

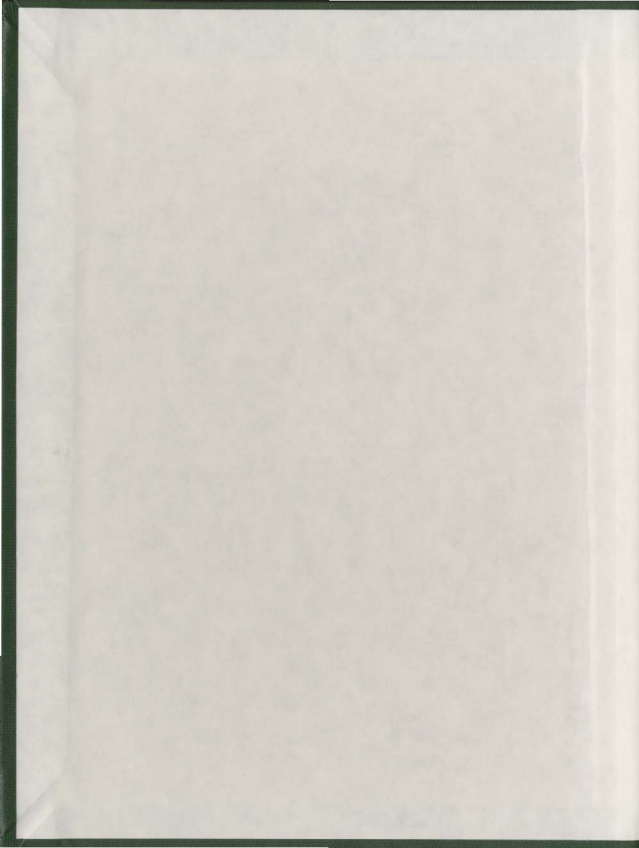
THE POETIC FUNCTION IN THE
SCHOOL LANGUAGE PROGRAM

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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THE POETIC FUNCTION IN THE SCHOOL LANGUAGE PROGRAM.

by



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"All reflective thinking is poetic, and
all poetry in turn is a kind of thinking."

M. Heidegger, On the Way
to Language, 1971.

Abstract

The major purpose of this paper has been to examine the poetic function of language, and to assess its role in an individual's language development.

Writing identified as "transactional" has been seen as that which is used to get something done. In the context of a school language program, such writing is viewed as that used primarily to assess what an individual knows about a specific area of content. Such an emphasis has been regarded as being a major reason for the absence of poetic language in a school language program.

"Poetic" language offers an individual the means to reconstitute the reality that he is constructing in language. Such a language usage allows an individual to function in situations outside his immediate experience - in essence, to function in situations that he constructs in language, and, in doing so, to search for meaning in his existence.

A school language program that is not characterized by an individual's use of poetic language has been seen as being deficient, and, as such, may not only impair an individual's language development, but also his development as an individual.

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Thank you Dr. Wolfe.

Thank you Eleanor and Allison for waiting. Next summer is ours.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

An examination of the poetic function of language was prompted by this investigator's interest in having students write poetry, and by the work of a poet, Kathy Ungerer, who worked with students in Central Labrador, demonstrating the effectiveness of the use of poetic language in getting students to write, and having them want to continue writing.

The writer's modification of Brian Powell's approach to having students write poetry also brought similar results - an interest in writing and a sustaining of that interest over a period of time. This approach appealed to teachers through the interest in writing that it motivated, and there was a willingness on the part of teachers to incorporate poetry writing into their language programmes.

From these initial experiences with poetic language in the classrooms, two essential questions emerged:

If the poetic use of language has such potential for motivating individuals to write, why isn't it a more visible component in the language programme?

What is the poetic function of language and to what purpose does it serve an individual?

The major purpose of this paper is to respond to these questions. Examining the functions of language, and, in particular, writing, would identify the poetic function and

its role, not only in an individual's language development, but also in an individual's development as a person. Transactional writing is the form of writing; we are told, that is the primary focus of language programmes. This emphasis alone may be significant reason for the absence of poetic writing in language programmes. It will be held here that a balance between transactional and poetic writing is a necessary requirement of an effective language programme.

An examination of the role of the teacher as audience for an individual's writing gives attention to the key person on whom the responsibility for the inclusion of poetic writing in a language programme rests. This would reflect not only an individual teacher's knowledge of an approach to writing poetry, but also an awareness of its purpose in an individual's language development.

Careful inspection of two representative approaches to having students write poetry demonstrates a need for teachers, not only to be aware of such approaches, but also to recognize that any approach to writing poetry must have a structure. While the structure created by one instructor may not be entirely suited to another, it can provide a guide to a process which a teacher may adjust or adapt to suit his own personal interests and those of the students who will be writing.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Language: Definition

Language has been defined as an instrument of human thought by which we are led to the construction of the objective world (Cassirer, 1979); as an arrangement of symbols in a systematic or patterned fashion with certain rules governing their usage (Hawes, 1975); as one way of representing experience (Britton, 1970); as a coding device for recall (Shepard, 1978); and as the medium of representation (Werner, 1963). While these statements do not exhaust a list of definitions of language, they do establish that it is instrumental, symbolic, and representational; and, as such, that it defines man as man, since it is through language that he experiences the world and himself in the world.

Linguistic Development

A child's linguistic development is a process requiring examination in a discourse on the poetic function of language. The intention in using the following quotation is to outline this process, and, in so doing, to establish that the poetic function of language is not one which emerges at some later stage in an individual's linguistic development, but is present from the beginning. This is not to say that an individual,

once having discovered the "representational function" of language, will immediately proceed to work upon his representation in language of his reality. It does indicate that an individual is using language to represent his experiences.

A child's linguistic development has been described in three major phases:

- (i) The discovery of language as patterns of sound takes on meaning and purpose in the repetitive activities that play so large a part in the infant's interaction with his parents and other primary caregivers. The infant simultaneously discovers his own separate identity and his ability to bring about changes in the people and objects that make up his environment. Language functions first and foremost as a means for the regulation of activity and interaction. Then, as objects and events in his environment are made the focus of conversational attention, he gradually discovers a further important function of language - that of representing, or standing for the objects and events that make up his experience.
- (ii) The second phase is one of consolidation and diversification. Through his participation in the talk that directs and interprets the variety of events that constitute everyday life, the child gradually takes over the language of his community, and, in the process, absorbs the cultural values and working assumptions that are encoded in that particular community's use of language.

Thus, by the time he goes to school, the child has made substantial progress towards mastering the resources of the spoken language and can draw upon these resources appropriate to achieve a wide range of interactional objectives in the familiar contexts of everyday activities.

- (iii) The first two phases of development are characterized by the close interrelatedness of language, action and social context, while the third phase sees a loosening of these links, as the child becomes conscious of his own mental states and capable of reflecting on his own experience.

As thought and action become inseparable, the function that language performs of representing the objects and events of experience is drawn upon to provide a 'tool for thinking' and a means for communicating to others the results of the thinking process.

There is a development in the child's use of language towards the expression of more individually differentiated meaning and towards the detachment of language from its context of immediate experience (Wells, 1981).

The initial phase views the acquisition of language as a discovery process, and recognizes a duality in the process: that of acquiring language and, at the same time, using what is acquired to further an individual's knowledge of the world, himself and his relationships in it. Language is, at first, outside in the world, not in the child, and it is then internalized in order that one may speak. This process is viewed as being highly selective, dependent upon structures already in place. This selection is personal, and an individual internalizes language in terms of his needs and interests (Britton, 1972). These characteristics of the acquisition and usage of language remain with an individual and are essential considerations when an individual is learning language and learning how to use language in a structured learning environment.

An individual does not learn the language of his community in isolation. The absence of that condition is

evident in the initial phase of learning language. The reality in which a meaning takes place is

a social reality into which the external environment enters through its significance for interaction, and is embedded in contexts of evaluation, argument, manipulation, and other social acts (Halliday, 1975).

This statement is also significant in furthering the individual's acquisition and usage of language.

The reality that the child constructs is that of his culture and sub-culture and the ways in which he learns to mean and to build up registers - configurations of meanings associated with features of the social context - are also those of his culture and sub-culture (Halliday, 1975).

In such a context, the language presented to an individual, whether spoken or in print, must reflect the social reality in which the child initially acquired language, and must be the language he has used to construct the social reality he brings to a learning situation outside his immediate social milieu.

A final consideration in this first stage of learning language is the symbolic function of language. This "symbolic function" is one in which

man receives the signals from the outside world, builds them into his world picture - his representation from past experience of what the world is like - and responds, not directly to the incoming signals, but in the light of his total representation: he responds to the incoming signals as interpreted by the representation (Britton, 1972).

While the development of a 'world picture' is at a beginning stage, the important factor to consider is that the individual can now use symbols to represent his experience, and his

access to the world is only limited to the degree that his language development is impaired.

While the second phase is viewed as one of consolidation and diversification of an individual's language development in the social context in which he is raised, it must not be viewed as a period of development distinct from the initial one. The acquisition of language continues and accelerates, and the ability to use language in increasingly complex structures and situations is a developmental feature of the learning process. A major point of emphasis is the role of talk in the individual's language development. The overriding desire to verbalize, to explore language, not only in the context of relationships within his community, but also through the imagination which allows an individual to play with language, demonstrates to the individual the endless possibilities it has for him to express, not only himself, but himself in roles and situations that are created by him through language.

Many children, given the encouragement of someone who will play the part of audience, will at times, employ speech, not for conversational exchange, nor as "running commentary", but as performance, requiring a listener who will not interrupt, an "entertainer" (Britton, 1977).

This

"delight of utterance" represents language as an end in itself, that is, talk for the sake of talking; talking as a pleasurable activity; talk as play. When children's play takes the form of make-believe, or symbolic play, it establishes itself clearly as activity in the spectator role (Britton, 1979).

While more will be said about the role of spectator, it is of note at this point that an individual's command of language has reached a stage whereby the representation of reality is developing, since the child is manipulating situations created in language. Language becomes the tool the individual uses

to transform signs into symbols and thoughts and thereby free himself from the specific here-and-now and give himself the license to generalize in the abstract world of thinking (Hawes, 1975).

While the individual has not reached the age of abstractions, its beginnings are being demonstrated. The importance of talk cannot be overemphasized in an individual's language development. It is not a component of language to be diminished, but to be encouraged, since it is through this verbal exploration that the foundations of listening, reading and writing are established.

The third phase of language development identified by Wells sees a further development of language "towards the expression of more individually differentiated meaning and towards the detachment of language from its context of immediate experience". This reflects

the capability of man to separate experience from language, of using language to recount experiences, and of classifying and collecting events and experiences via language. It is this ability to disengage himself from contemporaneous space and time and to wander forward and backward in time that sets man apart from other animals (Hawes, 1975).

While Wells is distinguishing the beginnings of that process, or at least a stage in which it is emerging, Hawes has pinpointed the ultimate role of language in the existence of man. His representation of reality in language, the world picture, is in place, not in some immutable form, but subject to change and revision, as is the language process that created and defined it.

Life is a continuous awakening in which the past prefigures the future. We advance as persons towards a maturity measured by our responsiveness to and affirmation of a life that is transitory, limited and mysterious (Shepard, 1978).

That awakening is through language, and the responsiveness and affirmation an individual can bring to his individual existence is quantified and qualified by those institutions which in large part determine his mastery of language.

The Representation of Reality

The concepts of "representation of reality" or "world picture" need further discussion and explanation. In sharing experience with others, man is using language to make that experience real to himself.

The selection and shaping that language involves, the choices between alternative expressions so that the language shall fit the experience and bring it to life "as it really was" - these activities imply imaginative work. If we could observe all the occasions when a child uses language in this way, then to put them together, we should have caught a glimpse of a representational world that the child has built up to fit reality as he knows it (Dixon, 1967).

Such a representational world provides a structure that at any point in time reflects an individual's knowledge of his world and himself in it, and provides a referential base in which and by means of which new experiences can be interpreted. Such experiences may be rejected and not provoke a revision of this representation, while others would result in this representation of reality undergoing significant change.

The purpose of building a model is to use an analogue about whose structure something is known, and to map onto that structure conceptual material about whose structure and/or function less is known. In short, the model must be heuristic (Hawes, 1975).

The representation or model then provides a framework for discovery in which the unknown is viewed in light of the known.

For individuals, this is a venture of working and reworking their experience symbolically until they have achieved rational thought. In doing so, the individual carries a step further the evolutionary internalization of the environment: he internalizes it symbolically and can carry his experience around with him, since every act of thematization increases his ability to create, by his own action, any part of his known reality (Church, 1966).

An awareness of the representation itself and the purpose it serves is essential knowledge for an individual who has responsibilities for the language development of other individuals. The imposition of language structures and experiences with language that have little or no relationship to the representational picture that an individual has

structured to reflect his reality can be detrimental to an individual's further comprehension of the complexities of his existence and may well have negative impact upon his further language development.

Reality is not a unique or homogeneous thing; it is immensely diversified, having as many different schemes and patterns as there are different organisms. Every organism is, so to speak, a monadic being. It has a world of its own because it has an experience of its own (Cassirer, 1967).

Hence, the reality reflected in any one individual's representation, model, or schematization is unique. It reflects that individual's use of language to experience the world and himself in it, and not a waiting slate on which others are to imprint their conception of what is real and how it should be structured.

Since our world representation is our only concept of the world we live in, it is important to preserve its coherence and unity, to keep it a world we are ready to go on living in. The maintenance of order in our conception of the world in total as we have experienced it becomes a principal concern for most of us, and this fact accounts for the readiness with which we take up the role of spectator. When we do so, we broaden the base from which we contemplate until it is, potentially, "the way things are with us", the quality of our living (Britton, 1977).

The preservation of that coherence and unity and subsequent order for an individual demands a recognition of what an individual has already conceptualized as being of primary importance. The continued language development of an individual is thus dependent upon recognizing the natural

process of language acquisition and usage, and the end it serves.

The Role of Spectator

Reference has been made to a "spectator role" and clarification is necessary at this point.

Thought processes gradually become independent of immediate concrete referents. Symbols can then be manipulated to produce thoughts that are not necessarily limited to those directly translatable to external events. The remarkable flexibility of symbolization and its independence from reality-constraints expands the scope of thought (Bandura, 1977).

It is in this context that an individual is in the role of spectator. He is operating in the actual world via his representation, or he may operate directly upon the representation itself (Britton, 1968). Operating in the actual world, the individual would be viewed as being in a participant role. In the role of spectator, the individual is free to contemplate experience, his own, that of others or imagined ones, and, in doing so to improvise upon his representation of the world (Britton, 1968). The emergence of this spectator role comes as a child's intellectual development progresses. Thus the child becomes capable of delayed imitation of modeled performances which he cannot himself have seen made (Bandura, 1977).

While the distinction between the role of participant and the role of spectator is important, it is also worthwhile

to consider the implications of such roles for an individual's continued language development. If an individual is constantly presented with language situations that demand his involvement only as participant, his development is compromised in the sense that there is a preoccupation with the "here-and-now", at the expense of language situations in the spectator role that would allow for individual freedom of thought and expression in the context of his representation of reality.

As spectators, our focus is upon maintaining the unity and coherence of our total representation of past experience and with this end in view we work upon experience in which we have participated, or might participate, but in which we are not presently participating. Thus, evaluation and organization of feelings and attitudes are important aspects of activity in this role (Britton, 1979).

A restriction on opportunities in language acquisition and usage in the spectator role denies the individual a primary language function, that of evaluatively working on his representation of reality and, in doing so, of using his developing command of language, and having the opportunity for further development. A restriction on the spectator role in a language learning situation would, in essence, interrupt the natural process of language development in an individual and compromise his development as a rational, thinking being.

Functional Categories of Language

←The roles of participant and spectator have been seen to represent two different relationships between what is being said (or written or thought) and what is being done, and to cover between them all uses of language (Britton, 1971).

Britton saw language in three main functional categories:

the transactional, expressive and poetic, with the participant role identified with the transactional and the spectator role identified with the poetic. The expressive function was viewed as straddling the participant/spectator distinction (Britton, 1971). "Expressive language" was defined as language that is close to the self; that is not called upon to go very far away from the speaker (Britton, 1972). This function of language manifests itself initially in the talk of an individual; hence, the importance given to the role of talk earlier and the need for it to continue throughout the formal learning process.

Talk will, in the end, establish the learner as the chief protagonist in his own learning process. Our speech establishes intimate connections with our first-hand experience, with the world in which we operate, and to which all our meanings apply (Britton, 1977).

This expressive function of speech must not be neglected in an individual's language development, for as he moves on to language in the transactional and poetic categories, he will continue to use language in the expressive function, and will do so because the need to

express himself and the reality he has constructed in language remains. Expressive language must also be viewed as the base from which an individual will move to the transactional and poetic functions. Expressive language in this context will contain elements that have the characteristics of the transactional and the poetic. It is in assuring that individuals move from the use of language in the expressive function to usage in the transactional, and, most importantly, the poetic, that is the challenge to effective language development programmes. In essence, then, it is in expressive speech that we are likely to rehearse the growing points of our formulation and analysis of experience (Britton, 1971).

Language in the transactional function is used to get something done. In this context, the individual is in the role of participant - a participant in a very general sense in the world's affairs (Britton, 1971). Britton went further to identify two main sub-divisions within the transactional function. These are the "informative", which encompasses the giving and seeking of information, and the "conative", in which the individual's intention is to change his listener's behaviour, opinions and attitudes (Britton, 1971). Language usage in instructional settings will, for the most part, fall within this transactional function. A further characteristic of language in the transactional function participant role is that

the speaker/writer is concerned in his utterance to enmesh with his listener's relevant knowledge, experience, interests: and the listener is at liberty to contextualize what he finds relevant, selectively (Britton, 1971).

This convention, Britton has referred to as a "piecemeal contextualization".

While the use of the term "piecemeal contextualization" is vague, the conclusion being drawn is that if an individual is presented in language learning situations with a preponderance of language activity in the transactional function, then what will result is language activity that is fragmentary in nature and not contributing to the coherence and unity of the representation of reality that the individual has constructed in language. In operating primarily in the participant role, the individual is denied the importance of the use of language in the spectator role, one in which he is free to work upon his representation of reality and improvise on it as he sees fit to do so.

Though as participants we evaluate a situation in order to operate within it, as spectators we are able to relate events more amply to a broader spectrum of values (Britton, 1971).

An individual in the participant role is operating with language to get something done. There is a purpose in his activity other than manipulating language structures, and the opportunity to be functioning solely with the utterance is not present. Thus, in the spectator role, the individual is free of the obligation to act and is able to focus on the language construct itself.

Poetic Function of Language

For Britton, the term "poetic" meant

language as art - the poetic in the original Greek sense of something made, a verbal object. In the development of an individual's use of language towards the poetic, the greater is the attention paid to forms, to the organization of form to create an artifact, a verbal object (Britton, 1972).

In this sense the poetic function sees the individual creating a construct in language not for the purpose of getting something done, but for the personal satisfaction of doing, of creating the utterance itself.

The attention of an individual is with the utterance as utterance, to forms of language, and to formal features of whatever the language portrays (Britton, 1971).

This freedom from action that an individual has in the spectator role is used to attend to the form of language, and to the use of language to evaluate experiences (Britton, 1968).

In stating that the individual is free to attend to the form of language, Britton identified the linguistic forms of the language itself, the form of the events represented in language, and the form of the feelings that are embodied and expressed in the language. This represents a level of language learning in which an individual is learning the forms of language through a usage of them. It is an identification of these forms, not in the traditional sense of what they are, but in how they function in the creation of a verbal artifact.

The usage of the poetic function in attending to the form of the events represented in language is a recognition of what has already been occurring in an individual's language development. From the initial stage of acquisition of language, the individual has progressed to a construction of his perception of reality in language. As an operator on the form of events represented in language in the poetic function, the individual is maintaining this natural process of language. He continues to work upon that representation of reality which is uniquely his own, maintaining its coherence and unity while engaged in the process of learning about language through the use of language.

The poetic function and the freedom of the individual in its usage was also viewed as allowing the individual an opportunity to attend to the feelings embodied and expressed in the language. It is language that defines man as man.

He cannot live his life without expressing his life. The various modes of this expression constitute a new sphere. They have a life of their own, a sort of eternity by which they survive man's individual and ephemeral existence (Cassirer, 1967).

The reality that an individual has constructed in language is his own, and in an expression of that reality, it is not only his sense of order that is projected, but also his own unique individuality as defined within and by that order.

Britton saw contextualization as the manner in which we relate what is in the utterance to what we know, think and feel already. In discussing the transactional function of

language, the suggestion was made that the usage of language in this mode was essentially to get something done. The form of the language was subordinated to the purpose for which it was intended. The argument has been presented that a usage of language in the transactional function as a major component of an individual's language development would result in a fragmentation of an individual's representation of reality and language; that it would be detrimental to the need for coherence and unity in that representation. This is not to suggest that a use of language in the transactional function is detrimental to an individual's development. Such use of language has its own distinct purposes and conventions for the language user. The concern arises when it has precedence in language usage, and particularly so at the expense of language in the poetic function.

To recapitulate,

the spectrum from expressive to poetic represents language "in the role of spectator": the more fully the demands of that role are met, the greater is the concern for form, for patterning, for organization into a verbal object, a work of art in language. Thus, both to writer and to the reader, it comes to constitute an experience of order consistent with the focal purpose we have attributed to it, that of maintaining the unity and coherence of our individually constructed representations of the world (Britton, 1977).

Writing

The focus of this paper is writing: specifically, the use of the poetic function in language and writing poetry. In that light, writing itself needs to be examined in the context of what has already been stated.

The expressive, transactional, and poetic functions of language represent the first context in which writing must be examined.

Expressive writing is seen developmentally as a matrix from which other uses of language are achieved by a process of disassociation; or progressive differentiation (Britton, 1977).

As the expressive language function in speech is the base upon which an individual builds his language knowledge and usage, expressive writing must be the base on which an individual will establish himself before moving on to the transactional and poetic forms of writing.

The child has to interpret the language that he hears around him. He has to feel his way, essentially experimentally, towards its rules. He learns it in the context of his own world, his own purposes, and his own meanings. Other than the mastering of the writing system, there is little reason to suppose that the process of learning to write is radically different (Burgess, 1973).

The importance of the statement is its recognition of process in learning to write, as there was in an individual learning his language initially, and that process is not identified externally, but internally. An individual's expressive writing must occur in a learning situation in which he is

free to explore language. The concern is not with correctness of usage, but with usage. As an individual identifies a need for a specific form in which to write, continued usage of language will result in the mastery of form required for the purpose intended.

The need on the part of an instructor to decide what the writing should be about is not present, nor should it be. As the individual acquires language and uses it to learn about himself and his world, he has built up a resource of experience that was expressed initially in speech. While an individual will continue to express that experience in speech, and must have opportunities in which to do so, writing initially must serve the same purpose. The individual will tap the resource of his spoken language and the experiences constructed to express himself and his world in writing.

The significance of speech as a prerequisite to expressive writing must not, then, be underemphasized.

Such writing is very much like written-down speech, reflecting the ebb and flow of the writer's thoughts and feelings, essentially what expressive language (spoken) does (Martin, 1975).

Writing, then, organizes an individual's representation of reality, as did talk early on, and communicates it to someone else.

It is also important to recognize that the need for expressive language remains wherever there are new experiences to be assimilated and that the expressive is the continuing source from which specialized forms of language

can grow (Martin, 1973). As an individual will return to the expressive function of language in speech to comprehend new experiences, so will he return to that function in writing. The message to teachers is not to render mute this expressive root of language, whether spoken or written. It is a continuing, developmental process in learning, and not a stage which is completed at a particular point in time.

A further characteristic of writing which is expressive is the movement between the spectator and participant roles.

The trend of the writing is moving away from the expressive, either towards a more informational or decision-making function or towards a more contemplative one (Britton, 1974).

The roots of the transactional and poetic functions of language in a writing context are inherent in the expressive. Expressive writing, by an individual, will contain elements that can be identified as "informational or decision-making" and "contemplative"; in-essence, serving the transactional and poetic functions.

Language in the transactional function of writing is used by an individual to get something done, and, as such, the essential concern is with the task itself and not with the language. The statement has been made that it is language in this function that comprises the major part of an individual's language usage in an instructional situation.

It is the means of testing, of monitoring knowledge and performance. It is writing that is seen not as a part of the learning process, but as something which happens after learning (Martin, 1973).

This is not to say that transactional writing does not have a role to play in an individual's language development. It does state that where such an emphasis exists, particularly in writing, an individual is denied the usage of language in the expressive and poetic functions, and the learning process is compromised as a result.

Poetic Writing

Poetic writing is that in which it is taken for granted that "true or false" is not a relevant question at the literal level. What is presented may or may not in fact be a representation of actual reality, but the writer takes it for granted that his reader will experience what is presented, rather in the way he experiences his own memories and not use it like a guidebook or map in his dealings with the world. In this sense, language is not being used instrumentally as a means of achieving something but as an end in itself (Martin, 1973).

Martin went on to point out that such writing shows a heightened awareness of symbolic, aural, and even visual qualities of shaping a verbal construct.

The distinction between transactional and poetic writing is that an individual is not concerned in poetic writing with getting something done, but is concerned with the actual use of language, as opposed to the purpose it will serve. The poetic function allows an individual to

experiment with the forms of language, to construct in language an artifact that presents himself in the light he would like to be seen in.

Acceptance of what he offers confirms for him his representation of what is real, and this represents the deepest satisfaction to be had from the whole process (Britton, 1977).

Only the poetic function allows this form of expression in the use of language. Britton went on to state that the sheer satisfaction of bringing into existence a pleasing verbal object is of primary importance in an individual's development. It is not constructed for someone else, but for the individual's own personal satisfaction. He is using language, and specifically written language, in the poetic function not only to express his own existence, but to come to terms with it as a thinking being. Britton sees the satisfaction an individual has from such writing as increasing as writing moves towards the poetic end of the spectrum (Britton, 1977). That satisfaction comes from an individual having had the opportunity to construct an artifact in language that is uniquely his own.

Writing Poetry

The focus of writing in the context of the poetic function, and within the parameters of this paper is on writing poetry, or, specifically, having students in schools write poetry.

Britton defined literature as language written in the role of spectator, and viewed this definition as one in which he could talk about the literature children write (Britton, 1968). To write in the poetic function is to write from the role of spectator. In this role the individual is working upon his representation of reality as that representation is reconstructed in language. From this viewpoint, what an individual writes is literature since literature is defined as something we do, as opposed to seeing it as what somebody else has done (Britton, 1968). This is the light in which poetry writing will be viewed in a language development programme. It can be seen as an individual's first coming to terms with literature through his own writing, and not through an examination of what another individual has written. In the end, an individual has nowhere else to go but to his own experiences, his own view of himself and the world, and it is from that perspective that an individual can approach literature.

The poet is a creator in the field of language. He has the power to recast and regenerate language, to mold it into new shapes (Cassirer, 1979). So too, is that power available to any individual who is using the poetic function of language. The individual is exploring his ability "to recast and regenerate language". It is not a new development, but one in which he has been involved since he began to acquire language. It is not the end of a process, but a continuing development of it.

The poetic is that which delights in being for the sake of being. The poet is he who realizes in his art his own being and the being of other lives and nature outside himself (Spender, 1974).

The individual in writing poetry can have these satisfactions.

For them it is a means of exploring and coming to terms with experience, and as such is a recognition of what an individual does throughout his existence. It is not a form of language that is, by its nature, restricted to the few; it is an experience in language in which all individuals in their formal language development situations should participate.

CHAPTER III

APPROACHES TO WRITING POETRY

Introduction

Both the impulse and methods of poetry are rooted in human experience, and formal poetry itself represents, not a distinction from, but a specialization of, thoroughly universal habits of human thinking and feeling. (Brooks, 1966).

Learning to experience poetry is not a radically different process from that of learning any other kind of play. The way to develop a poetic sense is by using it. And one of the real joys of the play impulse is in the sudden discovery that one is getting better at it than he had thought he would be (Ciardi, 1975).

One does not worry about the "greatness" or even the perfection of such a poem: one knows that the boy had great experience in writing it, and by making us see what he saw, and by telling us the thoughts that his experience called forth, he gave all who read such a poem something of the same delight (Read, 1956).

Poetry is a sort of truancy, a dream within the dream of life, a wild flower plucked among our wheat (Oakeshott, 1962).

An examination of the approaches to writing poetry identified by Kenneth Koch in Wishes, Lies and Dreams and Brian Powell's Making Poetry represents a recognition of a

need to provide teachers with resources they can use to initiate writing poetry. These approaches to writing poetry are representative of a modest body of literature describing a wide range of such approaches. The suggestion is not that these will guarantee any individual teacher success in implementing poetry writing in the classroom, but that they identify essential components of an approach to poetry writing. What will work for one teacher, may not for another. The responsibility of the teacher is to recognize that any approach must have a structure, and to place within that structure what will work for him and the individuals who will write poetry.

Writing Poetry: Kenneth Koch

Kenneth Koch's approach to having children write poetry involved students from Kindergarten to Grade VI. While one would, perhaps, immediately question the ability of children in their first years of school to write, or print, recognition has to be given to the fact that some children come to school with considerable skill in writing, or printing, and, for those who do not, the teacher can be the recorder during an initial stage.

Several considerations were made about children before approaching them to write poetry. The first was the recognition of the playfulness and inventiveness of children's talk, and, in particular, their ability to say things in fresh and surprising ways (Koch, 1970). While this is hardly a startling

revelation, it recognizes that exploratory talk should precede writing (Dixon, 1967). A child's experiences in language are initially in speech and it is this language resource that must be tapped for progress into writing.

A second consideration was to take children seriously as poets. Children were seen as having a natural curiosity for poetry and the process of writing poems was a discovery of something they already had (Koch, 1970). This represents a need on the part of children to express themselves and their experiences, and to share those of others. This "natural curiosity" is that expressiveness, and the "discovery" of it in a poetic form represents new experiences in using language.

The primary concern was to get children started writing and in writing anything in a way that would be pleasant and exciting for them (Koch, 1970). The tactic was a poem to which all children in a class could contribute, a class collaboration. Each student contributed a single line. Such an approach had particular advantages: it was easy to write, had rules like a game and included the pleasures without the anxieties of competitiveness. The rules identified what should be in every line, giving help to children in finding something to say and giving the final poem a unity (Koch, 1970).

The rules required all lines to begin with "I wish" and to name a color, comic-strip character and a city or country (Koch, 1970). As Koch was willing to admit, the result was hardly a "great" poem, but it achieved the purpose

of having children want to write more. They had a form in which they could operate and an initial confidence in their ability to do it (Koch, 1970). These lines were collected and read as a poem, and for the individuals involved in its composition, the writing of poetry had begun.

This particular form had advantages as a starting point. Children could relax after each line, and always start up afresh; they could play variations on the line itself, and they had something to write about which interested them: the private world of their wishes (Koch, 1970).

This form need not only be used in a class collaboration situation. Children can and should write their own individual "I wish" poems, and can be free to identify the content of the line themselves.

Poetry writing then moved to comparisons of things and sounds. A repetitive form was used to help give the poems unity and this form asked that a comparison or sound be used in every line (Koch, 1970). These ideas were easy for the children to understand, in that they were not presented with a situation in which they would be reluctant to attempt the writing. The ideas were interesting in the sense that once the form was identified, children could plug in their own words and ideas. There was a freshness of subject matter and a new experience of language or poetic form (Koch, 1970).

Students progressed to poetry about dreams. Koch viewed this particular theme as one in which children could

"get the feeling of including the unconscious parts of their experience in their poetry" (Koch, 1970). The observation made at this stage in having children write poetry was the inclusion of wishes, comparisons and sounds in their compositions about dreams. Their own writing had become a resource that they continued to use as they progressed to writing with new themes. This characteristic of their writing was recognized and a form identified for children whereby they could write poems that included wishes, sounds, comparisons and dreams (Koch, 1970). This structure reflects the openness of the approach. The poetry written reflected the children's use of the form and content, and revealed ideas for variations on forms and content that could then be used to initiate further poetry writing. It is a selection of ideas on which to begin, yet the approach is open to what an individual may want to include.

The form of a poem used by Koch to contrast the present and the past has odd lines beginning with "I used to" and even lines beginning with "But now" (Koch, 1970). As in the previous examples, children were given a form in which to write and an experience about which to write. This aspect of the approach must also be recognized since it underscores the importance of establishing both what will be written about and how it will be written.

Progress in writing moved on to poems about animals and objects. Mere description was avoided. Children were asked that they be the animal or object. This request

appealed to the play of children in which they could pretend to be something else (Koch, 1970).

Further examples included forms identified as "Lie Poem" in which children were asked to say something in every line which wasn't true or to make an entire poem that wasn't true (Koch, 1970). Koch viewed this particular example as having some shock value for initiating writing while recognizing "lie" as a word that children use themselves (Koch, 1970). Another form identified the beginning of lines as "I seem to be/but really I am", this pointing to the difference between how an individual is perceived and how an individual perceives himself (Koch, 1970).

The "Lie Poem" reverts to the everyday talk of children and just that resource is the touchstone in this approach that must not be ignored. Asking individuals to express how they view themselves is an approach that can be opened up by identifying forms in which they can express their individual views on a wide variety of topics.

The removal of obstacles to writing is an overriding feature of this approach to writing poetry. Children were asked not to use rhyme. "Rhyme" was seen as a technique that children found difficult to use; too, it inhibited the free flow of their expression of feelings and associations in written language (Koch, 1970).

Spelling and punctuation were ignored in the sense that a child need not be concerned with them in the initial

writing of a poem. Attention to these in the initial writing was viewed as a hindrance to the objective of having children write (Koch, 1970). These particular aspects of writing can be given attention after a poem has been written.

Poetry ideas should be presented to children in words that they understand. A statement and an explanation of it would take away from the purpose of presenting an idea, that of getting children writing.

Specific terminology such as alliteration, simile and onomatopoeia should not be used, since there are simpler ways of conveying what such nomenclature means (Koch, 1970).

The poetry a student writes must not be criticized. That is not the purpose of the approach. Examples from all students, whether entire poems or lines and phrases, can, and should, be shared by all, and all can benefit from the interaction. Such a tactic contributes to an atmosphere wherein any reservations about writing are eliminated.

Correction by a teacher is not a feature of the approach. Asking for clarification is acceptable; changing what an individual has written to meet an external standard is not (Koch, 1970).

The role of the teacher in using this approach has been revealed to some extent in the statements already made here. 1) Removing obstacles to writing, 2) presenting the actual forms in which students can compose, 3) allowing talk to precede the writing, and 4) establishing an atmosphere where children feel confident about what they write are

demanding and essential tasks. In addition, Koch viewed his role as one of "being there to explain and inspire before children wrote and to act as reader, admirer and furnisher of additional ideas" (Koch, 1970).

The question arises as to the function of the great poetry of the past and present in such an approach. The objective in using such poetry was for children to learn from it and be inspired by it (Koch, 1970). In the approach to writing poetry that has been described here, Koch observed that children were particularly attentive to poetry just before they were going to write, and that if a poem he read was related to what they were going to write about, their interest and understanding was increased (Koch, 1970). The challenge in promoting further poetry writing by children with the use of poetry from recognized poets is in the selection of what fits the writing situation at hand, or to take a poet's work and use the ideas it presents as a starting point for children to write poetry in response.

This represents a unique way of having children approach poetry that is not their own. There is no pressure upon them to describe or criticize or identify the particular use of poetic devices, but to react in writing to either a poem or part of a poem that has a specific appeal. Such a usage of poetry in this approach provides an essential linkage between what children write and what poets have written.

Koch summarized his approach by stating that

what seemed most important was that everyone had the capacity to write poetry well enough to enjoy it himself and usually well enough to give pleasure to others, whether it was entire poems or surprising and beautiful images, lines or combinations of words (Koch, 1970).

That is essentially all that needs to be asked of children ranging in age from five to ten. They are exploring language in its written form and doing so in writing poetry. This activity in turn represents a beginning for further poetry writing and a necessary developmental stage before approaching more formal poetic forms.

Writing Poetry: Brian Powell

Brian Powell's approach to having students write poetry is directed toward the nine to fourteen age group.

Three concepts are identified as being essential in an English programme. These are involvement, relevance and discovery (Powell, 1973). Involvement concerns itself with having students actively involved in the use of language; relevance establishes the need for the work in which students are involved to reflect their interests and experiences; and, discovery emphasizes the need for students to find out about things for themselves, rather than merely to be presented with information about them.

Control of words, structure, content, power of concentration, surroundings, mood of the moment and the

desire to write were identified as factors involved in writing (Powell, 1973). While all of these factors must be considered in having students write poetry, it is the individual's desire to write that will determine the success of implementing poetry writing in an English programme. This was a primary concern identified, as well, by Kenneth Koch; the need to get students writing in situations where they would want to continue becomes an overriding factor. Powell went on to state that "if the young person wants to write, he should eventually be able to overcome difficulties and achieve satisfaction in his work", and that "successful writing depends initially on the willingness of the young person to try and on his determination to try again" (Powell, 1973).

In this context, the role of the teacher as one who removes obstacles to writing and directs and encourages those who are writing is a crucial role indeed. Writing poetry gives students a situation where they are free to express themselves in writing without attending particularly to structure and correctness. These elements will come in time. The primary concern remains that of having students write, accepting what they write, and allowing a situation to develop in which they will continue to do so.

Powell's approach to writing poetry is a structured one. The English period designated for writing encompassed sections in which ideas are developed, forms presented in which students will write, content explored and examples that reflect the form and content presented (Powell, 1973).

The act of writing was seen as being an individual experience, and silence during the writing session thus becomes a necessary feature. Concentration on the writing being done and a willingness to be understanding towards the work of others are also characteristics of the learning situation to be established.

While the role of the teacher has already been discussed, Powell adds an additional characteristic. The teacher is asked to try to write poetry as well, and share the experiences in a class who are also writing (Powell, 1972).

The writing procedure asks for the use of an "ideas book" in which an individual would record ideas and experiences, building up a resource that a student can then draw on in writing situations (Powell, 1973). This data base would allow expressive writing to occur on a regular basis in an English programme. Such writing is an initial stage out of which the poetic develops, and opportunities for its occurrence must be established.

An exercise book for writing is seen as a record for writing in progress as well as completed work. The left-hand page would be used for drafts - essentially a working page - while the right-hand page would contain the completed piece (Powell, 1973). This arrangement provides a student and a teacher the means to review progress in writing and also becomes a source of ideas for further writing.

The re-writing that would occur in this exercise book is viewed as an essential aspect of this approach to writing poetry (Powell, 1973). Attention to structural features is not an initial concern in the writing process, but one that must be given attention prior to the final writing of the piece.

As with Koch, Powell sees the need to provide students some guidance in dealing with form. An absence of form would result in "expression that lacks focus, and hence precision and direction" (Powell, 1973). Powell went on to identify a "progression of forms, from the tightly structured, and moving toward the freer" (Powell, 1973).

Both Koch and Powell recognize the need to establish what students should write about in their approaches to having them write poetry. It is not enough simply to establish a form in which to write, to ask students to use it and then to wait for the result.

"Content" is not to be interpreted as telling students what to write, but an identification of suggestions that students may or may not use.

An approach to content is to compile lists of topics that are familiar to students. Such a list is not presented to them, but is one to which they continuously contribute, and particularly so during the dialogue that should precede the writing. From such lists students can select a topic and write about it in a form identified by the teacher (Powell, 1973).

The experiences an individual brings to a learning situation are the fund on which he will draw. The "ideas book" will reflect these experiences and can play a significant role at this stage of writing.

Nature, physical feelings, being something else, a personal reaction to a topic, advertisements, writing from a picture, and humorous moments are some of the content-topics identified by Powell (Powell, 1973). This variety of topic reflects the openness of the approach. A teacher and students will bring their own suggestions for content. The list is open, reflecting the individual personalities and interests that generate the content.

"Writing is a craft, and as such it involves certain specific skills" (Powell, 1973). While reference was made earlier to first drafts and completed pieces while discussing the use of a writing book, this approach also identifies evaluative criteria by which an individual can judge his own writing (Powell, 1973). Attention to choice of words, structure, accuracy and re-writing are skills that students can develop as their writing skill progresses. The process is one of self-evaluation of what has been done. Thus, the purpose of evaluating is not to meet an external standard, but to have students bring a piece of writing to whatever stage of development reflects their growing capabilities as writers.

Conclusion

These approaches to writing poetry appear to achieve their essential purpose. Students will write, will continue to write, and their writing improves in the process. These approaches are also effective in establishing a usage of the poetic function of language in a language programme. They provide teachers with resources that enable them to introduce poetry writing and to develop it as an effective component of their language teaching. What is required, then, is a knowledge of such approaches and a willingness to try.

CHAPTER IV

THE POETIC IN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

The Teacher as Audience

The role of the teacher in an effective language programme has been viewed as one in which the individual teacher is cognizant of the process of language acquisition and usage; recognizes the need to present to individuals language that reflects the social reality in which they acquired language; gives continued attention to the role of talk and to the creation of a learning situation in which it can occur, and maintains a balance in the writing component of a language programme among the expressive, transactional and poetic functions of language. In addition to these characteristics, a knowledge of approaches to having students write poetry is also considered essential.

A further consideration in examining the role of the teacher is the need for an awareness of the audience an individual has for his writing. An individual in a classroom will be writing primarily for the teacher present. The distinction to be made, is not who the audience is, but how a writer will perceive that audience (Martin, 1973).

Martin records six categories in differentiating a sense of audience:

- Child (or adolescent) to Self
- Child (or adolescent) to Trusted Adult
- Pupil to Teacher as Partner in Dialogue

Pupil to Teacher, Particular Relationship
 Pupil to Teacher Seen as Examiner or Assessor
 Writer to his Readers (or his Public)

Writing, 'Child to Self' is expressive, and an individual is his own audience. Such writing is personal, and is the writing contained in journals, and diaries that an individual may keep. The four middle categories identify writing for the teacher as audience. In the "Trusted Adult" category, there is a relationship between the individual and teacher that provides a secure setting for the child to write about personal feelings. The "Teacher as Partner in Dialogue" category also has that security and the teacher is viewed as being there to help and as being interested in what an individual has to express in writing. The "Particular Relationship" category is also a secure setting in which an individual will take risks in expressing himself and his ideas. In this category, the subject matter is that of the educational setting. In the "Examiner or Assessor" category, the individual writes to meet the demands of a teacher and will expect what he has written to be evaluated (Martin, 1973). The security that was characteristic of the previous categories is not present in the latter.

All too often, the writing that an individual will do for the 'Examiner' audience will be predominant in a language programme. This is transactional writing; that which is used to get something done. In this case, it is writing that will demonstrate to a teacher how well an individual can write and what he knows about a specific area of content.

In stating that individuals must have opportunities to write using the poetic function of language, and that such writing must become a component of effective language programmes, one must also recognize that such writing cannot occur in settings where an individual perceives his audience as being primarily that of an examiner or assessor. As an individual learned his spoken language in a setting that allows exploration, experimentation, and error; so too must settings for writing allow an individual the security and subsequent freedom to find his own way, with the guidance of an individual in a situation characterized by mutual trust.

When a child writes auto-biographically, he offers his experiences as a basis for forming a relationship with the reader he has in mind, a relationship of mutual interest and trust. His satisfaction in the writing, if he succeeds, lies in the rewards of that relationship. Since for teachers, this mutuality is in fact a professional relationship necessary to the kind of teaching and learning they seek to establish, the teacher will aim at cultivating it with every student he teaches (Britton, 1979).

In this statement, Britton has clearly delineated the task for teachers in developing an effective language programme. Unless that "relationship of mutual interest and trust" is established, the teacher as audience for an individual's writing will continue to be perceived as that of examiner and assessor. Martin saw the "Examiner Audience" situation as one that inhibited thinking and speculation and saw instead the need for a situation in which the child wrote for an audience that was interested and sympathetic, as opposed to one waiting to judge the performance of a task.

The final category used to differentiate a 'Sense of Audience' is that of 'Writer to his Readers (or his Public)'. In this category, what an individual writes is capable of being read and understood by an unknown audience. Writing in this context is poetic. The writer is not concerned with an audience or, for that matter, whether or not the audience will comprehend what he has written, but rather with the construction of a verbal artifact. This is writing in the role of spectator.

In this role, the individual exposes, by what he chooses to write about, some part of his system of values, his feelings and beliefs about the world; and his satisfaction lies in having his evaluations corroborated, challenged, or modified (Britton, 1977).

Britton went on to state that "this exchange of values is not indiscriminate, but is fostered by a relationship of trust, and by a sense of shared values, both of which are considered necessary if the fullest satisfaction is to be derived".

Teachers, then, must be aware of their roles as audience to an individual and his writing. A teacher who is perceived as an examiner will be focusing a language programme on transactional writing, and individual opportunities to explore the poetic function of language will not be characteristic of such a programme. Writing is more than a means by which one individual can assess the performance of another. It is also the means through which an individual works upon the representation of reality that he is constructing in language. That 'working upon' will not occur in a usage of

transactional writing, but in poetic writing, and that will only occur when teachers present themselves to individuals in roles other than that of examiner.

Poetic Language as an Evaluative Process

The poetic use of language offers an individual an evaluative process; not external, but internal. In the construction of a verbal artifact, an individual is using language to express himself and his experiences, and such usage not only allows an individual the opportunity to assess and organize his feelings and attitudes, but also to work with language in increasingly complex forms consistent with his language development. The need on the part of an individual to maintain unity and coherence in his representation of reality is, by its very nature, an evaluative process. The representation that an individual constructs is not 'completed' at some fixed point in time in his existence, but undergoes constant assessment and revision as new experiences are encountered and assimilated. This activity occurs when an individual is operating in the role of spectator; when he is free from having to act, and can reflect upon experience.

Why Poetic Language?

The succession of events we call "experience" is based on the constructions we place on what goes on. If those constructions are never altered, all that happens during a man's years is a sequence of parallel events having no psychological impact on his life. But if he

invests himself in the enterprise, the outcome, to the extent that it differs from his expectation or enlarges upon it, man's construction of himself is dislodged. In recognizing the inconsistency between his anticipation and the outcome, he concedes a discrepancy between what he was and what he is. A succession of such investments and dislodgments constitutes the human experience (Kelly, 1966).

The constructions that an individual places on his experiences form his representation of reality, his world picture and his place in it. The means by which an individual constructs this representation is language, and it is language that provides him the means to alter it. However, an individual's language development may not necessarily provide him with the language tools he requires for the task. The argument has been presented, in the case of writing in a language programme, that the transactional usage of language occupies an individual with getting something done in the world. A shift to the poetic usage of language would provide an individual with the means by which he can alter the constructions he has placed on his experience, and, in so doing, engage in an activity that is characteristically human - that of using a system of symbols, language, to construct a world picture, a reality for the individual, and of continuing to use language to revise that construct in response to new experiences; in essence, reconstituting the representation of reality and himself in it.

An effective language programme for an individual must come to terms with the role of poetic language in an

individual's development - not just as development in language usage, but in the development of an individual as a speculative and thinking being.

A Relationship of Trust

The examination of the role of the teacher as audience for an individual's writing identified a relationship of mutual trust between individual and teacher as a basic condition that must exist in the learning situation in which an individual will write in the poetic function. Such a relationship does not exist in a situation where the audience has been perceived primarily as examiner, and a change in the role of audience from that of examiner will be characterized by a change in the relationship between individual and teacher.

Trust is not concerned with knowing the essential truth about a matter, but with the success of the reduction of complexity, with the fact that the taking of the risk involved has proved itself in social life and thus becomes a motivating force, which yields further attestation (Luhman, 1979).

Hence, the relationship between individual and teacher must not be characterized by an examination of what the individual knows about a subject, but by situations in which an individual will have the feeling of security needed to explore his own reality; to come to terms with the complexity of his existence through the poetic use of language. In acquiring and using language initially, an individual's behavior is characterized by risk-taking. Language was used in situations other than that in which it was acquired. The

concern on the part of the individual was not with correctness, but with usage, and usage, in turn, would demonstrate to an individual either his success using the language acquired or a deficiency that motivated further acquisition and usage in order to structure and comprehend the new situation in and by language.

This is not a feature of an individual's acquisition and usage of language that terminates at some specific point in time. This process will, however, not be fostered by a situation wherein an individual does not feel secure enough to take risks with language, or simply does not have the opportunities to do so. The self-trust in his own ability that an individual brings to his early language acquisition and usage can and must remain throughout his language development in an instructional program. It is a self-motivation; an individual does want to know, and the relationship that develops between himself and a teacher-audience can only go beyond that of 'Pupil to Teacher seen as Examiner' when the trust that he initially placed in his own ability to use language is recognized and fostered.

Symbolic Functioning

All human beings grow up in a setting of artifacts, symbols and conventions, and because of their biological constitutions, are both less fit for direct adaptation to nature and better equipped for mediated, artificial adaptations to a largely artificial environment (Church, 1966).

For children, Church envisaged a venture of working and reworking their experience symbolically until they achieve rational thought. The individual internalizes his experiences symbolically and can recreate, by his own action, any part of his known reality. That re-creation of his reality is through language, and specifically, through the use of poetic language.

What if individuals do not get to 'work and rework their experience symbolically'? Will individuals not 'achieve rational thought', and be something less as individuals? The direction of this discourse allows an affirmative response to these questions. It is language that defines man as man, and if an individual's language development does not provide him both the opportunities and the skills he needs to reconstitute his experience, then he is denied a feature of his existence that compromises his fullest development as a member of society.

The acquisition of literacy provides a tool for and the spur to higher levels of analytic thinking and formal reasoning and these skills are among the chief forces in the development of civilization, both in whole cultures and in its individual member (Wells, 1981).

When an individual's language development has a deficiency, it is not only the individual's thinking and reasoning ability that is compromised, but also the quality of the society in which he lives.

The Individual as Poet

In using the poetic function of language, and, in particular, writing poetry, the individual is, as is a poet, a creator in the field of language (Cassirer, 1979).

The thought processes of an individual gradually become independent of immediate concrete referents. In this process, symbols are manipulated to produce thoughts; and, in the case of the poetic function to produce verbal artifacts, that are not necessarily limited to those directly translatable to external events. The flexibility of symbolization and its independence from reality constraints, expands the scope of thought (Bandura, 1977).

An individual's experiences with language must not always be in the context of what is immediate and real. There exists, within all individuals, a need to reach beyond their social venue. The need can be met in an effective language program; one which provides for a manipulation of symbols by an individual in a poetic form.

"The poet respects the fundamental structural laws of his language and has to adapt its grammatical, morphological and syntactical rules" (Cassirer, 1979). While an individual in the development of his writing ability may not, necessarily, be adopting these rules, they are inherent in what he writes and he is not in complete ignorance of them. The individual does not learn language and, at the same time, do so without a recognition of the rules that characterized it as a system of symbols. "A poet is concerned with the need to make verbal patterns, and formal constructions which will throw light upon

experience, make sense of it and convey it to others" (Day-Lewis, 1968). Such a mandate is not solely the prerogative of the poet, but can and must serve the same purpose for individuals in language programmes.

Language programmes too often become situations in which individuals 'learn' the grammatical, morphological and syntactical rules of their language, apply them in situations where their knowledge of the rules themselves can be checked, and rarely find opportunities to use language for the sake of usage. "Education consists of enlarging areas of recognition: the mind is encouraged to progress from the boundaries of its own experience" (Baldwin, 1959). Language programmes must then recognize, firstly, the experiences that an individual brings to them, and not present him with no more than a package on how a language works. Language has been working for an individual from the time he started to acquire and use it. The experiences of his existence that he has constructed in language are the base on which to build. In the case of poetry, Baldwin saw the most usual method of teaching it as not calling upon what the child had within, but to present him with a 'poem', with the hope that it would be close to his own experience. Poetry that comes from an individual's own experience is where such teaching must begin.

Knowledge and Reality

Education must not, for an individual, be based on the premise that knowledge is to be regarded as the apprehension of reality. There is no defined reality that an individual must be expected to absorb. Knowledge has been defined as

an adaptive activity of an organism and as a progressive adjustment. Reality is a continuous process and an individual cuts this continuum into discrete parts by means of his purposive acts of adjustment or adaptation (Lee, 1973).

These 'acts of adjustment or adaptation' come when an individual works up the representation of reality that he has constructed in language. The concern is not with the amount of knowledge an individual may or may not know, but how he will come to terms with it in the context of the construction he has already placed on his own reality. Poetic writing is, in itself, an act of adjustment or adaptation. The individual, through poetic writing, can reconstitute his world picture, adjust it in light of new experiences encountered, or adapt new experiences into the construct itself.

Why Writing?

In assessing an approach to having children write poetry, Esbensen saw writing become for children "a means to 'explore language, self, attitudes, and one's awareness of the world of real and imaginary things". Writing poetry was not a situation characterized by having to know a

defined amount of information, or by having to write, knowing that the writing would be assessed. The individual's exploration of language continues; in essence, learning continues; since as the individual explores language, he uses what he acquires in more complex forms. In exploring the self and one's attitudes, individuals come to an understanding of themselves, and their relationships to others. One's awareness of the world of real and imaginary things is enhanced by opportunities to express that awareness in writing.

Such an approach to language identifies a need for English teachers to foster the kind of language which represents a concern for the total world picture; the total context into which every new experience that comes to a child - a man - has to be fitted (Britton, 1972). A concern for the total world picture an individual is constructing will emerge by giving attention to what the poetic function of language can do for an individual. In acquiring and using language, an individual, early in his existence, demonstrates his ability to learn language and to use it as a means to learn about the world and himself in it. What is characteristic of language learning and usage at that stage must also become characteristic of the language programme in the school.

Conclusion

While a series of recommendations to the Department of Education, Memorial University's Faculty of Education, the Newfoundland Teachers Association and School Boards could be made at this point in time, there is a stage in the examination of writing in the school language programme that must precede any such recommendations. The stage, in question, is one that would see a comprehensive study of writing in the language programmes of schools throughout the province. Such a study would, and should, demand the cooperation and resources of the institutions listed above, and, from such a study, there would emerge specific recommendations defined for these institutions and the roles they must play in developing effective language programmes in the province's schools.

A partial listing of topics for such a study would include:

- 1) an identification of the amount and types of writing being done by students in existing language programmes;
- 2) an examination of recommended textbooks in language programmes, and the approaches to writing contained in them;
- 3) an assessment of the training of teachers, specifically in the area of teaching writing;
- 4) an evaluation of the courses being offered in teacher training programmes, and, in particular, those that concern themselves with writing; and,

- 5) a comprehensive examination of studies in language learning, and the identification of an effective means to disseminate such information to educators.

Only one recommendation is required. It encompasses the formation of a group of professionals from the institutions named with the initial tasks of a further definition of the parameters of such a study, and the identification of an organizational structure to direct it.

"We tend to disregard the token aspects of literacy and pictorial references which are as such natural" (Kenyon, 1976). Such a disregard is at our own expense as individuals, and the society in which we live. The 'token aspects' or, as in previous reference, the verbal artifacts, that we can, as individuals, construct in language represent the fullest potential of language in an individual's existence. The 'naturalness' of such a process in an individual's use of language is encompassed in his need to reconstitute his experiences in language, and to continue to do so throughout his existence. Instructional programmes that direct an individual's language development in another direction require re-evaluation and redress.

"The poet's labour is to struggle with the meaninglessness and silence of the world until he can force it to mean: until he can make the silence answer, and the non-Being BE" (MacLeish, 1961). Poetic language allows any individual this same labour. The search for meaning is a distinctive

characteristic of being human (Frankl, 1978). Are we then to deny an individual the usage of language that will engage him in a 'search for meaning'?

Language is more than mere self-expression. Language is always pointing to something beyond itself. In other words, it is always self-transcendent - as is human existence at large. Being human is always directed to something, or someone, other than itself, to a meaning to fulfill or another human being to encounter (Frankl, 1978).

To function with language beyond the range of his immediate experience, and, in so doing, change himself is the responsibility that must initially be presented to an individual and is one that he must ultimately assume.

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