PERCEPTIONS AND PROCESSES OF FRENCH AND ENGLISH WRITING IN A FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM

by

Diane Dagenais

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Abstract

Ethnographic methods were used to document classroom processes and participant perceptions of French and English writing lessons in a Montreal French immersion program. Classroom observations indicated that despite differences the French and English curriculum, French immersion and English teachers maintained similar traditional roles in writing. They favored linguistic form over content and responded to children's writing as evaluators of conventions. Participant interviews in both languages suggested that the teachers believed that their role was to transmit knowledge about language rules, while the children perceived writing in school in technocratic terms. The results of this study underline the need for French immersion language programs to emphasize process and foster dialogue about writing in writing lessons. They further highlight the importance of increasing social interaction among teachers so that they receive ongoing support as they effect change in the teaching of writing.

Résumé

Des méthodes ethnographiques ont servi à documenter les processus et les perceptions de participants dans des leçons d'écriture en français et en anglais d'un programme d'immersion française dans la région de Montréal. Des observations faites en salle de classe ont indiqué que malgré les différences des programmes, les enseignantes françaises et anglaises adoptaient des rôles semblables pour enseigner l'écriture. Dans les productions écrites des enfants, elles favorisaient les structures linguistiques plutôt que le contenu et répondaient à celles-ci en tant qu'évaluateurs de structures. Les entrevues des participants faites dans les deux langues ont suggéré que les enseignantes percevaient que leur rôle était de transmettre des connaissances linguistiques, tandis que les enfants percevaient que l'écriture à l'école était le perfectionnement d'une technique. Les résultats de cette étude soulignent que les programmes d'immersion française devraient mettre plus d'emphase sur le processus d'écriture et devraient encourager une ouverture de dialogue entre les participants de la leçon au sujet de l'écriture. De plus cette étude met en évidence qu'une interaction sociale entre enseignants(es) est essentielle pour soutenir l'application d'un changement de méthodes dans l'enseignement de l'écrit.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Problem Statement

A growing number of children in Canada learn to read and write in French and in English in French immersion programs. French immersion is an optional second-language program in which French is the language of instruction for some subjects in the school curriculum. There is a variety of immersion program models that differ according to the grade level of entry into the program, the percentage of French and English instruction provided, and the subjects selected for second-language instruction (Genesee, 1987; Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers, 1986). Usually, at some point in the program the children have both French and English as language subjects.

Traditionally, reading and writing instruction in each language focused on systematic teaching of discrete skills and emphasized the distinctive features of language such as phonics, spelling, grammar and other conventions. Recently, changes in the theory and practice of English Language Arts are leading to increasing disparities in the approaches adopted for language instruction in French and in English classes. These differences are most evident in the teaching of writing. The focus of instruction in writing in English Language Arts is shifting from a product-oriented, skills-building approach to an emphasis on writing processes and strategies. This change is a response to developments in theories of reading and writing which have redefined the nature of writing

as well as the teaching and learning of writing.

Theories of writing as process can be traced to the works of the Russian developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1962) which espouse a socio-cultural theory of writing. Influenced by Vygotsky's work, British researchers developed a theory that growth in writing involves complex interactive forces (Burgess et al., 1973; Britton, 1975). American researchers have since supported the principle that writing is a process of interaction among reader, audience, text and context (Emig, 1973; Flower & Hayes, 1977; Cooper & Odell, 1978; Harste, 1980). More recently, researchers have come to view written language as embedded in a social context (Heath,1983; Harste, 1983), as involving a transactional process and as including a negotiation of meanings between writer and audience in a particular context (Green & Wallat, 1981; Kroll & Wells, 1983).

These theories of writing as process imply changes in methodology and in the role of the teacher. Theorists and practitioners of English Language Arts are increasingly rejecting traditional approaches to teaching writing which support hierarchical skill-building methods, which aim to impart knowledge about writing conventions, and which focus only on the written product (Edelsky, 1982). Traditional approaches require children to write individually, the teachers to correct conventions in written texts, and the social organization in the classrooms to be teacher-centred. Today, theorists and practitioners support methods that focus not only on the product but include the process of writing as well. Writing conventions are viewed not as an end in themselves, but as a tool to clarify the content and

intention of writing (Sowers, 1982; Clay, 1973; Graves, 1973; Goodman, 1986). In classrooms where teachers use writing-as-process approaches, children discuss and clarify their meanings in writing with peers and/or the teacher. The teacher's role is to respond to children's writing on an ongoing basis, which fosters a child-centred social organization of classrooms.

Some theorists of second language acquisition support principles similar to those put forth by theorists of writing. Theorists who propose a communicative competence model of second-language acquisition claim that in addition to learning a language code, learners develop socio-cultural competence in the second language (Gumperz & Hymes, 1964). Learners are said to accomplish this by interacting with native speakers of the target language and by focusing on the content of what is said in interactions (Canale & Swain, 1980; Wong-Fillmore, 1983; Saville-Troike, 1983). A number of theorists of second language acquisition maintain that language is acquired in the active practice of communication (McLaughlin, 1984; Cummins, 1984; Hakuta, 1986: Swain, 1986).

A common principle underlies the theory of communicative competence in second language acquisition and those of writing as process: language learning is viewed as a social, meaning-making process. This has led some researchers to advocate the teaching of writing as process in second language education (Freedman, Pringle & Yalden, 1983; Cummins, 1985; Edelsky, 1987).

Researchers claim that children in French immersion programs learn French by focusing not on the form of language, but on the educational

content of lessons (Genesee, 1987). Yet it seems that a traditional skills-building approach to teaching writing remains common in a number of immersion programs. This is expressed in methods that stress spelling, vocabulary, grammar and stylistics in written products, giving minimal attention to the writing process or to the writer's voice and intention.

It appears, then, that children in French immersion programs not only receive instruction in writing in two languages, but may be exposed to two contrasting views of writing. For example, children in one language class may experience writing as a interactional process where the teacher acts as a communicative partner and instruction includes both the process and the product. In another class these same children may experience writing as a perfection of conventions where the teacher acts as an examiner and instruction emphasizes only writing products and correct form.

Past research on immersion education has not indicated how children learn or are taught to write in two languages. In fact, there have been few studies of the actual teaching practices and classroom processes in French immersion, since most of the published research has examined only the program's educational outcomes. Knowledge about the practices and the processes in delivery of the immersion curriculum would help to clarify problems and identify the special needs of children and teachers in the program. Therefore, by investigating the French and English writing lessons in a French immersion program, this case study attempts to add to, and expand on a small body of qualitative research on teaching and learning in immersion education.

Research Questions

The research questions aim at identifying the content, the classroom processes, and the perceptions of participants in grade five/six writing lessons in a French immersion program. Three general questions guide this study:

1. What is the focus of instruction in English and French writing lessons?
   a. What curriculum materials are used?
   b. Which teaching approaches are adopted?
   c. What aspects of writing are emphasized?
   d. What type of writing is produced in the lessons?

2. What are the teachers' assumptions about writing and the teaching of writing?

3. What are the children's perceptions about writing and writing instruction?

Literature Review

Research and prominent theories in the following related fields form the basis of the literature review: French immersion education, second-language acquisition, development in writing, and educational change.

French Immersion Education

Research in French immersion provides a wealth of information about the program's educational outcomes. The literature includes some comprehensive reviews of studies on immersion education (Swain & Lapkin, 1982; Cummins & Swain, 1986; Genesee, 1987). Most studies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s were psychometric research projects which emphasized quantitative measures of language proficiency and student achievement (Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Swain, 1978; Cziko, Holobow & Lambert, 1977). These studies consistently demonstrated that children's second language skills increased considerably as a result of the immersion experience and that they suffered no enduring lags in their academic development. This was interpreted as a sign of the success of immersion education and was attributed to the fact that French language instruction was incidental to educational content; children learned French by focusing on the meaning of messages in lessons, rather than by studying the features of the language.

The literature published since the 1980s suggests that there are gaps in knowledge about immersion education. Researchers have called for studies documenting the pedagogical procedures used by teachers, the nature of student-teacher interactions and the integration of language instruction

with other curricular subjects (Swain & Lapkin, 1982; Genesee, 1984, 1987; Carey, 1984; McLaughlin, 1984; Cummins, 1985).

Recent studies have provided some descriptive information about classroom processes in French immersion. Tardif and Weber (1987) investigated classroom interactions in kindergarten. Their preliminary findings confirmed that children at this grade level actively negotiated meanings with the teacher. They responded to a number of non-verbal and situational clues to make sense of the French language.

However, other research suggested that opportunities to freely negotiate meanings were less frequent after kindergarten. Findings from classroom observations in a five-year study of bilingual proficiency indicated that lessons in French immersion were largely teacher-directed and offered minimal occasions for genuine peer and student-teacher dialogue (Harley et al., 1987). This study confirmed that children in immersion programs developed stronger receptive language skills (listening and reading) in French than productive language skills (speaking and writing), and this was attributed to the fact that opportunities to practice productive skills were infrequent in these classrooms.

In an investigation of social-studies lessons, Mahé (1987) documented a prevalence of teacher-directed activities in French immersion. She found that discovery activities were traded off for activities which aimed at developing vocabulary skills. Lessons often featured presentations of French social studies vocabulary instead of the development of social studies concepts and inquiry skills.

Maguire (1989) conducted an ethnographic study of middle-grade immersion children's perceptions of English and French written narratives. Among her many observations, she documented a tendency for a case-study teacher to emphasize language rules in French writing lessons and conferences. She also documented that the case-study children were taught by an English Language Arts teacher and a French immersion teacher who had opposing views of writing.

A pattern of immersion pedagogy emerges from these studies; it appears that at most grade levels, immersion classes are characterized by traditional teacher-centred methodologies which emphasize transmitting language conventions at the expense of engaging children in genuine dialogue with a focus on meaning. Cummins (1984, 1985) and Genesee (1987) warn that such practices may limit the potential of immersion programs and may contravene what is known about learning and second language acquisition in young children.

Second Language Acquisition

In order to understand second language acquistion, some researchers have studied the early language development of children. Drawing from a study of second language learning in school-aged children, Ervin-Tripp (1981) found that the acquisition process was similar for younger and older learners in both the first and the second language. Although the older learners had a greater knowledge base, all learners relied on contextual meanings to acquire language.

Wong-Fillmore (1983) examined how young learners focused on making meaning of the second language through their interactions with members of the target language. She suggested that children develop individual interaction strategies which impeded or enhanced their acquisition of the second language, referring to this process as the development of a communicative competence.

Theorists now advocate a communicative competence theory of second language acquisition as a framework for bilingual education (Hakuta, 1986; Cummins, 1984; Canale and Swain, 1980; McLaughlin, 1984). They suggest that second language instruction which focuses on discrete skill mastery and memory drills fails to account for how children naturally learn language. Cummins (1984) and McLaughlin (1984) argue that meaning-based, interactive teaching strategies should be adopted not only for oral instruction, but also for instruction in reading and writing in the second language. Such approaches are endorsed in the literature on reading and writing in the first and in the second language.

Development in Writing

Like second-language researchers, theorists and researchers of writing have examined children's early language development in an attempt to understand the development of writing abilities. In some of his earlier studies of language linking speech, writing and thought, Vygotsky (1962) advanced a social theory of language learning. Halliday (1975) supported this theory, concluding from his studies of children's speech that language

learning is a purposive, contextualized, socio-semiotic activity. In the same vein, drawing from a longitudinal study of language development at home and at school, Wells (1986) states that children learn language incidentally, in their quest to understand ideas. Moreover, Barnes et al. (1986) claim that children use the context of conversations to make sense of their world and make links between observations of different events.

In a study of school-based writing, Burgess et al. (1973) found that children use their writing in school as a tool to solve conceptual problems and make connections. The researchers conclude that when teachers respond only to the form of writing in texts rather than to the content of students' writing, they inhibit the educational potential for further exploration of ideas. In the same vein, Giroux (1978) condemns writing instruction that avoids dialogue and is restricted to technique. He refers to this as a technocratic approach to teaching which he claims stresses only the reproduction of knowledge and prevents children from using writing as a tool to learn, to think critically, to be creative, and to develop social awareness. Giroux supports a critical pedagogy that promotes process in writing.

In a study of the composing process of twelfth graders, Emig (1971) concluded that the basics in writing are not the conventions but the processes in writing. She criticized instruction in schools for misrepresenting the essence of writing:

> Most of the criteria by which students' school-sponsored writing is evaluated concern the accidents, rather than the essences of discourse --that is, spelling, punctuation, penmanship, and length rather than thematic development, rhetorical and syntactic sophistication, and fulfillment of intent. (p. 90)

Graves (1983) studied the development of writing among first-graders and he found that given the opportunity to write and discuss their writing, the children naturally developed conventions in writing as well as a view of the writing process. Graves advanced a developmental approach to teaching writing which emphasized writing for real audiences, engaging children in dialogues about their writing, and having them rework successive drafts of their written texts.

A similar developmental approach to teaching the writing process was documented by Edelsky (1987) in a bilingual Spanish-English program in Arizona. Some of the teachers in this program allowed the children to use words from either language when they wrote. The findings from this study dispelled such myths as: a) development in literacy is a matter of acquiring skills; b) writing in one language interferes with writing in the other language; c) the learner learns alone and the teacher is irrelevant. The study provided evidence that given the freedom to write, the children actively explored and discovered conventions in writing in both languages. Moreover, teaching approaches played a critical role in inhibiting or enhancing opportunities to learn to write in both the first language and the second language.

Educational Change

In his review of the literature on educational change, Fullan (1980) concluded that change occurs along three dimensions: first, it includes changes in curriculum materials and instructional resources; second, it involves changes in teaching approaches; and third, it encompasses a change in beliefs and assumptions. Fullan stated that change is resisted when it is imposed from above or from the outside, when it is diffuse and incoherent, and when teachers are isolated and feel threatened. According to Fullan, educational change must be viewed as a social process and it can only be understood by examining the transformation in both the objective and the subjective realities of those involved in the change.

Summary of the Literature Review

Studies of writing development and of second language acquisition show that language learning is based on genuine communication needs. Research indicates that young children naturally learn language through social interaction, not through a decontextualized analysis of language. Studies of French immersion education indicate that traditional teaching approaches in writing instruction are not congruent with principles of language acquisition and writing development. Literature on educational change indictes that it essentially involves a process of social and individual transformations.

Methodology

Past research in French immersion was based on empirical methods that examined program products, but current trends in research indicate an attempt to document classroom interactions and teaching practices in immersion education. Some recent studies, which are based on a tradition of qualitative or naturalistic research in education, include classroom observations as an important source of data collection (Mahé, 1987; Tardif and Weber, 1987b; Maguire, 1989; Harley et al., 1987). In fact, Tardif and Weber (1987a) call for ethnographic research in French immersion to document educational processes in the context of immersion classrooms. The assumption in educational ethnography is that classroom observations and participant interviews provide insights, as well as descriptions of the context that help to explain educational outcomes (Guba, 1985; Delamont, 1984; Green and Wallat, 1981). In this case study, therefore, I have chosen to use a methodology that is within the ethnographic research tradition.

The Role of the Researcher

My role as researcher was as observer-participant in a grade 5/6 French immersion class. The advantage of the observer-participant role was that I had some flexibility to either move in close and interact with class members, or distance myself to watch and write fieldnotes. As a participant, I was able to move around the room to ask questions and as an observer, I was able to retreat from the centre of activity to record observations. This dual role was also a disadvantage, however, as my freedom to choose between participation and withdrawal made it clear that

I was not a full member of the class, that I was in fact an outsider who was there to record what I saw. Throughout the study I was aware that my presence in the room during observations may have led class members to behave differently than when I was absent. In order to verify for observer effect, therefore, I cross-checked data collected from observations made earlier in the study, when the classroom members were not used to my presence, with observations made when they were more familiar with me. I also compared the observations to my previous experiences as a classroom teacher in a French immersion program.

Between September 1987 and March 1988 I spent at least one day a week in a school which housed a French immersion program. I usually observed writing lessons, although on occasion I also observed mathematics, social studies and art lessons. Writing lessons took place in three distinct classroom settings: writing lessons in the regular French immersion class, enriched French language lessons, and lessons in the English Language Arts class. English Language Arts instruction was given in fifty-minute periods, from 8:55 to 9:45 a.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays, and from 10:40 to 11:30 on other days. The enriched French language lessons were provided on Mondays between 1:30 and 2:30 p.m. Writing lessons in the regular French immersion class generally took place on Monday afternoons around 2:00 p.m.

I was able to enter and leave all three classroom settings at will, was free to move around, and also made contact with a number of staff and parents who worked in the school. I regularly spent recess and lunch periods with teachers in the staff room or in their classrooms. I also observed the children in the school yard and in the lunch program.

Phases of the Study

Figure 1 represents the three overlapping data collection phases of the study. During the first phase of the study, from September 1987 to December 1988, four aims guided my visits to the school. I intended to 1) develop sensitivity to fieldwork and skills in data collection techniques; 2) establish a rapport with the members of the school; 3) develop an understanding of the general context of the research site; and, 4) select five children for closer observation in later phases of the study. I observed the three participating teachers, a parent-volunteer, and all the children in the grade 5/6 French immersion class. The fieldnote records I collected included general observations and narrative summaries of informal conversations. In addition, I collected school board documents and instructional materials which were later used as written sources of information to describe the context.

During the second phase of the study, from November 1987 to February 1988, I observed the five participating children as they worked in language lessons in the regular French immersion class, the enriched French language lessons and the English Language Arts class. My focus of observation was on describing the content of lessons and classroom processes. Data collection in this phase included observations and informal conversations recorded in fieldnotes as well as audiotaped open-ended interviews with staff members and teachers.

	PHASE 1 Sept '87 - Dec '88	PHASE 2 Nov '87 - Feb '88	PHASE 3 Jan '88 - Mar '88
DATA SOURCES AND METHODS	Document collection----------		
	Informal interviews of parents, staff and children----------		
	Fieldnote recordings of observations of 23 children in grade 5/6 and 4 participating adults----------		
	Selection of 5 participating children----------		
		Fieldnote recordings of observations of 5 participating children and 4 participating adults----------	
		Collection of writing samples----------	
		Open-ended formal interviews with staff----------	
			Open-ended formal interviews with 4 participating adults----------
			Open-ended formal group interviews with 5 children----

Figure 1. Phases of the Study

The final data collection phase of the study took place between January 1988 and March 1988. My focus was on uncovering the children's and the teachers' perceptions of writing and writing instruction in French and in English. I recorded observations and informal conversations in fieldnotes, audiotaped individual interviews with the teachers, audiotaped group interviews with the five children, and collected writing samples. I triangulated the data as follows: I compared and cross-checked interview information provided by the children with the interview information provided by the teachers and other participants and compared this to the observations I recorded in fieldnotes.

Modes of Data Collection

The four modes of data collection I used were fieldnotes, interviews, documents and writing samples.

Fieldnotes

I recorded fieldnotes by hand during observations and immediately following informal conversations. I divided fieldnote pages into three columns with the following category headings: Observational Notes, Methodological Notes, Theoretical Notes.

Observational Notes were anecdotal commentaries of observed events. For example line 05 on page 7 of observational notes taken November 23, 1987 stated: "Bill is writing quietly. He seems to be copying a paragraph from a reader." Methodological Notes were personal reminders about further

questions to be answered or statements about difficulties encountered in collecting data. For example, next to the above Observational Note, the Methodological Note stated: "Ask him to show me the text and explain what he's doing." Theoretical Notes were attempts to build categories, make cross-references to other fieldnotes as well as to link observations to theory and to literature. For example Theoretical Notes recorded following an informal conversation with a teacher January 4, 1988, on line 4 page 9 read: "Teacher doesn't see bilingualism as an enrichment. Does she hold to a linguistic interference theory of language learning?" In all, 213 pages of fieldnotes were recorded by hand.

Interviews

Throughout the study, I engaged members of the school in informal interviews which took the form of conversations wherein I asked questions about the French immersion program, the school and the community. French or English was spoken depending on the preference of the informants and I recorded their responses in fieldnotes accordingly. My purpose in informal interviews was to casually elicit information which participants might be more reticent to provide in formal interviews.

In order to obtain more in-depth information, I conducted eight formal open-ended interviews which I audiotaped. Of these, six were individual interviews with staff and two were group interviews with the five participating children. I asked open-ended questions about French immersion in general and specific questions about teaching practices in French and in English. I asked the participating teachers and the five

children to explain what took place in writing lessons and to give their perceptions of writing and writing instruction. My intention was to elicit participant beliefs and conceptions as well as their interpretations of events. I later listened to the audiotapes and using a dictaphone-transcriber, I transcribed onto a word processor. The interviews of the participants produced ninety-nine pages of text.

I examined the transcripts to find recurring themes and emerging patterns in participant responses. My reviews of each interview provided further questions to be asked in following interviews. I presented the transcriptions of interviews to all the interviewees, including the children, for their reviews and comments. The interviewees claimed to be satisfied that the transcriptions accurately reflected the interviews.

The conventions I used for transcriptions are as follows:

Short pauses are indicated by two asterisks: Um** yes.

Long pauses are indicated by three asterisks: At this stage? *** Oh

Unclear utterances are indicated by "inaudible" in parentheses: to keep it (inaudible) in French

Body language or relevant behaviours are indicated in parentheses: Beg, borrow and steal. (Laughs)

Simultaneous talking is indicated by a parenthesis notation between different speakers:

Bill: I just think it out** I think it out in my mind and write on paper.

[

Erica: Ya.

A sample page from the transcripts is given in Appendix A.

Documents and Writing Samples

I collected documents related to French immersion, immersion programs in Quebec and the school board throughout all phases of the study and I used them as background material for the context descripton. I used the children's writing samples as evidence to describe what was produced in writing lessons in the three classroom settings. In January 1988 the participating teachers agreed to save samples of the five children's written productions. In March 1988, I collected and photocopied the samples. I referenced the samples with the initials of the author and the classroom from which they were collected. I then categorized the samples according to type of written production such as ditto sheet, research project or story.

Gaining Entry and the Participants

The Teachers and Members of Staff

Maryse teaches in French immersion at Manor school, the site of this study. She received her Bachelor of Education from the department of second-language education at a local English university and she has taught in French immersion for the Weaton Board for nine years.

As Maryse has allowed researchers to work in her class in the past, I thought that she might be willing to participate in this study. I contacted her by phone in the last week of August 1987. During our conversation, Maryse indicated an interest in participating in the study, so we arranged to

meet in September. The following narrative segment from fieldnotes describes my first visit to the school and my meeting with Maryse:

Narrative Segment 1: First Impressions

> I entered the school at 12:30 p.m. during the lunch hour. The halls and bulletin boards were gaily decorated with fall themes. The school was relatively clean and the classrooms appeared to be well-equipped. I met Maryse in the hall as she walked toward the staffroom. We exchanged introductions and she explained that she was going to have an unforseen ten minute meeting in her room. She invited me to sit at a table at one end of the resource room which serves as her classroom while she attended to the committee meeting. After the meeting Maryse sat with me and explained her assignment this year: She is a French immersion resource teacher; this is a recently-created position. She works with small groups of children who need remedial help in French. Maryse either works with children in their regular class or they leave the regular class for an hour each week to work in the resource centre. One of the groups is composed of eight children from a combined grade 5/6 class and they are given enriched French language lessons which focus on story writing. Mme Cousineau, a francophone parent-volunteer, helps the children with translations of words and phrases during these enriched language lessons. The children also use dictionaries to help with spelling. Their stories are kept in file folders and are left on Maryse's desk.
>
> (Fieldnotes, 88/06/28)

We agreed that I would return to observe the grade 5/6 children while they participated in the enriched French language lessons, in writing lessons in their regular French immersion class, and in English Language Arts lessons. My first impression of Maryse was of an articulate and dynamic individual. She was friendly, easily volunteered information, and appeared to be quite comfortable in her role as a teacher. She expressed warmth and sensitivity in her interactions with children, frequently stood

close and touched their arms when she spoke with them. She appeared to be on good terms with both French and English staff members and she was active in the school's informal organization.

Mme Cousineau, the parent-volunteer who worked with Maryse in the enriched French language lessons, was formerly a grade five teacher in a francophone school near the island of Montreal. She obtained a teaching diploma in the 1950s from a francophone teachers' college in rural Quebec. Mme Cousineau came into the school to help Maryse teach the enriched French language lessons. She was unassuming and spoke in a soft tone when she worked with the children.

Ruth, the teacher of the regular French immersion class, was assigned to the school for one year to replace a teacher on maternity leave. She had had long-term substitute positions with the school board for sixteen years, both in English and in French immersion classes. Ruth received her teaching degree from a local English teachers' college in the 1950s. Although fairly fluent in French, she had an English accent and she was more comfortable speaking English. Ruth interacted warmly with children and staff, smiled easily, and generally got along well with everyone. She openly shared her personal life with her students to the extent that she once had the whole class over to her home on a country farm for a weekend. Ruth spent most of her free periods correcting or preparing work in the staffroom where she actively interacted with other staff members.

Cheryl, the English Language Arts teacher, began working for the school board a few years after emigrating from England in the late 1960s. She

received her teaching degree from a university in England, and she was following night courses in education at a local English-language university. Cheryl was new to Manor school where she taught Language Arts to three of the senior French immersion classes. She also taught music, as well as moral and religious studies to other groups. Initially Cheryl felt uneasy about my presence in her classroom but after several observations, she became more receptive and open about her perceptions. Cheryl held strong opinions which she expressed freely; she was sometimes brisk and business-like in her interactions with other staff and students, yet she was also warm and pleasant with the children in her own classroom. Cheryl was a disciplined worker, who spent much of her free time in her classroom working or organizing materials for lessons.

These four adults who taught the participating children writing, appeared to be hard-working, caring individuals. They often worked during their breaks and lunch hours, giving the impression that they were waging a constant battle against time. They easily engaged in conversations about the children in their care, openly discussing the accomplishments and problems of individual children and expressing genuine concern for them.

Both the principal and the secretary were the main gatekeepers in this school and were valuable informants about the school community. On a second visit to the school I met the principal and although the meeting was very brief as she had someone waiting to see her, she gave me a warm reception and explained that Manor school was open to researchers. Her enthusiastic welcome was explained in part by an unexpected second meeting with her; she was invited to present her recently-completed

master's thesis in one of my graduate seminars at the university. This indicated to me that she was familiar with research methods and it explained why she supported research projects in her school. The principal appeared to be dynamic and althogh she was very busy, I often saw her chatting and laughing with teachers in the staffroom during recess and lunch breaks.

The secretary was also friendly and very helpful during our frequent contacts. She readily provided information and openly expressed her perceptions, yet she was considerably more reserved about what she said in the formal interview situation. The other teachers on staff were pleasant with me during informal contacts in the halls and in the staffroom. A few teachers even invited me to observe activities in their classrooms.

In a study of teacher interactions in French immersion, Cleghorn (1981) documented conflict and ethnolinguistic clustering among staff. During six months of visits to Manor school, however, I observed mostly positive interactions among staff as they exchanged information, joked with each other and offered to help one another. Nevertheless, some English and French staff referred to instances of inter-group tension in the school. The secretary described occasional conflict in meetings in the following way:

> "Well, I don't think it's on purpose ** at all. ** But . . . you know when in our school council . . . the French immersion teachers will come up with something they want to be done ** and of course all the English teachers will get their backs up, but they don't really understand **. . . . I mean it's almost like two different worlds going on in one school."
>
> (Open-ended Interview 88/01/04)

As was also documented in Cleghorn's study, staff members deferred to the English language during conversations between French and English speakers. It was clear that English staff and their interests dominated the school's orientation. This was evident in comments made by members of the staff. For example, the principal referred to the school as "an English school with a French program" (Open-ended Interview, 88/01/18), and a French immersion teacher recounted how she was told by an English teacher that she should speak English to colleagues in the school because this was an English school (Fieldnotes, 88/02/08). The staff in this dual-track school had to deal on a daily basis with sensitive issues related to how language defines social roles.

The Children

In October 1987, I consulted with Maryse and selected five children for closer observation. These children were part of the group of eight students who participated in the enriched French language lessons with Maryse. The background information for the children was obtained in informal interviews with the children and with the teachers. The children's ages, grade levels and languages spoken at home are given in Table 1.

Bill was the only boy in the enriched French language lessons. He was an attractive, articulate child who lived with his parents and his eighteen-year-old brother. His parents emigrated from Korea after the birth of his brother. Bill expressed a high level of interest in his surroundings. At times he appeared to be interested only in playing with and teasing his classmates. He often helped others upon request or at times advised them

without being asked. His frequent playful moods were interspersed with intense concentration and a high level of productivity. Bill's three teachers agreed that he was quite bright. Both the English teacher and his regular French immersion teacher wondered if he were not being challenged enough by the grade five program; they believed that he was not working to the best of his abilities.

Erica was tall, slim, and had long blond hair. When she spoke French, she had a strong English accent and her speech was interspersed with English words. Erica said that she hated tests because they "make you feel so nervous, you don't know if you're going to pass or fail" (Fieldnotes, 88/01/25). She lived in a townhouse near the school with her father, his girlfriend and her ten-year-old brother. She visited her mother at her downtown apartment on weekends. Her parents were Canadian-born anglophones. Erica was very alert and eagerly answered questions during directed lessons in all of her classes. Both her English teacher and her regular French immersion teacher said that she loved to write and that she was very conscientious about doing her assignments as asked. Maryse reported that Erica developed interesting ideas in her stories.

Table 1

Languages Spoken at Home, Grade Level and Age of Participating Children

	Age in Sept. '87	Grade Level	Languages Spoken at Home
Bill	10.4 years	grade 5	English, Korean
Erica	10.9 years	grade 5	English
Denise	11.1 years	grade 6	English, French, Arabic
Linda	10.9 years	grade 5	English
Alison	11.10 years	grade 6	English

Denise was a petite, dark-haired child. She lived with her parents who came from Egypt, her twelve-year-old brother, and her twenty-two-year-old cousin who had come from Kuwait to pursue university studies. Denise's oral French was more fluent than her peers. She was easily distracted and usually chatted with neighbours during language lessons. According to Maryse, she had some previous social problems. Both her English teacher and her regular French immersion teacher described her as having little initiative; she did what was expected, no more.

Linda was a friendly, vivacious black student. She lived with her parents and her four-year-old brother. Her parents emigrated from the West Indies before her birth. Linda's dad spoke both French and English which may explain why Linda's oral French was fairly fluent in relation to her classmates. She confidently volunteered answers to questions in every class. She was quite dramatic, loved to perform, and she often asked to read her writing to the group. Her teachers described her as being independent and mature. Her English teacher reported that she wrote well in English and Maryse explained that Linda had "une fierté d'écrire" (Fieldnotes, 87/11/01).

Alison was a reflective, quiet-spoken child who lived with her parents and her fifteen-year-old brother. Her parents emigrated from the United States before her birth. She was taller than the others, physically more mature and wore braces. Alison enjoyed painting in her free time; she liked horses and poetry. She generally chose to work alone in school although she did participate in discussions. Alison's regular French immersion teacher said that she was beginning to use French sentence structures in her writing

instead of writing direct translations from English. Her English teacher explained that her writing in English was well developed; she used sophisticated language and sentence construction.

All five children lived in townhouses or bungalows near the school. In each case, both of their parents worked and most were professionals. These children were meeting with success in the French and English language programs. They were all considered by their three teachers to be high achievers, and yet they differed in personality traits and in family backgrounds.

These children and the four adults who teach them writing are the primary participants in this case study. Over the year, the children learn about writing in French and English in three settings for lessons. The focus of this research is on describing the content of French and English writing lessons, the classroom processes, and the perceptions of the participants.

CHAPTER II

THE CONTEXT

In this study I view language and writing instruction as embedded in a "context of situation". The concept "context of situation" can be traced to Malinowski (1923) who suggested that language does not exist in isolation, but is given meaning through social interaction in complex settings. Later, Firth (1964) described "context of situation" as a set of dynamic and creative relationships between the environment, human behaviour and language in use. This concept was elaborated by Halliday (1978) who claimed that language is experienced in relation to a background of persons and events. According to Halliday "context of situation" refers to features in both the immediate and the more remote environment that are relevant to the language in use. It is within this framework of language in "context of situation" that I examine the background of the writing lessons in a French immersion program. In this chapter, I describe socio-historical and educational features of both the larger environment and the local setting of the study.

I define the immersion program in this study as embedded in two larger overlapping contexts: Canada's bilingual education phenomenon and Quebec's education system. French immersion programs operating in Quebec are unique in that they serve a minority-language group in a provincial system that is predominantly French, whereas elsewhere in Canada the programs are set in systems that serve an English-language majority.

Canadian Immersion Programs

Historically, the founding French and English language groups of Canada have had different perspectives concerning group rights, language of education and linguistic survival. The relationship between the two groups has been characterized by competition and conflict (Cleghorn, 1981). At various points in Canadian history, and particularly in the 1960's, attempts were made to reduce inter-group tensions and to assure the security of each language group through laws and official policies governing language use in Canadian institutions.

In 1969, the Federal government enacted the Official Languages Act which recognized French and English as the two official languages of the government of Canada and related institutions, thereby officially sanctioning bilingualism. An outcome of this policy was increased governmental support for second language instruction in French and in English, including bilingual education (Genesee, 1978). In 1970-71 a federal program, the Program of Official Languages in Teaching was created under the administration of the Secretary of State. Over the years it has awarded 2.5 billion dollars to the teaching of minority and second languages (Peat, Marwick et al., 1987).[1]

A variety of new language programs was developed and implemented with the benefit of federal support. Among these was the 1965 Saint Lambert experiment, the first French immersion program, located near Montreal. There was some early resistance to its implementation, but this quickly disappeared as the positive results of the program were publicized (Lambert

and Tucker, 1972).

Parental pressure led to the implementation of the Saint Lambert program and was responsible for the establishment of a number of immersion programs across Canada. English-speaking parents who wanted to ensure that their children become bilingual formed a national association (Canadian Parents for French, 1979). Over the years, this association has disseminated information about French second language education, has kept parents updated on current research in bilingual education, has marketed French immersion programs, and has served as a political lobby group.

French immersion is defined in this study as a program that allows children to acquire French as a second language through instruction of subject-matter in that language. Although a number of the curricular subjects are taught in French, students generally receive some instruction in English Language Arts which, with some exceptions, is provided at every grade level in the program. Usually immersion programs are housed in English language schools referred to as dual-track schools, meaning that both a French immersion and an English stream operate in the same building. The following goals guide immersion programs:

> The program aims to develop a level of bilingualism which would allow, in addition to the mastery of the first language, the development of linguistic competence in the second language. The students would thus be able to communicate in both languages on a personal and professional level.
>
> (Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers, 1986)

Moreover, the underlying assumption of immersion education is said to be

"that the students' education should be the same as that of students in regular English programs offered in any given school system, with the only major difference being the language through which the teachers and the students communicate in the classroom" (Swain and Lapkin, 1981, p. 4).

Since the implementation of the first French immersion class, immersion education has expanded rapidly to all Canadian provinces. Table 2 provides recent enrolment statistics for French immersion programs. A number of immersion program models now exist and the selection of one model over another is frequently a controversial issue for parents, teachers and administrators. This is particularly true in Quebec where issues such as the amount of exposure to the second language and preservation of the mother tongue are quite contentious.

Table 2

Enrolment Changes in French Immersion Programs

	Year	Total School Population	Enrolment in English Programs	French Immersion Enrolment	Percentage of Eligible Population in Immersion[a]
Canada (excluding Quebec)					
	1977-78	3,910,857	3,697,976	20,081	0.51%
	1986-87	3,560,609	3,227,833	184,345	5.18%
Percentage of change:		-9%	-13%	+818%	
Quebec					
	1977-78	1,260,983	203,967	17,754	8.00%
	1986-87	1,037,174	101,856	18,391	15.29%
Percentage of change:		-14%	-45%	+4%	

[a]In Quebec the eligible population consists of those who qualify for English language programs under the provisions of the Charter of the French Language (Bill 101), whereas in the rest of Canada, the eligible population is the total school population.

(Adapted from: The Commissioner of Official Languages' Annual Report 1986; Gouvernement du Québec, Statistiques de l'éducation [préscolaire, primaire, secondaire], Ministère de l'Éducation, édition de septembre, 1985; Gouvernement du Québec, Principales statistiques de l'éducation [secteur des jeunes effectifs scolaires des réseaux publiques et privés], Ministère de l'Éducation, 1987.)

The popularity of immersion programs has led not only to their rapid quantitative expansion but also to a number of administrative problems:

1. Potential conflict in both the internal and external environments of the school between anglophone and francophone groups who perceive the expansion of immersion programs as a threat to first language instruction (Olson and Burns, 1984).

2. An inability to find sufficient administrative and teaching personnel competent in French (Olson and Burns, 1984).

3. A lack of material resources designed specifically for immersion (such as appropriate reading materials for middle-grade immersion students).

4. A lack of formal training of teachers and administrators for immersion programs (Stern, 1986; Rebuffot, 1988).

5. Inadequate supervision of programs and of personnel due to language barriers between unilingual anglophone administrators and francophone personnel.

6. Concerns about the implications of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in cases where children are refused access to immersion based on ability levels or where children in immersion programs are not provided special services such as French special education classes.

7. Criticisms of the suitability of pedagogical practices adopted in immersion programs (Cummins, 1985; Mahé, 1987).

The above problems are just lately receiving attention by concerned groups and are being addressed in some of the recent literature on immersion education. The future expansion of immersion programs may be hindered by the above problems as well as by increasing competition from

other popular educational alternatives, such as programs for the gifted and creative or performing arts programs (Henchey, 1988), or even new innovations in the regular French-as-a-second-language (FSL) curriculum offered in English schools.

While problems plague French immersion programs in particular, the need for second-language education in general is likely to grow for as Bain and Yu (1987) indicate:

> UNESCO demographers estimate that by the year 2000, six out of every ten people will either have moved from one country to another or from one region to another of the same country and, in some cases, will be using or studying in a language other than their mother tongue. (p.216)

Thus second language education of one form or another and pedagogical issues related to second language programs will continue to be a major concern for Canadian educators, researchers and policy-makers in the future.

French Immersion Programs and Education in Quebec

The conflicting relationship between English and French language groups has been most dramatic in Quebec where each group has felt threatened by the other. One of the major contentious issues has been, and continues to be, language rights.

In 1977, the Charter of the French Language (Bill 101) established French as the only official language of the province and limited access to English

language schooling. The purpose of the Charter was to protect the French language in Quebec within the context of an English-speaking continent. Attempts by governments to modify the terms of the Charter have received strong opposition especially regarding bilingualism in public signs. In a political and sociolinguistic context where there are great concerns about the future of the French language and fears of assimilation in the English culture, bilingual education is therefore perceived by some to represent a threat and has not received official support in Quebec, although personal bilingualism is valued by most francophones and anglophones alike.

For Quebec anglophones, however, bilingualism represents more than personal enrichment; it is a necessary prerequisite for employment and for full participation in the life of the province. French immersion programs provide not only an educational path to bilingualism, but also a means to secure a continued English- language acculturation. Genesee (1977b) found that immersion students maintain a basic identity with English-speaking reference groups and Cleghorn (1981) has suggested that French immersion programs have English language maintenance as an important though latent social objective. Immersion programs can thus be said to provide the English-speaking community with a French education which is of a non-assimilationist nature. For some anglophone parents, the fear of assimilation may be the unspoken impetus for selecting a French immersion education rather than opting for a French education through the local community francophone school. Therefore, immersion programs may also serve a socio-political purpose for English-speaking Quebecers.

While French immersion offers a means to acquire some level of

proficiency in French and to maintain English language skills, not all anglophones are in favour of or support immersion education. Some anglophone teachers and parents perceive the expansion of immersion programs as threatening English language education.

Opposition to immersion programs in Quebec is also voiced in the francophone academic community. The validity of immersion programs is challenged by some linguists based on studies which indicate that immersion students have weak productive language skills and continue to maintain an English-language identity after completing the program (Connors et al., 1977; Ménard & Connors, 1979; Bibeau, 1988). The researchers claim that Montreal's French immersion programs are to be evaluated according to their capacity to produce graduates with native-like fluency who can integrate in the francophone milieu.

Researchers in Quebec are divided as to the goals of second-language education in general, and opposing orientations in research reflect this division. On the one hand, Ménard and Connors (1979) as well as Bibeau (1988) state that the aim of second-language education ought to be the integration of minority-language groups into the majority-language milieu, and they criticize French immersion programs for their failure to achieve this. On the other hand, Genesee (1987) and others claim that the objective of immersion education ought to be the maintenance of identity with the mother-tongue reference-group while acquiring some level of proficiency in the second language.

Language education in Quebec must conform to the terms of the *Régimes Pédagogiques*, Quebec's mandated comprehensive curriculum that covers all subjects in elementary and secondary education. According to the *Régimes*, second-language instruction in English is to be provided as of grade four, while second-language instruction in French is to be given as of grade one. In addition, French immersion programs may be provided, but English immersion programs are not permitted.

Although the *Régimes* allow for French immersion programs, there are no official curricula for subjects in French immersion programs. The Quebec Ministry of Education recognizes French immersion as experimental second-language programs for eligible anglophones. Although the programs have existed in Quebec for over twenty years, they continue to have experimental status despite the fact that a Ministry report recommends that the official position on French immersion programs be revised and calls for new policy guiding the implementation of immersion programs (Danan et al., 1980).

Ministry Programs and Curriculum Documents

In the absence of official programs or curriculum documents for French immersion programs, local school boards independently create their own curriculum documents. For language instruction, attempts are made to adapt the immersion curriculum to the official Ministry documents for French-as-a-first-language (Programme d'étude, primaire, français, Québec, 1979), for English-as-a-first-language (Elementary School Curriculum: English Language Arts, Québec, 1983), and for French-as-a-second-language

(Programme d'étude, primaire, français langue seconde, Québec, 1979). Generally in Quebec's immersion programs, the official French-as-a-second-language program is not referred to as much as the French-as-a-first-language program. This is because the second-language documents are directed to traditional second-language programs and they are not thought to be applicable to a French immersion context.

The Ministry programs for French and for English are different in their assumptions about language and in their pedagogical orientations.[2] The English program advocates "Whole Language" which is based on social theories of language as process and integrates the four language arts (listening, speaking, reading and writing); the program for French-as-a-first-language acknowledges that a relationship exists among the language arts, yet it recommends instruction of discrete language skills; and the program for French-as-a-second-language advocates "l'approche communicative" which recommends the integration of the language arts, but its accompanying curriculum guide states that to facilitate instruction, language should be broken into distinct skills.

It should be noted that the Quebec Ministry's French and English language programs were developed independently and were written by committees which had little or no contact with one another. The ethnolinguistic differences in pedagogical orientations are underlined by the fact that Quebec's francophone and anglophone educators belong to different professional associations and there is limited dialogue between the two groups about educational concerns. The fact that the documents for the English language programs represent a departure from the theoretical and

instructional orientations of the French language programs may not have been entirely anticipated by central Ministry curriculum planners.

Interpreting and integrating the recommendations in Ministry documents are, therefore, difficult tasks for local French immersion curriculum writers who often work in isolation from immersion educators in other boards. Local French immersion documents may vary according to the personal educational assumptions of document authors and according to the educational priorities of each school board.

The Setting and the Research Site

The School Board and the Immersion Program

The Weaton Board is a Protestant school board situated in suburban Montreal where the majority of residents of the local community are middle-class anglophones. The French immersion schools in the Weaton Board are representative of immersion schools in general as they tend to be located in predominantly English middle class communities (Swain and Lapkin, 1982). Members of the Weaton Board claim that the school board has achieved prominent status for the high academic test results of its students and the Weaton Board is generally recognized for its implementation of innovative programs.

There are nineteen elementary and three secondary schools in the Weaton Board. One of the secondary schools is French; the others are English and they provide French immersion course options. Sixteen elementary schools

are designated dual track, and in these schools the French immersion stream is usually larger than the English stream. Three elementary schools are designated *écoles primaires* which means that they provide instruction only in French with a period of English-as-a-second-language given daily beginning in grade four. In the Weaton Board's "écoles primaires" an overwhelming majority of students are native anglophones.

The Weaton Board offers what is commonly referred to as a middle immersion program. This is defined as:

> An approach beginning in grade four or five and continuing at least until the end of high school [sic]. The percentage of instruction in the second language should be apportioned as follows:
>
> grades 4-6: 80% to 100%
> grades 7-12: 50% to 80%
>
> (Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers, 1986)

From kindergarten to grade three, all instruction is in English except for a daily period of French-as-a-second-language. As of grade four, students may remain in the English stream or be placed in French immersion at their parents' request. The organization of first and second language instruction in the elementary schools of the Weaton Board is represented in Figure 2.

English Stream	French Immersion Stream
Levels: Kindergarten to grade 6	Levels: Grades 4, 5 and 6
French-as-a-second-language instruction: - 30 minutes daily in kindergarten - 60 minutes daily in grades 1 to 6	Language of instruction: - grades 4 and 5 60% instruction in French (mathematics, social studies, sciences and French language) 40% instruction in English (Language Arts, music and physical education) - grade 6 50% instruction in French, same as grades 4 and 5 with mathematics taught in English

Figure 2. Weaton Board's English and French Immersion Programs

In 1972, the first year French immersion was implemented in the school board, 35% of parents opted to place their children in immersion. By 1985, the number had increased to 75% so that the French immersion program has become larger than the English language program in this board. In the early years, only above-average-ability students were admitted to French immersion (as was the case in many programs elsewhere), until research indicated that students of all ability levels could benefit from the immersion experience (Bruck, 1978; Cummins, 1979).

In 1986, a controversy arose about the amount of French and English instruction provided in the Weaton Board. The debate was publicized in the English-language newspapers and focused on the question of increasing French instructional time. Those against the change saw this as a further threat to the quality of English language services in the board and some who favoured the increase also proposed that the board offer an early immersion program option.

In response to this debate, a new school board policy concerning French language instruction was adopted, restating the board's commitment to the middle immersion program model. It stated that students of all ability levels were to be admitted to immersion at any grade level in the program and suggested that remedial instruction be provided for immersion students experiencing difficulty. This policy also increased the amount of French instruction in the English language program to 26% of the total instructional time.

Although it was historically an English language school board, the

Weaton Board is in transition. Today, its largest sector is a bilingual program, namely the middle French immersion program, and its French sector, with a curriculum for native francophones, is expanding. The differences in ethnolinguistic and educational realities are occasionally expressed by tensions between interest groups in the internal and external environments of the Weaton Board.

The School Board Curriculum Documents

The goals of immersion education for the board are given below as they are stated in the school board document for the French immersion program:

Cours d'immersion, de la 4e à la 6e année

Buts par ordre de priorité:

1. Développer chez l'apprenant l'habileté à utiliser la langue française comme un outil de communication, d'expression et de réflection.
2. Développer et maintenir chez l'élève une attitude favorable à l'apprentissage et à l'utilisation du français.
3. Développer l'acquisition d'habiletés, de techniques et de connaissances dans les diverses disciplines figurant au programme.
4. Sensibiliser l'élève au milieu francophone au Québec.

(Weaton Board Curriculum Document #1, p. 18)

These goals, listed in order of priority, indicate that the most important objectives for the immersion program are acquiring French and instilling a positive attitude to the French language. Learning the content of the different subjects in the curriculum is listed as a third objective; the goal that is given the least priority is sensitizing students to Quebec's French

ethnolinguistic reality.

The curriculum document also outlines changes in the materials and in the approaches used the the implementation of the immersion program in the school board. Figure 3 is adapted from the document and represents the changes in immersion in the school board.

The curriculum document provides profiles of immersion students at each grade level and gives guidelines for instruction of oral, aural, reading and writing skills according to grade level. It is to be noted that while the document states that grammar is not an end in itself, a method of formal grammar instruction is nevertheless recommended. This method is different from the traditional teaching of French grammar in that teachers are not expected to cover all rules. The document suggests that teachers have children observe and discuss grammatical patterns in written texts rather than memorize and write grammar rules.

The same document also lists twelve verbs that the children should be taught to conjugate by the end of grade six. This predetermined instructional content contrasts with the basic premise of the French immersion language program which is said to be "un programme centré sur les intérêts et les besoins spécifiques de l'élève" (Weaton Board Curriculum Document #1, p.4). By indicating that a specified number of verbs is to be taught, the document may lead teachers to "cover the curriculum" by systematically teaching the listed verbs instead of responding to the needs of the children.

	Matériel	Approches
1972	Choix de matériel didactique commercial assez restreint. Matériel institutionnel thématique et pluridisciplinaire.	Approche mixte: pédagogie active et méthodologie audiolinguale.
1985	Nouveau matériel répondant aux besoins d'une clientèle québecoise. Production de dossiers thématiques, suite à un relevé des intérêts des élèves.	Approche communicative: - le message d'abord, la forme ensuite. - tolérer l'erreur. - la grammaire n'est pas une fin mais un moyen. - contenu plus varié, plus près du vécu de l'élève.
Conséquences	Adoption de matériel de français langue maternelle Adaptation du contenu conforme à une pédagogie de la langue seconde. Excellent choix de matériel thématique, surtout en 4e année.	Programme centré sur les intérêts et les besoins spécifiques de l'élève et adapté à ses capacités. Le savoir faire d'abord, le savoir ensuite.

Figure 3. Changes in Immersion Materials and Approaches

Adapted from: Weaton Curriculum Document #1, p.18.

The Weaton Board also has a document (Weaton Board Curriculum Document #2) for evaluation of writing at the French immersion grade six level. It presents quantitative correction scales to be used for grading children's written work. In addition, the document provides a number of composition tests with corresponding quantitative evaluation scales. Despite the fact that immersion teachers in the Weaton Board have at their disposal the two above-mentioned local curriculum documents, teachers at Manor school explained to me that they must nevertheless locate and modify materials for daily use in their classrooms. While there is a wealth of French children's literature and French-language instructional materials in Quebec, these are generally written for native francophones and the language level is above the level of immersion students. Materials at a more basic level are usually not suitable for the interests of ten-to-twelve-year-old children in middle immersion programs. The teachers in this study claim that specifically appropriate children's literature, resource books and novels are lacking. In fact, I observed that the school library has only two bookcases with French books.

Olson and Burns (1984) have documented that the lack of appropriate materials is a common complaint of immersion teachers. In response, an increasing amount of contemporary materials specifically designed for immersion students is now becoming available on the market. But many of these are produced outside Quebec, which explains why some teachers in this study report using French materials imported from other provinces.

Regarding English Language Instruction, the Weaton Board's curriculum guide for English (Weaton Board Curriculum Document #3) supports a "Whole

Language" approach to English Language Arts instruction as defined in the Ministry's official program for English (The Elementary School Curriculum: English Language Arts I-VI, Quebec , 1983). The board's curriculum guide (Weaton Board Curriculum Document #3) for English Language Arts cites the Ministry program in defining its orientation to language instruction as:

> teaching the language arts in relation to the growth of the individual and in the context of social situations. Listening, speaking, reading and writing must be seen in the contexts of one another and must occur in situations which are meaningful and functional to the children. (p. 3)

The school board is committed to implementing a "Whole Language" approach in English-language programs in its schools.[3]

The School

Manor school is located on a fairly quiet street facing a row of well-kept bungalows. Behind the school is a ten-storey apartment building. The school is flanked on two sides by a block-long city park. There is no fence between the asphalt schoolyard and the lawns of the park so that students have easy access to the park's large play structures during recess breaks.

The school is a one-storey, red brick building with the school's name and school board logo brightly displayed above the main entrance. A floor plan of Manor school is provided in Appendix B. The school is designed in a T-structure typical of many elementary schools. The main entrance opens into a hall with the central school offices to the immediate right and the gymnasium to the immediate left.

Manor is a dual-track school with an English stream and a French immersion stream. The grade level groupings and class sizes are given in Table 3. There are five French immersion classes and ten English classes in the school, and although there are fewer immersion classes, they account for one-third of the total school population. The English grades range from kindergarten to grade six and the class sizes tend to be smaller than twenty students.

Table 3

Grade-level Organization of Manor School

English Stream

Grade Level	Class Size
Kindergarten	19 (am)
	17 (pm)
Kindergarten	15
Family Grouping (Grades 1,2,3)	19
Grade 1	19
Grade 1	19
Grade 2	23
Grade 2/3	19
Grade 3	25
Grade 3/4	20
Grade 5/6	16
	Total: 211

French Immersion Stream

Grade Level	Class Size
Grade 4	27
Grade 4/5	22
Grade 5	25
Grade 5/6	23
Grade 6	24
	Total: 121

Total School Population: 332

While the student population is composed mostly of anglophone children, there is a small number of children of Japanese and Finnish origin whose

parents work for foreign-owned companies located near the school. These students generally attend the school for only a few years until their parents are transferred elsewhere. They are usually placed in English classes yet they are considered to be English second language students.

The parents of students in the school are regarded as having high expectations for their children's education and they participate in the school. The staff's perceptions of parents are indicated by the following excerpts from an interview with the principal:

> "The Home and School and School Committees are both very active groups. We have a ** a large number of volunteers **. If they're not ah ** comfortable with what we're doing here they're certainly not the kind of ** this group would not sit back and go along with it. They would ask some questions.
>
> (Open-ended Interview, 88/01/18)

On a number of occasions I observed mothers either preparing teaching materials or baking with small groups of children in the staff room. I also observed children and mothers interacting in the lunch program. Four mothers work in the lunch program with sixty participating children (all other students go home during the 90 minute lunch break). Overall, a high level of parental involvement is evident in this school.

The French Immersion Class

The grade 5/6 French immersion class is composed of five boys and three girls in grade 5, plus seven boys and seven girls in grade 6 for a total class size of 23 students. The timetable for the class is provided in Figure 4.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:45 9:15	English	Histoire	English	Maths	English
9:15 9:45		Soc. Studies			
9:45 10:15	Épellation	Gr. 6 Phys.Ed. Gr. 5 Sci.hum.	Français	Library	Dictée
			RECESS		
10:30 11:00	Arts	English	Maths	English	Phys. Ed.
11:00 11:30					
			LUNCH		
1:00 1:30	Maths	Français	Français	Français	Maths
1:30 2:00	Français écrit	Drama	Drama		
2:00 2:30	Français	Maths	Français	Sciences nat.	Sciences hum.
2:30 3:00	Gr. 5 Phys.Ed. Gr. 6 Sci.Nat.				

Figure 4. French Immersion Grade 5/6 Timetable

Throughout the study I observed that the students in this class are generally cooperative, they respond to teachers' directives, and their interactions with peers and other members of the school are usually positive. Although a grade 5 French immersion class is located near this one, the other grade 6 French immersion class is in another wing of the school, as is the English grade 5/6. Neverthless, the children participating in this study report having friends in the two other senior French immersion classes as well as in the English grade 5/6 class, so that friendships do not appear to be divided along language streams in this school. This may be due to the fact that students in the school were together in the regular English stream before entering grade 4 and friendships were formed at that time. This is different from dual-track schools with Early French Immersion programs where students are separated into two streams from kindergarten on, and where children tend to form friendships primarily within their own language stream.

The Contexts for Writing

In the beginning of the school year, the principal arranged for a group of eight children who were deemed of high ability to leave their regular grade 5/6 French immersion class for one hour per week, and participate in enriched French language lessons with Maryse and Mme Cousineau. The plan was to then reverse the arrangement in mid-year and provide remedial instruction for a group of students from the same class who were experiencing difficulty in French. This was not pursued, however, because Maryse was appointed a French immersion consultant for the board during the course of this study. When she left the school in December, Mme

Cousineau continued working with the same group of children and a second group was never selected.

For these eight children writing instruction is provided in three separate settings, and over the year they are taught by four different adults. One setting for writing is the enriched French lessons with Maryse and Mme Cousineau. A second setting for writing instruction is the regular French immersion class with the teacher, Ruth, and all the other children in the grade 5/6 class. A third setting for writing is the daily English Language Arts lessons with Cheryl.

The writing lessons are experienced by the participating children in relation to a background of overlapping historical, socioliguistic and educational contexts. At a local level, the lessons are embedded in three separate settings for language instruction within the French immersion program of Manor school. At a broader level, the French immersion program is embedded in Quebec education and in Canadian immersion education. Features of all levels of the surrounding environment define how language is taught and learned in the writing lessons in this study.

CHAPTER III

THE WRITING LESSONS

The findings of the study emerge from the fieldnotes, the samples of the children's writing, and transcripts of open-ended interviews with the participants. I describe the findings according to three categories: the content and process of writing lessons, the teachers' beliefs, and the children's perceptions. In this chapter, I present an interpretive summary of the findings relating to the French and English writing lessons.

Lessons in the Regular French Immersion Class

In Ruth's classroom, it appears that she and the children pay little attention to classroom decor; they haphazardly leave textbooks, notebooks and belongings scattered in various places around the room. Ruth displays the children's artwork on bulletin boards that she changes infrequently, and she occasionally leaves ongoing artwork exhibited on a shelf or a table. There is no classroom library and there are no learning centres in the room. Floorplans of this room and of the two other classrooms are provided in Appendix C.

Classroom Processes

Writing lessons generally feature whole-class instruction during which Ruth moves around the room and children sit at their desks. The following typical episode illustrates the focus of instruction and the types of classroom processes that prevail in the regular French immersion class:

Narrative Segment 2: The Regular French Immersion Class

Ruth is standing at the front of the room and the children are sitting at their desks. She asks them to describe a happy event. A few children volunteer personal accounts of happy events. Ruth then gives the following task: The children are to write about a happy event, they are to use verbs in the past tense, they must vary their sentence structures and they should take care to write neatly. Some children begin writing on loose-leaf papers that they have taken out of their desks. The others chat or listen to Ruth who answers clarification questions. Then Ruth moves around the room and helps individual children with problems with spellings, translations and verbs. The class is fairly quiet now as most children are busy writing. Some ask each other questions concerning translations or spellings. One girl whispers to another in English: "What's mischievous?" Her neighbour looks up the word mischief in her English-French dictionary and says: "Malicieux".

(Fieldnotes, 88/01/04)

The lessons can be categorized into a four-part sequence: First, Ruth presents the subject of the lesson and she explains the task at hand; second, she allows for a brief question-and-answer period in which children clarify what is expected of them; third, Ruth usually has the children work alone on seatwork; and finally, she concludes the lesson by addressing the whole group again to correct the assignment together or she signals an end to the lesson by asking children to submit their work to her.

The writing lessons normally consist of activities that require some form of language manipulation like practicing mechanics such as verb conjugation, spelling, grammar, vocabulary, or reviewing conventions such as the format for writing a letter. Sometimes Ruth has the children compose stories or short texts based on a topic that she has selected

beforehand. She puts time and effort into preparing these lessons, drawing from school board documents for inspiration to stage a "mise en situation" -- that is, some type of lead-up to writing such as providing a reading text or engaging in a discussion.

During two of my visits, Ruth asks the children to work in collaboration with peers. In one lesson the children work in pairs to discuss a paragraph on a ditto sheet, and in a second lesson Ruth forms groups of three, directing the children to read and discuss stories they have written. In this lesson, Ruth explains that she wants the children to "read their stories to each other and correct the grammar" before they write a "good copy" to submit to her (Fieldnotes, 88/02/08).

When teaching writing, Ruth focuses on ensuring that the children spell words correctly, that they use the proper form of the verbs and follow the grammar rules they are studying. Ruth has the children engage in structured, carefully-controlled writing sessions.

The Teacher's Response to Children's Writing

As the children write, Ruth usually moves from one individual to another, responding to the form of their written texts with comments such as the following:

1. "Maintenant tu dois regarder chaque mot. Demande-toi: Est-ce que l'épellation est correcte? Est-ce qu'il y a un point et une majuscule? Est-ce que tout est au passé-composé?" ** "Regarde Joseph, tu as écrit 'a allé', est-ce que c'est 'a allé' ou 'est allé'?" (Fieldnotes, 88/01/04).

2. " 'J'ai entendu que tu as visité', -qu'est-ce qui manque?" (The student adds an accent to the last letter of "visité".) (Fieldnotes, 88/02/08).

When Ruth reads her students' finished compositions, it is to grade them according to a scale as indicated in the following fieldnote excerpt:

> Narrative Segment 3: Ruth's correction scale
>
> Ruth showed me how she used a scale to guide her in correcting the "happy story" compositions. This scale is an adaptation of a similar one presented in the School Board Document #2 for evaluation of writing in French immersion:
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | histoire et vocabulaire | /10 |
> | passé-composé | /5 |
> | paragraphes | /3 |
> | ponctuation | /2 |
> | accord des adjectifs et verbes | /5 |
> | total: | /25 points |
>
> (Fieldnotes, 88/01/11)

Ruth underlines mispelled words in pencil while she reads the written productions and she writes the standard form. She writes summary statements on written productions such as "Bravo!", "Belle Écriture!" or "Très Bien!" One of the children, Erica, summarizes how Ruth corrects stories: "Well, sometimes Mme S. (Ruth) writes two mistakes, um ** bravo, and then she shows you how many mistakes you have ** she ** concentrates more on ** how we spell it and stuff like that." (Open-ended Group Interview, 88/02/19).

The Written Productions

In early January, the participating teachers agreed to collect the five children's written productions. Maryse and Mme Cousineau set aside the writing folders and samples of stencils from the enriched language lessons. Cheryl provided the children's English binders and their writing that was posted on walls or placed in displays. Ruth collected the children's writing in a folder. In March 1988, I photocopied all the writing samples and returned the originals to the teachers.

When I collected the folder from Ruth's French immersion class, she apologized for the fact that it contained few samples, saying that she forgot to keep the children's writing and that the contents of the folder did not represent all the writing that was produced in her class. The folder contained three thank-you letters to Maryse for her participation in a weekend outing ten pages of sentences used to practice conjugating verbs, weekly spelling words, and photocopied comic strips under which the children had added their own scripts. The folder also included ten stories, some of which were based on open-topics and others which were inspired by predetermined topics. The teacher's handwriting appeared on all the written productions, either to cross out errors in spellings or grammar and include the correct form next to the error, or to indicate that a point was lost due to a mistake, e.g., in one of Bill's stories next to the words "Michel a réponds" the teacher wrote "-1/2". In addition, the teacher's handwritten correction scale appeared at the end of the stories.

The three letters represented one occasion when the children wrote for a real audience. Half of the remaining samples were exercises in which the children practiced spelling and verb conjugation. In the other samples, the children composed stories either by following the teacher's guidelines or by composing freely according to their imagination. All the samples were corrected by the teacher.

The samples suggested that the children produced structured writing assignments in the regular French immersion class. The stories were short, averaging one page in length, and most reflected the teacher's choice of topic. To quote Alison's comment, the samples indicated that there was "little room for imagination" in the type of writing that the children were required to produce. A writing sample collected from the regular French immersion class is provided in Appendix D.

In summary, most of the writing lessons in the regular French immersion class featured structured activities such as stencil completion and grammar exercises. In story-writing, the teacher usually assigned writing topics for which she gave specific directions; her emphasis in reading the children's writing was on correcting conventions. The children were asked to follow directions to produce pre-determined texts or answers to exercise questions. The observations and the interviews did not reveal evidence of participants responding to the content or clarifying meanings in their writing.

The Enriched French Language Lessons

Lessons with Maryse

The enriched French language lessons are generally held in a room designated as the resource centre. This room is used partly as a storage area for old textbooks and teaching supplies, but it is well-organized, has tables, desks and chairs, and is decorated with some French posters. The French resource teacher, Maryse, shares this space with two other teachers so that they each have their own desks and filing cabinets in the room. Until Christmas, Maryse and the parent volunteer, Mme Cousineau, worked together with the children during the lessons. Under Maryse's supervision lessons focus almost entirely on story-writing.

Classroom Processes

There are eight children in the enriched language lessons. As this is a small group, the lessons take place in an informal atmosphere. Maryse usually begins by greeting the group as a whole and giving instructions. Then the children begin writing while Maryse and Mme Cousineau move about the room and work with individuals. The children move around freely, sit alone or with friends and chat with neighbours, yet they nonetheless spend most of their time writing. At the end of the one-hour period, the children put their stories in their own writing folders that they deposit on Maryse's desk before leaving.

The children generally work at their own pace, developing a story over a number of lessons if necessary. Occasionally, Maryse gives the children a time-limit in which to write a story on a specific topic. For example, she asks the children to write a Halloween story in one half-hour and read it to the others at the end of the lesson (Fieldnotes 88/10/26). Usually, however, Maryse allows the children to write about any topic they are interested in. The following typical episode illustrates how these writing lessons proceed:

Narrative Segment 4: The Enriched French Language Lessons

> The children are all seated and writing. Maryse and Mme Cousineau move from child to child, pausing briefly to help with translations, French expressions, grammar and spelling. Linda reads her incomplete first draft of a story to Maryse. Maryse interrupts her reading to ask questions such as: "Est-ce qu'on dit le boîte ou la boîte?" When Linda finishes reading, Maryse goes over her story with pencil in hand to correct the grammar, the spelling and the punctuation.
>
> (Fieldnotes, 88/11/23)

Although most often the children write individually, at different times some collaborate to write a story. Maryse also encourages the children to read their stories in-progress to the group. Occasionally the children help each other by suggesting ways to continue writing a story:

Narrative Segment 5: Collaboration in Writing Lessons

> Maryse asks two girls if they want to read their story to the group. She explains to the others: "Elles sont en panne. Elles ont besoin d'idées." The two children take turns reading their collaborative story to the group. When they've finished reading, one says: "On a besoin d'idées." A number of children give them suggestions as to how to continue the plot of the story.
>
> (Fieldnotes, 88/11/23)

Despite the fact that the stories are generally free-topic, Maryse gives specific instructions as to what she is looking for in the stories. The following segment illustrates what Maryse emphasizes in writing:

Narrative Segment 6: Maryse's Instructions for Writing

> The children walk into the resource room, take their story files from Maryse's desk, sit down at a desk or table and begin writing. Maryse stands up near the blackboard at the back of the room to address the group: "On va seulement corriger l'orthographe et non le sens des phrases. . . . Je ne veux pas qu'on passe notre temps à copier et à recopier. . . . Gardez la page assez propre. Vous avez le choix pour la deuxième histoire, ça va être un petit livret ou une histoire où l'on s'engage à suivre un format, par exemple un contrat, un mystère, une histoire avec un certain nombre de personnes. Tu dois faire une description bien précise de ce que tu veux faire et après l'on vérifie si tu as fait cela."
>
> (Fieldnotes, 87/10/05)

In this case Maryse clearly states that for the sake of expediency, she and Mme Cousineau will look at spellings, not at meanings, when reading the stories. The emphasis is on getting a product finished in order to move on to the next story. Maryse's instructional focus is to have the children keep specific things in mind while writing, such as "mettez beaucoup d'émotion dans vos histoires et n'oubliez pas les paragraphes", or "mettez trois à six adjectifs dans vos histoires".

The Teachers' Responses to Children's Writing

When they read the children's work, Maryse and Mme Cousineau do not focus on correcting all the errors; they let many slip by without comment. Yet their responses are mostly directed to the form of language and rarely

to the content of the stories. The two adults respond to the grammar, the spelling, the vocabulary and the punctuation in children's stories with remarks like:

> "C'est l'imparfait? Quand tu commences avec l'imparfait, c'est pas mieux de continuer avec l'imparfait?"
> "J'aime ton histoire! Le vocabulaire est très riche. . . . Maintenant relis-la seule pour trouver les fautes d'orthographe."
> "Oh attends, ta phrase est trop longue."
> "Je vais relire ton histoire et je vais souligner cinq mots que tu peux corriger toi-même."
>
> (Fieldnotes, 87/09/28)

Both Maryse and Mme Cousineau ask the children to clarify what they mean to express in their stories when the meanings are unclear because of awkward translations of English terms. Otherwise, I observe few responses to the content of what the children write except for comments such as: "Oh, c'est bon!" or "Le titre est assez éloquent!" Once, after reading a child's story Maryse asks: "Qu'est-ce qu'il y a dans le paquet?" This is the only time I observed one of the two adults asking a question that would lead the writer to expand on what is written.

The Written Productions

The writing samples collected from lessons with Maryse consisted of seventeen stories that covered different topics and varied in length from one to six pages. Some stories contained a "contract" page in which a commitment was made by the author to introduce a certain number of characters in the story and include a specific number of adjectives and verbs. Maryse's and Mme Cousineau's handwriting appeared on the stories

where they had written the correct form near errors in the children's writing. The samples suggested that in lessons with Maryse, the children produced writing that was inspired from the children's own selection of topics yet there were constraints placed on the content of the stories. A sample of writing produced in the enriched language lessons with Maryse is given in Appendix E as "Writing Sample A".

Lessons with Mme Cousineau

Following the Christmas holidays, Maryse left the school and the children worked alone with Mme Cousineau. The enriched French language group then met either in the lunchroom or in the resource centre when it was not occupied by another teacher. Under Mme Cousineau's direction the lessons no longer involve story-writing but focus rather on a systematic instruction of vocabulary and grammar.

Classroom Processes

The following typical episode illustrates how the enriched language lessons with Mme Cousineau proceed:

> Narrative Segment 7: Typical Lesson with Mme Cousineau
>
> Mme Cousineau begins the lesson with a sharing time about what the children did over the weekend. Each child speaks for a couple of minutes. Then she has the children find words from a long nonsense word written on the board. Following this, Mme Cousineau gives a brief explanation of the three groups of French verbs, "les verbes en 'er', 'ir' et 're'". Next they take turns reading their answers to questions on a homework stencil that is a copy of a page from Alain De Bray's grammar book. When they've finished reviewing the homework, Mme

Cousineau gives a stencil like the one above as homework for next week. This concludes the lesson.

(Fieldnotes, 88/01/18)

Lessons with Mme Cousineau feature oral presentations, group work on grammar exercises, corrections of homework stencils and short presentations of grammar rules. The children do not keep their completed stencils in any specific place and they are usually discarded after the lesson. Essentially, these are drill-and-practice sessions with a focus entirely on technique and memorization of facts.

The Written Productions

The writing samples collected from the enriched French language lessons with Mme Cousineau included four pages of grammar dittos. These dittos were copies of pages from Alain De Bray's Petit code grammatical and they were all traditional structural exercises in grammar or vocabulary drills. The writing samples suggested that the children wrote only unrelated brief sentences or single words in lessons with Mme Cousineau. A ditto sheet given in the lessons with Mme Cousineau is provided in Appendix F as "Writing Sample B".

Two contrasting pictures emerge from the enriched second-language lessons. The first picture is of a four-month period when children write stories with Maryse. Maryse appears to be incorporating current approaches to teaching writing with traditional approaches. According to the current approaches, she has children write for longer periods of time, keep their writing in folders and she responds to their writing on an ongoing basis. In

keeping with the traditional approaches, her focus in responding to writing is a product-oriented concern with error-correction. A second picture of the enriched French language lessons is of a later six-month period when the children work with Mme Cousineau. They no longer write stories but instead they review grammar rules and practice speaking.

The English Language Arts Lessons

The children have a daily one-hour period of English Language Arts given by Cheryl in her own classroom. Cheryl pays special attention to every detail of classroom decor, frequently changing bulletin boards and displays that exhibit the children's writing. She has organized a number of attractive language centres that are identified by signs inviting the children to examine the displayed materials. The classroom library is composed of over five hundred books that are shelved under subject headings.

Classroom Processes

As part of her language program, Cheryl engages the children in drama, individual and team research projects, frequent silent reading of library books, interviews with peers and people in the community and numerous writing experiences. Writing includes a variety of activities such as filling-in stencils on vocabulary or word games, composing sentences using weekly spelling words, answering reading questions, writing books reports, writing-up interviews, filling-in summary charts, writing texts for research projects, and directed or free-topic story writing. A typical directed writing lesson is illustrated in the following episode:

Narrative Segment 8: Directed Writing in English Language Arts

The children have just spent a weekend at Ruth's place in the country. Cheryl wants them to brainstorm about the experience. She asks a number of questions such as: "How did you feel? Then what? What else?" She summarizes each response in one word that she writes on large experience paper. She says: "What I would like you to do is write about it and we're going to put it on a frieze opposite your (classroom) door. I don't want and then, and then, and then. It would take too long to write all about it, so I suggest that you pick certain events that you'll describe. Write on loose-leaf. Now, your name and picture will go with it. Everyone will be reading it. I want you to write 'we', it's not a personal account. Absolutely no Olympic writing today. We are taking time out to write our experiences together." Most children begin writing individually. Some chat about their experiences over the weekend. Cheryl moves about the room and whispers to individuals. While correcting one student's work, she puts pencilled dots under mispelled words. She asks him: "Why don't you include a concluding sentence to sum it all up?" As the English period ends, Cheryl says: "It's to be completed tonight for tomorrow. We'll put it on sheets to put on a cardboard." The lesson ends as the children trickle out of the class.

(Fieldnotes, 88/02/08)

Cheryl generally begins lessons by addressing the class and giving instructions. She gives a brief whole-group lesson on some aspect of writing which relates to the task at hand such as reviewing common salutations before she has the children write letters. Then the children often write alone at their desks. Sometimes Cheryl encourages the children to work in pairs on collabortive projects when they're doing research. At other times, she lets the children select their own language activity such as writing a story individually or in pairs, finishing a project, reading a novel, or preparing a book report. The children usually complete unfinished work during these periods. At such times, the children are free to chat, move

around the room at will and explore the learning centres. The children leave their completed assignments in a bin on Cheryl's desk. Cheryl encourages the children to have their peers read over their stories before submitting them to her. She either returns the corrected writing to the children to insert in their English binders or she displays it around the classroom and in the halls.

She also makes clear her expectations as to what the children should keep in mind while writing as illustrated in the following segment of an free-topic writing lesson:

Narrative Segment 9: Free-topic Writing in English Class

Cheryl directs the children to continue working on the free-topic stories they began yesterday. Speaking to the whole class, she says: "Do you have a storyline? Is there a dialogue? Remember to separate quotations from the story with quotation marks. Do you have paragraphs? Is your story a biography, a mystery, science fiction? Remember there's no need to use the word "said", there are plenty of other words to use unless you absolutely have to use said. You can have someone else reread your story for you." Most children begin working. Four boys move over to the carpet and sit on cushions under a table to read each other's stories. Bill reading his friend's story asks: "Who said that?" The other boy answers: "Danny said that." Bill: "But you have to say who said it." Erica and Linda are writing at their desks. Erica asks Linda: "What would you say about a box that's shaking?" Linda answers: "It's moving." Erica: "I already said that. Listen." Erica reads the last paragraph of her story. After suggesting a number of words, Linda tells Erica to ask Cheryl, which she does. Denise is busy re-writing her horror story. She explains to me that two other girls and Cheryl have read the draft of her story: "Both girls told me it's good. Cheryl thinks it's revolting. They corrected the grammar mostly, the words. . . . They asked me about this sentence, so I put 'the door' back in because I had taken it out."

(Fieldnotes, 88/03/02)

Cheryl alternates between controlling the children's writing and giving them the freedom to choose their activity. Overall, she provides opportunities to engage in a wide variety of language experiences in English class.

The Teacher's Response to Children's Writing

Most of the comments Cheryl makes when she reads over stories relate to the form of language with special emphasis on vocabulary and style. For example, after reading one of Bill's stories Cheryl exclaims: "Sounds neat 'disillusionment' in there! Well done! I think perhaps the only thing you could do is make two paragraphs." Yet there are occasions when Cheryl responds to the messages communicated in stories by making comments like "That's revolting!" or "I think that bobsledding is just fantastic! Don't you?" (Fieldnotes, 88/03/02). Other than these types of summary statements, I do not observe Cheryl encouraging the children to expand on ideas or clarify meanings when she reads their writing.

Cheryl corrects the children's finished stories by using a correction scale similar to the one Ruth uses. The following is the scale she used to grade one of their stories:

Introduction:	/5
Main idea:	/5
Conclusion:	/5
Vocabulary:	/5
Sentence Construction:	/5
Total:	/25 points

(Fieldnotes, 88/02/15)

The Written Productions

The writing samples collected from the English class included research projects, pages of answers to questions on readings, lists of sentences using the week's spelling words, summaries of readings, personal reactions to the Olympics, folktale summaries, invented tall tales, book reports, language dittos, interview reports, one page of language definitions, journal entries, comic strips with pictures, texts written and designed by the children and twenty-seven stories that ranged from one to thirteen pages. Some stories were written on a word processor while the others were hand-written. The teacher's handwriting appeared where she made corrections on the lists of sentences, the answers to questions and the ditto sheets. She had underlined mispelled words in the stories and in some places she had written in the correct form. Her comments and evaluation scales were written on small pieces of paper stuck onto all other assignments except the journal entries where she wrote personal responses to the children. A writing sample from the English Language Arts class is provided in Appendix G.

The samples indicated that the children did most of their school writing in their English class. In all, 321 pages of written text were collected from this class which represented a greater amount of writing than the sum total of the samples collected from the settings for French writing lessons. Some of the samples reflected teacher-control over the content of writing which allowed for only brief written responses. Other samples, such as the stories, the tall tales, the interviews, the journal entries and the research projects reflected that the children were allowed to use their imagination

and explore different forms of language.

In summary, Cheryl provides occasions for a variety of language experiences, ranging from highly structured stencil work to free-topic story writing. She alternates between directing children's activities to allowing them liberty of choice. Cheryl generally acts as an evaluator when reading children's texts and she responds primarly to the form of written productions.

Comparative Summary of the Writing Lessons

In the regular French immersion class, Ruth maintains control of the content of children's writing. She provides opportunities to practice language skills in short, fragmented activities. In the enriched language lessons, Maryse gives the children an opportunity to write stories over longer periods of time than is permitted in the regular French immersion class and she lets the children have a greater degree of freedom to select their own topics for writing. Mme Cousineau, on the other hand, does not have children compose texts, instead she has them talk about or work on structured exercises to practice language conventions. Cheryl offers the most varied possibilities for language experiences with more time and freedom to select and sustain activities. As with the other three adults though, Cheryl emphasizes form and conformity to language conventions when she reads children's writing. Ruth, Maryse and Cheryl make some attempts to foster cooperation in writing by having children engage in collaborative discussions wherein they revise their writing or offer each other suggestions to compose stories. Nevertheless, the overall focus in

these discussions is on correcting conventions.

Thus the major finding relating to the writing lessons is that despite the fact that the teachers rely on French and English documents that are based on different assumptions, the French and English lessons do not differ according to the language of instruction. Differences do not emerge along language lines but instead they emerge from one setting to the other. The lessons in each setting differ in the amount of time allotted to composing and in the variety of writing experiences provided. The writing lessons in both languages are similar in that the instructional focus is on the form of language in the written product and the teachers respond to writing as evaluators. In the writing lessons in both languages then, the ultimate purpose of writing is to perfect technique.

CHAPTER IV

PARTICIPANT BELIEFS AND PERCEPTIONS

The participants talked about their beliefs about writing and perceptions of writing instruction during our conversations and in open-ended interviews. I interviewed each of the teachers individually and I interviewed the children as a group. I assumed that the children would feel freer to express their views in a setting where they had the support of their peers, than in an interview alone, where they might feel pressure to please the adult interviewer In this chapter, I provide interpretive summaries of the participants' perceptions and beliefs, drawing from excerpts of the fieldnotes and segments of the interviews transcripts which reflect their typical responses.

The Teachers' Beliefs About Writing and Writing Instruction

Ruth: Teacher of the Regular French Immersion Class

Ruth relates that she teaches writing by having children engage in activities that she describes in such terms as, "taking a verb and an adverb and having children build a sentence around it", "reading stories and having them answer questions to the stories", journal writing on the weekends, composing as a group on chart paper, "writing things that they expect of me and things that I expect of them", writing short book reports, and writing résumés of newspaper articles. Ruth explains that her sources of inspiration for teaching are "other teachers", "some of the books that we're

given from the board", and "conferences when I can". She says that she uses whatever resources are available, referring to her scramble for materials and help as "beg, borrow and steal" (Open-ended interview, 88/02/29).

Ruth describes writing and the teaching of writing in the following way:

> Interviewer: . . . and how do children naturally learn to write?
>
> Ruth: Um ** by ** wanting to express their feelings . . . another way of ** expressing what they're thinking and telling stories and telling more about themselves . . .
>
> Interviewer. What should the teacher do when teaching writing?
>
> Ruth: Ah. . . I think to give, by giving them things that they know to start, and then letting them build from the known, not. . . to just jump them into a story. I think that's too difficult, at the beginning, just to you know ** write a story. I mean you have to guide them more than that in in French, whereas sometimes in English they'll go ** only a few children will do that in in French on their own. Ah. . . I guess to start them with the unknown and have them do it, with the known and have them build from that.
>
> (Open-ended interview, 88/02/29)

Although she describes writing in expressive and interactive terms, Ruth perceives the teaching of writing as a process of gradually allowing children to write. She believes that if teachers let children write on their own in a second language, the task may overwhelm them. Ruth's views are consistent with her teaching practices in the regular French immersion class where she limits and carefully controls the children's writing experiences.

Maryse: Teacher of the Enriched French Language Lessons

Maryse's descriptions of writing and the teaching of writing are also in keeping with her classroom practice as illustrated in the following interview segments:

> Interviewer: J'aimerai . . . que tu me parles de l'apprentissage de l'habileté à écrire en général. Qu'est-ce que c'est?
>
> Maryse: . . . c'est l'habileté à ** devenir consigne. ** Etre capable de mettre ses euh ** ses idées sur papier. Donc ça veut dire euh ** être capable . . . d'organiser ce qu'on a dans . . . sa tête. J'pense qu'avant tout c'est ça, c'est une ** habileté à s'organiser.
>
> Interviewer: Comment est-ce que l'on enseigne l'habileté à écrire?
>
> Maryse: Mais je pense qu'on enseigne à écrire, en donnant . . . une liberté de choix. . . . Alors c'est toujours un exercice d'essaie et erreur finalement. C'est sûr que j'ai pas je veux pas la perfection pour commencer là. . . .
>
> Interviewer: Est-ce qu'il y a quelque chose qu'on ne devrait pas faire?
>
> Maryse: Oui, commencer euh ** par . . . mettre trop d'emphase sur la grammaire. Ou l'enseigner de façon euh ** traditionelle-là euh ** je-tu-il-nous-vous-ils. Je pense qu'il faut donner . . . les directives très simples aux enfants pour commencer ** mais exiger ces choses-là. Par exemple euh ** avec "des" puis avec "les" on met un "s" et de ça ne pas démendre de ça puis pas en laisser sauver un . . . ce qu'il faudrait pas faire non plus . . . c'est trop d'exercices structuraux. ** Faut en faire un peu, mais je pense qu'on peut toujours garder une ** une moyenne là. . . .
>
> (Open-ended interview, 88/01/25)

Maryse defines writing as a cognitive and motor activity that involves

organizing ideas, putting thoughts on paper and conforming to conventions. Her perceptions of teaching can be seen to involve two contrasting conceptions: one portrays teachers allowing for trial-and-error exploration, and the other has teachers transmitting knowledge and focusing on conformity to conventions. She believes that the teacher must give children freedom to choose what they write about and the teacher should teach grammar without giving an abundance of structured excercises. Her views are reflected in the enriched French language lessons where the children generally select their own topics for writing and there is no systematic instruction of grammar, although the teachers do focus on grammar and other conventions when reading the stories.

Maryse explains that she draws her inspiration for teaching writing from the Weaton Board Curriculum Document #1 for the French immersion program:

> Maryse: Si tu veux je suis les objectifs de (Document #1). . . . Dans ce sens-là je vais je vais utiliser la ** la démarche à suivre par exemple euh ** on est supposé euh ** avoir des objectifs précis pour l'écriture, comme à la fin de ** la quatrième année l'enfant sera capable de décrire une personne, un animal, une chose. Alors dans ce sens-là je vais suivre cette démarche-là . . . je suis les objectifs de la commission scolaire.
>
> (Open-ended Interview, 88/01/ 25)

Maryse was a member of the committee that wrote the curriculum document. She has kept informed about current approaches in second language pedagogy, she is curious about trends that she observes in English language teaching, and she has read Donald Graves' book Writing: Teachers

and Children at Work. Maryse is sensitive to what she refers to as "les nouvelles tendances" that is, "l'approche communicative" supported in the French immersion curriculum (Weaton Board Document #1) and the "Whole Language" approach espoused for English Language Arts (Weaton Board Document #3). Maryse tries to make links between them. Her impression at the time of this study is that "Whole Language puis l'approche communicative c'est pas mal la même chose" (Open-ended Interview, 88/01/25). It appears that Maryse is trying to reconcile the differences she has seen in the French and English documents and observed in the teaching practices in both streams of her school.

Mme Cousineau: Parent-volunteer in the Enriched French Language Lessons

Mme Cousineau describes writing and the teaching of writing in technical terms as illustrated in the following interview segments:

> Interviewer: Comment est-ce que l'enfant apprend à écrire?
>
> Mme Cousineau: Apprendre à écrire ** correctement ** c'est là que je vois . . . la difficulté avec . . . l'immersion française. . . Ça devrait se faire graduellement à partir de la première année. L'enfant commence . . . en première année ici, ils ont quand même une heure de français par jour ** langue seconde. Apprendre les deux, un peu ** apprendre l'oral, qui est sûrement plus important. . . . en même temps commencer à apprendre . . . l'écrit. Mais si en langue seconde, s'ils apprennent à parler, puis ils apprennent au fur et à mesure, qu'ils mettent une règle de grammaire, ils commencent à faire l'accord des verbes, ils le sauraient en quatrième année. . . .

Interviewer: Alors, quel est le rôle du professeur . . . ?

Mme Cousineau: Le rôle ** c'est de tout enseigner à l'enfant à partir ** que ce soit graduellement à partir de la première année. Qu'ils apprennent à construire des phrases correctement. En même temps il doit . . . enseigner (inaudible) à enrichir le vocabulaire, il doit enseigner les règles de grammaire, l'accord des verbes, l'accord des adjectifs. Moi je pense que ** si ** la première année ferait enfin ** une partie du programme ** les deuxièmes continuent et puis euh ** rendu en quatrième et cinquième ils vont être beaucoup plus prêts.

(Open-ended interview, 88/02/19)

Mme Cousineau sees a problem with writing instruction in the middle French immersion program; she believes that the children have to learn all the grammar rules in grade five when they begin writing. As a solution, she proposes that children be taught grammar rules systematically as of grade one in order to be ready to write in grade five. According to Mme Cousineau, the teacher's role is to teach all the rules of writing. She clearly views learning as a mastery of skills accomplished through deduction and teaching as a systematic transmission of knowledge about technique.

Mme Cousineau explains where she draws her inspiration for her views of teaching writing. A few years ago her daughter's French immersion teacher sent home Alain De Bray's Petit Code Grammatical for the child to work on in the evenings with her mother. Mme Cousineau is impressed with the book's systematic presentation of grammar and she believes that it provides excellent teaching material for the immersion program. She worries that children in immersion programs make a number of errors in reading and writing that remain uncorrected by teachers and consequently "l'enfant

apprend à écrire avec . . . un nombre de fautes . . . dans ** chaque classe" (Open-ended Interview 88/02/19). Thus, her use of Alain De Bray's book is an attempt to remedy the situation by providing a sound base in grammar rules.

Cheryl: Teacher of English Language Arts

Cheryl describes writing and its teaching in the following manner:

Interviewer: Can you tell me what writing is ** in general?

Cheryl: . . This is a ** combination of thoughts that . . . these children have developed from every aspect of living, both from their reading ** the discussions in class, their experiences at home. . .

Interviewer: How do children naturally learn to write?

Cheryl: Well of course this is a process which begins way back in kindergarten . . . and is encouraged whenever, wherever. . . . as they get through the school system of course, they ah ** are required to put . . . certain restrictions on it, in that there are ** certain writing rules and regulations. . . . While some do pick up, without being taught . . . it still has to be shown ** on the whole I think. . . .

Interviewer How do children learn to write in school?

Cheryl: . . . it's sort of an osmosis pro process, I think . . . the teacher cleverly guides them into the . . the certain patterns ** that one has to follow. . . . They can observe this, . . . it's already learned, they just need to be reminded.

Interviewer: . . . What is most important in writing instruction?. . .

Cheryl: Well I have this . . . pet hang-up about vocabulary. And . . . as

> far as I'm concerned, . . . good vocabulary is . . . the most important process . . . in writing. . . . I think mainly it's to surround the room with, with . . . literacy ** and vocabulary ** interesting ideas. . . . make the whole thing interesting anyway.
>
> (Open-ended interview, 88/02/29)

Cheryl views children's writing as a developmental process, as a product of their reflections on personal and collective experiences. Cheryl describes her personal bias in the teaching of writing as having a "pet hang-up about vocabulary". She also believes that it is essential for her to correct all spelling errors in the children's writing as she states: "If the word isn't underlined, they'll simply continue to mispell the word." (Open-ended interview, 88/02/29). Like Maryse, Cheryl has contrasting perceptions of teaching: On the one hand, she views teachers as restricting children's exploration of language and imparting knowlege about rules and regulations in writing, and on the other hand she sees teachers as stimulating children's interests and extending their experiences with language by providing a rich literacy environment.

Cheryl explains that she is most influenced by the Ministry of Education's English Language Arts Curriculum Guide and by the units in the Board's English Language Arts Document (Weaton Board Document #3) which she claims to follow "sometimes strictly, sometimes loosely". She says that some of her ideas for teaching writing either "come to me naturally", "come after serious thought on the subject in hand" and sometimes her ideas are based on the children's interests. (Open-ended interview, 88/02/29).

Summary of the Teachers' Beliefs

In the interviews, the teachers have more to say about their roles in the teaching of writing than about writing itself or about theories of writing. Although they briefly discuss what they believe writing is, they provide more detailed descriptions of their views of writing instruction and they easily elaborate on their teaching approaches. Other than Mme Cousineau who describes writing as a purely technical activity, the teachers define writing as a cognitive and interactive process. Yet all four adults describe the teaching of writing as an activity in which teachers impart knowledge of language rules and ensure that children's writing conforms to conventions. At the same time, both Maryse and Cheryl also view teachers as providing children with opportunities to select their own topics and explore writing.

Recall that in the enriched French language lessons, Maryse provides the children with more time to write in their second language than is commonly done in the other French immersion lessons. In English Language Arts, Cheryl also implements a varied language program and provides much opportunity to write. Both teachers view their practices as a change from the traditional teaching of writing. In Ruth's regular French immersion class and in Mme Cousineau's enriched French language lessons , both teachers adopt a linear skills-building approach to teaching writing. Ruth attempts to literally apply some suggestions put forth in the school board curriculum documents for writing in the French immersion program. Mme

Cousineau reacts to problems she sees in children's writing and relies on a grammar text, given to her by a French immersion teacher, to develop her lessons.

What emerges from the interviews is that the teachers individually interpret the curriculum materials that are available to them. And despite the fact that they develop their approaches to teaching writing on their own, all of them assume similar traditional roles as evaluators of children's writing and focus on technique in writing instruction.

The Children's Response to the Lessons

In two open-ended group interviews, the children had much to say about how writing is taught in the four settings for writing lessons. They summarized lessons in the regular French immersion class in the following way:

Interviewer: Comment est-ce qu'on vous enseigne à écrire en français?

Erica: Dictée.
[
Linda: Oui.

Interviewer: Pardon?

Erica: Dictée.

Interviewer: Oui.

Linda: Les verbes.

Erica: Ou les tests.
[
Bill: Oui.

Alison: Et les exercices.

Interviewer: Pardon?

Erica and Linda in chorus: Les exercices.

Denise: Tu dois beaucoup comprendre la grammaire et les verbes que tu écris en français. Après écrire avec une bonne écriture.
[
Erica: Oui, on doit étudier pour une semaine dix mots et un petit peu regarder tous les soirs. . . .

Linda: Elle tout le temps dit qu'est-ce que tu dois écrire.

(Open-ended Group Interview, 88/03/02)

The children describe the French writing lessons as a collection of exercises and tests used to verify their knowledge about spelling and grammar. Alison's comment reflects how the children respond to lessons involving story-writing:

Alison: In French ** in French it's difficult because . . . she gives us a subject as well, and she goes "you have to do this like this". This week she gave us a story about a wallet and a bicycle. Except that doesn't leave much to your imagination (inaudible). And I said to the teacher: "But I don't really like ** the story. I don't really get into writing a story just about a bicycle." So, she said you can change the bicycle part.

(Open-ended group interview, 88/02/19)

Alison has the confidence to express her reaction to the teacher's

suggested topic and she attempts to negotiate for more control over her writing. But Alison is an exception most of the children simply conform to the teacher's expectations even though they may have little interest in predetermined topics that lack relevance.

The following is how the children view the enriched French language lessons with Maryse:

> Alison: Je pense qu'on peut écrire plus avec Maryse et c'est plus amusant.
>
> Interviewer: Pourquoi c'est plus amusant?
>
> Bill: Pas pour moi.
> [
> Alison: Parce que tu peux avoir beaucoup de ** d'idées.
> [
> Linda: Oui.
>
> Bill: Non mais pas pour moi parce que ** tu dois faire l'histoire . . . en une demie heure.
> [
> Erica: Pas tout le temps.
>
> Bill: Oui. Parfois elle dit qu'est-ce qu'elle voulait, et tu dois le faire.
>
> Alison: Et c'est difficile.
>
> Interviewer: Qu'est-ce qui est difficile?
>
> Erica: Pour le faire juste dans quinze minutes.
> [
> Linda: Pour écrire dans ** oui**.
>
> Erica: Tu dois pense [sic], et ça prend quinze minutes et après tu dois

écrire.
[
Alison: En anglais on a
[
Linda: Oui, et tu dois chercher dans le dictionnaire et tout ça.

Erica: Oui, et tu dois
[
Interviewer: Alors qu'est-ce que vous préfèreriez avoir, au lieu de juste quinze minutes?

Denise: Prendre ** une heure ou deux heures.

Bill: Non, comme ** si tu n'as pas fini l'histoire en une heure ** une autre leçon tu peux continuer.
[
Linda: Oui.
[
Alison: Oui.

Interviewer: Vous préfèreriez faire ça?

All in chorus: Oui.

(Open-ended Group Interview, 88/03/02)

These children frequently refer to their dictionaries when writing which may be due in part to the emphasis on correct spelling in French writing and also an insecurity about writing in a second language. In very brief writing sessions there is little time for reflection and for exploration of language. In principle, the longer writing periods allow children the time to do this, but in this case, the relative freedom to develop writing over an extended time may be constrained by the role that the adults play in the writing process.

The children explain that the adults' roles in the enriched language lessons is to correct their stories on a continuous basis before they are completed:

Interviewer: So what did you do with Maryse?

Erica: Write stories.
[
Bill: Write stories.
[
Linda: We wrote stories and then she'd come along and corrected them.

Alison: (inaudible)
[
Erica: Mrs. Cousineau helped out.

Interviewer: What?

Denise: Before we wrote the whole story, she'd come in the middle and correct so we wouldn't have a lot of mistakes to correct at the end. . . .

Erica: Ya, like in English I just get one or two mistakes and then ** in French I get like ** five or
[
Linda: Ya. You write the same sentence and you get ** ten.

(Open-ended Group Interview, 88/02/19)

The children do not think of writing in terms of expressing thought and communicating messages but rather in terms of producing, counting and correcting errors. They seem to believe that close adult supervision is necessary to maintain some control over the production of "mistakes" so that the correction task will not be overwhelming.

The children claim to find the new format for enriched language lessons with Mme Cousineau easier than writing stories with Maryse and they explain why the focus is no longer on writing:

Interviewer: Et alors quand vous comparez les deux ** ce que vous faisiez avant avec Maryse et ce que vous faites maintenant ** qu'est-ce que vous en pensez?

Erica: . . . On a ** on juste écrit ** avec Maryse.
[
Linda: Oui, on écrit plus avec Maryse et avec Mme Cousineau on fait les exercices.
[
Denise: Oui.

Interviewer: Et qu'est-ce que vous pensez de tout ça?

Bill: C'est différent.
[
Erica: C'est plus facile, les jeux.

Linda: Je pense que c'est ** plus bon de savoir comment parler que
[
Bill: De lire.
[
Erica: Oui, tu dois savoir . . . parler ** avant de ** faire des histoires.

Linda: Oui.

(Open-ended Group Interview, 88/03/02)

These children have spent the first part of the year writing stories in their second language and now they no longer write but instead they talk, play word games and fill out answers on ditto sheets. The children interpret this change in instructional focus to mean that they need more

practice in their oral French and reading before they can write. They conceive that a second language is acquired in linear oral, reading and writing stages. They seem to believe that they cannot write well enough to be allowed to write, and they need to return to oral and reading stages of second language acquisition.

The children report that they feel insecure about their ability to communicate in French; they expect to be judged and found wanting as illustrated in the following excerpt:

> Alison: Sometimes I feel sort of self-conscious about my work, showing it to French people because they might think: "Oh, this kid doesn't know much."
> [
> Linda: Ya, I know, even in talking if you go ** like ** well in the school I don't really mind because they know that I can't speak French really well. But if you go ** if you go out somewhere else and you ** talk to a French person, they'll look at you like ** "Hein?"
>
> Alison: Ya, and they'll say, "What is this person saying? ** That's very bad grammar."
>
> (Open-ended group interview, 88/02/19)

The children are sensitive to how the adults respond to their efforts to communicate in a second language and in the first language as well. The following episode illustrates how the children are aware that their English teacher reads their stories to evaluate their linguistic competence:

Narrative Segment 9: Correction of Stories in English Class

Linda is writing. I ask her what will happen to her story when it is finished. Linda explains that it will be corrected by the teacher and "she'll tell you if it's good or bad, and if it's good you put it in your Olympic folder or else you recopy it and put it in".

(Fieldnotes, 88/02/29)

The children know that vocabulary is a high priority for Cheryl when they write:

Interviewer: . . . what's most important ** in writing in English?

Linda: Your grammar ** and your punctuation.

Denise: How you use the words.

Linda: Making ** making make sense ** in one sense.

Interviewer: Making sense.

Linda: Ya ** sentence construction.
[
Erica: Well, you can't use ** the same words all the time, like and then and then.

Alison: Ya, like ** I like to use a lot of big words. . . .

Erica: Ya. It's better ** if you use ** long words.

(Open-ended Group Interview, 88/02/19)

These children have identified Cheryl's focus on vocabulary and form in writing, they know what she is looking for in their stories and they know how to satisfy her. The children perceive that the major purpose of writing

is similar in English Language Arts and in French lessons; the main objective is to perfect language techniques.

The Children's Comparisons of French and English Lessons

The children not only identify the focus of instruction in each setting, but they also compare the requirements for writing. When asked to compare the writing lessons in English and French, the children summarize the lessons in the following way:

> Interviewer: So would you say that . . . the lessons are similar in English and in French?
>
> Bill. Well like ** you do like ** like stories and stuff like ** and while you're in French ** you do like ** sort of spelling and you don't do much stories ** you don't do really stories.
>
> Interviewer: No, what do you do?
> [
> Linda: You do like ** exercises ** and in English you do stories. In English you do a whole long story ** when in French you'd just be doing exercises and how to conjugate this verb or something. You wouldn't be writing a whole story yet.
>
> Erica: (inaudible) you concentrate mainly on the verbs and stuff like that in the stories.
>
> Alison: And you're always looking stuff up in the dictionary. . . .
>
> Interviewer: Where does the idea matter?
>
> Linda: Well in . . . English. The idea matters more in English 'cuz all our writing is all correct and stuff. . . .

Linda: Well, we don't have as many mistakes. . . .
[
Denise: . . . (Cheryl) doesn't come around every five minutes. . . .

Interviewer: She doesn't. What does she do?

Denise: She just ** corrects it. . . .

Linda: We all give ** we all give our stories in or whatever we've written and then she corrects it.

Erica: And then we do a good copy. . . .

Linda: . . . In English the teacher knows that we knows ** that we know what it means, so
[
Alison: Ya.

Erica: She just lets us go.

Linda: Ya.

Alison: Ya, she just says: "Okay, write a story".

Erica: Or on this particular subject.
[
Bill: Ya (inaudible).

(Open-ended Group Interview, 88/02/19)

The children perceive that they write more stories in English class. They report that in French the focus is mainly on verbs and spelling. Even when writing stories in French, they report that their attention is on conjugating verbs and spelling correctly. They believe that the ideas matter more and that they have more freedom while writing in English class, but this is only because they have mastered the techniques of writing in that language.

Although they acknowledge that the English teacher allows them to write uninterrupted, they see her as having the same role as the French teachers --she is an evaluator of their finished products.

The interviews suggest that the children believe that all their teachers are looking for mastery of form in their writing and they know what particular conventions each teacher tends to emphasize. They perceive that their teachers read their writing to evaluate how it conforms to standard form. They also believe that adults encourage them to write on their own and emphasize ideas in writing only when they have reached some level of mastery of the techniques of writing.

The Children's Perceptions of Writing and Writing Instruction

Figure 5 provides a summary profile of how each of the children perceive writing and writing instruction. The figure is compiled from their individual responses recorded in transcripts of the open-ended interviews on February 19, 1988 and March 2, 1988.

	What is writing?	What do you think about when you write?	How would you teach writing?
Alison	"Putting your imagination on paper."	"sometimes I might be thinking of ah.. one particular idea, except ah.. I just get carried off so that I just go with what I have.." "you change the whole thing of what you started off with in the first place. But it's better at the end."	"I'd teach them the verbs and stuff, I think at the same time as they're talking 'cuz they have to use the verbs in talking to learn to write."
Linda	"Ah.. I don't know.. just writing... Ya... the teacher tells you to do something and then you just write that or.. if you want to write, you just write."	"I always write the story first and then I write the title... I write something and then I change it so that.. it's even better."	"First you teach them how to speak first, and all the.. verbs and everything.. and all the punctuation.. then, I'd teach them to write."
Erica	"Sharing your feelings with a paper." "Your hand does it."	"I think of something that I might write it.. but change it as I'm writing. Change the story."	"In French I would teach them.. like.. vocabulary and.. words and verbs.." "But if they know it already, I would /// just let them write and correct it afterwards."
Bill	(One-word reply) "Stories."	"I just think it out in my mind and put it on paper." "Like the books I read all together, like I sort of put them all together sort of."	"Well you get stories from books and you should make them read first. And then (write).."
Denise	"just your imagination"	"things you've made up" "made from true stories"	"Tell them what to write and let them write it."

Figure 5. Profile of the Children's Perceptions

The children describe writing as a cognitive, motor activity. They speak of writing in terms of a relationship between thought, mechanics and paper. These children do not speak of writing as a means of communicating with others. Instead, their responses indicate that they objectify the writing experience in that they relate only to the paper on which they write. The children appear to believe that the teachers' role in writing instruction is to first show children how to master the techniques of writing, such as using verbs, vocabulary and punctuation, and then to tell children what to write, while acting as an evaluator of their writing.

Ironically, while it seems that the children have a technical perception of writing and of the teaching of writing, when pressed in an interview, they were able to reflect on and articulate their own composing process: Alison, Linda and Erica describe the internal revision processes they use while composing; Bill relates that when he writes he weaves together ideas he has drawn from his readings, and Denise explains that she uses real experiences to invent stories.

The children were also able to talk about their conceptions of the relationship between the two languages when they write. In the following excerpt, they explain how they move back and forth between thinking in English and writing in French:

> Erica: C'est difficile de ** comme de faire les histoires en français, on doit pense [sic] en anglais et puis après, écris [sic] en français. Et des fois c'est difficile ** d'écrire.
>
> Alison: Parce que . . . quelque fois . . . tu peux dire quelque chose en

anglais mais pas en français parce que tu sais pas.
[
Denise: Oui.
[
Linda: C'est pas possible....

Linda. Je ** je pense en anglais premièrement ** et après je dire à toi ** et si ça va bien
[
Alison: Ça change.

Linda: Oui, ça change. ** Je trouve ah ** une autre façon de dire....

Bill: Je pense premier, une histoire en anglais, et j'écris en français. Comme ** comme il y a une autre personne...

(Open-ended Group Interview, 88/03/02)

Bill describes the change between thought in English and writing in French as a schizophrenic experience. The children explain some of the difficulties they encounter when composing in the second language: one problem they face is thinking of an idea in English, but not knowing how to translate it into French; another problem is thinking of expressions or structures in one language that are not used the other language. In these two cases, the children find strategies to get around the language difficulties as reported in the following interview:

Linda: If I don't know how to do the whole sentence, then I just leave it out because I have all the verbs and stuff. But if it's just one word I can just look it up in the dictionary. ** So it doesn't matter ... if it's just one word, I write the whole ... idea, but if I don't know how to write my whole idea then I just leave it out....

Alison: Ya, I ** find myself looking up in the dictionary a lot and then I

forget ** what I was gonna say and stuff like that. . . .

Erica: In French usually ** I write like ** stories that . . . can't really come true. And, in English I like to write more about ** people our age, and things that happen ** that really do happen.
[
Linda: Ya. In French ** in French and English I write the same thing. Like, about people our age and stuff. . . .

Erica: In English I write ** like ** probably what happened . . . things like getting into trouble and things like that. But . . . it's easier to write ** in French, like things that aren't true. . . .

Linda: . . . But in French I just -write! In . . . French I just write any old thing, it doesn't matter. . . .

Alison: I mainly write the same except . . . it's** harder and harder. And you can't use your imagination as much I don't think. . . . I find . . . myself . . . worrying a lot about grammar and stuff more in French.

Linda: Ya, in English it just comes to you.

Erica: Ya, you can use your imagination ** more in English 'cuz you already know the words. ** You're worrying about the words when you're doing a story in French.

(Open-ended Group Interview, 88/02/19)

Two strategies that the children use to resolve language problems are consulting with someone else while composing and omitting ideas that are too problematic to express in the second language. When composing in French, the children report that they tend to write fictional stories about topics that are unrelated to them, whereas in English they write about real life experiences. This may reflect the fact that their first language is their language of thought and it is more closely tied to their personal experiences. What the children report in the interviews suggests is that

they consciously choose to write "safe" stories in the second language, carefully selecting content that they are sure they know how to write in French. The children are preoccupied with grammar and vocabulary in French and their concern with form stifles their imagination in writing.

Summary of the Children's Perceptions

The interviews with the children indicate that they can describe the different requirements for writing in each setting and can compare settings. Moreover, the children perceive writing as a technical exercise and they view writing instruction as an attempt to systematically impart technique. Despite their technocratic perspectives, the children can nonetheless talk about their own composing processes and they are able to do so in both their first and second languages. The children describe strategies that they employ to deal with the complexities of thinking and writing in two languages. They claim that their concern with grammar, verbs and spelling impedes their efforts to develop ideas in writing in the second language.

CHAPTER V
SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Summary

The Writing Lessons in Theory

Using methods within the ethnographic tradition, I documented the classroom processes, the content of lessons and the perceptions of participants in French and English writing classes in a French immersion program. I found that underlying the teaching of writing in French and in English, there were contrasting curricula, learning theories, and ideologies of language.

Writing in English

The literature on writing in English indicates a tendency among theorists to view language as a dynamic social process that is meaning-based (Emig,1973; Halliday,1978; Harste,1983; Wells,1986). The theories of writing as process propose that children naturally learn about written language by focusing on its meaning, rather than by concentrating on its linguistic form (Sowers, 1982; Clay, 1973; Goodman, 1986). In response to these theories, a number of educators now advocate that teachers emphasize process in writing instruction.

This pedagogical trend is reflected by the English Language Arts curriculum that is in place in the program examined in this study. The curriculum is defined by central Ministry programs and local school board documents. The Quebec Ministry of Education's official program (The Elementary School Curriculum: English Language Arts I-VI, Quebec, 1983) recommends a Whole Language approach to teaching which rests on principles of language as social process. The program describes the English teacher's role in writing instruction as that of a facilitator who integrates writing with reading, speaking, and listening while acting as a communicative partner to children. The teacher is expected to provide a variety of contexts for genuine writing, to respond to the meaning of messages in children's writing, and to view variation of standard form as an expression of development in language. The school board curriculum document for English Language Arts instruction, (Weaton Board Curriculum Document #3), supports this approach to teaching language as it is described in the Ministry program.

Writing in French Immersion

A view of language as an interactive, meaning-based process is also supported in the literature on second-language acquisition (Gumperz & Hymes, 1972; Wong-Fillmore, 1983; McLaughlin, 1984, Hakuta, 1986). A number of second-language theorists propose a communicative competence theory which states that children learn a second language by concentrating on meanings in social interaction. This is said to be one of the underlying assumptions of immersion education; children learn French by focusing on

the content of communication rather than the form of the second language (Swain & Lapkin, 1982; Cummins, 1985; Genesee, 1987). Yet recent qualitative studies of French immersion classes suggest that teachers tend to provide instruction in distinct features of the French language, emphasizing linguistic form over content (Mahé, 1987; Maguire, 1989). In this study, such product-oriented methods are endorsed by the curriculum documents that are used in the French immersion program.

The Ministry program for French-as-a-first-language (Programme d'étude / Primaire / Français, Québec, 1979) was used as a foundation for the development of the local school board curriculum document for the French immersion program (Weaton Board Curriculum Document*1). Both documents describe discrete language skills, key concepts, and specific conventions that children are expected to acquire at each grade level. This assumes that language exists as a distinct entity, that there is a consensus about language rules in French, and that the teacher's role is to ensure that children master conventional form.

The teaching of writing in English Language Arts appears to be theoretically in conflict with the teaching of writing in French immersion classes. Yet, classroom observations and interviews of participants in the French immersion program indicate that this conflict is not clearly evident in actual classroom practice.

The Writing Lessons in Practice

In the classroom observations, I found that the French and English writing lessons were more similar than they were different, especially with respect to the focus of instruction and the teachers' roles; all the teachers chose to focus primarly on correct form in writing and acted as evaluators of conventions. The teachers rarely responded to content or emphasized process in writing; they responded mostly to how children used conventions in their written products. This was true for French and English teachers alike, despite the fact that there were some differences in how the lessons were organized in each setting. Each setting for writing instruction differed in the time that was devoted to writing and in the amount of freedom that children had to choose their own topics. Yet these differences did not correspond to language of instruction, so that it cannot be said that the French lessons distinctly reflected the orientations of the French curriculum, nor that the English lessons reflected the focus of the English curriculum.

The findings from the interviews of the teachers indicated that they all assumed that writing instruction is a matter of transmitting knowledge and ensuring that children follow language rules. The teachers had different ideas about the degree of restriction or freedom of choice that should be given to children when they write. On the one hand, two of the French teachers, Ruth and Mme Cousineau, believed that the children's writing experiences should be limited and carefully controlled. These teachers had adopted perspectives that are associated with traditional approaches to

teaching writing. On the other hand, one of the French teachers, Maryse, and the English Language Arts teacher, Cheryl, believed that children should be given ample opportunity to write and to select their own topics. In their lessons, therefore, they tried to remove some restrictions on children's writing. Nonetheless, the underlying focus on form in all the lessons overrode any differences in the amount of writing or free-choice that the children were given.

The teachers' instructional focus appears to have an impact on how the children view writing. The findings from the interviews of the five participating children suggest that they did not conceive of writing in French or in English as interactional; rather, they objectified writing and they perceived all the writing lessons to be technical exercises. For these children, the purpose of writing in school was to perfect discrete language skills so as to pass the evaluation of an examiner, usually the classroom teacher. They used a number of strategies to produce texts that would meet the technical standards set by each of their teachers. Moreover, the children reported that their worries about language rules were greater in the second language as they were less familiar with them and they indicated that this inhibited their creativity in writing in French.

Therefore, the conflict that appears to exist between French and English writing at a theoretical level is not evident at a practical level. Instead, there appears to be consistency in the practices and in the participants' perceptions in the French and English writing lessons. The teachers all emphasized linguistic form over content or process, and viewed language

teaching in terms of a transmission of facts. The children had a technocratic view of writing in both languages.

Discussion

The apparent consistency in the teachers' perceptions of writing instruction and in their practices can be explained by the nature of the Ministry and school board language programs and by the nature of the teachers' individual and collective daily experiences. The programs, together with the teachers' experiences, determined how the writing lessons were taught, how the children used language in these lessons, and how they experienced writing in school.

The Programs

Traditionally, the English Language Arts program was prescriptive while the French immersion program is still largely so. The French immersion program lists linguistic forms that children are expected to produce at different stages and details procedures that teachers may follow to deliver the content of the program. The French teachers' focus on imparting facts about language and evaluation of end-products can therefore be seen as a reflection of the program's technical orientation.

The current English Language Arts program is purposefully less prescriptive. Language learning is described as context-embedded so that learner needs are not predetermined. The emphasis in this program is on

viewing language development as a long-term process and learning outcomes as broad and not easily quantifiable. This aspect of the program may actually present a problem for teachers. Some English Language Arts teachers may cling to traditional methods because they are either unsure about the specifics of how to implement a new program in their classes. They may be uncertain about the implications of different teaching behaviours and responses to writing, or may be unsure about what types of learning outcomes to expect.

Fullan (1982) maintains that uncertainty about the operational meaning of a new approach may explain why some teachers respond in a conservative way to curricular change. A focus on technique, with specific descriptions of expected products, easily lends itself to systematic procedures and provides more immediate tangible outcomes than some of the relatively complex conceptual and social outcomes promised in the new English Language Arts program which emphasizes process in writing.

Moreover, a "quality control" evaluator role of teachers has been traditionally associated with high educational standards. Some teachers who are expected to change their role to one of communicative partner or facilitator, may feel they are abandoning their responsibilities and, therefore, sense their professional competence to be threatened. The uncertainty that is experienced in curricular change may lead some teachers to maintain their familiar role, favouring known approaches that define clear procedures and are straightforward to implement.

The directive nature of the French immersion program may make it easier for teachers to implement it in their classrooms. The non-prescriptive nature of the English Language Arts program and the role change that it implicates, may heighten uncertainty in some teachers and impede them from understanding and implementing it. These different characteristics of the programs lead some French and English teachers to commonly adopt a technique orientation in their writing lessons. Yet the programs are not the only factors that affect how the teachers choose to teach writing; they are also influenced by their individual backgrounds, their daily experiences, and the professional support that they receive in their classrooms.

The Teachers' Backgrounds, Daily Realities and Professional Support

As a group, the teachers in this dual-track school are exposed to different curricula for French immersion and for English classes. They are thus confronted with multiple criteria for learning and differing ethnolinguisitic perspectives about curricular content. At the same time, they have limited opportunity to discuss the meaning of language theories or the interpretation of programs. Most of their time is spent in hectic preparation or in busy isolation teaching in their own classrooms. Furthermore, the social organization of school life limits their opportunities to engage in peer observation or receive feedback on their classroom practice. Those teachers, therefore, who are willing to challenge traditional teaching approaches or implement change in their writing program, have a number of obstacles to overcome: they must come

to terms with multiple and controversial criteria for teaching writing, lack of time to reflect on language or changes in theories and practices, and limited occasions to confer with others about ongoing concerns.

As individuals, the teachers responded to elements of their environment and implemented the writing programs within the context of their personal realities. The participating teachers brought different backgrounds and personalities tc their tasks, and each experienced a different setting for teaching writing. Two characteristics that may have had an impact on what each teacher chose to do in her writing program were the amount of interaction with peers that she engaged in and the amount of experience that she had in her particular position.

The regular French immersion teacher, Ruth, was in the school on a long-term substitution contract and she did not perceive herself to be a specialist in immersion teaching. Lacking experience in this type of teaching position, she chose to closely follow the directives of the curriculum documents and she did not attempt to implement change. Her intention was to master the established program and she readily sought the help of other teachers and the French immersion consultant.

The teacher of the enriched French lessons, Maryse, was outgoing and she interacted with both English and French teachers. She had long-standing experience in the French immersion program. She knew the program well, participated in the development of its curriculum, and was aware of the changes in the teaching of English Language Arts within the school board.

Maryse was interested by the changes that she observed in some English classes and in the English curriculum. On her own initiative, she implemented some new methods in her teaching practice, recognizing that they represent a departure from what is commonly adopted in immersion classes.

Mme Cousineau had a number of years of teaching experience and she came into the school specifically to work as a parent-volunteer in the enriched French language lessons. She did not participate in the formal or informal organization of the school and therefore her contact with other teachers was relatively limited. While assisting Maryse in her attempts to implement a new approach to teaching writing, Mme Cousineau reacted to problems that she perceived in this approach and she responded by adopting more traditional methods when she worked alone with the children later in the year.

The English Language Arts teacher, Cheryl, had many years experience in teaching English. Cheryl was new to the school and she spent much of her free time in her classroom preparing materials or organizing the room, so that her interaction time with other teachers was somewhat limited. She had taken university courses in language instruction and she had participated in professional development in-services and workshops on Whole Language. Although she followed some of the methods associated with Whole Language, such as providing varied experiences with print, her overall focus and her underlying assumptions about language teaching were more in keeping with traditional approaches to teaching writing.

There seems, then, to be a relationship between the teacher's experience in her position, her interactions with other teachers, and how she implemented the writing program. Whereas little experience and minimal interaction appear to yield the most conservative teaching methods, as in Mme Cousineau's case, many years of experience combined with much interaction with other teachers may foster innovative methods, as is the case with Maryse.

Once teachers have acquired some experience in a program, their confidence about their competence is likely to increase. Moreover, once they know a program well, they may begin to see its problems, discern needs for change and embark on change efforts. Both Maryse and Cheryl had some years experience with the language programs. They were in the process of accommodating some of the methods advocated in the new curriculum for English Language Arts, such as removing some restrictions on children's experiences with writing; however, they had as yet only partially interpreted the curriculum. They had not changed their fundamental assumptions about the focus of writing or their roles in the teaching of writing.

Although interaction with others seemed to play a part in Maryse's growing interest in alternative approaches to teaching writing, both she and Cheryl would have benefited from more peer interaction during their attempts to change. Feedback and discussion with in-class observers would have provided the continuous support that these two teachers would seem to

have needed. When teachers such as these are sorting out the practical meaning of a new program, and receiving imput primarly through out-of-class training sessions and large-scale workshops, they risk experiencing frustration and confusion and in some cases, may even develop a reactionary response to the program as Mme Cousineau appears to have done.

Fullan (1982) claims that interaction with peers is a critical element of curricular innovation, helping teachers to grapple with different approaches and develop new meanings. He outlines the need for ongoing support and discussion while change is being experienced in classrooms, so that new programs are not implemented only partially. As this case study reveals, the result of social isolation is that even the experienced teachers, who have some knowledge of new methods, resort to a product-oriented approach to teaching writing. Perhaps they do this without even realizing it, believing instead that they are implementing a process-oriented approach. The teachers individually interpret the curriculum and decide how to proceed, which in turn affects how the children experience writing and how they develop conceptions about language.

The Children's Language Development

The children experienced writing in the French and the English lessons not as a tool to communicate ideas or interact with others, but as an exercise to practice certain aspects of linguistic form. Halliday (1975) states that writing is defined by its context, and in this case study, the lesson contexts define writing as a technical exercise. The children

understood this very clearly, and in this respect, they showed that they are sophisticated language learners. They were able to determine what purposes writing is used for in the lessons, meaning that they understood the functions of language in the writing lessons. The children were capable of discerning variations and the similarities in the language used in each context, they could accurately identify the specific linguistic requirements of the context and modify their use of language accordingly. Moreover, they knew how roles were defined by language use; in the lessons, they acted as technicians who were expected to manipulate properly the form of language, while the teachers acted as evaluators of their ability to do this. In their understanding that writing was used as a test of their knowledge of linguistic form, the children had become skilled in composing strategies that facilitated the production of "safe" texts.

While the children had learned how to read and meet the linguistic demands of the lessons, they were nevertheless limited by the view of language that these lessons communicated. The children were preoccupied with avoiding errors so that they were never allowed to, in Wells' (1986) words, "move beyond the status quo" and expand on their conceptions of language or make connections by exploring language. Instead, they performed writing tasks which, in some cases, they viewed as irrelevant and meaningless.

The children knew that the primary objective of writing in these lessons was to reproduce knowledge about language. Their preoccupation with getting the technique of writing right so as to meet with approval inhibited

both reflection and creativity. The children were so involved in reproducing techniques that this was not only limited to how they wrote, but this extended to how they viewed teaching and learning. They had internalized the views of teaching and learning that their teachers communicated in the lessons and given the chance to teach writing, the children reported that they would do just as their teachers did. This would support Giroux's (1978) claim that a technocratic emphasis on mastery of conventions in writing leads to reproductive education and deprives children of the opportunity to develop critical thinking.

The writing lessons in French immersion were clearly a form of reproductive education. The teachers attempted to transmit facts about the French language, rarely responded to childrens' meanings in writing, and infrequently asked the children to clarify or expand on their messages. The observations in the French writing lessons confirm the findings by Mahé (1987) and Maguire (1989) who documented that immersion teachers emphasized language form over content. Because the children had little opportunity to engage in genuine dialogue in French, their opportunity to develop second-language proficiency was limited. According to Wong-Fillmore (1983), development in a second language is a function of meaningful interaction between learners and other users of the target language.

Yet, the absence of genuine communication in French lessons does not mean that the children were unable to engage in such dialogue in their second language. As recorded in the open-ended group interviews, the

children were able talk in their first and second languages about their own composing processes; they recounted how they juggled two language systems and how they dealt with the problems posed by different linguistic perspectives and expressions of thought. These findings indicate that children were aware of the strategies they used to draw from the first language while composing a text in the second language. Moreover, because the writing lessons emphasized the surface features of language, the children were preoccupied by the differences in the two languages and they found ways to simplify the task of writing in the second language by producing texts that did not relate to their lives.

Although it is sometimes assumed that in the first years of a French immersion program children are not yet able to use their second language to talk about their complex language processes, the children in this study have shown that they did reflect on the problems of communicating in two languages. This indicates that it is possible to move beyond simple reproductive education in second-language writing and foster critical thought about language.

Since it is possible for children to engage in more communication about second-language writing than they are actually doing, there is clearly a need for new French immersion programs that will foster dialogue about writing. New immersion programs must reflect the meaning-making nature of second-language acquisition and emphasize process in language teaching in order to avoid reducing writing to a technical exercise, thereby limiting children's language development. Yet, as this study indicates, the

development of new language programs is not enough to ensure that these changes will take place in the classroom. What is also needed is a change in the social organization of teaching and professional development efforts that support intended changes by increasing interaction among teachers on an ongoing basis. Left on their own with little time to reflect or to interact, even the most well-meaning teachers will resort to adopting roles that are most familiar and aiming for products that are easily quantifiable. In the end, if there is no social change for the teachers, the children will continue to experience writing and to conceive of it terms of technique.

Implications for Further Research

Based on the findings of this study, I see a need for further research that examines a number of aspects of first and second-language teaching:

1) The teachers in this case study focus on technique in writing regardless of the orientations of the French and English language curriculum. There is a need for research that further illuminates the relationships between theory, curriculum, and classroom practice in language education.

2) One of the French immersion teachers in this study had adopted some approaches that were endorsed for English Language Arts. There is a need for further ethnographic research in French immersion programs that examines how changes in the teaching of English Language Arts are affecting teaching practices in the French language lessons.

3) In this case study, the consistency in teaching practices in the English and the French writing lessons is due in part to the personal experiences and

social realities of the participating teachers. There is a need for further case studies of French and English writing in French immersion programs to verify if the teaching practices are coherent in other contexts as well.

4) The teachers in this study did not have ongoing observer feedback in their change efforts. There is a need for qualitative research in Quebec schools that examines what impact the social organization of teaching and professional development activities are having on the implementation of new Ministry programs.

The participants in this study have shown me that even conscientious, caring teachers are hard put to implement educational change when they work in isolation in their classrooms with little available time to make sense of new programs. The participating teachers are members of a school with an approachable and involved principal. Moreover, they belong to a school board that has developed its own curriculum documents based on Ministry programs, and which provides workshops that support the orientations of these programs. If the task of interpreting change is difficult for these teachers, how much more difficult is it for teachers who are in less favourable situations? It appears to me that policy makers and curriculum planners at all levels should facilitate social interaction among teachers and make it an integral part of new programs. Perhaps if more effort were put into fostering interaction rather than developing curriculum documents, education would be seen as a process to be shared, rather than a body of knowledge to be delivered. This would make it easier for teachers and children in French immersion to change their technocratic perceptions and processes in writing lessons to a view of language as interaction.

Footnotes

1. There is a variety of second language programs in Canadian education. The terms *second language* and *bilingual* are commonly used to refer to different types of educational arrangements. Generally, core English/French second language programs (ESL/FSL) are said to be *second language education* The term *bilingual education* is used to refer to two distinct educational contexts; immersion programs, where instruction is given in one of the two official languages, and heritage or ethnic language programs, where instruction is given in another language (Bain and Yu, 1987).

2. The three Ministry programs for language differ in the teaching approaches that they advocate and in their descriptions of the role of the teacher. The English program describes language instruction as engaging children in a meaning-centred exploration of language. The program states that the role of the teacher is not to change the child's language, but to provide experiences which expand on the child's knowledge of language. According to the French-as-a-first-language program, children entering school have begun to master oral communication, but they have very limited experience with written language. The teacher's role *(les interventions du maître)* is to provide experience in oral and written communication, to provide verbal instruction, and to demonstrate how to manipulate, observe, reflect on and analyze language. The program for French-as-a-second-language is based on *l'approche communicative*, a second-language teaching approach that is said to focus on the message in language first, then on the form, and the instructional content must be related to an actual situation

rather than artificially contrived. The teacher's role is to tolerate error, to expose the child to a rich language environment and to provide varied experiences. While the language arts are said to be interrelated, the program states that oral language development precedes written language learning.

3. During the course of this study, the school board hosted Yetta and Kenneth Goodman, two prominent American researchers of writing development in childhood who support the implementation of Whole Language approaches in schools. They spent a week visiting schools in the board and spoke to community and board employees. Although the workshops were directed to English language teaching, French immersion teachers were invited and the school board consultants of all subject areas were expected to be present. The researchers spent a day visiting Manor school, as it had been awarded a prize for excellence in the English Language Arts program by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE).

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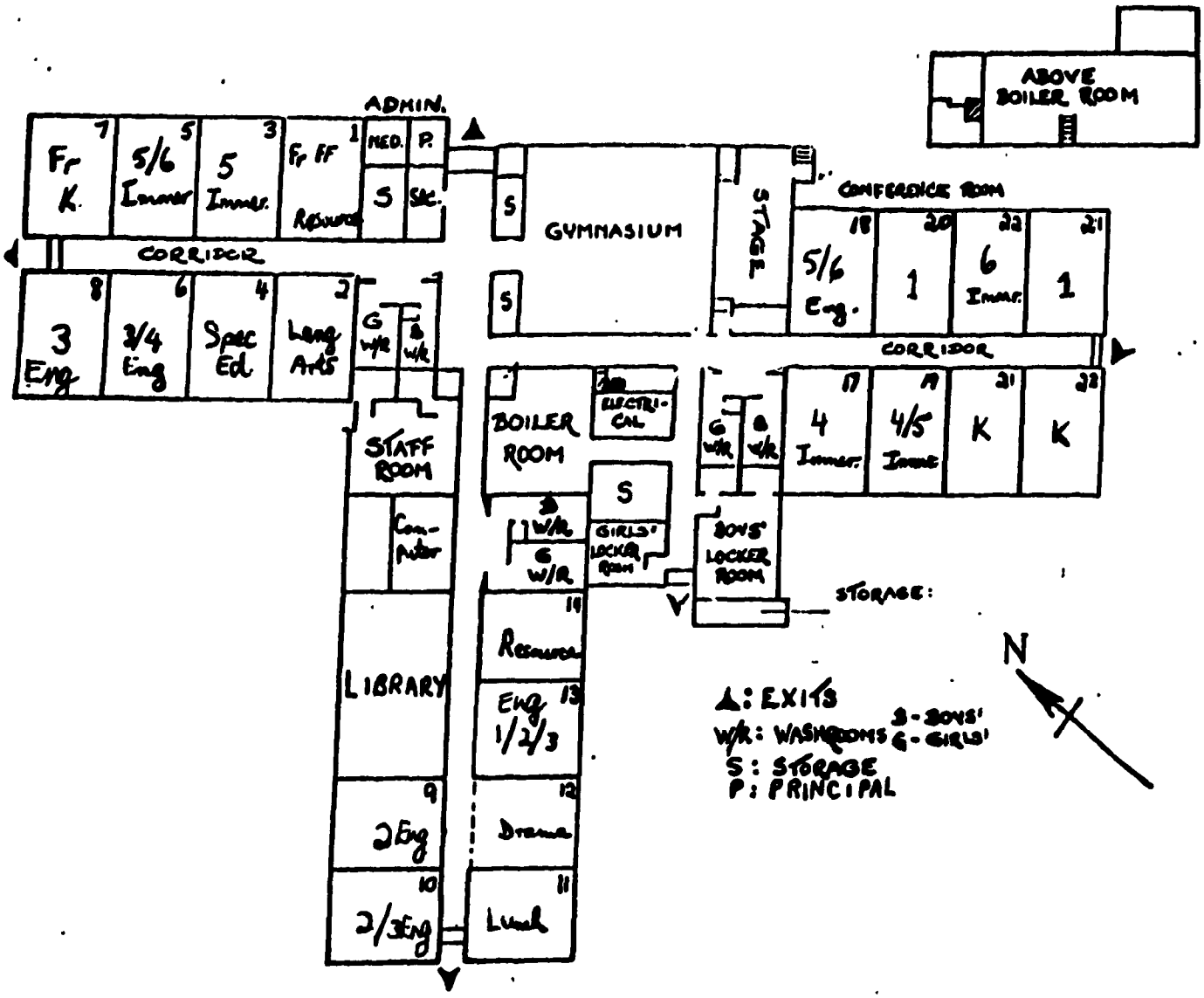
Appendix A

Sample of Interview Transcripts

UNIT	TALK	THEMES
453	Erica: Write stories.	Enr. Fr. lessons
	[	
454	Bill: Write stories.	
	[	
456	Linda: We wrote stories and then she'd come	Teacher as
457	along corrected them.	evaluator
458	Alison: (inaudible)	
	[	
459	Erica: Mme C. (Cousineau) helped out.	
460	Interviewer: What?	
461	Denise: Before we wrote the whole story,	
462	she'd come in the middle and correct so we	Focus on errors
463	wouldn't have a lot of mistakes to correct	
464	at the end.	
465	Erica: Ya.	
466	Interviewer: So how was that different than	Eng. lessons
467	when you write in English?	
468	Linda: Well, we don't have as many mistakes.	Focus on errors
469	And you just..	
	[	
470	Denise: Mrs. M. (Cheryl) doesn't come around	
471	every five minutes.	
	[	
472	Erica: We.. we write and then.. we have	
473	Interviewer: She doesn't. What does she do?	
474	Denise: She just.. corrects it.	Teacher as evaluator

Appendix B

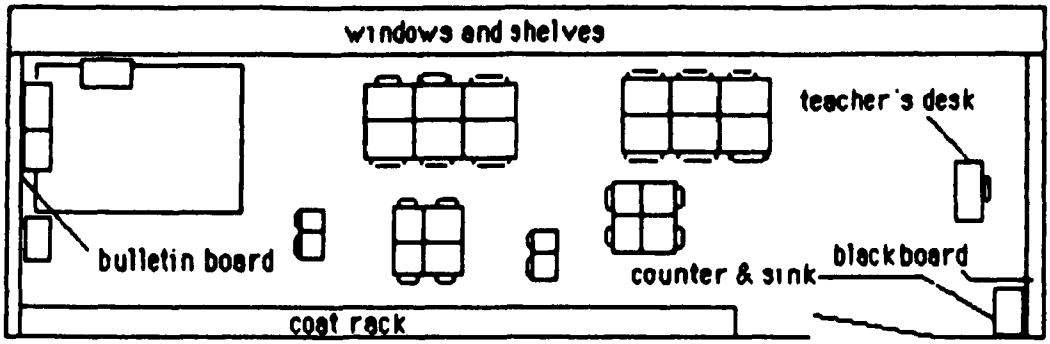
Floorplan of Manor School



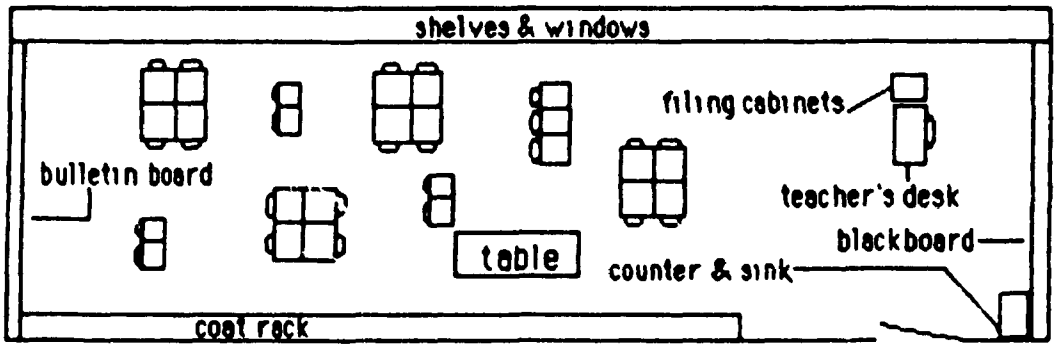
Appendix c

Floor Plans of the Three Classrooms

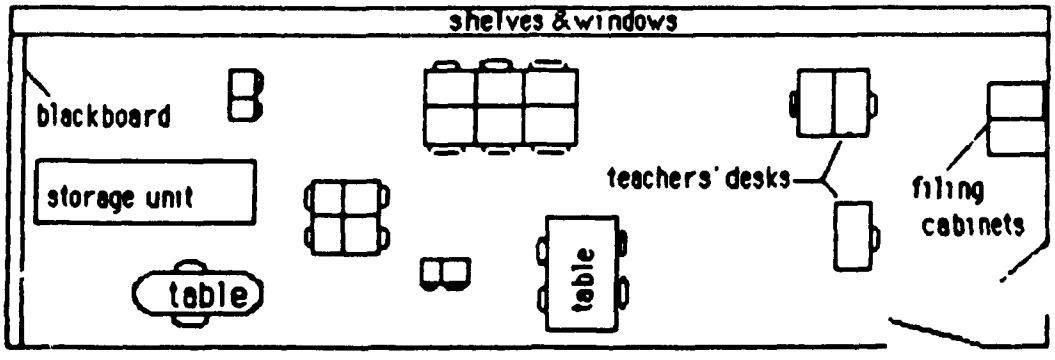
English Language Arts class, Room 2



Regular French Immersion Class, Room 5



Resource Centre, Room 1



Appendix D

Writing Sample from the Regular French Immersion Class

Qu'est ce que je vais faire? 2 mars 1988

"Aubbh, s'il vous plait maman, achete la bicyclette que je veux!" "Encore je dis oui tu doit achete avec ton argent, je n'en pas assez pour une bicyclette."

J'etais très faché, alors j'ai retourné a la maison sur l'autobus, je ne voulait pas avec maman dans sa automobile. Quand l'autobus a arrêté, et je n'étais pas sur l'autobus encore j'ai vû quelque chose sur la rue. J'ai mis sur ma main et c'était un portefeuille. Quand j'ai regardé dans le portefeuille, j'ai vu cent soixante dollars, et un carte de "American Express". J'ai demandé: "Est-ce que cette portefeuille est à toi?" à les personnes qui attendaient pour l'autre autobus, mais ils ont tous dit non.

Alors après quand j'étais à ma maison, j'ai téléphoné les policiers, puis ils ont dit que ils vont mis dans la "Gazette" que il y a un portefeuille perdu a, 917 Warple. Après il a dit, si personne arrivé à la maison en deux jours, il peut utilizé l'argent.

Deux jours a passé, et aucun personne a arrivé, alors j'ai allé au magasin, et j'ai acheté la bicyclette. Aubbh comme j'étais heureuse!!

à les = aux.

Présences d'information	4/4
Suite logique	4/4
4 sentiments	2/4
verbes aux temps passés	4/5
paragraphes	3/3
ponctuation	3/3
lisibilité	2/2

Appendix E

Writing Sample A from the Enriched French Lessons

Boule de coton
un lapin spécial!

Il y a longtemps il y avait un petit lapin qui s'appellait Boule de coton. Un belle journée au printemps Boule de coton est allé au champ pour jouer Quand elle trouve un bébé écureil avec une patte cassée. Boule de coton a mis le pauvre petit sur son dos et il l'apporte chez lui!

Après quelque temps, la patte est guérie. Mais le petit écureil ne veux pas partir de chez Boule de coton. Il pense que Boule de coton est sa nouvelle mère!!!!!! Il suive Boule de coton partout.

Un jour sa vrai mère vient à la porte pour emmener l'écureil à la maison. Il ne veut pas y aller. Mais avec beaucoup de travail il dit oui! "Merci pour garder mon bébé, Boule de coton, tu es un lapin très spécial!" dit mme écureuil.

Appendix F

Writing Sample B from the Enriched French Language Lessons

C. Donne l'infinitif de chaque verbe, puis complète le tableau comme dans les deux exemples.

			Terminaison	Groupe
1. J'attends	→	attendre	re	3e
2. Nous bondissons	→	bondir	ir	2e
3. Tu parles	→			
4. Elle écrit	→			
5. On sait	→			
6. Nous offrons	→			
7. Vous répétez	→			
8. Ils comprennent	→			
9. Je vais	→			
10. Nous subissons	→			

Application

Dans la chanson Fais un voeu mon bonhomme, tu peux trouver douze verbes. Trouve ces douze verbes et complète le tableau en t'inspirant des deux exemples.

Un garçon part en vadrouille
Au bord d'un étang.
Il attrape une grenouille
Qui dit en tremblant:
«Laisse-moi m'en aller et je te promets
De réaliser trois de tes souhaits.»

Fais un voeu, mon bonhomme
Car je peux, mon bonhomme
Si tu veux, mon bonhomme
Te donner le bonheur.

Verbe	Infinitif	Terminaison	Groupe
1. part	partir	ir	3e
2. attrape	attraper	er	1er
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
11.			

Appendix G

Writing Sample from English Language Arts Class

64, What A Year!!

Chapter 1 -When Will They Go ?

"I'm going shopping with Mom, so don't get into trouble,"my snobby sister exclaimed. Oooh I hate my sister, but I answered nicely and innocently," All right, all right."

My name is Jodi and I'm the type who can get real hyper sometimes, that's why my favourite cartoon is'Dennis the Menace'. It was two fifty five p m , five minutes before 'Dennis the Menace' was going to come on, and there was a power failure, just my luck. I began to sulk, but then I remembered I was in charge of the house, so I wiped my eyes and went up to the attic to try to find something to do

Chapter 2- This Can't Be!!

I was moving some boxes, when I noticed this great big mysterious looking box, which had many switches and buttons on it. I pushed one button, and a door slid open from the box! I went inside of the box, and the door slammed shut. I pressed another button and the box began to shake, I felt like I was in the middle of an earthquake. I got this really scary feeling that I was losing my mind. Finally it stopped shaking, and boy was I relieved The door slid open, and I stepped out of the box I must of definitely been losing my mind, because I was not in my attic anymore, I was at a bobsleigh track, where a Canadian bobsled was going to race next. This all just could not be true

I began to look around a bit, when I noticed someone I learned about in school before. I thought it was Doug Anakin, at the age of twenty eight or thirty years old! I must of been going crazy I went over to the man that looked familiar to me and asked him, " You must think I'm crazy, but do you happen to be Doug Anakin?" " I don't think you're crazy at all, of course I'm Doug Anakin." This is definitely was not 1988, it must be, it must be, 1964!! I had gone back in time!

Chapter 3- What A Ride!!

I was feeling so strange about this whole experience, that I just had to rest for a minute, so I began to lean on the Canadian bobsleigh that, Vic Emery, John Emery, Doug Anakin, and Peter Kirby were going to ride I was in such deep thought about this whole situation, that I didn't realize that they had to ride right now or they would be disqualified. Doug Anakin yelled to me, " Please, we have to race now, get out of the bobsled!" I blinked twice, and I got up. "I'm very sorry, please start the race," I stated They started to run, then they all jumped in and they were off!!

When the whole race was over, Vic,John, Doug, and Peter had the highest score, they had won the Olympic gold medal,[of course I already knew they would] After they received their medals, Doug Anakin came up to me and said," I hope you can stay a while and celebrate with us " But I told him it was time I should be running off, and with that I ran to the box,[which no one had noticed yet] and got inside. I pressed the button next to the button that brought me here, and the box began to shake As soon as it had stopped the door slid open, and I was back in my attic.

'64 WHAT A YEAR!!