

Authoritative Discourses, Institutional Narratives and the Language Arts Teacher

Martha Isaac

In this paper, I juxtapose the authoritative discourses of administrative personnel with institutional narratives to show how the classroom teacher is locked within the ambivalences that characterize the space that separate the two. I present that space as a place of tension, of split allegiances and therefore propose that we become a self-corrective community of researchers (Johnson 1995), that we embrace an ethic of care (Noddings 1991) at all levels of the system; above all, that we ensure that the various components of the system work in a genuinely collaborative way.

I will begin by teasing out the three components of the title of this paper. I will start with the Language Arts teacher. Every elementary school teacher is a teacher of Language Arts; when I refer to Language Arts, I refer to the various aspects of language teaching that are important for helping young children to develop receptive and productive competence in the language of instruction i.e. listening, speaking, reading, comprehension and writing. I am reliably informed that the term Language Arts was introduced by a Canadian educator in 1963 (information from retired Curriculum developer, Muriel Gill, 1996). The intention was to introduce a holistic/integrated approach to the teaching of English rather than the fragmented approach that characterized the subject on classroom timetables.

It is common knowledge that in St Lucia, English, the language of instruction co-exists with Kwéyòl, our national language, creating a bilingual sociolinguistic context. Consequently, the multiple linguistic realities in St Lucian elementary classrooms present serious challenges to the classroom teacher. The curriculum, timetabling, pedagogical and administrative guidelines should be undergirded by this bilingual sociolinguistic context, thus making it a fundamental component of their respective discourses.

Authoritative discourses

Authoritative discourses are those discourses that demand compliance, usually administrative requests, directives and instructions. I borrow the term from the literary theorist and philosopher of language Mikhail Bakhtin, whose work is invoked across diverse areas and a wide range of disciplines. The uncertainty about authorship does not make the ideas espoused any less significant. Most writers on Bakhtin acknowledge joint authorship with Voloshinov and Medvedev (Morales 1996, Hicks 1995, Morris 1994, Holquist 1981). I consider authoritative discourse as the discourse of received authority in education - the discourse of administrative personnel, the literature in the field - information, direction, rules, and models.

According to Bakhtin

The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; we encounter it with its authority already fused into it. It is indissolubly fused with its authority- political power, an institution, a person (1994, p. 78).

The tendency to assimilate others' discourse takes on an even deeper and basic significance in an individual's ideological becoming, in the most fundamental sense. Another's discourse performs here no longer as information, direction, rules or models and so forth - but strives rather to determine the very bases of our ideological interrelations with the world, the very basis of our behaviour; it performs here as authoritative discourse (1981, p. 342).

Bakhtin proposes authoritative discourse as an inherent component of administrative interaction with those subject to its authority; further, he notes that this discourse may form the ideological thinking of these persons and become the

bedrock of their mode of functioning. Ultimately, such discourses invite responses that may range from compliance, disgruntling responses to defiance. According to Tsitsipis (2004) authoritative discourse presupposes a sending source and a receiving destination. The dialogic nature of this connection; central to Bakhtin's thinking on language is also noted by Gee (1996, 1999). The word discourse, Gee claims, refers to language as ideologically saturated. He notes that when we speak or write, we craft our language to fit the situation or context in which we are communicating but at the same time how we speak creates that very situation or context.

We continually build and rebuild our worlds not just through language but language in tandem with actions, inter-actions and distinctive ways of thinking, valuing, feeling, and believing (p.11). Discourse is a dance that exists as a co-ordinated pattern of words, deeds, values, beliefs, symbols, tools, objects, times and places and in the here and now as performance (p. 19).

According to these writers the word is never neutral; it comes packaged with our intentions, our power, our empathy, our authority and our control. Consequently, it seeks particular kinds of responses and the contexts to which I refer - the Language Arts classroom and the narratives of the workers in that context- invite reflection, particularly against the background of the authoritative discourses that are intended to provide guidance and direction.

Institutional Narratives

My experience as an educator has taught me that narratives are significant tools in our work as educators- the capacity to listen, to mediate and to bridge boundaries across the various elements of our profession cannot be underestimated. Institutional narratives, in the context of this paper, refer to the narratives of teachers and principals about the joys and frustrations of making their classroom practice meaningful, such as determining practices that are best suited to the interests and contexts of their children's lives. I believe as Clandinin and Connelly express in their book *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*,

For us, life - as we come to it and as it comes to others- is filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities (2000, p.17).

The institutional narratives are 'storied moments' when teachers, principals and other education officials expressed their feelings and concerns about managing their respective tasks as they pertain to the Language Arts. The narratives of teachers and language educators -visceral expressions of joy, success, and disillusion are a fundamental component of the education process; they must not go unnoticed or unattended. Teaching is not a dispassionate or neutral act. Generally, teachers enter the profession with courage, with dreams and with hope. So I present next the voices of administrators and classroom teachers in their struggle with Language Arts teaching in our bilingual country. All the names of schools and personnel are fictitious. The situations are real.

Language Arts Issues

The authoritative discourses of education personnel - which are usually framed in the authority and power of their respective positions - are enclosed in rectangular boxes

A. Administrative expectations

Example i.

Principals and schools must understand that they are accountable. If there were no examinations so many children would leave school without being able to read or write, you would be surprised.

I do not know how to teach writing to children like that, you have to teach them sequencing, you have to teach them subject/verb agreement and a whole lot of things before they start writing.

Education official

Teacher IR young, unqualified

Example ii.

The children enter school without competence in spoken and written English and they come out without being able to do it. There is general dissatisfaction with language learning and teaching and the performance of teachers. Why are the students doing badly? There is nothing wrong with the students.
Education official

Our children take story telling lessons that you as an adult can learn from, they make up their own stories, use other children to dramatize but they cannot read a story from their books.

Teacher IR

Example iii.

Teachers are told by the principal that they have to follow rigidly the syllabus (rigidly).
Teacher educator, reporting the directives of principals

Many of them feel very intimidated when they go back to their schools and do not have the encouragement from the other teachers to share what they learn. They feel stifled, they are back in school and they are fearful of the repercussions.

Teacher educator

Example iv.

You can check the results, the statistics are there to show it. We get dismal performance in terms of their composition, many children score absolute zero which shows they cannot even understand what they write and this happens in large numbers.
Education official

One year when they gave them zeros, I went to them to say it is impossible for them to score zero. It is not mathematics, they wrote their names, they wrote a sentence, they did not get zero they wrote a word correctly. They did not get zero.

Retired education officer

Example v.

We do not do much writing because we find that the children are not able to spell.
Principal, St Augustine

They come with their patois background and the English is not standard and this is where we come in to teach them the standard. We have a problem and I associate it with being able to spell. They have ideas but cannot express it.

Teacher, Jude SA

I have presented in these examples multiple and disparate voices on Language Arts teaching - the strident voices of authority, the uncertainty of principals and the fear and intimidation of teachers. These framed discourses address the following:

Issues of accountability

Accountability is essentially a reciprocal process. To be accountable, teachers must be given tools and training that are adequate and relevant to the task. The sociohistorical, sociocultural and sociolinguistic contexts of a bilingual country

of colonial heritage must always be foregrounded in every educational endeavour. Research has shown that levels of success and satisfaction are increased when this done (Severing 2004, Simmons-McDonald 2003, Gonzalez 1999, Delpit 1995, McLeod 1994). The young teacher's dilemma in the first example is significant and parallels that of a teacher trainer who admits that the importance of the issue of sociolinguistic relevance was recognized quite late in her career as a teacher trainer. She remarks with regret:

I have taught thousands of teachers in the past ten years and never touched on issues of second language learning, so many teachers need to be retrained. (Teacher trainer)

Therefore statements about teachers' accountability must be made within a context created to make this demand realistic or within contexts created specifically to deal with the possible and recognizable deficits within the system. Inherent in the structure of the education system must be the capacity to become a self-corrective community of researchers, that is, to acknowledge and address the deficits that face us every day. Situations such as demonstrated in example one above point the way.

The absence of competence in written and spoken English

Given the sociolinguistic context, curriculum makers must anticipate the absence of this competence and the ambivalences of how to address its various manifestations as fundamental components of the curriculum endeavour. Therefore the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of the curriculum should clearly articulate the challenges of this difficult situation. For example, the results of diagnostic tests conducted as part of a literacy project in some Caribbean islands (Simmons-McDonald 2003) suggest that significant numbers of children in early and later primary education did not have the phonemic awareness necessary to acquire basic literacy skills. Not surprisingly, phonetic and phonemic discrimination, in some instances, is not part of the teacher's repertoire of skills; consequently there is an urgent need to redress this situation. The need for the study of Linguistics as part of the general education of the Caribbean teacher cannot be underestimated.

Dismal performance in examinations 11+

Examination results over the past decades as well as reports on examinations at all levels of the system tell the stories of unsatisfactory performances in language (EFA 2000). Actually there is an interlocking system of issues which index the language problem; the comments above on accountability, poor literacy skills in the official language, inadequacy of the training of teachers to deal with the sociocultural and historical contexts, poor performance in examinations are all dependent on each other for resolutions.

Rigid adherence to the syllabus

Despite the problems discussed above the 'internally persuasive discourses' of classroom teachers, their understanding of the need for alternate methods is not encouraged. Fear, the demands of authoritative discourses, result in rigid adherence to a program that is ineffective. For example with regard to time-tabling of Language Arts, the curriculum officer initiating the development of a Language Arts curriculum explained that the change of naming from English to Language Arts was not welcomed by principals. This name change came along with a reconceptualization of teaching English. English was seen as a constellation of skills which included listening, speaking, reading, writing. Principals found it hard to do away with prescribed times for the various components of the programme such as spelling, grammar, writing, reading etc. They also argued that unless these components were timetabled, they could not ensure that students were getting adequate instruction in English. Moreover, they argued that young unqualified teachers would have no idea how to manage a block of time on the timetable called Language Arts. Consequently, practice in that regard has been variable depending on the philosophy of the principal. Current research suggests a holistic or integrated approach because it represents the nature of language use more realistically, but even more importantly, it empowers the teacher in the management of the programme for maximum effectiveness for the students (Willinsky 1990). The teachers comment on the timetable hazards with which they struggle in the following excerpts:

One composition lesson for a week and by the time you do the conversation for that you don't have time.

IR

The programme is divided in a way which children do not use in their everyday lives. Too many sub-divisions, no need to break up for grammar and all these things. IR

In two schools timetabling was conventional: oral composition, phonics, reading comprehension, writing, grammar, spelling/vocabulary arranged in 30 minute slots. In one school, IR, there was a two-hour block of time assigned to Language Arts on a daily basis, where students were grouped for instruction according to ability. The timetable and the scheme and record books told a tale of a fragmented approach to the teaching of Language Arts.

Assessment

Example four deals with issues of assessment, where clearly the assessment procedures are influenced by varied beliefs within the system. Undoubtedly, issues of that nature must be part of the communal dialogue required within the system. Of course, it raises larger questions of pedagogy, management and curriculum definitions. It is not within the scope of this discussion to address issues of assessment. However, Gonzales 1999 provides a socioeducational framework for evaluation. In addressing the multidimensional process of assessment of language development in bilingual contexts she invites consideration of cultural, social and educational implications of decisions regarding assessment.

Isolating and identifying a weakness as the symptom of a larger problem

In that school the problem of inadequate literacy skills has been diagnosed as a spelling problem. The influence of the principal is pervasive - the school is working towards the goal of improving spelling as a means of improving written expression but this is done by de-emphasizing writing. While it is commendable that the school makes a diagnosis and addresses the symptoms of a problem, it however disregards the immediate context, ignoring the relevance of the social context because the cultural and linguistic realities are submerged by efforts to make these realities seem inimical to a desirable standard and quality of life. In this community the folk belief is that use of the vernacular precludes economic and social mobility, consequently cultural contexts are of secondary importance both at home and at school (Conversation with principal 1996).

B. The curriculum

The curriculum guides were created to help teachers develop perspectives on teaching language in the sociolinguistic context of their work (discussion with retired education official). However, over time the Language Arts guide was considered inadequate (Curriculum officer Language Arts 1995). Teachers and teacher trainers expressed their dissatisfaction with various components, some of which are presented below:

In some ways the curriculum is a guide, I improvise a lot, but I think there is a lot to be done to bring it to a certain level, so that inexperienced teachers could handle it with some measure of efficiency in the classroom. Henrietta IR.

Those who are coming into the profession and take the guide and look at it, it does not tell them anything. Schools may be at a disadvantage (in assessment) at school X, they do one thing, at my school we are using the thematic approach, maybe somewhere else they are using another approach. And when they really look at the schools it will not be fair. Rose IR.

We know better, but when we get to school we try to rush the curriculum, we have so many books to get through. Rapha SA.

I want a curriculum that shows how to, that has methods. IR.

What I want to see in a curriculum is how to teach. What about those who have not gone to college?

Teacher Rose IR.

What I find about the curriculum, what we learned at college they need to put in the curriculum. Because it is a waste of time you learn one and time to try it out some teachers or the principal may not agree. This is lacking -they need to put these things in the curriculum. Henrietta IR.

What really I find happens a lot, you go to college and when you come back to school it is useless you cannot use the knowledge. It is not in the guide. You go out to teaching practice you cannot use it in your school because what I find the college and the school and the ministry do not interrelate. Rose IR.

The feed back I have been getting, many of the teachers go back to the schools, I do not know if it is the fear or the fact that they don't have the encouragement but a lot of them have just fitted back into the system. Even if they have the idea they just fit back into the system, it is not really being used. Teacher trainer.

They talk a lot about content, but teachers are always comfortable with content, what we need is more methodology. IR.

I find the content limited. Some teachers are so lazy to go and research they do the very limited there is to do. It should be revised with a little more content. Jude SA.

A balance: not too much or too little either. Raphael ND.

It appeared that teachers wanted a curriculum that was largely prescriptive, but more importantly they wanted a document which reflected what they had learnt in their training.

When I commented on what I perceived as neglect of writing in a grade two class, the teacher took out her curriculum guide and showed me the section which suggested that writing be deferred till the third term of the grade two levels. That incident occurred in the second term. This was a clear instance of being dominated by the authoritative discourse of the curriculum. The curriculum cannot prescribe or anticipate all possible contexts; the ability of teachers to think, reflect and theorize their contexts of work is of paramount importance. Bakhtin 1981 discusses internally persuasive discourses as a positive response to authoritative discourse.

Every discourse presupposes a special conception of the listener. and the degree of his responsiveness. p 346.

When someone else's discourse is internally persuasive for us and acknowledged by us, entirely different possibilities open up.

Thought begins to work in an independent, experimenting and discriminating way, what first occurs is a separation of internally persuasive discourses and authoritarian enforced discourse. Internally persuasive discourse is tightly woven with one's own word. In the everyday rounds of our consciousness, the internally persuasive word is half ours, half someone else's. Its creativity and productiveness consists precisely in the fact that such a word awakens new and independent words; it organizes masses of our words within and does not remain in an isolated and static condition. pp. 345-346.

My reading of Bakhtin in this instance suggests that the classroom teacher is capable of thought and creative actions and in fact authoritative discourses can enhance that capacity, if it is done with respect, empathy and a certain level of consultation. The strident voices presented of authority presented above have failed, I think, to make an authentic assessment of prevailing realities. Consequently, these discourses confuse where they should enlighten and oppose where they should support. In the following excerpts teachers express their yearning for support, encouragement and direction.

Long ago when teachers just started teaching they put you in a section where there are experienced teachers and there you would learn, I do not know if they do that now. Rose IR.

When I came into the profession, I did not know anything much, as it was I did not know what I was about, but being with teacher Jude SA (an older and experienced teacher). I learned a lot. Agnes SA.

When someone's ideological discourse is internally persuasive and acknowledged by us, entirely different possibilities open up. Where there is a connection, where there is empathy and shared understanding, sensibilities are open to adventure, to experiment and to a confident approach to work. The climate of work and the quality of the working space are factors that, if poor, militate against the best possible outcomes. The curriculum is the site where authority and practice should meet in a synergistic relationship. The discourses of authority should impel the classroom teacher to best and realistic practice, rather than intimidate into compliance. Obviously, the basic premise of sociocultural relevance would be an underpinning factor.

C. Some Solutions

Teachers and teacher trainers propose the following:

*Their reading is poor, their writing is poor, but the problem I think is the two types of language we have and what I try is what I learnt from college... **the communicative approach** - making the children use the language in situations... you have to give it to them in the situation, let them handle the situation. IR.*

*Some of us are weaker in certain areas ... I am not good with slow readers; so she takes the slow readers because she is good with slow readers. I am good with phonics so we **group them according to our strengths and weaknesses** and as they progress we shift one group to another, we have written tests. We make observations. IR.*

*The main thing that should happen as soon as possible is for Ministry of Education officials, Curriculum development Unit and the Division of Teacher Education to **work more collaboratively - that tops the list** I feel really strange when I hear that Curriculum and Materials Unit has a workshop and I don't know anything about it. I have taught thousands of teachers in the past ten years and never touched on issues of second language learning, so many teachers need to be retrained. We also need smaller classes. If we put our heads together not only come with our bodies that I think is paramount. And I cannot overstress that I am willing and available. Teacher trainer.*

*We make room for oral communication but our parents are not too supportive in encouraging the reading, children learn to speak through oral communication classes so we have enough of these sessions to help them at all levels. There are so many educational materials in town that we can buy but then everything is left to the school, which is unfair. When I look around **parents could do so much better to help their children. We can make good use of the resources that we have.** Principal*

*Monitoring what is happening in school, that is essential. We just cannot get into the schools often enough. When we get there, there are so many things to do and so much that you see going wrong you just can't - so that is suffering as well. Providing workshops - some are initiated by curriculum officers, some by district education officers. When teachers go back they do not pass on the knowledge. I was thinking that instead of teachers, **principals should attend the workshops and then pass on the knowledge to the entire school.** Third world countries do not make strategic use of the resources which they have. Curriculum officer*

Simkin (1987), writing in the *International Review of Education*, suggests that third world countries should determine the theoretical contexts of their development in education since western models were not always suited to the demands of their socio-cultural contexts. In the past three decades we have experimented with the following: Second language training in the United Kingdom available to St Lucian educators from 1970; the establishment of the Curriculum and Materials development Unit 1976; the association of Teachers of English launched early in the following decade did not last very long, the Reading Teachers Association also had a short life in the decade of the nineties; the National Consultation on Education and the Seminar to determine an orthography for writing Kwéyòl sowed useful seeds. This rich heritage should constantly remind us to examine what we invest in the educational process and above all, to

strengthen the various embankments of our respective roles and disciplines in order to build dialogic relationships which can enhance the educational process for all. After all, the languages constitute a primary tool that we must master, if we are to obtain intellectual and economic strength in this global environment.

D. Discourses of Silence

Perhaps the most powerful authoritative discourse is that of silence regarding language policy in education. This very silence churns out the dilemmas of ambivalence and tension with regard to Language Arts teaching. A language educator referred to it in the following terms:

My first recommendation is that there is a policy on language, because I don't think that a policy on language exists. The policy is NO POLICY. Language educator.

Perhaps it is time to experiment with the articulation of a policy, other countries have done so with positive results. Severing 2004 shows the impact of a policy in Curacao for example. It is evident from the comments on the curriculum, that our teachers like to deal with certainty, in such an amorphous sociolinguistic environment, articulating certainties is challenging, and at best unrealistic. One thing is certain, we are a bilingual country and we need to arm ourselves to become much more than simply monolingual speakers of the official language.

Conclusion

Diversity in language, thought and action in the Language Arts classroom is not undesirable. However, discourses need not coerce where they could persuade. Authoritative discourses are a necessary part of managing the educational endeavour, especially as it relates to Language Arts in this bilingual sociolinguistic context, but authoritative discourse in the Bakhtinian sense should evoke creative and productive responses, should create hope rather than despair, and should enable healing possibilities.

How can that be achieved? The answers have been suggested by the 'internally persuasive discourses' of teachers, teacher trainers and principals. We do not need altered pedagogies as much as we need altered sensibilities, altered attitudes. Teachers should have the capacity to confidently solve the language problems encountered daily in the classroom and the resourcefulness to search for and ask for solutions when their own endeavours fail. Some of the tasks that we can undertake are summarized from the institutional narratives above. They are the following:

1. engage parents and the community in school endeavours;
2. determine the theoretical position that will guide Language Arts teaching and select content and methodologies that are consonant with the sociolinguistic context;
3. enable young children to own the language of instruction, to swim in it, to live in it, to think in it
4. work in genuine collaboration with affiliated institutions;
5. finally, adopt a reflective and dialogic approach to all interactions pertaining to Language Arts.

I will elaborate briefly on three of these:

- Determine the theoretical context for work in Language Arts - we need to acknowledge and accept the bilingual nature of our community and to explore the challenges it poses for education by giving some attention to research done by Caribbean linguists and students of Linguistics (Lawrence Carrington 1984, Hazel Simmons-McDonald 2003, Lindy-Ann Alexander 1981, Leonie St Juste-Jean 1985, Oswala Rodney 2002 are a few of the persons who have done work pertinent to Language Arts teaching in St Lucia. Copies of their research reports should be available in the Ministry of Education library.
- Enable young children to own the language of instruction: I cannot over-emphasize the value of reading - encourage reading, read to children, at home, in the classroom, on radio, on television. Let them write often, daily, let them keep journals, let them help each other, let them play with the language so they can master it and own it.
- Adopt a reflective and dialogic approach to all interactions pertaining to Language Arts in the elementary

school; remove the situation from one of contest to one of genuine collaboration.

References

- Alexander, L. 1981. Language Behaviour In The St Lucian Society. Undergraduate research paper.
- Apple, M. 1993. *Official Knowledge: Democratic Education in a Conservative Age*. New York, London: Routledge.
- Carrington, L. 1984. *St Lucian Creole: A Descriptive Analysis of its Phonology and Morpho-Syntax*. Hamburg: Buske.
- Chambers, J. K. 2003. *Sociolinguistic Theory* (2nd edition). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Clandinin, J. & Connelly, M. 2000. *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- EFA 2000. *Country Reports* <http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/home.html>.
- Gee, J. P. 1996. *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses*. London and New York: Routledge
- 1999. *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method*. London and New York: Routedledge.
- Gonzales, V. (Editor) 1999. *Language and Cognitive Development in Second Language Learning: Educational Implications for Children and Adults*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Hicks, D. 1995. Discourse, Learning and Teaching. *Review of Research in Education*. American Educational Research Association.
- Holquist, M. (Editor) 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination* by M. M. Bakhtin. Translated by Caryl Emmerson and Michael Holquist. USA: University of Texas Press.
- Johnson, T. 1995. *Discipleship or Pilgrimage? The Academic's quest for a Philosophy*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Moraes, M. 1996. *Bilingual Education: A Dialogue with the Bakhtin Circle*. Albany: State University Of New York.
- Morris, P. 1994, 2001. *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, Voloshinov*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Noddings, N. 1991. Stories in Dialogue; Caring and Interpersonal Reasoning. In C. Witherell and N. Noddings (Editors). *Stories Lives Tell: Narratives and Dialogue in Education*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Rodney, O. 2002. Teaching Practices Of St Lucian Primary School Teachers In Their Instruction Of French Creole Speakers. Undergraduate research paper.
- Searle, J. R. 1979. *Expression and Meaning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Severing, R. 2004. Language Planning and Language Policy in Curacao. Paper presented at the Seventh Annual Eastern Caribbean Conference. Tortola. November 3-7.
- Simmons-McDonald, H. et al. 2003. The University Of The West Indies Literacy Survey/Reading Diagnostic Project. School For Graduate Studies And Research. UWI, Cave Hill.
- St Juste-Jean, L. 1985. A Study Of Evidence Of Patwa Interference In The Written Work Of Children In The 11+ Age Group In Two Rural And Two Urban St Lucian Schools. Undergraduate research paper.
- Tsitsipsis, L. 2004. A Sociolinguistic Application Of Bakhtin's Authoritative And Internally Persuasive Discourse.

Journal Of Sociolinguistics Vo. 8. No.4 November 2004, pp 569-594.

Willinsky, J. 1990. *The New Literacy*. Great Britain: Routledge.

Appendix 1

This paper is based on fieldwork done in 1995-1996. It documents a small slice of the education system at a particular place and time. Consequently, the study is bounded by place and time - and does not represent or refer to the entire education system. In 1995, I was investigating - using largely ethnographic methods such as observation, interviews, and unscheduled conversations - the teaching of Language Arts in the elementary school. I worked with a single district and in the final stages of the investigation, I worked with three schools - a judgmental sample (Chambers 2003) - selected, because the principals had a well-articulated position on Language Arts teaching and a working plan for enhancing the Language Arts programme in their schools. These positions were not necessarily theoretically strong but having a theoretical **position and a plan backed by some ethical considerations** fitted in with my own perception, influenced by Bakhtin 1993, of a useful pedagogy.

© Martha Isaac, 2005.



HTML last revised 27th June, 2005.

Return to [Conference papers](#).