the students in mind. For example, the staff voted on how to spend the additional “At-Risk” federal dollars granted. In the past, this money had been used to pay for a mathematics specialist who both worked with students and teachers to improve classroom mathematics instruction. Many of the teachers felt that the curriculum this curriculum – with its heavy emphasis on writing and talking; construction of problems with multiple solutions; use of manipulatives and inquiry rather than repetition of logarithms – required too much work of the teacher. The staff decided to change the allocation of money to bring in more classroom aides and fund paid in-services with little discussion of student achievement or instructional goals. The principal did not intervene in this process at all but left such issues to the decision of the staff majority. Kathy and Terri continued to use the mathematics curriculum they had developed in collaboration with the math coordinator both because they felt it to be an effective way to support

student learning as well as because it was philosophically consistent with the rest of their curriculum in its strong emphasis on student discourse and the integration of literacy tools to support problem solving. Most of the rest of the staff dropped this approach in favor of a traditional textbook and this issue became, another source of dissension between Kathy, Terri and their colleagues.

The apparent nonchalant oversight was true of my presence as well. I spent three years in the building and while the principal knew what I was doing, neither he nor the secretary ever knew my name; few other teachers did as well. This speaks, perhaps, as much about what I did and said in the school and the way I constructed my participant observer role. Yet, I was always a bit amazed at how impervious the administration was to my presence. Until my third year in the school, when the district became more concerned about building safety following the publication of still more school shootings, I entered and exited through the rear of the building with no one knowing whether or came or went. Halfway through my third year in the school, all the doors except the front by the office were chained soon after school began. I was told by Kathy and Terri that I was supposed to enter the office and get a big badge that announced that I was a “VISITOR” and pin it on my clothes, However, after a week or two of going into the office and interrupting the secretary to sign in and have her page the classroom announcing my imminent presence, I just started to go to the box where the buttons were kept, the secretary completely ignoring me, and pinned one on myself. I stopped passing through the office entirely. No one really seemed interested in what I was doing or concerned about my role.

Occasionally I joined Kathy and Terri in the staff lounge during lunch but just as often, they ate lunch in their classroom. Increasingly I came to be viewed by students as an insider (I was “their” researcher), but little attention was paid to me by the rest of the school staff. Only the reading recovery teacher ever stopped me in the hall to ask about the work I was doing. While I developed some superficial relationships with a few other teachers, none ever expressed curiosity or interest in the work I was doing in their school. In part, that may be because Kathy and Terri kept to themselves. They often expressed feeling ostracized from the other staff.

They believed there was ongoing resentment of their co-teaching arrangement by other teachers who felt they had an unfair allocation of students. When Kathy and Terri decided to create an inclusion classroom, the principal, with the support of the district special education assistant superintendent¹, agreed to assign all the special education students in grades K-2 as well as enough regular education students to complete classroom load to the two teachers. Their class size was equivalent to that of other classrooms in the building. Prior to this, Kathy had run a resource room setting and all the K-2 special education students came to her on a daily, rotating basis as they were pulled out of their regular education classroom placements. The fact that Kathy and Terri shared a class load gradually came to be perceived as unfair by many of the other teachers even though this arrangement eliminated the need for any other early elementary teaching for having to deal with special education students in their classroom. When new student were identified with disabilities or entered the school building, they were

¹ The support of the special education asst. superintendent stemmed, in part, from his interest in the research project that Kathy had been a part of with Dr. Carol Sue Englert, and his understanding that this work would continue in an inclusion setting. His respect for Dr. Englerts’ work and research in the district seemed to help facilitate the bureaucratic aspect of moving from a resource room to inclusion context.

immediately placed in their classroom. The ratio of special education students to regular education students varied dramatically from 30- 75%. While the creation of this inclusion classroom meant no overall change in class numbers for other teachers, and in fact, meant the elimination of any need to deal with special education students, Kathy and Terri felt that as time went on the antagonism from their colleagues continued to increase. They were able to provide documentation, based both on district test scores and on those provided through the project, that their students were making greater academic gains. This seemed, however, to fuel efforts by other staff members to eliminate the inclusion program rather than support it. Kathy and Terri, then, felt both pride as well as discomfort when students in their classroom demonstrated high gains over the course of the year on standardized reading scores. Terri one day, in parodying the criticism she heard made about them at a recent staff meeting, said, “Well of course *their* students did well. They’ve got two teachers in that room. If I had another teacher I could do more too.” They were particularly angered by this comment since an ongoing complaint prior to the creation of their inclusion room was the regular education teachers’ frustration with having to instruct special education students.

Such comments, Kathy and Terri said, communicated publicly in the staff room, reflected an overall distrust not of the efficacy of the program in meeting the needs of special education students but rather of the equitability of the teaching load. It was also reflected, they believed, in the lack of practical collegial assistance they encountered. For example, when they attempted to get a larger classroom, or two rooms next to each other, other teachers refused to move. During the three years I was in their room, Kathy and Terri repeatedly attempted to have two adjoining classrooms for their small group

activities, rather than one upstairs and one downstairs. No teacher volunteered to change rooms, nor was the principal willing to exacerbate staff conflict by forcing room changes. The deepening schism between Kathy and Terri and the other teachers made me particularly wary about my interactions with the staff and during my time in the school I had little significant interactions with anyone besides these two.

Arrangement of people and resources: The “emotionally impaired” (EI) category of special education students was often the catch-all for those students whose kindergarten or first grade teacher or the reading recovery teacher had perceived to be deficient in academic skills and when referred for testing wasn’t found to qualify as learning disabled. Kathy and Terri took a number of students identified but rarely did these students present any significant behavioral difficulties in the classroom that were distinct from those displayed by others in the class. As a consequence Kathy and Terri felt validated in their perception that referrals for special education for many students were a consequence of the ineffective pedagogical practices (including curriculum design, instructional practices, classroom management). They mentioned the third grade student that they’d decided to keep in their room, “Roberto is EI. He would be in the office right now [if in another room]. He came right in and no problem in our inclusion classroom. The problem is with the whole big picture.....They are in a great program right now. They aren’t put in this room with low expectations. If they are getting a folder of dittos, they get bored, and the behaviors come out.”

The decision to make this classroom K-3, instead as it was originally conceived as K-2, had come at the last minute, just prior to school beginning. Enrollments had

changed and there was a larger influx of second and third grade students. This change was perceived as particularly problematic to Terri who became the regular education second and third grade teacher of record. All of Terri's teaching experience had been at either first or second grade. Her first year of doing inclusion with Kathy, the year prior to my arrival, had involved a K,1,2 multi-age setting.

While the building reflected a fairly individualistic tenor, there were a number of other projects and relationships connected to the university, besides the work I was doing with Kathy and Terri. While there was crossover in terms of teacher involvement, there was little if any cross talk about the projects. In fact, I always was surprised when I bumped into another university colleague at the school.

The Teachers

I spent three years in this multi-age, inclusion, urban, public school setting. The two teachers, one who was a special education teacher and the other a regular education teacher, shared in the planning, instruction, and assessment of these kindergarten through third grade students. Both were experienced, each with a minimum of 8 years of classroom teaching. The two teachers had already spent 2 years team teaching when I began my observations. During this time there were between 21 and 28 kindergarten through third grade students in the room (whose ages ranged from 5 years to 9 years), either regular or special education. In this setting both teachers fully shared in the instruction. During whole group activities, such as morning message, teachers took turns in being the instructional leader while the other helped primarily with management tasks. However, conversations about the task often took place back and forth as teachers

monitored the success of the lesson and then provided assistance to the other teacher. While students were placed into various (and often flexible) grouping arrangements throughout the day, special education students were given to no one single teacher. Because the student population is highly mobile (school district data indicate a 71% mobility rate; 81% of the students receive free or reduced school lunch), the number of students, the ratio between special education and regular education students, and the percentage of students of each age level fluctuated over the course of each school year. However, at any given time, approximately half of the students were classified as either educably mentally impaired (EMI), learning disabled (LD), emotionally impaired (EI), or physically and otherwise handicapped instructionally (POHI). This classroom, thus, provided a very diverse context in which to explore issues surrounding ability/disability and the educational significance of difference in instructional practice.

Kathy and Terri are both white and lived in nearby suburban communities. They clearly enjoyed being together and always had positive things to set about co-teaching; “no disadvantages” they would say. Terri, in fact, continued to express surprise at the advantages of the multi-age instruction and curriculum to the regular education students. She said she had “expected” that the special education students would benefit, but had been “worried” about how well the regular education students would perform, especially the older, more capable ones. Another advantage both discussed was the opportunity to interact with another professional and receive collegial support. Kathy once explained, “You can go to the bathroom; [You have] someone in the adult world that thinks the same way as you, [and] when stuck or frustrated knows where you are going and can

jump in and help explain. It's just a matter of keeping your mental sanity. It's good support. It's excellent support."

The practical aspects of sharing in instruction were a constant source of enjoyment in teaching – they enjoyed being together; they talked throughout the day; they carried the burden when the other was unwell and in fact preferred not to have a substitute if the other was missing since such a person was inexperienced in the norms of the community. The instructional implications were also important. Kathy had mentioned having someone who understands the goals and purposes and can "jump in" and help. Terri illustrated this by referring to a situation in which she was attempting to explain the relationship between science concepts but students seemed not to understand. Kathy moved to the board and suggested students think about the Venn diagrams that they used occasionally in reading time to compare characters in a story. She drew the diagram and asked students to help her compare and contrast the two concepts. "They got it," said Terri later to me, "I would never have thought of that [the Venn diagram]. Sometimes you just need another perspective." They continued to refine their collaboration to make their interactions with students more strategic. For example, by year three, teachers conferenced only with those students in their reading groups. Because they knew the spelling/decoding patterns that individual students were working on, they were then better able to help students transfer skills being developed in one setting to use in another.

Repeatedly both teachers explained that co-teaching only worked because they "shared the same philosophy" and "choose to be together." They emphasized the importance of individual choice in decisions about how and what to teach. As Terri

explained, it won't work "if both people don't share the same philosophy. You couldn't just tell two people that they have to work together."

Despite this, however, it was Terri who early on often seemed position as the novice in the interactions. She had been a regular education first grade teacher until Kathy approached her about team teaching. Kathy, who was already expert in the curriculum associated with the project, took more responsibility for leading and framing tasks and activities. Early on in their collaboration, Terri had taken a more peripheral role herself as she learned the pedagogical roles and routines associated with the activities. While close analysis of their pedagogical practices revealed significant differences in the ways in which they interacted with students, particularly around disciplinary actions and scaffolding the participation of less able students, it was clear that they perceived themselves to be working together, supporting one another, and sharing goals. Terri was more assertive and aggressive about monitoring students' behavior. It was her eagle eyes and quick response that students quickly learned the boundaries of behavior in the classroom. Kathy was very good at drawing in and using the language and actions of novices in ways that were sanctioned within particular activities. She gave an enormous amount of wait time to include student responses and was more tolerant of students' uncertain and half-spoken participation bids.

When discussing Alita, it was Terri who directly referred to Alita as "lazy" and her perception of the mother as unconcerned; Karen while not explicitly disagreeing would occasionally then move the conversation to speak to the difficulty the families experience – they "try" she would comment. "It's hard because they're so limited themselves. Both teachers emphasized personal responsibility in bringing in work on

time and for ones' actions. This included their public reinforcement of Alita as *able* to participate in literate ways in activities and therefore holding her responsible to fully engage in classroom tasks. Neither ever excused her lack of participation on home factors or personal difficulties.

A common thread was their convictions that all students could and should participate in every curricular practice. They believed that they had created a sufficient range of legitimate roles available to students that non-participation was inexcusable. Students could and did participate differently but they must be fully engaged in the group activity. Thus, when observing students not fully engaged in a task they responded to it more typically as either a management issue (student not following classroom norms) or a pedagogical problem (restructure the task through providing additional scaffolding so the student has entry). What was significant in their collaboration, then, was a philosophy that downplayed the role of mental differences in the participation practices of individual students. Regardless of whether the student was in first or third grade, in special education or in regular education, was listed with emotional disabilities or cognitive ones, all were held to the same norms for participation. This included how students interacted with one another and their engagement in classroom activities. What was different was the expectation for the roles one assumed in a practice and the literate tools currently mastered.

Teachers' beliefs establish classroom norms: Kathy and Terri's classroom is interactive while ordered, comfortable and flexible yet purposeful and controlled. By *controlled* I do not mean one that is tightly reigned; such classrooms as those always

leave me feeling a bit uncomfortable because I don't want to do or say anything while in the room as an observer that might interrupt the carefully orchestrated flow of events. Kathy and Terri's classroom, rather, was controlled in the sense of shared purpose. Students worked independently sometimes, collaboratively at others, or together as a whole community to accomplish tasks that were owned by the collective. *Ownership* in fact, is probably the central feature of the control that occurs in this room as students engage in activities that have both individual meaning and still contribute to the work of the community. Controlled refers better to the sense of individually monitored action rather than to the implementation of external force. Students monitored, managed, and directed their behavior.

When I first spent time in the classroom, I analyzed the "management" policies and practice on the basis of explicitly states rules and verbal directives. As I spent more time in the room, however, and in particular began to focus on student activity, I began to realize that the participation structure of the activities and the norms surrounding student-to-student interaction was more central to the regulation of behavior than the overt directives of the teachers. I found it, however, difficult to explain to outsiders how the locus of control was different from many traditional classrooms and oriented towards increasing participation and collaborative action, particularly when it was the reward and punishment system that first seemed to catch visitors attention. It was through showing and discussing videotapes with teachers and researchers unfamiliar with this classroom as well that I began to see how strongly interpretations of the nature of classroom life were shaped by personal expectations for how teachers and students *should* talk and interact. After viewing videotapes of the classroom and spending several hours actually observing

in the room, several teachers from an early elementary school with an “childhood centered” focus had shared their initial impressions with me. Their first reaction was that the two teachers weren’t sensitive to the emotional needs of the children. One commented that a more “appropriate” management policy would be one that sought to provide children with “choices” rather than being “so directive”. She seemed not to realize the implicit command in the carefully framed questions that she suggested (“Would you please sit down?”). Another teacher emphasized the importance of “processing” problems with students. This “non-directive” emotionally oriented management system was illustrated by one of the teachers who described an interaction with one of her own students, “When you hit [students name], it makes me feel sad. I bet it makes him feel sad too. Why don’t you tell him how you’re feeling?” The implication in this form of teacher response was that children learn how to regulate their behavior when forced to consider the emotional impact of their actions on those around them and learn to express their feelings in ways more socially acceptable (e.g. through talk).

In Kathy and Terri’s classroom, however, one child hitting another would immediately involve a sanction – rarely if ever discussion. Their disciplinary approach involved three strikes (checks) and the child is sent to the office and the parent is called. Hitting, punching, biting, slapping led to a 1-2 day suspension – immediately and always. In part, Kathy and Terri’s management philosophy stemmed from the districts “affirmative discipline” policy. The first infraction in the day leads to the students’ name on the board. Each subsequent infraction entails a check mark. When three are reached the student is sent to the office and a call made home. The child cannot return to the class that day. A serious offense – such as hitting a child – might lead to an automatic

suspension. As a counter to this “negative” response, students were given reward slips for doing something particularly helpful or for following the norms in a way distinctive from the rest of the class. Students would then put their names on the reward slips and put in a box. At the end of the day, one of the teachers would draw several slips of paper from the box and those students whose names were called got to select a prize from a box of trinkets (often the kind of toys you might find in a McDonald Happy meal or perhaps a fancy pencil or eraser). Also, students who didn’t get their name on the board during the day got to take a sticker and put it on a name their name card which was stabled to one of the front bulletin boards. Approximately once/ month there would be a reward movie in the classroom and those students who had a full card got to attend it. The other students had to work on homework.

The focus of the formal discipline policy was on the physical aspects of behavior. It was, therefore, an obvious focal point for newcomers, such as myself and teachers who saw videotapes of their curricular practices. Over time, through engaging in conversations with Karen and Terri, responding to the queries of outsiders, and observing students, I came to understand that the classroom norms were used to support dispositions of inclusiveness and participation which were a central feature of their curriculum. It tied together the social and academic facets of student activity. Kathy and Terri’s shared philosophy about how to support a classroom learning community was a primary reason they believed their collaboration worked both for themselves as well as their students.

The attention to the explicit directives that guided physical activity was often the first thing new students attended to as well. It took longer for students to come to understand the tacit norms that supported student participation in the actual activities of

the classroom. A kindergarten student, new in the classroom and sitting next to Alita, developed a strategy that lasted for a few days for increasing the number of reward slips he received in a day by quickly sitting up rigidly straight, folding his hands on the desk and look unwaveringly ahead without talking whenever the class was told to clean-up. Alita, who was very attentive in this her third year in the room to following activity norms, quickly patterned her physical behavior after him. It was rather cute, except that he often seemed more concerned with looking like the model child than engaging in the academic work that went along with it. He went through a few days in the class where he was continually praised for sitting rigidly at attention. It backfired on a few occasions when he would forget to actually put his books away before folding his hands. It also was ineffective for engaging in the kind of participation practices which were desired by the teacher. Alita quickly gave up the rigid stance and began helping him to actually get the task done and not just look like it was done. Because acquisition of class norms were oriented towards participation, superficial display of behavior apart that did not lead to greater engagement in activities never was successful in generating approval for long.

Desks were arranged in groups of 4-5 and students were expected to assist one another both in performing academic tasks as well as in monitoring behavior that would facilitate such tasks such as working cooperatively as well as modulating speaking so as not to disturb other groups. Working alone or silently could, therefore, be a cause for teacher rebuke as well as student shouting and yelling. The focus of behavior regulation by the teachers was on creating environments that increased the participation of all students in the class. Thus, in a partner activity when the student with greater writing ability in writing conventionally dominated the performance of the task he/she was

considered to be breaking the norms as much as the student who passively detached him/herself from the group or the child that was yelling so others couldn't effectively hear the conversation at their own table.

Terri, articulated a belief that you couldn't let "these kids have an inch". They are not used to rules and their lives are so out of control, Terri explained, that you can't let them get away with anything. Very little time was ever spent in this classroom on inquiring into students' motivation. Students were held accountable for their action regardless of the provocation of another student or factors that might have contributed to create a volatile situation. I'm not sure I ever heard a conversation between teacher and student that addressed the child's emotional state except as a rebuke. (e.g. "You're angry, Alita, but you can just take that look off your face because you're going to sit in that [time out] chair until the bell rings.")

The teachers indicated that they believed that the economic instability of the students lives as well as the cultural norms of the community, where single family homes headed by a matriarch were the norm, led to a kind of unregulated behavior that was not consistent with school success. The rhetoric surrounding the use of affirmative discipline, which implied a distrust of behavior, seemed at odds, however, with their passionate commitment to the potential for success in each student until you understood that the teachers required participation in activity because ability was viewed as *a consequence of* not a precursor to engagement.

Kathy and Terri talked about management in terms of activity goals. I found myself noticing Kathy and Terri's lack of attention to what external behavior should look like as distinct from the norms guiding the activity itself. True, students were

immediately sanction for hitting, touching or talk that was unwelcome by others, or defiance of teachers' directives. However, I quickly saw that there was very little of the "be quiet" and "don't talk" commands which tend to dominate the discourse in other classroom settings.

Like the visitors, I was not initially comfortable with the stark directives often given to the students and explicit reward system ("Fold your hands and sit quietly. Good. Go get a coupon.")). It didn't always sound *nice*. One new teacher in observing this commented that Kathy and Terri "weren't responsive to the students emotional needs." What she meant was that teachers sounded mean. As Delpit (1989) pointed out, middle class white teachers, such as this visitor as well as myself, are particularly prone to ignore the implicit directives and expression of authority embedded within discourse patterns that appear "passive" and non-controlling. Thus, especially during the first months of my time Kathy and Terri's room, I had to stand back and monitor my reactions as much as I observed the classroom. In beginning to focus on how teachers talk created norms that established particular kinds of activity settings, I was able to move away from evaluating their management style based upon personal feeling to analyzing how it functioned in the learning community they constructed.

I stated earlier that the room was controlled, not, uncomfortable or tense; I was never afraid that my presence, my questions to students or the teachers, would interrupt the flow of activity. The classroom in fact was rather informal. The teachers talked amongst themselves, moved casually around the room to work individually or in small groups with students, and time frame for activities would lengthen or shorten depending upon the engagement of the students. Students weren't ever "hushed" and talking was

monitored by the demands of the activity rather than the whims of the teacher. For example, during whole class discussions students were expected to raise their hands to facilitate conversation while during small group book discussions students were learning themselves to regulate the face-to-face conversation and invite participation of one another. They would evaluate their own participation at the end of small group activity and suggest possible ways of improving the nature and quality of their talk. By the middle of the year, and students themselves had a great deal of autonomy in how they used their time. During writing workshop, for example, which would commonly last an hour to an hour and half, students worked individually or with a partner on a story choosing to conference with a peer or with the teacher when needed. The students were generally quite engaged in the task and the teachers were able to sit off to the side of the room either conferencing with students or helping them type up and “publish” their final report. Rarely did they engage in management talk with students; students monitored their own behavior while participating in writing workshop, easily the favorite curricular activity.

I’ve talked about Kathy and Terri’s management style, but really there were often very few infractions by students in the classroom. Typically no more than 3 or 4 names would be on the board at the end of the day and very, very rarely was anyone sent to the office. Kids moved freely around the room. They didn’t have the nice round or octagon tables that were in the suburban schools that I frequented, but rather had much used desks of varying heights pushed together in squares. Students, however, talked, worked together whenever they wished, helped one another, sat on the floor at times, in table groups at others, got up and moved to join other groups or work elsewhere in the room

quite independently of teachers directions but in ways consistent with established norms for activities. In fact, I was often struck by the autonomy and independence which students in Kathy and Terri's room displayed and their ability to work for long periods of time with little teacher guidance. When intervention was required, it was brief and oriented to redirecting student activity. For example, when Kathy, who was working with Alita's group in a guided reading activity, noticed that two student partners who were working at a center weren't engaging in the activity appropriately. She stopped reading with the students and looked to two students in the back of the room working at the plastic pocket chart hanging from the wall. The group at the table immediately either paired off to read or continued to read silently. None turned around. "Do you know how to use that center?" She asked. They looked at her. "Tell me what you're supposed to do. What's the first thing you need to do at that center?" She walked them through the steps while the students in the group around her read either silently or with a partner. Reassured that the two students know what they need to do she immediately directed her attention back to those sitting at the kidney shaped table with her who had continued their work without her attention.

Frequently, when I would come into the room, I would have to take a second look to find a teacher. The students would be actively working on a project and Terri might be sitting at her desk having a teacher conference with one student on her writing and Kathy might be sitting elsewhere in the room working with a small group of students.

Occasionally each would look up and glance around the room and a comment such as "Darren, you've sharpened your pencil now three times, no more sharpening" or a directive for a particular group to work a bit quieter was made "so that other groups can

hear themselves”. Commands were specific and consistently explained as necessary in order to achieve the current activity goals.

What did often surprise visitors to the room was that the kindergarten through third grade students in this multiage classroom had a high ability to work independently on sustained reading and writing tasks. Besides the daily hour and half of writing workshop, students also spent an additional 1-1/2 - 2 hours each morning engaged in thematic unit work that often involved large blocks of time allocated to reading and notetaking or writing in partners or small groups.

Because these activities were established on the first days of school and participation structures and norms were modeled, supported, and repeated, even the very young students were able to establish patterns of literate activity that involved engagement in writing and reading tasks in individually monitored activity. During writing workshop, teachers were able to assume roles that took them on the periphery of the class work and trust that students remained busily engaged. At the beginning of the year they carefully modeled the social interaction pattern and physical and discursive actions that should characterize participation in particular curricular events. They modeled how to hold a book in shared reading, “notice the book is between us. Mrs. Kathy isn’t hogging the book. She’s holding her side. I’m holding my side. And did you hear when we read that I listened carefully to make sure we were reading together?” They regularly and routinely modeled and demonstrated the social interaction practices associated with partner and group activities. Never assuming that by showing the students once, they would learn the activity norms, the teachers repeatedly provided

illustrations themselves or celebrated and explained the expected social interaction patterns when other students were carrying them out.

Terri or Kathy often sat at a computer typing in a student's story for "publication" while the other would sit at a table with students doing teacher editing of stories. Periodically the teachers would look up or move around. However, the norm in the classroom was for students to monitor their own activities. Teachers would check on the work that students had done at the end of the hour or at the preceding of the next writing workshop. Sanctions for "wasting" time might include sitting next to the teacher while working or getting one's name on the board. Students often seemed to just know what to do and how to interact. Because of the highly repetitive participation structure of activities as well as the presence of students with prior experience in the classroom, at any moment of observation it was likely that very little teacher talk or directions were being given. The careful modeling of roles by the teachers and the opportunities each day to demonstrate and observe in a whole group roles that could assumed in partner, small group, or individual activities assisted in students assumption of class and activity norms as well.

Kathy and Terri's management focus was on helping students learn the norms and routines associated with the literate roles they needed to participate in the activities. Regardless of what a student's individual and independent "abilities" might be, each student was responsible for demonstrating the behaviors needed to assume the social and cognitive roles that tasks demands. Their management policies functioned to support the creation of the activity structure that in turn created parameters within which students assumed the social and cognitive roles that accompanied the literacy practices.

The Curriculum

Curriculum philosophy: Alita's case study emerges from a classroom that was part of a federally funded research project Literacy Environments for Accelerated Progress (LEAP) which was a collaborative study between teachers and university researchers to develop a curricular approach that supports the literacy learning of students with mild disabilities from a sociocultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978; Englert, & Palinscar, 1991; Englert, Raphael, & Mariage, 1994). The project has been described elsewhere (Englert, Dunsmore, 2001) as have the instructional activities and pedagogical practices which are characteristic of LEAP classrooms. The pedagogical principles² of the LEAP project, based upon a sociocultural view of teaching and learning, are that teachers apprentice students in literate discourse and thought by: 1) embedding instruction in the context of meaningful academic task; 2) integrating literate thought and action related to reading and writing across the curriculum; 3) emphasizing the role of language and discourse as an important medium for learning; 4) implementing interactive instruction that allowed for literacy meanings to be progressively and dynamically achieved; and 5) emphasizing membership in discourse communities where literacy functions, purposes, and social identities are negotiated.

The following literacy practices - involving whole group, partner and individual participation structures –were analyzed for this study: morning message, book discussion, (guided) reading groups, writing workshop, and thematic units. Figure 4.2 provides a brief description of the activities. They are more fully described in later chapters. Figure 4.3 gives a typical weekly schedule for this classroom.

Figure 4.2

Description of Literacy Activities

Literacy Activity	Process and Grouping Arrangement	Explicit or Implicit connections to other curricular activities
Writing workshop typically 1-1 1/2 hours long Students work alone or with a self-selected partner.	Students work either alone or with a partner to construct a piece of writing by moving through the writing process	Students are reminded periodically that the revising and editing that occurs during morning message should serve as a model for peer editing during writing workshop.
Book discussion - occurs 1 time/ week for approx. half an hour. Students divided into two groups based upon grade. One group goes to the library with one teacher while the other does book discussion with the remaining students. Then the groups switch.	Teacher reads picture book; students discuss, typical student comments begin with the words "I like", "I think the author...", "I wonder" and "I don't understand".	Turn taking, listening, and building upon the responses of previous speaker are social skills practiced and modeled during whole and small group morning message. The emphasis on building upon previous speakers' comments is less characteristic of author's chair and the daily discussion following the teacher read novel. However, listening to ideas in text and responding in ways both personally and publicly meaningful is carried throughout.
(Guided) Reading Groups - three to four times/ week for approximately 1 hour 20 min. Guided reading groups are about 20-30 minutes long. The rest of the time is spent in center activities or reading workshop. Students are divided into smaller (3-4 students) groups based upon ability. Some flexible grouping to account for individual change and development	Students rotate through center activities in partners while the teacher does small group instruction and reading experiences specifically tailored to students needs: phonics and decoding skill, spelling, word identification and comprehension strategies taught.	Rereading text for meaning, word correspondence, and the use of punctuation are skills developed and practiced across the day but particular attention is paid to this during morning message as well as during the peer editing process in writing workshop and notetaking, mapping, or writing in thematic units.
Thematic Units - depending upon task students may spend between 45 min to 2 hours 4 days/ week in either the current science OR social studies unit which can last 2-6 weeks.	Students work in whole group, small group and individually in constructing schematic maps which organize informational notes in order to write scientific texts (see Englert & Dunsmore, 2002 for further description)	Rereading text for meaning, seeking clarity and comprehensiveness in final text, using other classmates to help with task, peer editing, and revision occurs specifically as well during writing workshop as well as morning message

² See Englert & Marriage for a fuller description of the project principles and curriculum.

Figure 4.3

Typical Weekly Schedule

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
morning message	morning message	morning message	morning message	morning message
math	math	math	math	math
thematic units in social studies and science	thematic units	thematic units	thematic units	book discussion
Tchr. reads novel	Teacher reads	teacher reads	teacher reads	teacher reads
guided reading groups	guided reading group	No school in the afternoon - teacher reallocated time for staff development	guided reading groups	guided reading & spelling test as well as recess or monthly reward activity
writing workshop	writing workshop		writing workshop	writing workshop

The teachers' beliefs about literacy ability and its development were reflected not only in the classroom norms and interaction norms but also in how the district curriculum and LEAP project goals were instantiated in their classroom. Analysis of the activity settings of the curriculum suggests that Alita's engagement in literacy tasks was particularly supported by five themes that characterized the practices that were examined for this study. In other words, Alita's participation was supported by particular features of the activity settings itself. These themes, discussed below, include: (a) repetitive activity structures; (b) multiple access points for legitimate participation; (c) participation the criteria for successful performance; (d) literacy happens all day long and is a process of engaging in the curriculum rather than an outcome of it; (e) expertise for accomplishing activity assumed to reside in the community not the individual.

Repetitive activity structures: There was both a recursive aspect to curriculum activities as well as repetitive participation structures across the day. For example, thematic units in social studies and science were 4-6 weeks in length and always followed the same pattern: a) whole class brainstorming of knowledge about the topic and

questions students had about it; b) this was followed by several weeks of note taking of knowledge gained from watching videos, reading books, interviewing people, internet research, or from direct experimentation or observation. Notes were taken daily individually and then at the end of the session a whole class shared led to the constant addition, correction or refinement of the whole class notes begun the first day which were continually posted on the wall; c) at the end of the unit the class together created categories which contained all the notes. Often the categories reflected topics students had originally wished to explore (e.g. what fish eat) at other times they emerged from the “data” itself; d) students created concepts maps representing the organization of information that would be in their own report. A draft was written and edited and then the final report typed up, pictures drawn, read to the class and then put in the set of materials available for children to read during free time.

In the following chapter, the thematic unit process is described with greater depth and illustrations of how scaffolds were used to support Alita’s individual participation and her mental activity. The facet of the activity that I wish to note here is the way in which the process through which students progressed was mirrored in each unit. By the end of year three. Alita had participated in approximately 500 whole group morning message activities; 90 book discussions; and engaged in 18 complete cycles involving the construction of an expository text through taking notes, organizing information into categories, drafting from a map, and then final writing, publishing and sharing. Additionally, through the entire year, the teachers continued to model each aspect of the task that children were to perform (e.g. note taking) as well as provide multiple legitimate participation avenues into the activity itself (such as the varied forms in which note

taking could occur as was described above). In each thematic unit throughout the year, teachers continued to model taking notes from the whole class map and then having students do so in partners and then individually. This modeling occurred for each unit and the form of the map remained constant as well. Students took notes as a whole class on something that they participated in together (e.g. in the watching of a video on fish), they also took notes in patterns or in small groups (e.g. note taking from books or from observation of a fish), additionally there were numerous opportunities for students to take notes individually. Because the unit involved whole class, small group, and individual facets of the same practice, the activity involved multiple participation structures which altered the difficulty and focus of the literacy task for the individual.

While the units operated as a coherent whole, each day involved events that contributed to the knowledge of a particular topic. Thus, absences or entering late to the activity involved little breakup in the collective process or in folding in and engaging the late comer into the ongoing activity. The repetitive structure of activities was particularly important for students such as Alita, who was absent or tardy almost once a week, because it allowed her to easily move in and out of tasks. Alita's absenteeism was more excessive than most other students but truancy was high on the list concerns for all teachers in the school. The principal in fact once commented to me that, "it's a joke. I've got some students who've missed almost half of the school year." It was not unusual for a student in one of the older grades to stay home to care for a sick sibling or watch younger children in the home if the mother had to leave. In addition, because of the economic instability of most families compounded by fluctuating personal relationships, children often moved in and out of homes rather frequently. Because Alita often entered

late into class, her ability to quickly assume the roles and practices required facilitated her participation.

Repetition in activity structure was apparent as well in activities like morning message, book club, and guided reading where the norms, participation structure, activity goals remained constant while the nature of what was discussed (the content) continually varied as teachers introduced new disciplinary ideas and topics into the activity. The framework of the activity thus provided continued opportunity for students to develop literate skills and practices. This was important given the fact that many of the students were part of the classroom for more than one year. Familiarity with any given task structure provided more and greater opportunities for the acquisition of literacy skills rather than less.

Multiple access points: This was in part because there were multiple access points for entry into an activity as well as many legitimate kinds of participation. For example, during whole class morning message activities, all students were expected and were able to participate in the editing of the narrative. However, some students attended to conventions of prints (e.g. periods go at the end of the sentence, capital letters begin it as well as are used for proper names) while other students focused ways to make the text more interesting (e.g. through use of adjectives), less repetitive, or more complete syntactically complex. All, students, though regardless of ability in conventional reading were expended to listen to the meaningfulness and completeness of the text and ask questions of the author, or make suggestions for the text that addressed the overall narrative composition. For example, students might ask a “who” question (as in, “who

went with you to the hockey game?”) or a “what” question (“what did you do at your uncles’”) as well as express disapproval through a lowered thumb for the sensibility of the text in communicating authors intent (I don’t understand what you mean when you said you went *up* to your uncles’ house.). Additionally, the structure of the composition focused attention to specific features of written composition, namely topic sentences and conclusions. Very early, therefore, students knew that composing a text required some sort of introduction and some sort of concluding statement. The sophistication level at which this was performed varied. The important feature, however, of the task was that attention to the structural features of written genre (including conventions of print, attention to readers’ comprehension, and traits of the particular genre) provided multiple entry points enabling *all* students to legitimately participate in the task. *Activities are entry points for participation:* Activities are opportunities for students to participate in literacy practices that have both multiple points of entry (for students of various literacy competencies) as well as provide guidance and instruction in learning how to make personal responses material for public participation.

Participation was the central curricular objective: Lack of participation in this classroom was a clear violation of the norms. Perhaps that was one of the reasons initially I became interested in and concerned about Alita’s literacy development. During her first year in the classroom, when in groups Alita preferred to sit back and let others do the writing and reading. In clear violation of class norms where “everybody writes” she would often sit passively back and let the group carry the activity. When asked for a perspective or to participate she would often shrug and say, “I don’t know” or “You do

it.” Unlike classrooms where mastery of literate conventions or facility in particular cognitive processes is requisite for participation, in this room participation of whatever form was viewed as *prerequisite* to the development of literate ways of knowing and doing. That is, “copying” notes from the board rather than self-generation was considered an appropriate developmental process as well as drawing pictures to represent an idea or fact that could later be “read” back to the class. Thus, when Alita sat with a blank page or showed up to the teachers not knowing what she’d written on her paper or why, it was viewed by the teachers as a behavior problem rather than a cognitive one. They believed that all students could participate meaningfully in every task and attempted to create multiple legitimate roles to engage in literacy activity. Teachers modeled social interaction patterns; they modeled the diverse ways in which students could demonstrate literate participation. For example, repeatedly throughout the year, teachers would model notetaking through “reading” the pictures in books, taking notes by “drawing” a representation, then “reading” the notes back to the class by sharing observations. Therefore, when a student didn’t participate, she was perceived to be violating the norms for the activity. Participation and engagement were central criteria for evaluation of successful performance.

This meant that even though Alita could not yet read and write conventionally, her efforts to “write” stories during writing workshop by drawing pictures and then dictating a story were recognized as legitimate participation practices. Similarly, during morning message when she made punctuation and capitalization corrections, she was considered to be as competent in her participation as those students who were combining sentences or adding adjectives. When Alita “copied” notes from the wall chart onto her

graphic organizer rather than generating her own details during a science thematic unit. she was demonstrating her ability to engage in the process of organizing ideas in hierarchically defined categories. In short, the multiple access points available ensured that competence, from the perspective of the teachers, was to a great extent defined by the student's willingness to participate. Initially, then, Alita's preference for sitting back and letting others do the work led to sanctions of both Alita and her group members since accountability for ensuring that "everybody writes" was the responsibility of all classmates.

During the first year of observation, Alita's apathetic role in tasks, passivity that approached complete disengagement when invited to enter a small group, partner or whole group discussion, and frequent absences gave the teachers great concern for her ability to successfully enter the discourse community in the classroom and thus accrue the skills and knowledge such participation brought with it. What is significant is that they evaluated her competence on the basis of her participation, or lack thereof, and not the specific literate characteristics of her performance. That is, they were not concerned that she wasn't yet reading and writing conventionally, but rather that she often sat in silence in large group activities and became more withdrawn in small group ones. The teachers believed that participation was central to student construction of new cognitive skills. This gives insight into their repeated efforts to model interpersonal and literate behaviors and apply external reinforcement and sanctions to help student learn the roles and routines for participation that would lead, they believed, to the acquisition of accompanying literate dispositions.

Literacy as a process of engagement not an outcome: Kathy and Terri's beliefs about literacy ability and its development influenced how they interpreted and responded to Alita's interaction in activities. They did not segment literacy instruction into the time period allocated to writing workshop or reading groups. Literacy happened all day long: it's a process, not a program.

In formal interviews, teachers repeatedly described the central philosophy of their curriculum "as a way of viewing students; it's a process, not a program." (Terri, 2000 interview) For example, Kathy commented that literacy instruction "is what happens all day long. It's a mindset, not a set of activities." Terri added, "It's all we do. We scaffold, we support...it's paying attention to the discourse." Kathy agreed, "It's our whole day. Constantly student-to-student talk." She explained that their curriculum was "really more ideology than practice. It's how to see kids." A central feature of the classroom that these teachers articulated, was that the activities that are contained within the curriculum are viewed not as ends but as methods for engaging students in the practices of using reading and writing in the service of socially situated meaning making activities. Student interaction with one another and with literate tools was scaffolded such that students were provided the opportunity as well as supported in using and constructing meaningful text. The ways of "seeing kids" that Kathy described provided a framework that guided how the teachers interacted with the students and the goals that guided construction of the instructional activities in the classroom.

Because the teachers view each day as a series of conceptually connected tasks, they consciously mine the knowledge or skills demonstrated in one context to be used in those engaged in another activity. While the teachers viewed, the "whole day" as being

“all about literacy,” they had observed that the emergent readers and writers in their classroom weren’t always employing the strategies and skills they could and did use in one activity to support participation in another. The teachers would try to make explicit connections to facilitate the transfer of literacy knowledge across contexts. Vocabulary wall charts made during thematic units would then be categorized into sound/symbol patterns in reading time. During writing workshop the teachers met to conference with only those students in their reading group in order to better keep track of the literacy goals for each students. Figure 4.4 provides an analysis of the nature and meaning of literacy that Alita is developing by participating in the various curricular activities that cross one week. The teachers attempted to support transfer across tasks to create a more coherent, holistic experience of knowing and doing literacy. This figure presents observations of Alita’s participation practices across the activities that the teachers constructed either directly herself or peripherally through observation and conversation.

Figure 4.4

Uses of Text in One Week of observation of Alita	EXAMPLES
ENVIRONMENTAL PRINT - Use of writing in the classroom environment in the service of other activities or thoughts	• (e.g. Alita looks at "question words" on the wall next to the morning message board and then raises her hand when teacher asks "what are the question words?"; Alita looks at wall chart where vocabulary words for thematic unit are continually added and arranged alphabetically as they are writing notes; Alita looks at names on the board, written when students are warned for poor behavior, and then comments to another student, "there's nobody's name up. Look, there's nobody up." • Two students (Cordita and Keisha) referred to the morning message book to find out how to spell Alita's name. They were writing a morning message during recess and Alita was absent. Rather than approach a teacher or another classmate, they independently moved over to the text to look up her past message and copy the spelling.
STUDENT CONSTRUCTED TEXT AS WORK IN PROGRESS	• in writing workshop Alita formally had peer editors to listen, respond to, and edit text; some students worked in partners or engaged in dialogue about the texts they were writing occasionally asking advice or just sharing something they were thinking about or writing • Alita shared notes with their partners who challenged, corrected or helped with the writing of words and phrases • partners and teachers edited the written texts that constituted either the partner or individually produced writing as a summation of learning during the thematic unit • teachers read the essay or response (often pictorial for younger students) that students wrote in response to a book read during reading workshop. Suggestions for change or incorporating of more ideas were often made. Alita contributes to this discussion
STUDENT CONSTRUCTED TEXT AS COMPLETED PRODUCTS	• authors chair as well, where published pieces were formally shared to the whole class, provided an opportunity to respond to student text. However, since the piece was already "published" and thus "finished" students responded to what they liked about the text or asked questions of the author similar, in many respects, to the kinds of questions that students puzzled over in book discussions. • completed morning messages were then read by the class with the author and two "friends" standing in front pointing to the words leading in the class choral reading • a morning message book was compiled with each day's new message added to the binder. During recess time, this week, several students read through it as they would other books in the classroom.
Texts for personal and public response	• Every afternoon after lunch, one of the teachers would read another chapter in a novel. Students would briefly discuss - sharing comments, insights, predictions, connections. • During the weekly book discussion, a teacher read a picture book to a small group of students and then students sat in a circle and engaged in about a 25 min. discussion of the book. Teachers often facilitated interactions such that comments extended and grew out of the previous turn. • Books read during reading workshop • Books and texts read during recess.

Meaning is the criteria for successful participation: In this classroom, the criteria for what “counts” as reading has to do with evaluating the extent to which children are making meaning from text, meanings that can be utilized within the collective discourse. Validity in literacy practices is thus defined as activity which is meaningful in supporting the achievement of goal directed activity within the community. To “read” pictures, for the notetaking activity in thematic units referred to earlier, requires appropriation of the goals and values that define the activity. In year one, Alita characteristically drew pictures or copied words from a partner or the classnotes to represent information. Often she could not read these back. In year two, she copied words and phrases from the book and from other environmental print sources for her personal notes but could typically identify – if not by decoding the text directly than by recall – the meaning of the information recorded. In year three she used invented spelling as well as copied words directly from the book. She read them directly sounding out the words as needed. Thus, across all three years she engaged in competent and appropriate literate activity because she had assumed the requisite stance required that symbols on the paper were meaningful and useful for recording information to be shared with the class later. Making meaning from text was *the* primary goal that supports instruction in comprehension and decoding strategies. Regardless of whether kindergarten special education or fifth grade regular education students engaged in the activity, the practice was similar and demonstrates the flexibility of activities when the goal is focused upon participating in the process of constructing meaning rather than performing specific tasks and producing defined texts.

Expertise resides in the community: A central goal of the teachers was to create activities which en “able” students and minimize the effect of “disability” on participation (though *not* necessarily on performance or product). In this classroom, then, teachers create participation structures for activities in which students like Alita are “abled” rather than disabled. That is, difference in how Alita makes sense of and is able to employ literate tools is not a barrier to participation. Rather, all children participate in the entire practice. Activity norms that are established contribute to the viability of heterogeneity in this classroom because expertise for completing a task is distributed across the entire range of students and teachers. Therefore, difference in “ability” or skill does not render the individual unable to participate in functional ways in the classroom practice.

One of the noticeable features of Alita’s classroom behavior was her lack of engagement in the social interactions surrounding collective activity. It was what led me early into the school year, even before I had an adequate grasp of the classroom philosophy to feel that she wasn’t going to “make it” in the classroom. In fieldnotes and memos to myself I commented on Alita’s unwillingness or inability to focus for very long periods of time to the interaction and work of the group as on her passivity in partner and small group contexts. She seemed not only willing but to desire others to do the work of the activity participating minimally, grudgingly at times, or only when directed in specific ways.

The teachers believed that engagement was both initial evidence of development that could be subsequently observed in literate products as well as the necessary criteria for success in the classroom. “It’s when you listen to her [Alita’s] discourse” that you

really see she's grown" commented Traci at the beginning of Alita's third year. What she meant, in part, was that Alita had significantly transformed her role in the social activities of the classroom such that she often played a leadership role and could assume herself multiple aspects of the activity which before she had relied on others to perform. Kathy in an interview explained the distinction between literate knowledge as represented by student participation in an activity which he/she could not yet fully assume alone and literacy knowledge represented in a text product.

If you tried to teach a more traditional way, it would be harder for the special ed. kids to perform or look like they can participate...They couldn't do it and wouldn't be able to do it. They can work at their own level....ZPD [zone of proximal development]. Jesu tells where to put the period. Dino gave us a sentence, to the third graders who we had use all their details. Keisha wrote an introductory page. B.J. four sentences who put one detail from each category.

Kathy is referring to the two distinct roles that emergent readers and writers play in the whole class morning message as contrasted with the observed difference in the text products that they write individually in thematic unit. Her point is that while there are clear distinctions in the work they can do individually, there is a qualitative similarity in the organization, structure, and holistic nature of the literate activity in which they are engaged. Because in both morning message and thematic unit activities there are multiple participation spaces involving whole group, small group, individual activity, expertise is not required by the individual but rather can reside in the group.

Terri added to Kathy's explanation, "It allows us to know each individual. We know each individual's strengths. I couldn't say that five years ago." Later in a presentation to an undergraduate class of special education students, Kathy and Terri passed around the final text products of all the students from the recent thematic unit and

pointed out the developmental differences in the individually written reports. What they wanted the special education undergraduate to note was the similarity in structure of the texts and the ability of each of the students to organize and represent ideas in accordance with a scientific hierarchical text structure because individual writing occurred within the context of collective activity. There is a way for each student to participate; there were multiple resources available to simplify the specific literate task in which one student engaged.

Because of their emphasis on the group as a resource for individual participation, Kathy and Terri were continually monitoring Alita's behavior to ensure that her social interactions were in support of participation. They regrouped students frequently with this issue in mind. Every month or so, students would be rearranged into new table groups to alter the participation structures which emerged as particular arrangements of students could be better or less beneficial over time to those students with the least conventional literacy skills. Alita, in particular, often proved problematic in groups in her first year as she tended to let a dominant student(s) do all the work on a group project and withdraw physically and (possibly) cognitively from the literate activity. Kathy and Terri were constantly trying multiple arrangements to better maximize the peer interactions to support the engagement of all students in the task.

Alita

Alita had smooth, light black skin. African-American as nearly 90% of the students in the school were, she lacked the braids that characterized most of the other girls. Only once in three years was her short cropped hair braided with multicolored

beads fastened at the bottom; long, long braid attachments to her stubby hair were piled high on her head. During those few weeks she constantly touched her hair, played with the beads. She looked like a different child and, in fact, I did not recognize her when I first entered the room. She shrugged her shoulders when I asked who had done it and she said, "I don't know;" she was particularly non-communicative that day. The beads lasted for only about two weeks and then they were gone leaving the mop of black hair. "What happened?" I asked. She shrugged, making no comment. This was her second-grade year and such terse responses were characteristic of her interactions in the classroom. Unlike Year Three of this study (Alita's grade three) when she often became chatty, assertive, and domineering in groups, she tended to withdraw both physically and discursively in social interactions during her first two years.

Her clothing, while awkward, was unprepossessing and in this classroom didn't act as a distinguishing factor so much as an indicator to I, who was watching her closely, of perhaps less resources or attention to her physical appearance than that given to other students. A social worker report from this time in fact suggests that the mother was "overwhelmed" with the care of "so many kids" (there were seven). More suggestive of poverty or inattention was the repeated wearing of the same dirty pants and sweatshirt, often for several days in a row.

I never did learn much of her family directly. The focus of my study was on her *classroom* literacy behavior. It could be argued that sole attention to Alita's literacy practices only within school is insufficient for an exploration of the literacy development which Alita experienced over three years. Studies such as those done by Doug Hartman (1995), Mark Jury (1999), attend to the uses of language and literacy outside of school

and their function within the classroom. However, because this study attends to the meaning of (dis)ability within school classrooms and literacy development with respect to classroom practices, my observation of Alita over the three years of this study focused on her actions and practices within the classroom. At the end of year three I made several attempts to contact the mother in an effort to engage her in a similar viewing session as Alita. However, no phone existed, notes home with Alita were never answered and by spring of the year she was again homeless and seemed unable to be very explicit about where she lived. Some things about her family structure I gleaned from Alita herself, her cousin Daniel (also in the classroom and with whom she periodically lived), or from the teachers. Having run a big sister program that worked with elementary girls in a nearby neighborhood, I was hesitant to infer lack of care or attention from Alita's physical appearance – families on the economic margins of society struggled so hard, I had learned, just to make it through the daily requirements of life. Yet, Alita always struck me as a bit more on her own than other children her age in the classroom and I wondered about the nature of the attention and care she received at home.

The school was in a poor neighborhood and thus many of the children (approximately 81%) received free or reduced lunch. The school was also the site for the distribution of winter coats, boots, and gloves through a city and state funded social agency which supplied both basic personal needs such as food and clothing as well as medical care and referral's to other welfare services. The teachers also kept a ready supply of these in the classroom as students were liable to show up missing the very items they had been given the week before. Alita stood out to me not because she was poor – most of the students were – but because she somehow looked unkempt. By the

time she was in third grade she was taller than the other girls in the class and was beginning to show signs that she would physically mature early. In examining videos of her from across the three years, I continued to notice the ever-present bush of black hair that typically stuck stiffly up in random patterns on her head and the ill-fitting, often dirty and awkward matched clothing. She wasn't, however, a child that easily gathered pity from classmates or teachers. She kept to herself often, and would withdraw into silence, particularly when indignant or when she didn't wish to be involved in a particular class task. She also sucked her thumb quite often much to the chagrin of her teachers, one of whom kept telling her privately that she looked "foolish" and would get teased.

Participation – attendance – economics: The houses surrounding the school were large, old two story residences, and are predominantly now all rental units. Periodically there would be city efforts to condemn some of the houses and students and their families would be forced to find somewhere else to live. The summer, in fact, subsequent to the formal end of my study of Alita there were 18 homes condemned- all rental units - just two weeks prior to the beginning of the school year, Alisha's fourth grade year. This had enormous implications on the student population once school began, particularly since one house often held several families of kids. Some of the students straggled back into the school several months after the year had begun once a new place to live had been located. Alita was one of them. She had been out of school for nearly nine weeks of fourth grade before moving in with her aunt and re-enrolling in Westwood. Her mother, I was told, was in jail, for what neither I nor the teachers knew. It was at this time that I realized anew the role of home ownership on educational performance. It's hard to

acquire the discourse and participation practices central to classroom activities when you're moving in and out of different school communities.

Having a family member in the neighborhood, increased the likelihood that student would be able to remain in the school. Much of the mobility rate seemed to stem from instability in economic and interpersonal relationships. Many of the families were headed by a single mother and consistently seemed to teeter on the edge of joblessness. Students typically remained within the school district, but as families moved from one house to another (and often that meant residing with a relative or friend), they switched elementary schools. The greatest stability in school attendance for such students seemed to be if their mother entered the battered women's shelter that would ensure that each child was daily taken to his/her original school for attendance. Because there was a very high mobility rate in the school (60% according to district demographics), students would enter and leave quite frequently.

This was particularly problematic for carrying out a research study with a central quantitative component; it was from this larger study that my attention to Alita began. In my first year in the classroom, I had tested 30 students over the course of the fall. When it came time to do post-testing, however, there were only 12 students who had remained constant within the classroom over the year. One student in fact (Alita's cousin Daniel) had begun in the fall, moved, and returned in the spring. I did post-testing with him because his name was on the list of those with fall standardized test data. However, I was confused when I actually saw him. I'd been in the classroom twice a week for a year and didn't recognize him. Then I realized that he'd begun the school year in the fall, had moved to another school, and then had returned in the spring when he moved in with

Alita's mother, his own mother's twin sister. I found it difficult to keep track of the students in the larger study, never quite sure if the child I was focusing on at any particular moment had been there the week prior.

As a research project, we found this very difficult to deal with in terms of ensuring that our pre/posting database was sufficient to do statistical analysis; it interfered with the qualitative aspects of the study as well. Alita was one of the students I had begun attending to early on but so were several others. It was frustrating when some of our most "interesting" students moved schools. Occasionally, and much to our delight, they would move to a classroom at another school that was also part of our project. However, more frequently, they just dropped out of sight and a child leaving me with an incomplete data set.

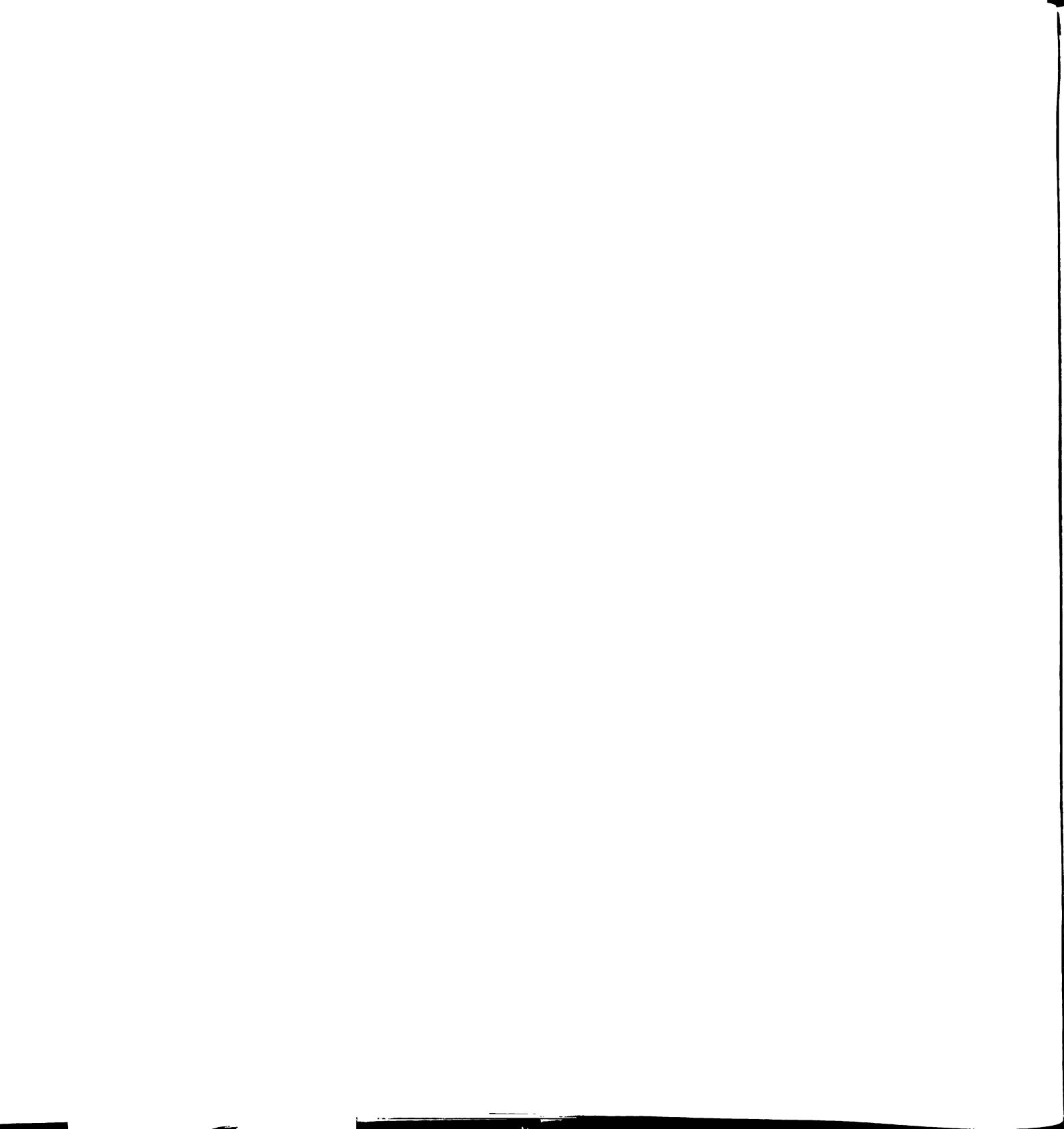
Family - school dynamics: Alita's own attendance was sporadic. For example, by February of her first grade year, she had already missed 28 half days of school and had been tardy 23 times (being tardy indicated an arrival to the classroom of greater than 15-20 minutes from the start when morning greetings and attendance were taken). The teachers blamed the mother for Alita's attendance problems. And district policies based upon state law supported this allocation of blame. State and law and district policy allowed parents to be prosecuted and even jailed for ongoing truancy on the part of the child. The policy wasn't enforced as strictly as Alita's teachers would have wished but many letters from the school principal did go home and were then included in Alita's ongoing school record. School absences as well were repeatedly cited in the school

psychological reports as well as social worker evaluations as contributing factors in Alita's school difficulties.

At a meeting with Alita's mother, the teachers brought up the issue of Alita's attendance. Alita's mother responded that she sent Alita off every morning at 7:30 (school began at 8:20). In recalling this conversation to me, Terri said that the mother asserted, "if Alita don't show up at the school, I don't know where she is. I send her off when I'm supposed to." It seemed unusual that Alita would be sent off an hour and a half before school began. However, as the school provided breakfast, for which Alita qualified, it wasn't unusual that she would arrive early to school. It was odd that it would take her that length of time to walk the few blocks to the school. The fact was that Alita rarely made it in time for breakfast, but typically arrived in class late and without having gone to the school breakfast. In trying to ferret out the cause of this disparity, Terri had spoken directly with Alita herself and then relayed it to me in a lunchtime conversation. "I told her [Alita] that her mother said she sent her off at 7:30 in the morning but since she didn't get in until 9 am, where was she. She just shrugged and said, 'I don't know,.'" Terri and Kathy's explanation was that the mother never sent Alita off at all. "She just said that. I bet she's asleep the whole time and it's Alita who wakes up and gets herself off. That's why she's late all the time." (Terri). Comments like these which occasionally emerged around Alita's inconsistent attendance and homework return rate suggested that the teachers seemed to feel that the mother wasn't interested, wasn't committed, wasn't able or willing to assume the kind of parenting responsibilities necessary to ensure Alita's success. The conflict of values between parents and teachers apparent in the talk of Kathy and Terri arose infrequently, but when it did so it arose around issues of parental

help with homework and ensuring that kids completed it, student attendance, or parental attendance at meetings.

Parental involvement & economic instability. The school district was constantly attempting to standardize the curriculum in order to address the high student mobility. Yet, I also found that parents (typically mothers) often went to extraordinary efforts to provide this consistency in their children's education. Cordita, a mentally impaired student, lived predominantly with her grandmother during the week so she could stay in Kathy and Terri's classroom . After spending three years in their classroom, she was to have graduated from their multi-age room and passed to another teacher. The mother decided at that point to enroll her in the school near her house. However, there she was placed in what was called the "center" program where she spent time coloring letters, working on handwriting, and filling in number lines. Since she had been writing stories and science reports the previous years in Kathy and Terri's classroom, both Cordita and her mother were unhappy with her experience. She was brought back to stay with her grandmother, enrolled again at Westwood and became a part of a regular education classroom with resource room support. In another case, a mother was so committed to keeping her kids together in the school and remaining with Kathy and Terri in particular that she continued with the father of her youngest child even after the man had brought his new girlfriend into the house. She shared the story with Kathy and Terri rather helplessly, explaining that while she found the situation very difficult, she didn't have a place to move to and was hesitant to take the children out of their present school. She was choosing to remain, at least for the time, in what was an extremely emotionally



taxing situation because of her desire to maintain as much educational and economic stability for her children as possible.

Alita's mobility. Alita's family was evicted in the spring of her third grade year; they moved to live with family on the other side of town. However, Alita continued to attend Westwood by catching a city bus, transferring once and then walking several blocks to the school. She rode the bus with her middle school sister who continued on when Alita completed the trip to school by walking several blocks from the bus stop. This often entailed an hour or more of travel. Given the sporadic, ill functioning city bus system, it would have been a very, very early bus (between 6:30 and 7 am) she would need to take in order to arrive at school close to its start. Rarely did she make this bus and had to, then, take a later bus which meant she didn't arrive to the school until around 10 am. The teachers talked with her about finding an alternative bus or way to the school, however, the public transportation system isn't an effective way to maneuver this city from most regions. The school year was close to ending and the teachers decided not to make an issue out of it. I, however, was struck anew by the effort and commitment required by many of the students and their families to actually make it in for the school day. Despite the difficulty families seemed to face, there was a commitment to education that was measured by the mere presence of kids in the classroom. As a third grade student, a great deal of individual initiative was required by Alita even to be in school during this time. Economic difficulties, which forced Alita out of the home near her school, directly impacted her participation in classroom activities. She often simply wasn't there.

Extended families: Daniel, Alita's cousin thought he might grow up to work at "Burger King like my Dad" or maybe at Arby's like his mother. A boy sitting next to him chimed in that he wanted to work at the car wash place like his Dad. Paying rent and remaining in a house near the neighborhood was contingent upon successive low paying, part-time jobs. The existence of extended families, however, within the community and school worked to counter the housing instability faced by individuals who were dependent often on low paying, non-skilled jobs. Many, many of the students were related to each other. Alita and her cousin, Daniel, regularly lived with each other. I never fully understood the economic or housing factors that played into the decisions at specific points but periodically Daniel would be living with Alita and her mother or Alita would be living with Daniel and his family. The interrelationships within the classroom often carried into academic activities as well such as in morning message when students would clarify comments for each other based upon shared knowledge.

An example of this occurred during Alita's morning message when she shared about going to the park with her aunt and cousins. When questioned by the students about the order of the events and several of the activities that were to take place, it was Daniel (one of the cousins identified in the story) who clarified the text for her. It was, in fact, rather common for students to extend or answer questions in morning message texts that dealt with knowledge that was shared between students as a consequence of familial relationships and shared housing arrangements.

School History

In this section I present the reports, letters, anecdotes about Alita that are contained in her official school record. What is significant about this information is that it indicates that her first experiences with schooling was characterized by difficulty, struggle, and efforts to label Alita. From a very young age, Alita's interactions with school have been perceived as problematic. What is particularly important is the recognition that from her first experience in school, Alita wasn't "making" it. This, of course, can substantiate a claim that Alita in fact did possess real constitutional learning difficulties which required specialized educational programs. It also, however, speaks to how she was positioned in school and the ways in which her primary discourse (of home and family) influenced the nature of the schools response. Therefore, in this section, I provide a brief overview Alita, as reflected in school records, to illustrate the ways in which the schools perspective positioned her with respect to academic and literate participation.

School records about Alita's development begin at her birth in a city hospital. Because her family was receiving state financial assistance and social services (including monthly checks, food stamps, rental assistance, and for the father, alcohol rehabilitation and counseling service, as well as job training for both the mother and father) there were a wide range of state, local community and private charitable organizations involved with the family. The general nature of this involvement is chronicled in the social worker reports that constitute a large portion of Alita's school records. From there I learned that the mother did not graduate from high school, the father had taken some courses at a local community college but prior to Alita's birth was in an alcohol rehabilitation clinic,

the fathers employment record was described as “sporadic”, the parents were married and had three other children prior to the birth of Alita.

The reports also indicate information, perceived by the author of the report at least, to have significance to understanding and situating Alita’s school difficulties (such as the fact that Alita’s mother had complications during the third trimester of her pregnancy, was confined to bed rest and then hospitalized). When she was born, the issues of import to the social worker recording and compiling the information was that Alita was of “normal weight” and “responded normally”. The formal report contained information about Alita’s potty training (“delayed”), her dislike of particular foods (“not liking blueberries, cream cheese, and kiwi) as well as the social workers presentation of how Alita’s mother described her: “picky eater”, “moody” “stubborn”, “fights all the time”, “cries a lot” and that “the mom reports that she has temper tantrums that last 30 minutes or more.”

The social worker’s report said that Alita lived with her parents and her three siblings. Her mother was 27 years old and had attended regular education public school instruction through 11th grade. Her father was 30 and had graduated from high school and attended some community college. He was currently in treatment for alcoholism and depression. Alita’s mother did volunteer at Head Start as the program urges, but her father was unemployed and at this point the mother had no job herself. All three of her siblings (a brother 11 and two sisters, 9 and 11) received Chapter One services in reading, said the report. The mother was evidently quite young when her first child was born (16 years old) although no mention is made in the reports of the educational and personal difficulties the parents themselves may have experienced. It report did note, however,

that the youngest of Alita's older sisters "has three kidneys and receiving on-going medical attention to monitor her condition" as if that fact illuminated some important aspect of Alita's own educational development.

The tone and style of the report reflects a dispassionate, clinical, professionally compiled portrayal. Yet, by the selective use of quotes, the narrow range of topics discussed (economic and emotionally distressed aspects of the family), what appears implicit in the "re"-presentation of Alita in the various social workers reports that followed, is a characterization of parents with substantive personal problems, a mother with poor parenting skills, siblings who fight excessively with a clear physical component, and a little girl who is troubled in the social interactions in her home.

Perhaps in part because the family continued to receive services and formal monitoring, Alita was identified as Preprimary Impaired (PPI) prior to entering Head Start in the city elementary school near where she lived. Records indicate that it was the Head start teachers who formally made the request for her testing in the spring prior her pre-school year, during the open registration period. She qualified for pullout services for speech and language impairment the following year. She was tested again in May at the end of her year in PPI was subsequently disqualified from receiving any additional services. The teachers recommended that she be passed into a regular education kindergarten classroom.

While in pre-school, she was absent nearly as often as present with 86 absences and 94 days present. Her absenteeism was noted even then as problematic. Although the teachers indicated Alita was "pleasant", they wrote notes home expressing concern about Alita's continued absences and then filed copies of them in her school records.

It was apparently during the pre-school year that Alita's parents divorced, because during her kindergarten year, Alita's teacher records the presence of a step-father and three additional step-children in the family. According to Alita, her father maintained fairly regular and consistent contact with she and her siblings. Spending the weekend, where he lived with his mother (Alita's grandmother) was a recurring theme in her writing or "news" that she shared with the class. A great many of her independent writings, especially during her third grade year, deal with anticipated or past events with her father.

Alita was absent nearly fifty percent of her kindergarten year, and the teacher noted in the school records that the mother appeared to be 'extremely stressed' through taking care of seven children (four of her own and three step-children) and had given this reason for her inability to attend the fall or spring parent-teacher conferences. On the kindergarten report cards that were sent home, signed and returned, the teacher noticed both affective dimensions of Alita's interaction in the classroom as well as provided vague directives on what the mother should do with Alita to help with school performance. For example, in November the teacher noted that she "needs extra help at home and school" then in January "Please use materials provided each day. Alita needs practice to build her confidence. Alita needs to be in school on time each day. She is missing directions a great deal of learning;" and then again in June "Alita is struggling to learn letters. Use summer games to help her gain confidence." Edwards (in press) has noted the prevalence, especially among white teachers working with poor, minority families, for teachers to provide directives to parents about homework and school work assistance, without providing the support (e.g. coaching, modeling, resources) parents

may need. What is clear from the records is a disjuncture between the explicit (e.g. attendance) and implied (e.g. economic stability and good parenting skills) expectations that the school holds for families and the realities of Alita's home life.

Alita's report cards from this year indicate that her performance was perceived to be "at or near grade level" in all areas except in those associated with "language skills and communication". For example, while she began the year unable to re-tell a story, she had "mastered" that by spring. However, she was not able to "construct and tell her own story" at year-end or "categorize items," prompting the teacher to recommend the need for specialized assistance in the area of speech. Alita, once again, underwent special education testing and evaluation in the spring of her kindergarten year. The teacher reported that Alita was unable to write her name and was unable to write any letters or numerals. She noted that Alita was behind in her general development. Her kindergarten wrote that Alita was struggling to learn her letters and had made few gains during the course of the year. The picture painted in the teachers records is of a student who was quiet (the teacher referred to her as "shy" and as "easily embarrassed"), didn't speak in complete sentences, and had difficulty engaging in the kinds of speech and language practices (e.g. making up a story) characteristic of school based literacy practice.

According to the psychologist's subsequent report, the teacher was particularly concerned that Alita was "displaying difficulties with articulation in the classroom." And that she "writes [her] name backward. Can not write letters or numbers. Appears to be extremely behind peers in cognitive development." His report includes information that appears to be taken verbatim without citation, however, from the earlier social work reports regarding Alita's potty training, birth, eating preferences (e.g. the same phrase

about “not liking blueberries, cream cheese, and kiwi” appears without quotation marks and presented as noteworthy despite the obvious uniqueness of such foods for young children), as well as additional direct quotes from an interview with the mother characterizing Alita’s interactions with her siblings (“they fight all the time”).

The school psychologist also notes that the mother was working and had remarried and that the home living arrangements included three half siblings, three biological siblings, a maternal grandmother, aunt (mothers’ twin) and her own two children. The same psychologist later added a section detailing a phone conversation via the phone with the mother that indicates that “She [the mother] believes that Alita’s educational needs can not be met in her current school setting and plans to enroll her back in a public elementary school where more service is available to her on a daily basis.....she [the mother] describes Alita’s home behaviors as ‘stubborn, mouthy and with emotional problems in the home setting.’ She minds her father better than her mother, aunt or grandmother. She is picky with food.”

Alita was qualified in May of her kindergarten year as *learning disabled* (LD) as well as “speech and learning impaired for articulation”. The articulation goals identified included producing the following phonemes (s, z, th, sh, v) and it was noted that she had distortions of /r/ and /l/. Here it needs to be restated: Alita is African-American. The characteristic speech patterns which I observed her to use reflect the syntactical and grammatical features of the dialect of Black English as delineated by linguists and scholars (e.g. Smitherman, 1993). No where in these reports or records, however, is there a discussion of the role of the linguistic patterns of Alita’s home and culture in shaping her ability to construct narratives or pronounce phonemes. In fact the concluding

sentence in the psychologist reports, confirms the validity of the LD label by virtue of the lack of mediating cultural, economic, or home environmental factors in accordance with state and federal laws governing the appellation of the learning disabled category.

Clearly Alita comes from what might be referred to as a “distressed family” where economic difficulties are compounded by marital instability and subsequent family change, personal stress on the part of the parents, and from the perspective at least of the authors of the school reports, an implicit portrait of family chaos. Attendance in school is clearly identified in the report by both her kindergarten and Head Start teachers as of major concern. However, it’s not discussed in the social workers’ or school psychologist’s reports as a factor contributing to her speech and language impairment or academic difficulties. Rather it seems to be presented as an indication of the lack of support at home for school. There is no discussion of how Alita’s literacy performance is affected by the social organization and cultural patterns of either home or school. No recommendations are made for appropriate learning environments. Dialect issues, with respect to articulation issues or linguistic patterns of her written text, are ignored. This may in part be due to the stringent rules for qualifying for services. Under federal and state guidelines, home cultural and environmental factors can not be a cause of observed academic differences or the student will not qualify for the specialized services which are being sought (Johnston, 1985). What is evident is that the records of Alita’s interaction with school prior to the start of this study indicate a history of difficulty with meeting the expectations for performance, participation, and personal affect that the school assumes. When entering Kathy and Terri’s classroom, the behaviors and attitudes that Alita demonstrates, particularly in year one should be framed with this history in mind. What

will become significant is analyzing the ways in which the curriculum in Kathy and Terri's room interprets and responds to Alita's participation in the classroom activities as it is mediated by her cultural and family background and academic history.

Discussion: Macro-level Influences on Micro-level Participatory Opportunities

There are several themes that emerge from this analysis of Alita's school records and reports prior to entering the focal classroom that become significant in analyzing is characterized by: (a) Engagement and participation: Participation in school based literacy practices has already proved problematic for Alita given the fact that she isn't present for half the days of school. Additionally, descriptions of her in the reports as 'shy, withdrawn, unhappy' are used to substantiate an apparent lack of social engagement in the classroom culture; (b) Institutional resources: In the context of her pre-school and kindergarten year, resources is associated with the nature of the instructional context and experiences which were provided to Alita and the opportunities for participating in the curriculum of school which were delimited by the perception of her needs and abilities. Alita's identification as learning disabled is what led to her subsequent placement in the inclusion classroom that was being studied. The multi-age classroom that Alita would enter in first grade contained students who were k-2 special education and 1-2 regular education. Her identification also eliminated, as mentioned, from participation in Reading Recovery. Her difficulties in kindergarten and the perception by the mother that the charter school couldn't adequately meet her needs, is what led to the move back to a public school setting where all day special education services were available. (c) Race, Class, and Economics - and particularly how they appear or do not appear in an

explanatory role when describing Alita's literacy development are significant. In particular the lack of discussion about the role of cultural and linguistic patterns on her performance is noticeable given it's discussion in the reports during year 3 which led to her subsequent disqualification from speech services despite the presence of speech therapists reports which indicate continued difficulties in the articulation of certain phonetic sounds and patterns. It was at this time (end of her third grade year), however, that the decision was made at the central special education office to change Alita's identification label from learning disabled (LD) to educably mentally impaired (EMI). Her verbal skills which had previously described as a "deficit" and "weakness" suddenly were presented in this report as "a strength." The analysis of Alita's speech as a facet of her cultural and ethnic identity thus re-positioned her with respect to resources offered and the interpretation of her abilities. Additionally, the economic status of the family plays a little mentioned but pervasive role throughout the three years of the study in shaping the literate activities and opportunities provided Alita.

Similarly, analysis of the features of the institutional culture of school and the characteristic features of the neighborhood community reveal significant ways in which the macro-level features of the community influence Alita's participation in classroom literacy activities. The school was in a poor neighborhood; the district constantly dealt with under-funding. Families in the community struggled with economic survival while simultaneously coping with the multiple associated stresses: low education, high crime neighborhoods, housing instability, family break-up. These factors influenced the nature of the sociocultural community and the ways in which the school as an institution interacted with Alita.

First, fragmentation of the staff influenced the opportunities available to Alita and the nature of classroom instruction afforded to her. Because Kathy and Terri had little respect for their colleagues they were very concerned about passing along those students who were most at-risk. Although, technically, Alita should have been moved into another classroom during her third grade year (since Kathy and Terri's room was only for K-2 special education students) they sought and received permission to keep her in their room another year. They believed they could better support her literacy development than any of their colleagues. Therefore, Alita received an additional year of apprenticeship in the literate activities of the classroom. Each spring, Kathy and Terri struggled to determine best placement for those students who were being passed into the upper elementary special education system. The options were for either a complete pullout model of special education services by a teacher who, according to Terri, "does nothing but worksheets all day long. The districts been trying to get rid of him for ages" and a resource room teacher who worked with two regular education teachers who preferred not to have special education students in their classroom at all. Because Kathy and Terri felt that Alita was at a pivotal point in her literacy development, having developed complex discourse practices and their accompanying cognitive routines, they choose to keep her in their room for a third year. The professional relationships in the school, then, directly affected the nature of Alita's instructional placement.

Second, the ways in which resources were allocated influenced the nature of literacy support she received. The multi-age inclusion setting was the only instructional option for her in this school. It was also the only literacy support available for her as a special education student. For students with as severe difficulties in reading as Alita

exhibited in first grade, reading recovery was provided. However, because she had a special education label, she was precluded for the one-on-one, daily reading intervention provided to other students with similar literacy profiles. Therefore, although she was able to become part of the inclusion community in Kathy and Terri's classroom, she never received the kind of intensive, individual assistance available to non-labeled students.

The fact that she spent her entire educational experience, as a special education student, in the multi-age classroom meant that she was never separately identified from other students on the basis of her disability. She was not pulled out for resource room services. Her literacy skills, while not conforming to norms for her age, were nonetheless perceived as within the range of competent literacy performances in the K-3 classroom. Kathy and Terri had found that when special education students left their classroom, they were in fact, often significantly disturbed and upset to find out that they were positioned differently than the rest of the peers. More than once, special education students, who had left their class approached them in the hall and asked to return. More than one, as well, of the special education students had been confused about the nature and meaning of their identification as a "special education" student and the resource room teacher in the upper elementary level had struggle to explain the meaning of the label to students who had experienced great support and competence in Kathy and Terri's multi-age, inclusion room.

Kathy and Terri's perception that they were in conflict with their colleagues, their sense of professional isolation, and their sense that they had to constantly fight to preserve their program, made them very concerned about the extent to which "their"

students measured up on the state and district tests in the upper elementary grades. Terri in particular was very concerned about criticism that might arise should their students be ill equipped to perform in the more traditionally structured instructional and assessment contexts in the upper elementary grades. Periodically Terri would bring up the concern about whether they were really doing their students any good because when they left the class they would be in classrooms with worksheets and test questions. Karen said but you have to look at what they have learned. Yes, this is better instruction for them *now*. Look at what they are learning. This concern, in part, seemed to contribute to Kathy and Terri's unwillingness to fight the change in Alita's label from learning disabled to educably mentally impaired. They recognized that when she went into the upper grades she would have very little support and that the political tenor was changing, reducing or eliminating entirely exclusions and modifications on assessments for students with LD. Students, however, who were educably mentally impaired were guaranteed altered performance and assessment expectations.

Finally, there were three ways in which the character of Alita's family and background directly influenced her literate participation in the activities of the classroom. First, extended family networks and social relationships influenced the content of her written work and the character of her reading during partnered activities. In morning message activities or writing workshop, the content of her text was often strongly influenced by her classmates who had familiarity with her family life outside of school. Because such writing was autobiographical in character, these students asked questions, made suggestions, or gave instructions that directly impacted the content of the text itself (including the organization as well as information included). They corrected, clarified,

extended, or added to her written text in ways that required a personal knowledge of Alita herself. During activities such as reading workshop, or “free” choice reading times in the classroom, Alita often partnered herself with a relative, which tended to increase on-task behavior through reducing social conflict. Students who were relatives or close friends outside had established interaction norms which were a particular resource in this classroom where social interactions supported cognitive activity. More of her time was then spent directly on the reading task itself.

Attendance. I’ve said quite a bit about it already. But it’s important to emphasize that Alita’s daily participation in the literate routines of the classroom was highly dependent upon her ability to actually be in school. Given the precarious nature of her housing arrangements, the fact that she had extended family in the community acted to mediate the instability and ensure greater participation in the classroom events.

An important theme of this chapter was the ways in which characteristic features of the classroom community created parameters that influenced how Alita participated in literacy routines and the meanings associated with her performance. Turner (199x) argues that engagement is an important component of literacy development and that changes in students’ task engagement are indicative of learning. This perspective is consistent with the apprenticeship model in Kathy and Terri’s room where ability was a function of participation. As Rogoff (199x) notes (and was elaborated in Chapter One) learning is evidenced through changing participation. The central facet of the curriculum in this classroom involved an emphasis on individual participation in an activity that was organized at the level of the collective. Specific literacy objectives were framed within a pedagogical philosophy that viewed development as a result of acquiring new roles and

discourse practices when engaging in the social practices accompanying literate activities. Thus, the teachers beliefs and the enacted curriculum framed the ways in which Alita's own activity was interpreted and responded to which in turn influenced the subsequent changes in what and how Alita participated in literate practices.

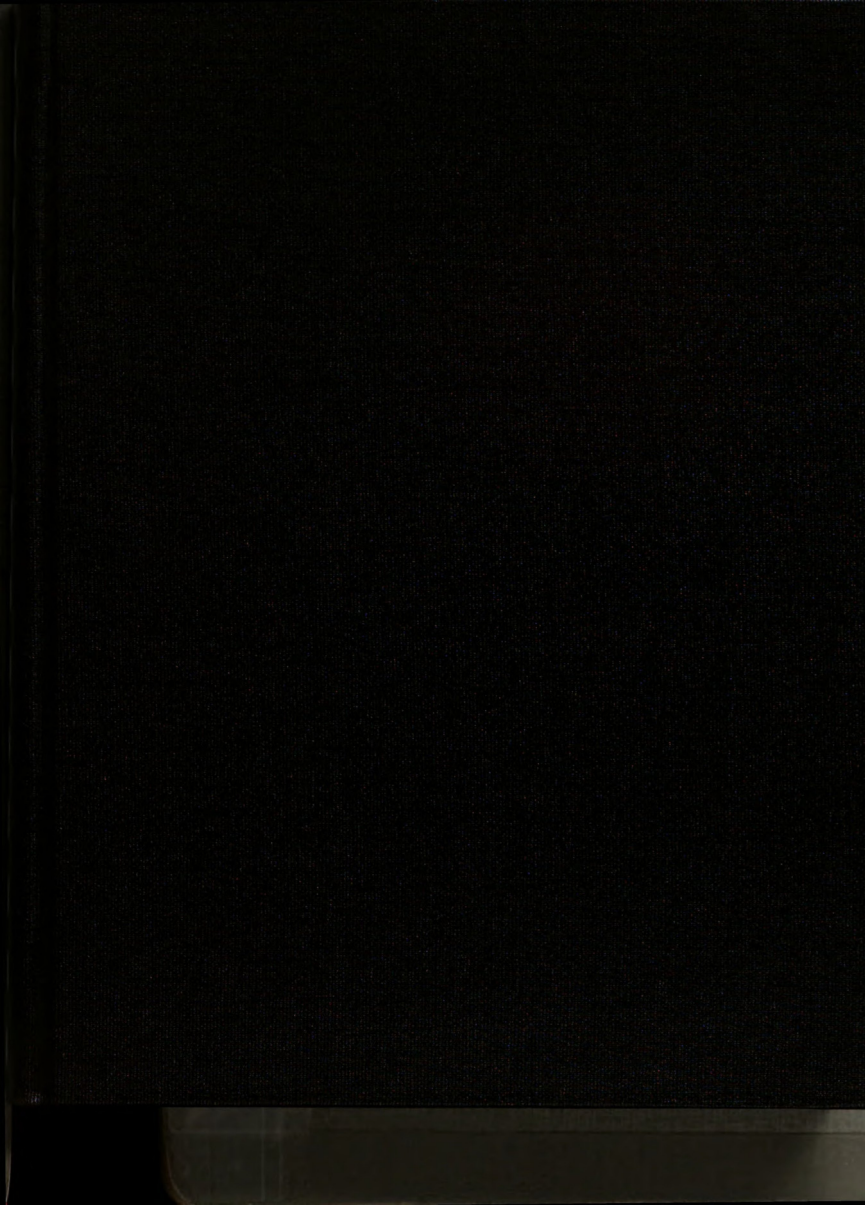
In the following chapter I examine Alita's participation in the specific activities of the classroom. The ways in which literacy task, discourse practices, and classroom norms position Alita with respect to literate tools and roles becomes significant in influencing the nature of her subsequent development. However, what needs not to be ignored is the important role that macro-level features of the sociocultural community play in defining the activity setting itself. In Chapter Five, I examine closely Alita's literate activities in daily curricular events to do so requires recognition that the classroom activity setting is nested in multiple sociocultural contexts with their own cultural practices and values. Analysis of development in the classroom, therefore, required explication of the macro-level features influencing ordinary, daily classroom routines.

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PARTICIPATION, LEARNING, AND A TRAJECTORY OF
DEVELOPMENT: A CASE OF LITERACY (DIS)ABILITY

VOLUME II

By

KaiLonnie Dunsmore

A DISSERTATION

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

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Teacher Education

2002

This chapter
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CHAPTER FIVE

ALITA'S DEVELOPMENT OVER TIME: DISCOURSE, TASKS & LEARNING

This chapter provides an analysis of Alita's literacy development with respect to her classroom discourse, the changing nature of the literacy tasks in which she engaged, and her learning, as indicated by changing participation in classroom activities. The chapter is divided into four parts: Part I provides an overview of the Alita's performance and participation over the three years; Part II analyzes Alita's apprenticeship in and through classroom discourse by examining transformation in her participation in book discussions in year one; Part III examines Alita's use of tools, norms, and roles in the morning message activity setting; Part IV examines the nature of joint engagement in thematic units and specifically the affordances of cultural tools in supporting individual literate practices.

As discussed in the methodological chapter earlier (chapter 2), an activity framework provides a way of conceptualizing and analyzing cognitive development as a function of sociocultural participation. In the previous chapter, the characteristic features of the subject-object-community relationship were discussed with respect to their impact on Alita's participation in the daily activities of the classroom. Here, I examine her actual literacy performance in the context of participating in the literate routines of the classroom. Her development is discussed as a function of classroom discourse, the literacy tasks in which she engages, and her ability to learn the roles and use the tools

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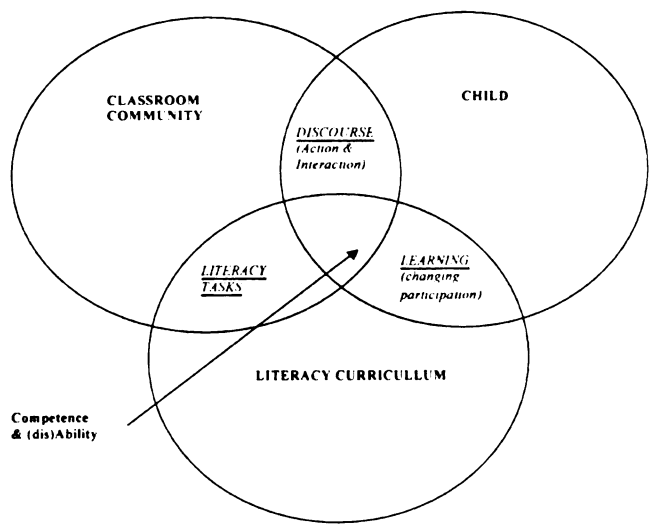
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associated with curricular activities (See figure 5.1 for the representation of the research findings presented and discussed in this chapter).

Figure 5.1



Alita in First Grade

Classroom context: By spring of Alita's first year in the classroom there were 24 students. Throughout the year the student population and demographics had changed somewhat as students moved or as new students were qualified for special education (such as in January when two kindergartners were identified as learning disabled, removed from their regular education classroom, and placed in this inclusion setting). Darren, the other LD kindergartner and also Alita's cousin, had started the school year in the classroom, left mid-fall and then returned in May. The one 3rd grader, who was in special education, was in the room only because Kathy and Terri had specially requested

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that he be allowed to remain; they felt that with an additional year in their classroom he would show strong literacy gains. Technically the classroom was for special education students in grades K-2 and regular education students in grades 2-3.

Table 5.2 gives the breakdown of the regular and special education student population. What is significant to attend to is the equivalent number of regular and special education students in the class at this point (12 of each). However, half of the regular education students were third graders, while half of the special education students were first and second. Thus, we see that expertise, defined on the basis of age or schooling, suggests that those student likely to be most competent in curricular activities were regular education third graders and those with least were special education first and second graders. Yet, as mentioned earlier, it was the special education students who generally had the greatest amount of experience in this classroom. Thus, expertise defined on the basis of experience in the activity itself would favor the special education students. This fact is important when interpreting the nature of Alita's participation in the classroom and the roles that she played in group interactions. What is important to understand when interpreting her literate activity, is that the great range of social and academic diversity in the classroom necessitated that teachers enact curricular practices that enable the participation and supported the development of each student. It is particularly important, then, when recognizing that teachers' viewed lack of participation as a behavioral choice rather than an ability problem. The range of diversity was perceived to be a strength in the classroom and provide all students with opportunities to maximize themselves socially and intellectually.

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Total Number
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Table 5.2

Total Number of Students in Spring by Grade	Regular Education	Learning Disabled	Emotionally Impaired	Educably Mentally Impaired
Kindergarten	0	3	0	0
First Grade	0	1 (Alita)	1	0
Second	6	4	1	1
Third	6	0	1	0

Total Number of students in May of Year 1998: 24 students.

Influence of institutional resources on learning, Year 1: Allocation and use of resources in the classroom (e.g. cognitive tools, literate materials, distribution of expertise) was clearly significant to Alita's reading and writing performance across her time in the classroom. Analysis of classroom and activity tools, artifacts, social resources, etc., constitutes the part three of this chapter. However, from a longitudinal perspective, the allocation of educational resources and materials at the school level (rather than those at the classroom or activity level) is the more significant determiner of the literate support provided her – particularly in first grade. In other words, the macro-level features of the sociocultural community, as described in chapter 4, were of great import for interpreting the literate opportunities and experiences afforded Alita in first grade.

Because she was identified as a special education student, Alita was not eligible for reading recovery. No students within the special education system qualified for reading recovery. Reading recovery, by design, explicitly excludes those students already formally identified as disabled because it is intended to be a relatively short term and intensive (approx. 6 months) daily, individualized reading remediation program.

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Therefore, students like Alita, who were early identified formally by the school as disabled in some way, were not eligible for consideration of these services. Unlike an elementary school nearby within the same district that refused to categorize students below second grade as learning disabled for fear of diagnosing “normal” developmental differences as abnormality, this school had no formal or informal stance about early identification. Generally, the practice that had evolved, was that in pre-school or kindergarten that students were identified and tested. Additionally, in this school, reading recovery had become a primary vehicle in first grade for referral students for special education testing. Students deemed “unsuccessful,” by the Reading Recovery teacher by Christmas were immediately referred for testing. Therefore, of the students in Kathy and Terri’s inclusion classroom, all of the students, except those who later moved into the classroom, had been identified as special education students by the end of their first grade year. Because Alita had qualified in kindergarten as learning disabled, she was not eligible for individualized reading support. There was no other system in place in the school for one-on-one instructional support in literacy despite the fact that was her primary area of identified need. Even though her reading profile alone should have provided her with access to this assistance, her label excluded her.

The inclusion model, while it provided the opportunity for greater support in participating in the overall curriculum, did not allow for any one-on-one assistance on a regular basis. During guided reading groups, Kathy worked with small numbers of students (often 3-4). However, no targeted assistance as reading recovery provides was possible.

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The alternative to inclusion is a pull-out resource room model. Two years prior to Alita's entrance into this class, special education in grades k-3 had been done on a pull-out model. At that time, Kathy worked with small groups of students throughout the day for one-two hours depending upon the level of service identified in their individual educational plans (IEP). She utilized a curricular and instructional model similar to that in place in this inclusion setting because she had participated on the research project designed for resources room teachers that was the precursor to the present project. The main difference was that the curricular activities that made up the entire day in the current setting occurred on a rotating basis throughout the week (e.g. morning message on Mondays and Wednesdays, thematic units on Tuesdays and Thursday, etc.). She perceived her role as a resource room teacher as providing additional opportunities to engage in literacy practice in order to provide support in the acquisition of the cognitive roles associated with higher order literacy task as well as skill instruction within the context of meaningful activities. Because students moved in and out frequently throughout the day based upon the schedule of the classroom teacher, it wasn't possible to individualize literacy instructional support or provide ability grouped instruction in that model either. Definitely, Kathy explained, no sustained or coherent program of individualized literacy instruction could be provided.

As a special education teacher, Kathy, in part, viewed her job as providing the kinds of educational experiences which would strategically and intentionally apprentice students in the higher order thinking skills which they both lacked as well as which they were often denied access to because of classroom instructional practices which required specific levels of expertise demonstrated prior to engagement. Terri's desire to develop

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an inclusion classroom with Kathy stemmed to a great degree from her observation over time of Kathy's classroom and her effectiveness with her students. Terri felt as if a curriculum that helped students who were already below that of other students could only accelerate further regular education students.

Alita received far more targeted assistance in the current institutional arrangement of special education support than had been possible prior to the decision by Kathy and Terri to team teach and develop an inclusion classroom. Kathy felt quite strongly that this inclusion model was far superior in supporting students cognitive development than anything she had been able to provide in the resource room model where students moved into and out of the classroom at varied times and schedules according to the homeroom teachers' schedule and preference. While the district special education director and the principal were supportive of Kathy and Terri's instructional model, there had been no requirement that inclusion take place as a school or district policy. The two special education teachers at the upper elementary level were given individual autonomy about the educational context and instructional framework within which student's IEP would be met. One of these teachers ran a pull-out, resource room model by choice. The other did so in her first year in the classroom (Alita's first grade year), then moved to an inclusion model with a fourth grade teacher who volunteered to team with her (year two of the study), which was deemed by at least the regular education teacher as unsuccessful and was changed back to a pull-out model in year three of the study.

What this suggests, then, is that the nature of the instructional support available to Alita was both highly idiosyncratic and inattentive to her literacy needs. That is, regardless of how effective inclusion versus resource room instruction was for special

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education students generally or in addressing the specific needs of individuals, decisions about the nature of the pedagogical environment provided special education students was largely based upon the preferences of individual teachers. Additionally, the program in place for providing individual reading instruction to at-risk students specifically excluded Alita on the basis of her identification as learning disabled. Therefore, a regular education student qualified for the kind of literacy assistance that Alita, on the basis of her special education referral, needed. The ways in which pedagogical resources were allocated in this school lacked the kind of discrimination that the special education system purported to provide.

Language and culture: In March of year one, the speech therapist composed her end of the year report for Alita's permanent file. She noted that in her spring testing, "Grammatical errors were noted during the testing. She [Alita] stated, "It got a chain" rather than "It has a chain," and had deletion of the verbs is and are. She state "Duke" in there, "He in the tub," and "they laughin." She also displayed deletion of possessiveness, as in "My brother dog." She added as well that "Alita needs frequent reminders to keep her hands away from her mouth and/or her fingers out of her mouth. She also needs reminders to speak clearly without mumbling. She has worked on the phonemes /sh/, /th/, /v/ and /r/. The phonemes /s/, /z/ and /l/ were not found to be in error except when involved as occasional deletion of final consonants."

What I found most noticeable is the lack of mention of dialect issues surrounding her language practices. The observed deletion of verbs and truncation of words to eliminate final consonants are noticeable in the majority of the African-American

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students in the classroom. Mehans' (1993) claim that it is those students who are noticed, they're behaviors start to stand out. When asked by Kathy to evaluate the impact of Alita's "language difficulties" on Alita's performance in the classroom, Kathy claimed that there was "no impact" on her classroom performance of any identified articulation difficulties but a "mild impact" in terms of her language and communicative. What Kathy explained to me is that because the classroom is "language based", Alita's unwillingness (or inability) to engage in conversation had an effect on her participation in the discourse of the classroom and thus in Kathy's view any subsequent learning. However, Kathy had noticed in book discussion that she was appropriating the discursive structure of the curricular practices and felt quite confident that as time, her growing facility in the discourse practices would enable her to take fuller advantage over time.

On the form given to Kathy by the speech therapist to fill out, she noted that Alita did not speak in complete sentences, express herself effectively in organized, sequential thoughts, had below age level vocabulary, wasn't able to listen to a story and interpret the meaning, her reading comprehension was below grade level as was her ability to comprehend math/science/social studies concepts, she wasn't able to problem solve, or sequence pictures, and wasn't able to understand "adult language (humor, proverbs, idioms.)"

In the classroom, Alita's speech, as noted earlier, reflected the characteristic patterns of Black English. Teachers seemed to pay little attention to this except during morning message. As will be discussed more thoroughly in the part II of this chapter dealing with the morning message routine, the teachers explicitly attempted to standardize children's colloquial speech during the construction of whole class narratives.

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Alita's language in particular was significantly altered at such times. For Alita this typically occurred in the truncation of verb endings (*goin'* for *going*) or the altered use of the verb *to be* characteristic of Black English. The teacher facilitating the morning message would write the sentence down as transcribed but then read it back to the students. Someone in the group, perhaps on hearing the language emerge this time from the mouth of the white, middle-class teacher, would indicate by a thumbs down that the text was incorrect and then make the changes necessary to change Alita's words into standard English. The teachers almost unconsciously altered Alita's written texts in writing workshop and thematic units when sitting with her in the teacher-student writing conference. When asked, they talked to me about such changes being about making the text grammatically "right" and never discussed the cultural implications of such changes.

By second grade, Alita was more conscious about the language patterns that characterized morning message narratives. She begins to alter her own text when narrating to the teacher and the language reflected in her writing is often not the same as used in her speaking. For example, when dictating her personal experience in a February whole class morning message she tells of her cousin's birthday party. Very slowly, very cautiously, as if thinking aloud and evaluating the text while speaking it she narrates the next sentence, "I..am...helping..her [long pause] open her presents." Her use of the standard form of "to be" stands at odds with her spoken speech. For example, several minutes later, after questions from the audience, Alita turns to the teacher in an effort to explain – to clarify her intention – NOT to dictate a sentence and says, "Alita and David is helpin' her." Noticeably, even after the teacher repeats this sentence in her own voice.

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It seems significant that Alita was receiving speech services for "articulation" issues that never were perceived to affect her participation. Her use of dialectal English, while not precluding her from literate participation, was a place in which the teachers worked to alter the relationship between Alita's spoken language and her written one. Given the fact that the majority of students in the class did use Black English to some degree, the teachers' interactions around Alita's written text were by no means unusual. However, her language was more significantly representative of the dialectal features of Black English than most of the other students in the class. Yet, it was when considering her ability to use language to engage in the social norms surrounding academic activities that the teachers had concern for Alita, not the form that her language took. In other words, the speech teacher was concerned about the sound of her speech and the syntactical structure of her sentences. The teachers were concerned about her willingness and ability to talk and interact.

The speech teacher validated the provision of services to Alita on the basis of apparent articulation difficulties that, in the classroom, seemed to in fact be representative of variability in cultural language practices. In the classroom any real or perceived articulation difficulties had little or no direct bearing on Alita's participation. In the context of this language rich classroom, her difficulty in framing ideas and writing and communicating did not preclude her from participation in book discussion, thematic units, or whole class morning message activities either. It was, however, this aspect of language – the ability and willingness to use it to interact with her peers in curricular

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activities – that caused the teachers to intentionally provide linguistic tools to support her discursive participation in activities. What is particularly significant, then, is the fact that the remedial support she received from the speech teacher was oriented towards articulation while the support that the classroom teachers provided was for the purpose of interacting with students around texts.

Attendance – Year One: In section two I suggest that analyzing the data from year one, in light of three years of accumulated literacy performances and participation practices, suggests that during year one, her participation - as evidenced in physical and discursive activity; her speech, both oral and written, as well as her knowledge and use of literate conventions and text – can best be characterized by efforts to learn and use the language characteristic of the specific literate practices in the classroom. Learning to attend, of course, also refers to actual attendance. Once again, her records indicate concern by both her teachers as well as the school principal about her missed school. She was absent twenty-five and half days of school and was tardy 16 days. Essentially, she was absent five weeks of the school year and arrived late another two and half weeks. Being marked “tardy” meant that she entered the school after the teachers had finished taking attendance and sent the record to the office. This was typically 15-20 minutes into the school day. If she entered at any time during that, that merely marked her present. Arrival after the record was sent to the office required that go downstairs to the secretary to announce her arrival.

Reading and writing – Year 1: Her kindergarten teacher had been concerned that Alita didn’t know her letters, wrote her name backward, and seemed “less

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developmentally able” than the other students. In first grade, as one of the youngest students in this multi-age inclusion setting, Alita’s knowledge of letters and words, while less developed than some students, was developing and changing over the course of the year and didn’t, in fact, seem a significant barrier in terms of participation.

Reading: During reading time, Alita was grouped with Kathy who worked with the lower ability readers for the hour and half reading time. She had them in several flexibly arranged guided reading groups where they read leveled texts and worked on sound patterns. At least one day per week as well students did reading workshop where they sat and read, reread, and then shared with a partner and then the teacher, a book from their list they compiled. During reading centers they either worked on the computer, put a familiar poem together from word cards in an envelope, followed along with a book on tape in the listening center, or did a shared book reading.

Alita relied on her strengths in memorization to support her in reading workshop. Paired with other students, they would struggle through decoding the text initially, by typically relying heavily on picture cues and the repetitious patterns in the emergent reader books available to them. By rereading numerous times, she was able to develop the appropriate facility to go and “read” to the teacher. Her rereadings, however, showed little indication of the ability to chunk words into sounds and patterns, nor did it indicate understanding of sound-symbol relationship but rather focused entirely on ensuring the reading fit the picture. For example, in an early November reading workshop with her partner Chordita, a second grade educably mentally impaired student, Alita relied heavily on Chordita’s knowledge of the print to support her own. Alita attempted to fingerpoint the words but made halting jabs at the text. Her finger moved along the page but didn’t

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correspond with the words. Rather, she touches the page in short jumps as if mimicking fingerpointing but not yet recognizing the cognitive function it could serve in support of reading. It was Chordita or matched words and speech. The text was highly repetitive and pictures were closely aligned with text. However, despite the high number of readings (6 in 15 minutes), Alita still made the same error of “mis”-reading nouns when she read for the teacher –rooster became chicken, and dog became puppy – sensible and coherent miscues but another indication that the letters and sounds themselves were not yet a focus in her reading.

When reading the text to Kathy, Alita had to present her letter which was addressed to Kathy and was supposed to be about the book. Only the teacher’s name, spelled conventionally and copied from the form letter on the wall, was identifiable. When asked to read it, Alita said, “I forgot what it says.” Kathy asks her, “Did you write down some place here what part of the story you liked. You were supposed to write down something you liked in the story?” Alita looks at the page and then comments, “I like the part with the shark.” She seems to be inventing it as she talks making no effort to point to words on the page. When reading the text she follows the simplistic rhythm of the text but is not consistent in her recall.

Alita: Can you put a shark in a bag.

Kathy: Not a bag.

Alita: A sack [she turns the page]

Alita: Can you put a bear in a [pause] box [said unsteadily and then she looks up at Kathy who says nothing]

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Alita: Can you put a [Alita looks up at Kathy who just looks at her] a chicken in a hat. I mean a rooster in a hat [she looks again up at Kathy]

Alita: Can you put a pen in a pot.

In both her fall and spring individual rereading text, Alita showed up at the emergent level, not able to read or identify any of the words in the texts. She made little effort either time as well. Looking at the text, which was alone without pictures, she merely looked up at me, shrugged, “I don’t know,” then looked away disinterested. Comparison of her reading of texts to her writing of words in isolation and with her writing of texts, suggests that Alita relied heavily on sight words, knowledge of text structure and patterns, and memory when reading and writing. Even when in guided reading groups and working on sound patterns she seemed to rely on the characteristic features of the symbols rather than sound pattern chunks to identify and write words.

Knowledge of letters: In January of her first grade year Alita only recognized 17 of the 26 lowercase letters. The letters were presented to her in random order and for half of them she merely looked at the symbol and stated its name. However, for almost half that she identified correctly she used the alphabet chart on the wall to help her locate and identify the letter. She would visually follow the letters and then say the alphabet in order, stopping and then naming the corresponding letter when she came to it. For other letters, however, she merely said, “I don’t know” and skipped to the next. Several of those that she missed were physically similar (“j” for “i” and “u” for “y”). Three months later, in March, she knew all 26 lowercase letters but only recognized two words on the

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Dolt test at the pre-primer level (“a” and “I”) both of which were “letters”. Again in June, she identified 24 lowercase letters accurately confusing “x” with “z” and “u” with “v”. She did not, however, use the wall chart as an aid this time. Her use of environmental print when engaging in other classroom literacy routines had gradually increased over the course of the year. The teachers were constantly pointing to vocabulary walls, concept maps, charts of notes for thematic units, etc as scaffolds that students could individually appropriate to support their writing. Alita, however, needed hand-holding, literally, to use these. That is, a teacher would have to take her physically over to the wall and show her where in the rooms the literate cues were available for use and where on her paper they went. Looking at the alphabet chart above the wall in support her identification of letters was the only evidence that I had seen, thus far that year, that she could strategically and intentionally use environmental print resources.

In her texts, however, she used letters to “write”. Most of her stories in writing workshop were made up of pictures, with letters and miscellaneous, letter-like symbols randomly crossing the page.

Word consciousness: When given a text to read in a shared partner reading activity, Alita had begun to point to text as if following along with the word. However, she could not yet match word and speech. During one of the frequent re-readings in a morning message in January, Alita began to point with her finger as if following words with her eyes and finger along with the teacher. Kathy, noticed, and celebrated and highlighted her behavior to the class, “Nice rereading Alita, she’s using her finger to point to the words.” Kathy’s comment served to affirm Alita’s efforts to demonstrate

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word consciousness, as well as a reminder of the utility of this strategy to coordinate reading activities. It also served as an example, a model, of literate behavior that other students could and should continually make use of – with finger and eye. By the end of the year she was still writing in what typically appeared to be random letter strings. She would often begin a text with word consciousness, initial consonants and some sight words and then get lost in the text.

Letters, words, stories: When retelling the text to a teacher she would typically be able to remember (i.e. “read”) the start of her text and then trail off into a rambling narrative. Significantly, however, she did attempt to match the length of her retelling to the number of lines on her page. Unlike some students who developed elaborate stories that tended to go on and on despite the limited number of characters on the page, Alita seemed to know that her telling was supposed to coordinate with the text. Her memory was a strength in this respect and suggested that she was working to use her limited knowledge of sounds and letters to engage in this process of writing a story. Temporal sequencing was evident as well in this mid-year text (“I went out of town to see my cousin Lana. I went to see my granma and then I went back home.”) where she organizes the structure of her narrative based solely upon temporal sequencing.

Phonemic awareness: When spelling words in isolation, such as on spelling tests or in her guided reading group, she could demonstrate for short periods of time emergent understanding of phonological awareness. However, attention and interest played a strong role in her ability to attend to sounds when writing. For example, on her spelling

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On the Dolch high fr

tests, she would start out laboriously, stopping to think and write the words. She rarely, though, said the word to herself or appeared to be “chunking” the word to hear sounds. Again, it seemed that reliance on memory – knowledge of sight words – was the dominant strategy when encoding text. When the task became difficult or the words unfamiliar, she reverted to random letter strings. Yet, did so while retaining the behavioral features of the writing. That is, she would write, erase, then write another letter, appear to be thinking and write something else, then look with satisfaction at the text. All the while, however, the letters bore little if any correlation to the actual letter-sound relationships even when accounting for phonological development (e.g. counting “p” for “b” because both made in same place in mouth just one was voiced and the other unvoiced).

As an illustration: On a spelling test in March of that year (Figure 5.2), the words Alita wrote approximated accurate spelling. However, three months later when given the same words (FIGURE 5.3), she was very intent on engaging in the writing task but seemed more interest in forming the letters than in verifying the accuracy of the spelling. She quickly wrote letters, never said or chunked the words, but erased letters, wrote in others or sometimes more carefully rewrote the same letter, then would look at satisfaction at the word.

One month later, I sat with her and showed her lowercase letters of the alphabet. She identified 24 of 26 letters correctly missing the “z” which she called an “x” as well as the “q” which she called a “g”. Figure x is her spelling text from this time. The correct words are next to it. She uses a mixture of upper and lowercase letters but it’s legible. On the Dolch high frequency word list she recognized a few words on the Pre-Primer

test: "can", "the"

made no attempt

occasionally shak

Figure 5.2

Alia's Text:

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I N

CS *she erased A d*

NO

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test: “can”, “the” “I” “is” “red” “to” and then identified the word “look” as “book” She made no attempt to sound out words but sat in silence as I pointed words out, occasionally shaking her head.

Figure 5.2

Alita’s Text:

Words read to her:

RN	run
Cat	can
I N	on
CS <i>she erased A and put “C” in its place</i>	is
NO	not
Ne	me
BeR	big
O P	up
T	it
H	him

Alma's:

RcN

Kar

To

Is

No

MC

Bck

FCKMar

FKMa

He

CKlMeY

Mer *originally*
she wrote He
Im dad

Isha

Bac

She *(originally she*
wrote "Asin" then
erased writing
"she")

Rnc

In

The

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Figure 5.3 – June 1998

Alita's:

Read Words:

RtN	run
Kar	can
To	on
Is	is
No	not
MC	me
Bck	big
FCKMar	up
FKMa	it
He	him
CKIMeY	see
Mer <i>originally she wrote He</i>	got
Im dad	and
Isha	Look
Bac	but
She [<i>originally she wrote "Asin" then erased writing "she"</i>]	He
Rnc	get
In	in
The	The
Psto	jump

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Both Figure 5.2 and 5.3 show developing awareness of sound-symbol relationships. However, a quick comparison between the two would suggest that her spelling actually gets “worse” from March to June as seen on the test. However, both loss of interest in the task as well as her efforts to hear more of the letters could be implied. She seemed more conscious in the June test of words and number of sounds supposed to be represented so you see a slight reduction in the overall accuracy of her performance perhaps as her attention to sound and symbol becomes more complex. On the other hand, in the June test she also seemed to lose interest halfway through the process and seemed more intent on forming the letters and “playing” at spelling than in thinking through the sounds she heard. The speech teacher, as well, made it a point to comment on the difficulty with Alita had in engaging for long periods of time. She wrote that Alita difficulty with attending saying that she was “highly distractible”, had a “difficulty time staying focused on the task....She also had problems sitting still in her chair.”

We do see inconsistencies in her writing that provide emergent phonemic awareness. For example, notice “BCK” for “big” and “FKMa” for “it”. While “ck” and “g” have same phoneme (one voiced, the other unvoiced) and can thus be said to reflect a phonologically consistent pattern, the same could not be said of the next word. Since she is able to accurately write words with similar sounds (e.g. “is”), it suggests that her spelling is more correlated with the memorization of sight words than ability to encode and decode text.

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Writing. Unlike some of the other students, Alita rarely worked in with a partner in writing workshop, in part, perhaps, because sporadic attendance mediated against. It was generally the boys in the class, though, who tended to spontaneously begin partnering during writing workshop and produce long epics involving some sort of archetype hero or villain, often based either through characterization, title, or theme upon a comic book, cartoon, or previously read book (e.g. Ninja turtle TV episodes, or the GooseBumps series of books). While Alita's text rarely extended into a second day, in part because her highly irregular spelling (which often consistent of non-letter symbols) made rereading her text the next day to extend her narrative a difficult task. Alita, in particular, seemed very confident with the routine of this activity. While it often took her one week or more to decide to bring a text to completion she was consistent in her engagement in the task. She was publishing an equivalent number of texts to other students. Of the 21 students in the class in January (several original had moved by this time and others were newly arrived that semester): one student had published 4 texts; three had published 3 texts; 10 had published 2 texts; four had published 1 text. Alita had two published texts and thus was performing an average amount, despite the fact that she was one of the youngest in the class. One student had has yet to bring a text thus far into publication. Publication involved having a text peer edited, then revised, than teacher edited, then one of the teachers would sit with the student and type it up on the computer, print it out and the student would illustrate it, followed by a public reading of the text – author's chair – followed by questions or comments from the class to the author.

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Writing workshop had not started initially in the year as had morning message, book discussions, and thematic units. Slowly Kathy and Terri added activities, gradually adding more activities once students acquired the norms and routines associated with the others. For example, while students ended the year being able to rotate quite independently through seven possible centers, they initially began with one. The teachers did not believe that young children need a great many successive activities as a short attention spanned precluded any long-term engagement in any single activity. Rather they felt that consistency, maintenance of norms and routines was a central component of successful student engagement and learning. By January students were well accustomed to the routines of writing workshop, which lasted from 1-1 ½ hours, and the teachers commented to me at this time that students complained if they missed writing workshop. The students were disappointed if it was canceled for the day or if the time was shortened.

ALITA IN SECOND GRADE

Attendance. Year 2: She was absent twenty-four and half days and tardy 50 days. It was during this year that the teachers attempted in both January of the year and in March to make contact with the mother to discuss the number of days in which she was tardy to school. Prior to January it had been 18 days but from January to March it was 23 days tardy. A letter was sent home in February. It was a form letter with name of the student and number of days absent and tardy typed in and included a standard reminder of the importance of school, filled in number of absences, and warning that “Unless I see significant improvement in this attendance pattern, I will refer this matter

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to the attendance officer of the School District for Probate Court action.” The principal signed it. The district attendance policy made the news that year when they started a program where volunteer senior citizens were given cell phones to call to call an attendance officer when walking regular routes (malls, past video arcades, and other teen hangouts). However, teachers in the district with whom I typically interacted felt that parents were not held truly accountable. While legally the district could jail a parent who refused to enforce attendance, this was rarely done. Teachers generally felt that despite the rhetoric, little serious attention was either given to absenteeism or the high mobility rate in the district overall and in this school in general.

Engagement: Assessing her at the end of her second grade year, the child psychologist wrote that:

During the evaluation Alita was compliant, but had trouble attending closely and consistently to the various task given. It was difficult to know whether Alita’s difficulty in performing was a result of inability or reflected a lack of motivation. She had difficulty sustaining concentrating and attending to small visual details. She tended to provide quick answers and had great difficulty if extended thought as was required. On visual tasks, she had great difficulty recognizing differences between her reproduction of designs when given examples and difficulty reconstructing pictures form memory. During the vocabulary subtest on the Wechsler scale, it periodically appeared as if Alita stopped processing the questions given and, even when prodded for answers, either was unable to answer or took an extended period of time to answer. During the academic portion of the examination, Alita attempted to use her word attack skills, but her knowledge of word sounds and syllabication was very limited.

The teachers described Alita in the formal paperwork of school as “working” but no always “self-directed” or “able to make independent choices” in directing her activity. To me, Kathy and Terri described her as a student who they needed to were constantly monitor to remind her what task she should be engaged in or what step to complete next.

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In activities, she seemed to operate at the level of concrete, specified steps. Able to work effectively and with a greater concentration and purpose on the individual step but unable to understand the activity as a whole and thus self-direct herself to the next aspect of the activity. This was especially true of more individually oriented literacy tasks. For example, during writing workshop time she would be engrossed in a writing activity during the class period, but the next day during the class period typically start a new task and rarely bring to completion a “published” text. Publishing a text required taking a rough draft to a peer to get editing and revision feedback, making those changes, then going to a teacher to get feedback, then the teacher would sit with the student to take the text to a computer and type up a correctly spelled copy which the student would then edit and read to the class.

Writing, Year 2: A huge transformation in Alita’s writing occurs in late fall of her second grade year. In September and October her writing was almost incoherent and it was difficult to discern even if she was using merely random letter strings with an infrequent sight word interspersed or if she were attempting to use her developing knowledge of sound symbol relationships to write at least initial consonants. Notice here morning message from the first of October. There is little evidence of word consciousness and she intersperses capital letters with lower case. There is an apostrophe near where “Grandma’s” may fit suggesting that she’s attempting both to spell grandmother, as well as develop a coherent narrative that fits the characteristic features of this genre. That she was able to do a retelling shortly after completing the text and begin with a phrase that approximated the letters she wrote initially suggests that she is able to

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develop a coherent narrative and begin to match it to the text on the page. Her fall text is event oriented but there is limited connection between the four thoughts expressed and she seems unable to sustain the development and description of one complete event.

At the end of January, however, her text is remarkably different. She chooses an event, appropriately important as the narrative genre as defined within this class demands [put in the number of kids texts and what they are about], has word consciousness and shows greater consistency in her use of lower and upper case letters (capitalizing the start of each line as well as “baby doll”, “dad” as well as her name). No end punctuation still. However, she now has developed a text structure that closely approximates that of the class morning news with a title, topic sentence, descriptive details in the middle, and a closing sentence. In addition she is following the procedures for the practice illustrating evidence of the close relationship between the acquisition of social interaction norms and cognitive routines associated with the practice. She initially began composing her text by writing the question words on the left hand side of the text which she boxed in as the teachers do when writing. She came back and added the title at the end as well as went through and crossed out each of the question words at the end as if she’d reread the text and assured herself that each was addressed. Additionally she did some minor editing – writing in “going” as well as well as transforming “I” to “Alita”.

Two months later she had incorporated another aspect of the written practice of circling the title selected and drawing an arrow to where it should go and then doing to the same to the conclusion. In the case of the conclusion she does not circle the complete text but rather the last few words and draws an arrow to a space above. She seems not to understand the meaning behind the procedure but has incorporated as an important

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aspect of the practice. The extent to which she understands the function of these practices in terms of the overall quality and nature of the text is unclear. What is clear is that she is appropriating the routine and strategically employing to participate in the literate practice.

Reading and the role of economic and pedagogical resources: During the hour long reading time all three of Alita's years in this room, the class was divided into two groups. Terri took the high performing readers, most of whom were second graders and high performing first graders. Kathy took the lower readers, both kindergarten students, a second grade special education student who was still reading at the emergent level, and Alita among others. During the hour or so long session, Kathy worked with two smaller ability groups of students, labeled by color (purple group, blue group). Guided reading groups lasted 30 minutes. While one group was working closely with Kathy, the other group was moving through centers (pocket chart where students worked on word patterns. They were given an envelope with the word pattern of that week (at) and then an envelope with consonants and were told to make word patterns out of them. The words themselves were in a chart to the right of the pocket chart so kids could always refer to the chart if needed. Most of these students were still working to distinguish letters and sounds and so much of the cognitive work seemed to be putting letters on right side up, saying the word from memory as they placed it correctly in the pocket. Partners reminded each other of the "rules" for that activity. These rules involved norms that guided participation and included both social and cognitive routines. For example, sharing the cards at the center, both partners putting words together as well as saying the

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word following along with your finger when you've put a word together to seeing if it made sense. The rules, therefore, supported literacy skills and well as facilitated the interaction. Partners were used a great deal in the classroom both as a means of supporting the participation of the less skilled as well as acting to monitor and enforce the activity goals and norms. Between the two partners often existed a level of expertise that wasn't available to either of them individual.

The computer was another center. Students would log on to the computer and select from several computer games that worked on sounds and letters or word patterns. The games were rather simplistic and had to voice properties and the computers were quite old. However, few of the students had access to computers outside of the classroom and this center was an extremely popular activity. The partner interaction occurred primarily around helping one another log on and go through the set-up functions, which due to the age of the computer were rather extensive, and then talk excitedly at periodic intervals about a success or failure in the game. There was a substantial amount of text associated with the logging on function but students seem to have memorized the sequence and knew without reading which buttons (esc) to push to get through. Another student would help if there were problems. It was when a student forgot or spelled incorrectly his/her name that problems confounding the pair would arise.

The other center was a listening center. A student pair would sit next to one another with headphones on sharing a book between the two of them listening to it read. The social rules became of paramount importance here because students often struggled to "share" the text. However, this kind of text interaction was repeatedly practiced at multiple points during the day because sharing and reading text together was a central

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activity in the classroom. The person to the left would hold the left side of the book and point to the words on his page as the text was being read. The person on the right would hold the right side of the text and point to the words as they were being read. It was, of course, much more complex of a social interaction process. One of the students might be less competent in tracking in sync with the tape recorded voice and the other person would “help” not always to the pleasure of the tracker.

There were some books on tapes for which two books existed and students could each have a copy. However, the teachers believed strongly in the value of partnering in the activity as a reminder and support to follow along. Working together created a context where each of the students was more likely to be accountable for following the words on the page as opposed to merely listening to the story.

In the beginning of the year, the teachers gradually added centers. Beginning only with one – reading, adding another the next week. Over the course of the few years of the study, more students in the classroom were experienced members and the work of the teachers in apprenticing students into the routines and norms of activities was diminished as peers shared expertise and supported one another in the goals. However, the time and training spent on acquiring the activity norms reflected the teachers’ belief that the center activities supported literacy development if done “correctly” that is in a way that supported the practice of literacy skills and not merely keeping students busy. For example, the listening center when the students tracked the words of the text with their finger and/or eyes while listening to the activity continued to support fluency and word recognition. However, if done only as a listening center it continued to support the acquisition of “book talk” and perhaps relationship in written text between picture and

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narrative but did little to foster word consciousness and phonemic awareness, which was intentionally supported during guided reading activities.

One of the reading centers had leveled books in Rubbermaid containers (like dishpans) which were labeled by level and color. In these boxes were the texts that students had read in prior weeks. During the time in this center students were to reread the familiar texts. They could do this alone or with their partner but were required to read either silently or aloud (typically with the emergent guys it was aloud) and then go to the next book.

The students moved through the centers with the timer set at a 10 minute interval. Kathy, while working with the guided reading group would continue to wind and rewind the time while working with the students. Because the students had been intensively trained in the beginning of the year in the norms of the activity, there were few times when she had to interrupt her activity to intervene. Almost never did she get up and move away from her kidney shaped table with her reading group but she constantly scanned with her eyes and listened and intervene while the students in the guided reading group generally continued to engage in their task without her direct focus.

One of the ongoing concerns was the lack of materials available for their students to read and to use during center read times. With the research grant a number of leveled readers had been purchased for the teachers directly out of the grant monies. The district provided a basal text for each student which was used only occasionally with the upper level readers. Because the conversations in our teacher researcher group, the readings we were doing together as well as the professional development that the school was providing always focused on the use of leveled texts in guided reading groups the

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teachers seemed unsure how to use the basal as part of a reading instruction. As a consequence, perhaps, they never used even though some of the literature within the basals even though it was in structure similar to the picture books in their classroom.

A masters' student who was doing an independent study with me, a teacher in a wealthy suburban district, asked in one of our sessions if I knew of a school or of children who could make use of books. They had recently had an enormously successful book drive with parents donating a plethora of books, both new and old, to the school and as a result the library had decided to clean out its' shelves to make room for the new books. He said that he had boxes of books that the school didn't want and wondered if I knew of a place to send them. I jumped at the opportunity, called the teachers, and one evening he transferred nearly 500 books from his truck to one belonging to a friend of Terri's. They were thrilled and couldn't thank him enough. He sort of shrugged it off and said he was just glad someone could use them since they didn't need them. To Kathy and Terri the books provided an opportunity.

During my first year of research in Kathy and Terri's classroom I was simultaneously supervising student teachers in a nearby suburban school. Teachers in that school did guided reading as well. However, students in this k-2 childhood center sat at their desks monitored by either an aide, the student teacher, or a parent helper doing seat work while the teachers worked with the guided reading group. One teacher in fact told me that she would cancel guided reading for the day if there wasn't a parent helper or teacher aide to monitor the students' behavior. Consequently, the parents in this school district who were very concerned about their children's education ensure adequate support for the teacher by either arranging to be in the classroom themselves or by

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placing great pressure on the administration to have an aide in the classroom during reading time. There was an enormous amount of books available in the school. Each classroom had a large classroom library. There was also a book resource room for the school where multiple copies of leveled texts were available to use during guided reading – no child in this school used Xeroxed copies – and the library was large, up to date, and constantly had new books. The school had a ritual where each child on his birthday donated a book to the classroom library. Additionally, parents could sponsor books to the library. The very large PTL organization each year raised about \$1000 that was used to pay for half the cost of books, parents would then sponsor in the name of their child the other half and in the library would be placed the book with a fronts-piece identify the name of the child for whom the book had been sponsored.

Kathy and Terri sorted through the books at the end of the school year and the ones appropriate to the reading level of their students they kept, the other ones were made available at the end of the school year program for students in all grades to select one book on their out. They used the Leveled Reader text, which identified the reading level of the book, as the guidelines it provided to organize the books. Books were leveled and then placed in the Rubbermaid containers that the teachers purchased (out of the their own funds) and used to provide targeted reading materials for students to self-select.

In Alita's second grade year, Kathy and Terri assigned students on an individual basis to the containers during center time to use to have them read books at the appropriate reading level. Reading workshop became a part of the center activity and it replaced more of the guided reading time. Rather than daily groups, students met only a few days per week in for intensive phonemic support. More of the Kathy's individual

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time was spent on listening to students read from their list of reading workshop texts and responding to the project they created about the text. Reading time, as well, was decreased to four days/ week as well because a half day release time was added to the day. Every Wednesday afternoon students went home at noon giving the teachers three hours for professional development experiences. The school day was lengthened the other four days to accommodate the needed teacher contact hours reducing the “planning time” for the elementary teachers that was technically the half hour after students went home. Teachers thus had one of these half days/ month reserved for their own use. I often met the teachers for lunch on these days because their lunch hour was longer than typical and I could use to talk with them about the students and the curriculum, plan activities for them, bring in resources, or just gossip about teaching and our lives.

Reading workshop was held 1-2 days per week and took up the entire time devoted specifically to reading instruction. Kathy commented in a mid-year interview that “The kids love reading workshop. They beg to do it. They read all the time.” By the end of the year, however, both teachers were feeling discouraged with their reading instruction. They felt that they weren’t providing enough strategy and skill instruction tailored for individual needs. Kathy felt that while her students were engaged with the books, they lacked the decoding skills necessary to make reading workshop a strategic activity for these students. They needed more direct instruction in phonics and other decoding strategies. Therefore, the following year (year three) students met each day in guided reading groups and the reading “center” activity required them to reread the guided reading texts from previous weeks which she had copied and placed in their personal reading tub. The range of books previously used in reading workshop were kept

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in the leveled tubs and used during free reading time or as an additional center that rotated in at various points throughout the year.

What this description of the reading time makes clear is the role of pedagogy and economics on the literate opportunities and experiences provided Alita. The range of reading materials needed to create a reading workshop or to more strategically create guided reading groups, required literacy materials that the teachers did not have. It was from an outside source – a suburban school discarding old texts – that the necessary pedagogical materials were provided. However, Kathy's beliefs about effective literacy instruction also impacted the literate support provided Alita. During year two, Kathy experimented with reading workshop as a central component of her instructional practice rather than, as before in year one, a minor part during center time. The change was particularly significant for Alita who had very limited decoding abilities but rather preferred to rely upon a partners literacy knowledge and then her own memory to engage in repeated re-readings of familiar texts. She thoroughly enjoyed flipping through books and chorally reading with a partner. However, the decrease in time devoted to specific and targeted word and sound recognition clearly was likely a significant influence on her literacy development. Once again, Alita ended year two with limited decoding abilities, few sight words, and reading at a pre-kindergarten reading level.

It clearly isn't possible to draw any specific conclusions about the change in reading instruction practices on Alita's development. The teachers continued to support word recognition, phonemic awareness at multiple points throughout the day. Additionally, Alita weekly engaged in word building activities and work on letter sounds and patterns. While drawing conclusions about the origin of Alita's continued difficulty

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with decoding is not possible or warranted, particularly given the fact the majority of the other students in the class showed clear grade level gains, it does seem important to suggest that Alita's development needs to be analyzed in terms of the instructional opportunities provided her. In such a study as this that pays attention to the role of participation on literacy development, it's important to examine the kinds of activities that were not included in Alita's classroom experience as well as those that were.

Alita in Third Grade, from Learning Disabled to Mentally Impaired

Institutional arrangement: Kathy and Terri had decided to maintain Alita in their classroom for her third grade year. Technically, the room was only a K-2 special education room and a 2-3 regular education classroom. However, they felt that Alita would benefit significantly from another year in a curriculum in which she had acquired already the activity structures and goals. Kathy believed that she would be able to make significant progress with her this year based upon her experience validated by the statistical data that suggested that it took 2-3 years for the greatest gains to be made (often more than one year in reading ability occurred at this time). The two teachers also had a low opinion of the upper elementary special education curriculum. One of the special education teachers did a full day pull out primarily because he had seniority, refused to do inclusion teaming with another teacher and, according to the teachers, had been so inflexible and disruptive in the times and ways he worked with kids in a pull-out model that other teachers were unwilling to have him work with her students. Because the case load of special education students had to be serviced, students were placed in his room for half day to full day special education assistance. The teachers described his

instruction as “worksheet based” and refused to send any of their students on to his classroom. A new special education teacher who was hired and began my first year working in the building (year 1) had initially done a pull-out model and I observed in her room periodically. She joined the project year 2 and began team teaching with a regular education teacher, however, they were never able to develop the kind of collaborative relationship that exemplified other project teachers or develop and implement practices that fully included as well as scaffolded literacy participation for those students who found school based literacy such a challenge. By year three the teaming was only nominal and a differentiated curriculum existed in most subject areas.

Therefore, Kathy and Terri felt particular concerned for those students they felt were most fragile – that is, at the turning point of acquiring strong participation roles in reading and writing but in danger of loss of confidence, engagement, particularly without the needed support for those students identified as “special education.” Unlike in Kathy and Trai’s room where all students were “our” students, in the upper elementary attempt at inclusion all special education students were described as “Susan’s” students (i.e. they belonged to the special education teacher so named). Kathy and Terri kept her in their classroom even though it meant it added to their special education case load which that year was particularly high. As mentioned earlier, mobility was a huge issue in this school. It was the rationale behind the emphasis placed upon curriculum being held constant across schools.

By May of that year, there had been change in the classroom again. There were 24 students total, eighteen of whom were special education – the maximum legally allowed on one special education teachers case load. Of those students only 4 were girls

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(Alita was one of them) and the rest were boys. That significantly altered the dynamics in the classroom and was a matter of ongoing public discussion in the classroom. It became difficult to discern in some of the small group activities how gender politics may have mediated the participation norms in group activity. The teachers lost some students and gained others predominantly through completed testing which would lead a kindergarden or first grade student to enter the classroom as “emotionally impaired” or “learning disabled”. There was strong sentiment in the school that the literacy development and general education of special education students should not be the responsibility of “regular” education classroom teachers. Therefore, as soon as paperwork was signed providing special services, a student would immediately be transferred into their classroom. This happened even in May of that year as a new kindergarten student, recently identified as emotionally impaired, was transferred in.

Terri in particular often felt that such students were identified at such an early age in part due to the ineffective classroom management and academic practices of the early elementary teachers in the building. Periodically both teachers were point out how quickly the students were entered the room subsequent to labeling acquired expertise in the literacy practices of their classroom community. It often seemed to me, however, that such students quickly were positioned as competent in this room in part because numerous spaces existed for a wide range of legitimate participation practices. In fact, participation, as opposed to a certain level or kind of performance, was the key criteria for success. Students also entered in late spring of their first grade year. Discontinuation due to “lack of success” from Reading Recovery led to immediate testing. “Failing” to show the appropriate gains during the 6 month duration of reading recovery led to the

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assumption that some kind of cognitive difficulty (a learning disabled) must exist.

Invariably such students were then tested, labeled, and passed into Kathy and Terri's room. Consequently, the teachers had a rather tense relationship with the reading recovery whose room was next door.

Writing: In writing, one of the goals that the teachers had for her was to develop her texts further as evidenced, they described it, through the use of paragraphs. They also suggested that in reading, apply basic phonetic skills to word parts and words. Her writing still reflected invented rather than conventional spelling though high frequency words like (x, y, z) consistently spelled accurately. Alita was very interested in learning to write in cursive. Very little time was spent on "handwriting". However, once a week, typically on Friday, each of the teachers would spend a small amount of time having students practice letter formation. In the spring of that year, the higher level readers who were working with Terri were learning cursive. Alita who was still with Kathy was still practicing printing. However, she sought me out during free time to help her with forming letters. For over a week, Alita was intensely interested in learning how to do cursive. She eagerly collected white boards and markers and would sit, often with another student, at the kidney shaped reading table to practice cursive letters.

She completed few of the texts at the beginning of the year was consistently one of the students with the least amount "published". Writing workshop time she spent busy, but had difficulty completing texts. If she was not able to complete a text in one sitting she had difficulty getting back into it because she didn't "remember" what it said. She published at the most one text per month and often not even that until May of year



three, her most where in a little over a weeks time she wrote three stories. Although, most students only published 3 or 4 texts per month, they often consisted of much longer narratives, often with multiple chapters and episodes.

A significant change in her performance, not just her discourse as observed earlier in the fall, occurred in the spring. In the following transcript, you see Alita in May interacting with a second grade learning disabled boy, Clarence, in a peer editing context about her recent text. The text is written almost entirely with conventionally spelled words, with a few highly regular invented ones. She walks Clarence through the peer editing activity, fixes the spelling on a word he identifies, then reviews with some apparent pride the significant number of texts that she has finished, edited, and is now signed up and waiting for a teacher conference in order to then publish all five texts. Alita hands the peer editing form to Clarence where he dates and signs the event. checks off that he completes the steps and identifies the suggestions.

Alita: Put your name [she points to the form] Clarence.

Alita reads her most recent text to him: “Me and my sister. Me and my sister are going to my dads’ house. My dad is going to take us shopping. He is going to take us to the mall. To get us some shoes and then when we are going back to his house.”

Clarence: [pointing to her text] Does that look like a ‘back’ or a ‘tack?’ You wrote a ‘tack.’ [He’s referring to her spelling]

Alita erases and says, “back, back” as she writes. “To his house. Okay.”

Clarence: I like how you read.

Alita: Thank you. Anything else.

Clarence: How you came up with that story?

Alita: Since we were going to my dad's house I thought to make this story

Clarence: When are you going?

Alita: I don't know.

Alita rifles through her papers.

Alita: I made, one, two, three. I made four stories. This one by itself and this one by itself and these two together. [It was a two part story like a "series" she explained later to me] I'm going to be on my fifth story. [She sits for a minute and then slides her chair back and then ending her peer editing session with Clarence.] Okay, thank you.

It was at this time as well that Alita created a chapter story and regularly brought the daily writing workshop texts to completion. Her chapter "book" had five full chapters and involved a series of events involving she and several other students in the class where they assumed power ranger type roles and experiences. The dramatic increase in productivity evident in May and with the lengthening of her narratives into at least one full-blown chapter "book" was associated with a significant improvement in her ability to use conventional spelling or highly regular invented spelling rough draft texts. It was evident that even Alita's competence in writing workshop as measured by her text products and not only by her participation reflected her growing phonemic awareness.

Special education labels, testing, and development: It was in fall of year three that testing began for her third year review. At that time the district psychologist began raising the term "EMI" (educably mentally impaired) as a more appropriate label for her.

Alita's cognitive performance was noted to be significantly different than that observed in May of 1997. Previously, Alita had been administered the Kaufman Assessment Battery for children (KABC) and had displayed above normative skills in the area of sequential processing (skills associated with verbal reasoning) while displaying significantly delayed skills in simultaneous processing (Skills associated with visual reasoning). Alita's current global cognitive performance placed her below the 1st percentile, although her verbal skills differed significantly from her nonverbal skills. At the same time, her performance on verbal skills differed significantly from that seen less than three years ago. The current Wechsler scale, when compared with the KABC, tends to measure different skills and, in part, the differences may reflect the differences in the instruments employed. However, Alita's above normative verbal performance on the KABC can not be dismissed without good reason. While the present examiner does suggest that Alita exhibits skills consistent with an Educable Mentally Impaired individual, it is recognized that her performance may be significantly below her true ability. (There was little clinical evidence to suggest that the present test questions and tasks failed to adequately sample her verbal skills.) Therefore, in judging her eligibility for continued special education, care should be taken to examine her behavior within the wider environment, such as her school, community and home, before adopting the present diagnosis....This examiner is somewhat at a loss to explain the wide variance in test scores observed over the last three years. The change from a verbal score which was above the norm to a score within the borderline range suggest that a major and significant shift has taken place or that one of the two measures is invalid."

I was told about this in early October and had just been viewing videotapes of literacy activities in which Alita participated from the previous two years. I was sitting next to her and observing her writing during writing workshop where she was composing a personal narrative. I moved over to where the teachers were talking and commented on how much Alita had developed in her literacy skills and practices. At that point Terri told me about the possible "label" change which would indicate a mentally deficiency rather than a learning disability. In reference to the school psychologists who formally were involved in Alita's testing, Terri commented, "if they would just listen to her discourse." Within the context of this classroom, "discourse" to the teacher referred to the actions and speech which surrounded the use and production of reading and writing.

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Terri suggested that Alita's use of reading and writing showed strong evidence both of development as well as was indicative of competent performance in classroom activities. The teachers agreed that Alita's literacy practices were below the norm of students in her grade.

However, her attendance problems, the instability they perceived to exist in her home and, at least according to Terri, Alita's "laziness" were more significant contributors to her continued development and current performance. By this she meant that interpreted Alita's behavior when engaged in a task as reluctance due to unconcern rather than insecurity or inability. They were, however, quite amazed at the transformation they saw in her this year. She seemed more confident and engaged in the activities. As one of the students who had been in the class the longest, she had the routines and norms of the classroom down much better than many of her classmates, particularly those who were new that year. Her enjoyment in "leading" activities, first observed in first grade, was given much fuller reign this year as her knowledge of the routines often positioned her as an expert with respect to her classmates or seemed to give her confidence enabling her to reposition her roles in partner and group activities.

The teachers deemed her mathematical skills as slightly higher than her literacy progress. In the spring of her third grade year (year three in their classroom), they described on the formal reports her mathematical skills as at an "early second grade level" while her "literacy skills" remained at a "first grade level," what they meant by literacy, however, was her decoding ability. During the day when the class broke into ability groups (for reading and math), Alita remained with the Kathy, who each year worked with the students with the lower reading skills - these weren't always special

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education students but were predominantly students in the lower grades (k, 1, some two). Therefore, in this third year she was the oldest student in this group. On the reports, Kathy wrote that Alita had “normal” and “age appropriate” - social interactions with students although Terri, in particular, constantly reminded Alita to stop sucking her thumb and would comment to me about how “silly” she looked and expressed concern that other students would begin to notice her behavior as odd and comment upon it. Alita seemed to have friends in the classroom, although it was typically with younger girls with whom she would interact during free times, in part because there were few girls (and even less so by spring) and she was one of the oldest in the room.

At the IEP in the spring of her third grade year, the recommendation from the teachers was that Alita remain classified with the learning disabled label. The school psychologist hadn't yet completed his report and was unable to be in attendance. However, the meeting was held without him. It was decided that she would remain in speech therapy. Her therapy, in fact, was not for observed difficulties in enunciating, as had earlier been indicated, but rather in her ability to use “expressive language” skills. According to the observations and formal testing by the speech therapist, Alita's language skills were “limited in terms of vocabulary, use grammatical sentence structure, and [ability to] speak in full complete sentences.” Once again, no discussion was made about the cultural aspect of her oral language practices nor about the clear difference in her spoken discourse and written discourse which tended to more closely mirror standard (white, middle class) English. .

Throughout years 1-3 she had qualified for speech services 1-2 times/ week for 20-30 minute sessions. However, due to the limited availability of the speech therapist,

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sessions typically filled the minimum requirement. She would leave with two-three other students one time/ week and return approximately 20 minutes later. The schedule was rarely consistent although the speech therapist tried to pull students out of the whole class morning message time rather than the thematic unit activity where students were often paired in order to interfere as little as possible in the regular curriculum. She would walk into the room, without saying a word, and one of the teachers would notice her and send Alita and the other students' receiving speech services out with her. Students often left reluctantly and often resented leaving the classroom. In discussing these sessions, Alita commented that described her speech teacher as her "reading teacher" but felt it was a waste of time to go with her because "she don't teach me nothing." Leaving the classroom for any reason was problematic for most student. Yvonne a second grade student had qualified under the districts criteria as "gifted" and was eligible to attend one half day a week a special class held in another school for students similarly identified. However, Yvonne disliked leaving the classroom and had asked her mother if she could instead just stay in class. She felt she was missing too much and preferred to stay in the classroom. The mother refused but it was with reluctance that any of the students left the classroom to go to a "special."

In discussing the least restrictive environment the following year for Alita, decisions by Kathy and Terri was made upon their evaluation of the nature of the teaching context which she would encounter the following year. They had a very low opinion of the more rigorous testing standards that the district and state was holding students to in order to pass into successive grades. The political rhetoric surrounding literacy development, particularly in urban schools, addressed the practice of "passing"

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students who lacked grade level competencies. Kathy was careful to delineate in her report the need to have any formal and state assessment measurements read to her. All three teachers (Kathy, Terri and the speech therapist) endorsed a label of “learning disabled” and the continuation of speech therapists and signed off on the report. However, one month later the school psychologists report came in and the report was altered to account for his evaluation. The district special educator administrator altered the district agreement as delineated in her IEP outlying both the nature of the disability as well as the requisite service that would be provided to her. The mother, though contacted as legally required, had not attended any of the hearings which discussed Alita’s certification and a district official signed off for the mother. It was in this final report in June, 2 months after the earlier IEP meeting attended by Alita’s teachers, that it was first indicated that her cultural language patterns mediated the assessment.

She is able to initiate and maintain appropriate conversation, though her lack of vocabulary is noticeable. Alita demonstrates deletion of possessives “s” as in “Grandma’_house” and noun/verb agreement errors as in “It have a hook.”; these are common in Black English dialect. She also had the common /f/ for /th/ phonemne substitution. She has no other significant articulation errors. Alita continues to be a persistent thumb-sucker. Alita’s progress has been slowed by her poor attendance to school.

The initial testing had been in the fall of that year and the June report cited it claiming that:

Alita’s overall cognitive ability places her at and below the 2nd percentile, making tasks which involve problem solving, reasoning, abstraction, comprehension and expression very difficult....On the Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children – Third Editon (WISC-III). She received the following scores: performance quotient 53, verbal quotient 72, and full scale 60. It was established that she will now be eligible for special education services as Educably Mentally Impaired (EMI). In comparing her current speech and language scores with her psychological quotients, it is evident that her language skills are commensurate with her ability and are in fact her strength. Therefore, it is recommended that Alita no longer be eligible to receive speech and language services.

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On the basis of the decision that Alita's speech patterns reflected cultural patterns of language use, she was no longer eligible for speech services. The test scores better fit the profile of *educably mentally impaired* rather than *learning disabled* therefore the districts psychologists and director of special education formally changed her label despite the earlier assertion of the teachers that a label of *learning disability* should be retained. The teachers' were not consulted upon this and as I mentioned before had earlier in the year resisted this classification. Since they did not need to sign off on the paperwork as they had earlier done so at the IEP meeting where the decision was made initially to retain the LD label, there was little involvement required of them in this process. Additionally, they had become increasingly concerned about the long-term implications for students such as Alita who continued to need scaffolding to support participation and subsequent development. A new school superintendent had been hired that spring on the basis of a public commitment of no "social promotion" and that summer school and retention would become the norm for students who failed end of the year performance exams which she intended to implement the following year. Therefore, while the teachers felt that the change in label had long-term implications terms of the academic opportunities and engagement practices offered her could be dismal, they also were concerned that she not become a student who was permanently held back. State policy as well was shifting and students with learning disabilities were being required to be held to the same standards for content based performance on exams as other students. The teachers, therefore, made not official comment in response to the report nor was any sought by them. The characteristic nature of the valuation placed upon formal test scores over teacher observation and classroom based literacy performance reflects other research

(e.g. Mehan, 198x) which supports the sanctioning of formal testing and school psychologist's profiles over that of other more informal or complicating representations of student learning and development.

The report closes with the same phrase repeated in reports from earlier years. "This recommendation is not based on cultural, economic, or environmental conditions." Despite the incongruity of identifying a child at one point for speech services for the same kinds of articulation efforts which characterize her at a later point, the decision to remove speech services addressed the reframing of her practices from illustrative of a disabling condition to one of a characteristic feature of her cultural linguistic patterns. Her language went from being a problem in need of individualized assistance to a "strength" which supported a more severe mental impairment than was previously identified. Having worked within a system where legal technicalities can have huge financial affect on school district budgets, I understand the use of the closing phrase. In fact, it appears on all of the reports for students receiving special services in that classroom and I assume it is a standard phrase that portrays a legal sentiment more than an ideological one. The ways in which culture, economy, home and school environment mediate Alita's performance are significant. One wonders if once the decision is made to disqualify a student, behavior can be recast in such a way as to fulfill legal requirements.

Classroom Discourse as Apprenticeship.

In this section, I examine Alita's participation in book discussion activities across one year (her first grade year) in order to more closely examine the ways in which

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classroom discourse mediated her participation. Earlier, when discussing the way in which Alita's language practices were perceived by the speech teacher and by her classroom teachers, I suggested that in formal testing articulation difficulties were identified as a cause for concern. To her classroom teachers, however, it was her ability to use language to engage in the social practices accompanying literate activities that was the significant determinant of the nature of her participation. By examining the way in which her participation in book discussions changed over the course of one year, the role of classroom discourse as an apprenticeship process is revealed. Analysis of Alita's participation in book discussions over three years reveals that the most significant transformation in her participation occurred across year one rather than from year one to three. In looking across three years of development, it becomes clear that Alita's first year in the class could best be described as *learning to attend to talk*.

In the section above, I described the characteristic features of her reading and writing performance across three years. Here I examine her actual participation practices in the sociocultural activities of the community. Describing development from the perspective of one year of classroom instruction directs attention to the ways in which Alita's knowledge of letters, sounds, text, orthography changed over the course of the year – or in her case, change little at all in year one. However, when examining her literacy development across three years – that is, observing her literate participation in the “same” activity (e.g. book discussions, writing workshop, morning message) – what is revealed is the way in which her performance at specific moments was highly contextualized in the discourse practices in which she was being apprenticed. Becoming competent required that Alita learn to attend to the discourse practices and participation

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roles that occurred in activities. The language practices embedded in literate activities served as models and as a parameter to define talk as meaningful and responsive when engaging in particular tasks at specific moment. Competence in book discussions developed as Alita learned to assume the discursive roles associated with talk about text. Alita was learning to attend to the discursive norms, routines, interaction patterns characteristic of classroom literate practices. Alita was learning to *perceive* the meaning and goals of literate tasks as well as learning to *participate* in ways that reflected conventions of the classroom literacy community. Attending, then, involve efforts to appropriate and assume the literate roles and tools accompanying such participation.

Alita was referred for testing in kindergarten because by the end of the year she was still writing her name backward and knew no letters and numbers when asked to write or label independently. When I pulled her out in the fall of her first year in the classroom, first grade, to give her the Durrell, she scored at the pre-kindergarten level unable, or unwilling to identify even sight words in the text or attempt to read the text at all. At the end of first grade she could identify almost all of the letters of the alphabet but had not sight words, wasn't decoding when reading, and was still using random letter strings in her writing. The question is, however, what these difficulties mean in this classroom and how were they demonstrated within the context of classroom activities? In part II, I analyze the changes in Alita's participation in book discussions across year 1. Alita begins the year in book discussions in an extremely peripheral role where she struggle to demonstrate competency just in physically staying in the circle and seemed unable to attend to the discussion at all. By the end of the year, Alita is actively negotiating meaning in the text and is able to assume a central role in a discussion even

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without the teacher's presence. In section two, then I explore the development of competence through examining the changing meaning of Alita's literate participation over book discussions in first grade and the role of classroom discourse in supporting this transformation.

Orienting physical behavior: In year one, much of the focus of teachers' remarks to Alita involved oriented her physical behavior to support literate participation. When the teachers walked her over to the class concept map hooked to the chalkboard at the front of the room, when they commented about how her gestures demonstrated her ability to track words, when Kathy told her in reading class to point to the words with her finger or point to the picture that helped her make sense of the text, when they told her to look directly at the person to whom she was speaking – all these were efforts to direct her cognitive activity through orienting her physical behavior.

Rarely did Alita participate in any extended public conversations that were connected to the literacy activity. That is, her discursive moves in the public space of the activity setting were typically not carried beyond one comment or question unless directly extended by the teacher through the posing of a question. In the following section is a description of the change in the nature of Alita's participation in book discussions over the course of year one. It is significant to attend to changes in the ways in which she appropriated the tools, roles, and activity norms to frame her participation.

In the early book discussions, the teacher as discussion facilitator is constantly reorienting Alita's physical and discursive activity to support her participation. Alita seemed to struggle to know when and how to find entry into the conversation and

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develop literacy goals that were legitimate within the specific context of book discussions as opposed to the participatory roles assumed in other literacy activities in the classroom. In the middle of the year, she could enter the discussion when there was a lull and by using the formulaic topics and phrases provided to interact with the group members and with the text. By the end of the year, she was actively negotiating the meaning of the language of the text itself and when in a discussion group without the teacher's presence was able to sustain an active role. Learning, as defined by changes in participation, thus reflect Alita's ability to assume new and different roles in the literate activity. This engaged her not only in new and different cognitive routines but provided her with greater independence and more flexibility in the way in which she entered the activity.

Book discussions occur once a week on Wednesday mornings and are approximately 20 minutes long. They are scheduled during the time when the class is assigned to "library". Visits to the library occur weekly according to the preset schedule determined by the librarian who schedules 30 minutes for every class. Because Kathy and Terri are technically assigned separate classes, two half hour periods are assigned to the classroom. The students officially on Terri's roster are the second and third grade students, so they go to the library together. The students on Kathy's roster are the kindergarten and first grade students. Book discussion, then, is divided by age in a way that other group activities are not. During year one, Alita is in Kathy's book discussion; in year two and three she is in Terri's.

When it is library time, the first group to go, which is Terri's group, finds their books and lines up to go to library. The other students take a bathroom break that isn't

always “quick” in the way the teachers frame it. When they get back into the room, they sit on the rug on the floor in front of the rocking chair where Kathy sits and reads a short picture book. She reads the text, shows each page to them, but silences comments and rarely responds to questions asked by the students unless they pertain directly to comprehending what she just said or the picture she showed them. In the following paragraphs I provide a narrative recapitulation of the 20 minute discussion (including the length of time needed to read the book, less than 10 minutes) rather than a full transcript or an abbreviated synopsis. What emerges in the way the experience is represented below in narrative form are the literary themes which frame talk about text in this context as well as the ways in which the teachers and students sanction particular forms of participation. Even as a peripheral member, Alita is learning what “counts” as participation and the kind of meaning making about text which is valid and sensible.

After the reading of *Frederick* by Leo Leoni, in mid-November, the students automatically move into a circle. Alita who has participated in approximately five discussions at this point (she was absent for a few earlier in the year) sits against the side wall just a slight bit apart from the other students, opening the circle up sucking her thumb and occasionally rocking her knees in and out as they’re propped up in front of her. The students begin talking about the book. Alita drops her face to her forearm, which is resting across her raised knee. Everything about her posture speaks of disinterest. Apparently the teacher thinks so as well; Kathy asks Alita and another boy (B.J.) who have both moved back from the circle as well to “join the discussion.” Both students interpret this as a bid to move physically and they scootch themselves into the group.

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The students begin talking about the genre of the text – defined in this classroom as “real” story or a “make-believe” story. Students in this discussion group (kindergarten – first grade) often have difficulty with this concept in terms of it defining the whole nature of the text and tend to focus on the illustrations (do they look comic or realistic) or feasibility of the plot in defining the story. In an attempt to reason through the genre of the text, one boy comments that “some mice are real and some are not.” Immediately Alita’s hand goes up, the first move she’s made in the discussion as a bid to enter. However, a half-raised hand, in the context of book discussions is an atypical way to bid for the floor and join the discussion (unlike in thematic units or whole class morning message where a raised hand is the only sanctioned way to gain the conversational floor). None of the other students raise their hand but rather talk freely with occasional intervention by Kathy to preserve or create a conversational floor for a specific student (e.g. “Did you hear Sam?” or “I don’t think everyone heard what Latoya said. Will you say that again Latoya?”). However, Alita makes no effort to talk, she continues to suck her thumb and raise her hand slightly in the air. Kathy did not call on her and in fact would be unlikely to see her partially raised hand; several students have moved between them. Additionally, Alita, still is physically further from the group than other students, has, without moving, become more on the margins as the excitement and energy generated by the other students in their conversations causes them to move or lean further into the group, creating a tighter community. Thus without appearing to do so, Alita is once again positioned on the periphery of the circle.

The student’s speech begins overlapping as students cite particular evidence both from the text and from their own experience to justify their position about the genre of

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the text. Kathy reminds the students to take turns. Alita raises her hand again but Kathy either does not see or choose to call on her. Alita after a few moments lowers her hand. Kathy asks them how their knowledge of mice will help them understand the story better. Students interact with each other in a free flowing discussion around this issue. Then Kathy asks how their “knowledge about what mice are like” will help them “understand the story better”. Alita again raises her hand and this time Kathy calls on her. Alita asks if she can get a drink to which Kathy responds, “No. We’re having a book discussion.”

The one time, Alita is called upon, she asks a question that has nothing to do with talk about books but in fact is a request to physically withdraw even farther from the group. Alita is still sitting against the wall, knees in the air. She puts her hands on the floor on either side of her. She stretches her feet out in front of her and at that moment Kathy asks B.J. and Alita once again to join the discussion. B.J. and Alita again move closer to the circle. Kathy suggests that some of the kids who have been talking ask B.J. or Alita a question to include them in the discussion. They do. Alita and B.J. are each given a question from the other students asking about what they “like” in the book to which Alita responds with little elaboration by mentioning a picture. No effort is made to draw them in further and the conversation continues around them. After a few minutes, Alita and B.J. move back again from the group. Three kids were talking at once. As a way of both sanctioning the overlapping speech and creating an interactive discussion with one person holding the floor at a time as well as in an effort to draw in Alita, Kathy turns, makes eye contact with her and asks Alita if she could hear “all three at once.” Alita says nothing but shakes her head as if “no.” Kathy reminds the group that they “need to be patient and take turns” when they have something to say.

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Matt talks about the illustrations. Alita is back to sitting against the wall with her hands in front of her face. Alita's hand goes up for a second and then it's back goes down again. Kathy again asks B.J. and Alita to join them. They move forward into the circle again. Kathy summarizes what they talked about: Fiction vs. non-fiction; illustrations; Author; "We talked a lot about the characters." She then asks, "Did it help you that you know a lot about mice?" and several students discuss what they know about mice but they seem unable to connect deeply to the substantive of her question, namely the role of prior experience in making sense of text. She lets the question drop and tells them to go to their seats and get their library books. They leave.

In this scene we see Kathy periodically checking in to see if all the students physically present in the circle. She does attempt to ensure that all the students have made some kind of verbal participation, however, she's very concerned that students look at one another when speaking, sit closely together, and orient their talk directly about the text. She wants them to provide specific evidence from the text to support their assertions. She even makes the book available to them as a reference if they needed to turn a page to find a picture or check on a word. Kathy ignores or is oblivious to Alita's bid for entry through raised hand except in the one instance where the result was Alita's request for a drink. This is significant in terms of how it functions to marginalize Alita in this particular activity. Unlike in teacher facilitated morning message or thematic unit routines where a raised hand is a legitimate bid for participation, in this one Alita's partially raised hand is ignored. While Kathy attempts at the end of the conversation to draw in comments from Alita and B.J., her attention throughout the book discussion has been predominantly focused on facilitating the students interactions with each other and

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the text and keeping Alita and B.J. physically in the space of the discussion. When Kathy does choose to acknowledge the raise hand and calls on her, Alita asks a question that isn't even connected to the discursive space of the activity. Physically Alita moves away from the group, by her posture and location of her body she has pushed away from the group.

A book discussion is an extraordinarily difficult activity setting for both the teachers and students to construct. Students must learn to chain their interactions to the previous discursive move of the members and all comments must be directed towards the text itself. In order to scaffold student engagement, Kathy had made a chart with a list of topics or phrases that students could use to identify appropriate conversational topics for book discussions. The chart sat where students could see it and Kathy referred back to it at the end of the discussion by helping the students to identify what they had talked about in the group. Alita has yet to acquire the skills to move easily in and out of this discursive space and seems in fact unsure what to do during the activity itself. The fact that Kathy didn't call on her with her hand raised noticeably calls attention to participatory bids that are unsuccessful in this activity. Kathy continued in her attempts to get the students to "join the discussion" both by reorienting their physical activity as well as prompting students to direct questions to them, suggests that she is attempting to create a space for them. However, at this point in the year, Alita's silence serves to actively marginalize her in the group.

Two months later (end of January). With only six book discussions intervening, Alita no longer bids for entry by raising her hand. She has acquired particular formulaic

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phrases or topics to use as a way of entering the discussion. Unlike the more vocal group members who are willing to engage in overlapping speech, have learned to chain their responses to those of other participants, and are more strategic about directing comments to one another, Alita waits until a lull in the conversation before entering and does so with little intentional effort to direct her comments to particular members. In the transcript below are presented Alita's only verbal forays into the discussion. However, both by her close proximity to other group members and her use of eye contact to speakers, she indicates in this discussion that she is a legitimate member of the group and an interested participant.

John: I think the book is fake because you can't really go to different planets.

Clarence: I disagree. Agree with Erica because Arthur on T.V.

Brian: I think that the person who wrote the book

Erin: [overlapping speech] I think that the person who wrote the book

Kathy, [looks at Brian and acknowledges his participatory bid?] Who are you talking to Erin? [Brian points to a John] Then look at them.

John: They fake though. They fake.

Erin: I think that the author studies space, the one who wrote the book.

Alita: Did he write all the other books?

Kathy: The ones we have in our basket?

Kathy repeatedly reminds the students to look at other people in the group. She physically turned Clarence's head at one point to the speaker. The discussion turns into an IRE format with the teacher intervening after each comment to direct students to pose queries and comments directly to each other. After a brief and very noticeable lag in the

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conversation where no one talks and Kathy seems determined to wait in silence for student to comment, Alita speaks:

Alita, “What part did you like in that?”

Kathy, “Are you asking me?” Alita nods, then Kathy shares what she likes.

Analysis of the content of the discussion reveals that the students are struggling with the concept of fiction and non-fiction texts again. Because Kathy had defined the terms as “fake” and “real,” the problem the students, and therefore the teachers, had encountered is that stories that are “made-up” by the author can be either realistic or fantasy and their definitions didn’t clearly demarcate this boundary. Clarence seems to be trying to validate the “true-ness” of the text by appealing to the cartoon character Arthur, which is the name of a small mouse as well as an after school cartoon of that name. There are, in fact, several cartoon episodes on T.V. where Arthur, wearing a space suit and clear helmet visits the moon and other planets where he has a variety of adventures. Erin has a more sophisticated understanding of the book and while she as well thinks the story is real, she roots it in the kind of knowledge and interest of the author (the text itself is a first person account of a boy being visited by aliens. The text has cartoon like images and is clearly a simple fantasy text).

What’s also true of this discussion is that Kathy is focusing on creating an interactive discussion, a central facet of talk about text in this activity setting. She’s concerned that students participate and thus earlier in the school year she had focused on keeping students like Alita in the group and ensuring that everyone talked. Now, however, she’s trying to guide students’ participation towards interacting with one another around the text. This requires her constant attention and intervention to support.

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The largest proportion of her discursive moves (both verbal and gestural) involve reminding students to look at one another, direct comments to someone specific or look more intentionally at the people in the group when talking. She's less concerned about overlapping speech than about the group following a discernable conversational trail. That is, when students talk over one another it doesn't immediately lead to intervention unless by doing so they then lose the ability to create a conversation where utterances are connected to one another and students are able to follow and create a coherent and naturally progressing discussion. Alita makes only these two conversational bids (presented above) in the entire 13 minute discussion (it had taken 7 minutes to read the book). Both are questions directed at the teacher and neither are direct extensions of the previous comments. Yet, Kathy responds to both. She seems to alter her goals and the norms she upholds for the book discussion as a whole based upon her perception of the discursive abilities of Alita. She immediately responds to Alita's general question although in the second one prompts her of the norm to direct comments to specific members by asking to whom her speech activity is oriented. Alita, however, has found entry into the discussion in ways that are legitimated by the norms of the activity itself. She also is specifically employing a topic on the wall chart – to frame questions about the author – in order to seek entry. Her ability to move into the discussion without being asked or inappropriately for this context raising her hands, demonstrates her growing awareness and competence in the discursive norms of the activity.

Six book discussions again later. In mid-March, Alita has not only learned the importance of physically remaining in close proximity to other members of the book

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discussion, but she can express her understanding of book discussion norms to new members. Two new students, kindergartners who were recently identified as learning disabled, had entered the room, and Kathy reviews some of the norms for the activity. She says that since the boys are new and “haven’t done this very much maybe people could tell them how they do book discussion.” One student commented immediately, “Eyes to the person that is talking.” Kathy asks him why that is important but he is silent. She then asks, “If you were talking and everyone is looking at you, what do you know?” He remains silent. Kathy answers her question, “That everyone is listening to you.” Here she reminds them of the purpose for looking at one another: fostering the creation of a discussion that involves social interaction with one another about the text. There is a pause and then Alita comments quietly that students “need to stay in the circle.” Kathy makes an affirmative sound and other students add their comments about the important aspects of book discussions. Alita’s comment about the importance of the physical location of the individual is a corollary to the reminders and prompts she has received during book discussions earlier in the year that she must remain *in* the circle and be physically part of the discussion and her developing competence at verbally participating in the actions of the group. Not only does she not need to be reminded to stay in the group, but she herself announces it as an important characteristic of book discussions. Alita now independently orients her physical body to the discussion of the group, she’s beginning to directly look at the speakers, and is able to verbalize this to a novice as an activity norm.

She also is willing to insert her comments into the discussion without having a teacher make a space for her, solicit her input, or wait for silence in the discussion. She’s

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beginning to participate in the interactive discussion, chaining her comments, directly to the previous speakers statement as well as remaining focused on the overall topic or theme currently on the floor. In this March discussion, Alita is still asking questions but they deal with the content of the book and require ability to think about the meaning of the text and not just borrow or adapt questions that can be addressed generically to any of the texts. Significantly, Alita is struggling now to make sense of how the author is using language to communicate ideas and not how to participate or engage in the actual discussion.

In this discussion about an expository text involving a description of the process by which seeds become trees, (e.g. a seed pod floats through the air, blown by the wind, and lands on the ground where it will eventually root which generates much comment). Anna asks, “Why did they call this book the tiny seed?” At that point there is overlapping talk that became difficult to differentiate, in part, because students shifted the discussion from a collective conversation to a series of asides made to a person sitting next to them and generic verbal pronouncements, two students point to the text laying open in the middle of the circle. Valerie’s voice can be heard above the others asking about the size of the seed in the book. Several people comment in response but others are talking amongst themselves about the previous question. The teacher attempts to pull them back into a collective interactive discussion by asking, “Can anyone answer Ashley’s question?” Ashley, however, immediately then asks, “How could the seed fly?” Shaquia responds, while the other students listen and comply again with the norms that a discussion involved progress in a linear fashion as comments are chained to one another

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rather than divergent, “Wind could.” Alita comments immediately. “Couldn’t float *in* the ground but could float in the air” (emphasis hers).

Significantly, Alita’s participation involves trying to work out the meaning both of discussion members’ own questions and comments as well as about the meaning of the text. Shaquia points out that it was the wind that was responsible. Alita’s comment seems to be stating the obvious, “It’s not in the ground in the air” as if she’s pointing out that “wind is up.” She’s moved from physical proximity to use the conversation to develop ideas or to make sense of something. It’s limited to a few conversational turns, but she’s trying to carry this very difficult conversation forward in her own mind as well.

It’s also important to note at this time that students were currently involved in a plant unit in their thematic unit. They had been talking about the reproductive cycle of a plant and the germination of seeds. Alita is moving between the conversation in the text about seeds, which indirectly (via the illustrations) speaks to the role of the wind, to connect to conversations currently underway in the thematic unit time about seeds sprouting up through the ground. Seeds, she is observing, can travel in the air. Book discussion are contexts that allow students to work out meanings and to participate in meaning making activities and inferences that may not be emphasized in the factual reading of books.

In thematic units, students directly record information from texts. In reading groups, they focus on decoding. In neither do they engage in any prolonged meaning making or questioning of text. Instead, in thematic units the goal of reading is to collate facts gathered from various sources into categories. In reading groups, accuracy in decoding is the primary goal.

If participation in book discussions were dependent upon her own reading ability, Alita would be precluded from talking about texts that had any kind of complex narrative or expository structure. This time Alita was able to read (or chorally revoice) texts that had highly simplistic and repetitive structure. Her emergent literacy skills thus prevented her from independent encounters with texts that might force her to negotiate the authors' intent, her own experience and the perspectives of her classmates. However, because the teacher reads the text in book discussions and because the central goal of the activity was to engage in discussions about the nature and meaning of the text itself, Alita, in this her first year, had moved from participation that involved a marginal physical presence to learn how to use text to make inferences that involved connecting to background experience, and connected to the ideas of her classmates.

The literacy task in which she has engaged has also changed dramatically over the course of the year. At the beginning of the year, Alita was trying to figure out how to gain entry into the group and how to physically orient herself so as not to be sanctioned by the teacher. She acquired some topics and questions, directly from the wall chart, that enabled her to enter discussions without regard to the actual conversation. This required, though, that she wait for a lull in the conversation. Since teachers sanctioned students for intervening in a discussion with comments that didn't extend the comments of others, her questions about the authors or a statement about what she liked in the text required that interactive discussion not be occurring in order for Alita to perceive a space created for her own comments. In late March, however, Alita was not only chaining her conversation to that of the others but was negotiating the meaning of the language in the text directly.

Seven book discussions later. Alita participated in a book discussion without the presence of the teacher. A month before the close of school (on May 12), Kathy allowed a small group of students to engage in a book discussion by themselves. Remember at this time, Alita only knew seven letters and she was showing little phonemic awareness. I had prompted the teachers in an earlier conversation to see what the students knew and could do independently. The teachers often expressed frustration over the students book discussion because of the constant scaffolding needed in order to participate in an interactive discussion. She divided her book discussion group into two and put six of the students, including Alita, in a small book discussion by themselves. Kathy was nearby, physically present in the discussion with the remaining students. The book they were discussion was Eric Carle's *The Grouchy Ladybug*. During Kathy's reading of text, the students had started reading with her when the patterned text repeated, "Oh, you're not big enough." When Alita's group split into their own small discussion space, they immediately reverted to formulaic patterns of participation. Erin, Alita, then Darren made repetitive comments that directly came from the wall chart, where one suggestion for "What to discuss" was the prompt to talk about what you "like. Therefore Erin begins the discussion:

Erica, "I like the part when.....

Alita, "I like the part when...

Darren, "I like the part when...

Alita, "I like the part when he says you's too big.

During this time Cordita, the educably mentally impaired second grader, keeps trying to get into the conversation by raising her hand but no one recognizes her. There is a lull in

the conversation as if students have run out of things they like. Erin adopts the language of the teacher and carries the discussion forward by mimicking the scaffolding moves the teachers make when facilitating the discussion.

Erica, "Alright I don't hear no talking/"

Erica, "Ok, it's Randy's turn."

At this point, Erin has assumed a leadership function by directly appealing to the activity norms. Randy then talks about how why the author may have written the book. "I think he made the book because he saw a butterfly outside his house." This topic of conversation as well is directly from the conventions identified on the wall chart. Erin and Alita have several conversational turns with each extending the others conversation. They are focusing directly on their opinions about the authors experience and purpose. Erin directly extends Alita's comment by asking her a "why" question that required her to elaborate her previous comment. There is a brief lull in the conversation and Alita, in behavior that would never be characteristic in a teacher led discussion, gets up from the group and walks over to throw away a tissue. Erin immediately sanctions that. "Don't get up." Again, Cordita tries to participate. She makes several conversational starters; none of the students look at her but rather turn to Darren who has begun talking and fills several minutes with his comments, which is a long time for a book discussion discourse move. Erin tries to interrupt him, but he continues and the other students remain focused on him, then Alita attempts to interrupt and is immediately "shushed" by Erin.

When Darren finishes, Erin reverts back to the formulaic "I like" conversational move, "I like the part when the whale didn't say nothing back." She then proceeds to describe this section in detail and Cordita talks over her. Detoin, who has said nothing

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this far in the discussion, lays down (again another norm breaking physical move) and looks at the floor. Erin finishes speaking and Cordita extends Erin's comment but no one looks at her. Alita comments about a part she likes. There is a lull and Erin leans over to whisper into her ear. Alita then looks at Detoine and asks, "What part do you like Detoine?" Detoine talks about the section of the book that he likes and then turns to ask Randy the same question, "What part do you like Randy?"

It is at that point that Alita was pulled out of the classroom by the speech teacher. The discussion continued for another five minutes without her. Kathy commented afterwards that "they did a fabulous job" and that "they were doing so well that I started listening to their group rather than my own." She was excited and pleased by their independence in organizing the conversation both in accordance with norms (make sure everyone talks, talk with each other, talk explicitly about the text, and use the framework provided to guide the actual content of the discussion – e.g. what you liked, what it reminds you of, etc.). Alita is pulled out of this discussion, as happened during various activities at least once/ week for half an hour, when the speech teacher arrived to provide her with "services". The group gets stuck for quite some time on the phrase, "I like...." which both prevents interaction – little comment necessary when expressing a personal preference – but does provide them with language to get into the text since they can refer directly to the action or pictures in the text itself. Until she leaves the room, Alita's participation in this activity is second only to Erin. It is she and Erin together who construct the framework for the discussion. They extend each other's comments, they struggle to ensure that a conversation continues despite the lulls. It is Alita, perhaps with prompting by Erin, who draws the silent Detoine into the discussion. Alita is an active

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member of this discussion. In fact, until pulled out, she is a central member of the discussion.

In book discussions, formulaic statements, prompted topics for conversations, characteristic topics mediate and support Alita's interaction with her classmates and with the text. In the typical activity, where the teacher facilitated the discussion, the teacher is able to open conversation spaces for students to participate. Evident in the small group activity, is the way in which Cordita, not a popular student in this group, is marginalized. Like other classroom activities (e.g. morning message) the nature of the literate discourse is shaped by the constitution of the group itself. The proficiency with which the teacher can step back and allow students to step into new roles, is a significant component in the observed transformation in Alita's identity and role in book discussions across year one. By titrating the assistance she provided and the literate task in which Alita engaged, Kathy was able to support Alita in assuming new and more complex ways of talking about text as the year developed. Thus, near the end of the school year, Alita was able to actively engage in an interactive discussion without the presence of the teacher and begin to intentionally create a participatory space for another member of the group.

Alita is transforming her role and thus her identity in the group activity as well. She has moved from on the margins to inviting in a student on the margins. She has moved from utilizing illegitimate bids to enter the conversation to extending and changing responses to other classmates and directly negotiating text meaning itself. The more superficial nature of the small group discussion without the teacher's presence is a result of the altered participation framework. What it clearly demonstrates is Alita's ability to assume a central role in an activity that is typically defined by the teacher. She

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has internalized the participatory roles and uses the formulaic features of talk as a scaffold to support her interaction with her peers in ways that is still directly about the text.

The distribution of expertise is clearly significant. As will be supported in the analysis of morning message and thematic units, different social spaces afforded students with different opportunities to transform roles. Without the teacher, Alita assumed a role that perpetuated and extended the collective discussion. She had the second highest number of conversational turns, prior to leaving. She assumed more of a leadership role. However, Cordita in this setting was marginalized. In the student-facilitated group, without the teachers' presence, peer status directly mediates the participatory bids of students. The teachers typically make space for students in the conversations and are careful to ensure that all students' efforts to contribute are recognized. However, in this space, the group ignores Cordita, because they lack both the skill and the perspective on student learning that the teachers provides in her facilitation of the discussion. Also, the talk, without the teacher, focused on more superficial aspects of the text and students never once examined the meanings of the text but focused almost exclusively on parts of the book they liked as well as on possible motivations for the author. As evidenced by her changing participatory roles in the discussion, Alita has learned to use new and more complex discourse tools and interaction patterns which have transformed how she negotiates talk about and meaning of the text.

PART III: LEARNING THROUGH MORNING MESSAGE: TRANSFORMATION OF ROLES, ACQUISITION OF NORMS, APPROPRIATION OF TOOLS

The nature of the task: As children interact the knowledge each brings to bear in a collaborative activity space is mediated by the rules and norms that govern interaction as well as by the beliefs and values students selectively employ to further personal goals arising in the moment. Analysis of the literacy tasks in which an individual student engages is defined not solely by the problem or activity but rather by the particular arrangement of expertise, norms guiding the activity as well as peer interaction, availability to material and ideational tools, and by the participation structures which influence and assign individual roles. Cultural models (D'Andrade, 1992), which influence how subjects perceive themselves and imagine possible future identities and activities, serve as resources in much the same way that classroom materials (such as word walls or dictionaries) or interaction norms (which support peer editing and spelling assistance) contribute to providing students with a range of participatory roles.

Application of this model to analysis of morning message, enabled me to explore the ways in which activities provide psychological possibilities for Alita's literacy development that are not inherent in the curricular practice itself but rather mediated by (a) the affordances of material objects (e.g. a book, paper, word wall); (b) by the socio-cultural norms within which the activity occurs (peer assistance, group work, teacher modeling); (c) skills and strategies of the students present; (d) as well as by students expectations for and understanding of the purpose and process of literate practice. The literate task in which she engages is thus defined within the context itself. In this section, I analyze the ways in which the literate problem solving in which Alita engages is shaped

by the distribution of knowledge and expertise among the students themselves. By examining Alita's participation in a morning message routine from year one-occurring at the same time in which the first book discussion (discussed above) -I begin to expose the ways in which morning message, as both a genre and practice, forms a kind of cultural model, which as gradually appropriated by Alita comes to shape not only her use of literate conventions, but her stance towards personal experience (narration), as well as the relationship between her written and spoken language practices.

During a morning message activity in Mid-November of Alita's first grade year (four days after the first book discussion presented above), Alita once again employs the hand raising as a bid for participation. However, during this activity – unlike in the book discussion - raising ones hand is the sanctioned way of getting the floor. Students in fact are remonstrated for speaking out of turn or ignored while the teacher looks pointedly at the student who was called on after raising his/her hand and lets them say what another student may have just blurted out. Morning Message is essentially a narrative activity in which one student - the author - sits in a rocking chair facing the class and dictates a personal experience. Figure 5.4 describes the literate and pedagogical knowledge embedded in the activity. Figure YYY describes the social practices which accompany it.

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Figure 5.4

<u>MECHANICAL</u>	<u>CONTENT</u>	<u>PROCEDURAL</u>
● Capitalization ● commas ● end punctuation ● apostrophe (contractions, possessive)	● pronoun usage ● sequence of events ● key words (first, second, next, after) ● Adjectives/ description ● word choice (avoiding repetition) ● completeness & clarity of text ● topic sentences ● difference between phrase (as in title) and sentence	● indent a paragraph ● title ● editing marks (caret, arrows) ● first person to third person stance ● closing sentences ● Using Question words: <i>who, what, where, when, why, how</i> to organize content. ● Date all writing

Figure 5.5

- how to peer edit; questions, words, language to ask
- how to work together
- that text makes sense
- that everyone has something to contribute
- that authors need to consider the audience; writing process requires author adjust words, tone, text in response to audience demands.
- rereading is necessary to see if text makes sense. In producing text, author must constantly reread and edit
- oral language is different from written language
- it’s ok to make mistakes/ editing is not a mistake

Morning message as a practice: The teacher scribes it directly as spoken on large chart paper on an easel facing the rest of the class. The other students in the class sit on the floor (“on your bottoms,” the teachers remind them) and asking the author questions about the experience in order to develop a more coherent or complete text, suggest

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editing changes to add text conventions (e.g. capitalization, apostrophe's, punctuation, etc.), or alter the text to make it more responsive to the reader, thus, fulfilling the characteristics of this genre that it "answer the five 'w' questions and one 'h'".

During this particular message Kathy is standing at the chart facilitating the activity and Terri is at the back of the room, both to help deal with management issues in a more unobtrusive manner ('Darren keep your hands to yourself') as well as act as an audience member and make suggestions or ask questions about the text. The teacher who is not acting as scribe functions as an editor particularly when the students are finding it difficult to sort through the revision process. Roberto, on this day, is in the author's chair. Kathy begins by writing the question words after being told to do so by one of the students. When prompted by her to tell "What do I do next?" another student tells her to "push over" the first line (i.e. indent). Then Kathy asks Roberto to dictate his first sentence. It's about going to "Chuckie Cheese". They spend a lot of time just editing the first sentence and then Roberto dictates his second sentence." When we got there the people put a stamp on our hand." While all of this is going on Alita is sitting quietly towards the right side of the group with her thumb in her mouth. During the conversation that immediately ensued about the editing changes needed in the second sentence Alita finally raised her hand and the Kathy called on her.

She wanted to change "our" to Roberto. "When we got there, the people put a stamp on Roberto hand."

They continue editing the second sentence. During this time, Alita is sitting there quietly, unmoving though occasionally sucking her thumb amidst the other children's

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raised hands. After Roberto dictates his fourth sentence, Alita raises her hand for a moment.

Kathy hears someone laughing at someone else's suggestion and gives a warning, but it's not clear who laughed. She emphasizes that it is not acceptable to laugh at anyone else's suggestions. Alita's hand goes down as other children get called on. She rests her head on her left hand. Her expression is slack as if bored but her eyes remain fixed on the chart.

Kathy asks for question words, several children raise their hands and stretch taller, as if they are eager to be called on. Alita's head is on her hand again. For a brief moment she raises her hand, but just for a moment as Kathy calls on Josh and then rereads the whole message so far. Kathy asks for "One more question for Roberto." She lets Roberto choose. Can't hear whom he chooses. Whoever it was wanted to know how Roberto's family got there. Lots of thumbs are down after she wrote the sentence. Kathy says, "Goodness, who hasn't helped me much yet?" Calls on B.J., then Larissa. Alita's hand starts to go up; then it goes back down again. Larissa wants Kathy to clarify that they went in "their" car (not somebody else's). Kathy uses the "teachable moment" to point out the use of possessive "their" spelled t-h-e-i-r.

They continue clarifying the message. Alita looks up at the board for a second or two, then looks at the floor. She sort of alternates between looking at the board and looking at the floor. The whole time, her head is resting on her hand. Can't hear if she reads along as the class reads the whole message, but it doesn't sound like it. Now it looks like she's sucking her thumb, but just for a second.

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Kathy asks for a closing sentence. Hands are raised, including Alita's but it looks like she's raising it halfheartedly. Roberto calls on a different girl. Kathy asks who has a different idea for a closing sentence. Alita again raises her hand halfheartedly but just for a second. Alita's hand goes up and then down. Other kids have their hands raised and keep them up. Kathy asks Roberto to choose one more person, but Alita doesn't raise her hand.

In morning message you can't "peg" students into particular kinds of editing roles "she's a period person or he's a capitalization person." Being called on serves to make further participation possible. Children who are called on for something very simple often come back with a very profound and complex interaction. Without participation you don't have a way to learn. When Kathy misses Alita's bid to participate that's a serious problem. When her hand goes down, that's a problem. Does she stop raising her hand because she has not yet been called upon?

Kathy points out to Roberto the choices for his closing sentence. They reread the whole mm to help him choose. Kathy asks for ideas for titles. Calls on Valerie first, because she said earlier that she had an idea for a title. After Valerie gives her idea, other kids raise their hands, but not Alita. She is just sitting there in the background, with her head still resting on her left hand. Kathy reads the suggestions for titles to Roberto so he can choose.

They all read the whole message together. Then Alita sits up and raises her hand high. This is the first time her posture, gestures, and facial expression demonstrate real interest, even eagerness to participate. She wants to be one of the kids who come up to

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read and point. Kathy, however, chooses three boys who also have been little involved in the activity.

Noticing how and where Alita bids for participation. Typical pose is sucking her thumb with head on other hand resting on her knees. Hand half raises and bobs up and down. However, at the end when students are selected by the author to come up front and “read” the text pointing to each word as the teacher, the author, and three students fingerprint to the words on the chart paper and lead the class in a choral re-reading. Alita typically raises her hand high, waving it almost, in a bid to enter. In a morning message this same month, in which she was selected to help read, she stood in front of the text, picked up a marker independently and moved it along the text as the class read in the same manner as the teacher does during the activity during re-readings. You get the sense from her behavior during these public times that Alita likes to “lead” activities and assume the teachers role through the use of the marker as a mark of leadership and authority. However, unlike the teacher she was not accurate in aligning the choral reading with the marker touch. Kathy had her stop using the marker because she was moving rather randomly across the words and suggested that Alita and the other students stand next to the chart paper and read while she pointed.

While this seems to marginalize Alita, it served an important instructional purpose and in fact reframes Alita’s activity from involvement to literate activity. Kathy talks about fingerprinting as one of the key ways in which she supports word consciousness and phonological awareness over the course of the day. Although in guiding reading groups each day student work on target sounds and letter patterns, literacy acquisition is supported, Kathy believes by helping students to use their developing knowledge of

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sound-symbol patterns in as many activities throughout the day as possible. Kathy goal in having Alita step aside is not to call attention to her failure in a public way, but rather to provide both Alita as well as her classmates access to a practice that provided correspondence between the written text and the spoken word. The class was involved in a choral rereading, therefore, even Alita wouldn't benefit from standing close to the text were she not physically oriented to the match between the spoken and written word. A key literacy opportunity would have been denied Alita and the classmates were the teacher concerned solely with participation defined as engagement with little regard to the function of participation and the purpose of the activity norms in supporting literacy engagement. This pedagogical move of the teachers, while only a tiny fraction of the entire activity, is significant in exposing the key framework organizing teachers interactions with individual students in the activity setting. individual participation plays in literacy development.....As in the book discussion, students in morning message often mimicked the participatory bids they heard other students use. For changing involving literate conventions (e.g. adding periods, capitalizing names) this was an easy way to find entry into the activity. To negotiate text meaning, coherency, or Alita in particular, would raise her hand, be called on and thenmy assuming language or mimicking the participatory bids they had heard other students successfully use, Alita was able to find entry into the literate work of the group. However, in the instance when she picked up the marker to "lead" the choral rereading she mimicked a physical activity that served no literate function. She was activity but *not* engaged in literate work. By altering Alita's activity, Kathy reframed "pointing" from merely directing to once again

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supporting the rereading of the text and modeling the correspondence between the spoken and written word. Activity norms served to function not only asbut

Kathy does, however, try to position students as experts in morning message activities. One way in which she does this is through putting them in the role of teacher or resource where they explain to others the purpose of their role. It doesn't function as a "testing" function in a more traditional I-R-E format but rather as a way of privileging Alita's knowledge and broadcasting or disseminating it to the group. It's a way of teaching the class by making student knowledge a resource for the community. For example in a morning message in late March of that year, Alita's editing change serves as a teaching opportunity for the class and positions Alita's expertise as a resource for the community work. Alita and Kathy, in fact, follow a formulaic pattern of talk about underlining, which Alita has heard frequently before. Alita, as a first grade special education student, is demonstrating here not only an important piece of understanding explain the construction of paragraphs and texts – they need topic sentences and she's noticed that unintentionally one has been composed already – but she's also able to be meta-cognitive about the editing role she just played.

Kathy: Alita what did you say that you wanted us to do?

Alita: Underline it

Kathy: Why should we underline it?

Alita: Because it's the topic sentence

Kathy: It's the topic sentence so Alita do you now have an idea what all-
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Alita: Going to his Uncle's house

Kathy: Sure that's what I thought.

Very little explicit teaching occurs during morning message, rather the teachers either uses a Socratic method to introduce new literate conventions, or mentions them in an aside and then waits until a student brings it up again to celebrate the student and position the knowledge as part of the community. This is in part why Kathy and Terri view the grammatical and literary goals of morning message as something that the students themselves define. Kathy explains that they often introduce things and “then wait to see if they're ready to pick them up.” Terri added that they now “introduce ideas much earlier - at the start of the year. Students are ready for so much more than we ever thought they could handle.” Kathy explained that having the older students in the room has “pushed us. They ask for information and we give it before I would have thought they were ready. Then even the little guys are learning and using it.” They explained that the presence of third grade students in the classroom had forced them to introduce text conventions that they never had used with before with their first and second graders (e.g. making text more interesting through using adjectives and adverbs: developing more complex sentence structures and simplifying the text but merging sentences, using apostrophes to show possessives). What surprised them, then, was the facility with which even the young students began to critique and alter text using this knowledge. The distribution of expertise in the classroom, thus, provided students with more and more complex approaches to text construction.

Participation Structures and Distinct Cognitive Spaces

In this section, I foreground the ways in which the division of labor mediates Alita's participation in the group and the cognitive roles she plays in text composition. Specifically, I examine how the participation structure of the activity influences the distribution of expertise and thus the literate goals that Alita constructs. Altering the participation structure of the morning message activity, from whole class to small group to individual, I suggest, engages Alita in a qualitatively different literate task. Because there are multiple points of entry and a range of participation strategies deemed literate (and thus legitimated) ability and disability are a function of the beliefs about the meaning of individual behaviors. Alita learns to participate in the morning message in a way that is consistent with the literate goals which frame that activity; her performance is competent in the situated context of the activity and she is becoming increasingly more able to assume new roles and utilize more varied strategies. In this section, I examine how the participation structure of the activity itself alters the tools and resources available for Alita's use. Therefore, the nature of the literate task shifts as a function of the knowledge and expertise available to Alita in the context of the activity itself.

The data I employ in this section draws from three morning message events that occur in three distinct activity spaces where the significant feature distinguishing each is the alteration of participation structure. The videotapes and textual products of these three events were taken within a three week time period all in year three of this case study when Alita was in third grade. The individual morning message was videotaped on May 17, the small group morning message on May 25 and the whole class morning message with Alita as the author was on June 01. Besides the observation data and

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analysis of the discursive features of the group, I had Alita as well view selected episodes of each of these events to talk about the roles and responsibilities of group members and the goals that she believed defined the activity.

The distribution of labor in the each activity setting provides Alita differential opportunities for apprenticeship in ways of knowing and doing that are beyond her independent performance. The form in which this participation occurs is integrally connected with the function in which participants linguistic resources serve in the construction of the narrative.

Whole class morning message, Year 2 : The teacher begins the activity as she always does by asking students what needs to be done first. The question words are given and Kathy asks the students why it is important to consider the question words when writing a text. It takes several students for her to call on before one indicates that the question words prompt the readers to ask, “Who is it about, why did they do that” and so on in order “to make it [the text] complete.” Throughout this interaction, Alita looks off passively into the group nonresponsive to the teacher’s queries. She seems to assume that her goal is solely to dictate the text in such a way that she tells a story for the teacher to write.

When asked to begin the narrative Alita dictates in a slow deliberative fashion as if providing assistance for the teachers writing “Today is my cousin’s birthday” Alita leans sideways in the chair to look up at the text. The teacher writes the text as dictated and invites students then to begin making changes to the text. Throughout this Alita looks out into the seated group of students and does not respond, chewing on her finger and occasionally looking up at he text. Even when Kathy asks the students for

clarification about “whose birthday is it?” Alita does not respond either in gesture, attention, or efforts to orally respond. A period is put in, students change “my” to “Alita” and then to “Alita’s” adding the apostrophe “s” to show ownership. Then they question her about who her cousin is and Asha says, “Shaminque.” One of the students tells the teacher what changes are necessary to make to alter the text to accommodate that.

The text now reads, “Today is Alita’s cousin’s, Shaminque’s birthday.” Kathy then asks “What else would you like to tell us, Alita?” and Alita again dictates a sentence. “I..am.. helping... her...[long pause] open her presents.” She begins the sentence slowly as if thinking aloud. It’s important here to notice how Alita’s physical presence indicates how she defines her role in the activity. She sits in the rocking chair, leans forward to look at the class, twists sideways and rests her head on the arm of the chair or on her leg to watch Kathy write in the text, sits back again then leads her head on her hand. At times she plays with her hair, puts her finger in her mouth, looks off. The literate tasks within which she engages focus solely on synthesizing an experience such that information can be communicated in single statements. She had to select an experience and organize it in a way that reflects the narrative structure in a class where approximately 3-5 sentences capture the entire experience itself. Editing changes are not her concern but rather she attends to the structure of the text itself as well as the accuracy of the language in representing her experience.

A student makes a change that uses an inappropriate verb form (“Alita is go helping her open her presents”). As Kathy reads the sentence all the students including Alita put their thumb down. It isn’t clear, though, that this gesture involves a bid for the floor in order to make a change in the language of the written text itself. doesn’t seem

clear that in this case she is bidding for the floor. She had been sitting looking around the room, then head on her hand, looking out at the group when students all started putting their thumb down. After Kathy read the sentence above, Darren who was sitting in front of Alita sat up on his knees and shook his thumb down high in the air. Alita looked at him a moment and then as he became more animated in his movements suddenly started moving her thumb down then switched it up then down as if trying to participate without clear intentions involving the text to motivate it. When Kathy asked if someone wanted to help make the change, Alita put her hand down. She didn't, perhaps, really want to provide new language for the text but rather wished to follow the norms guiding participation.

Kathy asks the class questions, "Why do we need a capital?" several students shout out but Alita sits back passively. After rereading the text as its written Alita puts her thumb down again and Kathy immediately calls on her. Alita says, "Darren is helping her. It's not just me. Darren is helping her too" in order to clarify who it is that is involved in the action of the story. Kathy asks her, "So how can we get that information in there? Kathy looks at her and Alita leans sideways to glance between the text and Kathy. There is a long wait time (22 seconds) which seems interminable. Finally Alita states, "Alita Darren is helping her." Kathy asks, "So I'm going to cross out she again and put Alita and Darren is helping her" [rising intonation as in a question] and Alita nods.

Notice that unlike the changes typically made by students "cross out she and put Alita" Alita dictates a sentence. It isn't grammatically correct and unlike the norms for the procedure Kathy accepts it adding the "and" as she writes. Perhaps she didn't hear

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the missing conjunction or more likely she wanted to accept Alita's efforts at introducing language. As is evident by the long wait time, the task of modifying the language used in the written text to better represent the experience itself is extremely difficult for Alita. In language we revise and alter text in dialogic encounters where much is left unstated but can be assumed through the shared agreement between interlocutors. However, the oral to written translation requires that meaning be fixed in the text on paper. Alita's task becomes therefore that of not merely recounting experience but wrestling with the linguistic demands of talk on text.

After the change is made, it is Kathy who asks Alita to once again participate in the activity by dictating the next sentence she wishes to add to the text. Alita responds directly as well to student questions to her in order to extend or clarify the text such as when Yolanda asks her, "How do you know what you are going to have for dinner?" To which Alita replies, "My mom told us." And then she falls silent again. The composition of this morning message is characterized by a great many efforts *on the part of Alita's classmates* to both simplify and clarify the relationships of people in the text. Because there are a number of names that are used to indicate ownership, the text quickly becomes awkward and unwieldy (e.g. Today is Alita and Darren's cousin's, Shaminque's birthday). Alita sits passively as students attempt to modify the text making suggestions on how to arrange the words. A second time, Kathy looks at Alita and suggests that she add the information and create the language. There is silence from Alita as before and her cousin Darren (the same one mentioned in the text) immediately jumps in and provides the language "Alita's cousin." He is remonstrated by the teacher, "David, this is Alita's message" but Alita looks at Darren and then repeats his language.

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In order to clarify the actors in the text, a student suggests removing a pronoun and replacing it with the person's name. Thus far, Kathy has asked the class to express a preference for such changes, but this time Kathy invites Alita herself to evaluate the structure of the sentence and express a preference for wording. Perhaps, it is because either form is grammatically accurate and modification of the text in this instance reflects personal style. Kathy asks, "Would you like it, Alita, to have 'she is going to have her party at Alita's house Or Shaminique is going to have her party at Alita's house?'" Under his breath but audible, the student who suggested the change comments, "Shaminique." Once again Alita looks at her classmate and appears willing to adapt his suggestion. She answers Kathy with one word, "Shaminique."

When responding to the questions of students she answers them simply providing the information but not creating any changes in the text which would facilitate the addition of this new information into the composition. In fact, her response requires the student to read into it the next feature of the narrative itself.

Kathy: Can anybody think of a 'how' question to ask Alita?

Rebecca: How are you going to put the decorations up?

Alita: my mom and my grandma and my Auntie Tasha " *and she proceeds to name a long list of relatives who apparently will be at the birthday party and will help with the decorations. It is Rebecca then who responds with a sentence that technically addresses the question.*

R: *begins rereading the text as written aloud and then adds "Ummm...Alita and Darren's four aunts and Alita's mom is going to help with the decorations [pause] and Darren's mom."*

The sentence is "wordy" as Kathy notes and a bit awkward and the students work for a while to streamline it; eventually it becomes "their family" helps with the decorations. Important to note though that it is Rebecca not Alita who provides the language for the text that the students work with. Evidently aware that Alita's long list of

names is inappropriate given the linguistic conventions of written text. she attempts to synthesize the information Alita provided and create a sentence that reflects written linguistic patterns for this activity. There are two times in which Alita participates in the construction process. After a number of students have offered suggestions for how to simplify the text, the conclusion the class reaches is just to write Alita and her family....” Alita perks up in her chair as says, “actually, it’s not the family. It’s just the grownups.” This participation is similar to that she used in editorial insertion earlier when Kathy reread the text as it stood and Alita clarified it by commenting that “Darren is going to help her open her presents, too.”

Alita’s editorial remarks are understood by the teacher and the class as providing information and not efforts to reconstruct the text or directly edit it herself. Her first clarifying remark would have created a redundant sentence were it to have been left as stated ((She is going to help her cousin open her presents. Darren is going to help her open her presents too). It’s likely however, that she did not expect Kathy to add the statement as dictated but was rather providing additional information to refine and make more accurate and specific what was already included in the text. Regardless, the response by the class and the teachers to these statements (So how would you like me to change it) positions her interactions as relevant to the information communicated in the text and not the linguistic features of it. Alita’s apparent deference to this characterization of her comments is indicated both by her passive acceptance in the groups changes to the language but her unwillingness to accept as it stands information which is not representative of her experience. Additionally, she defers as well to the class in constructing a closing sentence and title. As described earlier, part of the

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morning message process is to create a closing sentence and title following the composition of the narrative. In this case Alita asks for “help” and students offer suggestions for closing sentences and titles. Alita then picks from the suggestions offered.

One of last rereads. Kathy, “we’re going to reread and I need your help.” Alita puts her finger up on the text and Kathy asks her to put it down which she does while Kathy rereads the entire text one last time. Then Kathy asks her to pick two friends to come up and reread the text with her. Alita does so. The two other students stand off to the left of the text, Alita stands in the front to the right, holding the marker, attempting to fingerpoint. and lead the class in a choral rereading. Alita, however, randomly points to words, following a linear path but following in a haphazard fashion Kathy’s finger. She isn’t able to follow the text and skips over words. The text is rather “messy” with the number of changes requiring insertions above and below the original text. However, even on lines without any modifications to the original written language, she jumps over words trying to follow where Kathy’s finger is pointing. Her reading is slightly behind Kathy’s and the rest of the class.

Acquisition spaces: Whole class morning message thus serves as an “acquisition spaces” where literacy tasks are modeled and participation is supported. The teachers explain the whole group morning message context as both an opportunity to acquire new skills and strategies as well as to demonstrate them in a way in which assistance is supported. Terri comments that:

Morning Message has gotten them to see periods. They are editing in their journals now; for instance, changing “I” to a name....students now are able to take chances. At the beginning of the year, they weren’t participating. Everyone has learned something from morning message. Cordita [an educably mentally

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impaired student] has got the capital “I”. It’ll be the one thing she focuses on...All have gained in literacy. All know about spaces between words. We teach those skills in the context of lessons. We don’t teach capitals and periods separately. Kids have learned general literacy knowledge....At the beginning of the year, some kids looked at print upside down. Now they are writing more left to right. They have constant practice. Erin doesn’t write backwards anymore.

The activity system provides all students access to the literacy practices of the collective through both seeing and hearing as well as through participation in contexts which support and extend students cognitive routines. Perhaps this is why the teachers consider that all the literacy activities in their day are extensions of the strategies, skills, and literate routines that are modeled within the morning message practice. Teachers are required, then, to both titrate the assistance they provide to students as well as gauge students readiness to “try on” new routines. Kathy explains that in morning message:

We focus on correct punctuation, on having the students speak in a complete sentence. You go with what their response is. We have somewhat of a plan, but if someone brings something up, we go with it. We teach all editing skills in Morning Message. We use finger pointing. An important thing is to talk as you are doing it, explain as you go. Model your thinking out loud, so they know how to think about their writing.

Kathy’s comment indicates both the flexibility the activity structure provides for supporting student participation as well as her changing understanding of the cognitive possibilities inherent in the practice. “You go with what their response is” she says. By that she means that she uses the possibilities afforded by the text itself as well as students receptivity to increasing the sophistication and complexity of the text structure as a guide in monitoring and changing the literate goals for students. In fact there were several times, that skills would be introduced by the teachers and not picked up immediately. In talking about this, Kathy and Terri said that they are guided in part by the district

curriculum and in part by their sense of how children are using language in other parts of the day as a basis for determining when to set new tools before them. Terri adds,

Our main goal is to get everyone involved, everyone can make an editing correction. Everyone has [at least] one thing that they can do. Morning message throws all of the literacy skills out there all at one in a quick lesson. When kids see that their friend knows something different, they want to copy their friend. If all of the [editing] ideas are out there, they will pick ideas to use.

This indicates that a central goal in teachers mind for this activity is participation. They believe that interaction with others, even those more competent in conventional literacy than themselves, provides students with both access to the ideas and tools of the group as well as motivation to acquire them. The extent to which this is true in Alita's case can best be observed through an analysis of her participation in whole group activities over time as well as a comparison between the literate tasks she assumes in the whole group versus those she assumes in the small group activity (below).

Small group – appropriation space: It is in the small group, however, that Alita is enabled to engage in the kind of problem solving practices that foster increased understanding about the nature of the genre itself. In these Alita is further enabled to appropriate the conventions and norms associated with both conventional literacy and the local features of the narrative genre. Research (e.g. cite cite cite) suggests that small group collaboration provides increased incidents of the kinds of sociocognitive conflict (see Almasi, 199x Hatano, 199x; Palincsar, 198x) which fosters depth of understanding about cognitive tools and their function in the performance of particular academic activities. Hatano (199x) argues that small groups provide motivation for engagement in problem solving activity. In an analysis of children's collaborative mathematics activity,

he finds that children are more likely to engage in cognitive activity which endeavors to understand the mathematical problems and less like to engage in mathematical routines attentive to performance as divorced from the mathematical context. The mathematical task in which children engage, he argues, thus is strongly influenced by the participation structure within which a mathematical problem is encountered. Almasi suggests that this is true in book discussions as well noting the increased frequency of sociocognitive conflict – problem solving activity oriented towards understanding the nature and origin of a problem – increases in peer group discussions as opposed to teacher led discussion.

While the small group is often not able to provide the support in clarifying or supporting the participation of students in newly acquired roles and routines, it does force students to clarify the nature and meaning of their participatory moves. In the small group students must assume responsibility for coordinating their actions with those of others. Students together must coordinate their individual efforts to more closely approximate the goals and purposes of others in the group. They must read the text as well as read each other's intentions and meanings. Joint engagement in the small group assumes an affective dimension as students must address not only the cognitive demands of literate tasks but also the interpersonal implications for individual moves. It is by observing students interactions in small group settings that teachers noticed that students were appropriating their discursive actions as well. Terri comments that, "We've seen some instances of copying teacher behavior" as students seek ways to share responsibility for the composition process. They reread, fingerprint, asks students to clarify the purpose for the change ("Why does a period go here, Joshua?" asks a classmate who is scribing the narrative for the group), and adapt a stance towards the activity that indicates

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a responsibility for sharing the floor as well as ensuring the understanding of all students such as when Alita attempts, unsuccessfully, to explain to Joshua why she is crossing out Jacquero's text, changing I to him. Joshua is clearly upset that she is changing "what he said," and Alita legitimizes. The small group activity described below occurs a little over three weeks from the whole group activity described above. Notice the significant difference in the literacy tasks in which Alita assumes. Because the knowledge and roles are distributed differently as the participation structure for the task changes, Alita's engagement in literate practices alters as a function of the division of labor in the activity setting. She thus constructs new cognitive routines to meet the changing demands of the tasks.

Small group – March, Year 2: In this group there were four participants, Alita, Jacquero an LD student in his 2nd year in the classroom, Yolanda a regular education 3rd grade student in her first year in the classroom, and Joshua an LD first grader who has only been in the classroom for a few months. The first few minutes of the group morning message activity were spent in determining the procedural roles that each participant would play. Alita immediately claims her role, "I'm going to edit." Yolanda then steps in and decides the roles that the rest will play: Joshua will put in the periods, Jacquero will dictate the narrative, and Yolanda will do the writing. There are no arguments. After group members encouraging him to tell "something exciting that you've done" and thus follow the dictates of the genre characteristics in this classroom, Jacquero begins telling about going to the beach the previous summer and going swimming. He starts with "I was swimming." He's careful to dictate only one sentence at a time so Yolanda

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has time to write down which she does quite fluently and with no hesitation over spelling. Immediately while Yolanda is still writing, Joshua clamors to add the period and Alita starts making the kinds of editing corrections to the text that reflect print conventions (e.g. “capital I” she calls out). Additionally, before the first sentence is even complete Alita and Yolanda both ask Jacquero questions reflecting the “question words” which guide the organization and content of the text. Yolanda, while simultaneously writing the sentence, asks, “I was swimming [pause while she is writing] swimming. I was swimming [all this is said to herself then she looks up at Jacquero] Who went swimming?”

Jacquero: I went swimming [slight emphasis on “I”]

Y: with [rising intonation to ask a question]

There is a brief altercation with Joshua who wants to put the period in the text. He seizes the marker which Yolanda has just set down and attempts to put a mark in the text at the end of the line rather than at the end of the sentence. Alita and Yolanda both correct him and point to the place to put the period and then Yolanda takes the marker back.

Jacquero dictates another sentence and there are further queries about the information presented that reflect the local features of the morning message narrative. Alita wants to know “Why” he went to the beach. Jacquero responds, “Cause it was summer.” Alita seems to review the question words and asks, “Why, how, who” None of the other students respond and this seems to be Alita reviewing the information to herself. The teacher who has been present for a few minutes asks if they have all the information. Joshua nods yes but Alita says, “No. We don’t know how they got there.” Kathy, the teacher responds, “Alright. How are you going to find that out?” Here is another place

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where Alita's response implies a tacit question but the teacher encourages her to frame as a question to the author to actually pursue the information. As I've mentioned, the teachers think that helping students acquire "the language" associated with a particular practice is important. When encountering a small group of students with conflict, teachers help by either providing language or cues referring them back to the rules guiding the activity.

Alita: How did you all get there?"

J: In a car.

Yolanda is writing this down.

Alita: What color was the car?

J: It was red...

Kathy asks again, "Now do you have enough information to write?" The students say, "noooo." Kathy asks, "what else do you need?"

J: ummm...The question words up there (points to question words on the wall)
There's a pause and then Yolanda who looked with the other students up on the wall asks "Where did you go?" After receiving an answer to that question from Jacquero and writing it down, Yolanda turns to him again, "When did you go?"

Alita rereads constantly always being careful to touch the words either with the marker or with her finger. She fingerprints constantly. Also, she seems more receptive to Joshua indicating to him when it's his turn to put in a period and where to put it. She also rebukes him when he does it inaccurately such as when he put in two periods. The editing corrections Alita makes predominantly deal with the change from first to third person. For example ("I" becomes "Jacquero"; "We" becomes "They" and "me" becomes "him"). Joshua gets upset each time Alita makes these changes. At one point he struggles to understand why she is crossing out the words Yolanda had written "Why did you cross that out, Alita?" When they ignore him, he asks again, "Why did you [pause]" Alita and Yolanda chorally respond "We didn't go." The ease with which both

girls simultaneously responded to Joshua's question with an identical response is a further indication of the highly scripted nature of morning message.

A surprising feature of Alita's interaction is her adept use of fingerpointing and rereading as she leads the group in a number of rehearsals of the text. This is particularly significant given the difficulty which she encounters when reading unfamiliar text. Her sort scores at this time indicate she is at pre-primary reading level. The accuracy of her fingerpointing stands in marked contrast to her erratic pointing of the previous year.

When Yolanda continues a stream of comments attempting to get Jacquero to identify very specifically who he went to the beach with even though he'd already said he went to the beach with his mom and then in response to her queries he revised his statement to he went with Lucy. Yolanda clearly wants him to specify in his sentence the exact wording. Alita clarifies "Lucy is his *mom*". The emphasis she places on this last word suggests that Yolanda should know this. However, Yolanda is clearly following the scripted process where the author must indicate with the exact language the relationship between names and roles.

She demonstrates knowledge of the local features of the morning message genre through reference to the question words to help guide Jacquero's narrative construction. she puts a comma in, she uses the pen to fingerpoint and continue to rehearse the text to assist the author in construction of a narrative as well as to reflect on the quality of the text in line with, she does the kind of editing marks to indicate a first to third person switch, she tries to explain to Joshua why she has to do these editing marks but is unable to communicate in a way Joshua understands, she knows the difference between a sentence and a line and helps in drawing in Joshua to participate, she asks the group for

assistance in spelling a word, she moves from her spot at the table to come around to better see the text and make editing changes – the others remain physically in one spot, she makes the changes without prompting by others quickly jumping in. Yolanda negates only x changes that she suggests – at one point she wants to cross out the “but” in the middle of Jacquero’s sentence (“Jacquero brother tried to trip his but I did a backflip in the water”) In the whole class morning message there had been some discussion at this point about not beginning sentences with “And” or “but” perhaps Alita thinks that Jacquero is attempting to create two sentences. When Yolanda says no, Alita apparently defers to her because she makes no further comments.

As a result of the rereading, Joshua “hears” a problem that is frequently commented upon in whole class morning message –repetitive words. “Too many...too many Jacquero.” However, because he is unable to correct the problem, the group ignores his efforts and moves on.

Classroom norms guiding joint engagement are more than merely class “rules” for treating people nicely. Rather they are the ways in which participation is facilitated for the purpose of engaging in a particular process. Norms for who talks, when, and for what purpose are enacted with respect to the goals of the particular activity itself. Students selectively appropriate them to support desired participation. Typically it is when the norms are broken that we can best see how they organize interaction. In the March 99 small group morning message activity, Joshua was often ignored by Yolanda and to a lesser extent Alita who were doing the majority of work around the text. Clearly he wishes to participate, he has a question about the justification for the changes that Alita is making in the text, that are being explicitly supported by Yolanda, he wants to express his

disagreement with what they are doing and he seems to dislike something about the text itself (he later indicates the redundant use of the author's name in the text is a problem.) After bidding for the floor through his speech activity, he falls silent and raises his hand with his thumb down. In the whole class activity this is a signal that something in the text is problematic and serves as a bid for the floor. The teacher would call on someone with their thumb down and get him/her to explain what is wrong with the text and what must be done to fix it. He is ignored however. Joshua calls the group to account for this and points out that they aren't following the conventions of the practice.

What is being broken, however, is not merely norms for social interaction but the structure of the activity itself. A central piece in performing the practice is evaluating the text and interacting with the author and/or teacher in making text transformations. If Joshua had merely said something like students weren't listening to him or being nice to him, it's doubtful whether they would have responded; it would be an appeal to a moral code. What Joshua does do is appeal to the "rules" of that practice. Immediately, Alita, who seems particular sensitive to the importance of the process to be followed as opposed to Yolanda who is more concerned about the text. Alita in fact has been the one to most quickly point out the places in which Joshua participates and to try to provide explanations to him. Yolanda is more likely to ignore him. It could be supposed that because at this time Alita relies a great deal on the procedural features of the practice herself to assist participation, she's particular sensitive to these participatory bids based upon practice rules by others.

JO: Yolanda, you see my thumb like this. That means you're supposed to..

Jo: Yolanda, you are supposed to take me.

Alita calls on Joshua and then Yolanda looks at him and says, “Joshua, I picked you.”

Alita responds immediately to concerns that the norms for participation are being violated, perhaps, in part because her participation is still explicitly mediated by the rules governing participation. The nature of the editing changes that Alita makes tend to strictly adhere to the rules associated with performing the whole class practice. It seems evident that she makes use of procedural rules to mediate the comprehension and composition of the narrative itself.

J: We went because it was hot outside.

A: We didn’t go.

Y: (signals to her to wait)

J: Alita, this is what I’m supposed to do.

A: I know but I’m going to cross out the ‘we’ because “we didn’t go.

Jacquero interprets Alita’s editing comment as a criticism of his knowledge of an accurate morning message text. As if letting her know that he understands the rules governing the final text structure he reminds her that he is doing “what I’m supposed to do” which is narrate and allow the group to make the switch from first to third person. Alita, indicates that she wasn’t criticizing him but was rather assuming her appropriate role which was to notice the changes necessary in the text and provide an explanation (using the genre language phrase) to justify her actions. Her analysis of what makes a “good” narrative is defined by the “rules” which govern the composition process.

Once again Joshua seems to struggle with the rationale behind Alita's editing changes and gets upset that Alita is altering the text which the author, Jacquero, dictated. It is as if Joshua sees the text as an exact representation of the speaker's words rather than a specific kind of discursive activity based upon the specific features for the morning message practice as they are enacted in this classroom. When Alita does an editing change towards the end of the message, Joshua responds clearly upset.

J: Alita, no. That's how Jacquero wanted to put it. Jacquero wanted to put it like that.

Y: No, no, no. Joshua, she is editing.

JO: I know. That is how Jacquero wanted it.

Y: No, that is how he said it.

Yolanda tries to make the distinction between the spoken text and the morning message practice which leads to a final text. As evidenced by his continuing frustration with the changes that Alita is making in the text, Joshua doesn't really understand this feature of the class narrative genre. The students attempt to bridge this gap but are unable to provide the kind of explanation that is helpful to Joshua. While in the small group, students are all required to assume multiple roles and provide rationale's for their action in a way that is legitimized by the collective, they are limited in their ability to provide assistance for their peers in assuming new cognitive tasks.

Individual Space – internalizing and making public: When writing individually, Alita not only is required to plan the structure and content of the narrative, assuming the task demands in which she demonstrated when as the author in the whole class message,

she additionally faced with the demands of employing language reflecting the written features of narrative genres in this classroom as well. Indeed her efforts are largely focused on the sounding out words. She follows the routines of the practice in ways that indicate internalization of participatory roles acts to guide her composition process. Question words are immediately placed on the left side of the page. She writes her first sentence, subvocalizing as she does so, sounding out words, stopping to erase. She immediately goes back to cross out the “I” and write Alita above it. She rereads it. Then she makes an insertion in the text using a caret as the editing mark to put in the appropriate day in which this event happened. She crosses out the question word “when”. The pattern of performance follows very tightly this routine. She is not consistent in altering the text to reflect a third person point of view but she does attempt these changes. She draws an arrow to “push in” (indent) her text. She addresses answers to all the question words in her text mostly through altering the text by adding words or phrases. She rereads continuously. At the end, she provides two possible conclusions and then circles one. A title is written at the top and then circled. The routine of the practice in fact guides her independent performance. The question words act as tools to prompt a particular form of narrative construction. She labors over the spelling, sounding words out carefully. Elongating the words in an effort to hear the significant phonemes. The task takes quite a bit of time. The structure of the text is uncomplicated. She finishes and takes to the teacher to whom she dictates her text. Several words are written above her language to clarify it for a reader unable to decode her invented spelling.

Cognitive affordances in different participation structures: The nature of the literate tasks is significantly different for the students when the participation structure alters from whole to small group. In the whole group, the teacher acts to facilitate student participation, students themselves must manage this. Norms for group interaction help to facilitate this process and you see Joshua at one point appealing to these when his efforts to participate by the group, he appeals to the rules governing both the literate practice as well as group interaction in first his thumb up as well his pointed reminder to the group that “you supposed to call on me.”

In the whole class activity, the teacher does the actual scribing of the text. Other than when Kathy appeals to the class and other adults in the room for assistance with a word (and she does so on occasion because as all the students know she often needs “help” with her spelling), students need not attend to the phonological relationship between spoken and written language forms. The literacy tasks engaged in by the students as readers/audience primarily deal with evaluating and altering the text to reflect the local features for narrative genre construction and to follow the norms associated with engaging in the composition process itself. The teacher assumes primary responsibility for managing the social interaction as well as providing the kind of instructional support that mediates the learning of individuals in the group. For example, in the whole class morning message Kathy, the teacher, scaffolds the cognitive burden involved in participation through engaging in an IRE format such as she did with Alita in the topic sentence example which constrains the focus of Alita’s attention on the genre features and purposes. Additionally, she provides access to participation through calling on students who bid for the floor, revoicing responses, and preserving “think time” through

reminding students to be quiet and patient while waiting for students to respond. She validates and even encourages students' assumption of responsibility to seek assistance such as when she asked Alita if she wanted to construct a concluding sentence herself or seek "help" from a friend. This reinforces the notion that literacy is about collaborative rather than independent effort. Competence arises because of participation; it is not a prerequisite to it.

In the whole group, therefore, the students are almost completely preempted from having to deal with the phonological requirements for text composition. Responsibility for monitoring the progress of the task and accomplishing in a particular period of time becomes an issue that students in the whole class setting never address. Typically a whole class morning message makes use of about 45 minute of time. The time required for the task expands and contracts given the nature of the text and student participation. The teachers as well occasionally modify the duration of the task if other curricular activities cause changes in the day. The important point is that teachers are responsible for making decisions about the time and this influences how much attention they let students give to altering the text of questioning the author. In the small group task, however, students are faced with need to create a text within a period of time that is rather indeterminate for them. Students as well must manage the collaboration. Rather than operating side to side or discursively they now must interact and appeal to the norms of the practice to legitimize their own role in the group. This may seem an insignificant difference but it has enormous weight in the workings of the group – the students wield the markers. Thus, affective dimensions of peer social networks whereby some students

can be excluded or preferred over others, are mediated by the norms of the practice to which students can appeal and legitimize their entry.

How activities are structured position students in particular ways with respect to text, the teacher, and each other, thus, providing very different kinds of opportunities for learning. That is, children not only learn *different* things depending upon their roles and responsibilities in an activity, but they come to conceptualize themselves and the goals of literacy differently as well. What is particularly interesting with Alita, then, is exploring how what she does in any particular moment of classroom activity provides her differentially with future access and opportunities to participate in a task. Thus, in the first group activity she is a very peripheral group member, engaging in the composition of the text by adding punctuation and editing marks only when told to do so by another group member. However, in the later activity, Alita holds the pen and orchestrates the activity inviting participation and rejecting and accepting the comments and direction of others.

Because the collective knowledge alters the literacy tasks presented to Alita, the cognitive processes in which she engages are related to the other participants present as well as the norms and conventions governing their interaction. Alita was studied over three years of participation in a multi-age inclusion classroom students in grades k-3 are present; many with emotional and learning disabilities that range in severity from mentally impaired to learning disabled. In two of the years at least one autistic child was present as well. Inclusion and Multi-age grouping have both been represented in the research literature as effective instructional models for supporting learning, however, such arguments are often inattentive to sociocultural dimensions of such grouping

arrangements and how those differential alter children's developmental trajectories. In fact, research on both inclusion and multi-age instruction has provided mixed support for its effectiveness (see for example Veenman, 1994) in part because it has attended to context as a classroom rather than a series of nested social, material, and cultural relationships (Rueda, Moll 2000).

Predominantly it is the older students, often third graders, who engage in this kind of participation. The older students contribute significantly to the nature of the discourse about the text. Questioning the author about his or her meaning, asking for clarification, suggesting that sentences be rearranged or combined are typically made at the suggestion of second and third graders. Younger students while gaining proficiency in the mechanical aspects of editing are nonetheless peripheral participants in discussions between and amongst students and teachers that requires negotiation of meaning and text construction. The presence of students who've acquired conventional literacy practices provides a discursive space that apprentices more emergent readers into the more complex literacy practices that requiring negotiation and construction of meaning. With the absence of the teacher, the discourses changes providing a much less support for the participation of novices. It isn't that the students don't recognize the need to provide assistance but they lack the skills to explain their activities in such a way that Joshua can understand. In each morning message space student participation included mechanical correction and attempts to clarify and extend the ideas included in the written text. However, in the activity where the teacher was present, much more efforts to negotiate meaning occurred.

Without the presence of teacher in the small group space to help create the discourse around which a text is constructed, students' comments deal more with mechanical aspects of text (punctuation, capitalization, apostrophe) then with attempts to negotiate the meaning (what is in the message and how it is worded and organized). Additionally, in the small group morning message, editing comments dealing with content changes (addition, revision, and clarification) dealt with additions to the text twice as many times which either add to the text twice as many times as clarification and approximately the same number as revision. In contrast, during the whole class morning message, not only did a greater proportion of student comments address content changes but also the nature of their negotiation with content was different. Students gave much greater attention to revising the content than to clarifying or adding to it. Revisions to the text deal with much more complicated awareness of conventional discourse practices, understanding about how to combine ideas, and knowledge of the morning message genre form. The degree of scaffolding required and the nature of teacher's interactions with students was much different as well with the teacher directly questioning students a greater proportion of the time during the small group rather than the whole group text.

Vygotsky's notion of the zone of proximal development argues that learning proceeds in the direction of the practices and skills that children, with support, are able to accomplish. Application of this notion often attends to the dyadic relationship between teacher and student and the possibilities for development in assisted performance that the teacher can provide. Here, I wish to suggest that further exploration of the ways in which the nature of the activity itself is affected by the beliefs, values and skills of community members and thus affect the affordances for cognitive development that are available. In

an earlier paper Englert, Barry, Dunsmore (1998) argued that children themselves are active agents in creating their own apprenticeship opportunities. Here I want to propose that it is not only direct teacher involvement that creates the possibilities for development afforded in activity settings but the multiple zones of proximal development that students create among themselves.

What do children learn from participating in whole group activities? Rogoff points out (1995) that apprenticeship goes far beyond expert-novice dyad but focuses on the ways in which a small group in a community orients behavior and roles to accomplish goals that relate to others outside group. Mercer notes as well that it is important to recognize that culture (or cultural activities) is not merely something that is received but is also “revised and re-created by children” (Mercer, pg. 31). This important addition to a theory/conception of culture must be noted because the activity spaces represented by the two morning messages can be seen as presenting and re-presenting different cultural affordances to students and from these students draw from and add to it very different kinds of understanding about literacy. Mercer argues that “an awareness of the significance of culture and context encourages us to study the *process*, not just the outcomes, of learning” (p.34)

Each of the three activity settings for morning message – whole class, small group, individual – create unique affordances and constraints which alter the nature of the cognitive task in which Alita participates. Analysis of student performance as a function of the literate resources available suggests the necessity for reconsidering the kinds of social interactions and classroom grouping arrangements that support student development. This problematizes, then, the notion that homogeneous grouping

necessarily provides the greatest support for emergent readers and instead focuses on the cognitive possibilities afforded through participation in specific classroom literacy events (i.e. sociocultural practices). In selecting and interpreting the data in this chapter, I've attempted to argue that ability is a characteristic of student-context relationships and difference as functionally defined in curricular context. Thus, the concept of "mixed ability/ multi-age" or "inclusive" classrooms, while perhaps descriptive of institutional arrangement of students, lacks theoretical and pedagogical clarity. Further, analysis of literacy activities themselves indicates that differences in student cognitive practices and social experiences mediate learning rather than necessarily impeding instruction. This section addresses learning *opportunities* as contingent not only on what teachers themselves provide but what the community brings in and the process by which individual expertise becomes a resource for the collective.

The Affective Dimension of Sociocultural Interaction
or
The Distribution of Expertise in a Community of Practice

In discussing whole class morning message, I argued that it was an acquisition space where students became apprenticed into the cognitive routines requisite in composing a narrative that reflected local norms and practices. It also provided students with new tools and teachers were able to support students' use of these through titrating students participatory practices. Ability and disability thus come to be defined functionally as students engage in the practice itself. Analysis of the way in which knowledge and tools is distributed throughout the system and alters as the participation structure changes suggests that the literate tasks in which individuals engage are mediated

by the context itself. Ability refers though not only to what happens in one local setting but addresses how children are afforded cognitive practices in classrooms, which are contingent not only upon the tools that the teachers make available but by what the community brings as well. Because Kathy has greater facility than students do in providing the kind of support to students to assume roles that are in advance of independent performance, she is able to help students “try on” new cognitive routines. What I wish to explore here is not how the expertise of the teachers mediates ability but rather how student knowledge mediates the nature of the activity itself. Thus, what I attend to in this section is how the prior knowledge (about both the morning message literacy tasks as well as social interaction norms) within the community itself alters the activity setting and changes the cognitive apprenticeship within which students participate. That is, the literate tasks in which Alita engages are mediated by the cognitive and socio-emotional characteristic of the community as a whole. Specifically I will address the questions “How do differences in student linguistic and cognitive competencies affect the nature of the activity in which students are being apprenticed? What does that tell us about ability as a characteristic of individuals and social contexts?”

To address this issue I analyze two morning message texts constructed within a few weeks of each other analyzing the final text, the process of its production and the relationship between the nature of the activity and the competencies of students. This suggests that the nature of the activity itself, and thus the possible affordances for student development is contingent upon the literacy skills, knowledge of activity goals, and understandings about the participation structure of the event that each student holds rather than only the teacher. That is, the ways in which prior knowledge distributed among

group membership creates parameters for individual task goals. However, dyadic relationships between teacher and student, where the teacher, as knowledgeable other, seeks to apprentice students is only one possible perspective from which to view student learning. Students create among themselves multiple zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), which shape the nature of the activity and students participation in the literacy event itself.

Alita is a member of each of the morning message activities engaged in the questioning the author and editing the composition. However, Alita's participation is not the focus of this analysis. Rather, the ways in which the distribution of expertise in the whole group activity alters the nature of the literate task itself exploring the apprenticeship opportunities and cognitive affordances that are possible within a diverse classroom. In this section I examine how Alita's participation is influenced by the distribution of expertise in the group; expertise includes both facility in navigating the social and literate demands of text composition. Here I analyze, then, the cognitive performance of students as a function of the social context of activity examining the role of artifacts and participants in constructing the psychological dimension of morning message tasks.

A repeated criticism of remediation programs for struggling readers is the emphasis of repetition of skills decontextualized from the kinds of activities within which such skills are meaningful and valuable (Klenk & Kibbey, in press). Exploration of activity spaces where students engage in goal directed activities provides a lens for studying the relationship between home and school. At issue is the role of classroom activity in supporting the acquisition of the literacy skills and practices valued in the

dominant society. Here I will use the morning message activity space to explore how the competencies children display are connected to the nature of the activity itself. I present an analysis of the participation framework from the two morning messages to explore the processes by which each was constructed. Although, the final texts of each author were quite similar in content and structure, the discourse surrounding the actual text construction was quite different. The roles that students and teacher assumed, the interaction between students, the questions elicited created a very different cognitive space and thus I argue affected the nature of the activity itself. Membership in the community is instantiated through activity not merely the assignment of roles.

A month prior to the small group activity described earlier (the March event that included Jacquero, Yolanda, Alita and Joshua), Alita had participated in February in another small group activity. These were infrequent, only ever few months. In this one as well she had been the “editor”. When the activity began, the teachers reminded students that everyone needed a job and that before they began the message they should talk in the group about what jobs each person would have. “The important thing to remember,” Terri states to the class, “is since this is a group morning message, everyone has to have a job.” As with the March activity much of the time was spent circling the room checking to make sure that everyone in the group was actively engaged in the composition process. Prior to telling the groups to begin Kathy brainstormed with the group about some possible roles that students could play in the process. It was Alita who first responded by suggesting that besides writing the text itself another job could be “crossing out.” Which Kathy rephrased as “doing the editing”. Again as in the March unit, students composed a group morning message with the students at their table. Each

table consisted of four desks moved together to form a square. The composition of Alita's group in February was different, however. Teachers frequently moved students into new group arrangements. No arrangement of students every worked perfectly. Like most teachers, behavior was a strong motivation in deciding how to group students but it had to do primarily with behavior that affected the workings of the group (i.e. interaction and participation) rather than how it affected whole group. They struggled to put together students who reflected a range of performance abilities in literacy but who also were able to support and not dominate one another. One concern they had with Rebecca, who was a member of this small group activity was that she tended to dominate and didn't allow everyone to participate. This was particularly problematic for those students who lacked conventional literacy skills. Yolanda, a member also in the March small group activity had been placed at the table hoping to counteract Rebecca's tendency to position herself as leader. In fact, in this activity she does so. Yolanda is initially out of the room when the activity begins. She is in a gifted and talented program run by the district and is gone for part of a day several times per week. As an interesting aside, she along with some of the students receiving other forms of specialized supplemental education (e.g. speech or physical therapy) hates to leave the classroom. In fact, she asked her mother to let her stop attending the program so that she need not miss anything in the classroom. Her mother refused.

Alita immediately said she wanted to do the editing and Rebecca said that she would do the writing. Julia was assigned by Rebecca, with the tacit support of Alita, to put in the periods. As in the March event, it was Alita who made a space for Julia's

participation, Like Joshua she didn't know when it was time to put in a period or where to put one. Several times she asked questions

Rebecca kept control of the markers. Although there were two markers in the group – one for writing and one for editing. Rebecca seized control of them and would hand them over to either Alita or Julia when it was their turn to make a correction. Alita resisted Rebecca's leadership several times but Julia seemed unable to. Rebecca would reach over and grab the marker from her, ignore her pleas for explanation. Rebecca, however, seems to know that her efforts to lead reflect unsanctioned forms of interaction and when a teacher comes up to the group she repositions herself by attempting to redefine the intention behind the action which Terri observed.

Alita: period right there. [she points to the text and Julia uses the marker to make a mark on the page.]

Rebecca takes the marker from the other girl with a quick hurried movement, "there. Oops sorry..." as she makes a mark on Julia from her efforts to grab it so quickly.

Terrie who was standing nearby and saw the incident came over: "Rebecca she was doing just fine. Why are you taking that?"

Rebecca: (doesn't look at the teacher and comments as if she hadn't heard her by giving a directive to Julia) give that [the marker] to Alita. She has to do it on her own.

Alita crosses out the word "My" and says: "It's her grandma. How do you spell her."

Rebecca: h-e-r-r...no (she points to the word) H-e-r. okay (she takes the marker from

Alita, even though she has one next to her) and points to each of the words in the morning message as she reads it) Rebecca went to her grandma's house."

Alita puts her thumb up to indicate approval.

Rebecca: What do you think of it? Is it good [she doesn't wait for a response]
She

Julia: What are you doing?

Rebecca: Rebecca went to her grandma's house

Julia: Do I need to do a period

Alita: at summer (she crosses out the period she already wrote, talking to the other girl about the marker) give me that, give me that (Julia hands it over)

Julia: why did you cross out my period.

Rebecca: Rebecca went to her grandma's house (she points to where she wants the other words added) in summer (Alita is already leaned over the paper ready to make the changes)

Julia: (taps Rebecca who ignores her) why did you cross out my period.

When Yolanda entered the group, however the dynamics changed. Alita uses Yolanda's entrance as well to diffuse Rebecca's domination of so many of the participatory roles. She invites Yolanda to participate, "you put the apostrophe, I'm editing" Interestingly Alita doesn't see editing as involving the addition of any kind of punctuation perhaps because as she said earlier to Kathy she is "making the changes". Yolanda's entrance into the group created another level of expertise. Immediately following Alita's encouragement for her to put in the apostrophe, something Rebecca had just started to do but was forced then to hand over the marker, Yolanda pointed out a spelling error in a word Rebecca had just written and then noted another one right after it. Several lines later, Yolanda commented on another error of Rebecca's "you forgot the r". Mrs. Hicks passes alongside the group and asks if everyone has a role. Alita raises her hand and says, "I do the editing" Rebecca points to Yolanda and announces "she's helping her [Alita] do the editing. Julia adds, "I'm suppose to put a period." After Kathy

leaves, Rebecca tells Yolanda to “write the ending and the beginning sentences.”

Although later during the debriefing as a whole class on how the small groups functioned, Rebecca comments that, “we voted Yolanda would do the topic sentence and bottom sentences.” Clearly Rebecca understands the norms guiding participation.

In both small group morning message activities, Alita functioned as the editor. However, in one, her participation was often thwarted by the efforts of one student to manage the group through controlling tools (the pen) and participation. Additionally, it is interesting that in the two morning messages – both with Rebecca as well as with Jacob and Shayla, one would assume that those students who positioned themselves as experts are highly skilled. Yet when you examine the text you find that their spelling is highly unconventional as well – phonics based yes, but nowhere near accuracy in spelling. It becomes clear that the interpersonal dynamics in the group itself affects how students are positioned with respect to the material and mental tools. Determining the competency of members involves not merely identifying what students know and can do in isolation but rather analyzing the ways in which participation in the activity itself is differentially affected by the prior experience, norms, social interaction patterns of the group members working collectively together.

This is evident the following year as well in two small group morning messages occurring within a week of one another. Analyzed in the section below, the role that Alita plays is influenced by the social dynamics of the group. In the first small group activity, three of the four group members want to be the “writer”. Each thinks he or she is most suited for that role. Alita is rather adamant that she’s the best writer in the group. However, the other two contestors for the role are as assured as she. The students

initially vote on who ought to have this role. As each student votes for him/herself, there is a tie. It is Ned, the student who wants to narrate the text, who breaks it by voting for John, thus angering and alienating Alita. The group spends the majority of its time arguing over the roles and responsibilities of the group members. A week later, however, roles are quickly decided. Alita is the writer. Jason the narrator and then the other roles fall into place. In both small group activities in the spring of year three, Alita wished to serve as writer. In the only one did productive, collaborate activity occur. In the first, the group was unwilling or unable to negotiate the social interactions necessary to engage in the composition process.

Three of these members, Alita, Ned and John, each liked to serve as group leader and facilitator. When placed together in a group, they vied for leadership. Each believed he or she was the most competent and skilled member and therefore, when interacting together, even the strongly enforced norms for addressing conflict (voting) and the routines associated with respective roles, were not sufficient to ensure that their social interaction focused on the literate tasks associated with morning message. They spent the majority of their time negotiating the social task pre-requisite to the academic function of morning message discourse practices.

In both the February and March of year 2 small group morning message activities, Alita serves as the editor – the one who makes changes in the text. However, the interpersonal relationships in the group as well as the distribution of knowledge and expertise mediate the nature of the literate tasks in which she engages through providing differential access to and support for participation. Moss (1997) argues that, “particularly lacking in our current models of social and cultural co-construction is integration of the

affective dimension. For example, the adult in Wertsch's....study of the adult-child dyad as a problem-solving system could be, for all intents and purposes, mother, father, teacher, or detested great aunt whereas the peer in studies of peer influences could be one's best friend, [or] worst enemy" (p.118). She adds that, "our instructional efforts rarely address the developmental interdependency of motivational, strategic, and knowledge components in learning." In other words, analysis of the literate tasks which define Alita's cognitive practices occur within cultural contexts where the actions on the part of others create parameters for ones own activity.

Literacy Ability as Situated Performance

Morning Message is essentially a narrative activity. Activities are mediated by artifacts reflecting the history of sociocultural activity. That is, they emerge from particular social practices and lead to socially valued goals. This implies that they have both social and local meanings where cultural knowledge is appropriated and transformed. Activities are places where public discourse and private mental functioning engage in a dialectic of transformation. Studying and understanding genre from an activity theory perspective, where text forms are seen as dialogically created in situated sociocultural contexts, helps us understand the historical and cultural contingencies of any particular written (Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1993). In this case, the morning message text itself represents a particular narrative form that is both representative of certain cultural story forms as well as situated in the social and cognitive competencies of students in the classroom.

Morning Message, while viewed by these teachers as central to their curriculum is not a novel activity. An oral version of this activity in another school in another country (Australia) is called morning news [or by others Sharing Chair], is described by Christie (1993) as a form of morning share time where a student is selected to tell news to the class as a form of language development. Christie points out that scaffolding by parents and teachers teaches children both that language can be used to represent experience as well as acting to guide students into the kinds of experiences that are appropriate to reconstruct. Others, as well (e.g. Michaels, 1990; Heath, 1983) have noted that story structure and content, the actual language used, reflects particular cultural norms for genre definition and construction.

Morning Message, as a re-presentation of experience has several distinctive features which create a local “standard” which identifies a good morning message and “right” performance, that is participation moves which render individuals as “abled.” Three characteristics of morning message in this classroom are: (a) the process of text construction objectifies experience such that the audience as well as the author have the right to share in the construction of the text; (b) specific procedures and routines which govern task completion shape the content and organization of the message; and (c) representation of experience in the register of a dominant discourse which reflects both written literary forms as well as a white, middle class dialect. Each of these characteristics emerge through the situated nature of text composition and thus ability is related to acquisition of local norms, values, and language patterns and not only individual cognitive development abstracted from activity goals.

- DECONSTRUCTION OF AUDIENCE/AUTHOR DISTINCTION OR THE OBJECTIFICATION OF EXPERIENCE.

Although the person telling the story is referred to as the “author”, the final text of all morning messages is in the third person. One of the first (if not the first) editing correction students typically make is the shift from use of the pronoun “I” in the text to the first name of the author. It was the first and most consistent change that Alita herself made in the morning message texts she composed. Unlike other revisions or editing suggestions, where teachers insist student provide a reason for the change, this is first understood to be essential to the process (procedure) of doing morning message.

Additions of titles such as “her sister” or “his father Daniel” are also necessary because as the teachers remind the students of the ignorance of readers and necessity then of making a “complete” message. Mr. Davis, the school principal, is often held up as the model reader – somewhat familiar with the context of the students’ lives but ignorant of the specific experiences which motivated the narrative construction. At the end of Alita’s year 2, message, for example, Kathy brought the editing comments to a close by asking, “Do you suppose that if we typed this up and gave it to Mr. Davis he would have a good understanding of what is going on....We got all our questions answered. We read it and think it sounds okay.”

There are two reasons articulated by teachers for having students make the change from first to third person in their stories: First, that helping students turn a personal experience into a third person narrative teaches young children how to begin to make the kinds of intellectual transitions necessary for reading and writing expository text. Secondly, as the above comments by the teachers reflect, it helps students develop an awareness of an audience that is not familiar with the people, places, and events that are

familiar aspects of one's own life. Thus, the move to third person requires a conscious stance towards accommodating the informational needs of one's audience. As Kathy, one of the teachers explained, "You're changing it for your audience. You're not changing their meaning... We used to give the author, the person in the chair more say, but last year we started talking about but that might be ok but ... good writing is fixing it to good writing instead of just leaving it and that pushes." The standard for good writing, then, becomes located not in the opinions of individuals (even the teacher) but rather on the response of the audience to the message content and structure.

Students who have been part of this classroom for more than a year often begin to make these kinds of changes automatically when telling their story. For example, in Alita's third year in the classroom when she was the author of the text, she made some of these changes automatically referring to herself in the dictated message not as "me" or "I" but as "Alita". A short time before, when she had written her morning message individually, she also showed recognition of the need to make the changes. After completing her entire text she went back through out the text placing an x mark over each "I" and writing Alita above it. This change was viewed by her, as I indicate in a moment, not as a necessarily universal feature of narratives themselves but rather as situated in the discursive action of this curricular practice. During a writing workshop narrative construction she made no effort to reposition herself as author or construct a text from the third person point of view.

Randy (1997) points out that "genres are not merely text that share certain features; they are shared expectations among some groups of people" (pg. 512). As new members of a community participate in the social discourse surrounding an activity they

begin to appropriate the forms and functions of particular written genre as well as the values, goals, and identities that are part of the sociocultural community. Alita's deliberate transformation of her narrative from first to third person reveals a conscious repositioning of self aesthetically living the experience to cognitively defining it (Davis and Harre, 1990). Thus ability differences, in this context, reflect the degree to which a particular stance towards subject matter and text, which is valued by the community, has been appropriated by the individual.

(B) RULE GOVERNED PARTICIPATION AND EFFECTS ON TEXT CONTENT AND STRUCTURE.

A second feature of this classroom genre is the way in which activity procedures shape the content and organization of the message. Before the author begins the message, the class indicates the "question words" (who, what, where, when, why, how) which play a central role in assessing the completeness and clarity of the message. These are placed in the upper left hand corner of the text. Similarity in how and when these questions are formulated leads to similarities in content across texts. For example in narratives about events "how" tends to be formulated by students into "how did you get there" and "what" into "what did you do", the texts recording experiences of two different students ends up bearing remarkable similarity between each other as the class employs similar linguistic moves to form the content of the text.

Additionally, after the text is dictated and all questions have been asked, the activity moves into the phase where concluding sentences and titles are suggested to the author who then selects one. A topic sentence is identified at the beginning. Each message, then, has three clearly identified parts, title and topic sentence (introduction), text content (body), and closing sentence (conclusion). This procedure, a formal phase of

the morning message activity, therefore, leads to a uniformity in text structure that exists as part of the class participation in the activity itself rather than an intentional (or independent) act on the part of the individual narrator.

A final procedural characteristic is the expectation that the message be about something “newsworthy” (that is unusual) rather than a daily routine or activity. Teachers thus allow students to volunteer to be the author when something unique has or is about to occur in the child’s life. Narrative topics typically deal with such events as getting a new baby sister, attending a party or sporting event, winning a game, to raveling to visit someone or a special place. Morning message, thus becomes event centered with a focus on development of one image or experience.

In morning message, there is always a subject (typically one) The concluding sentence which the teachers describe as “wrapping up” the experience has a rather unique feature in that it emphasizes the emotional state of the main character, typically the author. While the story itself is essentially a description of the activity or the people, the final sentence typically refers to the emotional state of the main character after concluding the experience. The final written text of each student’s narrative, then, is very similar in structure and content to each other. For example notice the figure (5.6) below where two whole class morning messages, constructed in close temporal proximity to the individual morning message which Alita constructs independently (Figure 5.7).

Figure 5.6

	Randy's Message	Erin's Message
Title	<i>A Day of Excitement</i>	<i>A Birthday party</i>
Topic Sentence	<i>On Friday Randy is going in his uncle's blue truck to his uncle Pat's white house.</i> When (in prep. Phrase) + who + future verb <u>action</u> + how (in prep. phrase w/ adj.) + where (in prep. phrase w/ adj.)	<i>On Easter Erin went to her cousin Donald and Donathon's house for Donald's birthday party.</i> When (in prep. phrase) + who + past verb <u>action</u> + where (in prep. phrase) + why (in prep. phrase)
	similar sentence structure and content difference in addition of descriptives in Randy's text	
	<i>Randy wants to see his uncle and his uncle wants to see him.</i> Randy himself provided information about <i>why</i> he went in a second sentence.	
What they will do: focus on game playing activities	<i>They want to play the Sony playstation in the basement together.</i>	<i>Donald had a Chicago Bulls Cake. They played games in the basement. They played video games.</i>
		<i>Erin got there in a corvain car</i> Tells how she got there. Given in response to a question from a classmate.
Concluding sentence with focus on emotional response to experience	<i>Randy will have a great two days at his uncle's house.</i> Author/subject + future emotional state + adjective describing positive response to experience + temporal representation of experience + restating place where this will occur.	<i>She had an exciting day at Donald's birthday party.</i> Author/subject + past emotional state + adjective giving positive response to experience + temporal representation of experience + restating place where this will occur.

The morning message, as a narrative genre, is event oriented and purposely seeks to respond to the question words listed at the beginning of the message. Descriptions are included to give greater specificity to information provide (e.g. what kind of color, what color truck and house, what is the name of the game you played). Additionally the ordering of the information reveals not so much a chronological listing of experiences as in an event but rather seeks to describe an entire image that provides a summary of specific components of the experience (what you did, where it happened and how you got there) which are based upon locally developed and shared conceptions about information

important to include in a morning message. For example, in both texts the information about how the author got to the place emerged as a result of a question asked by a classmate. In the instance of Randy's message, the class chose to revise the topic sentence so this information was included in the beginning. For Erin's message, a sentence was created and placed in the text at the point in which the question was asked.

The narrative genre exemplified in morning message reveals characteristics of structure and content that while related to narrative discourse patterns are locally contingent as well. In fact, students individually begin to appropriate these forms. For example, of the 19 students on which morning message pre and post test data exist, we see evidence of children appropriating the representational scheme for narrativization practiced and valued in this classroom.

PRE-TEST from year one of the study

- 6 morning messages that have lists of experiences students like or can do
- 7 event centered experiences (2 partially developed and 5 with full images addressing all or most of the questions used to frame the whole class composition - who, what, when, where, why, how)

POST-TEST:

- 1 morning message texts that have lists of experiences students like or can do
- 13 event centered experiences (4 partially developed and 8 with full images addressing all or most of the question words). The one student with the list of experiences on his post-test was also one of the students who provided a list on his pre-test.

(C) DOMINANT DISCOURSE

A third characteristic of these narratives is the transformation of the experience from oral to written which involves a shift in register reflecting both literary forms as well as school based discursive practices, the "dominant discourse" (Delpit. 1988; Gee

1993). The majority of the students in the class are African-American who speak what has been called Black English (Smitherman, 1993) or Ebonics. Although, these teachers have never discussed differences in dialect or register they act upon the assumption that the school based, dominant discourse is the one that “sounds right” in the text. In discussing how she has changed over time in her facilitation of whole class morning message, Kathy explains the importance of this space for helping children learn standard English. She decided she said to “write the child’s sentence, even if it is wrong and horrible. I used to unconsciously correct it. I would switch has and have. Or I would correct ‘I go over John’s house.’ The kids don’t always find the errors though.” Her comment indicates both her recognition of the need to let students engage in the literate tasks associated with switching from oral to written speech as well as her perception of grammatical structure as an “error” rather than a discourse difference.

Teacher’s inability to view language as a representation of culturally situated discourse patterns was a way in which classroom norms for the grammatical structure of narratives intersected with home cultural language practices. I became frustrated when I interacted with the teachers about the relationship between children’s oral language patterns and the dominant discourse of school. Several times I attempted to engage them in a discussion about black English and Standard English and the role that morning message played in attempting to provide students with ways of thinking about academic written school language and the oral speech of their home and community. They were never willing to go there – I always sensed they didn’t get what I was talking about and eventually I dropped the matter trying at a later time to revisit the idea. The teachers continued to see students language patterns as “wrong” and, perhaps unsurprisingly,

when students themselves spoke the text they heard little wrong with it, but when the teachers, both white, spoke it, students couldn't identify the "error". It seems reasonable that when hearing their words spoken by an outsider, they could unconsciously hear the disjuncture and begin to imagine ways of constructing the text such that it matched with the standard English of the teacher and of written texts. The sentences Alita dictated during morning message (e.g. "For dinner we is having sloppy joes.") matched the language she used within the morning message activity setting to facilitate her own participation ("How you spell trick?).

The teachers speak of the difference between talking and writing as if changes in register are literary rather than cultural. The most common change occurs around the use of verb forms associated with "to be" such as in Alita's text when "We is having sloppy joe's" is changed to "We are having sloppy joes." Although the class, and often the author, immediately notes the changes that must be made. It is sometimes only when the (white) teachers reread the text that children can "hear" necessary places for change. As one of the teachers explained "sometimes it's only when they hear one of us say it do they realize it's wrong". Children's oral speech is corrected in no other context. Change in language is necessitated only when writing for an audience and for the majority of students involves the internalization of the voice of the "other," who is white, middle class, and speaks standard English.

Morning message versus writing workshop: Viewing texts as uniquely situated in activity settings suggests, then, that as the goals and tools change, so too would the process for composition and the final written product. Examining the relationship

between Alita's personal narratives constructed in morning message and those in writing workshop reveal just that – namely that the genre's and composition process directly influences the decisions Alita makes as a writer and the literary stance she takes towards her own experience. Both the narrative she constructs in the spring of year three within the same week emerge from a sense of real lived experience in Alita's life. In them she positions herself as the central actor. Events happen to her and around her.

However, the text she constructs is a reflection of the process and literary purposes that characterized composition in that activity setting. She sees each activity setting as leading to the construction of different kinds of texts. A constant feature is the notion that you introduce the topic, talk about it and tie it up. However, even that is different. During her writing workshop autobiographical narrative she writes the title FIRST. Three days earlier, when she had constructed an individual morning message narrative she constructed it last, circling as they do in the class process. Figure 5.7 presents the contrast; Figure 5.8 presents the text as written. Additionally she does not put the question words in the left hand corner, nor does she seem guided by them. While she is careful in the other texts to indicate the temporal characteristic (today, Saturday, etc.) here she completely ignores it suggesting an ill defined future tense.

Figure 5.7

1. a Sing Spel Aisha
Who I am going to
What The mall on MY
Where Saturday
Why Birthday They are
How in a car
going to The Meds
What they get back
to MY Dad House
in Den they are going have
1. a Sing Day
2. a nes sun Day

Can
Me and M. / Srt.
me and M. / Srt. are going
to MY dads hoves
MY dad is going to
theak us soon He is going
to theak us to The mall
to get sum stori and
then we are going bak
to his hoves
The
End

Figure 5.8

A Sing Spel [exciting?]	Me and my srt
Alita	Me and my srit are going to my dads house
---→I am going to the mall on Saturday my birthday. They are going in a car to the meds What they get back to my dad house in den they are going have a nice sun day.	my dad is going to theak us fopn He is going to theak us to the mall to get sum stori and then we are going back to his house The end
Morning message	Writing workshop

She clearly knew the difference between the characteristic features of the activity associated with writing workshop or “free writing” and morning news. In the morning message text she once again writes the question words on the left hand side of the paper. She draws an arrow to show and indent and she circles the title drawing an arrow to the top of the page. Additionally she writes two possibilities for closing days at the bottom of the page: “aexsing day” [exciting day] and “a nic sun day” (a nice sunny day). She creates and numbers two possibilities for conclusions as does the class in the whole class activity and then as if she deliberates between the two, circles the later and draws an arrow up to the last line of the text to indicate that is her choice for the text. Furthermore she edits the text, inserting the word Saturday after the text is completed as an addition and clarification of “when”. Furthermore, she attempts to make the first to their person transition throughout the text, crossing out “we” and changing to “they” in two places. Although she is unable to consistently change author positions throughout the text, her effort to do so indicates her growing mastery both of the practices associated with the morning message activity as well as the linguistic conventions associated with this genre. In contrast, when composing the narrative about the mall during her morning message activity which happened within several days of each other. She clearly is rereading and composing when she does so.

She continues the text in first person. She never indicates the date, show no indication of question words. Does create a title as well as a conclusion. However, the title isn’t indicative of the event as is common for morning message texts nor is the end....”The end” is characteristic of a story book ending. Two weeks later another narrative composed during writing workshop bears the same features.

My Birthday

On My Birthday I am going to goot a CD Plays and a Book My baby Cakus is going to goot the sma theing we are going to play to gaoor we are going to havue fun The end

It says: On my birthday, I am going to get a CD Player and a book. My baby cousin is going to get the same thing. We are going to play together. We are going to have fun.

The end.

What each of these illustrations suggest is that Alita is not gaining *generic* (i.e., generalizable) ability in composition processes but rather *genre-specific* competency in the processes and models which frame particular literacy activities. Her able to compose narratives is situated in the social practices accompanying curricular activities. This suggests, then, that the cognitive routines that accompany these tasks grow out of the norms and routines associated with classroom based literacy practices.

Discussion: narrative genre as situated reality: Appropriation of narrative discourses occurs as children actively and creatively internalize and thus transform social means (Hicks, 1996, 1997). Sociocultural theory as applied to genre studies helps us attend to the ways in which discursive practices and textual artifacts in the classroom mediate students' reconstruction of experience and the social origins of an individual's mental representation of experience. In a study of the acquisition of a narrative discourse by an emergent writer, Hicks (1996) argues that, "the discourse of the classroom instruction can be examined not only as textual *products*...but also as social interactional

processes. The latter “she explains, “are particularly revealing of the ways in which learners come to appropriate textual forms in school through social dialogue with others” (pg. 31, emphasis hers).

Telling an experience in the activity setting of morning message involves not merely recollection and repetition of experience but the use of language structures and genre framework to select from, organize and orally describe a particular lived event that is understood, described, and organized along lines reflective the sanctioned genre forms. In this way narrativization of experience is dialogic or what Hicks describes as “a dialectical movement between what is out there in the social world and what is experienced and performed as private and reflective mental activity” (1997, pg. 470). Text construction is dynamic as students move between the external social world and internal experience. Each informs the other. DiPardo (1990) points out that while much research has focused on children’s acquisition of particular story grammars it has ignored specific context features that explain *why* students remember events in particular ways and discuss them at specific times. As she notes, the developmental distinction between narrative and expository representations of experience may in fact be due not to cognitive maturation in a biological sense but rather appropriation of the particular textual forms which are modeled, supported, and demanded of children in both home and school based literacy experiences at particular points in ones development. Thus, the discursive features of the social environment and the storied forms available and supported in particular moments of context lead to the appropriate of specific linguistic features that any child individually uses to compose a text.

The tools available for text composition involve the story grammar available publicly for constructing (and reconstructing) experience. Narrativization, children's ability to construct and comprehend stories, has been assumed by many to hold a developmental primacy in young children's curriculum and literary theories (see for example, Egan, 1988, Wells 1986). However, new evidence is emerging that young children may in fact be equally adept at understanding both narrative and expository text forms (Pappas, 1993). Attention needs to be given to the social discourses that support, model, apprentice students into particular forms of composition. The function of text in the classroom leads students to develop particular understanding of purposes and roles for reading and writing.

What is important here to consider is that the nature of the literacy practice within which students are apprenticed results from the interaction between individual experience and locally defined activity goals and practices. Telling one's story is not merely a personal, localized phenomenon but reflects local patterns of language use in the construction of a written narrative. In analyzing students' texts as part of the larger research project, we were faced, in fact, with a dilemma in evaluating the quality of text that was constructed within and for specific classroom communities. Questions were raised about the relationship between what Alita does within the class and more global features of narrativization. The dilemma we faced during our first year of scoring on the project arose in part from the presence of research assistants involved in holistic scoring of texts that had never been in the research classrooms. One characteristic as I've indicated of a personal narrative in this classroom was the self-positioning of the author in the text. Alita in fact begins in year two to automatically make that change when

dictating her whole class morning message text. Other students, as well, by spring of their first year, intentionally made a switch from first to third person. While this in no way altered the experiential aspect of the story, it did modify the relationship of the author to the text. Rather than being an immediate text where the author was positioned with great immediacy, it became unclear whether the text was a true recollection of one person's experience. It could be about anyone. Our primary trait analysis evaluated the author's ability to construct a narrative, which provided information to the reader which rendered it meaningful and sensible. That is, the author anticipated and addressed in the text itself questions the reader might have (e.g. when did this happen, who was with you, why did you do that?). Alita's teachers, in fact, were very attentive to clarifying in the text itself any names that were mentioned.

However, as the class knew who the author was, there was an unconscious acceptance of the sensibility of leaving the name of the student unclarified. In fact, the switch from "I" to the child's name was presented as making the text *more* reader sensitive. The teachers would occasionally refer to the principal as a possible reader (and occasional guest) but unfamiliar asking if the text was worded in a way that addressed questions he might have. For example, during the construction of the morning message presented above in Figure 5.6 (Randys), Terri asked, "If Mr. Davies [principal] came in would he know who this was about?" Similar questions were raised about the use of "I" – would people know who "I" was? A chorus of "no's" would follow such a query.

Yet, from a narrative perspective, reading a first person account, even of an unknown author, is more sensitive to the demands of a reader, then one that refers to an unnamed child. This is, however, from an adult perspective. Children's texts are rarely

written in the first person. Quite commonly an unnamed child is the focal point of a story. We deliberated this issue in our project meetings. One person did a literature review of the characteristics features of narrative and specifically those of emergent writers. The self-positioning of the author with respect to the images and activities is a central feature of narrative discourses privileged in schools (Scollon & Scollon, 19xx). Yet, the criteria we used to score the texts had to reflect the local patterns of language in use and the process through which students participated in the construction of ideas. We had to make a deliberate decision to code texts written from the perspective of a person who was identified only by first name as high quality representations of a narrative within the primary trait feature. It is questionable, however, what our decision would have been if we were unfamiliar with the norms within the study communities guiding the construction of the narrative.

This reminds me of the work Allan Luke did in analyzing the relationships between texts composed in Australia as part of the state/provincial testing and the scores they received by the state raters. One of the assessment measures required that students construct a “creative writing” piece in response to a prompt. No directions or parameters were given other than it respond to the prompt and be original and inventive. However, in analyzing the texts, Luke et al (1999) discovered that the coding scheme constructed reflected a bias towards a particular conception of what “original and creative” entailed. Students who wrote narratives with a highly formulaic structure of beginning, middle, end received higher scores than students who chose a different way of responding to the prompt such as creating a TV advertisement, writing dialogue apart from a narrative plot, or writing a poem without a traditional structure. Thus, while the language of the text

implied a range of individual responses, the cultural models which guided the raters influenced the interpretation and evaluation of students “original” responses. Luke’s response was to work with teachers to help them teach students the models that were privileged on such tests. Criticism of a bias implicit in the test ignores the fact that in a discourse community parameters must exist within which texts are rendered meaningful and legitimate. Allowing any and all “original” forms ignores the socially constructed nature of the test themselves as well as students’ response. Evaluation of any text can only exist within the framework of a community where particular models and genres are meaningful.

Alita picks up the form of the question or the interaction even before she understands accurately the function. Appropriation of questions within the morning message context serves as a semiotic mediator of engagement in the composition process. When Alita asks a question, however, that isn’t pertinent to this particular text, we see her efforts to master features of the genre where linguistic form is contingent upon the function served in the discourse. Putting one’s thumb “up” or “down” to indicate a preference and bid for the floor for many of the emergent readers serves not to indicate a desire to intentionally reconstruct the text but rather serves as the literate goal itself, a desire or willingness to participate, to interact, to have a say.

During my observation of Alita’s first year in the class she never suggested an editing change to the text other than a procedural or punctuation change and that was typically done at the invitation of the teachers. Efforts she made, however, to participate were, however, celebrated such as in Erin’s message when Kathy noticed Alita pointing to the text with her finger and appearing to move it along to follow the words. “Nice

rereading Alita. She's using her finger to follow along!" Kathy praises Alita's behavior as an important reading strategy. The teachers attention to her efforts to participate were particularly significant since her typical interaction pattern during this time was to sit with her thumb in her mouth not moving, not talking. Only occasionally did she put her thumb up or down as a participation bid.

Students acquire understanding of the goals and meaning of morning message and the narrative structure through participation in the event itself. "Our knowledge of genres is derived from and embedded in our participation in the communicative activities of daily and professional life. As such, genre knowledge is a form of 'situated cognition' (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989) that continues to develop as we participate in the activities of the culture" (pg. 482). Additionally, competence in these genre forms is as much a function of opportunity to listen, practice, and engage in the task as in age or in demonstration of some sort of overarching literacy skills or abilities. Many of the students categorized as special education have been in the classroom longer and have had greater access to such genre forms. Similarly, age differences while indicative of length of time in school do not necessarily reflect experience with the participation framework and activity goals for this classroom literacy genre. Ability in the accomplishment of the task itself is a function the participatory practices within which students' use of language to read and write occurs.

Composing a narrative is situated within the classroom practices that give rise to it. In her study of reading behavior across contexts, McIntyre (1992) argues that emergent readers respond to the cues in each setting to make decisions about what behavior is expected. What is indicated here is that in composing text, Alita responds to

the norms, purpose, and goals that legitimize particular text structures. This is seen nowhere more clearly than in examining the autobiographical narratives Alita composes during writing workshop and those she constructs during morning message time. In figured d and e are two narrative texts composed within one week of each, one during writing workshop time and one done during morning message time as an individual activity. Both emerge from a sense of real lived experience in Alita's life. In them she positions herself as the central actor. Events happen to her and around her. However, the text she constructs is associated with the process of composition. She sees each activity setting as leading to the construction of different kinds of texts. A constant feature is the notion that you introduce the topic, talk about it and tie it up. However, even that is different. During her writing workshop autobiographical narrative she writes the title FIRST. During the previous week when she had constructed an individual morning message narrative she constructed it last, circling as they do in the class process. Additionally she does not put the question words in the left hand corner, nor does she seem guided by them. While she is careful in the other texts to indicate the temporal characteristic (today, Saturday, etc.) here she completely ignores it suggesting an ill defined future tense.

A significant feature is the relationship between the texts she produces when told to for "morning message" and the writing workshop narrative writing she does when she chooses to write about a real event in her life. Although she adapts a first person stance towards the material, she doesn't participate in the activity in the same way indicating that she believes that particular features of the genre (e.g. putting who, what, when, etc.) in the left corner and coming up with several options for a closing sentence are indicative

of the practice and not narrative genres more generally. Lack of editing changes anywhere in the text produced during writing workshop is the clearest indication of Alita's distinction between the genre features of a narrative produced in one context and those produced in another.

When she reads the text composed during writing workshop to me, I immediately comment, "Oh, you've written a morning message." She doesn't respond. I press her again, "this is like a morning message isn't it?" She looks up at me quickly then shakes her head in the affirmative. "How is it like a morning message?" I ask again. Silence. She points to the page, "the words. The words is the same." I pressed her further but she merely responded again "the words is the same." Initially I thought Alita meant that the structure of the text (the words) is the same. However, in comparing the two texts the striking visibly differences which indicate as well the distinctions in the process and purpose for constructing the two narratives I was less sure. In listening to her peer conference with Tarrence I was struck by her response to his question, "How did you come up with the idea?" She responded, "I'm goin with my dad sometime so I just thought of it." She used much the same language when she spoke to me about how she came up with the Ninja story that featured she and several classmates, "Shayla did one and so I just thought of it." In other words, she invented the narrative. It has autobiographical features – she is "going with" her dad sometime [soon I assume] – however, the narrative that she constructs reflects the norms and conventions associated with writing workshop, not morning message.

When I asked Alita what her teachers might talk with her about in the teacher conference during writing workshop, Alita replied in a sing-song voice, "beginning,

middle, end.” Each of the texts she composed and read to me during the spring, year three writing workshop had these features. As does morning message. They don’t, however, emerge from similar social practices.

I think my comment to her about the similarity between her narrative and a morning message text seemed absurd – of course they weren’t the same. But within the interview context I did not ask an open ended question but rather asked her to tell me how the two texts were alike. They are alike in the words. They both use words, not their structure is the same, or the texts are constructed according to similar processes or engage the author in the same literate tasks. In other words, Alita sees them as different.

I’ve identified several features of the morning message activity that while reflecting larger sociocultural conceptions of literary forms and functions are nonetheless reflective of localized knowledge and practices. Narrativization is, as Gee put it, an ability which “is by no means an innocent one” (pg. 93). Ability in such forms is locally situated. Because activity goals and practices are defined within the sociocultural context, it is not possible to talk about performance competence as absolute properties of individuals. There is no morning message archetype. Rather it is the goals and values of the community in an activity setting that defines the participation practices and procedures within which individual action is meaningful. These shared local values are the places where ability is defined, judged and acquired.

Rather the experiences of one student and his/her linguistic practices are brought within the classroom and become the fodder from which a school based literacy narrative is built. An activity perspective leads us to attend to the goals that define the behavior, the ways in which task achievement is dispersed among participants and the way

individual participation while supporting overall goals also transforms the meaning of them. As Berkenkotter & Huckin (1993) point out “genres are dynamic rhetorical forms that develop from responses to recurrent situations and serve to stabilize experience and give it coherence and meaning” (pg. 479). Thus, our individual values, social meanings and understandings create a dialogic form of knowledge construction.

Discussion of Morning Message

What counts as participation? If emergent readers are only developing knowledge of concepts of print and must therefore wait until they have acquired the conventional literacy skills in order to construct, revise, and negotiate meaning in text, there is little value in participating in a whole class activity that is “above” their level of independent. If knowledge is acquired through gradual accretion, then it could be supposed that emergent readers would not benefit from hearing conversations that involved other kinds of literate practices. Only when they were ready, that is had the subsequent knowledge base prerequisite to more sophisticated practices, would they be able to benefit from such participation. However, attention to the nature of the discourse practices within which students are apprenticed and the subsequent affect on school literacy learning and practice has led to awareness of how the oral and written patterns of language use in classrooms influences subsequent literacy development.

Rather than building blocks which can be discretely packaged and taught, Alita’s development is better understood when recognizing the situated nature of literacy practices. As Langer (1991) defined it, “literacy is the ability to think and reason like a literate person, *within a particular society*...there is no right or wrong literacy, just one

that is more or less appropriate to the demands of a particular culture” (pg. 11, emphasis hers). Therefore, because “acquisitions as complex as strategic [reading and writing] repertoires are taught over years of schooling, not months” (Pressley, 1995; p.181), apprenticeship experiences require multiple opportunities for students to participate in literacy practices that reflect a range of behaviors, purposes and goals. While students find entry to the conversation at varying levels they must have multiple opportunities to try out new roles.

Even when silent they are engaged in what Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to as legitimate peripheral participation where their own interaction is responsive to and structured by a discourse that is more sophisticated than what they could themselves individually create. While the lack of conventional reading and writing ability prevents the kindergarten and many of the first graders from actively reading and critiquing the text and while their editing remarks focus almost entirely on mechanical aspects of print, they are participants in a larger dialogue where negotiation of text meaning through oral interaction with written words and questioning of the author is taught.

The question remains, however, about what “counts” as participation. Is it only when students are talking, actively making changes that they can be said to participate in the activity itself? When I began analyzing the data in this study, particularly in an effort to study Alita’s development over time, the theoretical framework for the study shifted my focus away from Alita’s performance to Alita engaged-in-the-practice. Performance, in fact, becomes in some cases incidental when analyzing learning as participation. During Alita’s first year in the classroom, she spoke very little in whole class morning message activities. If engagement is a matter of talk, then she often wasn’t. Yet, in order to

understand changes both in Alita's literate performance as indicated in assessment of her texts as well as the literate roles she assumes in the classroom, I must be able to study changes in her participation in the practice itself.

Initially, I noticed how her "free time" activities began to reflect interest in and ownership of classroom practices. Instead of coloring or building blocks, she wanted to "play" morning message. Whereas before she would use the white boards to draw pictures, she used the white boards in the spring of the year three to practice cursive writing; she even drew me in once to evaluate her letters and help her learn new ones. It was during year two that I first noticed her seeking out other students to partner read with during free time. By year three she would come up to me and want to read to me rather than have me (or another student) read to her. Other students had done this in previous years, but it was clear that she had gained a confidence in her own reading to such an extent that she want to showcase it to me as other students did. In fact when asked, she asserted that she was a good reader already.

Her ability to engage for longer periods of time in a reading or writing task was markedly evident when I looked at videotapes from year one to year three. Turner et al (1998) argue in fact that engagement in reading and writing activities is a developmental marker in literacy. This is most clearly evident in the increase in the number of texts which she "published" in writing workshop as well as the increased sophistication in these texts. In year one her texts produced during writing workshop were predominantly pictures which were then presented to the teacher with an oral narrative which teacher scribed below. In year three, she had constructed stories that involved multiple chapters; pictures were added subsequent to the composition not as the form of the text itself.

Analysis of participation, therefore, must account for the varied ways in which students orient their physical and discursive activity to the norms, conventions, and tools which mediate the literacy practice. In chapter 4, I discussed the range of actions which “counted” as literacy in this classroom. Chapter 5 provided an analysis of changes in Alita’s participation practices and her literate performance and textual products.

Analyzing development in terms of participation, leads attention to the ways in which Alita orient both her physical and discursive activity to the written text even prior to her ability to engage in conventional reading and writing practices. Written symbols assume meaning prior to her ability to decode them. This occurs most noticeably in three places - knowing when to respond, knowing where to look, and learning how to listen in ways that allow oral response. Students are required to sit on the floor, with legs crossed, facing the west wall of the classroom. Should they forget, students are reminded to “cross your legs” and “sit on your bottom” with “everyone’s eyes on the paper”. A rocking chair faces them. In it sits that author of that day’s morning message. The teacher as well stands in front of them with marker in hand next to the big white chart paper on which the text will be written. Morning message begins with the teacher soliciting information that is recorded on every morning message. “What do I do first” A chorus of “write down the question words” follows. “And what are the question words?” the teacher responds calling on a child. Children will list off the question words, often looking to the North wall where on a big sheet of paper the question words are listed. Even though Alita is unable to read any of these words in isolation, she orients herself to the side wall chart when called upon to provide the question words. Additionally, when composing an individual morning message, these are the words

consistently spelled accurately in the text as she looks to the wall chart to assist her in recording them on her page. When she serves as the writer in the small group morning message activity, most of the words in the text itself she requires to have spelled for her. However, the question words she puts down without ease, having learned to appropriate literate cues in the environment to assist and orient her activity. Despite the constant repetition of the question words in the whole class morning message, she still turns her head to “check” the list making sure all is included.

The teachers view this as evidence of development. It indicates, they suggest, that the child is participating in the activity in ways more responsive to the norms and tools associated with the practice. Additionally, it reveals conscious effort to use literate resources in the classroom to aid in the text construction. In a viewing session with Kathy and Terri surrounding the morning message activity they commented on the importance of this behavior. Seeing this on action on the tape, Terri commented, “look at that. Anybody walking in would think she knows exactly what those say.....when she can’t read a word.” According to standardized assessment measures, Alita in year one and two could not read (i.e. she showed little ability or inclination to decode text in isolation) but she can read the meaning of textual artifacts and use them to orient her behavior and subsequent participation in the group. In fact, on her own individual morning message completed, her own text with it’s pre-literate “writing”, had in the upper left hand corner all of the question words, spelled correctly, as is done with the whole class text.

Morning message also provides students an opportunity to learn correspondence between the written and spoken word. Alita can not independently demonstrate

competency in decoding and encoding text. However, in the morning message context, where responsibility and expertise are distributed through the classroom community and with the teacher assumed the role of scribe thus eliminating the phonemic demands of the activity, Alita began to use and assume the literate tools associated with reading and writing. During the construction of the text, teachers and students constantly reread the text either after new information is added to develop a coherent sense of the text or when trying to articulate a change that needs to be made. Prompting to reread typically comes from the teacher, “let’s reread” or “would you like me to reread” but occasionally a student who is uncertain or what changes to the text should occur will ask, “will you reread”. The teacher points with her marker to each word and the students read along with her. Additionally, at the end of each message, the author chooses “three friends to read along with” him or her. Even those students with emergent literacy capabilities learn to move their finger (or a quickly snatched marker) along the text to match the chorus of voices.

In the fall of her first year in the classroom (grade 1), Alita was selected as “friend” to help Larissa read the text. She stood passively off to the side of the text, arms at her side and made no effort to follow the text or seemed to participate only occasionally in the choral rereading. However, in a whole group morning message in January of that year, as previously noted, she was fingerpointing even while sitting down on the floor as she attempted to follow with her eyes (and pointed finger) the relationship between the spoken and written text. It was an opportunity for the teacher to praise her efforts. In a morning message in the spring, she was invited to read but again, as mentioned, she used the marker to inaccurately point to the text leading the teacher to

reposition her as well as take over the fingerpointing role. In a morning message activity in the winter of year two, a student selected Alita as a “friend” to help with the final choral reading of the text. This time she pushed herself into the front and kept pointing with her finger to the text uncaring that the author was pointing or that she was blocking the text from the class. During year two and three in small group morning messages as well, she clearly works to fingerpoint the words in the text. By year three there is a close match between the words spoken and those she touches on the text; she is able at this point to “lead” the choral rereading of the text (See picture XXX) This indicates at one level acquisition both of the participation structure as well as development of word consciousness. While Alita lacks the facility and breadth of understanding of more expert peers in the literacy process, her differences reflect emergent features of conventional literacy practices. Alita demonstrates the cognitive processes reflected in awareness of print/sound relationships that more “abled” members possess. Teachers’ recognition of her participation as legitimate explains their perception of her difficulty in any given moment in engaging in an activity as a sign of laziness rather than cognitive disability. During year one in particular they monitored Alita’s involvement very closely concerned that she learn to participate in an activity regardless of skill level. Because they considered that there were multiple ways of legitimately participating, they looked for cues such as gesture and appropriation of the linguistic forms associated with the practice as evidence of her learning.

Alita quickly appropriated the structure of the editing role. Editing corrections that involve mechanical or grammatical additions or substitutions or meaning clarification are made during the writing of the text. Regardless of the accuracy of the

editing suggestion, acquisition of the participation framework is an early indication of learning the practice. For Alita, the clearest (and earliest) indication that she had begun to participate in the activity was in observing increased efforts to assume responsibility for editing the text. Especially during her first year in the classroom, she was withdrawn, silent, and often intent on sucking her thumb. However, by late fall of year one she had begun performing the “thumbs up/down” gesture at the appropriate sequence of the activity. Additionally, by the spring of her first year, she could identify the kinds of editing changes that reflected procedural features of the narrative text; she actively sought to use this knowledge to engage in public participation in the whole class message. For example, in the spring morning message she put her thumb down to indicate a bid for the floor. Kathy called on her to share what she saw as needing to be changed with the text. The change Alita suggested be made to the text reflected her understanding of the procedure of the activity rather than an attempt to negotiate the relationship between language, text, and audience. Kathy pushes her to clarify the meaning of this change and she is able to do so, parroting a response heard often in class but doing so in an appropriate context.

Kathy: Alita, what did you say that you wanted us to do?

Alita: underline it [pointing to the top sentence in the text.]

Kathy: Why should we underline it?

A: Because it's the topic sentence.

K: It's the topic sentence, so, Alita do you now have an idea what all what Randy's whole message is going to be about?

Keyana [another student in the class says] yes

Kathy: What's it going to be about?

A: Going to his uncle's house

Kathy: Sure that's what I thought.

When Kathy facilitates the whole group morning message activity she provided students with opportunities to assume roles in the practice that they would not be able to do so independently. Both teachers were intentional in constructing and reconstructing both their roles in the activity as well as the structure of it such that all students are able to participate in ways that lead to greater involvement and the appropriation of more and more complex skills. Terri believed that morning message is Alita's strongest activity because "it all started back on the carpet when she didn't have the writing skills but she could participate because it was all visual. She just needed to listen. Now she knows she has the writing skills." (Terri, interview May 2000) In other words, silence was a valid form of participation. Merely sitting and listening provided her with a legitimate literate identity in the group. From that she was able to gain access to new participatory roles. She moved from a peripheral position to assume the roles and tools associated with more expert performance.

To What Extent Is Peripheral Participation a Legitimate Entry into the Community of Practice?

Wenger (1998) writes that *all* forms of participation, no matter how peripheral, are legitimate participatory practices because they are a way to find entry into the cognitive routines of the community. Even when silent, he notes, members are observing and therefore getting access to the norms and conventions of the practice. I utilized the concept of LPP, legitimate peripheral participation, earlier to explain how Alita's learning can be described over time as a process of assuming increased involvement and

multiple roles in the performance of the practice. However, the question I raise here has to do with the extent to which classroom contexts can be considered communities of practice such that performance on the boundaries provides students with entry to the acquisition of more and more complex literate skills. I ask then about the validity of applying models of learning which draw from the research on real life practices involving systematic, long-term cognitive apprenticeships (e.g. Liberian tailors or Guatemalan weavers). Under what conditions then, does Alita's involvement in this classroom reflect participation in a community of practice? The teachers as more knowledgeable others strategically make use of textual artifacts and discursive practices to scaffold student participation. In other words, here I describe central features of the community of practice that make the experience educative for students with varying participatory competencies. This leads to an exploration of the meaning of ability as a description of qualitative differences in student mental function. I will argue that when viewing learning in terms of participation and performance competence, difference becomes a function of the degree of scaffolding required for student involvement in the activity itself.

The participation framework within which student activity occurred is formed through the discursive moves made by the teacher, the use of artifacts to scaffold student participation as well as negotiation and re-instantiation of specific goals that give meaning to individual action. There were a number of teacher moves that guide student participation. These were: (a) introduction of a specific language or discourse for thought and action; (b) development of an interactive discourse that provided insight into students evolving cognitive states; (c) selective provision or removal of prompts based upon the

developmental needs of learners; and (d) progressive movement from teacher-guided to student-guided literacy activities.

Scaffolding, as a metaphor to describe the assistance provided novices has come to be associated with sociocultural conceptions of learning and development (Stone, 1998). It describes the ways in which teachers adjust their interactions with students to assist in the performance of a goal directed activity which is initially beyond the capability of the learner. It assumes that as students conceptions of the task and their proficiency in performance undergo both quantitative and qualitative changes, the teacher's (or expert peer's) assistance will change in ways that gradually transfer greater parts of the task to students. Independent performance, thus, reflects successful appropriation of the goals, means, and skills necessary for the accomplishment of a task. Rogoff's (1995) notion of "apprenticeship" has a similar attention to the role of the expert in creating a learning space for the novice through guiding participation of the novice in culturally embedded, goal oriented activities. Linked with Vygotsky's (1978, 1986) notion of ZPD (zone of proximal development), such metaphors applied to the study of teaching from a socio-cultural context lead us to attend to the ways in which learners participation is supported in the accomplishment of the whole task (and not merely discrete portions of it) in advance of the requisite knowledge and skills needed for independent performance. It is performance in advance of competence. Which is why Cazden (1988) describes learning as "changing participation structures" where students acquire new levels of understanding (cognitive reorganization) rather than merely importing new information into old structures (cognitive addition). Thus, examining the changing participation roles of students indicating decreasing support by teachers reveals

development of student understanding of the goals of the activity and processes for participation. Product and process can not be understood independently of each of each other. Viewing student learning as “guided participation” provides “a *perspective* on how to look at interpersonal engagements and arrangements as they fit in sociocultural processes, to understand learning and development” (Rogoff, 1995, p147-148).

Introduction of a specific language or discourse for thought and action The way in which activity settings were designed in this classroom allowed teachers to be responsive to individual cognitive needs within the moment, situated in the discourse. They “recontextualize” (Newman, Griffin, Cole ,1989) student utterances adding to them new cultural meanings, values, goals which thus reorient students and redefine their participation. Attention to the discursive aspects of lesson structure brings to the foreground the ways in which individual differences in language use, whether through developmental or cultural differences, leads to exclusion from participation. The field of special education is increasingly becoming aware of the need to analyze the nature and function of classroom discourse (Forman & McCormick, 1995) in order to understand the ways in which children are “abled” and “disabled” in situated contexts. They note that numerous studies indicate that “disabilities are as much a function of the social interactional context as they are individual characteristics” (pg. 153). Teacher perception of student competence, based upon analysis of linguistic responses, shapes the ways in which they respond to and thus provide entry for the participatory moves of individual students (Mehan, 1980, 1986, 1993). Therefore, providing students with the language

that is both recognized (Delpit, 1988) as well as functional within a particular activity setting is an important aspect of guiding students' participation.

The language utilized within a particular lesson or activity framework is not merely the form with which academic knowledge takes but is in fact the very content of the knowledge itself. It is impossible to divorce the form in which students' oral participation takes from its function in developing student knowledge. If individual thought occurs primarily (that is first) through public, social interaction, (Vygotsky, 1978) then the ways in which students are enabled to participate in the dialogue surrounding text construction is what leads to acquisition of the discursive forms (genre, speech acts) which lead to cognitive change.

Selective provision or removal of prompts based upon the developmental needs of learners creates a framework within which students' participation in the same literate tasks is carefully scaffolded to the developmental needs of the participants. Lerner (1982) argues that "individual differences in children evoke differential reactions in other people, reactions that provide feedback to children and influence the further, individual character of their development" (pg 25). In the following example, the teacher helps the author of that day's morning message select an experience and relate a narrative that is bounded according to the narrative form characteristic of morning message. After dictating his first sentence the teacher looked at him and said, "Now you've just said, "I went to see the movie Rugrats with my Dad" so the whole rest of your message will be about Rugrats. She then underlined the sentence to indicate that this was the topic sentence around which the rest of the message would be written. By January, however, the teachers were rarely observed underlining sentences unless students indicated they should do so. Alita pointed it out. When asked about this they described this as an unconscious but planful response to students' acquisition of the morning message discourse framework.

KLD: ...I've noticed that you used to underline the topic sentence in the fall but you don't anymore

Kathy: you know I've noticed that

Terry: I have too

Kathy: it's like

Terry: You know what we've been starting to do I've noticed. We don't really talk about topic sentences anymore. We just. With certain kids. We used to underline. Back in the fall.

Kathy: We actually underlined it and said the words now this is your topic sentence now the rest of your message will be about

Terry: but only with like [names a child]

Kathy: They all pretty much know. Like look with Darren's message [points to it up on the wall] he knew right what he was going to say and started right out with the topic sentence and I knew it's like a sixth sense you know to know what each kid needs.

Teacher moves become *scaffolding* to the degree that they assist in the participation of students and accomplishment of task. Alita's development can be understood within a framework of individually responsive and gradually removed assistance. Textual artifacts, such as wall charts listing the question words or and "adjective chart" where descriptive words are continually place upon it to provide students with suggestions for avoiding repetitive or bland accounts, are physically prominent scaffolds which students can use of to aid participation. Difference is mediated by the response of the teacher and the construction of the physical and discursive context of the activity setting which selectively enables" student participation.

Development of an interactive discourse. In the interview above, Kathy described knowledge about how and when to respond to students' comments as emerging from a "sixth sense". This could better be described as learned attentiveness to the cognitive processes which students reveal in moment-by-moment discourse encounters. Attention to what students say and do in particular activity settings allows teachers to assess where to lead development and what frameworks to build upon.

Assessment of student present understanding requires engaging them in an interactive dialogue where scaffolds can be gradually provided. Attending to what students say and do and the assistance required develops a curriculum that is responsive to the developmental needs of all students while providing a continuum of participatory roles and practices. It is this ability to determine students' present "abilities" that allows teachers to gradually release control to students and thus within the context of one activity space provide a range of possible entries for students.

Changes in Alita's participation: In the previous sections in which Alita's participation in whole group, small group, and individual morning message spaces are provided, I've provided a thorough description of the characteristics of her participation in distinct activity setting across contexts, group membership and particularly over time. It is important her to draw attention to the contrasts in this participation over time. From a sociocultural perspective learning involves changing participation. Development follows learning. That is, through assuming the roles, using the roles, appropriated the activity rules and norms, the individual is learning the activity, with its accompanying roles, rules, and cognitive tools. Here I examine the nature of Alita's development as

observed through transformation in her participation in morning message over time. Alita's growing repertoire of roles that she is both able and willing to assume in the activity, reveal the ways in which literate competence is situated in the cultural norms and patterns of literate routines.

In the whole class activity in year one, she participated in very mechanical aspects of editing as an audience member. As the author, she merely dictated when told to, clarified when asked, but sat passively waiting to be invited into the activity. When attempting to fingerpoint and lead the choral rereading of the text, the teacher intervened and took over the task because she lacked the necessary word consciousness and understanding of the match between spoken words and written text to accomplish this task. In year two in the whole class morning message activity, she engaged very expertly in mechanical transformations and began attempting, often unsuccessfully, to engage in more complex editing practices by combining sentences and ideas. At the end of year three, as the author of a whole class morning message, she was an active participant simultaneously assuming the role of author and audience/editor as she directed the teacher's activity. See picture 5.1. She was highly successful at fingerpointing by the time and was able on numerous occasions to lead the group in rereading the text.

Picture 5.1



Picture 5.2



In small group activities, she moved from functioning as an editor (Picture 5.3) who only participated at the direction of the writer (small group messages in year 2) to serving as the writer where she orchestrated the engagement and involvement of other group members (small group morning message year 3; Picture 5.4).

Picture 5.3



Picture 5.4



Transformation in her individual morning message reflects not only her acquisition of conventional spelling and mechanical aspects of writing but also the creation of distinctions between the characteristic features of narrative genre in different activity settings. Figure 5.9 has been transcribed in order to more closely examine the language structures and practices she uses apart from conventional literacy skills.

Figure 5.9

	INDIVIDUAL MORNING MESSAGE NARRATIVES
5-6-98 <i>This was in random letter strings and then narrated to the teacher.</i>	I went out of town to see my cousin Lana. I went to see my grandma and then i went back home.
10-1-98	I am going to my grandma's. I am going with my sister. I am going over my dad's house. I am going to move.
1-28-99	Alita is going to have a great day. Alita is going to the mall today. Alita is going to get a baby doll because I wanted to. She in my cridad [cradle?]. Her Dad is taking her to the mall. That's all for today folks.
3-16-99	Alita is going to the movies to see bugs life. Whe she her get back her my mom is going to her cousins house. Alita is going to have a great day.
4-12-99	Alita fun day Alita is going to the mall today with her mom and her dad. Alita is going to have a great day.
5-18-00	A Sing Spell I am going to the mall on Saturday my birthday. They are going in a car to the Meos. What [When?] they get back to my dad house and then they are going home. A nice Sunday.
	WRITING WORKSHOP NARRATIVE
May 26 00	Me and My sister Me and My sister are going to my dads house. My dad is going to take us shopping. He is going to take us to the mall to get some shoes. Then we are going back to his house. The end.

Discussion: In the Morning Message activity, all students regardless of age or classificatory status participated in the composition of the whole text. Furthermore, while the resulting text reflected greater sophistication and complexity than what most students

individually could create, it provided multiple opportunities for students to see, practice, and acquire the cognitive skills personally that were being utilized publicly by the group. Results show that changes in student participation reflected evidence both of literate development in conventional knowledge and skills as well as transformation of the nature and function of their participation over time. Difference in student cognitive practices and social experiences was discussed as a pedagogical tool through which learning occurs as knowledge and understanding of participants shapes the nature of the task itself. From this perspective, ability, as assessed through performance, is mediated by the social context within which knowledge is enabled and constrained.

If learning involves internalization of discrete skills that are acquired through accretion of knowledge, then ability is an absolute property of individuals. Participation in activities, thus, must be carefully monitored so that activities are selected according to developmental achievement. In studying development, we, then, ask what children know now and what next they must learn. However “ the questions are different....if view internalization as participatory appropriation through guided participation in a system of apprenticeship”(Rogoff, pg. 157). In order to lead development, we must understand what ability and difference mean in specific contexts and ask about the nature and function of variability in student participation. Thus, to explore differences among the students in morning message activity, a variety of aspects of participation could be analyzed such as: the amount of students’ participation. that is sheer quantity of talk and turns. Who talks when? For how long? the differences in how students respond to, comment on, and negotiate the construction of the text or in the kinds of scaffolds

necessary to support performance (e.g. what initiates and extends a student turn? What role do textual artifacts play in supporting activity?).

The issue isn't whether certain ways of thinking are inherently more sophisticated, complex and mentally challenging but rather how particular modes of thinking, cognitive skills, participation practices provide tools for doing things in the world. I've chosen to study a literacy performance as an activity space because it retains the essential connection between situated goals and individual performance. Competence becomes the ability to marry the two. Teaching literacy skills as if divorced from the historical and social contingencies within which they are utilized hides the dialogic "give and take" within which "abilities" arise. Ability is a functional characteristic of the relationship between individual and social practice arising through participation in goal oriented, locally valued literacy activities rather than an absolute property which students import into all and new activity settings.

Vygotsky (1978, 1986) argued that learning occurs in children's "zones of proximal development." Discovering children's learning potential, he argued, requires analysis not of what children can do alone but rather what they are capable of with support. Traditional instruction which emphasizes teaching to students' present levels of cognitive performance and grouping practices limit children's participation with those using different tools to mediate their literate practices and, thus, narrowly defines the possibilities for learning and the direction in which learning occurs. It argues that difference is both a function of the social context and the medium through which learning opportunities for students at multiple points of development are created.

Standardized tests while useful for making comparisons across contexts provide an incomplete and fragmented picture about what children understand and do when engaged in literacy activities. Thus, differences in literacy scores as measured by performance on a standardized test become absolute statements about the ability of individuals.

Differences become situated within the individual which legitimizes attempts to remediate regardless of the meaning and purpose of literacy performances themselves.

When viewing cognition solely as intramental (inside one's own head) function we ignore the "contribution of structure in the environment, in artifacts, and in other people to the organization of mental processes." (Hutchins, p. 62). That is, in order to accomplish a task students must engage in discursive and physical behaviors that are oriented to each other for the accomplishment of a task. Exploration of performance difference through analysis of the activity setting within which literacy occurs requires a conception of cognition that is distributed among the artifacts, social networks, discursive practices, cultural norms (procedures and routines) and sheds light on the ways in which individual behavior is oriented by and directed to the goals and activities within sociocultural contexts. Implications for this affect the ways in which we understand the nature of learning and the function of pedagogical activity in individual development.

This is not to create a dichotomy between direct instruction and models which emphasize exploration and co-construction of knowledge, but rather to notice that knowledge within a community of practice is often tacit and supported by the incidental discourse rather than the direct question-answer-respond. It flows through, in and around activity. If we recognize the role of the social and cultural in defining individual ability we can better understand the individual-context relationship which is so difficult to study and

understand (Lerner, 1995) as well as design pedagogical activities that lead to change in students' conceptions about what literacy is and how one engages in it.

JOINT-ENGAGEMENT: LITERATE TOOLS DEFINE PARTICIPATION IN THEMATIC UNITS

In this section I examine Alita's participation over three years of thematic units. I examine the textual artifacts she produced over three years and then closely examine her actual participation in year one and then again in year three to discuss the role of mediational tools in supporting participation. Instead of merely studying the role of activity (i.e. what kids are doing) in supporting learning as in the part III above, this section attends to the role of discourse and the mediation of artifacts in supporting the development of particular ways of thinking, talking, and acting. In thematic units, material artifacts (i.e. a concept map) and ideational artifacts represented in classroom genre conventions for expository text structure and language (e.g. patterns for topic and concluding sentences), organize the process in which Alita composes and the cognitive routines that accompany her activity.

Specifically, however, the description of scientific literacy developed by Halliday and Martin (1992) was employed to analyze the extent to which Alita's participation in the reading and construction of expository texts in science could be characterized over time as the acquisition of scientific discourse practices. Halliday and Martin assert that scientific discourse involves: (a) transformation of "everyday" experience into formal scientific organization through the creation of abstract categories to create hierarchical association among events, ideas and objects; (b) specialized vocabularies. That is, nominalization and objectification (e.g. "naming") of processes and experiences for

study; (c) occurs within a community of practice such that all texts (both oral and written) involve intertextuality and responsivity. All knowledge, therefore, is subject to the validation, response, and acceptance of a larger group of scholars; and (d) the organization of texts constructed as part of scientific inquiry and dissemination reflect the specialized ways of using language to represent knowledge in language characteristic of practitioners in the discipline (such as vocabulary and grammatical and syntactical forms).

To develop and extend students' literacy knowledge and strategies in the content areas, special attention was given to the design and implementation of the thematic units. Within the thematic units, teachers involved students in researching topics that both supported the development of district and state content standards as well as were of particular interest to the students (e.g., in science such topics as insects, bats, fish, plants framed the inquiry and in social studies students explored community workers and city governance and management). The students read and wrote expository texts with guided instruction and practice in such literacy strategies as: activating background knowledge; asking questions; making notes; organizing, synthesizing, and constructing oral or written texts; and presenting informational reports. Thus, while scientific topics were selected based upon the interest and motivation of the students, the objectives reflected district curricular content which was aligned with state and national standards for science education. For example, in a unit on "fish", science objectives for the grade as defined within the district scope and sequence for elementary science instruction include attention to such disciplinary concepts as habitat, food chain, life cycle, predator, prey, parasite, and relationship between environment and adaptive characteristics. The central feature

of this unit, however, is its attention to apprenticing students in the forms and functions of language that characterize scientific literacy. Thematic Units in this classrooms involve recursive patterns of practice that systematically engage students in experiences which enable them to both participate in and come to learn the ways of seeing , knowing, and doing characteristic of scientific discourse.

To promote students' participation in a community of practice, teachers constructed disciplinary contexts that promoted the sharing of artifacts, meanings, practices, resources, texts and ideas (Roth et al., 1999). Sustained participation in conversations and interactions afforded students the opportunity for the development, invention and transformation of new mental processes and social identities, as well as a deeper understanding of the cognitive and linguistic properties of the discipline. Analysis of Alita's discourse reflected in both oral and written forms focused on how she was able to "take up" (Tuyay, et al., 1995) the opportunities for learning afforded by the text features and the teachers' instructional practices. In other words, the knowledge available for appropriation was defined in part by the resources she was able (or choose) to wield in the moment of activity. Tools thus play a central role in mediating the way in which Alita engages with others in accomplishing tasks that have both personal and collective importance.

Thematic units: In the curriculum framework prepared for the district and the principal that delineates how the teachers are fulfilling district standards for each discipline, thematic unit time is the "official" space in the curriculum allocated to social studies and science instruction. The teachers developed thematic units that varied from

3-6 weeks in length and organized a number of concepts within either science or social studies within an overarching topic that included a series of activities that occurred 4 – 5 times per week for one to one and half hours. Over the year, the teachers alternated between social studies and science units and never formally integrated them. For example, a unit on Police Officers, three weeks in length, encompassed social studies themes about community, roles, neighborhood and geographical analysis of uses of spaces, government, civic involvement, and responsibility. A unit on “fish” which followed dealt with habitats, the food chain, environmental niches, reproductive cycle, and microevolution.

Each of the concepts was taken from a list sent out by the district of social studies and science concepts important for each grade. Kathy and Terri had carefully checked off the concepts on the chart sent to them and organized them within units which, for the most part, were constructed initially somewhat independently of the district curriculum but then reframed and organized to meet the subject matter criteria. That is, availability of resources (and this included the willingness of a policeman to come into the classroom. The following year the unit was on firefighters since one of the teachers in the building was married to a firefighter and convinced him to come in; The following year the mayor, who was up for re-election and had recently chosen this school and this classroom to be the one in which he volunteered once/month for one hour to help a student read was the focal point of the unit).

While ostensible activities to support disciplinary knowledge, to Kathy and Terri these units were all about literacy. As they themselves commented, “everything we do all day long is all about literacy environments.” Thematic units were always organized in

the same recursive process which entailed creating questions, gathering information through interview, observation, reading expository texts, and watching video tapes and then collecting in the form of individual and class notes. then organizing the “facts” in concept maps and creating partner written research reports when were then revised, edited, published and illustrated.

Thematic unit activities were set up with multiple entry points for participation. therefore, Alita’s lack of engagement in many of the tasks involved in the process of constructing an expository text was a source of both frustration and concern for the teachers. Despite norms that “everybody writes,” Alita avoided the writing aspect when in small groups preferring to sit and let the other student take the leadership role. Notetaking activities in science units could make use of graphic symbols such as pictures to represent ideas. Students could use invented spelling or could involve conventional orthography. The point was to find a way to represent information so it could be drawn from and utilized later. During this aspect of the task she would make an effort to record something on paper, then, tended not to “share” what she learned during the public share time. It was at the stage of turning notes into a graphic organizer and then into a written text, that her lack of “acceptable” participation was most noticeable.

As described in the previous chapter, there was a repetitious pattern and structure to each component of the activity. It began with the development of questions and then students engaged in various activities to find answers to these questions as well as collect other information that occurred. These activities could include observation (e.g. of a fish in a bowl), experimentation (e.g. growing seeds in different conditions to see the effect on development), interview (e.g. talking with a police officer or a pet store owner),

mapping (e.g. by walking the neighborhood to observe how their community was laid out), watching video tapes, and reading books. From all these sources students gathered individual notes which were shared at the end of each class period to create whole class notes that were then placed upon the wall where they remained as a resource throughout the rest of the unit. The class together, then, coded all these notes and created a concept map to reflect the overarching categories. Modeling of this process of turning class notes into a map occurred in each unit over a 1-2 day period; it was a repetition of an activity which had occurred in each of the units which had preceded it. In every thematic unit, teachers modeled the full activity and students engaged in it as a whole group activity. They then created a map individually while sitting with a partner who could help and was in fact expected to help. The two maps formed the basis of a partner written final report, which had also been modeled and engaged in as a whole class process. Below are “snapshots” from Alita’s participation in thematic unit activities in year one which both illustrate the nature of the curricular routines and Alita’s own mental practices in year one.

Snapshot of collecting data – Year 1 – Fall: On this day, the class is going to interview a police officer who brought in his German Shepherd partner. The class has spent three days already preparing for this activity through generating questions, writing them up, categorizing them (e.g. all these questions are about what a police officer “does”), assigning each student responsibility to ask one or more questions and then practicing reading them. While interviewing the police officer Kathy stands at the white board and jots down notes on white paper that she both color codes and graphically

organizes to indicate the separate categories. In most such activities each of the students as well take notes, often on clipboards. However, the amount of student movement and attention required to read through the questions seemed to them to require enough engagement and activity so while Terri helped shepherd the organization of the students – students lined up along the wall in small groups reflecting their “category” of question and took turns carefully reading and posing their question while Kathy recorded information modeling and thinking aloud to the students the process of recording only a few salient pieces on the map as reminders of the information the police officer was providing.

Initially, Alita sits in the back on the left side; rarely do we see her in front. Often, as noted, she moves to the far fringes of the activity – against the wall, in the back of the group, as if she’s uncertain, unwilling, or uncomfortable about becoming a central actor in the community. She is actually kneeling rather than sitting on her bottom as norms dictate and is holding both hands near her face. Terri passes out papers with questions on them that the kids already wrote, long strips of paper written in color-coded marker. The first group takes their papers and line up against the wall. They take turns reading their questions then give their papers back to Terri before sitting back down. Alita was not one of the first groups called up to ask a question. She’s sucking her thumb as she listens to the questions and answers. Other kids in the back row are also kneeling (rather than sitting) so they can see well. Terri, who is monitoring behavior, makes no comment as she would during a morning message activity. The presence of the dog in the classroom acts as a powerful energy focusing attention to the front of the carpeted

area. Alita looks around at Terri who is standing at the back of the room. Terri passes out some more papers with questions written on them.

Kathy tells the kids that they have to sit on their bottoms, so Alita sits with her feet behind her, sort of like “w” position. Then she’s kneeling/sitting on her feet again. Other kids next to her sit on their feet as well. Alita leans back and puts her hands on the floor behind her. More kids are given papers with questions and stand up waiting for their turn to read the question. Alita is not one of them. She raises her hand for a second but puts it back down. She begins rocking with her thumb in her mouth. Then she stops. Puts her right hand on the floor behind her again, for a second. Alternates between putting her right hand on the floor behind her and resting it in front of her. The whole time, that left thumb is still in her mouth. Sits / kneels again. Takes her thumb out. Looks around at Terri behind her for a second.

Terri is passing out more papers. Alita’s hand goes up for a second again, but she is ignored for the moment. Finally, Alita gets called on to take her paper. She takes her paper and then lines up against the wall with the others where she stands quietly and with little movement. Looks down at her paper for a second – perhaps to rehearse her question? Now it’s Alita’s turn. Alita’s question: “Is your dog a girl or a boy?” Answer: “A boy dog.”

Alita returns her paper and sits back down in the back. She unties her left sneaker. Wraps the laces around her ankle before tying them in the front. Her laces must be way too long. It looks like a new sneaker. Then she unties it again and reties it without wrapping it around her ankle. She ties her shoe pretty quickly. Then she’s back to sucking her thumb and sitting on her feet. Looks around again then looks back at the

front. While questions were being asked and answered, Kathy has been standing at the chart taking notes. She asks the officer if there's anything else he would like to add. He looks at Kathy's notes for a second, noticing how they are organized by topic. Then he says that one of the main reasons they use the dog is to "track people. Criminals." Alita's hand goes up as Terri asks them if they have any more questions. Larissa gets called on. Alita's hand goes back up. Dejohn gets called on. Alita's hand stays up. Ebony gets called on. Alita's hand is still up. Alita rests her hand for a second and then puts it back up after Ashley gets called on. Finally, Alita gets called on. Alita's question: "Is your boss a lady or a man?" Answer, "My boss is a man, but my boss's boss is a lady." Alita resumes sucking her thumb. This is the first time that she has shown sustained attention. In each of these events there is a moment when her interest is piqued and she shows sustained effort to have the floor and participate. After doing so, she immediately resumes her passive, compliant behavior characterized by slouching, thumb sucking and holding her head in her hands. It's significant to note that her question wasn't scripted as the others were.

The public conversation in which Alita participates become internalized and transformed and provide the regulation of inner thought processes which guide the students as they employ literate skills and tools to compose scientific texts. Thus, as Englert & Mariage (1996) have noted, intentional organization of classroom discourse and carefully scaffolded participation provide students with opportunities to engage in cognitive practices, which reflect the socio-cultural ways of knowing which embody disciplinary knowledge. Understanding how Alita learns to understand disciplinary discourse practices and compose text reflecting alternative genre forms requires attention

to how specific cognitive practices are supported within the context of situated literacy activities. A central aim of this whole class activity was to support students in using literacy as a tool in disciplinary domains to support cognitive activity and socio-cultural practices associated with scientific inquiry. Writing served to collect ideas and questions generated for use in interviewing the police officer. These were then organized into categories. The categories, then, matched the macro-level themes identified in the concept map that the teacher constructed in front of the class while students were interrogating the officer. Students used writing to record and practice reading “their” question which pointed out the utility of writing as a memory facilitator and tool to support inquiry. Thus, attention to the ways in which literacy is employed during science instruction enables us to explore what students learn about composing expository text through participation in discourse practices that are meaningful within the activity goals and discursive forms of the classroom. In particular, in this chapter I attend to relationship between Alita’s developing understanding of the nature and process of reading and writing within and across academic genre.

Snapshot – Year 1 – Winter: It was in January of that first year that she was asked to write a paper explaining how to do something. The directions asked the students to write a “How to” paper explaining to another student, perhaps a younger one, how to do something. I observed her writing and she sat looking around the room and then began to write looking frequently up at the wall chart where there was a list of eight ways to be responsible in the class, which included keeping hands to oneself and being respectful and kind to classmates. When she brought her text over to me and I asked her

to read it to me, she dictated, “how to be responsible [pause] of holding hands [pause] how to be nice”. Her text actually reads “Hands are for helping not hurting.” All words are spelled correctly. Clearly she was able to copy letters from environmental print. There is emerging evidence that she is developing word consciousness. While the letters are spaced across the line, all but two of the words are on their own line. She places a period (incorrectly) at the end of the second line in an apparent attempt to punctuate. A common pattern in students’ text is punctuation at the end of the line. What I found most noticeable was that she had recalled the genre of the assignment and was able to dictate a text that while not coherent showed evidence of emergent acquisition of the genre. Additionally, her use of environmental print was an encouraged and acceptable form of literate behavior in the classroom. During thematic units especially vocabulary as well as scientific “Facts” were placed around the room and students were encouraged to walk up to the charts and copy down words they need to use in their texts. Her ability to copy correctly indicates her awareness of environmental print as well as growing understanding of the role of writing and the alphabetic principle.

In January of that year she was able to copy words from a wall chart although she wasn’t able to preserve word consciousness or write across the paper. She had been asked to write an explanation paper – how to do something – to select something she “knew a lot about, like making peanut butter sandwiches or taking care of an animal and explain to someone else how to do it.” She wrote, “Hands are for helping not hurting.” Which she then dictated to me as “How to be responsible. Of holding hands How to be nice.” She knew enough about the genre of “how to” to select environmental print that she knew matched that genre. Frequently the teachers referred to the wall chart and while

they rarely read it straight through there would be a reminder of one of the rules pertaining to “how we treat people in our classroom.” She spelled each word correctly, however.

This individual writing activity, while not a direct aspect of the thematic unit, was used at various points to provide a picture of the way in which students were internalizing the abstract (third person) stance and text structures associated with expository writing. Over time, the texts she composes during these individual “expert” writing activities continued to show certain aspects of the scientific organizational structure, specifically an abstract stance towards personal knowledge (See Figure 5.9). However, these individual writing tasks were also “independent” of activity settings where literacy was employed for engaging in cultural activities with accompanying tools, social practices, and curricular goals. They were assessments enacted independently of the material, social, and ideational artifacts of classroom practices. Thematic units occurred over several weeks of ongoing investigation, inquiry, information gathering, and organization. The final composition reflected this process. Expert papers were written in no more than thirty minutes; topics were generated by students in isolation of any larger questions or collective activity. Alita was never able to demonstrate the kind of scientific literate knowledge on these activities as she was in her thematic unit texts (figure 5.10 & 5.11), in part, perhaps because competence in composing particular kinds of texts required the availability of mediating artifacts. At the end of year three, Alita had not yet internalized the hierarchical structure of expository writing but remained closely tied in her composing process to the concept map to scaffold her participation. Thus, her competence remained tied to the physical availability of the concept map itself.

Social constructivist views on learning in particular situate knowledge within the context of specific cultural values, beliefs, and ideas (Wertsch, 1991). Learning, then, is an inherently social task where particular skills are understood best in the contexts for which society employs them. As Edwards and Mercer (1989) point out, the acquisition of skills requires understanding of the purposes, meaning, and values for which specific tools are employed. This, they note, leads us to view “educational knowledge (and by implication, other sorts of knowledge too), as socially constructed and reconstructed, conventionalized and historical, socialized and socializing” (pg. 93). A common rationale for integrating literacy instruction in subject matter activities is that it increases effectiveness and efficiency in transfer of knowledge across domain through opportunity for repetition of skills in authentic and meaningful contexts (Lipson et al, 1993). However, from a sociocultural framework, analysis of skill transfer requires close analysis of the values and meanings embedded in the activity itself. Situated learning means not merely that students engage in activities that require multiple or integrated skills but also that there are larger cultural themes and purposes that give meaning to isolated actions of individuals. Analysis both of Alita’s acquisition and development of expository composition skills must be understood within the larger context of classroom, community, cultural goals and practices which shape the meanings imparted to students’ individual educational activities.

Figure 5.10

Alita's: 1-26-97 Expert

5-4-99 Expert

6-13-00

Figure 5.11

Alita's Fish Unit Concept Map

Figure 5.12

Alita & Partner's Fish Unit Rough Draft Text

Snapshot of Alita in Year 1 – Spring: When Alita had been in the classroom for almost nine months (spring of her first grade year), she was working on developing a map for a science thematic unit. Several days before I had sat in the small group with whom she was working when I noticed that she appeared little engaged in the work the other girls were doing. The rule in the classroom is that “everyone writes” that is, no matter what the proficiency in writing, every member of a group is required to compose and scribe some aspect of the final group report. I noticed that the other girls were intently talking and working together with no involvement of Alita. They seemed to be completely ignoring her. She was looking off into the distance. I sat down with the

group and attempted to draw her into the task. She was unwilling, shrugging her shoulders at my questions, refusing to make eye contact, ignoring my comments or efforts to involve her. I attempted to get the other girls to include her but she seemed disinclined to join them.

During a unit on insects in the spring, Alita was working with a group of two other students, both girls, in the process of turning notes into a concept map. Students were to cull from the class notes, which they had collectively organized into themes or concepts, and create an individual idea map that would provide the structure for their own writing project. I was sitting off to the side observing the group and videotaping their activity. While the other two were working intently, she kept looking around. They seemed annoyed at first, then ignored her and pursued the task. She saw me and asked if I would help her. I went over, sat, and realized that by “help” she meant “do the task”. When I asked her questions to scaffold her engagement (e.g. “what is it that you’re supposed to be doing?” “What goes on the spaces next to the boxes?” “If this part of the map is about where bugs live, what kind of information goes here.” “Where could you look in the room to find that information?”) she shrugged or refused to answer. I struggled to figure out what sense she was making of the task and of my questions. Was she merely being “lazy,” as her Terri often suggested, or was her passivity an outward manifestation of her confusion about the nature of the task itself. I withdrew from the interaction and directed Terri over to her who treated the issue as a behavior problem and reoriented Alita towards engagement in the group and narrowed the parameters of the assignment for Alita. Instead of five pieces of information for each category, she needed only three.

Several days later, Alita was working alone on her own individual map, associated with the same unit. After filling in the map representing the main ideas and correlating details that would then become the paragraphs for the report, the students had to go to one of the teachers to review their notes and categories. The time was short so I offered to read some as well. Alita came up to me. She had only completed a portion of it. The teacher had reduced the number of notes she had to write for each category and she was free to copy or borrow ideas from the class lists on the wall. However, nearly half of Alita's map remained unfinished. When I attempted to walk her through the notes she already had and have her read them to me and come up with further, she continued to repeat "you write" and "I don't know."

In this case, I was unsure how to respond to Alita. She clearly didn't seem able or willing to engage in the roles required by the literacy practice nor did she seem inclined (or perhaps competent) to respond to my prompts. The teachers' perception of Alita's "laziness" needed to be balanced against the very real limitations in her knowledge of print. If her behavior were real laziness, then, it would be a management issue and I had never participated in that aspect of the classroom (e.g. putting one's "name up" on the board. On the other hand I was unsure how to provide further assistance without completing the task. I went up to some of the notes hanging on the wall and helped her identify ones she could write down but she merely looked at me when I suggested she copy it and said again, "you write it." One of the classroom teachers eventually heard or saw my dilemma and called Alita over to her. She was very firm with her and sent her back to her seat to write what she needed to. Her response I found interesting because

she treated Alita's behavior strictly as a behavior problem. Alita was "unwilling" not "unable" to follow the process.

Two days later, Alita had completed a map. She had a few more interactions with each of the teachers who redirected her attention to the task but she'd essentially completed the activity. In supporting this, the teachers had reduced the number of details that Alita needed to include in her map, they had directed her attention to the environmental print that could serve as a resource to her writing, they had reminded her that she need not focus on writing conventionally, they had her orally review the information she knew as a reminder of what she knew and would then write, they had monitored her attention and engagement and stepped into to refocus her if needed, they had provided models of the literate routines in which she would engage, and they had developed participation structures (whole group, partner, individual activities) which minimized the difficulty of decoding and encoding the text.

Several days later, Alita was ready to have her map checked by one of the teachers. They had asked me to help since there a number of students who needed their maps checked. When I looked at Alita's map, she had filled it in– three for each category as directed. She had, however, confused some of the details with the overarching categories and she could read little of what she'd written back to me. It was spelled conventionally – or almost so. She seemed to have copied the notes verbatim from the charts on the wall, put them in categories based upon the color coded reference, but then wasn't completely sure what the categories or the details written on the page represented. She could identify the categories and when I asked her to read the information, she seemed to be culling from memory rather than using the text on the page. That is, when I

read the overarching concept, represented by a single word (e.g. “live,” “eat,” “babies”), she could then list a series of details back to me that fit in the category. When I read details, she could identify the overarching category.

Solely by examining her concept map itself, where some details were in the wrong category, one could think that she wasn’t consistently able to match the relationship. What seemed to have happened was that she copied words from the wall, without being certain of what the words actually said, in an effort to finish the task of completing the map. Because the notes had been color coded and some of the concepts on her map were accurately organized, it appeared that she had been able to read and closely coordinate her writing, but then, as with the spelling, became confused about which category she was working on or perhaps lost interest.

When it was time for her group to draw from their maps and write the text, Alita did none of the writing. The norm for the activity, in the teacher’s words, was that “everybody writes. Everybody has something to contribute.” However, unlike in year three, when the teachers religiously monitored the groups to ensure that each student did indeed share in the writing aspect of the project, Kathy and Terri only infrequently monitored the task to ensure that each student participated in each phase of the report writing process. The teachers, rather, walked around and observed to make sure that each group member was involved in some way – pointing to the map, telling what to write, editing, etc. Most partner or small groups did share the writing task either to follow the activity rule or to speed up the writing process (“You write this [concept category] and I’ll write this. It will be faster,” said one student to his partner). In this particular group of students, however, Alita’s difficulties in writing conventionally or in reading notes

from the map and her willingness – preference even – to let other students do the writing task, for her. A third grade regular education student, who clearly preferred to lead the group and do the writing, ignored Alita much of the time during the writing phase and went ahead and wrote the text with little input from either of her partners.

What is significant about Alita's performance is that even though she only knew 17 letters at this time, she could engage in an activity which required that she use and develop abstract categories for information. She was operating at two levels –one at the level of spelling, print, text, and the other at the level of taxonomic structure, using an understanding of the organization of concepts and ideas to develop a written text that represents scientific literacy. The map itself, a piece of paper on which boxes and lines framed where and how information was recorded, created parameters which influenced her writing process. The modeling of the teachers as well as the written artifacts, available all over the room to use for reference, provided additional support for guiding what and how Alita engaged in the writing process. Both the teachers and I had directed Alita's attention to these texts and she used them directly when spelling the words and deciding which information fit into which category. The ways in which Alita's partners did and did not include her in their work affected her participation in the activity as well. Alita's literacy skills – inability to write complete words independently – could have precluded her participation without the creation of an activity structure and the presence of literate tools and artifacts to support the development of understanding of taxonomies and participation in a process of creating a text consistent with scientific organization of a topic.

Alita is working to align a written text product – her map – to represent the knowledge about insects as it existed in the classroom community. What is surprising is how much of the map she is able to read accurately. Despite her inability to read even simple sight words on the DOLCH test one month later, she's able to organize and re-read, in a remarkably consistently fashion, words which represent the scientific literate ideas and information. Observation of her engaging in this process suggests that her participation in the process with the concept map reflects her participation in the scientific community more generally. That is, the concept map developed by the teachers is a representation of the ways in which knowledge is organized in the scientific community.

The teachers intentionally utilized the model of scientific writing delineated by Halliday and Martin (1992) to inform the instructional process related to the presentation of the thematic content and linguistic style of academic. There are four aspects of scientific discourse that provided an organization frame for developing the ability of emergent readers and writers to read and construct expository texts within a science community. First, experience within a discipline is conceptually organized, that is, abstract categories create hierarchical association among events, ideas, and objects, such that everyday experience is transformed into formal scientific associations. Learning to know scientifically means developing ways of thinking about the world that reflect the disciplinary structures which guide inquiry and frame ways of making sense. Second, specialized vocabularies are explicitly employed during the research, synthesis and writing aspects of the unit. This is what Halliday and Martin refer to as nominalization – the naming and objectification for study and analysis of processes and experiences as

seen through a scientific lens. Scientific vocabularies are more than elaborate words; they embody disciplinary specific ways of knowing and understanding the world and thus are an important aspect of scientific literacy. Third, scientific literacy is premised on the notion that knowledge is constructed within a community of practice. Knowledge is always subject to the validation, response, and acceptance of a larger group of scholars. The questions one asks as well as one's own research findings are inextricably connected to the insights and practices of others engaged in scientific inquiry. Fourth and finally, text organization reflects the specialized ways of using language to represent knowledge in the discipline. Scientific literacy is characterized by hierarchical organization of ideas. Categories are not inherent to the structure of experience but rather imposed upon it through the socially derived meanings that have come to collectively organize our interactions in the world. Thus, students must be taught to see the world in ways that reflect hierarchically organized and conceptually derived experiences in a scientific community of inquiry.

According to Halliday and Martin, this hierarchy is reflected in the ways in which systematic relationships between ideas are constructed similar to those that might be contained in a taxonomy. In academic writing, each class in the taxonomy is introduced and signaled by an introductory main idea sentence known as the "Hyper-theme" (Halliday & Martin, 1992), which overviews the thematic information that might be contained in a paragraph(s). Hyper-Themes are prospective -- they pointed the reader forward to a relatively small set of meanings that would pattern as details, which were called Theme -News (details) in Halliday and Martin's framework. In addition, well-organized academic texts often contains a clause at the end of the paragraph that is

retrospective and looks back on the thematic ideas in the paragraph. This clause, Hyper-New, serves as a concluding sentence to summarize the major ideas and related information (Halliday & Martin). Finally, there is a top-level layer of organization that creates a broader pattern of development across the paragraphs and that unifies the entire text. Hyper-themes are themselves predicted in an introductory paragraph that contains a Macro-Theme (Halliday & Martin, 1992), which overviews and introduces the classes of information that will follow. In a parallel fashion, there is a Macro-New clause that retrospectively looks backward, summarizing across the relatively larger set of meanings patterning as Hyper-News or details (Halliday & Martin). A figure of this organizational scheme is shown in Figure 1. In other words, in order for children to construct meaning in and through written text (both through reading and writing) in a scientific discourse community requires understanding how categories are used to represent overarching conceptual categories and supporting and associated subordinate details.

Based upon Halliday and Martin's (1993) classification scheme for scientific writing, the Alita in collaboration with her partners exhibited an emerging sense of genre components: introductory paragraph, main idea-topic sentences that introduced each class of information, detail sentences, and concluding sentences for each class of information. What they had yet to acquire was the concluding paragraph that summarized and recapitulated the information in the text. Alita's participation in the composition process was very peripheral. Yet, she was able to complete a concept map that reflected hierarchical organization of text details into conceptual categories. Comparison of this initial effort with the independence displayed three years later in performing the same routine indicates that Alita's performance over time showed increasing mastery of the

genres and discourses related to academic writing. When Alita's knowledge is considered in light of her historical participation in the community, there was evidence of appropriation and mastery of tools that had been afforded them through social interaction.

Joint engagement, tool use and scientific practice: Joint engagement typically refers to activities in which students collaborate to achieve a particular task. For example, in her analysis of girl-scout cookie sales, Rogoff (1993) analyzes the ways in which tools, resources, and other actors apprentice novices into the cognitive routines afforded by the cookie sale activity. Attention is often given to the ways in which the physical and discursive activity of others activity scaffolds the behavior of novices. However as others (e.g. Stone, 1998) have pointed out, the scaffolding metaphor while of great utility in describing the way teachers, parents, and other adults alter the activity such that the cognitive task is rendered more manageable for the child, it has often been used in ways that are inattentive to the role that tools and subjects themselves play in creating their own scaffolding. All activity, whether performed alone without the actual physical presence of others, or in close interaction with other people involves a collaborative feature. Joint engagement refers not merely to explicitly collaborative activity (as in talking to each other) but rather to the ways that all tasks are constructed within a social space. Because the activity itself is defined by the meanings, tools, and cognitive activities of others, all task engagement can thus be viewed as "joint". In this section I explore the "joint" aspect in Alita's performance through examining the ways in which artifacts and tools (and discourses are ideational tools in this sense) mediate the actions of the individual. The data will be presented in two formats: first, as a series of

snapshots and bullet points from a six week thematic unit on birds at the end of Alita's third grade year and second, as an analysis of the specific features of the activities in this same unit.

VARIED FORMS IN WHICH JOINT ENGAGEMENT ASSUMES

Hearing the language that peers use to organize, introduce, frame text is appropriated to guide Alita's text organization. In a previous unit, Terri had highlighted as an "interesting model" the introductory statement that a partner group used to begin each paragraph. "Do you want to know what will happen next" was read by Terri as an "interesting" example. Alita used it to frame each of her paragraphs and it served to scaffold her entry into the text.

Learning community helps them take risks in part be/c celebrate the work of each other. Kathy adds as well about "opportunity to celebrate the work of others." In the bird unit activity, Alita and Donny's category is pointed out as a model for other students to use, "Boys and girls, Donny and Alita came up with another category. if anyone else thinks body parts would be a good category for them you can borrow that idea." In talking with Kathy and Terri before school just after this incident, several times Kathy said that "the learning community is everything." I ask what she means by that. The learning community is what "helps them take risks. She, then, explains that the importance of noticing, celebrating, and calling students' attention to the novel and inventive actions of individuals is that it provides new knowledge to the community as well as supports risk-taking and novel transformation of established practices.

“Partner writing gets the kids talking. They won’t interact unless pushed to do so. In partner wiring they talk academic talk instead of about unrelated stuff.” Terri’s comment (spring, 2000) about the value and utility of partner writing was presented as an explanation of the centrality in which collaborative writing plays in their curriculum. She and Kathy were explaining that partner writing served not only to mitigate the individual difficulties which students might have with the reading and writing demands of the task but that it created important opportunities to engage in talk about texts which reflected the characteristic discourse patterns of the activities. In other words, have students write in collaborative groups was not just about providing support to students less proficient in reading and writing. It was about the construction of discursive spaces where students would be required to engage in scientific conversations. Learning to compose texts that reflected uses of language characteristic in scientific discourse required that students be given the opportunity to engage in the social practices that accompany literacy in the disciplines. Because knowledge is internalized from the public to the private sphere, the creation of collaborative activity spaces was a necessary pedagogical activity for supporting the development of individual scientific literacy.

Bird unit highlighting: Terri says “just take a quick peek over at your neighbor and make sure they have highlighted the right information. The teachers thus build into the activities and the commands the interdependence for learning. In Alita’s table grouping, two of the four students are quite proficient readers and writers. They were able and willing to help Donny and John when they got lost in the text. Teachers decisions about how to groups students collaboratively, though, are not based solely

upon ability to conventionally read and write but also on students' ability to support each other. A good collaborative arrangement is one which supports productive interaction. For example, when partnered, at one point with Rebecca, Kathy had been highly critical of the partnership. Rebecca, a regular education third grader was a highly skilled reader and writer. She was above grade level in all academic subjects. However, she was very dominating, opinionated, and had difficulty listening to classmates in either whole class or small group collaborative arrangements. In the bird unit activity, Donny and Alita were very nearly matched in their literate abilities. Alita, who had been in the classroom two years longer than Donny at this point, was far more skilled than he in the routines associated with the thematic unit. It was she who directed the notetaking activities as well as the organization of information on the graphic organizer. However, they often seemed in conflict. Unlike the other students, these two were not able to self-select their partners. Both had been absent on the day in which partner selection was done and no one had volunteered to work with them. Both students were frequently absent, which added additionally difficulties to their partnership, particularly when Alita had to finish writing the text herself but was unable to read the words on Donny's concept map. She hadn't been in attendance the day when the maps were finished so she needed to rely on his map. Without him to "read" his unconventional spelling and with her own limited decoding abilities, writing the text became problematic. Kathy and Terri always allowed students to self-select partners during thematic unit activities. While they did intentionally pair table groupings to reflect the diverse range of decoding abilities in the classroom, they believed that the most educative partner spaces were those that were self-selected. Since the primary goal of partner activities when engaging in notetaking or

writing in science was the creation of collaborative spaces where “academic talk” occurred. It was more significant that students be able and willing to engage in joint problem solving than that they be able to “help” one another in a more traditional expert-novice partnership. It was the joint engagement in the activity itself that proved to be most productive for students’ literate participation.

When don’t know teachers suggest strategies: “Would you like to ask a friend? or they suggest, “Look at the wall. See if you can see....” The teachers minimize explicit instruction. Rather they use questions and privileged particular students’ insights in order to allow students to present the knowledge to the class. In talking with Terri during Bird Unit Terri comments to me “that what she hoped they would notice is that it’s all about the kinds of beaks that birds have. See [she looks up at the overhead] it’s all beaks, beaks, beaks. X child almost had it. I’m really going to push this hard we get back together [as a whole group].

Behavior is sanctioned because it interferes with the participation of others. “I’m wondering if you gave Dillon his think time or you just hollered out those words.”:

“Everyone needs to write. Everyone [voice raises] needs to write,” Kathy reminds students during the writing phase when noticing that one partner is doing all the writing in a particular collaboration. All tasks are shared regardless of independent literacy ability.

Terri requires that both students agree before one student can share information with the rest of the class. There must be agreement between partners before students can share information with the class or respond to a teachers’ query. Taking responsibility to

support the full participation of one's partner or the members in a small group requires learning the social norms that support joint engagement.

"Your job is to help him with spelling if he needs it and your job (Terri points to the other boy) is to help him with spelling if he needs it.

Terri: Now Alita and Jason are going to come up here together and decide what is going to be highlighted. Then you are going to share that with the group. Have your sheet because....Alita takes the pen and puts her sheet between her legs. She doesn't even look at her sheet but looks directly at Jason's page to highlight from that. He puts....She continues to look at his paper and doesn't look at all at her paper. Jason is a regular education third grader. He is a very skilled reader and writer, one of the strongest in the class based upon test scores. Alita, without discussion, uses his paper as a reference when highlighting the text on the overhead for a public presentation. When they had worked together to highlight the text, she had relied on his ability to read fluently as they together decided the important words to highlight. Perhaps having decided that his text would be more accurate, she references his when making the public presentation of their work. It is significant that her actions were not perceived as unusual or inappropriate in performing the requested action. Collaboration involves shared ownership of all texts and resources and the willingness to use one's own resources to support the collective activity.

Joint engagement also refers to parallel activity that is oriented towards the completion of the task. At one point, Donny and Alita are trading off responsibilities for writing the text. They are sharing the workload rather than sharing the task. Yet, even in this process, the two are supporting one another. Alita helps him spell a word and she

dictates the text while he scribes. Collaborative activity doesn't require the same role but rather shared ownership and responsibility for accomplishing the task.

Bird unit: This section foregrounds the ways in which the distribution of knowledge in the community and the presence of artifacts creates parameters that support Alita's acquisition of the particular discursive practices associated with scientific literacy. Information about the unit is presented sequentially. However, not every day is discussed. Following the pattern that Roth (1999) uses in analyzing students a science unit involving architectural design and geometric relationships, I described each new activity and analyze the cognitive practices provided to Alita and her classmates. In this section on thematic units, I analyze the literate practices of Alita in one unit at the end of her third grade year in terms: of the literate tasks in which she engages and the function of collaborative activity and mediational tools on the literate roles she plays; the ways in which classroom discourse mediates her participation. Then I end with an examination of her learning over time by contrasting the texts and participation practices at the beginning (year one) of her time in this classroom with those at the tail end (spring, year three).

Day 1 bird unit, May, Year 3: Students generate a list of questions...they are appropriating scientific concepts acquired in previous units to guide questions (e.g. I want to know a birds habitat? Or "How do birds camouflage themselves) and others based on knowledge of birds that ranges from general to living creatures (e.g. how many birds in the world?) to specific to birds (e.g. How does a birds build a nest; or) to species specific (e.g. Why do owls sleep all day? How fast can an ostrich run?). Some students attempt

to give information that they already know about birds (e.g. vultures eat with their beak.) Teacher interrupts with “sounds like already know about vultures. After we make a list of questions...we’ll make a list of things we know and then we’ll make a quick check to see if we’re right....We’ll verify with research.” Writing is used to identifies what they know and teacher writes down. Further words emerge. Student suggested that perhaps owls sleep during day because they eat at night. A boy adds, “Owls are nocturnal.” Another student says that vultures are “scavengers” These words were used quite often in the previous unit on mammals. Other terms have been used in all their animal units (e.g. camouflage and habitat were both introduced in early winter with the fish unit). Terri then reads an expository text called “World’s Weirdest Birds” The book is then set out on the bookshelf available to students. Over the next few days, whenever there is a break, there are always several students gathered around the book examining the pictures, reading the text and exclaiming over the oddities. Alita is absent.

Day 2 bird unit: highlighting. They are reading an article which has a paragraph describing different birds. They work on selecting the important information and then turning it into notes. First table groups work together to highlight the important information – and only the important information – must decide collectively. The whole class has the entire article but each table is assigned to highlight the important words from only one paragraph –There is a paragraph in this text about ducks and Terri later draws Alita’s attention to this since it was the topic she selected One student from each group goes up to highlight on the overhead what they did on the text. An argument ensues in one group about who is going to get to do this. Teachers come in and ask

“what the group decides. They don’t arbitrate but rather force the group to reach a democratic decision. Terrance wants to go up.

MODELING PROCESS:

Terri: Wow they really just highlighted the important words. Could you make yours look like his? Ducks webbed feet swim like paddles.

Highlighted text is turned into notes by writing on large sheet of paper and organization spatially to reflect

Cranes – long thin legs

long toes keep them

from sinking into mud

Robins – sit on branches

one back toe, 3 front toes

strong feet hold tightly

to branches

MODELING RESOURCES: Kathy asks one of the students to tell her how to spell ostriches. Kathy jokes occasionally with me about her poor spelling, she often has to asks how to spell words, asks students if in a text in front of them as this case or Kathy (or I if I’m in the room) acts to model ways of getting information.

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE: Students then are told to pick one of the other and take notes on them and if time do another one. Timer turned on.

CATEGORIES:

Terri: Now if I were to start a category like Dawson said and I gave it a quick

Alita: a regular bird

Terri: What kind of a bird

Alita: an all brown one.

Terri: do you know the name of those birds

Alita does not seem to realize that birds can be divided up into distinct categories or rather she lacks the taxonomic distinctions utilized in science. Terri places a concept map on the overhead to show her what she means by categories and kinds.

Day 2 bird unit: highlighting; Terri: Since we already know our first paragraph is about feathers do we really need “feathers to fly”? - Terri walks to the white paper and shows how to turn the highlighted into brief notes. Learning the activity procedures associated with particular cognitive routines.

SYNTHESIS:

Terri: If that talks about kinds of birds and this one talks about eyelids and feathers what do you think we could call this. Body parts. Imagine if we could fill out a map right now. Two categories set for our map.

INTRAMENTAL:

Alita is working with Aaron, Shaquia. It looks as if Aaron is leading the group. Alita is looking over him and Shaquia is looking over at him as well. Aaron: "Highlight the whole thing." Shaquia: "Now wait."

The process of composing a scientific text involves a social component, a material component, and a mental. Examination of the goals that define any moment of activity in the literate practice require Alita to negotiate the text, the social relations, language, literate genres. At any given moment in the writing process, she's involved with synthesizing information, having ownership, accomplishing the task, staying out of trouble, protecting her rights. Any of these goals can influence the cognitive routines and participation practices employed. Literacy research involves divvying up the field into specialized interests: gender studies, motivation, etc. Clearly there are many facets that may influence any single instance of literate activity, but the important point is to consider how we theorize about the relationships between them such that teachers, specifically can re-mediate based upon the role that differences among students in the way one talks, acts, think become consequential to the extent that they alter participation in the community.

Here's where Alita and her group demonstrate that they've internalized the social norms for dealing with role allocation. They did so in the morning message earlier but Alita perceived it unfair. An argument ensues between Alita and Shaquia about who gets to hold the highlighter and write.

Shaquia: I pick Aaron.

Alita: I disagree.

Aaron. If you want me raise your hand. If you want Alita raise your hand.

Alita raises her hand.

But I didn't agree.

SHARED OWNERSHIP: After working together, Alita and Jason are called up to share their group's efforts. Alita and Jason are going to come up here together and decide what is going to be highlighted. Then you are going to share that with the group. Alita takes the pen and puts her sheet between her legs. She doesn't even look at her sheet but looks directly at his page to highlight from that. She continues to look at his paper and doesn't look at all at her paper indicating the shared ownership of texts produced in collaborative activities.

Day 3 Bird Unit: highlighting. Alita is missing. Students again are working at their tables. Every student has been given a colored highlighter and an article with a number of paragraphs describing birds. Each paragraph is about a different bird. Each table group is assigned a different paragraph and told to highlight the words that are important. Students work individually but there is a great deal of peering at partner's work. This is explicitly encouraged by the teachers who several times suggest that students "Check your neighbors work. See if you agree." Rather than suggesting that student "get" help from their neighbor, they encourage students to examine their work and talk about what they've highlighted. This is another occurrence of constructing activities where collaborative talk about ideas central to the literate routine is encouraged. While all students participate, there is great diversity in the ways in which they are able

to simplify the text to identify only key words. For example, the text for the table in which Darren (Alita's cousin) sits next to Eli reads, "Ostriches have wings but they don't fly. These birds have large strong legs that help them run fast." The words highlighted on David's text are underlined: Ostriches have wings but they don't fly. These birds have large strong legs that help them run fast. However, Elijah is able to simplify even further. The words he highlights are underlined: Ostriches have wings but they don't fly. These birds have large strong legs that help them run fast.

Darren is a learning disabled second grader and Eli a regular education third grader. Both are engaged in the same cognitive routine: reading the text and then selecting the key words to record on notes. While Eli is able to identify far fewer key terms, both are engaged in the literate activity in ways consistent with the cognitive expectations of the task.

Alita, however, is absent. The absence of Alita is equally as significant as her presence in making sense of her subsequent development. While highlighting text has occurred at multiple points throughout the units that spring, nonetheless, Alita is once again missing an experience in which class members once again engage in a literate activity in which identifying the key idea of the text (main idea it is called on the state test) is modeled, supported through collaborative engagement, and is directly relevant to increasing knowledge about the topic under study.

Day 4 Notetaking on own topic. Day five videotape and notes. Day 06 : Made birdfeeders out of toilet paper rolls, peanut butter and bird seeds. In order to hang these so that the kids could observe the birds that came to feed off of them. A string was hung

from one of the class windows to a window in another classroom that is at an angle from their classroom. Because they are on the second floor, Terri tossed a ball of string to the teacher in the other room. It took several efforts to make it into the room, and a student stood in the ground below to assist when the ball fell short of the window to the ground below. The feeders were then slid along the string and hung suspended between the two rooms. A main purpose of the feeders was to allow the students to observe the species of birds that lived around the school as well as to more closely observe the birds themselves.

Day 07 Bird Unit: Terri reads a book: Nights of the Pufflings by Bruce

McMillan a narrative tale from the perspective of a young girl. Provides seemingly accurate information about the location, activities of this species as learned through the eyes of a young girl. Many argue that much expository texts when utilized in the primary grades are represented in a narrative fashion. Here is an example of a narrative text that is utilized to gather facts and information for the creation of expository text.

Characteristic of narrative is that rooted in one experience. Characteristic of expository is that generalized, abstract from single, isolated, experience. Narrative has temporal dimension; expository is organized by categories. The narrative becomes a resource, however, for further collecting of information that will be later used to generate categories and compose expository text. This case demonstrates that regardless of text structure, these students are using the texts in an expository way just as many teachers utilize expository text in a narrative way. It's the combination of the affordances provided by text and how they approach (purpose) the text itself.

Terri: Why did they have to go out to find the Puffins?

St: So the dogs and the cars wouldn't kill them and eat them?

Terri: Why did the Puffins not make it out to sea?

St: Because maybe they couldn't fly very good.

The text also leads them to synthesize what they have learned thus far about birds and hypothesize about the characteristics of the bird in this text.

Terri: Here's a great picture. Mrs. [Kathy] was talking about the beak. What kind of beak would they have? [The illustration provides a picture of the bird with his prey. She is connecting this to a previous discussion the day before about how beak shape is influences what the bird can eat. She's then asking, given what the bird eats, what shape would his beak be as represented on our chart.]

Kathy gets out the note chart on beaks and asks what kind of beak would they have. She reads off the different kinds of beak.

Donny: they have a black beak. [He looks at the illustration in the book rather than referring to the chart

Kathy: "What do they eat? [pause for students to respond] Fish. How many of you agree with Donny that they would need a strong beak?

Jacob: they don't need a strong beak, they need a pointy beak.

Terri: Jacob, look at the picture.

Kathy: Are you changing your idea [Teachers encourage students to refer to one another and the text to verify.]

Terri: [flips through several pages in the books and looks at and shows the class the pictures of the birds] when they are younger they look like their beak is pointy. That might be something you want to research a little further.

Day 8: notetaking: Terri scaffolds the task for students. She hands an organizational map to Alita and Donny who are having difficulty in collecting notes from the texts and collating them on regular paper. Terri works with Alita and Donny for a minute and then walks to the back of the room and says that “I see what’s wrong here. They’re taking too many notes.” She gets organizational maps out and takes to the front of the room where she explains.. then returns to work with Alita and Donny. Now with the map in front to guide their search for information, they are much more strategic in how they interact with the books in front of them.

Before turning the page after reading it Alita says, “we have to write something down.”

Donny: here’s about the food [word food is on the page he opened to]

Alita leans over on to his organization map and writes “food” in one of the category blanks

Alita: now let’s read about the food.

But the text is pretty hard and then they stop reading.

Donny reads “insects”...then pond grass and wild rice

This is a nice example to examine what they’re literate goals are and how prior knowledge defines the kind of task demands and the goals that are set. They do try to engage in and use reading strategies “sounding out” words, following along words, using

pictures to aid comprehension. But because they lack automaticity in decoding they struggle to remain engaged. Yet, their knowledge of the activity process and with the use of the map to scaffold their search for information they are able to persist.

Day 10: notetaking: Alita has her finger pointing at the page. Neither of she nor Bobby is able to articulate many of the words. The book has lots of text, limited illustrations, and is a quite sophisticate (perhaps middle school) level book.

Alita: they can fly. They The...What's this? That say?

Donny: I don't know.

Alita is looking at the book. Let's get another book. She picks up another book and looks at the book and reads the title, "Ducks and goose." [It says "geese"]

Alita: These are easy pages to read.

She opens to the first page. "This where they live" [rising intonation as if asking a question]

Kathy comes up to them. What's your topic? Ducks so this is the perfect book."

Kathy looks at their map and notices that one of the categories is body parts. And say, "so what body parts do you see that isn't already on there.

Kathy directs them to look at the pictures and notice information from looking at the picture. "Well you see they have a tail so you know they have an oil gland. [she is referring to the community notes, taken from text that the class highlighted together].

What else do you see?

Alita: A beak

K: good" [and she walks away]

Alita starts writing then looks at Donny: “How you spell beak?”

Donny: B-e-a-k [as he dictates this he is looking directly at the wall vocabulary chart where the word beak is written on the “Word Wall” in the “b” category.

Alita: What?

Donny: B-E-A-k. He looks down at her text “an a and a k”

Alita: they got eyes.

She starts writing and says E-I then she looks over at Donny’s text to see how he’s spelling his.

Donny: he looks at her: how many eye4s they got? One or two?

Alita: [does she look down at the text] Two

Donny: oh, yeah

Alita: she looks at the picture. They got legs. How you spell legs.

Donny: He looks at the wall but the word is not on the wall and he remains silent.

Alita: It’s l –el-gls – stretching out the word and elongating the sound.

Conversation ensues among Letia and Alita and Donny about how to spell legs.

Letia and Jacob are sitting at the two desks that form the opposite side of the square.

Alita and Donny, collaboratively, are utilizing multiple strategies to help with the task: environmental print, “chunking” and “sounding out” the word as taught in reading, looking at texts, and now talking with peers.

Alita: wait wait wait. This page. Can you see the. She tries to sound out the word and keeps looking at Donny and then at the text. She looks at Donny. You don’t know this word. She looks at Letia and Jacob, “What’s this word.” C-u-r-l-y?

Jacob gets up and walks over to her, “What you need help with?” and stands next to her and says the word. Then he walks back and sits and Alita and Donny read. They aren’t able to read with the kind of fluency though to make sense. Alita doesn’t read the second page but goes to the next page and Donny and Alita read it together. Donny does most of the reading on the page. Then they move to the next page and they keep reading but take no notes.

One of the issues in the scene that I just looked at is that Alita’s performance is being shaped by her partner – the frustration she experienced interpersonally with him as well as of his just barely above her competence in reading – as well as her location in the room – Jacob and Letia “helped” with some of the reading and writing tasks – as well then of course as the class norms that students should seek for assistance from the word wall, which they did at one point, as well as from others in the room. Thus, what they were able to do with reading task was facilitated as well as limited by social organization and class. Because they are not getting along with each other this significantly alters the nature of the literacy task which Alita encounters. Different problems emerge and she has different goals beyond just the literate demands of the task. She had to preserve face, assert leadership, legitimize her participation practices.

This shows (1) Alita’s perception of herself as competent (you’re supposed to ask me) and her ownership of the task. Difficulty with spelling is not perceived by her as indicative of any problem since the activity norms and social arrangement fostered and in fact required interdependence and assistance. (2) Distribution of expertise. Jacob and Letia provide assistance. (3) Enablements and constraints of resources and participants on the cognitive routines of Alita and knowledge that becomes part of her repertoire.

Because there are few books that directly address ducks or books constructed in ways that allow her to easily mine, she has difficulty in collecting notes. The absence of particular materials becomes significant in the design because need to attend to alternative sources of information such as when Donny couldn't find another book on ducks they had to figure out what it was that they were going to do to create their notes and maps.

Day 11: composition: Today was a short work period. Alita and Donny are working as partners to turn their concept map about ducks into a report. The centrality of the map in directing their efforts to locate information about ducks from examining the available books in the classroom is evident. Concept maps serve as organizational/ or as strategies to the extent that they guide Alita's engagement with knowledge in a way that reflects hierarchically organized information systems.

Alita: We gotta cross this. We gotta check this.

Alita: all ducks are related [points to his page] Put all ducks are related [pause] to each other. [Donny writes on his note page. Then the teacher announces that it's time to clean up.

Alita: Dang, we gotta clean up. Write. All ducks are related. I'll put the paper in my folder.

Day 12: composition: Donny is absent and Alita is working alone. She crosses off a category on the map when she is completed with it. She does a great deal of erasing as well. Now she is drawing a line horizontally across the page to separate one paragraph and category from another in her rough draft. She vocalizes aloud as she writes her

introductory sentence to her paragraph on the food that ducks eat. Each sentence is framed after looking at the details identified on the concept map.

Alita: Are you....ready....to see..what's next?" She looks at the map. "food" see. See. See

Alita marks off each category when she has completed it and then goes through and seems to decide how to number it. She rennumbers the paragraphs seeming to make strategic decisions about the ordering of information. She erases some numbers and crosses some out. What she shows is that she is taking control of planning her text from organizing the information on the map as well as crossing out the map when she completes sections of it.

Alita: "Four, five, this going to be six. Ooops not that"

Alita: are you ready to see what next. What's.....Live. There they live in a pen. Pen. They live in a farm. Farm.

I'm struck by the significant transformation in her participation when compared to her role in thematic units in year one. At that time she could not turn her text into sentences, she struggled to complete her concept map and did not engage in the writing process even with partners.

Discussion of bird unit: This section utilized data gathered an entire 6 week science unit during the spring of year three where it stands in contrasts to Alita's performance in thematic units in year one. This allows analysis of what constitutes "scientific literacy" for Alita and the role of tools in supporting her participation in these activities in ways that are viewed as competent and "abled" in the classroom science

community. This is significant for exploring the relationship between mastery of the linguistic, orthographic, and phonological aspects of the English language and the cognitive processes associated with the development of scientific concepts. In other words, to what extent is Alita's ability to think, read, write, and do science contingent upon the use and internalization of tools? Specifically, this raises the question about what is "independent" about independent performance. This is significant in part because Alita's performance on standardized reading tests indicates that she remains at a kindergarten to first grade reading level. As a third grader, however, she is held responsible for acquiring scientific concepts and practices comparable to other students her age. Clearly Alita is at a significant disadvantage to her age counterparts when participating in activities that require independent reading and writing performance. Yet, the question becomes about the extent to which these tools mediate the development of scientific (or systematic) concepts. Vygotsky suggests that differences in performance become consequential when they alter participation. In this section, I analyze what scientific literacy looks like in this classroom, how participation is supported, and the extent to which Alita's development of scientific concepts is mediated by the literate tools and artifacts available. This raises the question about "What is independent about independent performance?"

Multiple definitions of scientific literacy exist which reflect methodological and disciplinary foci which are divergent and often competing. Scientific Literacy has been defined: (a) in terms of children's acquisition and use of key concepts and principles of science (Rutherford and Ahlgren, 1989); (b) as a sociolinguistic apprenticeship (e.g. Halliday & Martin, 1992; Gee, 1997; Lemke, 1990); (c) as engagement in goal directed

activity mediated by tools (e.g. W.M. Roth, 2001); and (d) as the mastery of particular academic genres (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Callaghan, Knapp, & Noble, 1993, Kress, 1994). The purpose of this section, then, is to examine the parallel development of Alita's literacy development with respect to reading and writing information texts and her acquisition of ways of knowing and doing deemed "scientific."

A common rationale for integrating literacy instruction in subject matter activities is that it increases effectiveness and efficiency in transfer of knowledge across domain through opportunity for repetition of skills in authentic and meaningful contexts (Lipson et al, 1993). However, from a sociocultural framework, analysis of skill transfer requires close analysis of the values and meanings embedded in the activity itself. Situated learning means not merely that students engage in activities that require multiple or integrated skills but also that there are larger cultural themes and purposes that give meaning to isolated actions of individuals. Thus, Alita's appropriation and use of scientific discourse practices and literate tools requires analysis of how specific cognitive practices are supported within the context of situated activities.

Through examining the relationship between comprehension and composition of expository texts and the sociolinguistic features of scientific discourse which surround it (as defined by Halliday and Martin, 1992), the role of cultural tools and social practices in supporting the Alita's cognitive routines in thematic units is revealed. The activity setting, as it was enacted by teachers and students, privileged particular features of scientific discourse and literate practices.

Subject matter specialists as well as curriculum theorists argue for embedding student learning in activities which require the integration of reading and writing across

genre, for multiple purposes, and in the context of asking questions of larger human concern (Pappas and Oyler, 1993; Lipson et al, 1993, Goatley, Brock, & Raphael, 1996; Goodlad and Su, 1992). While there are a number of articles that provide descriptions of actual lessons or curriculum developed for interdisciplinary inquiry or integrated language arts instruction (e.g. Levak et al, 1993; Jacobs, 1996), there are few studies that analyze the relationships between instructional practices, student and teacher activity, and the discursive structure of scientific literacy. A central aim of this section is to define the relationship between the cognitive tools that students acquire through situated activity with the disciplinary methods and stance employed and the curricular goals as defined by the teachers.

Apprenticeship into school based story forms requires attention to the way in which language is utilized within the classroom to construct and reconstruct experience such interpretation and composition of classroom narrative forms is viewed as successful and competent. A sociocultural perspective rooted in the cultural-historical work of Vygotskian scholars argues that to understand the cognitive practices of individuals one must look first to the sociocultural milieu within which children are apprenticed. Thus, children's ability to represent reality in ways reflecting a paradigmatic or narrative genre forms are contingent upon participation in cultural practices which render particular uses of language socially meaningful.

A central tenet in a sociocultural theory of mind is that mental activity is mediated by symbolic as well as physical "tools" which both assist in the performance of the task as well as to define it. That is, tools are not merely aids in support of activity, but come to define the very essence of the cognitive act itself. Tools create a vision of what is

possible as well as are built into the very act of performance through providing affordances and constraints for imaginable and feasible activity. This requires then examination of the participation structures and interaction patterns that define the nature of the task as well as analysis of the material and ideational tools which mediate performance (Holland & Cole, 1995).

The collaborative report writing in thematic units provided a context for the development of scientific reasoning skills. Joint engagement required students to verbalize their understanding and negotiate meaning thus allowing them to focus more on the meaning of scientific phenomenon than on the finished product. Thus, the process of composing a collaborative scientific report thus supporting the acquisition and development of discourse practices associated with scientific literacy. Additionally, it distributed the cognitive burden of the task through decreasing barriers raised through discrepancies in back ground knowledge or conventional literacy skills thus enabling students multiple entry points into the scientific reasoning process and relating to the content of science or writing process. Analysis of the discourse surrounding construction of the reports by Alita and her partner as well as of the final text itself indicate that students improved both in their ability to use data to support formulation of scientific ways of thinking and talking as well as in the literate routines associated with composition of expository texts. The participation framework for the activity thus became a central feature of the use and acquisition of particular cognitive processes. In this case, material tools (i.e. the concept map) as well such as story scripts and grammars (ideational tools or artifacts) scaffold Alita's development and use of expository genres. Because, tools that mediate activity are neither solely in the head nor

in the environment, any act of cognition is both situated in the transaction between individual and text as well as distributed throughout the series of relationships and practices within the socio-cultural environment that gives meaning to activity. Studying the development of Alita genre knowledge required attention to the way personal meaning making reflects the internalized patterns and practices of a particular socio-cultural community. That is, coming to understand the genre of development of emergent readers and writers such as Alita requires analysis of the institutional patterns and practices surrounding literacy in various disciplinary domains.

Vygotsky (1981) made a distinction between what he called spontaneous and scientific concepts. We can think of spontaneous as those emerging from everyday, direct experience in the world. He distinguishes scientific concepts by their generality and systematic organization (Wells). While all interaction in the world is mediated by the cultural-historical tools and social interaction practices, spontaneous concepts emerge as people directly interact with the world, there is a level of specificity that relates to individual experience. Scientific concepts, on the other hand, are highly systematic and predominantly bear relationships to other concepts. Vygotsky's distinction between everyday and scientific concepts allowed him to integrate those concepts that emerge through physical/ embodied activity in the world as well as those generalized and systematically related concepts that characterize not only much of school knowledge but the socio-historical values and practices embedded in texts. True acquisition of scientific concepts however requires the integration of cultural historical categories of meanings with everyday experience.

When we think of “abstract” knowledge we think of knowledge divorced or removed from experience, but if we recognize that all concepts have their origin in experience, a discursive analysis allows us to see conceptual patterns formed in the moment describing relationships between ideas and connecting to experience. And while the mind is a marvelous recognizer of patterns (Clark, 1997), our perception is itself culturally embedded - what we notice, what we perceive reflects both our sensory and bodily nature as well as the socio-cultural values and practices. “Although there is more to doing science than its language, scientific reasoning is a linguist process. Because the work and thinking of science are grounded in specialized forms of communication and the language patterns they entail, it is difficult to conceive of teaching science without teaching writing at the same time” (Wolmant-Bonilla, 1997, p. 42).

One of my concerns here was to examine in depth the integral connection between text products and the social processes that support and render meaningful particular ways of using language within scientific practices to represent phenomenon from the ideological stance of science. Knowing science requires the development of an understanding of scientific taxonomies, as well as a vocabulary for communicating the academic genre, styles and relationships (Westby & Torres-Velasquez, 1999). The instruction of students in systems of scientific knowledge requires they master a unique form of communication in which words come to represent ideas and concepts that are organized in hierarchical systems. In academic texts, this often includes the system of interconnected concepts, as well as the recurrent patterns of stylistic, thematic, and compositional features rooted in meaning and social practice (Artiles et al., 2000; Kamberlis, 1999). Students must be able to talk and write in literate ways, which means

that they must master the academic. In learning to 'write science', students must understand how to reconstitute their experiences into written language structures which entails particular kinds of texts, structures, taxonomies, conventions, and practices. Of particular relevance for this analysis is attention to the ways in which thematic units in science were intentionally utilized as vehicles for supporting the development of conventional literacy skills and practices as well as the disciplinary ways of knowing and doing that are reflected in distinct written genres. Genre studies research emerging from a sociocultural perspective argues that genres are not static rhetorical structures but rather are dynamic forms "that develop from responses to recurrent situations and serve to stabilize experience and give it coherence and meaning. Genres change over time in response to their users' sociocognitive need (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1993, p.479). Thus, analysis of what students know about the nature and process of composing expository texts requires multiple units of analysis that seek to understand the relationship between the produced text, interaction patterns, and cultural tools that support literate performance.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Alita has spent three years in a single multi-age classroom where two teachers engaged in thoughtful and intensive efforts to apprentice her into the literacy practices associated with disciplined ways of using reading and writing in schools. Although, there was very little change in her reading levels as measured on standardized reading scores in years one and two, by third grade she showed significant development of phonemic awareness, ability to decode text, and the use of conventional spelling in her writing. However, at the end of third grade, she remained two grades below national norms as measured on standardized testing. In fact, instead of showing improvement on the psychometric exams given by the district, she's gotten "worse". Because there is no longer a discrepancy between her IQ and performance (both are low) her classificatory label was changed from *learning disabled* to *educably mentally impaired*.

Alita's teachers had been concerned about how inattentive the psychological assessments were to the discourse practices that she employed in class. As Terri commented to me in frustration, "If they would just listen to her discourse!" Alita's teachers believed that the roles Alita assumed, the literate tools she employed, and the norms she had internalized to guide her activity had significantly transformed over the course of three years enabling her to assume more central and independent participation practices in classroom activities. Yet, Alita's marked acquisition of the literate practices in the classroom occurred while continuing to struggle with decoding and encoding text.

She is an emergent reader at an age and in a grade when she should be moving into more independent and proficient reading practices.

This case study examined the meaning of literacy dis(ability) through examining how competence is constructed in the activity setting itself. In chapter four, I examined the characteristic features of the subject-object-community relationship by describing the influence of macro-level features of Alita's life, that of the classroom and school, and the community on her classroom literate participation. In chapter five, I examined the nature of Alita's participation over time and the role of discourses and tools in mediating her assumption of new and changing roles that manifested her learning. In this chapter I examine some final implications for considering the nature and development of literacy abilities and competence through participation in classroom activities. This chapter is organized to highlight: (a) the relationship between assessment and participation in supporting special education labels and learning environments; (b) the relationship between competence and the sociocultural community, inclusive of special education labels and institutional practices; (c) the meaning of "specialized" educational environments for students with disabilities when considering the function of activity settings in supporting participation, learning, and development; (d) implications for further study and evaluation of learning environments for students with disabilities.

Assessment and participation: What is at stake in the change of Alita's special education label is the nature and role of assessment in making educational decisions for students. The teachers never suggest that performance on standardized tests is meaningless. In fact, it is their concern about the long term implications test taking will

have on Alita's educational experiences that plays a significant role in their decision not to challenge her special education label. Reading and writing, as part of a standardized assessment measures, are "real" literacy experiences. Yet, they bare significantly different relationship to the kinds of reading and writing practices which characterize three years of classroom experience. In Alita's case, the tests given to her in isolation do little to illuminate either the ways in which her literacy practices have transformed over time or the relationship between classroom activities and her literacy participation.

When examining her actual participation over time, it is evident that by the end of her third grade year Alita has learned to use a wide range of tools and strategies across curricular contexts that were unavailable to her when she started first grade. By the end of third grade, she sounds out words, engages in comprehension monitoring activities, chunks words and sounds, uses context cues to assist in decoding, strategically employs environmental and community resources to assist in spelling, and distinguishes the characteristic features of genre tasks in writing and systematically uses language in ways that reflect that norms and goals of writing across disciplinary contexts.

When writing alone, she needed to attend much more closely to the phonological demands of the task and because she has yet to gain automaticity in decoding, she was less likely to assume other literate goals simultaneous. However, when Alita held the pen in the small group morning message (i.e. acted as scribe), she became more rather than less attentive to the need to monitor the meaningfulness of the text. Her role in collaborative tasks in spring of her third grade year indicates that Alita is capable of holding a wider range of skills and strategies and participatory roles than was possible months earlier. Learning the activity means that she has acquired new and multiple roles

that she can assume in a literate practice; she has a wider range of tools to mediate her composition process; and she is able to selectively appropriate activity norms to juxtapose the varied social and cognitive goals which frame her moment-to-moment activity. *Learning* has meant that she has moved from a peripheral role in the activity to one more central and facile. She has changed her participation and thus been able to assume an identity of competence in the classroom itself.

Literacy development for Alita meant: (a) that there were changes in the goals that framed her activity; (b) transformation in the responsibility she assumes for completing the curricular assignment (c) that she interpreted students actions to marginalize her or position her as incompetent as “being mean” and a disruption of activity norms rather than a description of her personal, literate identity. Through learning new roles and tools for engaging in activities, she has been able to transform her participation and thus constructed an identity of competence in the activities settings of the classroom. (d) Alita, therefore, intentionally and selectively draws from class norms to support her participation rights when others attempt to marginalize her; (d) cultural models (such as genres and discourse practices) frame her activity. Meanings, purposes and goals of the practice become tacit, implicit. (e) This allows greater variability in the roles she assumes and the goals she holds at any given moment of activity.

Special education, competence and sociocultural community: What does it mean, though, to be a special education student and yet increasingly more competent in the performance of a practice? The small group morning message interaction, in the spring of her third grade year, in which Alita, Shaquia, Jason, and Aaron engage in a small group

writing activity has elements that are both encouraging and disturbing to me as I try to make sense of the relationship between Alita's literate performance and the socio-cultural context in which she participates. In contrast to her participation in the activities of prior years, in this one she serves as the group writer. She holds the pen. She has developed a literate identity such that both she and others in the group consider it appropriate that she assume this role. However, as a consequence of the ways in which first Jason and then Shaquia responded to the difficulties she has with spelling, she gets positioned as disabled or incompetent in the specific role. She responds both by defending herself as competent (I can write my own words) as well as accepting this identity, in part, by providing a label to explain her difficulty.

Jason	She's ten years old and she don't know how to spell cool [said with emphasis]
Alita	[looks up directly at Jason and answers quickly]Maybe because I'm in special ed
Jason	Special ed [rising intonation]
Shaquia	Still You still gotta know how to read
Jason	She's ten and she don't know how to spell cool?
Alita	I don't' know how to spell for other people, I know how to spell for myself

When Shaquia and Jason, the most proficient spellers in the group, continued to refuse to help her with spelling, Alita reminds them of the activity norms ("You gotta help me") and then draws in the teacher to re-establish the collaborative enterprise.

Alita	How you spell 'trick'
Shaquia	Don't help her
Alita	You got to help me
Shaquia	Don't help her anymore
Jason makes a comment that is inaudible as if he's muttering to himself. Shaquia contributes then Alita looks at Jason and raises her hand in the air, an indication that she wants to the teacher to come over to the table.	
Jason	What are you telling on me for
Alita	[She is silent and then looks away toward the teachers]
Alita	You're talking bout other people. [Terri comes up to the table]
Alita	They won't help me
There are protests from Shaquia and Jason, "No, we were just." And overlapping with Shaquia, "She..." Terri interrupts and talks over both of them.	
Terri	...If you're making fun of her writing....if you disagree with something I expect you to say I disagree but if you're making fun of her writing then that's a problem.

Perhaps because this is a multiage classroom, very few students know what age or grade their classmates are in – I've even encountered students who were unsure of their own grade. Yet, Jason's query to Alita about her age suggests growing awareness that there are norms beyond their classroom, which guide expectations of what students should be able to do independently.

Students are nested in multiple sociocultural communities, beyond just the classroom, where literacy is defined and employed. The peer culture in this context is at odds with the norms the teachers have established for the activity. What is remarkable is not that students can be "mean" to one another and attempt to position students as disabled or less than competent. Rather, what is unique about the literacy practices in this classroom is that the activity setting established legitimize the role she assumes in the activity, provide her with literate resources to assist her performance, and enact norms

which she can selectively and intentionally use to reposition herself as competent and redefine the meaning of her participation.

When asked, Alita views herself as a “good reader.” Of the four other students with whom I did viewing sessions and focal interviews, three of them identified Alita as being one of the classmates that was a good reader. This leads, one to wonder, though, about the extent to which the school environment Alita has developed particular conceptions of herself as a reader and writer and the meaning of literacy tasks. The activity setting in which she operates is highly flexible allowing multiple interpretations to exist. Multiple and many, however, not any. Von Glaserfeld’s (1988) discussion of the socially constructed nature of reality explains that the ways in which we find “workable” explanations of the material world arise as explanations “bump up against” material reality and the conceptions of others. What happens, one wonders, when Alita enters another classroom community and “bumps” up against conceptions of literacy and participation that do not acknowledge the competency she already possesses and foster participation that is irrespective of individual difference in literacy ability?

In chapter five, I demonstrated the development of Alita’s ability to create conventionally literate products and performances and transform her participation in classroom activities. She has acquired more literate tools over time as well as has learned to selectively and intentionally apply these tools in new and personal ways. Roth argues that there is interpretive flexibility in how tools are used and meanings are created in any activity setting. Interpretive flexibility is not a blank check, however, for all out permissibility. Activities are systems, not structures - a distinction that indicates the fluid movement and possibilities inherent in the flexible association and reconfiguration of

roles and practices deemed legitimate within *particular* sociocultural communities. To a great extent, it is the norms and conventions within the setting, itself, that create parameters for how children will interact with each other and the process through which they engage in literate activity influences to a great deal the identities these students construct.

I've puzzled over for a long time Alita's statement to Jason that she's "special ed and maybe that's why I can't spell." I felt as if in that one statement, three years of assumptions about the "abling" of children in this classroom was called into question. I almost missed her statement in fact. It was the only time I ever heard a student use the phrase special education. Jason's uncertain repetition of the word indicated his confusion about what the term meant. It was only in playing that section of tape for Alita in a viewing session that her comment, a bit indistinct in the noise of the classroom, was apparent. I stopped immediately, replayed, and asked her what she meant. She said that her aunt told her "a long time ago" that she was special ed. She said that meant she was "slow". "Do you think you're slow?" I asked. "No." She replied and then went on to provide a discussion of how because "they" (she could never identify who "they" was) said she was slow, she was "supposed to get a check" (i.e. some money). She seemed very unclear about the process of becoming special education. She associated it with having to go outside of the classroom with the speech teacher (where she went about once per week). She hated that she said because "We don't do nothin in special ed. We just play games and talk. She [the teacher] won't let us even leave" When pressed, she reluctantly agreed that "maybe she helps me a little. Helps me read. She helps me with my speaking and reading....[but] it a waste of time." I asked her if there was any way to

get out of special education. “No” and she reiterated that she didn’t like it because “she come get us when we have fun working we working and have fun working.” Like Yvette who was taken out of class for the gifted and talented program and resented leaving the classroom, Alita has often expressed the same frustration and being taken out of the classroom and having her participation in the class practices interrupted. While Alita considers herself a “good reader,” she does think that she is “slow at writing. “That’s why I didn’t publish so much,” she explained. However, she quickly adds that this is partially the teachers’ responsibility because “she didn’t call me up to conference.”

I had never heard the words or phrase “special education” used in that classroom by the students or the teachers when speaking and interacting with the teachers. In fact, according to the teachers, many of the students didn’t realize that they were considered “special ed” or understood what that meant until they moved into the upper grades. Upon identification as a student requiring special education (according to district, state, and federal criteria), students were placed in Kathy and Terri’s multi-age classroom. There they remained until they moved into the upper elementary grades where they received “pull-out” resource room support. It was at this time, that most students learned for the first time that they required specialized assistance. More than one student had been surprised, upset and confused to learn that he/she was in special education and the third grade resource room teacher had reluctantly assumed the responsibility of explaining to students the reason they were “now” required to leave the classroom.

It was Alita’s aunt who had explained to her that she was “special ed” a fact that seemed somehow conflated with receiving monetary assistance from the state and going to speech twice a week. Perhaps because Alita was just finishing the psychological tests

for her third year review, the label assumed particular immediacy for her. Regardless, it is clear when analyzing Alita's participation practices, that despite her very real difficulties with decoding, the activity settings in the classroom supported her use and assumption of literate practices that were in advance of independent performance. In that sense, competence was situated in the activity settings with its associated norms, rules for the division of labor, and tools that mediated performance.

If Alita is still struggling to develop conventional reading and writing practices, what does it mean that ability or disability as situated? Analysis of Alita's participation and meanings accompanying it, suggest that competence is defined within the situated context of activity where the removal or provision of tools and the distribution of expertise alters the way in which an individual participates in the practice itself. When Shaquia and Jason refused to help Alita with spelling, and thus made her role as scribe more difficult, she raised her hand prepared to get the teacher to remind her group members of the appropriate roles they should play. Earlier that day, in fact, Terri could be heard above the noise of the classroom reminding two students about activity norms for collaborative work with respect to spelling ("You're job is to help him if he needs help spelling. And your job is to help him with spelling.")

Alita's classroom interactions reveal that differences in how she interacts with text can be meaningfully analyzed as a function of alterations in the nature of the activity system itself. That is, the cognitive processes that Alita is able to practice and employ are dependent upon the resources and activity structure in each of the small group, whole group, partner and individual writing activities in morning message. For example, in both whole and small group morning message experiences Alita is able to participate in

discursive and literate practices that are in advance of individual competence. In whole group activities, the teacher serves as the primary more-knowledgeable-other, with both the knowledge of conventional literacy practices, narrative text structure and the pedagogical content knowledge that enables her to scaffold the involvement of students. Novices, such as Alita, are enabled to participate in cognitive skills much in advance of individual competence.

However, in small groups, students work cooperatively to construct texts. There is much more negotiation of roles and responsibilities as students struggle to articulate the organization of the task as well as the process of constructing and revising oral language into written text. Because students lack both the developmental and procedural knowledge needed to scaffold other students, novices (as Alita in year 2) are more likely to be directly told by their peers what to do (Such as when Rebecca tells her to “put the period there. No. Right there”). The smaller size of the group, the lack of adult authority to defer to requires that students take more initiative and engage cooperatively in problem solving for accomplishing the task. But the kinds of assistance available to mediate performance is much more limited as well.

When Alita engaged in individual morning message composition, there was clearly much less attention to the editing and planning aspects of process. During small group morning message activities she was often highly engaged in the talk surrounding evaluation and alteration of the text. However, when composing her own narrative a great deal of her energies appeared to be focused on the production aspect itself, that is, the transcribing of speech to text through attention to the phonological and orthographic features of print.

Thus, the participation framework, task structure, and activity goals shaped the nature and process of her participation in the group as well as the subsequent opportunities for her to engage in particular kinds of cognitive processes. In this case, the knowledge the student demonstrated, the roles she assumed, the opportunities that existed to observe and practice new cognitive processes, was determined, to a large degree, by the nature of the participation structure. Variety in grouping practices (spaces) provided new and different opportunities to explore and develop understandings about the nature and process of constructing and making meaning from text. While schools by their very nature *must* select specific knowledge practices to teach, and thus exclude others, this analysis suggests that teachers can become increasingly aware of how students ability to learn and acquire this knowledge is influenced by the way experiences are organized for students.

“Specialized” education: The close examination of the way in which Alita’s literate abilities were situated in and grew out of her participation in the activity settings of classroom literacy practices, thus, directs attention to kind of “specialized” learning environments appropriate for students with disabilities. After describing the success of their early elementary intervention program in reducing the number of students identified as learning disabled, Vellutino & Scanlon (2000), still found that despite intensive and sustained remediation, 1-3% of the students continued to need ongoing support. Their findings call into the question the larger proportion of students currently identified as learning disabled in public school classrooms. Yet, their research also points out that despite intensive, research based – one-on-one instruction there are a small percentage of

students who may continue to need ongoing literacy instructional support throughout their educational career. This raises questions about the nature of the instructional support required. Alita is significantly below her classmates on a number of literacy and cognitive assessments.

How activities are structured, positions students in particular ways with respect to text, the teacher, and each other, thus, providing very different kinds of opportunities for learning. That is, children not only learn *different* things depending upon their roles and responsibilities in an activity, but they come to conceptualize themselves and the goals of literacy differently as well. What is particularly interesting with Alita, then, is exploring how what she was able to do in any particular moment of classroom activity provided her differentially with access to and opportunities to engage in socially valuable and cognitively sophisticated literate routines. In chapter 5, I analyzed Alita's participation in two small group morning message activities that are 14 months apart to explore transformation in the roles she assumes, the cognitive tasks her role sets for her, and the knowledge she constructs about what literacy is for and how one engages in it. Thus, in the first group activity she is a very peripheral group member, engaging in the composition of the text by adding punctuation and editing marks only when told to do so by another group member. However, in the later activity, Alita holds the pen and orchestrates the activity inviting participation and rejecting and accepting the comments and direction of others.

Later in that chapter, I examined the nature of her participation in thematic units and examined the ways in which her participation was supported through the provision of material and ideational tools that scaffolded her literate activity. Evident over the three

years was development in the cognitive routines and social practices associated with scientific literacy in this classroom. Yet, she had not yet internalized the tools accompanying the practice and her “independent” writing was highly dependent upon the availability and use of the concept map to guide her composition process as well as on social and environmental resources that supported her reading and notetaking. The question was raised about meaning of “independence” when considering individual literate activity. In this section, the role of tools and social practices as scaffolds for participation was discussed. With these, Alita was enabled to engage in complex cognitive routines. Because the activity setting was structured to foster her participation in the literate practices associated with scientific ways of knowing and doing, Alita was enabled to develop cognitive routines. Conventional literacy was not a pre-requisite to participation. Rather the activity setting itself provided access to higher order literate routines through supporting and scaffolding her participation.

Because “acquisitions as complex as strategic [reading and writing] repertoires are taught over years of schooling, not months” (Pressley, 1995; p.181), apprenticeship experiences require multiple opportunities for students to participate in literacy practices that reflect a range of behaviors, purposes and goals. While students find entry to the conversation at varying levels they must have multiple opportunities to try out new roles. Even when silent they are engaged in what Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to as legitimate peripheral participation where their own interaction is responsive to and structured by a discourse that is more sophisticated than what they could themselves individually create. While the lack of conventional reading and writing ability prevents some students from actually reading the text or recording the ideas, they are nonetheless participants in a

larger dialogue where negotiation of text meaning through oral interaction with written words and questioning of the author is practiced. The question arises, however, about the conditions in which peripheral participation is a legitimate entry to new roles within the community.

There are multiple research studies in support of the fact that students who lack conventional reading and writing skills (including those are labeled as disabled or non-English speaking) are and continue to remain on the periphery of the classroom, never acquiring access to the mediational tools which reflective expert participation. Thus, chapter five, participation in the same activity settings over three years presents Alita's literacy acquisition and performance in terms of changes in her participation over time as she acquires greater facility in the roles, tools, and social interactions which accompany specific literacy activities. As Alita internalized the goals and routines associated with the performance of specific literate tasks, she moves from the margins of participation in collective activities to gradually assume more central roles required greater expertise and intentional use of literate tools. In this respect, classroom activities did provide a legitimate apprenticeship opportunity such that peripheral did indeed provide access to new and greater participatory roles. However, the description of her participation over three years in the same activity settings also allowed exploration of the limitations of an apprenticeship model for the study of school learning.

Alita represents problematic aspects of an apprenticeship model because it forces confrontation with the real and perceived relationship between classroom practices and isolated assessments of literate competence. Much of the theoretical work surrounding learning as apprenticeship involves analysis of cultural activities that exist outside a

traditional school structure (e.g. Liberian tailors, Guatemalan weavers, mothers with children, selling girl scout cookies). This study raises the question about the extent to which classroom activities can be appropriately analyzed as communities. In the specialized learning environment of the study classroom, Alita had the opportunity to engage in the same literacy activities over three years. Thus, transformation in participation was possible to observe. Alita's ability to appropriate the meanings and norms of her local community practice was contingent on recurring apprenticeship in literacy practices with recurring features (e.g. while expertise varied as a function of participants, tools, norms and roles remained constant). Few such classroom settings, however, provide students with the kind of stable activity setting such that student learning can be observed and provide insights useful for pedagogical decision making.

The study of Alita's instructional context highlights the centrality of discourse as an analytic tool for assessing learning. Alita's teachers consistently argue that by listening to what students are saying and not merely what they are performing they know when learning is happening or when and how to intervene. Over time, Alita increasingly became independent, assumed ownership of practices, actively participating in ways appropriate to literate and genre conventions, and began to utilize more conventions and tools to engage in the reading and writing practices associated with classroom activities. They argued that attention to her discourse suggested that Alita was developing and acquiring literacy understanding within the situated context of classroom reading and writing practice. The change in year 3 of Alita's disability status from a *learning disability* to *educably mentally impaired* highlights the socio-political aspects of identity construction.

Alita has been identified through teacher, school district, and formal testing procedures as one who “struggles” in literacy tasks. Initially, she was been given a label of “learning disabled” and placed within a special education program because of a perceived gap between her “ability” as measured on an IQ test and her performance. Three years later, she was retested and while her performance was still significantly below that of the “normal” range on literacy tasks, her IQ had fallen below the normal range as well, thus, no longer indicating an IQ discrepancy; her disability status was changed to educably mentally impaired (EMI) that spring. Her teachers initially resisted this change, since they focused on the nature of the changes in her discursive participation in the classroom and appropriation and use of the materials and ideational tools associated with classroom literacy practices.

Implications for the trajectory of her participation in school based literacy practices beyond their classroom influenced their willingness to support the recommendation of the school. The formal definitions of disability, which are associated with Alita’s psychological examinations, utilized discrepancies formulas, which have been codified in state and federal law, to describe the performance characteristics of students who may be referred to special education. Discrepancy formulas, which have been codified in state and federal law, describe the performance characteristics of students who may be referred to special education. They assume that a discrepancy between a child’s IQ and performance on a standardized subject matter test indicates a constitutional disability on the part of the child. However, it implicitly ignores attention to instructional, cultural, and environmental features that contribute to reading difficulty. A discrepancy would indicate that the student has the capacity to be achieving at a higher

level; her inability to do so is perceived as indicative of the involvement of an underlying cognitive processing difficulty. A low IQ correlated with low achievement indicates that the student is performing as well as could be expected. It also assumes that the presence of a true learning disability, while affecting performance, will not affect IQ scores, even though IQ tests rely heavily on language and vocabulary measures.¹ The discrepancy formula for special education identification may, therefore, be ignoring students who truly are learning disabled as well as over identifying students who merely need more effective instruction.

Velluntino et al (1996) argue that the discrepancy model of classification for learning disabilities is both misleading and ineffective. Misleading because it implies that difficulties with literacy arise from an underlying organic disorder and ineffective because it provides no direction for pedagogy, and in effect, they argue, dis-empowers teachers. Velluntino and Scanlon argue, as well, that labeling a child as disabled ignores the environmental and instructional context within which a student is educated. In Alita's case, her change in special education identification was legitimated by the changed relationship of her IQ test score to performance on standardized reading measures. It assumes a perspective on cognitive development that legitimizes ignoring the changing nature of Alita's relationship with the pedagogical contexts in which her literacy performance is meaningful.

The psychologist, who recommended in the spring of Alita's third grade year that she be considered EMI, described the nature of the school based learning experiences she

¹ For a more thorough discussion of this see Vellutino, et al (1996). Cognitive Profiles of Difficult-to-Remediate and Readily Remediated Poor Readers: Early Intervention as a Vehicle for Distinguishing between Cognitive and Experiential Deficits as Basic Causes of Specific Reading Disability. *Journal of*

required. He wrote, “As with all EMI Alita will require concrete learning experiences in order to learn and apply concepts. Whenever possible, abstract ideas and concepts should be provided within context, and directions should be demonstrated. Alita also requires additional drill and practice in order to retain skills being taught.” What this assertion highlights is (a) the ill-defined relationship between participation and learning; as well as (b) the under-theorized role of activity in supporting the development of students with disabilities. In suggesting that Alita requires “concrete” experiences and repetition, the psychologist leaves unspecified the nature of the practices that ought to be repeated and which qualify as concrete. The mention of “drill and practice” and “concrete” in opposition to “abstract” imply, in fact, that Alita lacks the capacity to acquire literate routines associated with higher level discipline-based activity.

Chapter Four provided description of the classroom, the curriculum, and the beliefs about literacy, learning, and development that influenced the construction and design of the activity settings in which Alita was apprenticed. The highly repetitious nature of the practices was a central characteristic of the educational environment. Rather than repetitive practice of specific skills, however, Alita had recurring opportunity to participate in the discourses accompanying literate activity. As opposed to engagement only in simple routines, Alita participated in abstract and complex composition processes. Her inability to read and write conventionally did not preclude her participation because the activity setting accommodated difference in individual knowledge through the provision of material and ideational tools, construction of learning spaces which involved both social and personal meaning making, and the enforcement of

Educational Psychology. 88(4), pp. 601-638; Aaron, P.G. The Impending Demise of the Discrepancy Formula. *Review of Educational Research*. 67(4), pp. 461-503.

norms which supported joint engagement. Thus, while Alita has very real differences in the cognitive routines she is able to independently assume, her ability to engage in these in the social spaces of classroom activity is nonetheless supported. Through this inter-mental participation, there is clear evidence of Alita's intra-mental development. The "specialized" learning environments of this classroom, thus, provided her with access to the literate routines of her more normally developing peers.

In this text, I have analyzed the literacy development of one special education over three years of participation in the same activity settings of a classroom. I've examined the ways in which Alita's development was a function of her participation in the classroom learning community. Literacy ability developed as she acquired the tools, assumed the roles, and appropriated the tools to intentionally and strategically support her participation. Competence, however, was situated in the nexus of the subject-object-community relationship itself as the parameters of the activity setting created affordances and limitations to the ways in which she participated and the meanings assigned to her literate moves. The trajectory of Alita's cognitive development is thus a function of the participation practices within which she is apprenticed.

Final thoughts: This study clearly reveals that the characteristic features of specific activity settings have potential to alter the nature of students' participation and the trajectory of subsequent development. Thus, in designing educational contexts to support the specific needs of students, attention should be given to those aspects of the sociocultural context that teachers can control and modify. Teachers understandably are concerned over the role that ethnic, linguistic, or economic aspects of students' lives play

in classroom learning. While teachers have little control over the home environment of children's life, this study suggests that such factors become significant only when examining how they affect a student's participation in the learning community. The macro-level features of Alita's classroom, community, and home life become important when examining the extent to which they do (or do not) interfere with her appropriation and use of the roles, tools, and norms associated with classroom practice. The repetitious and routinized component of the curricular activities in this classroom helped mediate the difficulties that might otherwise have been caused by Alita's highly erratic attendance. Through modeling and supporting students in using the discourse practices accompanying literate routines, the teachers were able to support Alita's appropriation of the linguistic tools requisite to full participation. Transformation in her participation, thus, occurred as she began to attend to and acquire the discursive practices accompanying literate activity.

In a similar fashion, physiological disabilities of individuals are more appropriately considered in relationship to social interaction as opposed to being viewed as ever-present, individual properties. The significance of the differences in Alita's knowledge and use of conventional literacy arises only when examining the import of any such difference on her subsequent activity. When examining Alita's composition process in the science unit in the spring of her third grade year, limitations caused by her difficulty in decoding were evident. Also, evident, was her heavy reliance on mediational tools and social scaffolds to support her composition process. The question was raised, then, about the meaning of independent performance. The concept map, in particular, appeared to be a necessary component of her engagement in this practice. Without the

presence of the map, it is questionable whether Alita would have been able to construct a text that reflected hierarchical organization of ideas, abstract structures and categorizes, and the use of the specialized vocabulary and concepts associated with scientific literacy. What this suggests, then, is that when constructing specialized learning environments for students with disabilities, attention needs to be given to the ways in which participation can be supported.

If the educational goal is for all students to engage in the kinds of literate practices valued by the sociocultural community, then selectively providing tools or norms to mediate and support that participation become the means by which disabled students are enabled to become full and competent members in the community. Through participation students internalize, and make ones own, the social and cognitive routines accompanying situated literate practices. Therefore, by explicitly attending to the nature and structure of classroom activity settings, teachers can strategically create educational contexts that provide access to academically valued mental practices originating in meaningful and real participation.

The findings emerging from this study do not suggest that inclusive or multi-age classrooms are necessarily better educational environments for students with disabilities. Rather, results reveal the ways in which attention to an individual student's participation in the literate practices of the classroom gives insight into the developmental implications of particular arrangements of people, resources, and discourses. This case study provides clues for considering ways to intentionally alter the tools, norms, or participation structures such that a student's access to culturally valued cognitive roles is better supported. I suggest, then, that in examining the environments most suitable for students

with disabilities, we examine the nature and meaning of classroom activity as both a resource for and a precursor to learning, development, and a trajectory of ability.

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