LANGUAGE USE IN A FIRST GRADE CLASSROOM

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Presented
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in
Education
Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Learners Option

by
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Summer 2010
LANGUAGE USE IN A FIRST GRADE CLASSROOM

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Denise Findlay

Summer 2010

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DEDICATION

With love and thanks to Michael, the invisible committee.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to acknowledge and thank the many people without whom the writing of this thesis would not have been completed.

I extend my thanks and gratitude to the principal and staff of Happy Valley School, especially Mrs. Brown, the school principal, and Mrs. Sherman, in whose classroom I was allowed to work and observe. Mrs. Brown consented to numerous interviews and answered my many questions with patience and graciousness. As well, it was with great kindness, warmth, and openness that Mrs. Sherman allowed me to become a part of her classroom community. She spent many hours in conversations, which provided insights into the communication styles and patterns of her first graders. I appreciate her patience and support during my many hours of observations and recordings.

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I want to thank my family for their unwavering support and continuing belief that I could finally complete such an undertaking. My thanks to my husband, Michael,
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Last, I would like to give special thanks to Anne Russell (retired from California State University, Chico) who willingly accepted the task of formatting a thesis that included 16 tables. Her comments and expertise are greatly valued and appreciated.
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ABSTRACT

LANGUAGE USE IN A FIRST GRADE CLASSROOM

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Frequently, in classrooms, the language that is used has an implied meaning which may not be understood by students. In addition, educators often use specific, common patterns of instructional language such as the initiate-respond-evaluate (IRE) format that generally elicits a one-word response or an answer lacking any depth. In this study, a microethnography was conducted in order that observations might be made that would illustrate the variety of communication styles and patterns in a 1st grade classroom. In this microethnography, it was apparent that situations occurred in which students might not clearly understand the use of certain language structures in which behavioral expectations were desired on the part of the teacher. Also, it was apparent that income levels were integral to the use of language. Those students with lower socioeconomic levels of income were erroneously thought to lack the language required to tell a story. This was, in fact, not the case. As well, a deeper understanding of stories was gained
when first graders were placed in small groups and discussions related to the reading were more conversational than highly structured in an IRE format.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

Currently in California, a variety of indicators suggest that many students are not as educationally and academically successful as other students. Such indicators include high school dropout rates and low performances by some students on high stakes testing. Noticeable among those students are culturally and linguistically diverse students from a range of ethnic and economic backgrounds.

Culturally and linguistically diverse students are those students whose backgrounds are other than the White, English speaking, middle-income populations that exemplify mainstream culture in the United States today. However, many “subcultures” are represented within these non-mainstream populations including English Learners (EL) and immigrants from around the world, as well as individuals from high poverty areas in the United States. Often, there are similarities in the circumstances and characteristics for members of these populations, including low-income levels, varied enculturation patterns and processes, and numerous spoken and written languages.

Moreover, students from low-income households may speak a non-standard version of English such as African-American dialects. In general, students from these households, which include low socioeconomic status (SES), EL, or culturally and
linguistically diverse populations, do not achieve as well as their English only, middle-income classmates (Garcia, 1994; Gipps, 1999; Popham, 2001). Indeed, recent reports regarding exit exams from California high schools indicate that students from diverse backgrounds do not perform or score as well as those from more affluent, middle-class backgrounds (High School Students Score Well on Exit Exam, 2005; Gold, 2004; Slater, 2005).

Evidence of this is demonstrated in many high school rates of attrition and dropout rates. While separate EL data is not available for all EL students, the statistics for Spanish speaking students are indicative of the situation. In California, 84% of all EL are Spanish speakers. The attrition rate from 9th-12th grades (graduation) for Hispanic students is 42%, with only 52% of all Hispanic students finally graduating (Gold, 2004). In addition, in 2001-02, the four-year derived, high school dropout rate for all Hispanic students was 14.7% (as compared to White, non-Hispanic students at 6.7% and African American at 18.8%). Also, the passing rates for EL students for the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) were equally dismal with only 33% successful on the Language Arts portion and 22% successful on the Math portion. Indeed, speaking English as a second language has been identified as one of the early indicators for at-risk students that eventually drop out of high school. These indicators are identified as early as third grade in elementary school (Druian & Butler, 2001). These statistics suggest that, in many cases, current high school instruction and programs are ineffective for EL students.

Likewise, in the spring of each year, the State of California requires statewide testing (the exact timing for this depends on the beginning date for a particular school),
for two-week periods, during which time-mandated testing occurs for K-12 students. All students enrolled in California schools are expected to take these tests. Indeed, the results are not considered valid or counted in any school in which 95% of its students do not participate in this annual cycle of test taking. This percentage includes regular education students as well as those in specialized programs such as Special Education and instruction for ELs (California Department of Education [CDES], 2004).

The tests taken by students include sections aligned to general, national standards (California Achievement Tests, 6th edition, Survey or CAT/6 Survey) and other sections that attempt to measure student achievement in relation to the State of California’s own content standards (California Standards Tests or CST). The CAT/6 Survey seeks to compare California’s students with those throughout the nation while the CST assessment attempts to measure student achievement in terms of California’s own content standards. Currently, the CAT/6 Survey is given in grades 3 and 7 and the CST is given beginning in grade 2 and continuing through grade 12 (CDES, 2004). Both the CAT/6 Survey and the CST assessments are norm-referenced tests that are scored by the State of California (CDES, 2004), and the results sent back to individual districts and schools as a measure of how their students are achieving.

The results of these tests are also used in a statewide grading system to rank various schools and students. The grade, or rank, received by each school is referred to as its Academic Performance Indicator (API). Each year, every school in California is given a target API and expected to meet or exceed this figure. Schools that meet or exceed their API are congratulated and considered to be effective schools. Those schools that do not
meet their API are considered ineffective and termed “underperforming.” Schools in this
category must attempt to meet their target API within three years or face serious conse-
quences. Such consequences may include losing state or federal funding or being taken
over by the State of California as a “comité de padres” school (CDES, 2004).
This makes both the CAT/6 Survey and the CST “high stakes” tests with regard to
resources and funding for those schools found to be “underperforming” and ineffective.
While there may be a complex set of variables that contribute to a school’s achievement
of a high or low API, schools in which the demographic profile includes low socio-
economic levels and non-English speakers, frequently rank in the “underperforming”
category (CDES, 2004). Thus, such tests are even more “high stakes” for schools that
serve a population in which families and students may not enter with similar resources
and background experiences found in predominantly English speaking, higher income
schools.

Statistics for the United States as a whole are also revealing. Recently pub-
lished statistics suggest that the dropout rate for the United States as a whole is approx-
imately 30% for all high school student populations. This figure may be even higher for
Hispanic and African American students, hovering near the 50% level (Thornburg, 2006).
Individuals with low-income backgrounds are much more likely to become high school
dropouts than members belonging to households with higher income levels. Dropout rates
are also high for individuals of Hispanic backgrounds who, in many cases, are also EL
students. In addition, remaining or not remaining in school is also a strong predictor of
future income potential (U.S. Census Bureau, 1997). Individuals who remain in school at
any level and earn a degree (high school, vocational, two- or four-year degrees, graduate or professional degrees) earn progressively higher incomes than do individuals who do not graduate from high school (U.S. Department of Commerce & U.S. Census Bureau [DCCB], 1993). Moreover, as shown in Table 1, proportional increases related to diversity in the United States are likely to continue.

In 1980, 83.1% of the United States population was White, 11.7% Black, 6.4% Hispanic, 0.6% Native American, and approximately 1.5% Asian. By the year 2000, 77.1% was White, 12.9% Black, 12.5% from Hispanic origins, 4.5% Asian, and 1.5% Native American. These proportional changes were even greater in California. There has been a decline in the percentage of the population from 1980 to 2000 for individuals classifying themselves as White, from 76.2% to 63.4%. The Hispanic/Latino population in 1980 accounted for 19.2%, but now encompasses 32.4% of the state’s population. Black percentages have remained relatively stable, including 7.7% in 1980 and declining slightly to 7.4% in 2000. The final two population groups have also increased from 0.9% in 1980 to 1.9% in 2000 for Native Americans, and 5.3% in 1980 to 12.8% in 2000 for Asians (Lopez, 2002). With increasing economic, cultural, and linguistic diversity in the nation’s and in California’s schools, it is critical that students from these populations access the academic and cultural knowledge that allows them to achieve and maintain a level of educational success.

In light of the relationship among socioeconomic status, cultural, and linguistic diversity and academic and educational success, educators in schools with high ELs and low-income populations must develop and implement strategies and programs that
Table 1

Changes in Racial Composition in the United States from 1980 to 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>American Indian</th>
<th>Asian/Pacific Islander</th>
<th>Hispanic/Latino</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>188,371,622</td>
<td>83.1</td>
<td>26,495,025</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>1,420,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>18,030,893</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>1,819,281</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>201,369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>199,686,070</td>
<td>80.3</td>
<td>29,986,060</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>1,959,234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>20,524,327</td>
<td>69.0</td>
<td>2,208,801</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>242,164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>211,460,626</td>
<td>77.1</td>
<td>36,419,434</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>4,119,301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>21,490,973</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>2,513,041</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>627,562</td>
</tr>
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promote and improve their effectiveness. While it is true that educators have little influence over the income levels or the backgrounds from which students arrive at school, they can influence and develop schedules, programs, instructional strategies, and school communities that contribute to the overall success of students in terms of academic content and English language development.

Statement of the Problem

In view of the statistical data regarding low SES, EL, and culturally and linguistically diverse students' performances, many questions arise with regard to school experiences for these students, and how they acquire language, cultural knowledge, and academic content. While many questions emerge related to student performance, those regarding how enculturation and language socialization processes might impact student learning are especially intriguing. Indeed, many educators and researchers have asked whether the extent to which a particular student's socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic background aligns with mainstream, school culture and language will significantly impact learning and access to content knowledge (Brice Heath, 1993; Cazden, 2001; Payne, 2001; Philips, 1983).

These differences in alignment may emerge from shared, cultural patterns and communicative styles that are present within the home context and community, but are not found within the school setting. Thus, students arrive in school acculturated to use particular communication patterns; however, they encounter, what is to them, unfamiliar communication patterns which exist within in the school setting and culture. While success and high achievement for students is the product of a set of highly complex variables
and experiences, investigating cultural and linguistic patterns and communication styles may contribute to overall understanding as to how some students learn and succeed.

Since the 1960s, the body of knowledge related to learning and effective educational practices has grown extensively. Indeed, the book, *How People Learn* (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999), described new thinking and information regarding student learning and the acquisition of knowledge. As a part of the Executive Summary, “. . . five themes that changed conceptions of learning. . . .” were identified with regard to the new science of how learning occurs (Bransford et al., 1999, p. xi). In a particular learning environment, these five themes combine and integrate in order to ensure the acquisition of knowledge. The research and information reviewed in How People Learn presents new understandings and insights as an integration of the following five themes.

1. Memory and the structure of knowledge
2. Analysis of problem solving and reasoning
3. Early foundations
4 Metacognitive processes and self-regulatory capabilities
5. Cultural experience and community participation

While each of these five themes contributes new understanding as to how students learn and gain knowledge, it is the last theme, culture and community participation, which has most recently been included in constructs of learning theories.

The inclusion of culture and community as critical to learning is a reflection of the writings of Vygotsky (1986), and his development of social learning/sociocultural theory in the construction of knowledge (Riddle & Dabbagh, 1999; Rozcycki, 2000;
Vygotsky, 1986). Vygotsky suggested that any learning, including social or academic, occurred in a social context. Vygotsky thought that community members constructed social contexts from the cultural and linguistic enculturation processes undergone by those same members. Language and various forms of discourse expression emerge from the cultural and social context of members, and function as both thought and communication in learning and enculturation processes. Thus, all forms of learning and knowledge acquisition are mediated by culture and the tools of that culture, one of which is language (Riddle & Dabbagh, 1999; Rozcycki, 2000).

In light of Vygotsky’s ideas and theories, there are several implications for student learning and classroom instruction. First, the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of students must be considered when planning classroom lessons and activities. Educators need to be aware of differences in communication and behavior patterns as well as cultural learning styles. A second goal of instruction based on Vygotsky’s writings is to develop social interactions and “talk-time” for students as lessons unfold. This incorporates the social interactions necessary for knowledge construction by students. Third, opportunities for several forms of collaboration need to be provided. These include both student-to-student and teacher-to-student forms of instruction, so that “. . .learning becomes a reciprocal experience for the students and teacher” (Riddle & Dabbagh, 1999, p. 1). The classroom environment and arrangement needs to reflect the fact that student interaction and collaboration occur as an integral part of knowledge acquisition.

Traditionally, American classrooms are not reflective of Vygotsky’s thinking and theories. Rather than considering the linguistic and cultural communication patterns
and varying forms of interaction or collaboration with which students enter school, instruction is generally provided and controlled by the teacher who may be acculturated in a language and culture substantially different from the students’ (Cazden, 2001).

Teachers may include more frequent use of school language and discourse styles that reflect both educational and mainstream culture rather than that of the students in the school setting.

Many educational researchers have discussed one aspect of the use of school language and discourse extensively. They have focused on the heavy reliance by teachers on a particular, traditional instructional structure when teachers provide classroom lessons. In general, teachers use a fairly linear discourse structure when they deliver many lessons and instruction. This discourse structure is composed of a three-part sequence, which is referred to as Initiate, Respond and Evaluate (IRE) or Initiate, Respond, Feedback (IRF) (Cazden, 2001; Diaz-Rico, 2004; Mehan, 1991). In either case, this questioning sequence is considered a more direct discourse style in which a minimal response is expected from the student. Also, this more minimal response often results in students repeating back or “displaying” information either provided by the teacher or gained from reading a text (Cazden, 2001; Diaz-Rico, 2004; Mehan, 1991).

This linear instructional sequence frequently used by teachers as normal “school language” often results in miscommunications for students who have been acculturated into a more narrative, contextualized discourse pattern. Such students are often from economically, linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. This traditional, linear discourse pattern is unfamiliar to them. As a result, they find it difficult to
enter into and negotiate meaning from school discourse and speech. In the end, they struggle to access the content and meaning of school culture and communication (Brice Heath, 1983; Hart & Risley, 2003; Payne, 2001; Philips, 1983).

In addition to the traditional, linear classroom discourse structure being unfamiliar to some students, this structure allows for teachers to control the types of discourse that occur. This is especially true with regard to the types and levels of questions asked by teachers when this linear structure is used. Teachers generally initiate the sequence with a question, and students answer with a response related to the teacher-selected topic. This sequence also sanctions the authority and power of the teacher to dominate speech and conversations in the classroom. Moreover, when this occurs, teachers control the “floor,” and the pace, depth, and level of discourse (Cazden, 2001).

In light of the variations in communication style and patterns that exist among students, and the prevalence of traditional instructional structures, it is critical that educators are consciously aware of how instruction is delivered within classrooms. They also need to be aware of the constraints and limitations that occur when such structures are used. For example, a particular instructional structure may or may not encourage deeper thinking or critical problem solving simply because the teacher controls the pacing, content, and depth of the conversation. This may be especially true of the types of questions teachers ask and the responses they expect. Such structures may also limit familiar discourse styles such as a more narrative, contextualized conversational style with which students arrive in school settings (Cazden, 2001). Once educators become aware of
frequently used instructional structures, they can ascertain how they might impact student learning and acquisition of academic content.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to observe and describe the discourse styles and communication patterns present in a highly diverse, mainstream classroom in a Northern California school setting. In view of the current research and thinking with regard to enculturation and learning processes, it is helpful to know how such processes may occur and develop within a classroom setting. Such direct observation and description can help shed light on how enculturation and learning processes may impact student learning. They may also provide insights into effective practices for educators and suggest implications for further research, study and practice.

Hypothesis and Related Research Questions

The main focus of this study was to observe and describe the cultural context and speech behavior within an educational setting, specifically, an elementary classroom. The cultural context of the classroom is, to a certain extent, a reflection of the demographics and prevailing attitudes of the local community. The school setting, and the individuals who are present and work within its walls, also influence the cultural context of a classroom. Therefore, it is important to observe and describe the classroom in relation to the broader scope of the community in general.

In addition, a classroom of students must be viewed as a representative sampling of the larger speech communities present within the broader, local population.
However, it is important to keep in mind that the classroom setting and its participants derive their language use, discourse styles, interaction patterns, and communicative actions and situations from the cultural context created by its members. Moreover, the school environment and culture also impose constraints on the communicative patterns and behaviors of classroom speakers. These culturally and linguistically diverse communication styles all contribute to the emergence of a distinct and unique language and culture within the classroom.

While classroom culture and language styles emerge from the participants within the classroom setting, it is sometimes precisely the diverse nature and variety of communication styles and patterns that creates issues of learning and instruction for both educators and students. Therefore, it is important for educators to be aware of the backgrounds, communication and learning styles, and cultural knowledge with which students enter the school environment. In addition, implementing curricula, content, and instructional practices with regard to student culture and communication is critical in terms of the potential for learning and achievement. As well, the use of linear questioning sequences as the prevailing instructional structure in classrooms is contrary not only to Vygotsky’s (1986) theory of knowledge construction, but also to many of the more contextualized discourse styles and communication patterns with which students arrive in the school environment. Its frequent use will impact student learning by limiting and controlling the depth and length of student responses and discussion when questioning occurs. Generally, more display or recall type questions will be asked rather than questions that promote student thinking.
Thus, the objectives and goals of this study were to observe and describe both the cultural context and the speech setting to better understand how language and culture impact learning and instruction within the classroom setting. In light of these objectives and goals, the following research questions formed the initial impetus for this study:

What discourse styles and communication patterns are apparent within the classroom setting as a school’s population changes and transitions from one socioeconomic level to another? Are the types of students’ responses related to their cultural and linguistic discourse styles or communication patterns? Do the types of questions asked by the teacher impact student response and discussion? Is there a relationship among students’ discourse styles, communication patterns and the type of students’ responses when different types of questioning structures are implemented?

Assumptions

1. Communication patterns and behaviors vary for students and teachers both, depending on background culture, and the socialization/enculturation processes with which students and teachers arrive in the school environment.

2. Native Americans, Latino and many Asian students employ a more indirect, contextualized discourse style.

3. Low socioeconomic status populations tend to have a more indirect, contextualized discourse style.

4. Most teachers in traditional, mainstream American schools tend to employ a more direct, decontextualized discourse style when providing instruction and lessons to
students (Brice Heath, 1983; Cazden, 2001; Diaz-Rico, 2004; Jacob, 1993; Kusnick, 1997; Mehan, 1991; Philips, 1983; Rozcycki, 2000).

5. The school and classroom environment and context are culturally constructed expressions of behavior and may alter, restrict, or constrain behavior and communication styles of its members (Cazden, 2001).

Limitations

1. Data collection occurred over a two-month period of time, and this may only serve to be a preliminary introduction to the recurrent patterns and behaviors that students and teachers may exhibit.

2. Patterns and behaviors observed and described in one, specific classroom may not necessarily be generalized to other classrooms or educational contexts.

3. Direct observation as a method of collecting data may interrupt, alter, constrain or restrict the “natural” setting and behaviors of the classroom or individuals within it.

4. Observations and interpretations are made through the “cultural filters” of the researcher.

Delimitations

1. The focus is on discourse and social interactions between the classroom teacher and students as it relates to instructional structures employed in the classroom setting.

2. The focus is on the collection of qualitative, descriptive data.
Definition of Terms

1. Communication—interactions which transmit information and knowledge from one person to another or a group in a variety of forms that can include verbal, written and oral discourse, non-verbal gestures (kinesics), and how individuals space themselves when discourse occurs (proxemics).

2. Code switching—Altering a speech format to fit a particular situation; that is, switching from formal to informal English when speaking with close, personal friends (Findlay, 1998, p. 31).

3. Direct discourse style—a brief, decontextualized, and straightforward answer in which the speaker answers or speaks to a main point or subject as quickly as possible.

4. Display questions—”... questions which test the other speaker’s knowledge of the answer...” (Kusnick, 1997, p. 3). The answer is generally factual, only expected to be one or two words long and is a “... particular piece of knowledge... the student already knows” (Kusnick, p. 3).

5. Enculturation—the process, manner and instruction by “... which humans learn to become members of their society” (Nanda, 2004, p. 122).

6. Indirect discourse style—a more narrative, “contextualized” style of speaking in which the speaker(s) incorporates a series of related ideas or subjects into their oral or written discussion. There is not necessarily a main point or subject within the discourse.

7. Instructional structures—the routine practices encountered in the daily lessons and discourse of the classroom setting including “wait time,” questioning, “teacher-talk time,” and the IRE/IRF instructional structure (Cazden, 2001).
8. Language socialization— the process by which members of a community or society become fluent not only in the spoken language of the group, but also the social knowledge required to function as a member of the group (Duranti, 1997).

9. Participant structures—who is talking and who is listening in a conversation or during instruction. Philips (1983) described four such structures: a. teacher or another student speaking to the class; b. teacher speaking to a small group; c. teacher speaking to one student; and d. student working alone on “desk work.”

10. Referent questions—questions that ask for “... information about situations, events, actions, purposes, relationships or properties,” or ask students to verify, justify or explain their thinking (Kusnick, 1997, p. 3).

11. Speech events—exchanges of conversation between two or more individuals (Duranti, 1997).

12. Speech acts—specific utterances of an individual (Duranti, 1997).
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Culture as a Paradigm

According to the *American Heritage College Dictionary* (1993), the broad
discipline of social science includes such subgroups as psychology, sociology, geogra-
phy, political science, history, law, education, economics, linguistics, and anthropology.
In general, these areas of study are those that relate to some aspect of the human condi-
tion, as well as mankind’s impact on the world. For example, geography deals with the
study of the earth and the impact humans have on it. In sociology, researchers study
human social behaviors, institutions, and how humans organize themselves. Psycholo-
gists, on the other hand, deal more with the mental and behavioral characteristics asso-
ciated with the individual. Definitions could be supplied for each subgroup within the
broader discipline of social science; however, those provided above demonstrate an
emphasis on one particular aspect or area of study related to human society.

Notably, anthropology is also included as a subgroup within social science. In
defining anthropology, however, a unique difference is revealed among anthropology and
the related subgroups within social science. Anthropology is broadly defined as

the comparative study of human societies and cultures . . . Anthropology at-
ttempts to comprehend the entire human experience, . . . It attempts to under-
stand the similarities and differences among human cultures . . . through the
study of humanity in its total variety. . . . (Nanda, 2004, p. 3)
In reviewing this definition of anthropology, it is evident that it encompasses, in a holistic way, all aspects of humans and their behaviors, impacts and institutions. In looking at various societies or groups, anthropologists collect data on the entirety of a particular group’s membership and the social behaviors and patterns exhibited by them. It seeks to clarify numerous organizational strategies such as the aesthetic, religious, political, social, linguistic, or economic systems of a particular group. All of these systems are viewed as integrated into a dynamic and fluid network, which serve to structure and impact the lives of those within such a system’s influence, and who also understand its patterns, rules and symbols. In general, other subgroups in social science look at specific, particular aspects or facets of humanity; for example, psychology, which early on “. . . tended to ignore the social context in favor of the cognitive processes” (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2008, p. 6). Anthropology, on the other hand, attempted to view the entirety of a particular human society, review similarities and differences, and understand patterns that might emerge; anthropology seeks to understand a society’s culture. Hence, the use of culture, and the inclusive nature of anthropology, provides an excellent, overarching paradigm or framework for study, research, and investigation in education.

In an attempt to define and understand culture as a conceptual framework, as well as the role that culture plays in a variety of contexts, anthropologists and, indeed, social scientists in general, have developed a number of definitions of “culture.” Definitions of culture have derived from a variety of philosophies including pragmatics, structuralists, cognitive, symbolic, or interactionist perspectives (Atkinson, Delamont, Lofland, & Lofland, 2001; Geertz, 1973; Varenne, 2008). Among the first to attempt a definition
of culture was E.B. Tylor who referred to culture as a “complex whole... that incorporates knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Harris, 1983, p. 5; Geertz, 1973; Honigman, 1976; Varenne, 2008). Culture has also been viewed as a “structure” that imposes itself on human behavior, as a means with which to explain behavior, as that which is learned and transmitted, and that which is symbolic and understood by members of a particular society (Harris, 1983, p. 320-329; Honigman, 1976).

While there are many perspectives and definitions of culture, six aspects of culture, and how it might be viewed as an overarching structure for research within the school and classroom setting, have been described by Duranti (1997). The six aspects are a) culture as distinct from nature, b) culture as knowledge, c) culture as communication, d) culture as mediation, e) culture as a system of practices, and f) culture as a system of participation. Each of these may be used as a foundation for research.

First, Duranti (1997) describes culture as distinct from nature:

Culture as distinct from nature—the notion that humans are somehow separated or no longer confined or constrained by nature; that they are able to view the natural world as separate and distinct from themselves; that there is a learned, behavioral component to culture which is distinct from nature and the biological capacity for learning; and that through culture and language, humans categorize and impose their mental schemata and realities on nature and the natural world. (p. 23-24)

For students and teachers, it is precisely this imposition of their language and culture on their environment and world which allows humans to distinguish themselves from nature. Based on teacher expectations, rules and constraints, students enter a classroom and encounter the culture of the classroom. Students bring with them their previous
experiences and understandings regarding their shared culture at home and assume that
the cultural rules will apply at school. When students enter a classroom, they perceive
themselves and their classmates in terms of their respective socialization and culturally-
based schemata that separate them from nature and connect them to other individuals
within the classroom. However, all members of the classroom do not necessarily share
such schemata.

Secondly, Duranti (1997) describes culture as knowledge in terms of
procedures and propositions: culture as knowledge—that a group or society shares a body
of knowledge, not only with regard to propositional knowledge, but also in terms of
procedural knowledge; there is a shared, mental reality and set of guidelines for that
society or group (p. 23-30). Culture as knowledge is critical for both students and
teachers since knowledge of the school environment allows success within the school
context both socially and academically. Shared cultural knowledge allows students to
participate in the process of learning and the acquisition of knowledge. However,
miscommunication and mismatches can occur when individuals in the classroom do not
share the same body of cultural knowledge and rules. This includes both procedural and
propositional knowledge related to the populations that enter into a classroom setting.

Duranti’s (1997) third discussion describes culture as communication. This
idea is related to the shared understanding that students and teachers must have in order
to interpret each other’s behaviors and speech. Duranti describes this as culture as
communication—that culture is a set of symbols or signs (semiotics) that can hold
meaning for the society or group that connects meaning to those signs and symbols; that
the society or group understands and interprets these signs and symbols, and because their meaning is shared, can communicate with one another. Such signs and symbols can be communicated using language and all five senses, and in an abstract, subtle, or concrete fashion through pragmatics and language (p. 33-38). Culture as communication is inherent in the development of classroom culture in any situation. Communication and how it occurs is critical for learning and instruction to occur. Within the classroom setting, it is critical that students understand the symbols and signs that are contextualized within speech events and acts. Without a shared understanding of explicit and implicit speech and communication, miscommunications and misunderstandings can interfere with learning and instruction.

The fourth idea discussed by Duranti (1997) is that culture serves to mediate or facilitate interaction between human societies and the natural world: culture as mediation—that culture serves to mediate or intervene between human societies and the natural world; that culture provides the tools and knowledge that allow humans, societies and groups to survive and function within environments, both social and physical (p. 39-43). Culture can also mediate the school environment for students within the classroom setting. For example, when students interpret and intervene as negotiators and brokers of cultural rules and behaviors for others, they are mediating the cultural differences for their classmates or members of the school setting. Often students from the same or divergent cultures rely on each other’s expertise in terms of how to understand events and instruction in the classroom (Findlay, 1992).
Culture as a system of practices is the fifth description of culture that Duranti (1997) provides: culture as a system of practices—that culture is a set of practices or behaviors and guidelines that allow individuals to function and operate within a specific group or society; that culture is a resource that allows the individual to use their cultural knowledge to function, but that in the simple act of using their cultural guidelines and knowledge, they also reproduce and promote the culture from which the guidelines and knowledge emerged (p. 43-46). Culture as a system of practices is highly important within the classroom setting for several reasons. The teacher creates a classroom culture and frequently it is integrated into the daily routines and activities of the school environment. Students placed in the classroom must adapt to the practices determined and set in motion by the rules and practices developed. In short, they must learn the practices of the classroom and share these practices with classmates. Practices of the classroom may or may not be aligned to the cultural practices with which students enter school. However, once in school, the practices developed and set in place by teachers and educators take precedence over those brought from home.

The last description of culture included by Duranti (1997) is culture as a system of participation. Ways of participating are crucial for students to know and learn in order for them to succeed in any classroom or school environment. Duranti describes this as culture as a system of participation—that culture is a system in which members of the culture must interact at a variety of levels: socially, verbally, and collectively, and all of which require participation by its members (p. 46-47).
As well, culture as participation is implied simply by the nature of the classroom setting itself. Students participate and work in the instructional setting within the context of the rules and practices established. It is “. . . based on the assumption that any action in the world, including verbal communication, has an inherently social, collective and participatory quality” (Duranti, 1997, p. 46). Student and teacher participation, in the shared context of the classroom culture, strengthens the process of learning and teaching.

Theoretical aspects and theories of culture, such as those defined above, provide a framework or point-of-view from which to develop questions and carry out research. All of the characteristics of culture outlined above have value when attempting to observe, interpret, and understand cultural influences and practices. Indeed, it is precisely these influences and practices that emerge within a culture that intrigue anthropologists; that is, they are specifically interested in the relationship that exists between how societies and groups derive, learn, transmit, and impose their culture on the world, and the resulting linguistic and mental schemata which allows for the expression of that culture. It is this dynamic and symbolic interface between cultural expression and linguistic expression, which is referred to as “language.” In fact, language and culture are so closely integrated and intertwined in most societies that speakers often identify themselves as speakers of a specific language, and, by extension, as members of the culture that speaks that language.

The idea that culture is shared, mediating, participatory, communicative, a set of practices, and incorporates a shared set of knowledge, is especially meaningful with regard to educational settings. This is true in relation to current views of learning theory.
Two general theoretical models come to mind: sociocultural and cognitive learning theories. Sociocultural theories view the learning process as social—that there is a need for discussion, interaction and processing on the part of learners (Nelson-Barber, 1999; Vygotsky, 1986). This relates especially well to culture in terms of practice and communication. In the cognitive theory of learning, the learner goes through a set of developmental levels and attains knowledge as their thinking processes become increasingly more complex. The cognitive model as a format for learning is also reflected in culture as a participatory and social process (Bransford et al., 1999; Nelson-Barber, 1999). Thus, the influences and perspectives of this study take into account culture in all its manifestations, as well as how culture relates to learning theory and language use and communication within the classroom.

In the realm of anthropology that includes the aspects of culture previously defined, it is critical to realize that each aspect of culture has a set of associated rules, cues, and behaviors. At various times throughout the day, a particular aspect of culture can function as a facilitator of communication, behavior, or expression. It is in the blending and fluid nature of culture, in which each aspect merges with another, that allows individuals to negotiate their way through the networks and webs of human interaction. Without an understanding of the rules, cues and behaviors of a particular culture, one cannot “know” or behave appropriately. Such rules, cues, and behaviors form the “symbols” from which one learns to negotiate their way through a particular culture’s matrix. In doing so, one must interpret these symbols or miscommunications may result. In this way, the concept of culture interfaces with symbolic knowledge and structures the
behaviors of both the society and individuals within it. Language and speech are contextualized within the matrix of culture and symbols, and allow members to transmit, teach, and learn expected cultural knowledge. Thus, analyzing, interpreting, and understanding a particular culture is also analyzing, interpreting, and understanding the symbols used by its members.

Geertz (1973) has written comprehensively about the relationship between language and culture, and the symbols or “semiotics” that allows members to interpret, understand, and communicate with each other. Such cultural and symbolic knowledge is transmitted and shared among the members of a particular culture, whether it is abstract or concrete. For example, a statue of Saint Joan of Arc conveys both a concrete aspect (statue, technology of creating the statue) and an abstract aspect (religion, Christianity, martyrdom) that members view and perceive easily, whereas an outsider might not share the same understanding. Indeed, this is one of the difficulties in attempting to interpret unique objects and artifacts uncovered in archaeological excavations. Modern day excavators regularly hypothesize as to possible meanings or functions for such items. However, because excavators lack a set of shared cultural knowledge and symbols with the population under investigation, any interpretations are mainly conjecture. This idea applies equally to educators and students who may not share the same cultural knowledge and symbols. The conclusions reached by either party (student or teacher/educator) may be in conflict and incorrect if they do not share the cultural contexts of each other. For non-members of a culture, such interpretations are equally difficult when confronted with differences in behavior or habits; hence symbolic knowledge is essential:
The whole point of a semiotic approach to culture is, as I have said, to aid us in gaining access to the conceptual world in which our subjects live so that we can, in some extended sense of the term, converse with them. (Geertz, 1973, p. 24)

The value of an anthropological approach, in terms of cultural and symbolic knowledge, and with regard to educational settings, was recognized early on by anthropologists. Initially, this research emerged from the writings of a number of pioneers in cultural anthropology; among them were Gregory Bateson, Ruth Benedict, Franz Boas, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Melville Herskovits, Margaret Mead, Robert Redfield, and Edward Sapir, (Eddy, 1997, pp. 5-6). Their research largely dealt with the importance of culture and personalities as it related to the educational processes and learning of cultural rules by individuals within particular societies, especially those that were non-Western. This contrasted with much of the research described at the time (1920s, 1930s, and 1940s), which emerged from writings in psychology by Freud, Piaget, and Watson. Mainly, these ideas reflected more Western viewpoints in terms of education, learning theory and how culture was acquired (Eddy, 1997, p. 8; Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2008, pp. 33-36; Rilling, 2000). For these psychologists, learning occurred through conscious introspection, movement through cognitive developmental stages or through conditioning for specific behaviors (Rilling, 2000). While much debate raged among psychologists, anthropologists began to add to the discussion with new studies and ethnographies from around the world, which provided data from a cross-cultural perspective (Mead, 1928; Benedict, 1934).
Because of these early, cross-cultural studies, anthropologists tended to view “learning” differently than psychologists or other social sciences. For them, learning occurred within the context of an individual’s culture. As children grew, their culture imposed accepted methods and ways of learning or acquiring the behaviors and skills needed to be a member of society. Among anthropologists, the term enculturation was coined to express the notion that cultural contexts imposed a particular method or manner in which individuals were imbued with their culture (Herskovits, 1956). Enculturation “. . . is in essence a process of conscious or unconscious conditioning, exercised within the limits sanctioned by a given body of custom” (Herskovits, p. 39). Thus, the notion of enculturation encompassed the educative processes employed by any society for the acquisition of culture through the teaching and learning of its members. By extension, this process involved the society or group that did the teaching or the learning from which individuals gained cultural competence. It demonstrated that acquiring culture was somehow a social activity and “. . . humans develop in particular social contexts and acquire competence in particular cultural systems” (Wolcott, 1991, p 257).

As this line of inquiry continued, anthropologists set about to define teaching and educational processes in order to incorporate both Western and non-Western societies. As a result, the concept of “education” that was developed contrasts markedly with the idea of “education,” and how it is currently understood in the United States. Among the general population of the United States, the terms “. . . to educate or provide with an education. . . .” refers to the K-12 and college or university experience; it is “. . . to teach
or train a person, especially in a school or college: develop the mind; the act of training or teaching...” (American Heritage Dictionary, 1993, p. 226). Education, in its broadest sense, is the acquisition of knowledge and information in a formal setting—that is, “school.”

However, for anthropologists, a new definition evolved, which allowed them to focus on the notion of education within the discipline of anthropology. Much of the work of anthropologists who conducted field studies in education was based on the emergence of cross-cultural studies and the issues developing in the American educational system. They began to “...examine education as a process of cultural transmission both in the United States and in cross-cultural contexts” (Ford, 1997, p. 33). Additionally, anthropologists accepted a broader definition of “education” and began to draw a distinction between education and schooling:

We see education as cultural transmission, and of course cultural transmission requires cultural learnings, so learning and transmission are never separated except by convention. Further, we see that aspect of cultural transmission in which we are most interested—education in the broad sense, schooling in the narrower sense (including initiations, rites of passage, apprenticeships, as well as schools)—as a calculated intervention in the learning process. (Spindler, 1997, p. 52)

As well, in 1954, the Stanford Conference on Education and Anthropology was convened in an attempt to determine how education and anthropology might gain insight and benefit from each other’s constructs and theories. During the conference, the relevance of using ethnographic strategies and techniques to conduct educational research was much in evidence. In addition, the newly handed down ruling of the United States Supreme Court regarding segregation (Brown v. Board of Education, 2001) provided new
opportunities for research in terms of how desegregation and the collision of different enculturation and educational processes would unfold (Spindler, 1955, pp. 279-295).

While much of the writing of these early anthropologists related to culture, personality, and the developmental processes among adolescents both in Western and non-Western societies, such studies did provide the impetus for some researchers to enter the world of the classroom and actually apply their findings in order to suggest methods and strategies to improve schooling for students. They especially applied their thinking to African Americans and Native Americans in the United States and to schools in numerous areas of Africa. These ethnographies directly led to “. . . the need of Western educators to take indigenous native systems of education into account when formulating educational policies. . . ” (Eddy, 1997, p. 11). By extension, this is an increasingly important need in the United States educational setting and those students that are encompassed by it. This is especially current in light of the numbers of immigrants entering the United States from around the world along with the diverse languages and cultures from which these students derive.

Learning as a Sociocultural Event

While anthropologists accepted a broader definition of education and defined it in terms of culture transmission, it was not applied to learning theories until Vygotsky (1986) published *Thought and Language*. Vygotsky agreed that there are many variables and theories about how learning might occur—including biological, environmental, and developmental—but he also held the view that learning occurred in a sociocultural context. Vygotsky recognized that there was a genetic or biological component in an
individual’s ability to learn. However, he differed with Piaget and others of the time in that he believed “... development is the result of interaction between cultural and historical factors” (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2008, p. 36). Vygotsky theorized that there was a connection between language and thought; that the development of cognitive ability was somehow tied to social influences. He believed that “... social influences contribute significantly to children’s development of cognitive abilities and that mentoring or guidance strengthens their growth” (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, p. 36). In addition, social influences were culturally dependent because the learning “tools” that students employed were embedded within the cultural matrix from which they developed. Tools for learning included the use of language in order to communicate thoughts and information. Thus, learning occurred in a sociocultural matrix that depended on language, communication and understanding the symbolically coded cues and tools within an individual’s culture (Gardiner, 2008; Vygotsky, 1986).

In addition to learning as culturally dependent, “how” learning occurred also involved the use of “agents of mediation” (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2008; Vygotsky, 1986). Two types of agents of mediation have been described. First, there is the “human mediator”—an adult or individual with whom the child interacts in order to learn a particular skill or set of knowledge. For Vygotsky, in any learning, it was first necessary to have “modeling” and “guidance” from the adult/mediator regarding some activity. This provided the needed “interaction/appropriation” from which learning emerged. Often, it was accompanied by questions or statements (language and communication), either from the learner or the mediator, from which understanding evolved. Once an interaction
occurred, the learner “internalized” the skill and then was able to self-direct him- or herself, being able to repeat the skill without further assistance. In the teaching/learning “event,” the nature of the interaction between the mediator and learner is culturally derived; that is, culture governs and structures how such an interaction unfolded.

Vygotsky’s (1986) second type of mediator is symbolic. Symbolic mediators include “. . . different signs, symbols, writing, formulae, and graphic organizers” (pp. 23-24). In order for learning to occur, the learner must be able to decipher or decode the symbols, and such symbols must be conveyed and taught to learners. Such symbols are culturally embedded, and “. . . favor culture-specificity rather than universality. . . ” (p. 27). Thus, for optimum learning to occur, both types of agents of mediation are necessary, and

The key concept in this new orientation is that of psychological tools. Psychological tools are those symbolic artifacts – signs, symbols, texts, formulae, graphic organizers – that when internalized help individuals master their own natural psychological functions of perception, memory, attention, and so on. Each culture has its own set of psychological tools and situations in which these tools are appropriate. (pp. 15-16)

A variety of studies have been undertaken which have attempted to investigate Vygotsky’s ideas that learning is culturally mediated through human interaction and symbols. These range from specific studies to learn more about the nature of interaction patterns between mothers and caretakers and those attempting to interpret and understand the symbolic nature of communication within a particular culture (Bernstein & Henderson, 1974; Bongartz, 2003; Clancy, 1989; Hart & Risley, 2003; Lynn, 1997; Mehan, 1991; Michaels, 2005; Ochs, 1993; Pan, Rowe, Singer, & Snow, 2005). In general, much of the understanding and discussion regarding culture and how it structures
learning has emerged from such studies, although there remains much more in terms of research to undertake.

Enculturation Processes

Enculturation is the process that allows one generation to impart its traditions, beliefs, behaviors and values to the generation that follows (Harris, 1983; Nanda, 2004). For educators, understanding the impact of enculturation on student learning and behavior within an educational setting is essential. This includes being able to align and interface with the learning, discourse, and communication styles with which students arrive at school. This is true especially in early, primary grades (preschool, kindergarten, and first grade, where students first encounter the culture, expectations, and language of the school)( Brice Heath, 1983; Philips, 1983).

Whether or not students are able to match enculturation processes learned in the home environment with that found in the school setting, may ultimately shape their success within the educational setting. Thus, it is important for educators to recognize student responses, questions, discourse, and learning styles and how they are expressed within the classroom.

As enculturation occurs, cultural elements and characteristics are transmitted to younger members of a culture. As a result, continuity is maintained for a particular society or population. How, and in what manner, each culture achieves continuity varies widely throughout the world. For example, controlling the behavior of children is culturally prescribed and sanctioned in order to encourage the values and appropriate behaviors desired by a particular society. In many instances, educational environments and
school classrooms function as models and conveyors of dominant cultural values and beliefs. This is supported by one particular study comparing preschools in Japan, China and the United States in which misbehaving children were treated quite differently (Nanda, 2004; Tobin, Wu & Davidson, 1989).

For example, in Japan, a preschool student named Hiroki was behaving in a highly disruptive fashion. He threw possessions belonging to classmates on the floor, pushed, shoved, and hurt other children, and refused to clean up along with the other students. During this time, the teacher did not punish Hiroki and simply ignored his behavior. Finally, when another student in the class reported Hiroki’s behavior to the teacher, the teacher urged the student to consult with her peers in the class and discover a way of dealing with Hiroki’s behavior. Both the teacher and the administrator believed this was the best intervention for Hiroki’s behavior (Nanda, 2004; Tobin et al., & Davidson, 1989). In this situation, the goals of both the teacher and the administrator were to encourage the development of the Japanese value of accountability to the social groupings within their society, and that cooperation and shared responsibility are desired behaviors and beliefs.

In contrast to the Japanese, American teachers tended to intervene almost immediately when students misbehaved. Interventions included discussions with the students, which required the students to express their feelings and tell each other “. . . with words instead of grabbing. . . ” how they might solve their problems and explain what they wanted (Tobin et al., 1989, p. 132). The emphasis for American teachers was on solving problems as individuals through discussion and compromise.
Both the Japanese and American approaches were different from the Chinese discipline strategies. Chinese teachers felt that students must be disciplined immediately, in an authoritarian manner, and with little expression or discussion of feelings. For the Chinese educators, students must learn obedience and allegiance to the teacher, administrator, and, ultimately, to the idea that in China “. . . preschool teachers hope to instill in children less an identity with their class or school . . . than an identity as citizens, as cadres of the People’s Republic” (Tobin et al., 1989, pp. 109).

When video examples of teachers disciplining students in each of the three preschool settings were shown to parents, teachers, and administrators in the three cultures, reactions and responses by the observers were also embedded in a cultural context. Japanese educators felt that both the Chinese and American personnel intervened too quickly, and that not enough accountability for group behavior was placed on the students themselves. Both the Chinese and Japanese thought that American teachers spent too much time trying to reason, explain, and discuss behavior with students. American and Japanese educators both felt that there was too much regimentation and structure when Chinese students were disciplined.

In the three cultures described above, the process of enculturation varies greatly. Different societal elements, ways of learning, traits, and behaviors are all desired in each culture. The manner, in which children are instructed, whether implicitly or explicitly, differs and results in members who are integrated into the social contexts of their particular culture. Enculturation processes are familiar to the members of each population. As such, they allow members to learn and understand cultural nuances and subtleties
within a specific cultural context. This context includes behaviors, speech and discourse patterns, communication styles, and how individuals learn. While China and Japan are thousands of miles away, these examples demonstrate how varying enculturation processes provide insight not only into the manner in which culture transmission occurs, but also reflect how such transmission can be implicit or explicit.

Broad Influences Impacting Enculturation Processes

Generally, enculturation processes entail three broad and fluid conditions (Peshkin, 1982). First, location or geographical separation promotes variation as populations may be isolated from one another and undertake less interaction. Secondly, enculturation processes may arise in relation to socioeconomic status where low-income populations are concentrated in particular neighborhoods. Finally, the ethnic background of a specific population may influence enculturation processes. Within any community, it is the interplay of these conditions that creates an incredibly complex dynamic within a particular culture or society.

The influences exerted on individuals by each of these three, broad conditions, are considerable. Individuals may identify with a particular ethnic group or income level, and consider themselves as residing in a particular region or area (such as rural or urban). Thus, enculturation processes are a function of general, local patterns, perceived ethnic identification and socioeconomic status. Indeed, enculturation patterns are, at varying levels, dynamic integrations of these three influences, which continue to evolve and may become altered considerably over time.
These dynamic enculturation processes shape and form cultural patterns and behaviors around the world. Integral to the processes of enculturation are the roles that language and language socialization play in cultural transmission, and the ability for an individual to function within a particular culture, society or group. Numerous researchers have investigated the notion of language socialization and its effects on understanding and learning, not only in relation to the subtle nuances of shared communication patterns, but also with regard to its impact on student learning within a school setting (Brice Heath, 1983; Daniell, 1996; Gee, 1985; Kyratzis, 2005; Michaels, 2005; Moje, 2000; Philips, 1983; Poveda, 2001, 2004; Rowe, Coker, & Pan, 2004; Whitbeck, Hoyt, Stubben, & LaFromboise, 2001).

Language socialization is the process by which members of a community or society become fluent not only in the spoken language of the group, but also the social knowledge required to function as a member of the group (Duranti, 1997). Moreover, “Language socialization has as its goal the understanding of how persons become competent members of social groups and the role of language in this process” (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986, p. 167). Indeed, some researchers have suggested that differences in language socialization and communication patterns among some communities and the school environment and culture significantly impact student learning and understanding (Adger, Wolfram, Detwyler, & Harry, 1992; Bernstein & Henderson, 1974; Brice Heath, 1983; Coonfield-Ward, 1971; Marshall, 2000; Miller, 1994; Payne, 2001; Philips, 1983; Schecter & Bayley, 2004; Whitbeck et al., 2001).
Understanding such dynamic and community-specific language socialization processes may provide insight into learning styles that are familiar to children, and how instruction, in more formal settings, such as a school environment in the United States, may impact student learning. This understanding and knowledge includes, but is not limited to, participation structures such as how children are grouped for learning, who speaks to whom during the learning process, how pausing and silence are used in speech events and situations, as well as whether learning is more experiential, conversational or in a direct instructional format. The speech interactions and communication patterns of parents, especially mothers, also impacts the manner in which information, instruction and learning occur and culture is transmitted. Such patterns may impact the overall success and achievement of students.

For example, Coonfield-Ward (1971) described language socialization patterns that emerged in a rural, low socioeconomic, African-American community located in Rosepoint, Louisiana, a town in the rural American South. Coonfield-Ward describes how the unique blending of ethnic background, income level, and rural location integrate to create particular, community-specific processes and patterns in terms of language socialization. In Rosepoint, schedules, adult supervision, and written texts were not generally part of the home environment where daily schedules evolved at the discretion of the child. Family meals were not eaten together; rather, family members ate at varying times and throughout the day as they became hungry. In addition, verbal expression and speech interactions were mainly undertaken in peer relationships and not with adults. Children were expected to listen silently as adults conversed with either acquaintances,
relatives, or a variety of tradesmen and store clerks. In using speech with adult community members, children functioned mainly as messengers or to deliver groceries or other items requested by adults.

Coonfield-Ward further elaborated on language socialization patterns she noticed in Rosepoint and went on to describe the differences in speech patterns between Rosepoint families and more standardized, mainstream, White, middle-class speech patterns. White, middle-class mothers or adults attempted to have meaningful conversations with their children that were, to a certain extent, also an attempt to instruct children in correct English syntax and grammar. Generally, this was carried out by adults through the “expansion” of sentences uttered by the child. This is illustrated in the following example in which the mother restates, corrects, and expands the child’s utterances (Coonfield-Ward, 1971, pp. 43-44).

Kathy: Go store Mommy?
Mother: Oh, you want to go to the store?
Kathy: Go now?
Mother: We can’t go now. We have to eat dinner.
Kathy: Eat dinner.

In contrast, a Rosepoint mother focuses on behaviors as demonstrated by the following exchange, rather than attempting to instruct or converse with her child:

Mother: Say, Mark quit it. (Uttered loudly each time.)
     Say, Mark quit it!
     Say, Mark quit it!!
Mother: Mark, oh Mark, come give your mother a kiss.
Mother: Mark, oh Mark, come give your mother a kiss.
Mother: Mark, oh Mark, come give mama a kiss.
Mother: Oh, nobody to kiss me.
     [Much discussion]
Mother: Mark, take this belt to Cicero.
Mother: Mark, give me a kiss. He shame to kiss his mother in front of Joan. Mark, you shame to kiss your mama in front of Joan? (Coonfield-Ward, 1971, p. 55)

In this exchange, Mark’s mother

…does not view herself as a language instructor nor her child as a budding conversationalist. After all, her child will learn to talk—all children within her experience have. She is concerned about his overt behavior, not his speaking ability. (Coonfield-Ward, p. 55)

These examples reflect marked variations and differences in language socialization processes related to how children learn to interact and speak with adults. Responses are also markedly different in terms of how adults expect children to answer or behave as speech unfolds.

In addition to differences in the function and purpose of adult/child speech interactions, another characteristic of speech and communication patterns prevalent in low-income populations and students from diverse backgrounds is related to the highly contextualized, or storytelling, nature of speech acts or events which predominate in these communities (Adger, Wolfram, Detwyler, & Harry, 1992; Brice Heath, 1983; Cazden, 2001; Daniell, 1996; Delpit, 1995; Gee, 1985; Kyratzis, 2005; Philips, 1983; Poveda, 2001, 2004). Gee (1985) analyzed, in depth, the speech patterns of a low-income, seven-year-old, African American, female student, “L,” during her “sharing time” in school. During L’s sharing time, she draws on her speaking experiences from home with regard to describing her morning getting ready for school and the adventures of her puppy, which is ultimately given away by her father. Gee points out how remarkable this narrative is, utilizing important story elements such as setting, description, characterization, tension in the plot, and resolution of the story towards its end.
However, when L finished her story, she was asked several questions by the teacher, which indicated that L’s teacher had not followed or understood the contextualized nature of L’s story. Moreover, the teacher went on to describe her narrative as “... incoherent” (Gee, 1985, p. 24). Her story was felt to be inconsistent, disconnected, and rambling. In this example, Gee suggests that there is clear evidence supporting the idea that the teacher and L were attempting to communicate using different discourse and communication styles. The teacher’s style was culturally embedded in a White, middle-class pattern, while L’s emerged from her African-American background and her situation related to income. As a result, L was considered to be lacking in her ability to express herself, and “... was sent, on the basis of stories like this one, to the school psychologist” (p. 24). The question here, then, is how could a student produce such an extended narrative, yet still be considered to be inadequate in terms of her literacy and expression to the point that she is perceived as failing. These mismatched communication styles eventually directly impacted how L was perceived, as well as her learning and success in school.

Hollos (1987) also observed and described language socialization processes relevant to adult/child speech interactions. Hollos focused on the impact of distinct locations on speech patterns as she conducted an ethnographic study of rural and urban in both Norway and Hungary. Hollos observed children who came from three communities differentiated in terms of the amount of isolation each family experienced. Hollos recorded the resulting differences with regard to the amount and kinds of speech interactions to which children were exposed. The three types of communities were: “... a
dispersed farm community, a village and a town” (p. 401). The focus of the study was rural children, and the prevailing notion that rural children acquire some cognitive skills later than children from an urban environment. The main question of the study was to determine whether or not there was a specific reason for this apparent cognitive, developmental lag on the part of rural children. As an extension of this prevailing notion, several questions were developed:

Is there a difference in the pattern development of these two types of cognitive skills between rural and urban children? And if so, what is the reason for it? What are the channels, methods and situations in which children learn the different kinds of skills? Specifically, how does a child living in a dispersed community spend his time? With whom does he interact and what are the forms of interaction? Are the children consciously taught certain skills or is learning mostly through experience? Given the relatively non-verbal environment, does this effect learning? (p. 402)

Hollos discovered that in rural communities, there was little opportunity for farm children to develop verbal skills with individuals other than their mothers or one or two other individuals (siblings or father). When speech interactions or activities did occur, they were primarily “. . . non-verbal, non-cooperative, non-directive or directive, which gives the child a great deal of opportunity for self-directive solitary play and observation” (p. 415). Based on her observations, Hollos suggested three points as to how this type of language socialization might impact learning for children living in more rural communities. These three points were:

1. Children mainly manipulate physical and not social relationships; manipulation is visual or manual, not verbal
2. Little pressure is placed on children to achieve or in terms of time constraints; children experience time to explore and experiment on their own without adult pressure
3. There is not conscious introduction, stimulation or teaching of children to try new things or activities; children initiate their own learning although a nearby adult may confirm or provide feedback. (p. 415)

The language socialization processes that emerged in the villages were quite different from that which Hollos observed in the rural settings. First, children experienced many opportunities to interact with friends and family. In addition, significantly less time was spent alone with mothers as the main speech or language role model. Moreover, there were frequent speech events and acts that included non-related adults, strangers, and tourists. Finally, children had the opportunity to “. . . range in the social settings that a village of this size (population: 1,400) offers” (p. 416). In general, there are more opportunities for stimulation and more pressure for achieving with regard to school and career.

The social environment Hollos observed in the town was similar to the village setting. However, the town was significantly larger (population: 6,000). This larger size provided a greater number of social interactions resulting in a greater opportunity for speech events and acts to occur. Children encounter “. . . strangers of all kinds and ages and their activities take place in more settings than those in the village” (p. 417). As a result of the variation in the process of language socialization in each of the three settings, children from each population arrived at school with different experiences related to speech and social interactions. These differences in language socialization create the appearance that rural students are less developed in terms of cognition and language use, when, in reality, they arrive at school with an entirely different set of linguistic, social, and cognitive strategies. Once in school, they are perceived as “slow or delayed,” because
they are confronted by different expectations stemming from rules and ideas for appropriate behavior and speech.

Brice Heath (1983) also observed and described varying language socialization processes in her landmark study, which took place in the American South. Over a period of nine years, Brice Heath observed and described three different communities, Trackton, Roadville, and Townspeople. Brice Heath was able to observe and analyze the discourse styles and communication patterns into which children were socialized. In Trackton and Roadville, the uses of text and written material were less common than oral language and narratives, while Townspeople made extensive use of written texts in their daily lives and actions.

These three general patterns were expressed in different interaction styles and communicative patterns in each of the three communities. In Trackton, Brice Heath observed that children were exposed to multiple interactions and individuals who included the verbal and nonverbal cues prevalent in the community. In addition, children were exposed to contextualized, narrative discourse even when conversations were not held with the children themselves. Even though children did not necessarily participate in adult conversational topics (for example, legal notices, and newspaper advertisements), children heard adult conversations. In the absence of direct adult explanations and categorizations, children created their own cognitive schemata and organizational frameworks from which to make sense of the language used by adults. As a result of this language socialization, children reproduced the same type of communicative pattern and
discourse style in their daily lives, play, and activities as their peers, siblings, and community members.

The language socialization process in Roadville was distinctly different from that of Trackton. First, when conversations with children occurred, they consisted primarily of scripted interactions in which parents explained what was to be accomplished or gave directions. Secondly, conversations and communicative interactions were not contextualized, but rather took the form of decontextualized language, with items being labeled and spoken of without reference to the situation and relationships from which they emerged. Last, children in Roadville were not conditioned to create and develop connections and links between the home and school setting. They saw no relevance with regard to “at home learning” and the “learning” which occurred in school.

In Townspeople, language was used to make connections to both the school setting and home environment. Children were questioned and participated in conversations with both adults and peers that encouraged them to develop both contextualized and decontextualized language. As a result, these children could both label decontextualized events and speak in a contextualized discourse style in terms of oral language. Also, these children could speak both concretely and abstractly about events that occurred in the present and in the past or future without connecting them to the present. Moreover, their socialization included both peer and adult connections and conversations in the form of athletic events, socially organized groups (e.g., Boy Scouts, soccer leagues, Little League, music lessons), and day-to-day interactions in school.
In addition to language socialization processes being related to the location of a particular community such as Brice Heath (1983), Hollos (1987), and Coonfield-Ward (1971) have suggested, Bernstein and Henderson (1974) have related such processes to income, class, and status levels. Bernstein and Henderson studied and interviewed members of two communities of speakers in England. One community was composed of working class families and the other of middle-class families. The two populations lived in specific areas of England that were identified as either working class or middle-class residential locations. There was a strong relationship between the families and the area in which they resided relative to income ($r=0.74$). The sample that was used in the study included 50 middle-class mothers and 50 working-class mothers selected at random from each of the respective communities. In addition, Bernstein and Henderson measured social class position on “a ten-point scale 0-9.” In using the scale, Bernstein and Henderson calculated a mean of 2.8 for the middle-class population and a mean of 6.9 for the working-class population (Bernstein & Henderson, 1974).

First, each mother was asked, “If parents could not speak, how much more difficult do you think it would be for them to do the following things with young children who had not yet started school?” (Bernstein & Henderson, 1974, pp. 273-274). An interviewer then asked each mother to respond to the same set of eleven statements. Responses were recorded on a six-point scale that ranged from “. . . very much more difficult, much more difficult, more difficult, not too difficult, fairly easy, and easy” (Bernstein & Henderson, 1974, p. 274). Of the eleven statements used to prompt the mothers, two were “dummy” statements designed as controlled responses, four
statements dealt with the transmission of skills (skill area), and five statements related to social control (person area). The goal of the research was to determine from the mothers’ responses “. . . the effect of the social class position of the mothers on their perception of the role of language as a socializing process” (Bernstein & Henderson, 1974, p. 274).

The data gathered was analyzed in three different stages. The first analysis was by population, which allowed a comparison of the “. . . differences in patterns of responses for each statement with reference to social class” (Bernstein & Henderson, 1974, p. 275-276). Secondly, the number of ‘difficult’ responses was compared to the number of ‘easy’ responses in relation to each social class. The final analysis consisted of an analysis of variance, which enabled “. . . control for within-person variance as well as for between-people variance and residual variance” (Bernstein & Henderson, 1974, p. 275). This helped provide a somewhat more clear view as to whether there was consistency with regard to responses by the same mother or among the mothers. In each of the analyses of variance, there was a high level of significance, suggesting that there was consistency in terms of responses both individually and among the mothers.

The results of this study suggest that middle class mothers tend to use language more in relationships and “. . . in dealing with situations within the person area” (Bernstein & Henderson, 1974, pp. 282-283). Working-class mothers, on the other hand, tended to use language as a means to transmit various skills. This suggested to Bernstein and Henderson that working-class mothers transmitted knowledge “. . . through a social relationship in which the receiver is relatively passive and, in the middle class, knowledge is transmitted through a social relationship in which the receiver is active,” (1974,
Middle class mothers expected extended responses and discussion from their children especially with regard to the transmission of principles. However, they also expected that the acquisition of skills (dressing one’s self, brushing teeth etc.) be developed more through children observing adults and adults modeling behaviors and skills for children. Thus, middle class children were socialized in terms of language and culture to be more active and self-directed learners.

Working-class mothers, on the other hand, transmitted knowledge regarding skills in a much more didactic manner, telling children much more explicitly how certain practices needed to be performed. In addition, children were “… much less likely to receive explanations of principles” (Bernstein and Henderson, 1974, p. 284). Therefore, socialization in terms of language and culture for working-class children was much more passive and related to giving directions and procedures without extended explanations or responses on the part of the child.

Bernstein and Henderson went on to suggest that enculturation differences in language and culture suggested a “discontinuity” between the home and school environments. Such a “discontinuity” impacts the concept of learning and acquisition of knowledge when children enter school. Middle class children have access to “… the verbal realization of affects, moral principles and their application to behaviour, and independence in cognitive functioning,” which “… is much more likely to be linguistically elaborated” (Bernstein & Henderson, 1974, p. 285). A middle class child has “… access both to operations and principles… and tends to regulate his own learning… which encourage autonomy in skill acquisition” (Bernstein & Henderson, 1974, p. 286). If, in a
school setting, students encounter an expectation of “autonomy” in terms of learning skills, middle class children will have an advantage over working-class children. Such a “discontinuity” might also impact verbal and linguistic expression in addition to a more “active/responsive” learning style exhibited by middle class children relative to working-class children.

Numerous researchers have explored adult and child interactions prevalent in various socioeconomic levels and their influences on language learning and socialization since Bernstein and Henderson described their findings (Gipps, 1999; Hart & Risley, 2003; Pan et al., 2005; Payne, 2001; Rowe et al., 2004). Payne (2001) has also pointed to differences among low, middle and high socioeconomic status and language socialization processes. Payne describes the five registers common to languages around the world. In Table 2, Payne describes each of the five registers, which she believes govern how speech occurs throughout the world.

As a communication pattern, formal register is different from casual register. In using casual register, language is broad, and non-specific in terms of vocabulary, sentence structure and syntax. Non-verbal cues are integral to the interpretation of the speech interaction of individuals. Casual register is the main communication style utilized by many minority and low-income communities and families, and it is frequently spoken in a more contextualized, narrative format. Formal register is rarely used or non-existent. Thus, many minority and low-income students find themselves confronted with communication patterns significantly different than the more formal register used easily by
Table 2

*Language Registers Around the World*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Register</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frozen</td>
<td>Language that is always the same, for example, Lord’s Prayer, wedding vows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>The standard syntax and word choice of work and school; has complete sentences and specific word choice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultative</td>
<td>Formal register when used in conversation. Discourse pattern not quite as direct as formal register.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>Language between friends and is characterized by a 400- to 800-word vocabulary. Word choice general and not specific. Conversation dependent upon non-verbal assists. Sentence syntax often incomplete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimate</td>
<td>Language between lovers or twins. Language of sexual harassment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


middle- and upper-income individuals, but with which they are unfamiliar or have had little practice using (Payne, 2001).

Registers of language are important in school settings because in most classrooms settings, formal register is used as the medium of communication for instruction and interactions between students and teachers. Students from more middle class backgrounds have already encountered this register, and they are more able to converse in and utilize it as a communicative pattern. Many minority and low-income students have not had access to formal register in their home or community environment. Therefore, these students are at a distinct disadvantage when they enter school since they might not have the vocabulary, sentence structure, syntax, non-verbal cues and communication patterns associated with formal register.
Another discrepancy between formal and casual register is the number of actual vocabulary words used and understood in daily communication. Typically, in casual register an individual speaker utilizes 400-800 words. Formal register, however, not only incorporates a larger vocabulary, but also has specific words that are often related to content and academic language (Payne, 2001). Generally, speakers whose main communication style is to use a more casual register in their speech interactions are individuals from low-income and minority populations. Individuals familiar with formal register are generally from White, middle- to upper-income environments.

Hart and Risley (2003) have also described this pattern of register use, and its accompanying vocabulary development in a recent study. Over a period of two and one-half years, Hart and Risley observed the speech and interaction patterns of 42 families in Kansas City, Missouri. Families volunteered for the study and agreed to be observed one hour each month over the course of the study. The study began when the children were infants, seven to nine months old, and continued until the children were three years of age. All 42 families completed the study. The socioeconomic level (SES) of each family was determined by their occupation and corresponding income level. Table 3 shows the SES levels and indicates the ethnic background of each of the 42 participating families.

The findings reported from this study suggest a strong relationship between income level and vocabulary development as well as predicting language skill by age 9-10 \( (r=0.58) \). Indeed, the researchers reported that in a 5,200-hour year (14-hour day) children in upper SES/professional families have experiences with 11.2 million words. This was well above the number of experiences of children in low- to middle-income/working-
Table 3

*SES Levels and Ethnic Background of Participating Families*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SES level</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Unspecified/not African American</th>
<th>Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Welfare</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


class families at 6.5 million and welfare children at 3.2 million experiences with words.

These data also support observations of many researchers who describe language interactions in low-income families as typically in the casual registers as well as generally peer-to-peer rather than adult to child (Gee, 1985; Michaels, 2005; Pan et al., 2005; Payne, 2001; Coonfield-Ward, 1971).

In light of such data, the discourse and communication styles expressed by some students within the educational or classroom setting are often distinctly different from the teachers and educators they encounter at school. The use of formal register and unfamiliar vocabulary, as well as patterns of instruction and child-adult interactions, may all impact student learning and success in school. Where such discontinuity occurs, students may indeed not fully understand what is expected in terms of responses to questions or discussions from teachers or peers from different backgrounds.
Discontinuity between home and school language socialization processes have also been suggested by researchers in relation to various ethnic groups (Brice Heath, 1983; Davis & Golden, 1994; Delpit, 1995, 1988; Mehan, 1991; Moje, 2000; Philips, 1983; Sindell, 1987; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Wortham, 2005). One such study that focuses on language socialization processes within a particular ethnic group was conducted in the American Northwest, (Oregon) on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation over a five-year period of time by Philips (1983). In her ethnography of communication, Philips suggested that Native American teachers from the same culture as Native American students were more effective in instruction and supporting student achievement and success. She attributed her findings to the shared culture, communication patterns, and discourse styles of Native American students and teachers who had the same early socialization and background. In other words, they brought into the classroom shared cultural understandings regarding language and communicative behaviors.

During the course of her research, Philips noticed the general lack of comprehension and lack of achievement by Native American students as measured by standardized tests and national achievement tests administered by educators as the students progressed through school. As her observations continued, Philips identified three areas of miscommunication that occurred between Anglo teachers and their Native American students. First, she noticed that there are distinct differences in terms of the structuring of attention and the regulation of talk. Anglo teachers tended to insist on eye contact and controlling the structuring of how talk occurred in the classroom. Anglo teachers also monopolized and controlled who was allowed to talk and whose turn to
speak came next. This dominance and control of classroom discourse, as described by Philips, was a function of the heavy reliance by Anglo teachers on a more direct, linear instructional style. This feature of the classroom contrasts with the more general Native American pattern in which attention and focus are not directed to or on an individual, but rather directed to the general group of speakers as a whole. For Warm Springs Native Americans, talk is equally distributed among the participants involved in the speech event. Competition and interruption for “talk time” does not occur and allocation of turns is much more evenly distributed.

Secondly, Philips noticed that Anglo teachers did not allow for periods of silence and pausing in speech, which was a prominent feature of talk noticed in Warm Springs Native American speech patterns. This is directly related to the discourse rules prevalent in Warm Springs Native American communication patterns that shape how speakers relate and add to prior utterances of previous speakers. Last, Philips noted that the distinctness and separation of the Anglo teacher with regard to the Native American sphere of interactions was obvious. Neither had an extensive knowledge of the cultural knowledge or experiences of the other, the rules of discourse, or the appropriateness of when or to whom to speak and in what manner. As a result of these three identified concerns, Native American students from the Warm Springs Indian Reservation acquiesced to the dominant teaching style of Anglo teachers and educators by deliberately shutting out the teacher and not paying attention to instruction. In short, they stopped participating in the Anglo-dominated speech and learning patterns of the school setting.
Philips extended and generalized her thinking and findings to suggest that similar issues exist with regard to Latino and African American students in many school settings throughout America. She suggests that students from other than Anglo, middle-class backgrounds are disadvantaged when entering schools dominated by the cultural and linguistic parameters of mainstream communication styles. She goes on to suggest that teachers and educators need to understand and have exposure to the context of enculturation, in terms of culture and how students are socialized to use language. Such differences must be considered in order to use curricula, instructional strategies, and structures that relate to and support the students with whom they interact and educate.

Brice Heath (1983) also suggested the need for understanding the background and enculturation processes from which students emerged. In her research, she describes the varying contexts and structures of language and speech used by the children of Trackton, Roadville, and Townspeople. Moreover, Brice Heath believes that once teachers were aware of instructional and communication styles and differences, they were able to and did create an environment for success within their classrooms and schools, because they were able to incorporate the context and language use of the children’s backgrounds into their curriculum and daily instruction. In a sense, teachers became anthropological ethnographers who researched the social environments and the contexts for language use of their students in order that they might include familiar formats and experiences in their lessons and units. In addition, as teachers became aware of enculturation processes, students also became aware of the social and behavioral differences and patterns of communication and language in social contexts. As a result, students and teachers both
gained insight into the various communication and behavior systems in place in their communities and the school. They were able to “code switch” between these various contexts, because

Making explicit the rules of each system became possible through active involvement in experiencing how facts are known and how they can be built from bits of information into structures carrying more information. Probing their own ways of organizing information and talking, they learned to build upon these to construct the school’s details, concepts, and generalizations. Also, facility in articulating the ways their own home communities used language, and comparing these with the ways of the school, weakened the boundary between the systems.

Students became engaged individually and as a group in translating and organizing community knowledge into the classroom and classroom knowledge into the community. They learned to recognize where and how the materials and methods fit in either context, or where they could be latched on to familiar concepts for comparison and contrast. (p. 355)

Payne (2001) has also suggested that it is imperative to “make explicit” the strategies and systems that occur in the school setting. She suggests that low-income students are often perceived as entering school with lower-level cognitive abilities, but that, in reality, these students are unfamiliar with the cognitive strategies required in traditional educational settings. For Payne, cognitive strategies “. . . are the fundamental ways of processing information. They are the infrastructure of the mind” (p. 119). For students of poverty, who enter school unfamiliar with mainstream, cognitive strategies and ways of organizing their world, “mediation” must occur in which students are explicitly taught to focus, schedule, plan, predict, identify cause, effect, and consequences, control impulsivity, and use precise language for categorizing and problem solving.

The connection to language and enculturation processes is clear in that students from poverty do enter school with a variety of cognitive strategies in place.
However, these strategies are not the strategies needed for success in the school setting, but rather for success in the cultural context of their background and environment. An example of how this impacts students was described in an ethnographic study undertaken by Moje (2000). Her research took place over a three-year span, in Salt Lake City, Utah, among adolescents who were affiliated, to varying degrees, with local gangs. The students were all considered to be from “impoverished” homes and represented diverse ethnic backgrounds such as Laotian, Vietnamese, Latina, Latino, and Samoan. While Moje followed daily routines for these students, her main focus was on the English classes, in which these students were enrolled, and their “literacy” acquisition and academic understanding of literature and writing.

In discussing the results of her study, Moje (2000) found that, in general, the school community perceived these adolescents as often engaging in deviant and negative behavior, that they did not have a grasp of English or the uses of language, and that they did not know how to use language to communicate in the sophisticated manner required by school and society. However, Moje found that far from being unsophisticated users of language, these students possessed complex and extremely contextualized understandings in terms of language use. Their abilities and expressions of literacy, however, did not align with the “school” expectation of literacy and expression, but rather were embedded in the context of enculturation found within their homes and neighborhoods. Such unsanctioned literacy for these students included body discourses, oral discourses, and written discourses. In addition, how these literacy practices were learned were also transmitted within the context of the learning styles and communication patterns familiar
to students. Learning occurred in context, in fluid, changeable, and informal situations without exposure to formal institutions. Learning was neither systematic nor random, but rather, embedded within the context of situations or events as they unfolded.

Moje further discusses what these literacy practices accomplished for students. They allowed students to “take hold” of their lives and communicate with others regarding meanings, identities, values, and space and to suggest relationships and commitments of the writers related to identity and definitions of self. Moje also found that learning and literacy within the gang were more valued than those in institutionalized settings (school) because “gangsta” literacy represented a connection to culture and family, as the following example demonstrates.

Heavenly Father please hear me,
Tonight I need you so much Guideness [sic] to live my life right,
Sometimes the pressure is so hard to bare [sic]
I often wonder if anyone cares
How can I wake up and face a new day
Knowing I have to live my life this crazy way!
Heavenly father please forgive my sins, I want to change, but don’t know where to begin.
Give me the strength to resist crazy life I desire, and help me stay away from the mighty gunfire
Please bless my family whose eyes plead for me
As they watch me leave, and God bless my mom
Who cries every night wondering
If I’ll be killed in another gang fight!
Heavenly father please answer my prayer
Please let me know your (sic) listening up there
Where will it end, what’s it all for?
I’m down, hard core
But it doesn’t matter not anymore
Sometimes I wonder just how I’ll die
With a knife or a bullet right in my side.
Thanks for you giveness (sic), and most of all,
Thank you for listening to this Gangsta’s Prayer tonight
In recognizing that there are formats in literacy that might prove beneficial in terms of teaching practice and instructional strategies within the classroom, Moje suggested that there are specific implications for educators, including

1. Improving teacher practice in terms of instruction and strategies, incorporating the literacy of minority and marginalized groups into classroom practice, as

2. A way to acknowledge their literacy practices and promote learning in the mainstream culture.

3. Recognizing that literacy is about communication of values, identity, beliefs and a sense of community with family and culture rather than institutionalized formats, sensitivity on the part of educators to the culture from which students emerge and practice their communication skills.

4. Recognizing the sophistication of students in terms of the culture with which they enter school, incorporating literacy practices of students into the mainstream classroom while at the same time strengthening their skills in mainstream literacy skills.

In reviewing the findings related to the discontinuity between home and school language, many researchers suggest that in order to understand the language and speech patterns of any social interaction, it is critical to be aware of the social context within which the interaction occurs (Ancess, 2003; Au, 1981; Brice Heath, 1983; Daniell, 1996; Gee, 1985; Hart & Risley, 2003; Moje, 2000; Philips, 1983; Poveda, 2001, 2004; Tharp & Gallimore, , & Gallimore, 1988; Coonfield-Ward, 1971). That “only by viewing the relationship from the side of contexts can we see an essential part of what is going on
when language is taught and used” (Cazden, 1972, p. xix). Thus, the “context” of the language use must be considered before language form or structure. By extension, and in order to understand broader issues and concerns related to student acquisition of knowledge, as well as many student behaviors and interactions, educational professionals must also be aware of the linguistic and cultural context, and not just the form or expression of behaviors or interactions exhibited by students.

Such differences are embedded in the cultural and language practices in which students are immersed in their home and community environments. Cultures provide schemata and filters for understanding and interacting with the world, and those who live in it. Students frequently enter school assuming that others operate and interface with the world in the same ways in which they have been taught. Teachers also make assumptions about the “sameness” of viewpoint in terms of learning styles, values, and beliefs. This difference in cultural schemata and behaviors frequently leads to misunderstandings and miscommunications among parents, students, and teachers.

An example of these miscommunications and misunderstandings is demonstrated in a math class, when a student was asked which they preferred: one-third or two-thirds of 12 cookies. The teacher expected an answer of two-thirds rather than one-third, because what the teacher wanted to know was which was more, one-third or two-thirds? However, the student repeatedly answered one-third, because it was never polite to prefer or require more than someone else in his or her culture. In this case, the student appeared to have the wrong answer viewed from one cultural perspective (in America, one always prefers more), but the correct answer if viewed from the cultural perspective that they
brought with them to school (it is impolite to prefer or have more than others). When the teacher stated the question another way, that is, which is more one-half or two-thirds, it was obvious the student was aware that two-thirds was greater than one-half and was able to answer correctly (Findlay, 1995).

The implications of research and findings presented in many studies connect directly to the research questions proposed here. Educators must be aware of how diverse the populations are with which they interact, as well as be sensitive to the changes and transitions within these populations. Additionally, when using specific instructional and questioning strategies, teachers need to be aware of the impacts these formats may have on their students. As many researchers suggest students from African American, Native American, or low-income backgrounds may be unfamiliar with the more direct, instructional or questioning formats generally used by teachers (Brice Heath, 1983; Hart & Risley, 2003; Hollos, 1987; Payne, 2001; Philips, 1983). Indeed, how students respond relates directly to the cultural environment and context of enculturation. Educators must be aware of how culturally different perspectives enter into the learning styles and communication patterns of the students with whom they work (Brice Heath, 1983; Nelson-Barber, 1999; Peregoy, 2001; Philips, 1983; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Teachers must be well prepared and aware, but they must also require a “. . . commitment to the present and future lives of the students and of having a vision of society that builds on diversity to create an American cultural dialogue” (Walqui, 1999, p. 65).
Teacher Regulated Discourse

As reviewed above, it is clear that there is a large body of literature regarding discontinuities between home and school language and communication. While questions of significance emerge from this body of research, perhaps the most important concern is the possible impacts on student performance and learning. Students from diverse backgrounds and income levels enter school with patterns of language use and strategies that may not be aligned with those encountered in the educational setting. In short, many students are unfamiliar with the formal, mainstream communication patterns and uses of language they encounter in school.

One aspect of language and communication discontinuities, which has been the subject of much research, is the type of instructional discourse and questioning techniques used by teachers in the classroom. These experiences with school language are a function of the type of instructional discourse style that is prevalent in schools throughout the United States (Cazden, 1972; Diaz-Rico, 2004). In general, instruction and subsequent questioning are delivered by the teacher using a fairly linear discourse structure. This discourse structure is composed of a three-part sequence, which is referred to as initiate, respond, and evaluate (IRE), or initiate, respond, and feedback (IRF) (Cazden, 2001; Diaz-Rico, 2004; Mehan, 1991). This pattern is referred to in this paper as the IRE. An example of the IRE instructional structure demonstrates how this structure evolves in
a linear sequence and tends to restrict or limit social interaction, discussion, and questioning. This is illustrated in the following dialogue.

Teacher: “Who knows why names are capitalized?”
Response:
Jose: It’s somebody’s name.
Evaluation or Feedback:
Teacher: That’s true. Good Jose.
Invitation to respond: (pattern repeats)
Teacher: But who can tell me what the term for that is? (Diaz-Rico, 2004, p. 296)

As this illustration demonstrates, the teacher initiates the discourse sequence, selects a student who responds, and then makes a judgment regarding the student’s answer. The judgment provided by the teacher signals the end of the student’s turn, and the initiation of another IRE sequence. The end of the student’s turn is acknowledged by the student and teacher both, and does not allow for extended discourse or discussion to occur. Rather, this discourse structure assists teachers in controlling the duration and content of topics, as well as the allocation of turns among students. The IRE structure prevails in American classrooms and allows teachers to dominate “classroom talk” two-thirds of the time (Cazden, 2001; Diaz-Rico, 2004; Hickman, 2005; Kusnick, 1997; Mehan, 1991).

In addition, because the IRE structure allows the teacher to control the “floor” and move the “talk” along, little opportunity or time for in-depth questioning or discussion occurs. Rather than in-depth thinking where students are encouraged to support and explain their answers, students are instead encouraged to provide the “right” answer. This answer is then evaluated, judged, and another IRE sequence is begun (Hickman, 2005). Moreover,
Because the teacher is the only individual in the classroom given the power to evaluate responses, the structure assumes that the teacher already knows the answers to the questions he or she is asking, and that the teacher is only interested in the limited scope of information which can be accounted for by the question used to initiate. (Hickman, 2005, p. 2)

As a result, students are exposed to a simplistic view of content without expressing their own, deeper thinking.

The lack of deeper thinking and discussion that occurs in the IRE format is related to the actual structure and nature of the IRE format itself. Generally, four elements are evident in a typical IRE structure (Kusnick, 1997). First, the main types of questions asked are “display” questions, in which the teacher is looking for a specific answer and not what the student thinks. When the teacher does not hear the desired answer, the usual response is to repeat the question in a different way (changing vocabulary or rearranging words) and to narrow the scope of the question until the answer is forthcoming. Second, the teacher may also choose to use a “fill-in-the-blank” format by restating the question, giving the correct answer except for a specific word, which the student must provide to answer correctly. The third element included in the IRE format is that responses from students are short, specific, and considered either right or wrong by the teacher. Finally, after questions and responses are completed, the teacher still controls the floor, and no attempt is made by the students to speak or control the discussion. The entire interaction serves to limit student response, move the “talk” along, and to provide the teacher with specific information in terms of correct responses.

While the IRE format does prevail two-thirds of the time during lessons in classrooms in the United States, two additional types of instructional structures or
formats do occur. These include directional “talk” or instructions to students and “probing questions and argumentation” (Kusnick, 1997, p. 4). Directions and instructions are provided by the teacher to students, so that students will be able to follow general procedures in the classroom, such as completing a task or activity, cleaning up or how an assignment is to be accomplished. These may occur in the form of a question, such as “Alright. Now then. Does every group have a hypothesis written, what they think is gonna happen” (Kusnick, 1997, p. 4), or as a statement, “If your group has done that, you’re ready to start” (Kusnick, 1997, p. 4). They serve mainly to implicitly or explicitly let students know what should be completed or accomplished by that point in time.

Hence, “talk” by the teacher consists of directions, instructions or the linear IRE pattern. These types of classroom speech contribute to the lack of social interaction and “talk” by students, because the teacher controls who speaks, as well as the evaluation of information given in a response. It impedes more desirable in-depth thinking by students, because as the teacher controls and dominates classroom discussion and discourse, little opportunity is provided for student-to-student conversation and construction of knowledge through the use of referent rather than display type questions. This is counter to Vygotsky’s (1986) suggestion that learning and the construction of knowledge occurs in a social context that uses language as a tool. Thus, when student classroom discussion and interaction are minimized, instruction is less effective and students acquire less broad content and knowledge.

On the other hand, probing questions and argumentation are classroom discourse structures that provide more opportunity for students to express their thoughts and
thinking. Such questions are “... characterized by referential rather than display questions” (Kusnick, 1997, p. 5). Referential questions attempt to elicit a response from students that illustrates their thinking. Such questions also provide the teacher with information that relates to how well the student actually understands the concept being explored. Frequently, referent questions explicitly ask students to explain their thinking using interrogative words such as “why” or “what” (Kusnick, 1997). In addition, referent questions encourage longer and more in-depth explanations from students in terms of their responses with less overt evaluation from the teacher.

Good (2003) has described the “characteristics of good questions,” which allow teachers to probe and allow for students to argue their points by providing explanations and justifications for their thinking. Good’s questions “are (1) clear ... (2) purposeful” (p. 380), “(3) brief ... (4) natural and adapted to the level of the class ... (5) sequenced” (p. 381), and “(6) thought provoking” (p. 382). First, clear questions are those that ask students to respond to specific points such as describing the economic reasons for the War of 1812. This question is still open-ended because a student might respond in several ways, however, what the question is asking is still clear and has specific points to which students must respond. Second, purposeful questions help move the lesson along and “... achieve the lesson’s intent” (p. 380); these questions are directly related to the goals of the lesson. Third, questions should be brief and short. Teachers should ask students to respond to only one set of ideas. For example, regarding the War of 1812, the question is: “What were the economic reasons for the War of 1812? ... and not ... in one continuous statement, Why did we go to war? As a merchant, how would
you feel? How was our trade hurt by the Napoleonic War?” (p. 380), which forces students to respond to too many points at once. The fourth characteristic of a good question is that questions are natural and authentic. While a teacher may have in mind particular questions to ask in the course of a discussion, questions also need to arise out to the context of the discussion itself and be stated in language understood by students. Fifth, questions need to be sequenced, so that they build on one another. Teachers may want to begin with review questions to reinforce previous material, but once student responses indicate that basic facts are understood, higher level questions need to be posed. The sequence developed in questioning often leads to the more difficult, or thought provoking questions, which is the sixth characteristic of good questions. Thought provoking questions should elicit “. . . strong, thoughtful responses from students, such as “I never thought of that before” or “I want to know the answer to that question” (p. 382).

In addition to asking good questions, teachers also need to ask a range of questions which are considered “thought provoking” (Wolf, 1987). First, inference questions “. . . ask students to go beyond the immediately available information” (Wolf, p. 3). For example, students shown a photograph of a worker might infer time of day (based on lighting), type of job (based on tools or clothing around the person) and whether the person was married (based on whether or not the person wore a ring on their left finger). Each inference is supported by evidence contained within the photograph.

A second type of question is interpretive. When an interpretive question is asked, students must “. . . understand the consequences of information or ideas” (p. 3). This type of question also encourages comparison between ideas, such as the differences
revealed in comparing the woman in a poem by Robert Frost to “. . . an ordinary canvas tent instead of a silk one-what would that change?” (p. 3). Students must be able to use their previous knowledge about the differences between silk and canvas in order to understand the meaning of the poem.

Transfer questions are the third type included in the range of questions:

“Transfer questions provoke a kind of breadth of thinking, asking students to take their knowledge to new places” (Wolf, 1987, p. 3). Often this type of question might ask a student to write or debate about something from another point of view. This might include an assignment asking students to rewrite the story of Little Red Riding Hood from the point of view of the wolf—that the wolf has been maligned over time as the intruder.

Fourth are questions about hypotheses, which involve prediction and making guesses about an outcome based on the facts that are known (Wolf, 1987, pp. 3-4). This is often the type of question teachers ask students in science classes, however, predicting outcomes is also used when students read text, whether fiction or non-fiction. In fiction, students predict what a particular character might do based on previous behaviors in the storyline. In non-fiction, students must also predict where a writer is going in terms of the information under discussion in the text.

The last type of question is reflective, which occurs when teachers ask “. . . students to ask themselves: ‘How do I know I know?’; ‘What does this leave me not knowing?’; ‘What things do I assume rather than examine?’” (Wolf, 1987, p. 4). This type of question might often be used by teachers in terms of reviewing a student’s academic growth over the course of a school year. Such questions might be asked in a
portfolio review of a student’s work for the year. A student is asked to consider his or her growth and new knowledge, and to demonstrate how he or she knows progress has been made or new insights gained.

Another critical aspect in asking questions and developing class discussions is “wait time.” Wait time actually encompasses two categories. First, there is the period of time a teacher waits for a student or students to respond to a question; while the second type is how long a teacher waits after a student has responded to ask another question (Cotton, 1988). The average amount of time teachers wait for a student to respond or to ask another question was typically one second, not nearly enough time for students to understand a question, formulate a response, or process what was just said by another student. As well, “Students whom teachers perceive as slow or poor learners are given less wait-time than those teachers view as more capable” (Cotton, 1988, p. 7).

Both types of wait time impact student participation in class discussions. Various researchers (Cazden, 2001; Cotton, 1988; Good, 2003; Rowe, 1986) have described a similar set of positive impacts on student learning when wait time is increased to at least a three-second period after a question is posed. These include

1. Improvements in student achievement
2. Improvements in student retention
3. Increases in the number of higher cognitive responses generated by students
4. Increases in the length of student responses
5. Increases in the number of unsolicited responses
6. Decreases in students’ failure to respond
7. Increases in the amount and quality of evidence students offer to support their inferences
8. Increases in contributions by students who do not participate much when wait time is under three seconds
9. Expansion of the variety of responses offered by students
10. Decreases in student interruptions
In reviewing this list of beneficial outcomes for students, it is apparent that there is a strong relationship between increased wait time and the use of more thought-provoking questions; the use of one equally facilitates the use of the other (Cotton, 1988). Not only does increasing the teacher’s use of both wait time and more complex questions enhance student learning, but these two strategies both encourage more student-to-student interaction, participation, and discussion. Increased discussions among students serve to increase the social context for learning and certainly support Vygotsky’s (1986) ideas about knowledge being constructed in a social context.

Many researchers (Bransford et al., 1999; Cazden, 2001; Good, 2003; Hickman, 2005; Jones, 2002; Newmann, 1993) also suggest that teachers need to provide more opportunities for students to control more “talk” in classrooms. They believe that one way for educators to further extend student explanations and learning is to decrease the amount of “teacher talk” in the form of linear questioning sequences, and to increase student-to-student and student led and generated discussions and conversations. Cazden (2001) describes several classrooms in which students participate in “Cross-Discussions.” or “... dialogues between students in which teacher is not a constant intermediary... cross-discussion is signaled when one student addresses another publicly rather than addressing teacher... When one hears a student say, “I think you forgot...,” in place of (to teacher) “I think she forgot...” cross-discussion is taking place... (p. 57)

Student groupings for cross-discussions may occur in several formats. These include “whole class,” in which students interact with one another and comment on each others’
ideas and statements, small student groups of four to six, or placing students in pairs for discussion. In classrooms where this strategy is used, the teacher will often provide a “big idea” question such as “Who is the best president between 1789 and 1841? Be ready to explain your thinking.” The task for students in discussion groups is to research, justify, provide evidence, and explain their answers. In order to maximize student learning, such open-ended questions must be “real” and require students to present their findings in an authentic format (Good, 2003, pp. 386-388). This format is consistent with Vygotsky’s (1986) notion that learning occurs in a social context.

**Classroom Discourse and Sociocultural Differences**

Another impact of the IRE instructional format is its unfamiliarity to students whose language enculturation process includes a more contextualized, narrative discourse style. For example, in the previously described study of Trackton, Roadville, and Townspeople, Brice Heath (1983) relates the following exchange between the teacher and a third grade student from Trackton:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>What is the story about?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>(silence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Uh . . . Let’s see . . . Who is it the story talks about?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>(silence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Who is the main character? Um . . . what kind of story is it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Ain’t nobody can talk about things being about theirselves! (p. 105)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Brice Heath notes that the third grade student was reacting to the teacher’s questions, because the teacher was asking questions in terms of the unfamiliar IRE format, which required students to label or “. . . provide attributes and discrete features of objects and events in isolation from the context” (p. 105). However, because so much of the language
enculturation process in Trackton was contextualized in the form of narratives and stories, students had a difficult time understanding the questions and tended to respond, if at all, with a narrative answer that provided more information than the teacher was requesting.

When students from varying communities enter school, they bring with them the communication patterns and learning styles based on their “at home” enculturation and learning. Several researchers have also noted that this has a direct impact on student success in terms of educational measures (Au, 1981; Brice Heath, 1983; Cazden, 2001; Coonfield-Ward, 1971; Delpit, 1995, 1988; Gee, 1985; Gipps, 1999; Hart & Risley, 2003; Hollos, 1987; Kusnick, 1997; Labov, 2006; Moje, 2000; Philips, 1983; Tharp & Gallimore, & Gallimore, 1988; Walqui, 1999). In such cases, teachers encounter a more narrative discourse style than they expect from students raised with similar experiences and enculturation processes as their own. Brice Heath (1983) especially provides evidence that academic success and achievement and discourse styles and communication patterns encountered previous to the educational experience in school are clearly related. Students from Trackton entered school with an oral, contextualized, and narrative style, which was contrary to the more decontextualized, linear IRE style of instruction of Townspeople teachers. Eventually, Trackton students acquiesced to this communicative style and participated less and less in the learning process as delivered by teachers. This became apparent as teachers tried to elicit responses from Trackton students and then became frustrated when students did not respond to requests for information from the material and stories being read.
Students from Roadville, however, having been exposed to a less narrative, decontextualized communication style, were able to answer discrete labeling questions with more ease. In general, they functioned well for the first six or seven years that they were in elementary school. Concerns developed, however, as students entered 6th grade and beyond when teachers were no longer looking for labeling type answers, but answers that were contextualized, and involved higher levels of thinking, such as the evaluation and synthesis of information and facts. Roadville students experienced difficulty when teachers requested this type of information or response. Trackton students, by 6th or 7th grade, had already given up in terms of a response to teachers’ requests, although they had earlier been acculturated into the use of a more contextualized language style that teachers actually sought from students in higher grade levels. As a result, students from neither Trackton nor Roadville were able to achieve at the level that students of the Townspeople did, since they had, during their early enculturation processes, been exposed to both a contextualized and decontextualized manner of communications.

As previously discussed, using a more narrative discourse style was also the issue when the teacher failed to understand L’s story relating the events she encountered in getting ready for school that morning (Gee, 1985). When L began her story, she provided many details and a long explanation of what had previously occurred regarding her puppy. To L’s teacher, L’s story was a long and rambling discourse that had no real point or ending to it. When L’s teacher asked her to share some aspect of her morning, two differing expectations regarding “sharing” emerged. Both were embedded in past experiences with discourse and language. For L, sharing time was a chance to practice the
telling of events that included providing a context for the events, with the understanding that the audience required such a context in order to fully understand the sequence of events she described. As she spoke, she included information that, to the teacher, seemed unrelated to the story; information that was not needed in order to understand how L had lost her puppy. Such extraneous information included how L had readied herself that morning for school and did not like the oatmeal her father had made for her. In contrast to L, the teacher was expecting a short, specific, and to-the-point sequencing of events regarding why L’s puppy was taken away from her by her father. The two speaking styles conflicted, because L was relating her story in the style of the adults and speech models around her at home and in her community, while for the teacher, “Sharing time appears in fact to trade on typically middle-class home experiences for success, thereby excluding from an enterprise that is meant to teach the literate style to those who do not already have the foundations of that style” (Gee, 1985, p. 25). In short, the teacher drew on her experiences using a more formal and direct, “school” discourse style in evaluating L’s story.

The Classroom as a Context for Research

While there are many variables related to achievement, the extensive body of research related to communication patterns and discourse styles provides one context for understanding why or why not students acquire content or achieve well on assessments or standardized tests. The research also suggests that such variations are observable and discernable, and that when educators become aware of the impact of such variations on stu-
dents, they alter their practice and instructional styles in order to support student learning.

This was specifically noted by Brice Heath (1983) when she wrote that

The townspeople teachers described in the final two chapters of this book used knowledge about ethnography as an approach to learning to move to new ways of doing in their classrooms. The townspeople adapted materials and methods by sing their ethnographies of interactions in their own homes and classrooms in combination with ethnographies of communication done in their student’s communities. Their interactive approach to incorporating these communities’ ways of talking, knowing, and expressing knowledge with those of the school enabled some Roadville and Trackton children to understand how to make choices among uses of languages and to link these choices to life chances. (p. 343)

Thus, it is critical for educators to be aware of the variations between early home enculturation patterns and school communication patterns and discourse styles. This is especially true in schools in which the population is in transition from one socio-economic level to another or as ethnic populations shift within a school. As a school’s population changes, it is important to question why some strategies and instructional practices are no longer as effective in supporting student learning or achievement. In observing and understanding variations in communication patterns and styles of students, the delivery of lessons, questioning strategies, and assessing student learning can be considered in terms of the most effective practices for a particular student population. When communication patterns are incorporated into classroom practices, students will be successful, as Brice Heath suggests. When such variations in communication patterns are viewed as a form of illiteracy or substandard discourse, student learning often will not occur and can result in a student population that is disenfranchised and disconnected from school content and knowledge, which might support achievement and success (Moje, 2000).
CHAPTER III

METHODS

Ethnography as a Qualitative Method

Within the discipline of anthropology, the ethnographic method has long been a traditional approach for the collection of data and information regarding various cultures and societies. For much of the development of anthropology as a discipline, the goal of ethnography was to provide descriptions of the “so called” exotic cultures encountered as the world was divided among the colonial powers of the 1800s and early 1900s. These ethnographies served “. . . as the description of the culture of a whole community . . .” (Wilcox, 1982, p. 458). For some, such as Boas, Kroeber, and Spier, who are identified with American historical tradition, complete, detailed ethnographic accounts of particular cultures were a means to investigate and compare the historical relationships that might exist among them (Honigman, 1976). Boas (as cited in Honigman, 1976) especially emphasized the need for accurate ethnographies

and careful fieldwork (in which the smallest, most commonplace detail—the pattern of a moccasin, the number of poles supporting a tipi—might be an important clue to historical relationships). . . . (p. 193)

In order to understand and analyze a particular culture, detailed and extensive information and facts must be collected. From this set of information and facts, each culture’s historical journey could be described and reconstructed; hence, its history was reconstructed from the facts and information collected (Honigman, 1976; Harris, 1983).
For Boas (as cited in Harris, 1983) and his students, it was only through such accounts and descriptions that a particular culture could be understood; that each culture had followed its own unique journey to derive the cultural matrix in which it existed. As well, because each culture had its own unique historical path of development, “. . . there are no higher or lower forms of culture” (p. 322). Thus, the constraints and ways of behaving within each culture were considered normal for that culture. The concept that cultures were relative to each other and based on the norms for that culture was referred to as cultural relativism (Harris, 1983; Honigman, 1976).

In the early 1900s, Boas and his students (such as Mead, Benedict, and Sapir) heavily influenced the direction of anthropology in America. Detailed ethnographies of numerous societies were published. Understanding each culture emerged from the collected data into a larger picture of the culture’s history and how that culture structured how its members behaved. This belief that a complex culture could only be understood from examining its many, specific parts led to a more “inductive” approach in ethnographic interpretation, rather than attempting to view cultures progressing through similar sequences to develop into highly evolved civilizations (Harris, 1983).

Ethnography and Education

Recently, as ethnographic methods have been applied to education, both the notion of cultural relativism and a more inductive approach to ethnography has been applied. Investigating school and classroom settings in terms of cultural relativity have generally emerged from the impact of large numbers of non-English speaking students arriving into the United States and entering the school setting. Along with another
language, these students frequently arrive with a set of cultural rules, behaviors, and learning styles different than those typically displayed by middle-income, White Americans. As a result, cultural strategies that assisted individuals to negotiate within their own culture no longer facilitate learning or remain useful within the context of the American classroom. This creates a situation in which classrooms become “. . . arenas of cultural conflict in which mutual misunderstandings produce learning difficulties” (Wilcox, 1982, p. 466). A large number of studies have been devoted to researching this aspect of the classroom setting in terms of language, cognitive development, behavioral norms, and modalities in terms of learning styles (Au, 1981; Brice Heath, 1983; Cazden, 2001; Labov, 2006; Philips, 1983; Watson-Gegeo, 1988; Wilcox, 1982). Similar to the Boasian school of thought, current researchers employ careful and thorough analysis of detailed facts collected ethnographically, in order to reconstruct, understand, and interpret cultural impacts on students in such settings (Wilcox, 1982). By looking at the specific “parts” within a classroom setting, investigators use “inductive” strategies to understand the “whole” picture in terms of classroom behaviors, impacts and possible miscommunications.

Generally, whether in more traditional settings or within the context of the classroom, ethnographic methods are based on fieldwork and have been broadly described as “. . . first and foremost a descriptive endeavor in which the researcher attempts accurately to describe and interpret the nature of social discourse among a group of people. . . ” (Wilcox, 1982, p. 458). This type of exploration
requires direct observation, it requires being immersed in the field situation and it requires constant interviewing in all degrees of formality and casualness. From this interviewing, backed by observation, one is able to collect and elicit the native view(s) of reality and the native ascription of meaning to events, intentions and consequences. (G. Spindler & L. Spindler, 1997, p. 53)

Frequently, ethnographers describe and record data using participant-observation as one means of investigation. Participant-observation includes actually participating with and taking part in the daily lives, events, and celebrations of those being observed. Direct observations are necessary in order to provide detailed data from which analysis and interpretation might derive. In his criteria for quality ethnographic research, Spindler (1997) includes participant and direct observation as critical with regard to inferences and analysis of data collected and recorded. Interviews of group members are integral to the process of interpreting and understanding the social interactions shared by those participating within it.

In using ethnographic methods, anthropologists are able to gain understanding and collect sufficient data that will allow them to not only record and describe what they see, but also to analyze and interpret the patterns of behavior present in a culture or society (Duranti, 1997; M. Ember & C. Ember, 1999). Indeed, because ethnographic methods are so integral to research in anthropology, “...a list of criteria for a good ethnography” (Spindler, 1982, p. 6) was proposed that included the following:

- Observations must be contextualized, prolonged and repetitive
- Hypotheses, questions, and instruments for the study should emerge as the study proceeds
- Judgments about what is most significant to study should be deferred until the orienting phase of the field study has been completed
- Participants’ view of reality are revealed by inferences drawn primarily from direct observation and various forms of ethnographic interviewing
• Sociocultural knowledge—both implicit and explicit—that participants bring to and generate in social settings should be revealed and understood (Spindler, 1982, pp. 6-7)

Spindler’s (1982) criteria are grounded in Boas’ (as cited in Honigman, 1976) beliefs for creating good ethnographies. Boas emphasized the need for collecting extensive details and facts from which an understanding of a particular culture emerged. Recognition of patterns and behaviors are inferred from the observations and interviews. Preconceived, generalized patterns of behaviors or predictions about behaviors and actions are not determined ahead; these emerge from observation and data collection. The progress of the ethnography, that is, what is collected, who is interviewed, and further observations, all evolve from the data collected. From such combined collections of data, the ethnographer is able to review the “parts” and understand the “whole” through a process of inference and inductive thought and reasoning.

In addition to Spindler, Geertz (1973) has written extensively regarding ethnographic methodology and practices. For Geertz, ethnographies were recorded descriptions and the accompanying interpretation of observed cultural behaviors. Such observed cultural behaviors were based on a shared knowledge of both the symbols and rules acquired and shared within the culture. In this way, culture is a symbolic, shared and public set of knowledge. Further, Geertz described culture as

essentially semiotic . . . that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (p. 5)

Thus, ethnographic descriptions needed to somehow be accounts of the cultural context of the events, situations or interactions of the participants. Geertz went on to suggest that
meaningful ethnographies included three characteristics. First, they needed to be interpretive; second, that what is interpreted is the “flow of social discourse”; and third, that what is interpreted “... consists in trying to rescue the ‘said’ of such discourse from its perishing occasions and fix it in perusable terms” (p. 20).

The need for culturally contextualized interpretations and detailed accounts of social discourse was achieved through the use of “thick” description. Thick description includes the culturally imposed subtleties and nuances of a gesture or set of spoken words. As an example, Geertz uses the physical act of a “wink,” but goes on to ask whether the wink is a nervous tic, a socially sanctioned manner of silent agreement between two conspirators, or an exaggerated act of sarcasm if the face muscles are overly contracted. In order for the wink to be interpreted by others, there must be a shared cultural understanding of the symbolism involved (such as contracted face or exaggerated winking) that allows the two participants of the action (social discourse) to communicate their intent or message. Without shared cultural knowledge of the symbols (semiotics) such as a highly contorted face, nothing would be communicated between the two participants involved (p. 5-10).

Language in the Ethnographic Study of Cultures

Social discourse also includes the spoken word or conversations between members of a cultural group. Another example involving the spoken word might be a conversation between a husband and wife related to taking out the trash. How often has a wife declared, “The trash is really full,” when, in reality, what is being requested is that
the husband take the trash out. Unless the two participants had a shared set of cultural symbols, neither would understand the message being sent. The describing and accounting for the nuances and subtleties of this exchange such as tone of voice, facial expression, and previous experience with a statement used as a request would all be part of a “thick” description. Such descriptions are thick because they include the cultural context, in addition to as many of the details surrounding the social discourse as possible. Without such a description, no interpretation or an incomplete understanding of the social discourse occurs.

There are two extremely relevant insights gained from both Spindler (1982) and Geertz (1973). First, there is the idea that culture is an overarching paradigm that imposes rules on societies and governs the behavior of members. Such a paradigm suggests that members behave and act as they do in the context of their acquisition of the knowledge that allows them to behave appropriately within their society. Secondly, in terms of ethnographic research and observation, there needs to be a “thick” description on the part of the researcher that includes the details and nuances, which allows others to interpret, analyze, and understand what a particular interaction of social discourse might demonstrate or communicate.

In keeping with traditional methods, linguistic anthropologists have also included ethnography in their repertoire of techniques for collecting data and information. Early anthropologists have always included descriptions of various languages as a part of their fieldwork. However, the impetus for the inclusion of ethnographic methods into the research designs of linguistic anthropologists was especially emphasized in the 1960s.
This inclusion emerged from the interface of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology into the “ethnography of communication,” an approach developed by Hymes (1964, 1974) and Gumperz (1986).

As developed by Hymes (1964), the ethnography of communication encompasses three broad conditions necessary for ethnographic research in linguistic anthropology. Hymes described these as follows:

The starting point is the ethnographic analysis of the communicative habits of a community in their totality, determining what count as communicative events, and as their components, and conceiving no communicative behavior as independent of the set framed by some setting or implicit question. The communicative event thus is central. (p. 13)

First, as noted above, ethnographic methods are integral to research in anthropology in general. Thick descriptions and observations form the basis for a body of knowledge from which to describe differential expressions of culture as well as universal patterns of human behavior and actions. Second, communicative events connect and provide the interface between speech and the social actions of members within the speech community. Such events “. . . connect the specifics of language use to the community within which such uses took place, were interpreted, and reproduced” (Duranti, 1997, p. 288).

The third condition includes a model of the components in the use of language and speech (Hymes, 1986, p. 52-71). First, Hymes describes a speech community. Speech communities consisted of those speakers who were “. . . as a community sharing rules for conduct and interpretation of speech, and rules for the interpretation of at least one linguistic variety. . . ” (p. 54). Within a speech community, this model includes three levels
of speech: speech situations, speech events, and speech acts. Speech situations are broad contexts in which speech is used, for example, at work, in a market, or at school. Speech events are those communicative events that occur when two or more individuals speak to one another in a particular context, such as teacher-to-student or student-to-teacher within the classroom setting. Finally, speech acts are those utterances produced by an individual. Speech acts generally must be culturally contextualized in order for a particular utterance to make sense.

**Ethnography, Language, Culture, and School Classrooms**

One area of study within the discipline of anthropology to which both the ethnographic method and the ethnography of communication have been increasingly applied is within the school and classroom environment. Researchers have viewed schools as both the institution through which mainstream culture is transmitted and as the promoter of cultural and linguistic misunderstandings between students and educators (Spindler, 1982). Numerous studies have described differences in communication patterns and discourse styles and possible impacts on learning and of students’ attitudes (Au, 1981; Banks, 2001; Bernstein & Henderson, 1974; Brice Heath, 1983; Cazden, 2001, 1972; Daniell, 1996; Delpit, 1995, 1988; Findlay, 1992, 1995; Gee, 1985; Gipps, 1999; Good, 2003; Hart & Risley, 2003; Hickman, 2005; Hollos, 1987; Kusnick, 1997; Kyratzis, 2005; Labov, 2006; McDermott, 1981; Miller, 1994; Moje, 2000; Nelson-Barber, 1999; Peters, 1995; Philips, 1983; Poveda, 2001, 2004; Spindler, 1982; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Tobin et al., 1989).
As well, in the analysis of many communication exchanges and structures within the school environment and classroom, researchers have adopted a microethnographic approach. Microethnographies are considered a type of case study. They are “. . . done either on small units of an organization (a part of a classroom) or on a specific organizational activity (children learning how to draw)” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 60). Such a microethnographic case study describes detailed, daily interactions, and exchanges within classrooms. Among the topics for study are participation structures, speech and communication interactions, and the distribution of power in classrooms. Routines and schedules established by the teacher within the classroom environment might also be observed and interpreted. Microethnographic case studies represent small, slices of life and “. . . glimpses or extended views of the process of change in schools, and have worked with . . . and contributed to . . . a general theory of change with regard to the institution of the school. . . .” and how such change might contribute to the success of students (Spindler, 1982, pp. 474-475).

A Microethnographic Study

I decided to use a microethnographic case study approach in describing an elementary, socioeconomically diverse, multilingual, multiethnic classroom. This allowed me to be able to observe communication patterns and behaviors as well as learning styles prevalent in the school setting. Also, this type of case study enabled me to understand any mismatches between communication patterns and learning styles among educators, students, and parents within the classroom setting. In addition, statistics regarding the achievement and success rates of economically, culturally, and linguistically diverse
students, indicate that a mismatch in relation to culture, communication, and learning styles exists. A microethnographic case study of this type might serve to uncover where those mismatches occur, and what implications might emerge in order to alleviate such miscommunications. In large part, my choice of microethnography was in hopes of determining if such mismatches were apparent, and from this body of data, what implications might be revealed for educators.

Methodology Employed

In keeping with this type of study, I made sure that I was compliant with any regulations or legal aspects for such a study. This was especially important to me because I was working with young children. In addition, I was also working with teachers and other educators who were placing themselves in a position of vulnerability as I worked among them and their students. In any type of microethnography, there is a level of rapport and trust that exists between informants, participants, and the observer. I certainly wanted those involved to know that their identity and statements would be held in confidentiality and without judgment.

Relative to my methods, I employed both participant and direct observation of speech situations, events, and acts within the context of an elementary classroom. Specifically, I looked at the economic and cultural context of the classroom as an extension of the larger community, as well as the conditions under which communicative acts occur. I collected and recorded the temporal and spatial distribution of communicative acts and the participant structures (this includes participant roles such as who is the speaker, and who is the listener) (Philips, 1983) in which communication takes place. In
addition, I observed and described situations and events in which code switching occurred, (i.e., using a different code of speech to more closely integrate into the conversation such as switching from formal English to informal English) (Labov, 2006), so that I might understand the socioeconomic and cultural status of my participants.

There are several methods for recording and describing the members and events of the classroom setting. In keeping with the parameters for ethnographic research, I used tape recording, transcription, interviews, and direct and participant observation in order to capture speech situations, events, and acts that occurred in the classroom by its members. Also, I took extensive notes and made sketches of the classroom and environment in order to document spatial and temporal distributions within the classroom. As described by Spindler (1982), research questions and judgments about classroom culture need to emerge from the ethnographic data as it progresses. Therefore, any interview questions and inferences regarding classroom culture that were determined by me emerged from interviews, discussions, and observations with participants; they evolved as the study progressed. My entire ethnography was contextualized within the school/classroom environment and incorporates the socioeconomic and sociocultural knowledge that members bring with them as a basis for understanding classroom dynamics.

As with any ethnography, there is always the apparent contradiction on the part of the researcher regarding objectivity and subjectivity. That is, that there is always the danger that the participant-observer is unable to step back and view the speech situation, event or act without judgment, influence or imposing his or her own schemata. It is
also necessary to balance objectivity with the empathy and desire to identify with members of the culture observed. Participant-observers form attachments and connections for those with whom they interact as a part of their research. Balancing the apparent contradiction of “insider/outsider” or the “emic and etic” view is one of the challenges related to ethnographic research (Duranti, 1997).

It was difficult for me to balance these aspects of my microethnography. First grade students are inevitably personable, cute, and engaging. In terms of interviews with students, I transcribed them as soon as possible after recording them (usually within a day or so). I did this to capture as many of the nuances and subtleties of a particular event as possible. I also did this because I did not want to lose any information, memories, or details related to conversations or acts. I then allowed some time to go by (a week to two weeks) before revisiting each recording, reviewing my transcription, and deciding whether or not I had read too much into the transcription or put more in than I really remembered. At all times, I made an effort to keep an open mind, but to also keep in mind my goals related to communicative mismatches. This allowed me to review recordings and notes with a little more objectivity and relate only the information or aspects of the event that were pertinent to the questions evolving at the time. Also, I felt that by taking observational notes, in addition to recording interviews and daily classroom occurrences, my thoughts, and interpretations, could be supported by the actual recordings. Repeatedly listening to them and again taking notes over a period of time also allowed me a degree of objectivity. For me, adult interviews and observations were, in
general, more easily objectified than students’ interviews because adults realized they were part of a study and tended to respond in terms of that relationship.

Another issue related to ethnographic method is the danger of influencing individuals within the context of the study. Cameras, recording devices, and adults taking notes can influence students’ answers and responses and general behavior. Simply having various non-routine items and individuals in a classroom can disrupt and promote behaviors and actions that normally do not occur. In addition, it is critical that the teacher/educator in the classroom does not have the perception that they are being evaluated or critiqued in regard to their teaching methods and practices. Great care and consideration of the relationships developed are needed to prevent behaviors or actions that influence results in this type of study.

In order to make sure that I was recording the daily routines and activities within the classroom as they would naturally occur, I spent several weeks just getting to know the kids. I interacted with them during their “centers,” or stations through which students rotated in 20- to 30-minute intervals that included instruction or reinforcement activities related to their learning. In many cases, I ran centers when parents or student teachers were unavailable. When kids asked me about “. . . the thing around my neck. . .” I explained that it was my recorder, that I was actually recording their voices, and that they were part of a big writing project that I was completing for college. I also showed them how it worked, and we spent several days at recess just recording their voices and playing the recordings back so they could hear what they sounded like.
There were also times when I just sat and recorded information and observed what the teacher or other adults were doing or how they were interacting with students. During these times, kids mainly ignored me because the management and discipline within the classroom dictated that students pay attention to the teacher and not me. In general, students did this well; the teacher commanded their attention and distractions were out of the question. Also, by that time, I had become a fixture in the classroom, and students were used to me at my usual place in the back of the room. By this point, time had given me the advantage of “. . . being a familiar entity. . . ” in the classroom.

Thus, within the classroom, I was able to integrate into the daily routines and events of the classroom and students soon learned to view me as the “. . . friend of the teacher who was writing a big paper for her college professors.” To a certain extent, this allowed me to become an “insider” with regard to daily operations and activities within the classroom setting.

In addition to my choice of a microethnographic case study, I also decided to incorporate the learning theories of Vygotsky (1986). Vygotsky published his work in 1934, just about the time that Boas was writing and publishing his ideas regarding cultural relativity. In reviewing the work of both, I thought that, in reality, Vygotsky was suggesting that learning occurred relative to the culture in which it occurred; in other words, Boas’s notion of cultural relativity applied to learning and teaching, as well as numerous other behaviors and actions. In many ways, this makes sense, especially in terms of the difficulties that children of immigrants or non-English speaking students have in the American educational system. I thought it would be interesting and valuable
to describe events in a classroom where there was a diverse mix of students in order to observe whether such culturally different symbolic cues were visible or obvious to me. I also wondered if cultural symbols and cues did matter, how did teachers and students negotiate around or find alternatives to such barriers. The overarching questions, therefore, which I wanted to answer, were Did culture matter? Were enculturation patterns and a lack of symbolic knowledge, which might lead to miscommunications visible? Was it possible to determine this through direct observation?

I chose to complete my study in a first grade classroom, because, in reading a number of studies (Brice Heath, 1983; Hart, 2003; Payne, 2001; Philips, 1983), it occurred to me that students develop coping strategies, become familiar with school symbolism or language or learn expected “school behavior” as they progress through the lower grades and into high school. If miscommunications and miscues related to cultural misunderstandings were going to occur, then theoretically they would be more obvious in earlier grades. Also, I thought that being able to discern such miscommunications, if observable, would be critical in terms of understanding why some students were less successful than other students in school. This type of knowledge would be essential and might assist teachers in determining the best approach or strategy for instruction.

Participants

Population Characteristics for Happy Valley Unified School District and the City of Happy Valley

The Happy Valley Unified School District (HVUSD, a pseudonym used to maintain the confidentiality of students, teachers, and other district staff) is located in the
City of Happy Valley, California, which lies at the far northern end of the Sacramento Valley. Happy Valley Elementary School is one of 14 elementary schools included in the HVUSD. Also included in the HVUSD are three high schools, two junior highs, and a variety of alternative schools that support and assist a widely varied population. The total population for the City of Happy Valley is approximately 59,954. Approximately 57% of the population is relatively young, and falls within the 16-24 or 25-44 age range. Most likely, this young age for the population is related to the large number of students who attend classes at the nearby state university, Happy Valley campus, and who reside for most of the year in Happy Valley. With regard to gender, the population is nearly evenly split, females at 50.9% and males at 49.1% of the total number (Table 4) (ePodunk, 2005; Wikipedia, 2005).

The population in Happy Valley and the HVUSD includes several groups from diverse backgrounds; however, most of the population describes its ethnic background as Northern European or “White.” Other groups represented are African American, Latino (usually from Mexico), and Asian (Hmong, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Lao, Cambodian and Vietnamese) (Table 5) (ePodunk, 2005; Wikipedia, 2005). A more discrete breakdown of ethnicity and language was reported by HVUSD in the 1997-1998 school year. At the time, 12 different languages were spoken among students who were English Learners (EL/LEP) (Table 6) (California Department of Education, 2005). The most mentioned ancestries in Happy Valley, however, were German (16.4%), Irish (12.4%), English (11.2%), Italian (6.3%), United States (4.1%), and French (3.4%) (CityData.com, 2005).
Table 4

*Population In Happy Valley, California*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>59,954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Square miles (land)</td>
<td>27.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population per square mile</td>
<td>2160.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Gender*

- Male: 29,422 (49.1%)
- Female: 30,532 (50.9%)

*Age*

- 15 or younger: 10,606 (17.7%)
- 16-24: 18,230 (30.4%)
- 24-44: 16,086 (26.8%)
- 45-64: 9,100 (15.2%)
- 65+: 5,932 (9.9%)

Average age in years: 32.51

Another variable that adds to the diversity of background and languages spoken are the 5,324 members of the population who were born in a country other than the United States. These additional families add to the impact on schools in terms of EL students and the support required for them. Most of these families are either from Asian or Latin American countries (1,903 and 2,488, respectively). Other countries from which immigrants entered the United States were Europe (594), North America (188), Africa (38), and Oceania (113) (U.S. Census, 2005).

There are also a variety of statistics related to social characteristics and dynamics that provide an interesting profile of Happy Valley and the HVUSD. There are
Table 5

Race and Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>49,377</td>
<td>82.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>1,215</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaska Native</td>
<td>782</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2,524</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Other Race</td>
<td>3,390</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>2,551</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic\textsuperscript{a} or Latino</td>
<td>7,351</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{a} Hispanic ethnicity is a separate data category from race. This number should not be added to race totals.

23,476 households in Happy Valley. Of these households, 27.1% have children who are under the age of 18. Also, 34.4% of these homes have couples that are married, while 11.3% have a female who is not married and is the head of the household. Nearly one-third (29.3%) of all households were comprised of individuals living alone, and of this number, individuals over the age of 65 occupied 8.1%. Moreover, the average household size is 2.42 people, and the average family is made up of 3.03 members.

In relation to national averages, Happy Valley residents earn less income each year. In the city, the average income is $29,359 per household, and per family it is $43,077. Males generally earn an income of $35,548, compared to $26,173 for females. Per capita, the average income is $16,970. Poverty is also evident in Happy Valley. Slightly more than a quarter of the population is living at or below the poverty level.
Table 6

*Languages Other Than English Spoken in Happy Valley United School District*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th># Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmong</td>
<td>538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilipino</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khmer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other LEP</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total LEP</td>
<td>1,365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total enrollment</td>
<td>14,099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent LEP</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


(26.6%). In addition, 12.7% of all families earn an income at or below the poverty line. In some cases, the level of income is related to the large number of college students who may not be earning higher incomes, although 19.2% of those under the age of 18 are living at or below the poverty level (Nationmaster.com, 2005). As well, 17.6% of children
between the ages of 5 and 17 are living at or below the poverty level. This is nearly one in every five children between the ages of 5 and 17 Happy Valley and the HVUSD (U.S. Census, 2005).

Educational levels are also revealing. Of the 31,072 individuals over the age of 25, most have some years of college (Table 7 (U.S. Census, 2005). Related to educational levels and family incomes are the types of employment that predominate in Happy Valley, as well as whether a family rents or owns their home. There are a total of 24,352 housing units in Happy Valley. Of these, 14,105 are rentals and 9,269 are owner occupied. There are 27,463 individuals over the age of 16 who are employed in Happy Valley. Most are in middle-income level jobs such as management or sales and clerical positions (Table 8) (U.S. Census, 2005).

Table 7

*Educational Attainment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population 25 years and over</td>
<td>31,072</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 9th grade</td>
<td>1,563</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th-12th grade, no diploma</td>
<td>2,379</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>5,293</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college, no degree</td>
<td>8,639</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>2,748</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>7,174</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate or professional degree</td>
<td>3,276</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent high school graduate or higher</td>
<td>87.3</td>
<td>87.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent bachelor’s degree or higher</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table 8

**Employed Population 16 Years and Older**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total employed population</td>
<td>27,463</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management, professional, and related occupations</td>
<td>9,703</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service occupations</td>
<td>5,359</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales and office occupations</td>
<td>7,837</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations</td>
<td>1,735</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production, transportation, and material moving occupations</td>
<td>2,484</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Industry</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting, and mining</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>1,247</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>1,548</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale trade</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail trade</td>
<td>4,102</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation, warehousing and utilities</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing</td>
<td>1,693</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, scientific, management, administration, and waste management services</td>
<td>1,898</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational, health, and social services</td>
<td>8,322</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services</td>
<td>3,457</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other services (except public administration)</td>
<td>1,242</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public administration</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary: Population Characteristics for Happy Valley and Happy Valley Unified School District

In general, the City of Happy Valley and, by extension, HVUSD, is comprised of a population derived from a Northern European background. Many individuals and family households are at or below the poverty level, and earn substantially less than households elsewhere in the United States, where the national average yearly income is $41,994, compared to the $29,359 in Happy Valley (U.S. Census, 2005). One interesting aspect of Happy Valley’s income level is that only 5.9% of the population was unemployed, which suggests that much of the population that is employed is working for low wages and salaries (U.S. Census, 2005). Also, one of every ten households are headed by a single, female head of household, which brings with it all the concerns and issues of raising a child or children in a one-parent home and on a single income. These concerns also relate to the issue of poverty in Happy Valley. The overall average for individuals at or below the poverty level is 25%. Minimally, it is critical to understand these statistics in relation to the impact on education and schooling in general. Within the HVUSD and the City of Happy Valley, differences in terms of ethnicity and race are secondary to the impact of income level and socioeconomic categories.

Economic Conditions for the City of Happy Valley and Surrounding Area

Statistics for the economic viability of Happy Valley are relatively optimistic. Happy Valley is in a growth phase relative to housing and any large-scale businesses that are opening in the area. Of the 33,800 employable individuals in Happy Valley, 31,800 are employed. This gives a rate of unemployment at 5.9% (State of California, 2005).
The forecast regarding economic conditions and employment is generally optimistic in Happy Valley, although there has been a decline in the number of students enrolled in the HVUSD, which can significantly impact a school or district in terms of enrollment and funding (Angel, 2004b). If enrollment declines, there is less funding since school funding is based on numbers enrolled. This can impact budgets and ultimately programs serving students. Currently, in the City of Happy Valley as well as HVUSD, declines in the student population have occurred.

Declines in student numbers have occurred mainly at two schools in the HVUSD. One school was eventually closed as an elementary school and reopened as an alternative high school. Ultimately, this decline in students will affect overall funding and employment opportunities for educators in the Happy Valley area (School Board Shake up, 2002). Happy Valley Elementary’s enrollment, however, has actually increased as a result of these school closures and changes in programs at other schools (Angel, 2004b). The increase in enrollment has caused another impact for Happy Valley Elementary, which has been a significant change in demographics of the student population and subsequently qualifying to receive Title I funding.

For most schools in the HVUSD, the decline in student enrollment is exacerbating the already declining budget situation based on state funding. The HVUSD Board of Education has had to balance budgets, teacher salaries, and maintain programs located at various school sites (Angel, 2004a). While the current population growth rate for the Happy Valley area is 1.7%, which is near the maximum for new housing starts and measured impacts on the city’s infrastructure allowed by the General Plan, this
growth is not necessarily being translated into an increase in funding based on student enrollment (School Board Shakeup, 2002; Six Questions for Six Candidates, 2002).

Population Characteristics of Happy Valley Elementary School

Happy Valley Elementary School is located in a moderate sized, Northern California city. Happy Valley has a total enrollment of 450 students who attend the school on a year-round, single-track schedule. Students who attend are mainly from the surrounding neighborhoods in the northwest section of the city, but there is also a large number of students who attend the school from outside the school’s neighborhood boundaries. Students who attend from outside the school’s boundaries must obtain special transfers and permission from the school district. In order to obtain these transfers (known as Form 10ing), parents or guardians must apply and gain approval from Happy Valley Unified School District and the Happy Valley School Board.

In past years, Happy Valley was known as an innovative and excellent school. Due to this, and the desire of many parents to have their students enrolled, the number of students that were attending through the Form 10 processes was as high as 75%. There is a general feeling among the staff that parents who choose to enroll their students in a particular school tend to be more involved and supportive of education. Because of the high Form 10 percentage, Happy Valley had been one of the more highly regarded schools in the district. At the time of the study (October and November of 2005), however, fewer students enrolled in Happy Valley are attending through the Form 10ing process (Brown, personal communication, October, 2005). Some staff members believe
that the decline in Form 10s is related to the increasing percent in low-income families and the school’s new status as a Title I school.

In past years, the make-up and background of the student population was predominantly from a White, middle to upper socioeconomic level. Over the last few years, however, population changes in the school have occurred. Students from more diverse backgrounds, both economically and ethnically, have enrolled in the school, and are presenting staff, teachers, and administrators with a new challenge for educating their students.

The school has only recently become a Title I school (the last two years—2004-05 and 2005-06) and currently is funded under this federal program (Brown, 2005, personal communication). This is demonstrated by the level of free and reduced-price lunches that are provided by the school (GreatSchools Inc., 2005a). For example, the percentage of students participating in free or reduced-price lunch programs is 42%, which is higher than in previous years (Brown, 2005). There are also a breakfast program and an after school program integrated with the local Boys and Girls Club, and the city’s recreation program, which is supported by a 21st Century grant that is funded through federal monies. The after school program includes academic tutoring, homework club, and structured outdoor activities. It operates from 2:15 to 5:30 P.M., Monday through Friday. The mobility rate is 23% (GreatSchools Inc., 2005b). This mobility rate includes a variety of situations in which transitions are occurring, such as students and families that may begin the year, but not complete the year. They may also come at some time other than the beginning of the year, and remain to complete the school year.
Happy Valley reflects the general population profile and demographics of the local city and school district. Approximately 80% of the school population at Happy Valley is from a White background. There are also a variety of other ethnic groups represented, which closely mirror the statistics and demographics for the city itself (Table 9).

Table 9

\textit{Happy Valley Elementary School Student Ethnicity By Percent for 2004-2005}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Happy Valley</th>
<th>State average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White, not Hispanic</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American, not Hispanic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska native</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple or no response</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While specific information is not available for parent incomes at Happy Valley, the income eligibility guidelines for free and reduced-price lunches are informative with regard to the income levels represented at Happy Valley. If the average family size in the city is 3.03 members, and 42% of students at Happy Valley qualify for free or reduced meals (breakfast and lunch) (Happy Valley School District, 2005), then a reasonable estimate regarding income for at least that 42% is approximately $29,000 to
$30,000. This is the annual income requirement that qualifies for a household of three for free or reduced price lunches (Table 10). This amount is also close to the average income earned per household in the City of Happy Valley (U.S. Census, 2005).

Table 10

*Income Eligibility Guidelines in Dollars for Happy Valley Elementary School*

*from July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household size</th>
<th>Annual</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Twice per month</th>
<th>Every two weeks</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>17,705</td>
<td>1,476</td>
<td>738</td>
<td>681</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>23,736</td>
<td>1,978</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>913</td>
<td>457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>29,767</td>
<td>2481</td>
<td>1,241</td>
<td>1,145</td>
<td>573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>35,798</td>
<td>2984</td>
<td>1,492</td>
<td>1,377</td>
<td>689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>41,825</td>
<td>3,486</td>
<td>1,743</td>
<td>1,609</td>
<td>805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>47,860</td>
<td>3,989</td>
<td>1,995</td>
<td>1,841</td>
<td>921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>53,891</td>
<td>4,491</td>
<td>2,246</td>
<td>2,073</td>
<td>1,037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>59,922</td>
<td>4,994</td>
<td>2,497</td>
<td>2,305</td>
<td>1,153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Currently, Happy Valley has approximately 450 students, and about 190 of these have qualified for free and reduced-price lunches. This 42% of the school population has also allowed Happy Valley to be classified as a Title 1 school. This will bring in additional funding and grants for specialized programs such as the 21st Century grant already mentioned and specialized intersession and various intervention programs (Brown, 2005).
With regard to parent education level, Happy Valley’s profile is similar to that of the city in general, with the bulk of parents falling into the level of having some college, but not graduating from a four institution (Table 11) (GreatSchools Inc., 2005b).

Table 11

*Happy Valley Elementary Parent Education Level by Percent for 2003-2004*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Happy Valley</th>
<th>State average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did not graduate from high school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate school</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of students with parent education data available</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most recent information for Happy Valley with regard to state standardized testing is listed in Table 12 (California Department of Education, 2004). The Annual Performance Index (API) for 2004 for the entire school was 718, a decline of 34 points from 2003 to 2004 (Brown, 2005). Many reasons have been suggested for this decline in test scores. Among these are beginning teachers in the upper, intermediate grades, an increase in students who have greater needs, which is related to the conversion of another nearby school to an open structure program and the closure of that particular school’s neighborhood program, and an increase in overflow students and EL students.
Table 12

*CST/Standardized Test Scores by Percent for Happy Valley Elementary School*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reported enrollment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*CST English-language arts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total enrollment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean scaled score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far below basic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*CST mathematics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total enrollment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean scaled score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far below basic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


from schools throughout the district. Indeed, many teachers are extremely concerned as to how to support and assist students enrolled at Happy Valley (Brown, 2005).
The credentialed staff currently teaching in the school is fully qualified as required by the No Child Left Behind Act (2001). The average numbers of years of teaching experience is 17 years in the classroom. The principal feels that she is fortunate to have a collegial, committed, and caring staff, and that they are an excellent team (Brown, 2005). In talking with many members of the staff, it is apparent that there is an increasing frustration as to how to support and meet the needs of the changing population enrolled in the school. Teachers have referred many more students than in previous years for student study team meetings (SST). Students who are experiencing either behavioral or academic difficulties are referred to SSTs in order that intervention and support might be provided for them. Many teachers believe the change in population demographics is largely responsible for the many concerns related to such increasing referrals. Indeed, special education teachers at the school feel that there is a strong desire on the part of teachers and staff to teach to this different population of students, but that there is unfamiliarity with information, teaching strategies, and instructional methods that might improve achievement and success rates for these students. This is why the increase in SSTs has been so dramatic (Hobart, personal communication, October, 2005; James, personal communication, October, 2005).

There is also a tradition at Happy Valley among teachers and staff of dedication and hard work with regard to teaching and supporting students. As the population of Happy Valley changes, the culture of the school is also undergoing transition. Teachers, staff, and administrators are all adjusting to and seeking new ways of teaching children. Those who work at the school realize that they are in transition. They are aware that this
is a very different population of students, and are seeking to collaborate and educate themselves about the cultural, linguistic, and learning issues related to this population. This is often evidenced in discussions in the staff/lunch room. There are frequent discussions during lunches and breaks about a particular student or solution to a problem. Generally, these discussions are professional, and seek positive solutions to support students. “Teacher talk” in the staff/lunchroom is rarely negative or derogatory toward students or parents unless there are extreme events or situations related to student or parent behavior.

In addition to the desire to help students succeed, the staff generally believes in the leadership, vision, and goals of their principal. The principal is well aware of the changing population at Happy Valley and is currently collaborating with the staff to find solutions and support for student achievement. The current restructuring of the SST process is evidence of this. However, the principal did not attempt this restructuring without the collaboration and support of the staff. The principal provided substitute days for teachers so that each teacher had the opportunity to visit a school with similar issues and demographics. The schools they visited already had Title I programs in place that were considered successful. Teachers returned from these visits excited and hopeful that they would be able to implement similar strategies and instruction. As a result, some SSTs are handled as grade level meetings and interventions planned and implemented. If these interventions are ineffective, then the regular SST team meets to further intervene (Brown, 2005).

As the community of Happy Valley has changed to a more low-income population, teachers have noticed changes in the manner and patterns of behavior, lan-
guage, and socialization. Many have stated, “We never used to have so many kids with so many needs. We never used to have kids named Lupita” (Hobart, 2005). The trend has been so noticeable that several copies of *A Framework for Poverty* (Payne, 2001) have been purchased and read by teachers. Many see their students in the discussions and descriptions presented in the book. Currently, the culture and community dynamics of Happy Valley include adjustment, adaptation, and change, as well as poverty among their students. There is continued anxiety as to how this will evolve, and as to what new community and culture will emerge. Currently, the teachers and staff of Happy Valley are striving to develop a community and culture which will meet the needs of their new students.

**First Grade at Happy Valley Elementary School**

The selection for data collection of a first grade classroom setting was based on two assumptions which were suggested by existing research (Brice Heath, 1983; Philips, 1983). First, students in first grade are more likely to exhibit the language and communication patterns learned in the home. This is because they have had less exposure to the school environment and language, and less time to incorporate school language patterns into their own manner of communication; thus, there was less interference from “school” language. Hence, their language and communication patterns were more closely aligned to their ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic levels than those which were encountered in the classroom. Secondly, since first graders’ communication patterns are more closely aligned to language and expressions found in their homes, any misalign-
ment between the home language and communication and the language of the classroom might be more readily discernible than that which might be found in later grades.

In terms of demographics, the classroom in the study generally reflected the population characteristics of Happy Valley. The class was comprised of 19 students. Sixty-eight percent of the class were considered to be students who were White, not of Hispanic origin (13 students); 21% were from a Hispanic/Latino background (4 students); 5% from an Asian background (1 student); and 5% were from a background from the Indian subcontinent (1 student).

Because the students were first graders, written parental permission was required in order for a student to participate in the study. Of the 19 students in the class, 16 parents granted permission for their students to participate. These included all students described above except for three of those classified as White, not of Hispanic/Latino origin. Thus, the final pool of participants included students in the following categories: ten White, not of Hispanic/Latino origin, four students of Hispanic/Latino origin, one Asian student, and one student with a background from India.

Information on the socioeconomic levels of all students is considered to be highly confidential. Thus, the specific numbers or percentages of students who might be on free or reduced breakfasts or lunches are unavailable. This information is not revealed to anyone at the school, including teachers, school secretary, or principal. Initially, distributing a survey which included income level ranges was considered, in order to determine the income of students/parents within the classroom in an effort to gain some sense of socioeconomic levels that might be represented. However, because of the confiden-
tiality surrounding income levels and connecting them to specific students/parents, the school principal suggested relating incomes to occupations rather than individuals. As a result, the principal provided access to the occupational categories represented by students’ families. Interviews were also conducted with Mrs. Sherman (all names are fictitious), the classroom teacher, regarding the family situation and types of employment for families whose students participated in the study. Occupational categories, and the average national income associated with them, were then accessed through the U.S. Census Bureau’s Bureau of Labor Statistics in order to determine a relative income level for students’ families. This was a necessary step in the study in order to determine whether communication patterns or discourse styles might be related to income levels (Table 13).

A Day in 1st Grade

Research in the first grade classroom at Happy Valley was carried out over a two-month period (October and November of 2005). Observations were conducted in the mid-morning (10:00 A.M.-12:00 noon), two hours each day, and four days each week (Monday through Thursday). This time period was selected after a discussion with Mrs. Sherman regarding the least disruptive time of day in which to participate in her classroom. This time of day also included both whole class and small group instruction. Mrs. Sherman also thought that because this was a time of day when aides, parents, and other adult volunteers were in the room, it would be a normal time for yet another adult to be involved with the class.

Instruction and activities during this time included a whole class story time immediately upon entering the room after the morning recess (the teacher would read a
Table 13

*Ethnic Background of Happy Valley Elementary First Graders Compared to Happy Valley Elementary Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>% Happy Valley</th>
<th>% Happy Valley students</th>
<th># Students in class</th>
<th># Students participating in study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White, not Hispanic</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American, not Hispanic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska native</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple or no response</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Indian subcontinent)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total students</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

book to the entire class of students), then breaking up into “centers/stations” for small group instruction in reading. The remaining two centers/stations that did not focus on reading, alternated among math, science, social studies, or art projects. Frequently, this instruction supported science or social studies lessons taught the previous afternoon. Art projects were related to seasons of the year or topics such as holidays or the students’ favorite activities, although they might also connect to science or social studies.

Most observations, however, occurred during small group instruction at centers/stations immediately following the morning story time. These included both direct
and participant observations. Direct observations generally occurred during whole group instruction or story time, while participant observations occurred as a part of the small group instruction. Direct observations were made without interaction or attempt to intervene or interject speech or behavior patterns upon the students or teacher. Participant observations occurred when I was given a particular task, activity, or lesson to present to students. Presenting this instruction included not only delivering the content, but also modifying behavior or disciplining students if the need arose. The length of time in which students were engaged in centers/stations was 20-30 minutes during this morning instructional time. Each set of students rotated through the centers/station, receiving instruction or completing a reinforcement activity in three areas over the next hour to hour and a half. Participant observation also included any activities that the class was involved in such as field trips, awards assemblies, or plays for parents. There were also brief visits and interactions, which occurred outside this time frame, however, no extensive notes or recordings, were made of these times (such as before or after the 10:00-12:00 time span).

This combination of observation strategies allowed opportunities for daily observations and recordings of conversations and discourse patterns not only between the teacher and students, but also for me to engage in speaking with students themselves. Handwritten notes and written records (diagrams, charts, etc.) of classroom discourse were made each time direct or participant observations occurred. In addition, a small, portable recording device allowed audio recordings of conversations made during direct and participant observations. Once the purpose of this portable recorder was explained to
students, and a chance to listen to each other’s recorded voices provided, it no longer caused a distraction, but became a regular accessory for me; indeed, so much so that if students did not see it, they inquired as to its location and why I did not have it with me.

The following narrative describes my role in a typical day in Room 4 (Table 14). It is a composite narrative based on interviews with the classroom teacher, Mrs. Sherman, and brief notes and recordings made during those times I visited the classroom, both within the 10:00-12:00 time span and outside this time span.

The day began at 8:15 each morning. From 8:15 until 9:40, students first completed an opening activity, which included the usual morning activities such as the flag salute and calendar, followed by Bell work (3 or 4 review problems in math) or a written journal assignment. Next, students received instruction in various forms of language arts such as phonics and spelling. Physical education (PE) was also a part of this morning routine. In general, I was not in Room 4 during this instructional time unless a field trip or other event was scheduled and I needed to arrive early to go or drive on the field trip. After PE, students had a 20-minute recess until 10:00 A.M.

At 10:00 A.M., I usually arrived to find recess over and Mrs. Sherman opening the door to her class of 20 students. During this time, I generally sat at the back of the classroom, off to one side near Mrs. Sherman’s desk, awaiting the arrival of the students, and getting ready to take notes or record the discussion. I found the students to be generally well-behaved, entering the room with the usual noise and activity exhibited by first graders. The first graders responded well to Mrs. Sherman’s positive, calm, and gentle requests to remember the classroom and school rules as they entered. Mrs. Sherman led
Table 14

*Approximate Annual Income of Happy Valley School Participating Students’ Parents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student family</th>
<th>Average annual salary/wages</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Total family income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$36,100</td>
<td>Retail sales/management</td>
<td>$36,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>$49,670</td>
<td>Education (classroom teacher)</td>
<td>$49,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>$9,600</td>
<td>Education (playground supervisor)</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>$42,630</td>
<td>Auto repair/maintenance</td>
<td>$52,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>$28,950</td>
<td>Self-employed/long line trucking and freight</td>
<td>$28,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Travel agency owner</td>
<td>Unknown (teacher suggested independently wealthy: frequently gave donations to class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>$35,940</td>
<td>Clerical (government agency)</td>
<td>$65,940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 - 10</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>Clerical (government agency)</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(siblings/twins)</td>
<td>$42,630</td>
<td>Auto repair/maintenance</td>
<td>$72,630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>Massage therapist</td>
<td>$72,630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$58,750</td>
<td>Police/detective</td>
<td>$91,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$32,630</td>
<td>Clerical (government agency)</td>
<td>$32,630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$36,000</td>
<td>Clerical (medical insurance)</td>
<td>$36,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<th>Occupation</th>
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<td>Food preparation and serving related occupations</td>
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the students to the carpet for story time, requesting that they quickly sit down and get ready to listen to her read a book. The book was usually an illustrated story book that could be read in approximately 15-20 minutes. As Mrs. Sherman read to her students, she frequently stopped to ask students to make predictions about what they thought was going to happen, or to ask questions about the story itself. At the end of story time, Mrs. Sherman and her students finalized the reading by summarizing the story and what they liked about the book.

Once story time was finished, Mrs. Sherman separated the students into three different groups. Sometimes these groups were leveled by ability or reading skill and, at other times, they were comprised of students with mixed abilities and reading skills. Mrs. Sherman liked to mix these groups because she felt that she could target specific reading skills when students were at the same reading level, but that students benefited from hearing strong readers model their skills. Mrs. Sherman usually taught the main reading instruction in her small group using the school/district adopted basal reading program. Generally, this consisted of lessons that related to reading comprehension or literary elements such as character descriptions, plot development, or questions related to specific details about the story.
Another center/station was supervised by a full-time aide or another adult such as a parent volunteer. These lessons usually included reinforcement or support activities such as writing in a journal or writing a story about a field trip or holiday and were related to art, science, or social studies. I usually either supervised the third activity or assisted students a task, depending on whether another parent volunteer was present for the day. During this time, I was seated with the students at the center/station and was consistently able to audio record conversations with students, or engage them in conversations. Later, after centers/stations were finished, I was able to write down various notes and conversations in my daily journal. Activities included math or language arts games such as “Frog Math” and “Word Bingo.” After students completed the centers/stations, they went to lunch from 11:40 to 12:25. Although after lunch was not a time in which I generally observed or participated in classroom activities, Mrs. Sherman related that this was when she did social studies, science, or art projects depending on the time of year. In addition to these content areas, Mrs. Sherman also read the students a “chapter book” and provided time for “sharing” in the afternoon. Although not usually in Room 4 in the afternoon when sharing occurred, I was able to observe several sessions of sharing and the discussions that followed.

In addition to the observations within the classroom, I was also able to shadow several students when they went for intervention in reading instruction. On these occasions, I was strictly a non-participant observer taking notes and recording the instruction and interaction that occurred during the lesson. Generally, the groups were small, consisting of between two and four students who had been identified as needing additional
reading help. I sat behind the students, so that they were unable to see me, but I could hear and see their discussions and dialogues with the teacher. I also integrated information, observations, and conversations from several other teachers with whom students from Room 4 interacted. These included resource teachers and intervention teachers such as resource teachers or Reading Recovery teachers.

In addition to interviews, participant observations, and direct observations, audio recordings were made during many class sessions and discussions. Once these data were recorded, I reviewed each recording and produced a written record for each session. The written documentation for these data included notes and comments on the discussions and verbal responses listed as daily journal entries. There was no attempt, however, to produce an exact transcription of the recording except in the case where the recording or verbal responses and discussion were directly quoted in the text of this thesis.

I believe the transition taking place in the demographics and student population at Happy Valley is one that is taking place in many schools throughout California and the United States. From the information I gathered regarding Happy Valley and its change to an economically and ethnically diverse school, it became apparent that understanding the “student context” within a classroom was critical. I think how teachers use instructional strategies and respond to students provides a critical mechanism through which students learn. When teachers are aware of their students’ backgrounds, they are equipped with the knowledge that will allow them to be more effective.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

When students enter the school environment, they arrive with a particular set of language behaviors and communication patterns. Anthropologists and linguistic anthropologists have long sought to understand these behaviors in terms of the cultural contexts students bring with them from their home environments. Indeed, students use culture as knowledge, communication, mediation, and as a system of practices, behaviors, and participation in order to negotiate the school environment. These strategies that students bring with them to this learning environment have provided ample research and study opportunities within the classroom. How language integrates and interfaces between and among students and teachers, and how such interactions might impact learning, are questions of great concern for educators in general.

For many researchers, descriptions of classroom practice and context are the genesis of many questions and issues related to learning and success rates for students of diverse cultural backgrounds and languages. Indeed, such research is the basis for the questions under investigation here, and the resulting descriptions derived from the ensuing ethnographic observations. Such descriptions might best be detailed as they relate to each of the original research questions:

1. What discourse styles and communication patterns are apparent within the classroom setting as a school’s population changes and transitions from one socioeconomic
level to another? Are the types of students’ responses related to their cultural and linguist
discourse styles or communication patterns?

2. Do the types of questions asked by the teacher impact student response and
discussion?

3. Is there a relationship among students’ discourse styles, communication patterns,
and the type of students’ responses when different types of questioning structures are
implemented?

Discourse Styles and Communication Patterns

As previously described, the student population at Happy Valley Elementary
School is undergoing a marked socioeconomic and ethnic transition. The numbers of
middle- to high-income families have declined significantly over the past three years. The
number of students on free or reduced price lunch programs has also increased. In addi-
tion, there has been an increase in students from diverse cultural and language back-
grounds. As a result, there has been a marked change in terms of classroom populations
over the past three years.

As the population becomes more ethnically and economically diverse at
Happy Valley, so do discourse styles and communication patterns. Many teachers at
Happy Valley repeatedly voiced concerns related to these changes. Teachers commented
on how it seemed that so many new Student Study Team (SST) referrals were being
made compared to previous years. STTs are convened when a teacher believes there are
significant academic or behavior issues for a particular student. The SST committee
members (administrators, teachers, and parents) meet and describe their concerns
regarding the student. Together, they develop strategies and interventions for the student. These strategies might include testing to determine whether the student qualifies for special education or simply accommodations that the parents and teachers attempt either at home or in the classroom setting.

Although not statistically quantified, it seemed to teachers that many of these SST referrals were related to a lack of “readiness” for school. Being “ready” for school included not only concerns over an apparent lack of skills (knowing the alphabet, expressive vocabulary, being able to count, knowing their colors) but also behavioral issues such as paying attention, being able to focus, voice level (using a quiet, inside voice), expressing an answer to questions, and knowing when and how to speak. Many of the concerns listed by teachers are similar to those described in previously mentioned studies related to vocabulary development, student responses to teacher questions, and classroom behavior (Brice Heath, 1983; Cazden, 2001; Gee, 1985; Hart & Risley, 2003; Payne, 2001).

Often, teachers spoke about language use issues, such as slang terms and the seeming lack of an extensive vocabulary related to the chronological age and development of students. Teachers perceived these characteristics of student speech as interfering with their ability to learn successfully, and that they spent much of their class time attempting to convey what proper language use was in school. In several interviews, teachers were asked whether they could “guess” the income level of students and their families. Most believed they could. When teachers were asked on what they based their predictions, they listed several characteristics for student behavior and speech, such as
word use, blurting out in class discussions, and interrupting in a loud voice with whatever thoughts came into their minds, and then talking on and on in discussions, seemingly without a point to be made in the conversation. These speech and communication patterns frequently reflected those elements and characteristics reported on by Brice Heath (1983), Hart and Risley (2003), and Payne (2001) with regard to students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

When questioned as to the specific characteristics of these terms, teachers first described “word use.” Word use included difficulty levels of words to describe an object, or displaying a more basic vocabulary to describe objects. In addition, teachers often identified low-income students as those who spoke out of turn, interrupted, or caused disruptions in class discussions. Several occurrences of these speech and behavior patterns were also evident in recordings made during observations in the classroom and are clearly discernable in the following lesson entitled “My Shell Is Too.”

“My Shell Is Too”

During one circle time lesson, the first grade teacher, Mrs. Sherman, read a story to the class about a hermit crab that outgrew its shell, and the subsequent search to find a new shell that was “just right.” The focus of the book was to use words along with illustrations in order to provide context and list adjectives such as long, rough, short, or round. The story was repetitive, frequently using the sentence, “This shell is too.” Mrs. Sherman finished the story, then passed out a variety of shells, a different one to each student. As the lesson proceeded, each student was asked to pretend he or she were the crab looking for a shell and to then describe his or her shell:
Mrs. Sherman: What I’m going to do now, now is I’m going to give you a shell. [laughter, inaudible noises from students]

Excuse me, I’m going to wait for Kate to sit up, and Jacob to put his book away, hopefully. You don’t need to close it. We’re going to do more after this.

I’m going to give you a shell. The shell won’t be to keep. But what you’re going to do with the shell is we’re all going to look at it for a couple minutes. And then you’re going to tell me; stand up and describe your shell; pretend you are the crab, and you’re looking for a home.

[Interruption from another adult who has come to take a student away for writing class; this stops the directions from being given, inaudible noises from students occur as Mrs. Sherman talks with the adult]

[Donald calls out, something like “Bye”]

Mrs. Sherman: Donald.

So I’m going to give you a few minutes to think; you’re the crab, you’re looking for your shell, but this isn’t the right one for you. We’re going to pretend this is not the right one for you, so you have to tell us in the same.

Excuse me, Cord, Cord . . . put that in the garbage please . . . in the same words that the book had, the same language, it’s too what? So Cord, would you repeat those directions please. Can you do that?

Donald: [Calls out “What is this?” as Mrs. Sherman continues to talk to Cord]

Mrs. Sherman: O.K. Take a look at your shell. [conversation continues]

No beads . . . um Leslie. There’s no beads right now. No beads Leslie. We’re looking at our shells right now. No beads. Leslie’s going to go first. If you’re a good listener, when I’m all done, I might pass out a bead. If you’re not a good listener, then no beads. I’m having a lot of trouble with people doing a lot of their own visiting. Excuse me.

Mrs. Sherman: I don’t want to put you on the spot . . . [Mrs. Sherman continues an inaudible discussion with Cord in a quiet voice concerning the need for him to not talk or play with things when she is trying to give directions. Mrs. Sherman repeats directions quietly to Cord]
[Mrs. Sherman raises her voice so the rest of the class can hear] It’s too what . . . Now, I don’t care if you use some of the same words, but you might want to come up with your own words. You could come up with a different word. [Conversation and noise from students as they determine the quality of their shell that is “. . . too what” and what criteria would be included for such requirements]

Mrs. Sherman: Leslie, tell us. Your shell. Say, my shell is too.

Leslie: My shell’s too right because it’s the one that was in the story. [inaudible]

Mrs. Sherman: Oh, so you think yours is just right. O.K. so yours was in the story. O.K. so yours was just right. Nobody else’s can be just right. Thank you. All right, Gail, come on up here.

Gail: It’s too beautiful.

Mrs. Sherman: [quietly to Gail] My shell’s too beautiful.

Gail: My shell’s too beautiful.

Mrs. Sherman: Her shell is too beautiful [referring to Gail’s statement]. Good word. That word wasn’t in the book, so that’s a different word. Dale.

Dale: My shell is too small.

Mrs. Sherman: My shell is too small. O.K. Maggie. Maggie. Adam, where’d we say we wanted the shells to be kept? [Meanwhile, Donald is playing and talking with his neighbor; he drops his shell] O.K. Donald, you just lost your chance to share. Move your tag please. Put your shell back in the bag please. I’m not going to have you share. My shell is too what?

Maggie: too white.

Mrs. Sherman: too white . . . My shell is too white.

Donald in the background: It’s a long one. [Mrs. Sherman turns to him and says] Sh. Alright, Mary. ‘Member so far everyone’s earned their bead. [referring to beads earned for good behavior]

Donald in the background: Teacher, is this real? [Mrs. Sherman at first does not respond then says] Sh.

Mary: [Thinking and pausing] . . . too long.
Mrs. Sherman: Her shell is too long. She had to think a long time for that one. Cord.

Cord: My shell is too big.

Mrs. Sherman: His shell is too big. It’s a pretty one. Alright, Thomas. Sh . . . sh . . . He’s got a quiet voice, so we have to listen. Sh.

Thomas: My shell is too brown.

Mrs. Sherman: My shell is too brown; a brownish color. The crab doesn’t want a brown color. O.K. ah, Adam. Sh. . . Boy, I like the good listeners I’m having.

Adam: My shell is too . . . fat.

Mrs. Sherman: Too fat. You were trying to find a different word weren’t you? That’s good! O.K. He’s trying . . . I could hear it.

[Turns to Donald] Donald, sit up. Now. Jacob. [Pauses] . . . Donald, feet down, head up. Kay, Donald, could you move your tag again, please. Thank you. You’re not show . . . You’re not trying to earn it back. That’s not the kind of behavior we have to earn a tag back.

Jacob: My shell is too big.

Mrs. Sherman: His shell’s too big.

Donald: [talking over Mrs. Sherman, calls out] It’s on the board.

Mrs. Sherman: John [the next student to be called on to speak, but then Mrs. Sherman turns to Donald and restates] Donald, you know how to earn it back. You know how to get it again.

Mrs. Sherman: My shell is too long. It looks like an ice cream cone if you turn it that way. Cody. Nope . . . Donald . . . [shaking her head at Donald]

Cody: My shell is too flat.

Mrs. Sherman: Another good word. Show ‘em what kind of shell you had . . . too flat. Boy, good listeners, you’re being such better listeners right now . . .

Mrs. Sherman: O.K. Devin.

Diego: Mine is too prickly.
Mrs. Sherman: My shell is too prickly. Good word, because it does have a lot of points on it. Good word, you guys are using good words.

Robert: [pauses and takes a while to think of his word] . . . too cool.

Mrs. Sherman: Too cool; let’s see it, let’s see it. He said his shell is too cool. That is a neat shell.

Mrs. Sherman continues around the circle until all the students have shared their words. She finishes the lesson by having students read again through the story, this time with a partner. Finally, the lesson ends as the bell rings, and the students are excused for recess.

Lesson Structure, Discourse, and Behavior Patterns

During this lesson, several discourse and behavioral patterns were discernable. First, Mrs. Sherman set up and structures the lesson by giving a set of directions to acquaint students with their part in the lesson. This “introduction” to the lesson informed the students as to their part in the lesson, as well as what expectations Mrs. Sherman had for how they were to present their chosen words. Students had a few minutes to think about what word they would use to describe their shell, and then a student was chosen to go first. Students were allowed to discuss and compare their shells during this time. In addition, students needed to stand when chosen, and each student had to use the sentence starter, “My shell is too,” in order to create a full, complete sentence as they spoke. The first student chosen, Leslie, completed the task by saying that “. . . her shell is too right.”

While it is important to introduce a lesson and provide directions for student responses and behaviors, how they are provided might lead to some miscommunications for students. For example, there are several times when both the directions and behavior...
expectations were implied rather than explicitly stated by Mrs. Sherman. In stating her directions, Mrs. Sherman said, “Now, I don’t care if you use some of the same words, but you might want to come up with your own words. You could come up with your own words.” This direction might have been confusing to some students, because it was ambiguous, especially for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds or for whom English is not their first language: does the teacher want a word from the book or a word they think of independently?

Clearly, Mrs. Sherman wanted students to think of words independently, because, as the lesson continued, the feedback she provided to students varied, depending on whether the word was from the book. Her feedback for students who used a word not in the book was more enthusiastic and included evaluative words such as “good”; she praised Cody, Adam, and Diego for their use of a word not in the book (saying, to Cody, “Another good word. Show . . . ,”; to Adam, “You were trying to find a different word weren’t you? That’s good!” and telling Diego, “Good word, because it does have a lot of points on it.”). When Mrs. Sherman provided feedback to students who repeated a word used in the book, her response was to restate what the student said as she did for Dale, Maggie, and Jacob (to Dale, “My shell is too small.”; to Maggie, “Too white . . . My shell is too white.”; and to Jacob, “His shell is too big.”). There was an implied message in the directions that students needed to use a word not in the book. Students who did not repeat a word from the book were responded to more positively, enthusiastically, and the discussion was more extended by Mrs. Sherman. Students not exposed to this type of implied speech previous to their entry into school might not have been able to decode the
message or understand what Mrs. Sherman really wanted. Students might wonder why some responses to their words were “good” and others were just repeated back.

Secondly, in terms of behavior expectations, there were several times when Mrs. Sherman managed student behavior through the use of her dialogue. Mrs. Sherman said, “I’m having a lot of trouble with people doing a lot of their own visiting. Excuse me. I don’t want to put you on the spot.” In this case, Mrs. Sherman was asking students to stop talking and focus on the directions she was giving. Another phrase Mrs. Sherman used was, “Where did we say we would keep our shells?” Some students may not have realized that Mrs. Sherman was not asking a question and was not expecting an answer. The message was a subtle reminder to keep the shells in their laps and not play with them. However, because the request was implied and not explicitly stated, some students might not have realized what she was asking them to do.

Finally, as the lesson continued, the structure of the lesson was presented in a traditional initiate, respond, and evaluate (IRE) format. This is clearly illustrated when Mrs. Sherman asked a question, a student responded, and Mrs. Sherman commented on their responses. Her responses clearly evaluated or provided feedback to the student, and she quickly moved on to the next student as soon as the student had given an answer. Mrs. Sherman commented on the response by each student, but each student only had one opportunity to speak. Also, the amount of “teacher talk” compared to the amount of “student talk” was much higher since students were given only one opportunity to speak, while Mrs. Sherman commented after each response. Throughout this lesson, there was little opportunity for students to expand their discussions, interact, or learn from one
another. In addition, the wait time for student responses was also less than three seconds, and the same student was not asked to expand or extend his or her thinking once a response had been given. When student-to-student interaction occurred, it was when one student interrupted or talked over another student, and Mrs. Sherman intervened. The student-to-student interactions did not relate to or extend the topic of the lesson. As well, in the IRE sequence with Gail, Mrs. Sherman quietly repeated the sentence starter after Gail said, “It’s too beautiful,” encouraging Gail to use the sentence, “My shell is too beautiful.” Mrs. Sherman did this in order that Gail follow the sentence starter pattern she requested in her directions.

Research suggests that this type of sequence does not promote the greatest amount of student learning (Good, 2003; Hickman, 2005; Kusnick, 1997). Student learning is best when students interact and develop their knowledge in a social context (Vygotsky, 1986). They must share their own thoughts and apply their thinking by speaking and questioning each other. This is especially true for any students who have entered school from backgrounds other than mainstream American culture.

Economic, Cultural, and Linguistic Backgrounds and Their Relationship to Discourse and Communication Styles

Within the context of this classroom discussion, several instances of different communication styles occur. First, the descriptive/adjective responses appear to align more along socioeconomic levels than they are related to ethnic background. This finding is supported by the work of numerous researchers (Bernstein & Henderson, 1974; Hart & Risley, 2003; Pan et al., 2005; Payne, 2001, 2002; Pikulski & Shane, 2004). For example,
Diego describes his shell as prickly, a fairly sophisticated word for first grade, according to Mrs. Sherman. It is also the most descriptive and imaginative word given by any of the first graders. However, Diego’s home environment includes parents and other relatives from a Spanish speaking background. Diego, however, is not an ELD student, but is considered fluent in English for his age. Some Spanish is spoken in the home.

In addition, Diego’s parents earned an annual income of approximately $49,680 (Table 13). The average income in the Happy Valley area is approximately $31,924.00 annually, which means that Diego’s parents earn an income above the county average. In this particular lesson, Diego, whose background is ethnically and linguistically diverse, but whose family income is above the area average, provides the most descriptive and sophisticated adjective as a response. This suggests that, in this particular instance, income level might be more of an indicator for vocabulary development than cultural or ethnic background. However, while a relationship between income and vocabulary development is suggested by the above discourse sequence, it is only a possibility. In Table 15, it is apparent that the student from the highest income level family, John, who uses the word, “long,” uses a descriptive word that is less sophisticated than “prickly.”

In addition, Maggie, whose family income is the third highest in the class, uses the word “white,” which is considered less sophisticated than the “prickly” used by Diego. Maggie comes from a family whose first language is Hmong. Thus, while her family has a relatively high income, which would suggest a particular level of
### Room 4 Data Collection Methods and Daily Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Method of Data Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:15-9:40 a.m.</td>
<td>Opening, bell work, journal write, spelling, phonics, occasional field trips</td>
<td>Generally not in the classroom at this time unless a fieldtrip occurred; participant observation and audio recordings were used at these times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00-10:20 a.m.</td>
<td>Read aloud</td>
<td>Direct observation, note taking and audio recordings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:20-11:40 a.m.</td>
<td>Stations and centers for math, reading or art projects (most days)</td>
<td>Participant observation, audio recordings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:20-11:40 a.m.</td>
<td>Shadowing students (on some days)</td>
<td>Direct observations, note taking and audio recordings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:40 a.m.-12:25 p.m.</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Audio recordings, interviews, discussions and debriefings Mrs. Sherman (as needed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:25 p.m.— Extended day after lunch (if needed)</td>
<td>Field trips, interviews with various staff and teachers</td>
<td>Field trips were participant observations and audio recordings; interviews were notes and audio recordings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sophistication in word use, she may have more exposure to descriptive language in Hmong than in English. Hence, her use of the word “white” to describe her shell.

There are many variables that might explain the choice of words used by students to describe their shells. For example, these might include a student’s individual preferences, student background experiences in terms of vocabulary, or variation in exposure to language for a number of reasons. However, there is no clear relationship, in this particular dialogue sequence, among primary language, income level, and the apparent level
of sophistication in descriptive vocabulary when income falls in the middle to high income range of this first grade class.

At the lower end of the income range are Cord and Jacob, who both described their shells as “big.” In conversations with Mrs. Sherman, both of these students were considered less verbally sophisticated than other students in the class. Their descriptive vocabulary was less likely to contain words such as “prickly.” Often, for these students, there was a tendency to describe their shells or any other objects using the same words repeatedly, such as “big” and “little.” Thus, at least in this particular situation, there is an apparent relationship between income level and sophisticated vocabulary when income level is extremely low.

Ninja School

The relationship between low incomes and vocabulary use was most obvious for Jacob and Cord, English speakers whose family incomes are among the lowest in the class. There was a perception among adults working in the classroom that language development and verbal expression were low. Both boys were placed in the lowest groups for reading and math. Cord was pulled out of the class several times each week for additional help in reading. Often, these small groups met outside the classroom and the aide or teacher in charge would work on concepts more in line with their perceived skill level.

For Jacob, there was not only a perception that his math and reading skills were low, but also his ability to tell or write a story. This lack of storytelling/writing ability was of great concern to Mrs. Sherman who felt his skills were lagging behind those of
other students in the room (except for Cord). One day, I was asked by Mrs. Sherman to take a small group of four to five students, Jacob and Cord among them, out into the hall for some additional math help. The math activity involved a game and the kids were looking forward to playing.

The group of students and I set up a table and some chairs and took out the game pieces. As the game began, a conversation began including the usual greetings and dialogue that an adult in the role of teacher might have with first grade students:

*Me:* Well, hello . . . how are you all doing today? Are you ready to play?

*Students Together:* Yeah . . . yes!

[Play begins; a few minutes go by; the topic of conversation becomes what the kids do when they get home after school. Jacob dominates the conversation with his after school activities]

*Me:* . . . and you Jacob, what kinds of things do you do after school?

*Jacob:* Ninja school . . . I go to Ninja school . . .

*Me:* What? What do you mean, Ninja school? I thought you had to be older to go to Ninja school?

*Jacob:* Well, after I get home, I go to Ninja school. I get trained there.

*Cord/Maggie:* Yeah . . . he does . . . he said so . . .

*Me:* Oh . . . What sorts of things do you do when you’re trained?

*Jacob:* I have to kick . . . and jump . . . so I can jump over houses and get guys. I go out and look for things to do.

*Me:* Well, how long does Ninja school last after school? Do you have time for your regular homework?

*Jacob:* . . . ’till night . . . then I go out and find things to do . . . once I had to fight with laser sticks. I had to fight a T-Rex. I had to fight on top of buildings and kick and jump. He [T-Rex] was big.
Jacob stood up to demonstrate his Ninja techniques with the laser stick. He moved his hands rapidly about, jabbing and stabbing at the imaginary T-Rex. The T-Rex was hiding around stuff. I had to look for him. He hid, but I searched and looked everywhere. I had to get the other Ninjas from Ninja school, and we looked for him together. We were all together looking for T-Rex. It took all night to find him. We had a big battle. T-Rex went, “RRRRRROOOOAAARRRR!”

Jacob demonstrated verbally the sound of the T-Rex. We could hear him. “Get him,” I yelled. Some of us went around him and some of us came in the back. He (T-Rex) went “BLAM” when he fell.

Me: What happened then? Did you make it back home O.K.?

Jacob: Yeah . . . we made it . . . we get back home by flying in the air. It’s easy.

Me: Were you tired after such a long battle? Was your mom happy you made it back home safely? Does your mom know you are a Ninja fighter after school?

Jacob: She doesn’t know. No one does . . . it’s secret . . . I’m not allowed to tell her . . .

Me: OH . . . Wow! [I looked at the other kids in the group . . . they were looking at Jacob, hanging on every word of his narrative . . . amazed by his story. The bell rang . . . apparently it was time for recess. Jacob’s narrative ended as we picked up to go outside]

In listening to the narrative provided by Jacob, it was clear that he had a vivid and expressive imagination. The other kids in the group paid rapt attention to his ability to make the story seem real. Jacob added both sound and visual effects to his story. From this example of his story telling ability, it was clear that Jacob understood the basic elements of a story such as details, development of plot, and rising action, as well as that a story had a beginning, middle, and end. In his story of T-Rex, Jacob already understands the literary elements of good versus evil and the juxtaposition of protagonist and antagonist.
Jacob provided details for his T-Rex when he described him as “big.” He also described the sound the T-Rex made and the sound he made when he fell to the ground after the Ninjas defeated him. Jacob demonstrated how to fight the T-Rex with the laser stick and how to jab and pull back. Jacob developed the plot for his story, explaining how he had to search and search for T-Rex, and that the T-Rex was deliberately hiding and avoiding capture or a battle. There is also a clear sense of story developed by Jacob because he begins the story at Ninja school and describes his training there. He develops the middle of the story as he searches for the T-Rex, and then concludes with the defeat of the T-Rex.

Jacob also created tension when he could not defeat the T-Rex by himself, but had to call upon his Ninja friends to help him. The assistance of friends and companions is often required to defeat the enemy or monster such as in any of the Greek and Roman or King Arthur legends. Jacob and his friends are clearly the heroes in the story and Jacob is the main protagonist. Jacob and his friends are also clearly on the side of good, recognizing the T-Rex as evil and a destructive antagonist. In listening to the story by Jacob, his skills as a story teller are obvious and impressive. Why then, was he perceived as lacking in expressive language and storytelling ability?

In thinking about Jacob’s situation in first grade, it was helpful to recall the studies of Brice Heath (1983), Gee (1985), Payne (2001), and Poveda (2001, 2004). In each study, the researchers were working with or describing the speech communities and patterns of low income populations. In general, low income populations tend to have strong oral traditions of storytelling. The enculturation processes related to the
development of their communication styles emphasizes an oral storytelling tradition more than a written one. Jacob’s family income was $17,830.00 annually, and among the lowest in the class of 1st graders. It is likely that Jacob’s communication style, emphasized a more oral tradition, which he demonstrated in his story of Ninja school.

Literacy has many forms including all of the forms found in language arts (i.e., reading and written and oral language). For Jacob, it is clear that he has strength in oral literacy, being able to create stories and express himself quite well. In the school setting, however, as Brice Heath (1983) found, there is an emphasis on written literacy. Students whose communication style is more oral tend to struggle when they encounter the requirements of written literacy prevalent in schools. Jacob’s speech and discourse patterns appear to fit a profile similar to that of the Trackton students (Brice Heath) who spoke using a communication and discourse pattern that included a more contextualized, oral narrative style.

A Nightmare in My Closet

While there were a variety of situations in which communication styles of “school language” and students might promote miscommunication, there were also instances where such conflicts of style did not impede discussion, understanding, and learning. One example of this occurred near Halloween when Mrs. Sherman was absent and a substitute was taking her place for the day. Students had just come in from recess and they were invited to sit on the rug for story time. The student teacher was going to read the story for story time, which was usually done by Mrs. Sherman right after recess. The student teacher, Miss Night, then read A Nightmare in My Closet (Mayer, 1992).
During the reading, there was very little discussion, questioning, or interaction related to the story. Most of the interaction between Miss Night and the students was related to behavior issues and trying to keep students quiet so the book could be read. A short sample is provided as an example of the reading by Miss Night and the dialogue that ensued.

Miss Night, sitting in a chair with the students gathered around her, settled down to read.

[Noise and talking as the students come in from recess. Miss Night asks students to please sit on the carpet]

*Miss Night:* O.K., you all, I asked you to sit on the carpet. It’s carpet; sit your bottoms down. Devin, come sit down on the carpet. I need you to sit on the carpet.

[One student complains about another student doing something, Miss Night responds telling the student it’s none of his business]

O.K. Donald . . . Donald, sit down on the carpet . . . sit, sit, sit . . . O.K., is anybody missing right now?

[Another adult in the room says that one student has gone to her reading intervention class, and she isn’t in the room]

Oh, O.K. . . . That’s O.K. O.K., crisscross . . . you need to not be touching anyone. Donald, Donald . . . you know where you need to be sitting right now . . . we’re not gonna do that right now. Donald, you need to sit . . . you need to sit on the carpet. I don’t want you scooting up or touching the desk or being under it. Lilly take that off your head. O.K., this is called *A Nightmare in My Closet*.

[Miss Night begins to read . . . soon she is interrupted by Donald, who wants to tell the story. Miss Night tells him not to tell the story if he’s already heard it. She begins to read again. Several students point to the pictures and begin to talk about them]

O.K., do I need to wait until everybody is not talking to anybody?

[Miss Night resumes reading. Again, she is interrupted, mainly by students talking at once about the story or pointing at pictures and talking about them]

O.K., I’m gonna have to wait again. You guys have been wasting a lot of time on the carpet today.
[Miss Night again resumes reading. Another interruption occurs from Donald]

Donald, look up here.

[Together, several students again point to pictures and comment that the young hero of the story must be scared. Miss Night begins again reading again]

Sssshhhh... Devin... sssshhhhh.

Devin: Lilly popped her check.

Lilly: No, it was Donald.

Donald: Uh-uh, it wasn’t me... I don’t even know how to pop my cheek.

Miss Night: O.K., Donald, don’t even put your finger in your mouth right now, O.K.? It’s too tempting for you.

[Miss Night resumes reading. She is able to read several pages without too much interruption. She continues reading, interspersing the reading with sh’s. Miss Night finishes the book]

So... was his nightmare big and scary or was his nightmare kinda scared?

Several kids together: Scared, but there’s two more in there.

Miss Night: There’s another one in there, but he looks nice too.

After the whole group reading time, Miss Night separated students into their various reading groups for their daily rotation into centers where they would participate in specific activities run by parent volunteers or a student teacher. In one of the centers, the book, A Nightmare in My Closet, was reread to students by one of the adult volunteers in the room, Mrs. Black. Mrs. Black read the story to each small group as they rotated through her center. The following dialogue is an excerpt of Mrs. Black reading the story to the low reading group (consisting of five students) in Mrs. Sherman’s room.

Mrs. Black sat down on the rug and the students gathered around her for the reading.
Mrs. Black: Donald, Donald. I need you to come and sit on the rug real quick.

Donald: Am I in trouble?

Mrs. Black: No, you didn’t do anything . . . but I need you to be the first . . . to show everybody else what a good job you’re doing. Go ahead and sit down.

Donald: We need to get Randy . . . RANDY! RANDY!

Mrs. Black: SSSshhh . . . Donald, in a quiet voice. Mary, James, Randy, Tim, come sit with us on the rug. We’re gonna do something special. O.K. Is this everybody from your group? Let’s sit crisscross applesauce. We get to do something special today. I asked for special permission for us to read the book again . . . We get to read this book again, and I want you to do some special things. I need you to pay special attention to some things in this story. Because, we’re gonna write . . . Do you know what a summary is?

Donald: [along with other students present] No . . .

Mrs. Black: Well, it’s sort of telling back what the story is . . . so we’re gonna read this . . . telling the things that happened in the story . . . pay special attention to the story for three important things that happen in the story . . . because, because when we finish, we’re gonna sit and we’ll write the story together. Then together on the board, we’re gonna tell back the story, and we’ll write it together on the board. Do you guys have little lap boards?

Donald: Yeah. I can get ‘em.

Mrs. Black: O.K., no, we’ll get those in a minute. And you know what Randy, I need you right here, and I need ya to sit crisscross applesauce.

Donald: Do ya need the boards?
Mrs. Black: You know what, Donald, not yet, Donald. Wait ‘til we read the story.

Also, I want you to pay special attention to the art in here; to the little boy and to the nightmare, O.K. . . . because, maybe we’re gonna get a chance to draw it. O.K.? Can you all see if I do this?

Students: uh, uh . . . yeah . . . yes, I can . . .

Donald: I wanta do browser boxes . . .

Mrs. Black: You know what, if we get done, you can do browser boxes. This is what we’re doing right now. O.K.? O.K, so let’s read this again. Be sure you follow
along and look for three special things that are important in the story. Be sure you help me, and tell me what the story says as we’re going. O.K., so let’s read this again, and you help me . . . here we go . . .

[Mrs. Black begins to read]

Mrs. Black: “There used to be a nightmare in my closet.” Why does he have that little cannon there? Why is that cannon there? If there’s a nightmare in your close . . . (interruption by Donald.)

Donald: Oh, that means he’s getting ready to shoot.

Mrs. Black: Shoot what?

Students together: . . . the monster . . . there’s a monster in there . . . we already read it . . . there’s the helmet . . .

Mrs. Black: Oh . . . so you think he’s getting ready because there’s a nightmare living in his closet?

Donald and Randy together: Yeah . . . and he’s asleep in his bed . . .

Mrs. Black: Do you think he wants to go to bed?

Randy: No.

Mrs. Black: ‘Cause he’s worried about what?

Students: The monster.

Mrs. Black: The monster. Yep . . . O.K., here we go . . . [using a whispering voice as she reads] “Before going to sleep, I always close the closet door.” Why does he close it?

Donald: ‘Cause, there’s a monster.

Randy: He doesn’t want to have a monster.


Students: [Shaking their heads] No . . .

Mrs. Black: Why? Why doesn’t he look happy?
Students: He’s scared . . . and maybe afraid.

Mrs. Black: Why? Why’s he scared?

Donald: The monster . . . in the closet . . . he’s hiding.

Mrs. Black: [Continues to read] “I was even afraid to turn around and look.”

Randy: ‘Cause he’s even afraid to look . . . he thinks the monster’s gonna get him.

Mrs. Black: Ooohhh . . . gonna come out and get him. [Continues to read] “When I was safe in bed, I’d peek sometimes. See, he looks out . . .

Students: No, see, he does this . . . [Donald especially demonstrates how the boy looks out from under the covers or over his shoulder]

Mrs. Black: Yeah . . . he’s worried, isn’t he? Oh, look . . . he’s ready . . . see his helmet . . . ? He’s got 4 stars . . . he’s a four star general. He’s very important. [Reading continues] “One night, I decided to get rid of my nightmare once and for all.”

Donald: [Interrupting the reading] That’s just a grabbing thing.

Mrs. Black: You think that’s a grabbing thing?

Donald: Yeah . . . you just grab him and pull him.

Mrs. Black: [continues to read] “As soon as the room was dark, I heard him creeping toward me . . . Boo!” [Laughter all around, students and Mrs. Black] “Quickly, I turned on the light, and I caught him sitting at the foot of my bed.” Do you think a polka-dot monster is very scary?

Jacob: No, No, there’s . . . there’s spikes on his head.

Mrs. Black: Ooohhh! Spikes, what if he started swinging his tail?

Donald: [Demonstrating how the monster could get the boy and making swishing noises to sound like the spiked tail that might be swung at the boy]

Mrs. Black: Then he would get him? See? “Gotcha. “ Gotcha, he says. [Continues to read] “Go away, Nightmare, or I’ll shoot you I said.” Now who’s scared?

Several students: Him.
Mrs. Black: Which him?

Randy, Jacob: The monster.

Mrs. Black: The Monster! Look it, he’s got funny toes.

Donald: He’s gonna shoot him.

Mrs. Black: Ooohhh, scary, very scary . . .! [continuing to read] “I shot him anyway. My nightmare began to cry.”

Donald: Hah! There’s the cork! [Interrupted by Jacob who can’t see]

Mrs. Black: Let Jacob see. Why did he cry?

Donald and Jacob: He’s crying ‘cause he got hit . . . on the finger.

Mrs. Black: Oh, see, now it’s all red and sore. [Continues to read] “I was mad, not too mad.” [To kids] Why was he mad?

Jacob: ‘Cause he hated the monster so bad, he wanted him to die.

Donald: No . . . he didn’t want the monster hurt.

Mrs. Black: So, he didn’t think the monster should be hurt? [continues to read] “Nightmare, be quiet, or you’ll wake Mommy and Daddy I said. He wouldn’t stop crying, so I took him by the hand, and I tucked him in bed. I closed the closet door. I suppose there’s another nightmare in my closet, but my bed’s not big enough for three.”

Mrs. Black finished the story, and she continued the discussion by asking the kids to help her remember the important events in the story. Mrs. Black wrote their sentences and thoughts on the board, and they reread the story from the summary on the board. Finally, she had them draw a picture to go with their writing. As the kids were finishing their work, the time was up and a new reading group was about to arrive. Mrs. Black had the kids gather up their work and sent them to their next center. She welcomed the next group and prepared to read to them.
In analyzing the two different readings for this story, *A Nightmare in My Closet*, there are several obvious differences. One major difference is the number of students hearing the story; 17 versus 5 students. Reading to a larger group is always more challenging, because there are simply more individuals to try to engage in the reading or lesson. In this particular classroom, students were in close proximity to one another on the rug, which, for any teacher, is challenging. This is because there are more opportunities for students to interact with one another or just generally poke, bump, or annoy each other. When students are close to one another, often times they are more likely to be interested in what each other has to say rather than what the teacher has to say. This is perhaps more so in the case of first graders who have not yet gained the skills or maturity to sit quietly near one another without talking or just generally annoying one another.

However, there are some differences in the way the reading unfolded in the small group that might be useful to consider for any reading of a story, regardless of group size. First, Mrs. Black gives the students in her small group a specific goal. She tells them to look for three important events in the story that will help with the summary or retelling of the story after the reading. Apparently, the idea that the students need to find information or specific events, forces them, in a way, to pay attention, so they can discuss the summary at the end of the story. This appears to be true anecdotally, because there are fewer interruptions in the small group reading than in the whole group reading.

Another difference in the two readings is the nature of the questioning. There are relatively few questions asked in the whole group reading. Most of the interaction for this reading relates to the behavior issues of several students. However, in the small
group reading, questions are constantly posed. For example, Mrs. Black asks, “Why is the cannon there?” and “Why does he close the closet door?” These are only two of the questions she asks through the course of the story. Apparently, what this does for the students is create a more conversational dialogue between the students and the person reading the story. Students are expected to interact with the reader and the story as it unfolds. In a sense, there is a legalization of talking and commenting on the story as it is read.

As well, by simply asking questions continuously, Mrs. Black is challenging students to engage in the text and the story. Students appear to have a variety of interpretations for the story. For example, when Mrs. Black asks why the young boy is mad, one student thinks it’s because he wants to shoot the monster and another thinks it’s because he doesn’t want to hurt the monster. Neither answer is judged right or wrong. Both answers are accepted and Mrs. Black continues to read. This non-judgment of answers seems to allow for a variety of interpretations for the story or question, and appears to promote deeper and more individualized responses to the story. In the case of the small group reading, because of the questioning and more conversational interaction of the parent volunteer, the story and its meaning become more challenging, real, and engaging. There is less emphasis on behavior and more emphasis on the content of the story and interpreting the story as it is read.

Another difference between the two readings of A Nightmare in My Closet is the type of questions asked of the students. In the whole group reading, questions generally deal with the behavior of students. For example, Miss Night rhetorically asks, “O.K., do I need to wait until everybody is not talking to anybody?” This question is really
meant to cause students to have better behavior. The only question related to the story or content of the book is asked at the end of the story when Miss Night asks, “So . . . was his nightmare big and scary or was his nightmare kinda scared?” The responses to this question are from several students together (“Scared, but there’s two more in there”). Miss Night replies, “There’s another one in there, but he looks nice too.” The interaction or checking for understanding of the story is limited in this sequence as is the opportunity for a variety of interpretations and deeper analysis of the story.

In contrast, Mrs. Black asks questions throughout the reading. The questions are generally questions that cannot be answered yes or no. Mrs. Black’s questions appear to promote a response that reflects a greater use of vocabulary and a deeper, more complicated answer. One example of this is when Mrs. Black asks, “Why? Why doesn’t he look happy?” Here, several students answer at once saying, “He’s scared . . . and maybe afraid . . . The monster . . . in the closet . . . he’s hiding.” Mrs. Black is asking students to not only interpret the drawings in the book, but also to connect them with the words being read, and to then analyze and interpret the combined meaning of both artwork and text. In learning to read, the ability to use context clues gained from text and artwork to develop meaning and understanding from reading is a critical skill (Askov & Kamm, 1976; Dulin, 1969; Emans & Fisher, 1967; Greenwood & Flanigan, 2007; Olson, 1971).

Recently, some educators have suggested approaches in the teaching of reading that reproduce the more conversational/interactive communication style used by Mrs. Black (Daniels, 2002; Goldenberg, 1992; McIntyre, 2007). In these formats, students often lead book discussions, developing the questions to be asked, and by bringing
their own experiences to their reading in order to engage and comprehend the text more fully. In these small “book circles or book clubs,” students dominate “classroom talk” rather than the teacher. The teacher is often an observer, or “participant-guide,” who might interject a comment or question as the discussion unfolds, and as a member of the circle or club.

In addition, small book circles or clubs are similar to the communication styles and patterns of students from non-English-speaking backgrounds or ethnically diverse students. As a general rule, students from diverse socioeconomic levels (such as African American, Native American, Asian, Hawaiian, and Latino populations) benefit from working in small groups in which no one person dominates the conversation and there is a more equal distribution of “talk” among the participants. As well, both instructional conversations and literature circles might help promote deeper understanding and comprehension of text for all students through student interaction and discussion (Au, 1981; Bernstein & Henderson, 1974; Brice Heath, 1983; Daniell, 1996; Delpit, 1988; Gee, 1985; Payne, 2001; Philips, 1983; Poveda, 2001).

While these are only three examples of the many conversations and dialogues that occurred in first grade, My Shell Is Too Long, Ninja School, and A Nightmare in My Closet are indicative of the ease with which miscommunications and misunderstandings can develop. They also demonstrate how perceptions of students develop, based on educators’ notions of what constitutes literacy, and how they themselves were acculturated in terms of language and communication. In these examples, it is apparent that several variables contributed to the dynamic mix of language and communication styles observed
in this first grade classroom. Among these are levels of exposure to English, the language background of the student, socioeconomic levels, and notions related to literacy within the families themselves. Also, in this particular first grade classroom, both student and educator response and performance appear to be dependent on early enculturation of communication and discourse styles and patterns.

Summary

Discourse Styles, Communication Patterns, and Student Responses in the Classroom Setting

For this particular classroom setting, there are several communication patterns and discourse styles used by students. In general, these are related to income levels, which are changing as the school moves into Title I status, with many students receiving free and reduced-price lunches. In fact, these patterns and styles appeared to be related more to socioeconomic levels than ethnic background. The stronger relationship to income is most likely because there are fewer students of diverse ethnic backgrounds than there is diversity in terms of socioeconomic level at Happy Valley Elementary School. Students from lower socioeconomic levels tended to use less sophisticated descriptive language than those from higher socioeconomic levels (using prickly in contrast to using big, small, or white). This appeared to be true unless the student was actually from a home in which English was not the primary language. In such cases, a student might have had more descriptive vocabulary in their first language, something not investigated here.
In addition, in this setting, more oral storytelling traditions were also connected to socioeconomic levels (Ninja School). The tendency to “ramble on” orally is generally more typical of lower socioeconomic levels (Brice Heath, 1983; Daniell, 1996; Payne, 2001). Here, this more circuitous, oral communication style promoted the perception that a student had no sense of story or development of plot. As a result of Happy Valley transitioning into Title I status, and more and more families arriving from lower socioeconomic income levels, students found their communication patterns and discourse styles in conflict with those of teachers from middle class, White backgrounds.

Teacher Questioning and Student Responses

While many situations in which questions were asked of students were observed, the examples described here (There’s a Nightmare in My Closet) provided an opportunity to observe how the configuration, group size, and format for asking questions caused a very different response from students. Small group configurations in which the adult reading the story is perceived as a participant (adult seated on the floor, level with students, asking questions and entertaining all responses) appeared to engage students more. As well, the types of questions were more analytical and interpretive as the “conversation” developed. This is in contrast to the whole group reading, teacher seated higher than the students on a chair, and where most of the language, questions, and discourse revolved around behavioral issues.

In addition, this more “conversational” format not only elicited deeper thinking on the part of students, but it also is more familiar to students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and a variety of ethnic backgrounds. The adult or teacher is not the
one who judges each response by a student. Rather, students were able to comment on each other’s thinking or make suggestions as to their interpretation of the text. There was no right or wrong answer, as is so often apparent in classroom discussions. In this smaller, more conversational format, the IRE (initiate, respond, and evaluate) format so often used by teachers was not used. Students actually engaged both the text and pictures in the book and were able to “discuss” rather than “answer questions.”

Relationships among Students’ Discourse Styles, Communication Patterns, and Student Responses

In any classroom, a wide range of maturity, skills, and ability levels exist. This first grade classroom at Happy Valley. This was evidenced by the various reading groups that rotated through the centers and stations during reading time. Students were leveled into low, average, and high reading groups. The dialogue described in the small group reading of *A Nightmare in My Closet* was the discussion for the “low” reading group. It is interesting to note that students in this situation answered questions with a variety of responses, many of which were cognitively demanding (students using both artwork and text to answer why the boy looked unhappy).

In contrast, in the student teacher’s reading of *A Nightmare in My Closet*, as well as in Mrs. Sherman’s lesson *My Shell Is Too Long*, there are mainly rhetorical questions being asked (“Adam, where’d we say we wanted the shells to be kept? or “O.K., do I need to wait until everybody is not talking to anybody?”). It is apparent that no answer is expected for these questions, but that they are mainly used to imply that particular
behaviors are expected. Anecdotally, in a variety of situations and lessons, it appeared that many questions were related to behavior and not content knowledge.

In general, the pattern of questions and answers followed the IRE format. This is especially evident in *My Shell Is Too Long*. Student responses in this lesson are one-word answers that are commented on by the teacher, not by each other. In contrasting this lesson with Mrs. Black’s reading of *A Nightmare in My Closet*, there is certainly a different type of access to the story. This is true for both comprehension and descriptive language. This is illustrated in student willingness to comment (several students answering at once) and the depth that their answers demonstrate (”Cause he hated the monster so bad, he wanted him to die” and “No... he didn’t want the monster hurt”).

In this particular setting, students and teachers both were transitioning into new territory. It is evident that discourse styles and communication patterns were different enough that miscommunications and perceptions of students might occur. It is also apparent that students responded in a variety of ways to the use of questions, dialogue, group configurations regarding comprehension, understanding, and the use of language.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In reviewing the results of this study, several broad implications emerged regarding ethnographies, and instruction at Happy Valley School. Ethnography as a strategy provides a unique perspective. Ethnography is an extremely useful tool to understand student communication styles and discourse patterns and to improve instruction and learning. It is useful on two levels: one specific to an individual teacher’s classroom, and the second related to teacher preparation and the existing body of ethnographic literature in education.

First, ethnography allows educators to be aware of and realize that students in their specific classrooms arrive with a wide array of communication styles derived from and embedded within enculturation patterns experienced before school begins. Lessons and instruction could be planned to incorporate these communication styles rather than viewing students with non-standard discourse patterns as lacking language or a set of particular language skills. Teachers in individual classrooms could use such information in order to support students who come from more oral storytelling backgrounds rather than ones in which written stories are more prevalent. Also, more direct and less implied language might help those students understand exactly the behaviors desired by teachers during lessons and instruction, especially for students arriving from lower socioeconomic levels. For these students, using more direct language might be clearer and less of a
guessing game as to the teacher’s wishes. Undertaking an ethnography in one’s own classroom would provide a specific teacher with a clearer picture and greater in-depth understanding of student discourse and styles of communication, which allow teachers to develop lessons and instruction that provide greater support for their students.

Secondly, in terms of many recent studies, there is a large body of ethnographic literature which is often overlooked in terms of its use in education. This body of literature suggests general trends among various populations. In this broader view, ethnography, as a body of literature that describes human behavior, situations, communication, and discourse, provides examples and illustrates options upon which educators and teachers might draw in order to be more able to identify the array of communication patterns and styles with which students arrive at school. In preparation for a career in education, it would be helpful to become familiar with the ethnographic literature in education. This allows teachers to be able to identify, early in the school year, which communication styles exist among their student population.

Specific ethnographies could provide examples of what will work in terms of instruction for local student populations. For example, reading the ethnographies of Brice Heath (1983) and Phillips (1983) would give insight into some African American groups in the southeastern United States and Native Americans in Oregon. Certainly, the description of L by Gee (1985) demonstrates the more narrative, oral storytelling found among some ethnically diverse groups. Already having a command and an understanding of communication styles for a variety of populations would help teachers be ready to discern and discover discourse patterns and design instruction in order to incorporate such
patterns into their lessons. Candidates for teaching credentials could read a particular ethnography and design a lesson based on the communication patterns and discourse of the students in the study.

There are many variables that converged to create the communication dynamics found in this particular first grade classroom. While these variables are, to a certain extent, unique to this classroom, similar variables, in varying expressions, are found in classrooms throughout the United States today. Thus, a classroom of students is a unique and dynamic entity in terms of communication and student backgrounds. Because each classroom has a unique set of communication patterns, difficulties arise from that very uniqueness of communication patterns. Thus, while there is uniqueness to every classroom simply because the students’ communication styles within that classroom vary, a broader idea might be introduced that such variables encourage similarities in terms of how instruction might be approached.

In terms of this study, and perhaps for future educators, ethnography is a way of understanding not only the communicative uniqueness of a student population, but also might help provide an awareness of a broader picture or trend in terms of student communication and how lessons are delivered. Ethnography is useful specific to a particular classroom because it can help educators and teachers to be aware of the communication patterns and styles of discourse within their classrooms.

A second, broad implication related to discourse styles and communication patterns at Happy Valley School is the evidence that the changes occurring in the school population are impacting instruction and learning in the classroom. This was clearly
observable within the first grade classroom setting investigated. Opportunities for miscommunications occurred during lessons when instructions were given using implied language. In other situations, socioeconomic factors impacted how student forms of communication and forms of literacy were perceived. As well, responses of students varied, based on their background experiences and communication patterns and styles.

Teachers and educators at the school recognized that changes were occurring, and that students were arriving equipped with a different set of skills than those with which they previously arrived. Teachers often expressed concern over the situation and responded by setting up a variety of meetings and STTs in order to intervene and support students with different sets of skills. Thus, the issue is not that teachers did not care or that they were not aware of the problems they encountered with their students and families enrolled at Happy Valley. Teachers and educators did care about their students and worked many long hours to plan lessons and that helped support students and their academic needs.

Rather, the issues for Happy Valley were first, how quickly the population was changing, and second, how quickly and easily teachers might be able to adapt to this new population and their needs. In addition to adapting to students and their needs, there is also the need to review the idea that students such as Jacob are entering school with a deficit in terms of their literacy and communication skills. Most students enter school fluent in communication skills based on the enculturation patterns they have been exposed to in their preschool years.
For Happy Valley, it would helpful to provide continuing information and education related to the changing student population teachers were encountering. However, such information and continuing education must have both input and “buy-in” from teachers. This information and continuing education must be relevant and specific to local school populations, and teachers must be able to perceive its relevance and applicability to their situation. In schools where teachers are aware of diverse communication patterns and design curricula and lessons with this in mind, students have been supported and become more successful (Au, 1985; Brice Heath, 1983).

As well, in the current educational climate, teachers and educators are charged with providing instruction for students that allows them to pass a variety of standardized tests and exit-level exams. It is precisely this charge that infinitely complicates an educators’ and teachers’ jobs. Hence, the question becomes, How do you prepare students for standardized tests and the completion of standard curricula when they are entering school with non-standard discourse and communication patterns relative to mainstream, school communication and discourse patterns?

Once teachers become aware of their students communication styles and recognize that it might be different from “school and test” language, it might prove beneficial to instruct students in these differences. The teaching of the structure and language of tests would also be transferrable to the use of “school” language, which daily occurs in the school setting.

In conclusion, the literature regarding participant observation and the results and analysis of this research clearly demonstrated the use of ethnographic study to define
and reveal existing communication styles and patterns. This type of research and study is under used in the field of education today, both in teacher preparation programs and in the classroom setting in general. Educational ethnographies provide a large body of knowledge and research from which the creation of curricula and lessons might be developed. The use of ethnographic literature in education could assist teachers in incorporating variable discourse styles and communication patterns of their students into lessons that consider the impact of language enculturation and the experiences with which students arrive at school.
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