CHAPTER 8

Exploring the Cognitive Consequences of Variations in the Social Fabric of Classroom Literacy Events

Robert J. Tierney
and Theresa Rogers

The study of classroom literacy seems to be at a crossroads. Researchers of reading, writing, and learning tend to follow one of two avenues: one which treats literacy as an abstract body of knowledge or a set of skills or strategies that can be imparted from the teacher to the students, or another in which literacy is viewed as a process that grows out of social interaction among individuals who have communicative goals and intentions. Those who choose the former avenue are interested in the products of instruction, and some argue that student achievement is enhanced when teachers model certain strategies or skills and then allow students time to practice on carefully crafted items; the teacher is the one with the goals and the one who evaluates the students' ability to attain those goals. In support of this approach, these researchers provide correlational data from large scale comparisons of classroom factors and achievement measures (e.g., Rosenshine & Stevens, 1984) and data from experimental studies examining the effects of strategy training on transfer measures (e.g., Brown, Campione, & Day, 1981; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983).

The group of researchers who follow the second avenue might argue that the development of literacy is influenced by the nature of the social interaction that takes place during literacy events, that cognitive demands are shaped by the social situation. These researchers would argue that reading and writing are by their nature socially constituted, and that literacy flourishes in an environment where communication is the goal of each person. Researchers have described a number of social contexts in which classroom literacy events take place (see Bloome

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& Green, 1984). With some exceptions (e.g., Dyson, 1984; Bloome, 1983), this work uses the group as a unit of analysis, leaving largely to speculation the ways in which the social fabric of a classroom may influence individual learning.

One Emerging Perspective

An emerging perspective is that literacy learning is both a cognitive and a social process, and that the social contexts and the mental contexts involved in literacy instruction interact to affect the kind of learning that takes place. This perspective is not new in cognitive psychology; the work of Vygotsky and Piaget suggest that social context may be an important factor in learning. For instance, Vygotsky's (1978) observations of the learning process led him to conclude that learning consists of the internalization of social interactional processes, and that development proceeds when interpsychological processes are transformed into intrapsychological processes. Piaget (1970), focusing on peer interaction, argued that individual thought processes develop by means of social interaction.

Educational researchers working from a sociolinguistic/ethnography of communication perspective also acknowledge the need to look at the interaction of the social and mental contexts. As Cazden (1982) remarks:

> Learning to read . . . is certainly a cognitive process; but it is also a very social activity, deeply embedded in interactions with teachers and peers. (pp. 418–419)

Erickson (1982a) points out that we have neglected the study of "taught cognitive learning":

> While the individual is the locus of learning, this learning does not take place in isolation. Learning by individuals occurs as a reflexively adaptive transaction between the immediate environment and the individual, in which each stimulates the other. (p. 151)

Research carried out from a sociocognitive perspective will require new methodologies that capture the students' cognitive processes as they are displayed during classroom literacy events, or to capture what Susan Florio-Ruane (1987) refers to as the "touch points" between classroom discourse and the teaching and learning of academic content. These new methodologies will include complete descriptions of the learning contexts (including teachers' and students' perceptions of the social

structure and the content of the events) and descriptions of the cognitive behaviors or changes in behavior of individual students.

The present paper is one attempt to look at individual learning from a sociocognitive perspective. In a previous paper (Tierney, Leys, & Rogers, 1986), we argued that literacy events involve children in a number of layers of social interaction and suggested that the nature of these interactions may either limit or extend the literacy experiences of the students. In the present paper, we take a closer look at the relationship between the social fabric of the classrooms we studied and the literacy behaviors and perceptions of individual students. Specifically, we argue that, in varying degrees, the nature of the social interactions that take place during classroom literacy events may support (a) the development of a student writer's sense of audience and a student reader's sense of authorship, (b) the extent to which students make connections between reading and writing, and (c) the flexibility with which students initiate, apply, and monitor strategies for creating and refining meaning.

We chose to look at two third grade classrooms that represented variations in the social framework surrounding reading and writing activities. In one classroom, the teacher largely initiated the reading and writing experiences of the students; in the other classroom, students were given more opportunities to initiate their own interactions with the teacher and with peers. The classrooms were not randomly selected, but chosen for the differences which existed in the types of social interactions that took place in each; that is, two different kinds of classrooms were chosen in order to compare different kinds of literacy events and cognitive behaviors of the students in each classroom.

The first classroom, which we will refer to as classroom A, is characterized as having a basal reader approach to reading lessons, although the basal readers were supplemented with trade books. The students in classroom A also had a separate creative writing lesson twice a week. The second classroom, which we will refer to as classroom B, used a conference approach to reading and writing and provided students with more extended and integrated reading and writing opportunities.

In order to describe the social fabric of the two classrooms, we analyzed videotapes of typical reading and writing events chosen from over 200 hours of observations in each classroom, and interviewed the teachers and the students in order to get their perceptions of the literacy events in their classrooms. To explore literacy behaviors of individual students, we interviewed selected students, observed them during reading and writing lessons, and examined writing samples and journal entries.

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The Social Fabric of the Two Classrooms

In this section, the learning environments or social fabrics of the two classrooms are described through analyses of the types of interactions that took place during the literacy events and through the teachers' explanations of those events. Literacy events have been defined as "those occasions in which the talk revolves around a piece of writing" (Heath, 1983) and generally are homogeneous with respect to topic, participants, and purpose. In order to systematically describe the structure of a reading event in each classroom, we used a sociolinguistic analysis procedure (Saville-Troike, 1982) that includes a description of the purpose of the event, the participants, the setting, the act sequence, and the rules of interaction; from that information, interpretations can be made about the social norms underlying the event. (For a rationale for analyzing one representative classroom literacy event, see Weade and Green, in press). These following two events were chosen because of their typicality, and because of similarities in terms of purpose and topic: both events were discussions of texts all the students had read and focused on character analysis, and both events concluded with a writing assignment.

The purpose of the literacy event in Classroom A was to discuss a basal reader story ("A Sidewalk Story" by Sharon Bell Mathis) that the students had recently finished reading and to assess the students' understanding of the story, particularly of the characters and their attributes. The teacher listed the characters' names on the board and asked students to provide descriptive words which she listed under each character name. This event prepared the students for a writing assignment in which the students were asked to write a "biography" of one of the characters.

Five students from the "middle" reading group sat around a table and faced toward the teacher with the blackboard behind her. A short excerpt from the end of the lesson is provided below.

T: WE HAVE [LISTED] THINGS UNDER EACH PERSON. SOME, I THINK YOU CAN SEE ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN OTHERS. WHO WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON IN THE STORY?
s: Lilly and Tanya.
T: YOU FEEL THEY WERE BOTH VERY IMPORTANT?
s: Lily, because she did most of the stuff.
T: OKAY . . .

The act sequence of the literacy event in Classroom A followed a variation of the Initiation, Response, Evaluation cycle described by

Mehan (1979). The teacher initiated the interactions with a question, students raised their hands to gain permission to speak, and the response was evaluated by the teacher. If the response was deemed inappropriate or incomplete, the teacher either asked another question, asked for more information, asked another child for additional information, added information herself, or asked for another response. In the excerpt above, the teacher asked the student another question and the student had provided a different response.

One way to interpret the rules of interaction in this event is that the teacher is the participant who knows the appropriate questions and is the judge of the "rightness" or "wrongness" of the answers to those questions. It is up to the students to interpret the teacher's questions in order to provide the appropriate answer (c.f. French & MacLure, 1983). In the case above, the student interpreted the teacher's second question as meaning that she was to give the name of only one character.

The purpose of the literacy event in Classroom B was to continue a discussion of a book the students had read (*Soup* by Robert Peck) with an emphasis on helping the students to see how the author had developed the characters. During the discussion, the teacher moved from discussing the book to discussing a story written by one of the students.

During this event, 24 students sat on a rug on the floor surrounding the teacher. An excerpt from the event is provided below.

T: YESTERDAY WE TALKED ABOUT HOW [SOUP] USED ROB AND WHAT HIS RELATIONSHIP WAS. I WOULD LIKE TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT HOW HE DID THAT—HOW ROBERT PECK DESCRIBED HIMSELF AS A CHILD, HOW DID HE DEVELOP HIS OWN CHARACTER AND HOW DID HE DO IT WITH SOUP?
S: He picked out all the bad things—where he got in trouble.
T: OKAY. A LOT OF HIS ADVENTURES, AND A LOT OF THEM WENT WRONG, RIGHT? AND WHAT DID HE TELL US ABOUT SOUP AS A PERSON?

The act sequence of the literacy event in Classroom B also followed a variation of the IRE cycle. The teacher initiated the interactions with a question, a student was called on to respond, and the teacher, in this case, evaluated the response and then elaborated on it. A subtle difference is that the teacher then said "right?" before moving on to her next question. It could be interpreted that the teacher was either just using the question (right?) as a marker, since there is no indication that she was actually verifying her interpretation with the students.

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pretation of her use of *right?* is suggested. In the excerpt below the discussion moved to a story written by one of the students.

T: OKAY, AND LISA [the student author] PUT US INTO HER IMAGINATION, SO WE AREN'T SURE WHAT WAS TRUE AND WHAT WASN'T TRUE, RIGHT?
S: Most of the time.
T: OKAY, MOST OF THE TIME UNTIL NATASHA WAS DISCOVERED.

In this excerpt, the teacher again says "right?" and this time the student responds with a slight clarification. The teacher then says "okay" and modifies her original statement. This time, when the discussion revolves around the student's text, the rules did actually change. The student, at least temporarily, was allowed to take an authoritative role and it was up to the teacher to modify her own comment.

In fact, there were more instances of sharing of authority in classroom B than in classroom A. In classroom B, there were various types of literacy events, with varying social rules and norms. Here, the social rules changed when the text being discussed was written by a student author. Another kind of reading event commonly occured in this classroom—"share meetings"—in which students shared books they were reading individually. During these events, students initiated questions about texts their fellow classmates had read, evaluated each other's questions and responses, and supplied most of the substantial talk about the texts (see Tierney, Leys, & Rogers, 1986).

The interviews with the teachers corroborated the observations and analyses of the literacy events. In classroom A, the teacher described a typical reading lesson as follows: "In reading groups, we usually introduce the story, there would be some kind of motivation to read the story, we might discuss words. . . . I would ask questions that were literal or factual, and then some questions that were more or less evaluating what they thought of the story." She described a similar pattern in her writing lessons: "As far as the chronological order for the writing lesson, we would do some motivational activities, we would follow it up, maybe, with some suggestions from the students, too. Then we would do the writing and I would walk around the room giving encouragement and suggestions. I might say, as they are writing, 'what about this word?' For example, they might have a word that should be capitalized . . . or they will discover they have left out a word." When the writing lesson was over, the teacher collected the products and either returned them to the children with corrections or displayed them on the bulletin board.

The teacher in classroom B described reading lessons this way: In

literature group, there is a cross-dialogue between them [the students] and what the author might mean, and how this ties into what we have already found out, and what it would mean for what is going to happen next." This teacher also allowed students to choose their own topics to write about, and to confer with other students to, as she described it, "help them along with the process" or "decide through conferencing or share meetings how they want it. Before they start writing, they have a choice . . . and they should choose something they care about and are really interested in . . . Sometimes they will talk to friends to get some ideas. Once they start writing their story or report, they conference with other kids on what really sounds best. I go around conferencing all the time. I might ask questions, they might read it to me, they might just tell me about it . . . they are sharing their processes of writing with people as they go along."

The teachers' perceptions of the events are closely tied up with their perceptions of how children learn to read and write. What we find interesting is that the teacher in classroom B, who viewed reading and writing as ongoing processes, felt that these processes could best be learned in situations in which there was variation in interpretive authority, and that students should be given the opportunity to take control of those processes. The teacher in classroom A emphasized product over process and communicated to the students that she was the one whose role it was to interpret and evaluate those products. In the next section we look at how consequences of the classroom social fabric affected the students' perceptions of the processes of reading and writing and their reading and writing behaviors.

Students' Reading and Writing Perceptions and Behaviors Across Three Dimensions

After interviewing the students, observing their reading and writing behaviors, and looking at their writing samples, we began to see a relationship between the social fabric of the two classrooms and the perceptions and cognitive behaviors of the students along three dimensions: a sense of authorship and audience, connections made between reading and writing, and their use of strategies.

A sense of authorship and audience. The students in classroom B exhibited a strong sense of audience in their comments. As one child said: "Writers have to know if their readers are going to understand . . . sometimes it only matters if I like what I write; sometimes it only matters if the readers like it." Another student made comments about how he met the needs of his audience. For instance, he discussed

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In contrast, students in classroom A offered only vague comments about audience. As one child said, "I'm not sure, I don't know what they will think." Several students commented that only the teacher or possibly a friend would read their writing. And as one student said, she would sometimes "keep it a secret" in case "some friends did not like it."

There was also a difference in the way the students in the two classes thought about authorship—the people who write the texts they read. While students in both classrooms indicated that they think about authors quite a bit when they read texts written by professional authors, the children in classroom B talked more specifically about the author's writing strategies ("where did they get the title"; "they really made the characters so alive") as opposed to the author himself ("I sometimes wonder what the author looks like . . ."). The students in classroom B also viewed themselves and each other as authors. For instance, one student described how she might confer with other class authors: "I think about he or she wanted to write the book . . . sometimes, if the author is in the room, I will go and ask why." Another child mentioned that he had read a friend's book at home, "and it [said] 'both my grandmothers came for Christmas Eve' . . . I wanted more information, 'who are both your grandmothers?' so I asked her on the phone."

The students in classroom A exhibited a more limited sense of themselves or their classmates as authors. The teacher either presented the children's writing to the class or placed them on the bulletin board, which, as the teacher admitted, did not prompt students to "rush over and read them." These children did not talk about themselves nor their classmates as authors. The students' sense of audience and sense of authorship are reflected in their comments included in Table 1.

Reading—writing connections. The social fabric of the two classrooms provided varying support for helping students make connections between reading and writing. In classroom A, students were given writing topics based on what they had read, but there was little support for

Table 1. Sense of Audience and Authorship: Comparison of Students' Comments

Classroom A	Classroom B
Sometimes I give it to my friends or someone. Sometimes I keep it a secret . . . some friend might not like it.	Writers have to know if the reader is going to understand . . . sometimes it only matters if the reader likes it.
Mostly the teacher reads my things; when they're on the bulletin board I hope other people do, too.	Well some people don't know what elliptical means so I just decided to put that there so they wouldn't get mixed up.
I'm not sure, I don't know what they will think.	"COMETS ARE MEMBERS OF OUR SOLAR SYSTEM TRAVELLING IN ELLIPTICAL (which means long oval) ORBITS"
	Well, on the second page it says, "BRAD WILSON WAS WALKING DOWN A DIRT ROAD," and they have a dirt road in their mind, but when I say, "WHICH IS REALLY A MUD ROAD BECAUSE OF A GOOD DAY'S RAIN" they have a clue and they keep it in their minds.
Sometimes I think about what that person [the author] looks like and what he or she would be doing at that time when he or she was writing that or something	I'm looking over the words and I'm thinking who wrote it and why and how they figured out how to write it . . . where did they get the title and stuff like that?
If it's not a good story I could feel for [the author].	I like the part where they wrote about the egg fight . . . They really made the characters so alive . . . they just didn't go to a book and copy.

making connections between the processes of reading and writing. For instance, the following writing assignment was given in classroom A after the discussion of "A Sidewalk Story" described above:

T: I WANT YOU TO SELECT ONE OF THESE PEOPLE—ONE OF THE MAJOR CHARACTERS IN THE STORY AND WRITE ABOUT THAT PERSON AND JUST ALMOST AS THOUGH YOU WERE WRITING A BIOGRAPHY. WE'VE READ LOTS OF BIOGRAPHIES ABOUT FAMOUS PEOPLE AND WRITTEN ABOUT THEM. YOU DON'T HAVE TO MAKE IT VERY LONG, BUT TELL AS MUCH ABOUT ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE AS YOU CAN AND YOU CAN SELECT WHICH EVER ONE YOU WOULD LIKE. DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO DO?. . . . OKAY, GO BACK TO YOUR DESKS.

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In classroom B, students would often read a work and analyze the author's craft and then compare their own writing craft to the author's, so that reading and writing events or lessons were more integrated. The following is an excerpt from a writing assignment given in classroom B after the discussion of *Soup* and a student's story described above.

T: SO THE WAY LISA WROTE THAT WE GOT TO KNOW THAT CHARACTER AND WHAT WAS GOING ON IN HER MIND. WHAT I WOULD LIKE YOU TO DO TODAY IS GO TO WHATEVER YOU ARE WRITING ABOUT AND LOOK AT IT—THE CHARACTERS—AND SEE HOW YOU'VE DEVELOPED THEM. HOW YOU LET US KNOW ABOUT THE PERSONALITY OF THAT CHARACTER AND WHAT'S GOING ON WITH THAT CHARACTER. . . . AND I'D LIKE YOU TO WRITE ABOUT THAT IN YOUR JOURNALS SO WE CAN DISCUSS IT TOMORROW, OKAY?. . . . IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, I'LL COME AROUND ANYWAY.

Both assignments dealt with literary characters, but the nature of the two assignments was very different. While students in classroom B were encouraged to draw on the content (ideas), techniques and strategies of published and other student authors in relation to their own, the students in classroom A used only the content of published texts to provide a writing topic and extra support for continuing the assignment was provided. In classroom B, the teacher was going to provide further support by "coming around" while they wrote and by discussing what they wrote the next day. The differences in the extent to which students made connections between reading and writing are apparent in the comments presented in Table 2.

The students in classroom A offered broad statements alluding to the use of ideas from what was read, and they did not pinpoint specific examples. The children in classroom B were cognizant of using what they read to write, could pinpoint specific examples, and even comment on their success. For example, one student said: "I got this chapter out of the Encyclopedia Brown book. I was reading a chapter called 'The Flying Submarine'. And it's a little similar to the chapter that I'm writing right now. That's how I got the name of the chapter. . . . I made different characters, settings and all that, and I think mine is better than the book I just read." These students commented on a range of ideas, techniques, and strategies that they borrowed from other writers.

Independence and flexibility of strategy use. Differences in the social fabric of the two classrooms were also reflected in the students' use of independent and flexible strategies for creating meaning. Across the

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Classroom B
...ers have to know if the reader is going ...o understand . . . sometimes it only ...atters if the reader likes it.
...some people don't know what ellip...cal means so I just decided to put that ...ere so they wouldn't get mixed up.
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...s of reading and writing. For ...nt was given in classroom A ...y" described above:

...HESE PEOPLE—ONE OF THE ...Y AND WRITE ABOUT THAT ...OUGH YOU WERE WRITING ...F BIOGRAPHIES ABOUT FA...T THEM. YOU DON'T HAVE ...L AS MUCH ABOUT ONE OF ... YOU CAN SELECT WHICH ...OU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ...O DO?. . . . OKAY, GO BACK

two classrooms, there were differences in the extent to which students were willing to wrestle with problems for themselves and to initiate their own problem solving strategies. In classroom A, the reliance on the teacher's authority appeared to constrain rather than facilitate independence and flexibility. For instance, one child said that she expected the teacher to pick up her mistakes when she was writing. "If I don't catch it [a mistake], Mrs.—will and then she'll tell me to figure out how to fix it." These students seemed to monitor their reading ("most of the time I can tell when something doesn't make sense") yet they had few strategies for solving a reading problem beyond reading it again or "reading more carefully". Rather than relinquishing

Table 2. Reading–Writing connections: Comparison of Students' Comments

Classroom A	Classroom B
Ideas	**Ideas**
Sometimes I think about a story that sounds like a story I am writing . . . I see what things I can put in the story.	Well I read this other book and it was about this girl's imagination, but I just thought about that book and I thought it would be a good title for Natasha Koren to have a runaway imagination . . . it [the other book] wasn't the same . . . she looks at pictures and stuff and imagines they are moving and stuff like that.
If I had my autobiography that I was writing, and I remember that long ago I had written something that had something to do with this, then I could write that in there.	I got that chapter out of the Encyclopedia Brown book—I was reading a chapter called "The Flying Submarine." And its a little bit similar to the chapter that I'm writing right now. That's how I got the name of the chapter, its very similar, but I got this topic because I made up a character called Brad Wilson and he's supposed to be a detective . . . I wanted to copy down things but I decided that's like stealing, so I made different characters, settings and all that, and I think mine is better than the book I just read.
	This is the end of the chapter, and the solution isn't finished yet. And I will read this last part: "IT'S A FLAPPY NOISE," ROBBY SAID. "100% WRONG." BRAD SAID, "WAS BRAD RIGHT?" "AN OWL'S WINGS ARE SPECIAL SO THEY CAN SNEAK UP ON PREY." [I knew that] because I read this book and it was all about owls, so I put it down in my report, then I put in this.

Table 2. (continued)

Classroom A
Techniques
No comments
Strategies
No comments

control to the teacher, the chil
as their own monitors and
instance, one child said: "I re
have a hint of what other peo
I want it, I write down on a
put in there, then I keep on
The students in this classroom
greater flexibility in dealing
creating their own texts. They
brainstorming and planning a
as monitoring their understan

Discussion

To summarize, students in th
of authorship and audience, a

Table 2. (continued)

Classroom A	Classroom B
Techniques	
No comments	I: I noticed . . . at the beginning of Chapter 5 (you wrote) "MEANWHILE AT HOME" . . . how did you know how to do that? C: I have seen it in other books. I: What are some of the other things that you use? C: Words, dedications, dialogue, ways to show people that you are going back to something else . . . I get new ideas, I put feelings and details
Strategies	
No comments	What I do [when I read] is I just think about what I do when I'm writing . . . I remember that mistakes aren't everything. . . . If you thought mistakes was everything, like say they were dumb, so you would get bored with the book. In writing I mark my place the same way I do in reading.

control to the teacher, the children in classroom B spoke of themselves as their own monitors and of their ability to solve problems. For instance, one child said: "I read my work as another person. I like to have a hint of what other people will say about it. If it's not the way I want it, I write down on another piece of paper something I could put in there, then I keep on writing more—and I pick the best one." The students in this classroom seemed to have more self-reliance and greater flexibility in dealing with meaning making, especially when creating their own texts. They used strategies such as self-questioning, brainstorming and planning, and becoming their own audience as well as monitoring their understanding (see Table 3).

Discussion

To summarize, students in the classroom B exhibited a stronger sense of authorship and audience, made more connections across texts and

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Classroom B

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Table 3. Strategy: Comparison of Students' Comments

Classroom A	Classroom B
Writing	
When something doesn't make sense, I have to go back and see what part doesn't make sense . . . and then usually if I don't catch it, Mrs. _____ tells me.	I read my work as another person. I like to have a hint of what the other people may say about it . . . if its not the way I want it, I write it down on another piece of paper, something I could put in there then I keep on writing more—and I pick the best one.
	Well, say I'm writing a book, a detective book, and I have all these ideas floating around in my head, so it is good to jot down and pick two or three of them and arrange them.
Reading	
Most of the time I can tell when something doesn't make sense. Sometimes when I read a book, I find a sentence that doesn't make sense and then if I read it a couple of times I can figure it out.	When I get stuck I ask myself questions, like have I ever heard of this before?
	Because then if you skip that (something you don't understand) then its clear on the other pages . . . you could find out what that meant just by reading the whole other page.
If it doesn't make sense I read it more carefully.	
	I think about the word, I look at it and I say it in my mind . . . and then I try to figure it out, what it means.

were more flexible and independent in their use of strategies. In particular, they were alert to how to adapt their writing to meet the needs of their audience, they exhibited more awareness of how they could and did use their reading to empower their writing, and they knew what strategies to employ if they encountered problems. Students in classroom A made fewer connections between what they read and what they wrote and did not appear to know how to adjust their writing to the needs of the audience. They did not exhibit awareness of how anybody other than the teacher might respond to what they wrote. When they did discuss their strategies for coping with difficulty, they made it clear that they deferred to the teacher.

While other factors may have accounted for differences in student literacy behaviors, the social fabric of the two classrooms contributed to these differences in both obvious and more subtle ways. In classroom A, the interaction patterns served to limit the students' literacy expe-

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of the students' work and th
interpreted. In classroom B, s
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Classroom B

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riences. For instance, the teacher was nearly always the sole audience of the students' work and the sole authority on how texts should be interpreted. In classroom B, students were allowed to participate more fully in the processes involved in reading and writing, and students exhibited more sophisticated understandings of those processes. We concur with Dyson (1984), who stated that her findings "clearly suggest the importance of opportunities for children themselves to control the writing process" (pp. 260–261).

We do not mean to overstate our findings. Our data are self-reports offered by a select group of students who were considered by the teacher to be the best readers and writers in each classroom. Despite these and other limitations, what we can say is that the variations in the social fabric of the two classrooms seemed to correlate with variations in individual literacy perceptions and behaviors. We want to argue that the social rules and norms of classrooms send signals to students about what the academic task demands are (Green & Harker, 1982; Erickson, 1982b); that is, ways of knowing and learning are communicated to students along with the rules for social participation. As Bloome (1983) argues, students learn about literacy through their participation in literacy events.

In the beginning of this paper we said that literacy research was at a crossroads, and that each avenue of research highlights different aspects of classroom literacy events. One avenue highlights the transfer of academic knowledge from the teacher to the students, and the other describes the social contexts of classroom lessons. We feel that literacy must be looked at from both a social and a cognitive perspective in order to discover the kinds of literacy events that will nurture the students' growth and development as members of a highly literate society. To look carefully at how the social contexts and the mental contexts of learning environments affect each other, that is, to take a sociocognitive perspective, will allow us to learn more about the teaching and learning of reading and writing in our classrooms.