A CASE STUDY OF A POLYPHONIC LITERACY APPRENTICE:
A KINDERGARTEN COMPOSER’S DEVELOPMENT OF
VOICE AND GENRE UNDERSTANDING
THROUGH THE USE OF MULTIPLE SIGN SYSTEMS

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The purpose of this interpretive case study was to examine how a Kindergarten composer used multiple sign systems—drawing, talking as storytelling, and writing—to develop voice and how engagement in a reconceptualized writing workshop—Quiet Choices Workshop—supported an emerging writer’s understanding of genre. In order to investigate these phenomena of the focal child, James, I analyzed descriptive field notes, conversations with James and his peers, and James’ compositions.

My study chronicles James’ voice development through a description of his three kinds of choices—his position in the composing community, sign systems, and genres—each time he composed. In his compositions, James appropriated cultural resources from the official school culture and his unofficial childhood culture exclusively and in combination with each other. James consistently chose to appropriate his unofficial childhood culture when he composed with others. His choices as a composer and his subsequent compositions earned James both verbal and nonverbal responses from others. All observed responses James received carried the message of unconditional acceptance of his compositions.
I also found that James’ understanding of genre changed. In October, James was not able to state a purpose for a composition. In January through April, at the time of composing the texts, James stated a purpose for 8 of the 15 compositions. At the end of the study and with modeling by a peer, James stated a purpose for all compositions. Furthermore, when I compared James’ stated purpose to each genre, I found his purpose aligned with the features present in his compositions.

I reached the following conclusions: the variety of choices offered to James fostered his development of multiple voices, James clearly changed in how he participated in the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), James grew to demonstrate an understanding of genre, and James learned that writing was a way to communicate.

The implications for research and instruction highlighted the need for choices in position, sign systems, and genres; acceptance of appropriations from the official school culture and the unofficial childhood culture; and the value of implementing Cambourne’s (1988) conditions for literacy learning.
For My Children,
Maureen and Jonathan

May you always hold the beliefs that your dad and I embrace—
pursue challenges, demonstrate perseverance,
and value lifelong learning.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Studies of early writing development document children’s multimodal explorations of texts as readers and writers (Dyson, 1983, 1986a, 1986b; Graves, 1981; Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984). Multimodal exploration means that children use multiple sign systems—multiple ways of knowing such as talking, drawing, dramatizing, and writing—to represent and share their ideas (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996). Twenty-five years ago, Harste et al. found young children understood the multimodal nature of literacy, they combined multiple sign systems to represent their ideas, and they used these sign systems as a necessary tool to participate in the writing process. Dyson (1986a) described Kindergarten children as “symbol weavers” as they composed with drawing, talking, dramatizing, and writing.

The current demands of standardized teaching and assessment challenge an expanded view of literacy that honors the development of children. The state-imposed curriculum defines writing as a limited list of skills and restricts the broad repertoire of signs which young children use. Furthermore child-centered, open-ended periods of play and exploration in which children have choices of the topics, purposes, materials, and sign systems have been replaced with teacher-directed skills and strategy-based lessons (Wohlwend, 2008).

However, even in this climate of standardized teaching and learning, literacy researchers continue to call for the honoring of multimodal compositions (Harste et al.,
When teachers offer children multimodal experiences, they honor the way young children develop as they begin to participate in the writing process. Although studies substantiate children’s use of multiple sign systems as effective instructional practice, honoring the use of multiple sign systems does not align with the state-imposed curricula.

Kress (1997) pointed out the wide variety of multimodal experiences children bring to school. Children’s experiences involve the communication systems of television, computer games, and the Internet. Kress urged schools to continue to foster children’s composing through a combination of sign systems. Siegel (2006) asserted that it is time to recognize multimodal composing as a matter of social justice for students who are often marginalized within a literacy view focused on only the written text.

It is in these two conflicting stances—a narrow, monolithic view of literacy with an emphasis on assessing reading and writing and a broad view of literacy in which multiple sign systems are encouraged as tools for meaning-making—that early literacy instruction is positioned.

In this study, I investigated how one focal child, James, used multiple sign systems, including writing, drawing, and talking as storytelling to develop voice and an understanding of genre. I intended to expose the meanings of James’ actions in the cultural context of Quiet Choices Workshop—an event held four times a week in which Kindergarten children observed a 5-10 minute lesson on some aspect of writing, composed for 20-30 minutes using multiple sign systems, and shared their compositions
with peers. I examined the specific context and experiences of James and he served as a linguistic informant (Harste et al., 1984).

The Multimodal Nature of Literacy

Harste et al. (1984) described the multimodal nature of language as an open sign system. Their finding brought the semiotic perspective, a view that does not privilege language over other sign systems, to the socio psycholinguistic perspective, a view that maintains literacy is learned through demonstration and engagement, and meaning remains the cornerstone of language. The semiotic perspective looks at how the children come to interpret and use the complexities of linguistic and non-linguistic signs as a way to represent their meaning with the available semiotic resources. Harste et al. found that children reached beyond linguistic signs when they wrote and used talking, gesturing, dramatizing, and drawing. They stated that moving among sign systems strengthens the students’ learning and allows for a deeper understanding as each mode supports the other.

Vygotsky (1978) proposed that all writing is birthed out of gesturing, talking, dramatizing, and drawing. He explained that prior to writing, children grow in their use of various symbols—gesturing, scribbling, dramatizing as symbolic play, and drawing. For example, a young child may show the action of running by moving his or her fingers, representing the movement on paper with marks or dots, or running as movement during dramatic play. Later he or she may draw multiple scenes in which a person moves from one place to another before choosing to compose the written text that explains the person running. Vygotsky argued that to fully understand children’s writing, we need to understand the entire history of these sign systems. His statement requires a view of the
social phenomena surrounding the children, including their interactions among peers and the influence of cultural artifacts. Vygotsky further contended that writing should be “cultivated” rather than “imposed” (p. 118) and drawing, talking, and dramatizing through play allow for such a stance. Vygotsky’s assertions align with Siegel’s (2006) call to honor multimodal composing within writing instruction pedagogy.

Teaching Writing to Emergent Literacy Learners

Emergent literacy learners evolve in their writing development in much the same manner they evolve in oral language development. Children begin to write by observing and interacting with others engaged in writing as they construct their own meaning (Sulzby & Teale, 1991). The current view of teaching writing recognizes writing is a recursive process (Graves, 1994) and consists of pedagogy in the format of writing workshop (Calkins, 1994; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Graves, 1983). The typical structure of writing workshop involves a mini-lesson that targets one aspect of writing, an independent writing period when teachers talk to the children about their writing processes and products, and a sharing period when children share their writing with their peers and teacher (Calkins, 1994; Graves, 1983). In Kindergarten, the teacher encourages the children to “write” their own ideas using both drawings and invented spelling, meaning they spell words using letter-sound relationships. Examples of topics for the mini-lessons include: labeling a drawing with invented spelling, placing spaces between words in a sentence, and writing a beginning to a personal narrative. Additionally, teachers encourage children to use writing as a sign system to compose functional texts—meaning the texts serve a specific purpose such as a list or note—and compositional
texts—meaning the texts are children’s own projects such as an alphabet book or a personal narrative (Ray & Glover, 2008, p. 23).

Definitions of Voice

Various deliberations and discussions of voice focus on its nature as a quality of writing and an ongoing process. A popular sentiment of teachers and researchers of writing is “the successful writer writes with voice.” Voice is one of the six traits Spandel (2004) identified after extensively examining student writing. Spandel stated that voice is “expression personalized” (p. 42) and it can be seen in children’s drawing and writing. Writing workshop advocates view voice as a mark of success and an individual expression or imprint that keeps the reader engaged (Graves, 1994; Murray, 1987; Romano, 2004). Fletcher (1993) said voice in students’ writing is the “indelible stamp of their personalities” (p. 79) and he encouraged writers to “stalk their inner voices” by searching for topics that are relevant and meaningful. Other literacy researchers who maintain a critical theory stance (Cappello, 2006; Dyson, 1999; Lensmire, 1994) argue that children create multiple voices while appropriating the language and experiences of their social context. Cappello defined voice as “a multiple, dynamic, and socially situated expression of oneself” (p. 483). Like the writing workshop advocates (Graves, 1994; Murray, 1987; Romano, 2004), Cappello maintained voice is an individual expression; however she asserted there are multiple voices that change in different social situations.

In this study, I define voice as a dynamic process of using multiple sign systems—drawing, talking as storytelling, and writing. As children develop voice, they appropriate the language and signs of their cultures, engage in social interactions, and
form identities in composing communities. The inclusion of multiple sign systems, appropriations, and social interactions in this definition assumes a social semiotic perspective. It also aligns with Vygotsky’s (1978) assertion that writing develops from children’s use of other symbols and these offer a way to cultivate writing. To only investigate voice in writing is limiting and perhaps oppressive to individuals who rely on other sign systems to represent their meaning making.

Roots of My Inquiry

My observations of children’s engagement in composing multimodal texts led to an interest in how they develop their voices. As an educator of students our culture labels as “emerging” or “struggling,” I witnessed children’s abilities to represent ideas through written text just beginning to emerge as they labeled illustrations with words. I also noticed children demonstrate sophistication in the compositions they create through drawing and talking. For example, I observed many students who were not able to create written text to articulate their ideas, but they composed elaborate drawings and descriptive oral presentations to illustrate and speak their meaning making. Furthermore, I also noticed that they used their spoken and drawn compositions to participate in the learning community. The limited written text the children produced was only one of many multiple sign systems that offered an opportunity to demonstrate their voices.

Therefore, I was interested in children’s use of multiple sign systems—drawing, talking as storytelling, and writing—as they developed their voices and grew as writers. I conducted a case study of one Kindergarten child, James, as a way to describe his
development of voice and his growth as a writer when offered opportunities to choose among sign systems.

Statement of Problem and Purpose of Study

Honoring multimodal expressions during open-ended composing periods is a recognized approach in early literacy research (Dyson, 1983, 1986a, 1986b; Harste et al., 1984; Rowe, Fitch, & Bass, 2003). Open-ended composing periods offer children an invitation to choose the sign system, topic, and purpose when composing. As children weave multiple sign systems to construct meaning (Dyson, 1986a), they utilize the multimodal nature of literacy (Harste et al., 1984). However, I have not found a qualitative study that investigates voice development and growth as a writer through the use of multiple sign systems.

The purpose of this study was to investigate how a young child used multiple sign systems, including writing, drawing, and talking as storytelling to develop voice and grow as a writer during a daily event of a re-conceptualized writing workshop—Quiet Choices Workshop. The 45-minute period studied was reminiscent of both writing workshop (Calkins, 1994; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001) and choice time (Denton, 2005). The classroom teacher, Carrie, developed the period so children felt the relevance of their tasks, experienced both ownership and choices in their experience, and viewed their learning as purposeful for children (Goodman, 1986). This period also aligns with Dyson’s (2001a) call for open-ended composing periods when children have time to talk, draw, and write with peers.
To accomplish the purpose of the study, I posed two major questions that are each accompanied by subquestions. The first main research question with three subquestions asked:

1. How does a Kindergarten composer develop voice through the use of multiple sign systems during Quiet Choices Workshop?
   a. What choices does he make regarding his position in the composing community, his choice of sign systems, and selection of genre?
   b. What appropriations does he make in his compositions?
   c. What responses does he receive from others in his composing community?

2. How does Quiet Choice Workshop support an emerging writer’s understanding of genre?
   a. What changes occurred in his statement of purpose and intended audience for his compositions?
   b. How did his purpose align with the genre features present in his compositions?

Significance of the Study

In the test-driven era of standardized teaching, decisions about curriculum are often made without regard to the development of young children. This study took place in a context in which the development of an emergent writer was honored. Through reading about the details of James’ voice development and growth as a writer, teachers and researchers might gain insight into the factors and processes that shape young writers. Then literacy professionals could look at children situated in particular classrooms
through the lens of factors and processes to develop a deeper understanding of children’s
development as literacy learners. Such reflection would be especially relevant for the
children who sit on the periphery in the classroom as writers and children who do not
demonstrate growth in their writing development.

This case study has the potential to expand what teachers, teacher educators, and
researchers know about how early literacy learners use multiple sign systems to construct
their voices and grow as writers in Kindergarten. For advocates and teachers of writing
workshop, this study offers a particular example of how a child’s choices in a
reconceptualized writing workshop—Quiet Choices Workshop—fostered the
development of voice and genre understanding. When teachers are aware of the
possibilities to reconceptualize existing classroom practices, they might be more willing
to make adaptations as a way to meet the needs of their students. This inquiry also shows
the value of closely examining the kinds of choices offered—position in the composing
community, sign systems, and genres—in a specific approach to teaching writing.

Summary

This was a case of “James” situated in a specific school district and classroom at a
specific point in time. The case of James is a thick description of one child’s learning in a
particular context. In school, James was a child of concern academically and he did not
initiate interactions with peers. James clearly stood on the perimeter of social interaction
during the first semester. Outside of school, James interacted with siblings and extended
family members. He enjoyed playing outside, riding horses, and caring for animals. I was
interested in how the choices offered in Quiet Choices Workshop supported the
development of voice and genre understanding of a child who was an outsider in the community of composers.

As an interpretive case study, I utilized qualitative methods to profile a Kindergarten composer engaged in a daily activity, Quiet Choices Workshop. The study’s intent was to reveal a thick, rich description of James’ development of voice using multiple sign systems and also to explain how Quiet Choices Workshop supported James as an emerging writer.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to provide a clear understanding of their use in future chapters.

*Appropriation:* using the content or form of another source and making them one’s own (Bakhtin, 1986).

*Community of practice:* a group of people informally connected by a shared passion. They participate in social activities organized in a particular way and there is a history of how language is used in the activities (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

*Compose:* the act of creating a text by “deliberately manipulating meaning” (Dyson, 2001b), through the use of multiple sign systems.

*Composition:* a text or “a chunk of meaning that has unity and can be shared” (Short, Kauffman, & Kahn, 2000, p. 165). In this study, drawing, talking as storytelling, and writing are sign systems investigated in compositions.

*Conversation:* verbal exchanges when James and I discussed his compositions.
Multimodal compositions: texts that used multiple sign systems—images, sound, gestures, language, and movement—to express meaning (Siegel, 2006).

Multiple sign systems: “multiple ways of knowing—the ways in which humans share and make meaning” (Short et al., 2000, p. 160). In this study drawing, talking as storytelling, and writing are the sign systems investigated.

Official school culture: the practices and set of events planned by the teacher that comprises the school experiences (Dyson, 1993).

Semiotics: interdisciplinary field that studies the construction of meaning through a variety of linguistic and non linguistic signs, including images, gestures, movement, and music, and in a variety of contexts.

Unofficial childhood culture: practices generated by the children based on their experiences and interests of their culture (Dyson, 1993).

Voice: dynamic expression using multiple sign systems while appropriating the language and signs of the culture, engaging in social interactions, and forming an identity in the composing community.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this review, I discuss literature that provided a framework for the study. First, I describe the sociocultural perspective of learning as it relates to literacy development, including one particularly compelling model of literacy learning proposed by Cambourne (1988) that is relevant to my inquiry. Then I share research on the use of multiple sign systems in literacy pedagogy, the development of writing, and the teaching of writing. Finally, one specific aspect of writing—voice—is explained through various definitions offered by researchers, theorists, and professional writers. This review of the literature rests on the assumption that theory and research are woven to inform practice and it relies heavily on the research associated with children younger than 8 years of age.

Sociocultural Perspective of Learning

From a sociocultural perspective, learning is a process of constructing meaning within a social and cultural context (Vygotsky, 1978). A sociocultural theory of literacy learning suggests children learn about language and literacy based on what is valued in the culture of the community from the more experienced members (Owocki & Goodman, 2002). As members of the community, they gain their understandings through social interactions with others (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus literacy develops as children “construct knowledge within unique social worlds” (Owocki & Goodman, 2002, p. 3).

A sociocultural perspective assumes that as children acquire literacy skills and knowledge, they change as participants in the social practices of the community (Dyson, 1988).
2001b; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990). Children are considered apprentices as they learn beside a more skilled person (Rogoff, 1990). Initially, the more knowledgeable others take responsibility for structuring the task and facilitating the interaction. The children gain a higher level of understanding, and the responsibility moves from the more skilled person to the children. As time passes, the less experienced members come to participate in the cultural practices and then become active, responsible members.

The manner in which learners participate in the cultural practices is described by Lave and Wenger (1991). They explained participation as a process of assuming changing roles situated within the social processes of the community. Lave & Wenger use the term *legitimate peripheral participation* to explain how learners participate in a community of practice—a group of people informally bound by a common goal (a shared passion or the task of mundane work). Newcomers are initially on the periphery and gradually become socialized into a community before becoming old timers. As children move from being on the periphery to becoming a full participant, they acquire mastery of knowledge and skills as they learn the craft and discourse of the community. In a community of practice, learning occurs among peers as well as from a master in the apprenticeship model (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

As children engage in social interaction, the use of language is foundational to children’s participation in the community and the development of literacy understandings. My study looked at the social interactions within the Kindergarten community of practice as James developed voice and genre understanding. The language theories of Vygotsky (1978) and Bakhtin (1986) ground a sociocultural perspective of
literacy and offer particular significance to what is understood about early writing development.

*Theories of Vygotsky as Contributions to Writing*

Vygotsky’s work (1978) supports the sociocultural view of literacy with a focus on the social interactions through which learning occurs. Within the social interactions, children are initiated into the culture’s signs and tools, including written language. Vygotsky’s theories of learning offer two explanations relevant to this inquiry: (a) the *zone of proximal development* and (b) the *interpersonal and intrapersonal levels of acquiring cultural knowledge.*

*Zone of Proximal Development*

Vygotsky (1978) described the zone of proximal development as the opportunity for a learner to interact with a more knowledgeable other to complete a task in the social world that could not be completed independently. Vygotsky’s premise assumes there is a presence of a more capable other sensitive to the learner. As a way to explain the learning and development, Vygotsky used a metaphor of buds or flowers that, with assistance, blossom into fruits of development. Vygotsky said the nourishment for the buds is the social interaction in the classroom. His theories describe how the social interactions occur in the zone of proximal development: “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). Thus his theory illuminated that
interacting with a more able person allows children to accomplish a task that they would not be able to complete alone.

The term *scaffolding* was used by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) to describe the support system that assists children in completing a task too difficult to complete alone. The scaffold might consist of the more capable other modeling the task, partially completing the task, or offering directions to complete the task. Gradually the scaffold is removed. The importance of modeling a task is significant in the use of children’s ability to use writing as a symbolic tool. The complexity of writing makes it necessary to have more capable others available to the children. In addition to teachers, parents, and other adults, the role of peers as the more capable others during social interaction was discussed by Forman and Cazden (1986). They explained that peers create an intermediate audience and transform the context to assist the learner in the completion of the task through scaffolding.

In addition to more capable others providing scaffolds for writing, Cambourne and Turbill (1987) asserted children choose and construct structures for themselves that scaffold the unrest associated with new learning. Cambourne and Turbill called the scaffolds, *coping strategies*, and argued that once children acquire confidence and competence with literacy tasks, they remove the scaffolds.

Based on their research with young children, Cambourne and Turbill (1987) developed six broad categories to explain the coping strategies the children use as they learn to write. The coping strategies include: use of related activities (such as drawing to create meaning or to accompany written language), use of environmental print (copying
or using the print displayed in the classroom), use of repetition (repeatedly using the same pictures, letter groups, sentence structures, sentences, themes, or genres), assistance from and interaction with other children (as the result of a direct request or as incidental exposure through spontaneous interaction), assistance from and interaction with the teacher (as the result of asking or seeking help), and use of ‘temporary spelling’ (using unconventional spelling as approximations to conventional spelling as they create written texts).

Thus, more capable others—either teachers or peers (Forman & Cazden, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978)—and children themselves erect scaffolds (Cambourne & Turbill, 1987) that allow them to participate in meaningful, authentic writing activities as members of the writing community. Vygotsky further explained how children’s development of cultural knowledge appears first on a social level and later on an individual level. A discussion of Vygotsky’s premise and its relevance to my study is presented in the following section.

*Transformation of Interpersonal Process to Intrapersonal Process*

Vygotsky (1978) contended that cultural knowledge such as literacy occurs first between individuals on an interpersonal level through social interaction and later it is internalized on an intrapersonal level. This process takes significant time and prolonged development. As children interact with others—teachers or peers—they acquire a deeper understanding of the cultural forms. In the official classroom setting, the teacher models the task using specific language and gives options as a way to assist the children. The language of the teacher is then used between peers as a way to assist each other before
the children begin to internalize the skills and knowledge (Forman & Cazden, 1986). The goal of engaging in interpersonal conversation is the eventual internalization of the cultural knowledge—the use of written language as a sign for communicating.

Learning about and developing writing as a symbolic tool is a complex task that requires instruction through social interaction. Children begin with what they can independently complete and then—through social interaction with more capable others—they develop while engaged in their zone of proximal development.

**Implications for Writing Instruction**

The implication of Vygotsky’s (1978) theories for designing writing instruction is that the development of writing requires instruction through engagement in social interactions. The interactions include support from others—both teacher and peers—and allow the children to complete writing tasks that they could not complete without assistance. Thus, Vygotsky’s premise includes three assumptions. First, children must be able to interact with others as they write on an interpersonal level before they can internalize their learning about writing on an intrapersonal level. During social interaction, both teachers and peers offer scaffolding as assistance for a writing task. This means the structure of the classroom must provide opportunities for social interaction. Second, scaffolding affords children the ability to complete tasks with others that they could not complete independently. Scaffolding occurs through modeling the task, sharing the task, or offering guidance to complete the task. Therefore the classroom arrangement must be conducive to these opportunities. Third, children internalize the learning at various times. Since some children require more time to internalize the learning, the
instructional practices should honor the children’s broad range of understanding about written language.

In my study, I was interested in Vygotsky’s assertions as they related to how James socially interacted with others, erected and used scaffolds, and internalized an understanding of written language, particularly an understanding of genre. In addition to Vygotsky’s premise to honor the children’s multiple levels, Bakhtin (1981) suggested there are multiple languages in a sociocultural context that need to be honored. A discussion of Bakhtin’s theories relevant to writing is presented in the next section.

Theories of Bakhtin as Contributions to Writing

Like Vygotsky (1978), Bakhtin (1981) contended language, including the written form of language, is social and an important tool for shaping the literacy practices within the community. In Bakhtin’s view, language functions within heteroglossia, meaning there are multiple socio-ideological languages in a social context. Various social, interest, and age groups comprise the socio-ideological languages. Children create texts by borrowing signs from the texts of others. From Bakhtin’s perspective, all language belongs to someone else. We acquire our words from specific people in specific places and at specific times. Then we recontextualize the words based on personal intentions while also addressing family, friends, and the larger societal context. Thus, Bakhtin argued that all language is dialogic. The understandings of words and how to use them are developed through social interactions. Furthermore, the writing reflects the writer’s past intentions and the anticipation of possible future interactions with others.
Implications for Writing Instruction

The implication of Bakhtin’s (1981) premise for studying young composers is that researchers must consider the social worlds in which children participate through dialogue. From Bakhtin’s perspective, children’s oral and written texts are flavored with the values and views of multiple voices. Dyson (1993) used Bakhtin’s premise to identify three “social spheres of interest” (p. 13) used by young children in classrooms: the official school world, the unofficial peer world, and the sociocultural community within the classroom. Children enter school with the experiences of the unofficial peer sphere. The sociocultural community is new and different to them. The three spheres converge to create a social sphere of interest linking the official school world, the unofficial peer world, and the classroom community. It is necessary to examine the conditions in official school spheres which support and scaffold the children toward independence in writing.

Sociocultural Context of Literacy Learning

The theories of Vygotsky (1978) and Bakhtin (1981) encourage researchers to look at how children learn to write through social interaction with an emphasis on the social and cultural contexts. Looking at writing through the lens of social and cultural contexts implies looking at what Vygotsky called “the entire history of sign development” (p. 106). Vygotsky argued that writing has its roots in earlier forms of communication—gesture, speech, dramatic play, and drawing. As children begin to write, they lean on these earlier forms of communication and also rely on the support of other people.
Like Vygotsky (1978), Cambourne (1988) emphasized that oral language is foundational to written language. Oral language is one of the sign systems that children utilize as they begin to write. Cambourne argued that oral language and written language are only different on the surface. He recognized that different knowledge and skills are necessary to use oral and written language, but states both are rooted in the same function—“the mind’s effort to create meaning” (p. 29).

Cambourne’s Conditions for Literacy Learning

Cambourne (1988) asserted that learning to use oral language is “a successful, easy and painless task” (p. 30) when eight core conditions or features are in place. He explained that the conditions are also the conditions through which reading and writing develop and remain constant across cultures and time. Cambourne’s schematic representation of the conditions for literacy learning is represented in Figure 1 and a discussion of each condition follows.

In his model, Cambourne (1988) defined each of the eight conditions and stated the relationship among them. Cambourne argued that since the brain has learned to process the new learning of oral language through the presence of specific conditions, the same conditions are also useful as a way to foster the development of writing. Furthermore, he asserted that teachers should simulate the natural conditions known as effective to develop oral language. The conditions include: immersion, demonstration, engagement, expectations, responsibility, use, approximation, and response. Each of the conditions is described in the following sections.
Figure 1. Cambourne’s (1988) Model of Literacy Learning

**Immersion.** Children who are learning about literacy need to be immersed in a variety of texts. From birth, children are surrounded with examples of the oral and written language. The accomplished members of the culture provide the examples and support the children’s acquisition of the language by talking and writing for the children, with the children, and around the children. The children’s immersion in the language provides a context in which the children can construct meaning.

**Demonstration.** Cambourne (1988) called demonstrations the “raw material” of nearly all learning (p. 34) and explained that demonstrations consist of two forms: actions and artifacts. The action of an expert user of language asking “Would you please give me
a crayon?” and the subsequent handing of a crayon is a demonstration of what a sequence of sounds means and a demonstration of what and how language can be used. An artifact also serves as a demonstration. An example of an artifact is a book in which children see how print looks, how words are spelled, how texts are formatted, and what print and images do on a page.

Engagement. Cambourne (1988) posited that learning will not take place unless engagement occurs. Smith (1981) agreed that engagement is an essential feature that must accompany immersions and demonstration. Children may be exposed to many demonstrations; however, if they do not engage in the demonstrations, learning will not occur. Regarding oral and written language, Smith explained that engagement means: (a) the potential children perceive themselves as potential talkers or writers, (b) the demonstrations they observe foster the purposes in their lives, and (c) trying to participate in or create a demonstration will not result in unpleasant feelings or actions if the children are unsuccessful. Thus, when children see themselves as talkers, writers, and readers, they emulate observed demonstrations because they feel safe to make the attempt.

Expectation. According to Cambourne (1988), expectations can be discussed from several perspectives. First, there are the expectations the children have for themselves. Smith (1981) argued that children believe they can learn anything until they are told in some way that they are not able to accomplish the task. Second, there are expectations of the significant others in the children’ lives. When the message of expected success is communicated to the children, then learning typically takes place. Thus when teachers expect children to write, they succeed as writers.
Responsibility. Cambourne (1988) explained children display a willingness to make decisions about learning independent of the teacher. The teachers trust the children to engage with the available demonstrations. Ultimately the children decide if it is necessary for them to learn or experiment with the task at a particular time. Cambourne argued that children have two levels of responsibility. First, children must expect proficiency in the entire task. Second, teachers must expect children to make decisions about the most useful aspects of the demonstrations.

Use. Cambourne (1988) posited the importance of both time and opportunity to use the approximations or immature forms of language. Time and opportunities to use oral and written language are necessary in settings where they practice alone and with others.

Approximation. Cambourne (1988) pointed out that children are not expected to fully acquire all systems and sub-systems of oral language before they begin to talk. Instead they attempt to emulate the language by producing approximations of the language. Cambourne suggested that the same stance is necessary to foster written language. The immature language the children produce is accepted by others in the culture. Mistakes are essential to the learning. Children must feel safe when the approximations are made in public. A cycle occurs in which the children hypothesize, test, and modify as they acquire the skills and knowledge of oral and written language.

Response. As literacy learners, children participate in exchanges with others in the culture and receive feedback from others as responses to their oral and written language. The responses must be readily available, frequent, non-threatening, unconditional, and
without penalty if the conventional forms of the language are not produced on subsequent attempts.

I saw three reasons in which Cambourne’s (1988) model of literacy learning is relevant to my inquiry. First, Cambourne and Turbill (1987) studied Kindergarten writers when their initial project began. Later they added children from the ages of 5 through 12. Second, the children were encouraged to engage in authentic writing—writing to communicate with actual audiences. Third, the teachers used writing as a process based on the pedagogy proposed by Graves (1983). Thus, the context in which Cambourne studied children engaged in writing aligned with the fundamental aspects of the context and the participant in my study.

Cambourne’s (1988) conditions highlight the processes of writing that complement the theories of Vygotsky (1978) and Bakhtin (1981). As children explore writing, the use of multiple sign systems may serve as scaffolds to develop the ultimate production of writing. Using multiple sign systems scaffolds the more difficult task of abstract writing. Participation in the writing community while using multiple sign systems is necessary for development in the complex task of writing. Since a sociocultural view of literacy acknowledges a variety of sign systems exist in our culture, investigating them from a semiotic view becomes valuable particularly in my study. The significance of using multiple sign systems in literacy learning is examined in the following section.
Multiple Sign Systems in Literacy Pedagogy

Literacy researchers contend the use of multiple sign systems is part of children’s natural literacy development. Accepting a multimodal view of literacy means all modes are equally significant. Short et al. (2000) argued that children come to school with experience in representing meaning through nonlinguistic sign systems such as art, music, movement, and drama. Kress (1997) confirmed that language is only one aspect of literacy development and acknowledged that image, gaze, gesture, movement, and other sign systems provide additional evidence of a children’s development as a literate person. Young children understand the multimodal nature of literacy and combine multiple sign systems to represent their ideas (Harste et al., 1984). Furthermore, young children use multiple sign systems to explore writing. Additionally the use of multiple sign systems is supported by theories of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983) which assert children are drawn to particular sign systems.

Multiple sign systems can trace their roots to the field of semiotics—the study of sign systems, their meanings, relationships, and use (Siegel, 2006; Solomon, 1988; Suhor, 1992). Sign systems are invented by humans and serve as communication systems to interpret the world and create meaning—represent ideas and experiences. The study of semiotics spans diverse disciplines like anthropology, architecture, and art history (Siegel & Carey, 1989). Scholars who study semiotics believe all cultural occurrences can be studied as the production and interpretation of signs. Since semiotics permeates the social, cultural, political, historical, and cognitive dimensions of literacy, it is therefore a
useful lens to view literacy (Berghoff, 1994). The value of looking beyond language offers children the opportunity to express themselves in a variety of ways (Suhor, 1992).

There are benefits to a semiotic-based curriculum. Siegel and Carey (1989) asserted that encouraging the interpretations and construction of multiple sign systems encourages critical thinking. Given the complexity of literacy and the multiple ways of knowing in the world, semiotics affords all children, especially those at-risk in a verbocentric school culture—a context where language is the privileged sign system—the chance to represent that world (Berghoff, 1994). The semiotic perspective means language is not privileged over other sign systems.

Literacy pedagogy is challenged to create opportunities for composing with multiple sign systems. Siegel (2006) argued that semiotics is a useful tool for understanding multiple sign systems or multiple ways of knowing—art, music, math, drama, and language. When children use multiple sign systems, their meaning making is based upon their lived experiences as they go beyond printed text to generate the meaning (Short et al., 2000). Since there is not a one-to-one correspondence between systems, the composer creatively seeks to conceive symbols to create meaning. The use of sign systems other than writing broadens children’s understandings of their ideas. Concerning writing, Kress (1997) reminded us that words are not birthed as immediate meaning. He stated, “Words are materials out of which we can fashion new signs; and these new signs express meaning” (p. 130). His statement reminds researchers that children must work hard to craft the meaning. It does not come immediately as they compose. Kress’ premise
aligns with Cambourne’s (1988) assertion that writing is rooted in the mind’s effort to create meaning.

**Multiple Sign Systems From a Curriculum Studies Perspective**

In addition to literacy researchers supporting the use of multiple sign systems, curriculum studies theorists—Eisner (2003) and Greene (1995)—agree that a broader view of literacy through the use of multiple sign systems benefits the children. Eisner (2003) posited that literacy is more than reading or writing. In his view, literacy reflects the ability to use *forms of representation*—various linguistic and non-linguistic forms to express meaning—that offer different meaning potentials. Eisner explained that as we are acculturated, we experience various forms to encode and decode meaning. He claimed that society presents experiences for children to use specific aptitudes to represent meaning; therefore teachers should honor and foster these preferences.

Greene (1995) agreed with Eisner (1994) and embraced the arts as language, therefore recognizing value of multiple sign systems. She gave attention to the silencing and disempowering that occurs through a narrow definition of literacy. Greene suggested classrooms should be places where multiple sign systems are honored. Eisner (1994) further argued that offering various sign systems provides multiple ways of knowing about the world.

Both Eisner (1994, 2003) and Greene (1995) suggested that children should be offered multiple ways to describe their meaning making. Their assertions are supported by studies in elementary classrooms where children were encouraged to use multiple sign systems to compose; the studies are explained in the next section.
Instructional Implications for the Use of Multiple Sign Systems

The use of various multiple sign systems in classroom practices is evident in several studies conducted by literacy researchers with young children. The investigations include the contexts of writing workshop, play periods, exploration of picture books, responses to literature, and inquiry learning with expository texts.

The use of multiple sign systems during writing workshop was investigated in first grade classrooms by Rowe, Fitch, and Bass (2001, 2003). In an investigation of power and identity embedded in writing workshop, Rowe et al. (2001) saw both cognitive and social advantages for young children when drama was allowed during independent writing time. The introduction of drama allowed children who were previously in low-status roles as writers to move to high-status roles of director or actor. In an inquiry that looked at dramatic play with toys, Rowe et al. (2003) found young children used dramatic play as a tool to mediate the task of writing. The children who struggled with writing had the opportunity to tell their stories through dramatic play. Then they entered collaborative relationships with the teachers to compose written texts.

Van Oers and Wardekker (1999) found benefits to semiotic activities for children who ranged in age from four to seven years old. During a period of free play—meaning the children volunteered to choose the activities—the semiotic activities included constructing a railway track, role-playing a shoe shop, and constructing castles. The teachers suggested drawing as a way to represent their experiences. The findings revealed that with the mentoring of adults or peers, young children can participate in semiotic activities during play that may foster later authentic, constructivist learning (Van Oers &
Wardekker). Since semiotic activities in play depended upon the inquiry initiated by the child, Van Oers and Wardekker concluded that the curriculum must offer choices and not require specific investigations with particular sign systems.

As children weave play into the literacy experience with picture books, Crawford and Hade (2000) saw engagements in semiotic activities were also evident. They found that as children described scenes in a wordless picture book, the children used multiple sign systems like body movements, gestures with hands, sound effects, and voice intonation. The children also made intertextual connections, reflecting on other texts and media, like television shows, to demonstrate their interpretation of the relationship to the picture books (Crawford & Hade, 2000).

Literacy researchers have also examined the use of multiple sign systems with children older than eight years. Short et al. (2000) documented the “multiple ways of knowing—the ways in which humans share and make meaning, specifically through music, art, mathematics, drama, and language” (p. 160) in a study of fourth and fifth graders in multiage classrooms. The students had opportunities to use multiple sign systems as ways to think about literature. The researchers found that a vast offering of sign systems allowed students to think more broadly in their responses to literature. Gray (2006) presented the option of choice among sign systems for students engaged in inquiry learning. She investigated children’s use of language, visual art, math, music, and expressive movement during their inquiries. Gray found children choose their symbols by effectively blending talking with sketching and using various combinations of sign systems to construct meaning.
The previously described studies illuminate the opportunities afforded to students when teachers allow meaning making through multiple sign systems. In the following sections, I review the literature on specific studies that investigate meaning making through the use of drawing—one of the sign systems in my inquiry. In each of these studies, drawing is equal to writing, rather than being an add-on to the literacy curriculum.

**Drawing**

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) argued that as our culture moves from being language dominant to one in which images secure more importance, literacy educators and researchers should reflect on the representations beyond ones that involve language. The *Standards for English Language Arts* (1996), a document written jointly by the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association, indicates the necessity for children to visually represent—convey information or express ideas through nonverbal visual means, such as drawing, computer graphics, and photography.

*Complementary nature of drawing and writing.* The complementary nature of drawing and writing (Hubbard, 1989) provided children with a way to think, know, and learn (Ernst, 1994). The connection of words and visual images is acknowledged by Hobson (1998) who stated, “Writing derives from vision” (p. 15). Children are skillful at making meaning in multimodal ways and as forms of communication (Kress, 1997) and drawing represents a conceptual understanding not attainable with only language (Kress, 2000).
Donald Murray stated in the foreword of Karen Ernst’s (1994) book, *Picture Learning*, “The relationship of seeing and telling, drawing and writing, is intimate, essential, and a significant aspect of teaching and researching the writing act” (p. vii). As a teacher researcher, Ernst documented the intimate relationship among viewing, talking, drawing, and writing in her classroom. She developed an artists’ workshop parallel to writing workshop. Her elementary students were both artists and writers as she encouraged students to use drawing and writing to compose. Ernst argued that the relationship between drawing and writing is essential to the teaching of writing in elementary classrooms. She found her students experienced a new depth of thinking when drawing and writing were combined. Ernst stated: “Writing and picturing were forms of meaning making, and with writing as a key element in the workshop, pictures and words worked together as complementary processes of knowing and provided a link between words and images” (p. 55).

Literacy researchers (Dyson, 1992; Sidelnick & Svoboda, 2000) found that drawing serves as a bridge from one sign system to another—often from drawing to writing—and drawing can also be more accessible and appealing to young children. Dyson (1986b) asserted that children gradually negotiate between drawing and writing as they learn to write. Children’s drawings often represent their early accounts of experiences and foster their narrative desire to create stories (Vygotsky, 1978).

For young composers, the importance of drawing their stories was documented by Horn and Giacobbe (2007). They asserted that children enter school with prior experiences of drawing and it is a way to share their stories. Drawing also fosters
language development since 4- and 5-year-olds often use private speech (talking to themselves), whereas 5- and 6-year-olds take this private speech inward. Horn and Giacobbe also found that drawing provides opportunities to represent depth—more than with only words, since there is a playful quality to drawing.

*Drawing as rehearsal for writing.* Drawing is a writing strategy (Graves, 1983; Newkirk & Atwell, 1982) and it allows children to collect and arrange their thoughts prior to composing in words. Thus drawing enhances the written product (Caldwell & Moore, 1991; Dyson, 1986a). Drawing serves as a form of scaffolding, allowing children the chance to use a well-known system of signs, and “reduces cognitive demands” (Caldwell & Moore, 1991, p. 208). Graves (1975) documented how 7-year-old children use drawing as a writing strategy to plan and organize their ideas. Through rehearsal in a familiar symbol system, Norris, Reichard, and Mokhtari (1997) found that drawing as a prewriting activity enabled third graders to compose stories of an overall higher quality. The children were asked to write three different stories on three separate sessions each one week apart. The students in the treatment group were also visibly more excited about the drawing and writing than those in the control group who did not draw.

Drawing as a multiple sign system is both a complement to writing and a technique to plan and rehearse writing. Children often pair drawing with talking when they compose. Additionally, talking—a sign system investigated in my study— is also viewed as a valuable tool to represent meaning making. In the following section, I discuss the literature that supports talking as a sign system with young children.
Talking

Vygotsky (1978) believed oral language is an essential tool for children to acquire the knowledge and processes of their culture. He explained that as children socially interact, they transform the language and activities of their experiences into tools for independent thinking. Through a process of internalization, the children choose, redesign, and change the language to meet their needs. They use private speech—talk not addressed to others, but sometimes occurring in the presence of others—to internalize their experiences. For example, as young children create illustrations, they may make sounds aloud, name the items they are drawing, or elaborate on components of their drawing.

Owocki and Goodman (2002) argued that there are two reasons why early literacy educators should attend to children’s use of oral language. First, they highlighted Vygotsky’s (1978) assertion that talking is the central sign system through which the young children learn about their world. Second, children’s talk provides a look into the thinking of young children. Close observation of their talk allows others to learn about how they use language, the forms of the language, and their knowledge of the world.

In recognizing the value of talk, Fletcher (2006) posited that talk has two purposes in the classroom community. First he called it the “hidden glue that cements students’ understandings” (p. 81) while also building the community of children. Britton (1970) agreed that talk supports writing when he claimed everything that children write “takes place afloat upon a sea of talk” (p. 29). The importance of giving children time to talk about what they write was also highlighted by Short et al. (2000). They documented
students’ discussions about literature prior to writing about the literature. Schultz (1997) examined collaborative writing which included numerous instances for talking about the compositions. She found talking about writing fostered the development of voice, discussed later in this review.

Talking as storytelling. Talking as storytelling honors children as individuals and does not require any knowledge or skill with orthography or fine motor skills (Horn & Giacobbe, 2007). Bodrova and Leong (1996) argued that orally presenting stories assists in developing the craft of writing. The craft of writing is “the knowledge a writer has about how to do something” (Ray, 1999, p. 25). Bodrova and Leong stated, “When children become capable of thinking as they talk, speech actually becomes a tool for understanding, clarifying, and focusing what is in one’s mind” (p. 98).

Horn (2005) encouraged Kindergarten children to compose stories through the use of oral storytelling—a specific time for composing oral texts. She found the oral stories children told provided opportunities for them to construct a story during the typical time for writing workshop and fostered their writing development. Horn’s approach to talking as storytelling helped children use their own words to create stories reflective of the literature shared with children.

Horn (2005) justified the use of storytelling with three reasons. First, she argued storytelling is student-centered. Most children enter school with stories to tell. For children who do not come with stories, Horn argued that if children can talk, they can tell a story. Second, valuing stories means teachers value oral language in learning to write. Horn stated that when children verbalize a story prior to writing, their writing becomes
clearer. Third, Horn saw natural opportunities in oral storytelling to teach the craft of writing before children turn to composing with paper and pencil.

Dyson (1986b) referred to the tools of talking and drawing as transitions to writing. She also saw children experience tensions between their imaginations and experiences as they moved to express their ideas using written language. In my study, it was important to investigate James’ choice of multiple sign systems because the classroom teacher encouraged the children to compose through drawing, talking as storytelling, and writing. An extensive discussion of writing now follows and addresses the development of writing and research on the teaching of writing.

The Development of Writing

During the past several decades, literacy educators gained an understanding of how young children “explore with a pencil” (Clay, 1977) and how their writing changes over time. Dyson and Freedman (2003) found children experiment and approximate features of written language in the same way they learn other sign systems. In a study of 3- and 4-year-olds, Rowe (1994) saw children naturally engage in communication as a multimodal event, both in school and out of school. She explained that combining drawing, talking, and writing allowed the children to develop understandings about literacy. For example, drawings can tell a story just as words can tell a story. Vygotsky (1978) posited that all writing is engendered in gesturing, talking, dramatizing, and drawing. Dyson (1986a, 1986b) found that young children talk, act out, use gestures, and dramatize as they compose. Thus, she referred to the children as “symbol weavers.”
Research on Emergent Writers

The emergent literacy view—typically used to describe children from infancy to Kindergarten or first grade—holds that learning to read and write is an active, constructive process taking place in social settings as children interact with others (Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Settings that promote meaning and purpose in reading and writing provide the most benefit to young children. Emergent literacy is highlighted with the work of Clay (1975) and Read (1975) who assumed a constructivist view. Both Clay and Read observed young children engaged in writing and documented how children begin to develop writing knowledge and skills prior to starting formal schooling.

Children learn about writing as they witness and interact with others engaged in writing, often through demonstrations in their homes. Their earliest attempts with writing include other sign systems—especially drawing and talking—and their attempts are playful (Dyson, 1986a, 1986b).

Ethnographies and longitudinal studies by Bissex (1980) and Baghban (1984) of their own children reveal further information about emergent learning. Bissex’s (1980) study of her son from the ages of 5 to 10 showed that to understand a child’s writing, it is necessary to understand the development of the person. Baghban considered her daughter a writer at the point when she could hold pencil and make markings to represent her intentions.

Thus the emergent literacy perspective holds that children observe and explore through social interaction as they learn about language and literacy. Their engagement in the interactions allows them to integrate new insights with prior learning, and then
construct and test their new learning in an ongoing cycle. According to Sulzby (1985), emergent literacy is not a concept of ages and stages in the Piagetian sense, rather context plays a key role. Instead of defined sequences, there are differences in children’s backgrounds, experiences, learning styles, and abilities. Children’s purposes, audiences, and language experiences influence their early writing development (Chapman, 2006). As they write, children also make decisions about content and form.

*Appropriations of Cultural Resources*

Children appropriate the resources of their social worlds—their cultures and communities—as they write. As defined in Chapter 1, appropriate means to take the words or content of another source and make them one’s own. This definition is rooted in Bakhtin’s (1986) assertion that we respond to and then transform the utterances of others for our own purposes. Thus, our words are always the words of someone else. However, Bakhtin argued that when we appropriate words, we also appropriate forms and content—including topics, themes, purposes, and styles.

Within the social interactions during writing periods, Dyson (1999, 2001a, 2003) saw that children appropriate cultural artifacts including popular culture media figures, sports figures, songs, movies, television shows, cartoons, video games, and children’s literature. Dyson (2001a) called the children’s use of these artifacts, “textual toys” and stated that children use textual toys to negotiate the completion of school tasks. The textual toys were multimodal in nature and included images, names, events, snippets of dialogue, and plot lines.
Hicks (1998) agreed with Dyson (2001a) that children need to have the freedom to appropriate textual references of their choosing while socially interacting with others. In a case study of a first grader, Hicks (1998) described how the focal child actively approached literary forms and changed social meanings as a way to make the content his own text. She argued that “the act of achieving an individual voice is one involving active dialogue with the discourses of one’s social surrounding” (p. 29).

In examining children’s appropriations, interplay exists between the official literacy practices of classroom and the unofficial childhood practices (Dyson, 2008). Dyson (1997) found children draw from multiple affiliations, such as family, religious, gender, age, as they complete activities in the official classroom culture—the set of events planned by the teacher. Simultaneously children participate in peer cultures (Corsaro, 1985) in which they control their purposes through talk and actions. Rowe et al. (2001) noted the importance of attending to both groups as a way to more fully understand how young children participate in literacy experiences. Lensmire and Beals (1994) examined a third grader’s piece of writing and found that she appropriated oral and written materials from both adults and peers in and outside of her school culture. They saw she appropriated more than form. She used storylines, themes, character names, and powerful words of others as a way to tell a story. Dyson (1999) described some of the written pieces were of a hybrid nature, meaning they intersected the official school and unofficial peer spheres.

Dyson (1999) suggested children’s out of school experiences can be honored in school literacies. Observing children while they compose yields important information
concerning their use of content from media references. Dyson (2001a) called for more “open-ended composing periods” where children are free to talk with peers and appropriate resources from official school and unofficial peer spheres. She argued that when teachers offer children the freedom, children often emerge as writers.

A sociocultural theory of literacy suggests children appropriate from the cultural signs and artifacts. In my study, I investigated how James used appropriations of cultural resources—both the content and form—in his compositions as he developed voice. As children use the material to create new ideas and change what is provided, young children also develop an understanding of various genres. A review of literature about genre development follows in the next section.

**Development of Genre**

As children develop as writers, they grow in their understanding of genre. According to Ray and Glover (2008), genre refers to “various kinds of writing in the world that are written for different purposes and audiences” (p. 70). Understanding genre is paramount to developing as a writer. Writers must possess vision—a sense of what they create with their writing (Ray, 2006). Ray and Glover’s definition of genre aligns with Bakhtin’s (1986) idea that genres are structures situated in various spheres of human experience. As flexible models, genres allow writers to use the genres to meet their needs. Specific genres have a set of signals that informs the reader or listener of the purposes (Bakhtin, 1986). Kamberelis and Bovino (1999) described genres as “open-ended cultural frames” (p. 138) which are both durable (there are consistent features) and
flexible (they evolve and expand over time). When children experience new goals, they adapt their resources and the result is a new genre (Kamberelis & Bovino, 1999).

Learning about genres mirrors how children learn about other aspects of writing (Chapman, 1994). Genre development occurs within a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Children obtain their knowledge and understanding of genres from their school worlds and their social worlds (Chapman, 1995). Duke (2000) argued that children learn to read and write particular genres through experience with the genres. Thus exposure to specific genres yields understandings of specific genres. Studies indicate that when children hear particular genres as read alouds at home (Harste et al., 1984) and at school (Pappas, 1993), children are able to recreate the genre as they pretend to read—they view illustrations in a book and orally create the written text. The use of particular genres involves taking a stance towards an audience and the broader world (Dyson, 1992).

Within the sociocultural context, children gain an understanding of genres as they see, hear, and create a range of writing forms. They write for specific purposes and audiences as they develop their understanding of genre. While research has been conducted on how an emergent writer develops an understanding of genre through reading and writing, limited research has shown how children demonstrate genre development through drawing and talking as storytelling. My study extends Ray and Glover’s (2008) work that examined young children composing wordless picture books and talking to share the meaning of their stories. In the following sections, I review literature that highlights what is known about teaching writing.
Research on the Teaching of Writing

The current view of teaching writing assumes that writing involves both cognitive and social processes. The cognitive perspective is rooted in Flower and Hayes’ (1981) assertion that writing is a recursive process comprised of subprocesses—planning, translating, and reviewing. Each of these subprocesses cycles into one another. Writing is conceived of as a goal-directed, problem-solving process. From Flower and Hayes’ study came the process-oriented writing pedagogy in which teachers conferred with individual students about their subprocesses. Process-oriented pedagogy is student centered and acknowledges that writing is a recursive cycle.

The social perspective holds that becoming literate is a social process in which children learn to differentiate and use written language from others in their social world (Dyson, 2001b). The development of writing is viewed through the lens of how the written language changes as print on paper and how the young writer changes as a participant in the writing process.

A specific examination of young children engaged in the process of writing was first conducted by Graves (1975). He found that 7-year-olds compose using subprocesses of rehearsing, brainstorming to choose a topic, drawing to plan, organizing, editing, and revising. Graves also saw informal settings and free choice of topics allow children to compose longer pieces and he documented the value of children talking to one another during their writing process.
Writing Workshop Pedagogy

One particular process-oriented approach to teaching writing is writing workshop (Calkins, 1994; Fletcher, 1993; Graves, 1983; Murray, 1987). Writing workshop honors the children’s cognitive processes and their personal, cultural, and social pursuits as they engage in writing. Writing workshop typically consists of three components: a mini-lesson in which the teacher demonstrates one aspect of writing, independent writing time, and sharing their writing with classmates. During the independent writing time, the children interact with peers and confer with the teacher about their writing.

Graves (2004) recommended that writing workshop occur a minimum of three times a week, but more optimally four or five times a week. Some of the other essential ideas he suggested included free choice of topic, extended time to write, opportunity for feedback, and maintaining a collection of work for reflection by students. Graves also cited the role of the teacher as being highly literate, interested in writing, demonstrating high expectations for students, teaching for responsibility in writing, and writing in front of his or her students.

Graves’ (1981, 1983, 1994) work engendered others like Calkins (1994) to pursue investigations of writing with children, particularly her introduction of the mini-lesson—a 5- to 15-minute lesson focused on one aspect of writing. The structure—often referred to as the architecture—of the mini-lesson Calkins perfected includes: defining a teaching point for the lesson, stating a connection to prior learning, teaching through demonstration, engaging the students through active involvement, linking the new learning to prior learning, and then sharing their writing. The phases of the mini-lesson
provide a framework for scaffolding and support Vygotsky’s (1978) theory that learning occurs when children are in a zone of proximal development.

For the teachers of writing, Giroux (1987) offered praise of Graves’ (1983, 1994) approach to writing workshop. He stated that writing workshop empowers both students and teachers by honoring the experiences of students and the topics they select to write about. Their intentions of writing are also honored as their goals become the focus of conferences. Giroux (1987) noted that by honoring the students’ experiences, it becomes important to recognize that schools are cultural sites (Freire, 1970) and issues of power relations are embedded in this acceptance.

Writing workshop pedagogy is viewed as effective practice in literacy research. My study takes a different look at writing workshop. I studied an emergent writer during a reconceptualized writing workshop—Quiet Choices Workshop—in which the classroom teacher allowed the children to choose their sign systems, position in the classroom (including where and with whom they wished to compose), and genre for compositions.

In recent years, the role of social interactions among peers during writing workshop has been the focus of writing studies. A discussion of the literature related to interactions with peers is presented in the following section.

*Interactions With Peers*

A theoretical shift to the social aspect of writing engendered the move for studies during the 1990s to center on observing social interactions during writing. Social interaction offers a source of support as children develop as writers (Cambourne, 1988;
Vygotsky, 1978) and it is one of the key elements in descriptions of writing workshop. Writers talk with one another to brainstorm ideas, share feedback, and talk about their pieces in progress (Graves, 1983).

Dyson (1993, 1999, 2003) conducted numerous case studies and ethnographies to investigate the interactions among peers while they composed texts. In a study of the social worlds of young children, Dyson (1993) found children use talk to give constructive criticism, defend their work, and perform pieces for peers. A positive influence on children’s writing was also noted by Dyson (1989) and she encouraged teachers to provide more open-ended composing periods where children could use their imagination during social interactions.

While Dyson’s work revealed the benefits to social interaction during writing workshop, Lensmire (1994) found a negative influence as the consequence of social interactions. He documented the mistreatment of one student, who was not socially accepted, during writing workshop. The student was ridiculed and excluded from the learning community. Lensmire’s finding caused him to call for more frequent monitoring of the interactions and he also encouraged teachers to pay attention to issues of power, identity, and social status in the classroom during composing periods.

While working with fourth graders, Burns (2001) found that being social does not mean just dialoging with peers about topics, but also casual conversations and private dialogues with others and internal dialogues. She encouraged teachers to model a variety of strategies for the purpose of gathering ideas, drafting, and revising.
Thus many literacy researchers find that social interactions provide support to developing writers. However, Lensmire (1994) cautioned teachers to attend to any damaging consequences of social interactions and Burns (2001) suggested a wider view of acceptable forms as a way to socially interact during writing. Within the range of social interactions, children form identities and develop voice. In the following section, I provide a discussion of various definitions for voice.

Defining Voice

Deliberations and discussions of voice have centered on its nature as a quality of writing, and often it is simplified as an item on a writing rubric. A popular sentiment is “The successful writer writes with voice.” However, this is only one view of voice. The elusive concept of voice is defined by writing workshop advocates, critical theorists, and literacy researchers. The diversity of their definitions reveals the complexity of voice.

Writing Workshop Advocates

Writing workshop advocates (Calkins, 1994; Fletcher, 1993; Graves, 1983; Murray, 1987) describe voice in similar ways noting the mark of an individual expression. They posit voice is a quality or characteristic that demonstrates the personality of the writer and maintains the attention of the reader. Fletcher, Graves, and Murray explained voice as the presence of the author appears in the piece and it sounds like the person actually wrote it. Graves stated:

Voice is the imprint of ourselves on our writing. It is that part of the self that pushes the writing ahead, the dynamo in the process. Take the voice away and the
writing collapses of its own weight. There is no writing, just words following words. (p. 227)

According to Fletcher (1993), a text with voice is text with authority and he suggested a two step process for fostering voice in our students’ writing. Fletcher argued that students must have opportunities to discover their “inner writing voices” (p. 68) and they must witness voice in published pieces.

Only one writing workshop advocate, Spandel (2004), explicitly acknowledged the presence of voice in drawings. According to Spandel, voice is seen and heard in drawings and text of young authors and illustrators, as a way to personalize expression. She identified voice in drawings when there is: “distinctive or unique style or approach, emotions as expressed on the faces of characters, humor, passion, as expressed through color or style, and a piece you would like to share with others” (p. 43). Additionally Spandel viewed characteristics of voice in written text when an emotional response or personal connection is created and when the author or illustrator wishes to share the piece with others.

As children develop voice, the act of self-selecting a topic has another important implication. Stetson (1996) contended that teachers can nurture voice when they give children choices in writing. He stated, “Student choice is essential to building voice; otherwise, institutional voice creeps into their writing” (p. 75). Voice takes significant time to develop and requires the opportunity to select the topic (Simmons, 1996). However, Simmons found that classroom teachers did not give more than four days on average to complete a piece (p. 602). Writing must be given the occasion to be “in
process” for the amount of time deemed necessary by the authors, so the depth of their voices may emerge.

Elbow (1994) offered two points that are relevant to an inquiry concerned with voice. First, audience influences voice in two ways. We imitate those around us and we respond to those around us. Second, he argued that spoken language has more semiotic channels than written language. This means when we write, there are fewer resources to achieve voice. With oral language, we can alter our volume, pitch, speed, accent, and intensity. With written language, we have a much smaller set of options—punctuation and word choice.

The definitions presented by the writing workshop advocates remain the most popular versions of voice as a characteristic of writing. Lensmire (1998) summarized writing workshop advocates’ view of voice as a mark of success or an endpoint in writing that is “found”—rather than created. Critical pedagogy advocates share a different view of voice. Their definition of voice is reviewed in the next section.

**Critical Theorists**

Critical theorists, including Ellsworth (1989), Freire (1970), Giroux (1987), and hooks (1989) agreed with writing workshop advocates that students’ experiences and active involvement are valuable; however they emphasize the process of participation instead of the notion of individual expression. Additionally, they view voice as being crafted in children’s social worlds and acknowledge that children have multiple voices. Critical theorists embrace Bakhtin’s (1981) concept of heteroglossia to include the stances, beliefs, and perceptions present in the culture’s language.
Valuing the idea that all voices should be heard, critical theorists recognize that the world privileges some voices and oppresses other voices. Ellsworth (1989) and hooks (1989) referred to voice as a process of “coming to voice” and revealing those who are silenced and those who are heard. Critical theorists argue for critical dialogues among teachers and students. The critical theorists’ definition of voice explains voice as the starting point, rather than the endpoint (Lensmire, 1998). They see students’ experiences, languages, and stories need affirmation and hearing all voices is empowering to writers. Instead of finding voice, critical theorists argue voice is constructed within the culture and through the use of cultural resources

Alternative Views From Literacy Researchers

Two literacy researchers—Lensmire (1998) and Cappello (2006)—both used their experiences with children in primary grade classrooms to study the development of voice during writing workshop. Their investigations enabled them to define voice in alternative ways.

Lensmire (1998) claimed the previously described definitions do not account for the conflicts among the voices, among students, between the students and teachers, and within themselves. Embracing a critical theory orientation, Lensmire concluded voice is “a project involving appropriation, social struggle, and becoming” (p. 261). He asserted voice is a project because it can be perceived of as an activity with active involvement of the participants in their social and cultural worlds. Appropriating includes the assimilation of cultural artifacts in society and the voices of others. The notion of social struggle refers to Lensmire’s assertion that as children appropriate others’ voices, they
must satisfy their audience, the task, and purpose of the writing. While appropriations
give children material for voicing, they present them with many choices and therefore
may include or exclude them from certain social groups. The concept of *becoming* is
described by Lensmire to involve the idea that there are no guarantees when voicing.
Sometimes voices become overwhelmed, they are silenced, or they simply are not heard.
Yet these occurrences foster the opportunities for growth and change. Lensmire therefore
stands as a literacy researcher who has re-envisioned voice as he critiqued the definitions
posited by advocates of writing workshop and critical pedagogy.

Cappello (2006) also investigated voice with an eye on the interactional
relationships among young writers. She studied the construction of identity in a primary
multiage classroom. Cappello’s findings led her to define voice as “dynamic, changing as
it develops and appropriates language, and as an expression accumulated through
experiences” (p. 483). Cappello’s definition accounts for the sociocultural perspective
prevalent in writing research today and she suggested that “voice was negotiated through
their identities and their relationships with others” (p. 490). Her work confirmed
Bakhtin’s (1981) dialogism since she found children respond to their social worlds as
they compose. Cappello argued that there is a reciprocal relationship among social
identities, voices, and the texts children create. Other literacy researchers support
Cappello’s assertion about voice and identity and their studies are discussed in the
following section.
Reciprocal Relationship of Voices and Identity

The development of writers’ identities influences how children approach literacy engagements and how they develop as writers (Owocki & Goodman, 2002). Classroom practices also influence their writing identities. When children are given opportunities to write about meaningful experiences for authentic audiences, and they feel confident in taking risks as writers, they will develop “a strong and positive writing identity” (p. 88). McCarthey and Moje (2002) asserted that identities children construct mold their literacy practices while the literacy practices become a way to perform their identities.

In a case study of a reluctant 6-year-old literacy learner, Compton-Lilly (2006) found the learner used childhood and cultural resources to accomplish school literacy tasks. The resources he used—knowledge of video games and characters of the games—aligned with his identities and social relationships. Compton-Lilly suggested teachers embrace the cultural resources that children bring to literacy learning as a way for children to develop identity and grow as literacy learners.

Writing workshop advocates, critical theorists, and literacy researchers all agree that voice is an integral part of writing and therefore it is worthy of further investigation. Although studies have examined voice development with older writers, I did not find a study that involved emergent writers or the use of multiple sign systems. Thus, my study extends the research on voice development by investigating an emergent writer while he used drawing, talking as storytelling, and writing.
Summary

The literature I reviewed in this chapter provided a framework for five areas connected to my study: the sociocultural perspective of literacy learning, the use of multiple sign systems in literacy pedagogy, the development of writing, research in the teaching of writing, and definitions of voice.

I used a sociocultural perspective to understand literacy learning. From this perspective, children construct understandings about literacy as they actively participate with more skilled others in their cultural practices. Social interaction is essential to developing knowledge and skills about literacy. One sociocultural model of literacy learning is proposed by Cambourne (1988) and offers particular relevance to this study. Cambourne explained the sociocultural context in his model through a description of eight conditions that foster literacy learning.

In a sociocultural view of literacy, a variety of sign systems exist in our culture. As children participate in literacy practices of the community, they use multiple sign systems as transitions to writing. Composing with multiple sign systems aligns with children’s natural literacy development and means language is not privileged over other sign systems. Literacy studies indicate children attain a depth in their thinking when they use multiple sign systems to represent meaning.

Emergent writers develop as they socially interact, integrate information, construct understandings, and then test their new learning in a continuous cycle. Through symbol weaving (Dyson, 1986a), children combine talking, drawing, and dramatizing as they develop their writing skills and knowledge. They demonstrate understandings of
genre as they explain what they create when they write (Ray, 2006). Within the current view of writing pedagogy, writing is both a cognitive and a social process. Thus, writing instruction incorporates demonstrations, time for independent writing, conferring with young writers, and opportunities for social interactions.

Current operational and theoretical definitions of voice vary from individual expression as proposed by writing workshop advocates to participation as proposed by critical theory advocates. Alternative views of voice are presented by two literacy researchers, Lensmire (1998) and Cappello (2006), who recognized the interactional complexities of student expression within their specific cultural worlds.

Although many studies have investigated the use of multiple sign systems in literacy pedagogy and other studies have examined the development of voice, none has specifically looked at how young children develop voice using multiple sign systems. Additionally, there is limited research to describe how honoring multimodal experiences support children as emerging writers. This investigation will extend what is known about how a Kindergarten composer develops voice when allowed to choose among multiple sign systems and explain the child’s growth as a writer as he develops an understanding of genre.
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I provide a statement of the research methodology through an overview of the study, the theoretical framework, and the research design. Then I explain the research site and include descriptions of the student population, stance of the teacher, make-up of the class, and entry into the site. Next I describe an overview of the three phases, explain how James was selected as the focal child, and describe the data collection, including multiple sources of data. I then provide the procedures for data analysis. Finally, I state the establishment of trustworthiness through credibility, dependability, and confirmability.

Introduction

The purpose of this interpretive case study was to describe how James, a Kindergarten composer, developed voice and an understanding of genre through the use of multiple sign systems over time. As defined earlier, the development of voice is considered a dynamic process using multiple sign systems while children appropriate cultural resources, engage in social interactions, and form identities. In my study, I examined the multiple sign systems of talking as storytelling, drawing, and writing. Two main research questions framed this inquiry. The first question with three subquestions asked:

1. How does a Kindergarten composer develop voice through the use of multiple sign systems during Quiet Choices Workshop?
A. What choices does he make regarding his position in the composing community, his choice of sign systems, and selection of genre?

B. What appropriations does he make in his compositions?

C. What responses does he receive from others in his composing community?

A second research question with two subquestions then posed:

3. How does Quiet Choice Workshop support an emerging writer’s understanding of genre?

   a. What changes occurred in his statement of purpose and intended audience for his compositions?

   b. How did his purpose align with the genre features present in his compositions?

Theoretical Framework

The goal of interpretive research is to understand the meaning people make of their lives in specific contexts (Erickson, 1986). Interpretive research involves describing and interpreting in order to reconstruct the phenomenon through “richly detailed cultural descriptions” (Graue & Walsh, 1995, p. 135). To gain an understanding of the phenomenon involves understanding the factors that shape it and the processes through which people make meaning. An interpretive orientation holds that social structures are based on webs of meaning created through social interaction of individuals (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995).

Interpretive research questions involve choices and meanings made by individuals. Erickson (1986) argued that a distinguishing characteristic of interpretive
studies is “the immediate and local meanings of actions, as defined from the actors’ point
of view” (p. 119). Interpretive research pairs close observation and analysis of action and
meaning in the everyday phenomenon with close observation and analysis of the wider
context (Erickson, 1986).

In this inquiry, an interpretive orientation was chosen for four reasons. First, the
definition of voice development adopted in this inquiry assumed there are multiple voices
constructed through social interaction. The idea of multiple voices aligns with the
assumption of interpretive research that there are multiple realities constructed through
social interaction. I was interested in how James developed voice within the webs of
meaning created through social interaction.

Second, I aimed to study the webs of meaning in James’ world, as a way to
understand his development of voice and the growth as a writer. I did this by examining
his composing processes while he socially interacted with peers in the following ways:
(a) making choices, (b) selecting appropriations, and (c) receiving responses from others.
I also observed and conversed with his peers to remain “inside his world.” By this I mean
I sought to understand the meanings he and his peers attached to actions and language.

Third, an interpretive research stance is compatible with theories of early writing
and the workshop approach that supports the practices in the classroom of this study. The
workshop approach to writing rests on the assumption that learning to write is a social
practice (Vygotsky, 1978). Graves (1983) extensively studied writing workshop and
noted the significance of the social interactions on the children’s composing processes
and products. As children learn to make meaning and represent meaning through various
sign systems, their choices are ones valued in their specific contexts (Bakhtin, 1986). Since knowledge is constructed within the cultural arena, it is essential to examine the meaning making through this lens. Therefore the research methodology used to study a child engaged in composing through talking as storytelling, drawing, and writing aligned with the assumption that constructions of reality are part of the world in which they occur (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

Fourth, an interpretive inquiry assumes an active role of participants (Erickson, 1986). I considered James to be a linguistic informant (Harste et al., 1984) and therefore an active participant. I became the apprentice in James’ world as he taught me. As James’ apprentice, I honored his agenda for discussion. He taught me to understand his voice development and how he understood genre through conversations about his texts. I deepened my understanding of his voice development and growth as a writer, thus engaging in the art of interpretation.

Research Design

Specifically, the research methodology used in this study was an interpretive case study that examined one focal child, James, engaged in the composing process. I conceived of James as living in a specific setting and immersed in specific experiences (Graue & Walsh, 1995). I chose his classroom based on the theoretical stance of the teacher which is described in a future section.

The aim of an interpretive case study is to explain the meaning of some phenomenon in a specific case (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 10). Merriam (2000) called for case study research to be: (a) particularistic—focusing on one particular phenomenon,
person, or situation; (b) descriptive—richly and “thickly” describing the case; (c) inductive—generalizing from the data collected; and (d) heuristic—sharpening the reader’s understanding and contributing to new meaning. These four qualities—particularistic, descriptive, inductive, and heuristic—rendered the type of response I sought to answer my research questions. I investigated: (a) the phenomenon of James’ voice development by examining his choices, his appropriations, and the responses he received from others; and (b) the phenomenon of his growth as a writer—changes in his understanding of genre. My emphasis remained on the meaning perspectives and the contexts of the phenomena.

The View in This Case Study

My choice of a vantage point in this case study was inside James’ official school practice of Quiet Choices Workshop while also being attentive to his multiple cultural influences that constituted his unofficial childhood practices (Dyson, 2001a). Clay (1998) argued that studies of literacy development should attend to both the official school practices and the unofficial childhood practices. I studied James through the lens of a child as an apprentice (Rogoff, 1990) within a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). At times James was an apprentice of composing, as he stood under the guidance of more knowledgeable others. At other times, he stood as the more knowledgeable other as peers became his apprentice. Within a community of practice, James was a member of a group in which there was: (a) mutual engagement—members interacted with one another in various ways, (b) joint enterprise—they shared a common endeavor, and (c) shared
repertoire of resources—they developed language and routines as a way to express their identities (Wenger, 1998).

*My Role as Researcher*

As an inquirer in this study, my posture was one as “passionate participant” and “facilitator of multi-voice reconstruction” (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 171). In order to reconstruct the case, I was foremost an interpreter by revealing new meanings (Stake, 1995). This involved diligent gathering of interpretations from multiple data resources. Along a continuum of participation and observation, my role was described as moderate (Spradley, 1980). I sought to achieve a balance between participation and observation, as an insider and an outsider.

In this role as a participant-observer, I assumed the challenge of conducting respected interpretive research. At times, I participated in his composing process when James initiated conversation with me and when I posed questions. These interactions mirrored the interactions the classroom teacher, Carrie, shared with the children during the independent composing time. At other times, I observed and made jottings to capture the essence of the children’s composing. I had to be “patient, reflective, and willing to see another” while also being “empathetic and non-interventive” (Stake, 1995, p. 12). Therefore, my role was positioned in the middle of the continuum roles, between the roles of participant and observer, as a participant-observer.

*Research Site*

Wellingford School District is approximately 50 miles from a major northeastern city. The site of the study, North Western Elementary, houses 317 students in
Kindergarten through grade 4 and four special education classrooms. One classroom is self-contained for multiple-handicapped students and three classrooms utilize both inclusion and pull out models to service students with learning disabilities and emotional problems. The population is approximately 95% European American. Only 5% of the population includes students of color, including three Asian Pacific students, nine African American students, and four Hispanic students. Although there is little ethnic diversity in the school, there is economic diversity. The free and reduced lunch population is 28% in the school. The population includes a majority of children from both working class families and professional families. The National Center for Education Statistics (2007) classified the area as a small town on the fringe, explaining that it is a “territory inside an urban cluster that is less than or equal to ten miles from an urban area.”

Several specifics to the site of North Western Elementary contributed to the uniqueness of the school. The mission statement for Kindergarten reflected a student-centered, developmentally appropriate stance, rather than a highly academic stance often present in Kindergarten classrooms. Carrie had a supportive school administrator who gave her the freedom to teach writing from a “research-based” orientation, rather than a mandated perspective. In a period of time when schools experience budget shortfalls and class sizes notably increase, this particular class of 16 students is perhaps smaller than many Kindergarten classes in the Northeast. The smaller class size represents the school district’s commitment to have less than 20 students in each primary classroom. Thus class size was perhaps lower than a typical Kindergarten.
Stance of Teacher

At the time of the study, Carrie had 32 years of teaching experience in Kindergarten and first grade at the same school district. She earned a Bachelor’s degree in elementary education and a Masters of Education in elementary education with a minor in special education. Carrie and I were colleagues for seven years when I taught at North Western Elementary as a special education teacher and as a reading specialist. During that time we collaborated to differentiate instruction for all learners and we continue to converse about literacy through ongoing complicated conversations (Pinar, 2004). Given our 18-year relationship as critical colleagues (Brookfield, 1995), I entered this inquiry confident that our dialogues would be honest, even at times when we may not agree with one another.

I chose to work in Carrie’s classroom based on our long term collegial relationship and my knowledge of Carrie’s beliefs about teaching. Carrie enacted three beliefs that were essential to the study. First as a constructivist teacher, Carrie honored children as composers who have choice among multiple sign systems—drawing, talking as storytelling, and writing. Second, Carrie believed children construct multiple voices using multiple sign systems as they try on different ways to “tell their stories.” Carrie’s belief aligned with the definition of voice adopted in this inquiry. Third, Carrie encouraged social interaction during composing, and social interaction was also a component of my voice definition.

The literacy curriculum used by Carrie was child-centered and included components of balanced literacy (Cunningham & Allington, 2007). On a daily basis, it
included read alouds of picture books, shared reading of poetry, songs, rhymes, and predictable patterned texts, guided reading, and independent reading. Carrie encouraged children to make personal connections (Harwayne, 1992) to literature in their writing. Interactive writing and phonemic awareness activities related to text sets in thematic units—collections of texts that connected to a central theme. Carrie also used Phonics in Motion (Kindervater, 2002), a scaffolding method for writing experiences. Phonics in Motion pairs a motion with the sound symbol relationship. Children were introduced to a motion for each phoneme—the smallest unit of sound—and the motions were used in the shared context of songs, rhymes, and chants. They were then encouraged to independently use the motion as they wrote to scaffold their invented spelling.

Carrie developed Quiet Choices Workshop to give the children time to explore a variety of sign systems most often used prior to entering Kindergarten and to compose for authentic audiences. The sign systems included drawing, talking as storytelling, and writing and the authentic audiences included the other children in her classroom, the children in other Kindergarten classrooms, school personnel, and the children’s families and friends outside of the classroom.

Carrie constructed Quiet Choices Workshop to mirror the components of writing workshop by including a mini-lesson, independent composing time, and sharing. The composing time was expanded beyond drawing and writing to include oral language compositions as a “way to tell their story.” Quiet Choices Workshop occurred four times a week for approximately 45 minutes. In the mini-lesson, Carrie modeled possible genres, topics, and skills while the children were seated on the rug. For example, she modeled
how to write a thank you note using drawing and writing or how to create an oral story using puppets. The children then selected materials from the art cart for drawing and writing or they chose puppets, props, and books to compose through talking as storytelling. After about 20-30 minutes of independent composing, Carrie brought the children back to the rug and she invited them to share their compositions. She referred to these as “their stories.” Quiet Choices Workshop differed from writing workshop with the expansion of oral language as a composing tool. Carrie used the Quiet Choices Workshop in place of writing workshop. However, as time evolved, her mini-lessons were more focused on writing and her expectations changed. During the last week of February, she expected all of the children to “write their stories” rather than just draw or tell their stories.

I focused my inquiry on Quiet Choices Workshop because I found during my pilot study that it offered children choices and explorations with peer interaction, sign systems, genres, and purposes. Thus, Quiet Choices Workshop was naturally connected to my inquiry on the development of voice.

Make-Up of the Class and Entry Into Site

There were 16 students (10 male, 6 female) in the class when school began. All of the Kindergarten students received literacy instruction in Carrie’s classroom. Therefore every student was invited to participate in the study and all parents provided consent. Carrie introduced me to the students on the first day as a friend who was interested in what happens in Kindergarten. I was introduced to the parents at the Kindergarten
orientation as a former teacher, a parent of young children, and a researcher. I briefly explained my research interest in the composing process of Kindergarten students.

Phases of the Study

The study consisted of three phases: (a) an initial 12 week phase that explored the class from a holistic perspective; (b) a 4 week period in which I focused on one focal child, James; and (c) a 4 week return to test out and expand preliminary findings about James. Phase I spanned late-August through late-November. Phase II occurred during late-January to late-February. A 2 week break then provided time for preliminary data analysis. In phase III, I returned to the field for a period that spanned mid-March to mid-April. Table 1 provides an overview of the three phases.

During each of the phases, I was involved in observations, was engaged in conversations with Kindergarten students, and collected artifacts of the children’s compositions. Each form of data collection changed slightly as my purpose for each phase changed. The observations commenced by broadly viewing the entire class and later zoomed into James as a situated focal child. The conversations with the children were woven into the observations. Initially, I conversed with a variety of students and later focused on James and his peers. I had a general agenda for the conversations and allowed the children’s responses to influence how I proceeded in the conversation. The artifact collections included scanning the drawn and written compositions and audio recording the oral compositions. During Phase I, I viewed all of the students’ compositions to understand their competencies with drawing, talking, and writing. In
Table 1

*Research Agenda*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Time in class</th>
<th>Description of research agenda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>12 weeks, 2 days per week, 3-4 hours per day</td>
<td>Established myself as “someone interested in Kindergarten.” Established rapport with individual students. Observed all students during a variety of activities throughout the day. Documented the range of competencies with talking, drawing, and writing. Selected a focal child at the conclusion of the phase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>4 weeks, 4 days per week, 2 hours per day</td>
<td>Persistent observation of James as the focal child. Daily global view of Quiet Choices Workshop. Daily fine-grain view of James, including choices of position in the composing community, sign systems, genres, appropriations, and responses from others. Conversations with James individually and with peers. Collection of James’ compositions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>4 weeks, 4 days per week, 2 hours per day</td>
<td>After a period of two weeks for preliminary data analysis, replication of Phase II to test and revise categories. In observations, particular attention to how James developed an understanding of genre. At the conclusion of the 4 weeks, conversation with James and a peer to learn about his understanding of genre as it relates to purpose and audience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phases II and III, I directed my attention to the compositions of James. Next, I provide an elaboration of how James was selected and how multiple data were collected.
Selecting James as a Focal Child During Phase I

The selection of James was based on observations I made during the 12 week phase, from late August through late November of 2007, when I explored the class from a holistic perspective. I refer to this period of time as Phase I. I observed twice a week for 3-4 hours during the literacy block and Quiet Choices Workshop. In looking at the whole class, I wanted to select a focal child who was hesitant to use both oral and written language to express ideas because oral language facilitates written language (Britton, 1970; Clay, 1998; Owocki & Goodman, 2002). I hoped to be able to observe what happened to a child’s understanding of genre over time when there was choice among sign systems and when social interaction was honored.

In order to select a child who fit this profile, I documented how the 16 children used the sign systems of talking, drawing, and writing. While I observed the children, talked with them, and examined their compositions, I used three tools to document their use of the sign systems. They included: (a) Interactional Competencies Observation Form, (b) Functions of Oral Language Observation Form, and (c) Functions, Features, and Social Processes for Drawing and Writing Observation Form. These tools were adaptations of forms developed by Owocki and Goodman (2002). They suggested adapting such tools to meet the unique needs of specific groups of students and goals of instruction. I adapted the tools to reflect the early literacy skills emphasized by Carrie during the first three months of school.

First, I observed the children’s interactional competencies by using a form that I developed, Interactional Competencies Observation Form. It is included in Appendix A.
To develop this form, I selected competencies from the *Interactional Competencies* checklist (Owocki & Goodman, 2002, p. 112) and added additional competencies that were most relevant to my definition of voice. The interactional competencies included how the children listened to others and participated in verbal exchanges through participation, elaboration, initiation, and asking questions. When I observed the children interact, I noted the existence of the competencies by rating them as follows: regularly present, sometimes present, or not yet present. Rating the competencies in this manner provided a more detailed description than simply placing a check by the competency. It was important to identify interactional competencies since engaging in social interactions was woven into the definition of voice used in this study.

Second, I observed the children’s functions of their oral language and documented my observations on another form I developed, the *Functions of Oral Language Observation Form*. The form is included in Appendix B. It was adapted from the *Oral Language Functions: Individual Observation* (Owocki & Goodman, 2002, p. 111) by selecting four functions of oral language which Carrie focused on in the fall. The functions included: (a) sharing stories of personal experiences, (b) retelling stories previously read aloud, (c) explaining how to do or make something, and (d) creating imaginative worlds. Next to each function, I jotted descriptive notes for each of the four functions. Documenting the functions was important because oral language—when used as talking as storytelling—was one of the sign systems under investigation as a way to develop voice.
Third, I observed the children’s processes of representing ideas on paper through drawing and writing. The form that I developed and used, *Functions, Features, and Social Processes for Drawing and Writing Observation Form*, is included in Appendix C. I focused on five areas: (a) features of drawing, (b) functions of drawing, (c) features of writing, (d) functions of writing, and (e) social processes while drawing and writing. Next to each of the five topics, I jotted notes that described instances when I observed these features, functions, and social processes. I chose to focus on these details of drawing and writing because it provided me with a thorough description of the children’s use of the sign systems under investigation.

The three observation forms focused my observations of the entire class. As I thought about selecting a focal child, I chose James because he was a child of concern as evidenced by my observations. He represented a student who stood on the sidelines of social interaction and responded differently to the use of multiple sign systems. When I analyzed his patterns of using drawing, talking, and writing during the 12 weeks, I saw James was hesitant to use oral and written language. I found that he represented one end of the continuum in the use of talking and writing. Carrie agreed with me. James’ use of detailed drawings confirmed that he would provide sufficient data to investigate my questions since he regularly used this sign system to represent his meaning making. A complete description of James’ profile at the time of his selection—including my observations based on the three tools—is included in Appendix D.
Collection of Multiple Data Sources During Phases II and III

Once I selected James, I collected three kinds of data. The multiple data sources included (a) field notes of observations, (b) transcripts of conversations with James and his peers, and (c) James’ compositions—audio tapes of oral compositions and scanned copies of drawn and written compositions. The data contributed to quality in my case study since multiple data sources were used to construct a “converging line of inquiry” (Yin, 1994, p. 92) and to explain how James developed voice and an understanding of genre. I collected 20 transcripts of conversations with James and 15 compositions.

Participant Observations and Descriptive Field Notes

During Phases II and III, I observed for two hours a day, four days a week. I arrived 30 minutes prior to the 45-minute Quiet Choices Workshop, and I stayed for at least 30 to 45 minutes after the period. During observations, I was positioned in various places to accurately record the events and dialogues of Quiet Choices Workshop. For the mini-lesson and sharing, I sat on a student chair at the edge of the rug. For the composing period of Quiet Choices Workshop, I initially remained on the rug at a distance from James, until I saw him select his materials, position, and begin to compose. I did this because I did not want James to be aware of my close observation and I did not want to interfere or influence his decision making process.

Following Graves’ (1975) model, I pulled up my chair to James when he was engaged in the composing process. During the observations, I used five lines of focus that allowed me to make notes in a detailed manner. First, I noted a description of how he used his composing time including the topic, when, where, and with whom he composed.
Second, I recorded the choice of sign systems and the materials used. Third, I noted the appropriations to media, literature, and experiences. Fourth, I recorded James’ social interactions with peers and noted the reactions of others to the composition. Finally, I observed how James reacted as a result of the responses from others. My five lines of focus allowed me to make notes in a manner which attended to James’ language and actions fully, thereby contributing to persistent observation (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Following a protocol also allowed me to record data related to the definition of voice used in this study. A sample of the notes I jotted to record the five lines of focus is included in Appendix E.

Although I selected James as one specific child, my observations often involved other children. This was because the students had the choice of where and with whom they wished to compose. Thus, I observed and documented James’ interactions with others engaged in literacy acts, the choices he made to express his thoughts, and the sociocultural influences in the lives of the children with whom James interacted. I sought to understand how the topics of his compositions related to experiences he found culturally and socially meaningful.

Upon leaving the classroom, I added additional details to the jottings and conversed with Carrie about observational notes. Within 24 hours, I used these jottings to construct full field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). After formulating field notes, I utilized bracketing to highlight thoughts, impressions, and early interpretations.
Conversations With James

Conversations with James occurred during the observations as a way to explore his perceptions through authentic responses. The conversations mirrored a familiar context of a writing workshop conference. I utilized Graves’ (1994) and Calkins’ (1994) call to draw close to the child and follow their lead. Although I came with some questions, the goal of the conversation was to find out what questions to ask (Spradley, 1980). Since the conversations provided an interpretation of the child’s experiences and compositions, they were similar to responsive interviews and therefore it was important that they remained flexible and adaptive (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

During conversations, I waited to see if James would initiate the conversation. If he did not ask a question, I posed an open-ended question frequently used in writing workshop conferences, such as “How is it going?” (Anderson, 2000) or “What are you working on?” (Calkins, Hartman, & White, 2005). I interacted as a person interested in his work without assuming the teaching role. As the conversation proceeded, I often began the discussions with two questions that Carrie used: “What is your thinking here?” and “What decisions did you make as an illustrator or author?” My agenda for questions also depended on the specific events and intentions that the children brought to the workshop. Additional questions included: (a) What is happening in your piece? (b) What part(s) show strong feelings? or (c) What helped you to create your piece?

During this period of focusing on James, he became socially affiliated with three boys—Daniel, Louis, and Nicholas. Therefore they were included in my observations and conversations when James was working with them. Socially affiliated meant that the boys
regularly worked at the same table, chose one another for group activities, sat together at lunch, and played together during recess.

In my conversations with James and his peers, I attempted to address Spradley’s (1980) three principles by recording the language for each entry, capturing as much verbatim, and using very concrete, specific language (pp. 66-68). I recognized that interactions and conversations are multi-layered, and I was cognizant that as a researcher, I needed to depend on my interaction skills and carefully decide whether or not to make jottings (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 23). When it appeared that my presence as researcher jotting notes would interfere with the interactions, I tape recorded the conversations. This allowed me to be an active listener by maintaining eye contact, nodding my head, and observing explanations. Within 24 hours, I transcribed the taped conversations myself.

While conversing with James and his peers, I was also aware of the challenges of interviewing young children outlined by Hatch (1990). He cautioned researchers about four problems: (a) the nature of the adult-student relationship, (b) the children’s desire to give “the right answer,” (c) egocentrism, and (d) difficulty in viewing themselves separate from simply being themselves. The four strategies he suggested to address the problems included: (a) taking time to establish rapport, (b) keeping the interview informal, (c) asking questions children can answer and accepting their answers, and (d) using concrete artifacts as items for discussion (Hatch, 1990).

I addressed each of the four issues when conversing with James and his peers. First, given the extended time that I visited the classroom, I was able to establish rapport and I was viewed as someone who was interested in the events of Kindergarten. Second, I
kept the conversation informal by talking with James and his peers if they were seated at his table. I did this because I wanted to provide a familiar setting of conversation where he felt at ease and understood the rules of the discourse (Baturka & Walsh, 1991; D’Amto, 1986 as cited in Graue & Walsh, 1995). Third, I asked the previously described kinds of questions that Carrie regularly asked because James was accustomed to answering such questions. Fourth, I had James use concrete artifacts—his compositions—as items for discussion. During the conversations, James talked to me with his compositions placed before him. Since this was a regular classroom practice, James was accustomed to sharing his work with peers and other adults.

Artifact Collection: James’ Compositions

During each observation in Phase II and III, I collected James’ compositions, including drawings, writings, and transcriptions of oral language during Quiet Choices Workshop. As previously defined in Chapter 1, I use the term *composition* to mean a text as “a chunk of meaning that has unity and can be shared” (Short et al., 2000, p. 165). I scanned his drawn and written compositions and I audio recorded his oral compositions. Audio taping was necessary because jottings would not be sufficient to capture the entirety of his oral language. For this reason, I had the audio tape recorder readily accessible to capture such compositions.

I used the compositions as a record of the products James composed. I paired the compositions with the field notes which documented his composing processes. Thus I captured a complete record of both his composing processes and products. For each composition, I noted his choice of position in the classroom, sign system, and genre. I
also noted appropriations from cultural resources and his responses from other members of the composing community.

**Summary of Data Collection**

During the study, I conducted observations, engaged in conversations with James and his peers, and collected artifacts of the children’s compositions. Early in the study, I observed the entire class and in the last two phases I focused my attention on James as the focal child. In the following sections, I summarize the data collected in each of the three phases.

**Phase I: Selecting James as the Focal Child**

In Phase I, my aim was to document the children’s competencies with drawing, talking, and writing in order to select a child who was hesitant to use oral and written language. Using three observational forms, I noted their use of the sign systems under investigation while I observed the children, conversed with them, and collected their compositions. After a 12 week period, I selected James as the focal child of the inquiry because he fit the profile I sought to investigate. I then turned my attention to James’ composing processes and products during the next two phases.

**Phase II: Understanding James as a Composer**

During Phase II—a period of 4 weeks—my focus was on James as the focal child. I used the previously described data collection methods—observations, conversations, and collection of compositions. I observed him 4 days per week for 2 hours each day. This meant that I observed 16 sessions of Quiet Choices Workshop. He created 10 compositions during this period and I collected artifacts to represent each of them. The 10
compositions included 6 electronically scanned compositions since they were drawn or written and 4 audio taped compositions since they were composed through oral language. I engaged in conversations with James about each of the compositions.

**Phase III: Focusing on James’ Growth as a Writer**

After a period of 2 weeks to conduct preliminary data analysis, I returned to the classroom to replicate Phase II. During Phase III—a period of 4 weeks—there were three additional goals in this phase.

First, I refined my categories through more defined questions based upon previous findings. For example, in Phase II, I found where he chose to compose and with whom he chose to compose varied. Therefore in Phase III, I observed with the intent of looking at his role in the mini-community and the larger classroom community. I attended to the details of his position and his interaction with peers as I maintained the same position in the classroom and continued to interact with James by asking “How is it going?” or “Would you like to share with me what you are working on?”

Second, there was also an additional focus on James’ presentation of his compositions during sharing from the author’s chair (Graves, 1994) and within the mini-community. When James shared from the author’s chair, he shared with the entire class. Looking at this aspect provided a view of his peers’ reaction to his compositions and his subsequent actions. Since Carrie invited the children to share rather than require them to share, I had the opportunity to observe only those compositions which James chose to sit in the authors’ chair. My documentation in this phase involved noting the responses he received from others in the composing community and his reaction to the responses.
Third, I focused on the description of how James grew as a writer with particular attention to how he demonstrated an understanding of genres for various purposes and audiences. I used conversations with James to learn about his genre understanding.

During the 4 weeks of Phase III, I observed James 4 days per week for 2 hours each day. He was absent one day, and school was not in session for one day due to a holiday, thus I observed him for 14 sessions of Quiet Choices Workshop. James created five compositions and I collected each of them by electronically scanning the drawn and written texts. James created significantly fewer pieces during Phase III because they consisted of more pages with written text and more detail in the illustrations over multiple days. He also talked with peers as he drew and wrote, and his social interactions consumed some of his independent composing time. I again had conversations with him about each composition and I also conversed with him and a peer at the conclusion of the study to discuss his understanding of genre. Table 2 summarizes the phases, time in the class, and data collected.
Table 2

*Overview of Data Collection*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Time in class</th>
<th>Data collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| I     | 12 weeks, 2 days per week, 3-4 hours per day | 24 observations  
*Interactional Competencies Observation Form*  
*Functions of Oral Language Observation Form*  
*Features, Functions, and Social Processes of Drawing and Writing Observation Form* |
| II    | 4 weeks, 4 days per week, 2 hours per day | 16 observations  
12 transcripts of conversations with James and his peers  
10 Compositions |
| III   | 4 weeks, 4 days per week, 2 hours per day | 14 observations  
8 transcripts of conversations with James and his peers  
5 Compositions  
1 transcript of a conversation with James and a peer at the conclusion of the 4 weeks |

Data Analysis

Data analysis commenced with the initial collection of data and continued in a recursive manner throughout the study. I viewed field notes, audio tapes of oral compositions, drawings, writings, and transcripts of conversations with the children as
data sources (Erickson, 2004). In qualitative research, there is a transactive nature of data collection and data analysis (Spradley, 1980). Each influences the other and therefore they can not be viewed as separate phases of this inquiry.

**In Field Analysis**

The recursive process I used to conduct in the field analysis involved generating ideas for emerging themes and categories. My process mirrored Seidel’s (1998) process approach to data analysis that focuses on noticing, collecting, and thinking (p. 1). After a few sets of field notes were composed, I reread them multiple times and wrote preliminary themes and later categories in the margins. I then used these jottings to compose analytic memos which articulated future questions to assist in the subsequent observations. I asked Carrie to review the assertions to highlight misconceptions, thereby supporting member checking.

**Analyzing Transcripts of Conversations**

I used two methods to analyze the transcriptions of the conversations. First I utilized Erickson’s (2004) top down approach. This involves listening to the transcription tapes and constructing the equivalent to field notes or a review of the events as a way to analyze from whole to part (p. 491). Then from those notes, I made notations in the margins as I did with the full field notes from participant observation. Second, I also used the traditional bottom up approach (Sipe & Ghiso, 2004). This method involved transcribing the taped conversations, rereading the transcriptions, and noting emerging themes in the margins of the transcriptions. I chose to use both methods as a way to strengthen my data analysis procedures.
Annotating the Composing Process and Products

With the multiple data sources, it was important to create a chain of evidence to reveal how conclusions were drawn (Yin, 1994). At the conclusion of Phase II, I used all of my data resources—field notes, transcriptions of conversations, and James’ compositions—to annotate the composing process and product in two ways. First I analyzed James’ choices with regard to his position in the composing community, sign system, genre, appropriations, and the responses he received from others. A data recording form (Dyson, 1986b) organized the information analyzed and created an annotated record. It was constructed to reflect the definition of voice adopted for this inquiry. The data recording form is represented in Figure 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Composing Time</th>
<th>Choices of Sign Systems &amp; Genre</th>
<th>Appropriations</th>
<th>Responses from Others</th>
<th>Social Struggles or Social Successes</th>
<th>Other Questions &amp; Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>title with whom where materials duration</td>
<td>what/source</td>
<td>who/what whole group or small group sharing</td>
<td>actions within the mini-community of composers</td>
<td>within the composing community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Data Recording Form

Second, I made notations on the data recording forms after rereading the field notes, compositions, and transcripts of conversations. From the notations, I jotted emerging themes and possible categories in the margins. As I formed the categories, I
again shared them with Carrie and another literacy researcher familiar with qualitative methods. My aim in the inductive process of data analysis remained thick description.

At the conclusion of Phase III, I again used multiple readings of the field notes and transcripts of conversations to test and refine categories. Once I refined categories, I discussed them with Carrie and a peer debriefer. In discussions with Carrie and my peer debriefer, I shared definitions of my categories and assertions, and excerpts from my field notes, transcripts, and James’ compositions. I asked them to share their thoughts about my analyses as a way to confirm them. Our discussions allowed me to further refine my categories and assertions as a way to know that my analyses were reliable. Once themes appeared to solidify, I wrote a few integrative memos to scaffold the mind work involved in the analysis.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted criteria to establish trustworthiness includes addressing credibility, dependability, and confirmability. The implementation of such criteria assures that the standards of the qualitative research field have been met.

Credibility

Credibility refers to extent to which the findings are considered reliable. In my study, it was addressed in five ways: by (a) prolonged engagement, (b) persistent observation, (c) triangulation of data resources, (d) negative case analysis, and (e) peer debriefing.
**Prolonged Engagement**

My study lasted eight months and during Phases II and III, I was in the classroom four consecutive days a week. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that credibility can be enhanced through prolonged engagement (pp. 306-307). Merriam (2000) also acknowledged the length of time spent in the field is a way to enhance credibility. Since I was present in the classroom since the first day of school, observed twice a week during Phase I, and observed on four consecutive days during Phase II and III, I addressed the need for prolonged engagement. Thus in Phases II and II, when I observed James as the focal child, I spent 63 hours over 30 days in his classroom.

**Persistent Observation**

I implemented an agenda of intensely focused observations, following the protocol previously described and aligned with the definition of voice embraced in this study. My observations involved daily global views of the Quiet Choices Workshop and daily fine-grained observations of James. Therefore, I acknowledged the necessity of persistent observation.

**Triangulation**

Triangulation required the use of multiple sources of data that support one another and enhanced credible findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, triangulation was represented as shown in Figure 3.

Collectively these data resources sustained credible findings by verifying one another as I sought to identify “different sources of the same information” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 305).
Responsive Interviews/Conversations: Artifacts Composed by James:
With James and His Peers Drawn, Written, and Oral Compositions

Figure 3. Triangulation of Data

Negative Case Analysis

In order to assure that all accounts of the case aligned with the hypotheses, I used negative case analysis. The technique involved the process of identifying occurrences that did not fit neatly into the existing categories. Then continual revision of the categories proceeded until I accounted for all discrepant cases. Negative case analysis served as an important focus in conversations with my peer debriefer. This process of locating discrepant cases both expanded and compressed my emerging codes.

Peer Debriefing

During peer debriefing, I focused on discussing emerging themes and category construction as a way to test my hypotheses. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that peer debriefing through honest conversations that test the emerging themes provide another set of eyes to confirm my data analysis.
Carrie provided member checking each time I discussed my ongoing data analysis in the field with her. At least twice a week during lunch, we discussed the jottings I made while I observed. Conversations with Carrie allowed me to share what I saw and gave Carrie the opportunity to elaborate on and confirm my emerging analysis. Thus Carrie provided another set of eyes on the data.

An experienced primary grade literacy educator trained in qualitative research methods served as the peer debriefer, since she was knowledgeable about the topic under study, but not connected to the classroom. As previously described, the peer debriefer read through a set of data to check its alignment with my themes and categories. She looked at each theme, the corresponding category, and the definition. My peer debriefer found that she agreed with my analysis. Thus she was able to confirm that my findings were reliable. These steps were implemented as I strived to solidify all aspects of establishing credible findings.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the constancy of data over a period of time. Lincoln and Guba (1985) posited that “overlapping methods” of data collection and theoretical perspectives foster dependability of a study. In this study, I chose to overlap three methods of data collection: participant observation, conversations with James and his peers, and his compositions as artifacts. Each of these overlapped with one another since they all occurred when James composed. I specifically chose the data sources because they aligned with my interpretive orientation.
Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the extent to which the actual interpretations are embedded in the data. In my study, I maintained a researcher’s journal and it became a trail of the affective issues related to the study (Hatch, 2002). In my journal, I openly revealed my feelings about the research process and it served as “an extension of bracketing” (p. 88). This created an audit trail (Harste & Vasquez, 1998) of the decisions I made and the influence of my ongoing readings, conversations with colleagues and participants, and other scholarship engagements. I continued to maintain a field journal throughout data analysis to create an audit trail (Harste & Vasquez, 1998).

Hatch (2002) asserted that keeping a researcher’s journal is especially important to researchers conducting observational studies and it becomes a trail of the affective issues related to the study. My goal in this process was to enhance transparency and reflexivity (Schwandt, 2001). Therefore, I documented how I brought my multiple “selves” as researcher, teacher, teacher educator, and mother. A reflexive stance assisted in fostering validity since a social phenomenon was investigated (Schwandt, 2001).

The Issue of Generalizability

As an interpretive case study, my investigation dealt with a “bounded system” during a “bounded time period” of eight months, and in a single classroom. Yet, the issue of generalizability often presents questions. Stake (1995) responded to this concern by arguing the purpose of a case study is “particularization, not generalization” (p. 8). The case study required a focus on the unique features of the bounded system. Dressman and McCarthey (2004) argued that case studies have the potential to disrupt stereotypical
norms and foster new understandings among social factors (p. 336). Therefore the inquiry has the potential to inform us of the social factors in the life of James that influenced his voice development and his understanding of genre. This particular view of one Kindergarten composer demonstrates what happens when James chose his position in the composing community, sign systems, and genres; appropriated cultural resources, and received responses from others.

Summary

The fundamental aim of my inquiry was to reveal how James as a Kindergarten composer developed voice and an understanding of genre when given an invitation to use multiple sign systems. I created a profile of James to highlight his voice development and show how his understanding of genre matured.

This chapter highlighted the multiple forms of data collection: descriptive field notes from participant observation, transcripts from conversations with James, and his compositions. Data analysis occurred recursively in the field and upon completion of data collection. Trustworthiness was addressed through credibility, dependability, and confirmability.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of my study was to describe how a Kindergarten composer developed voice over time and grew as a writer when he was allowed to compose with multiple sign systems. The development of voice in this study was previously defined as a dynamic process of using multiple sign systems while appropriating the culture’s language and signs, engaging in social interactions, and forming identities in composing communities. The multiple sign systems under investigation were drawing, talking as storytelling, and writing. The following two main research questions with their corresponding subquestions guided my investigation:

1. How does a Kindergarten composer develop voice through the use of multiple sign systems during Quiet Choices Workshop?
   a. What choices does he make regarding his position in the composing community, his choice of sign systems, and selection of genre?
   b. What appropriations does he make in his compositions?
   c. What responses does he receive from others in his composing community?

2. How does Quiet Choice Workshop support an emerging writer’s understanding of genre?
   a. What changes occurred in his statement of purpose and intended audience for his compositions?
b. How did his purpose align with the genre features present in his compositions?

My research questions framed this interpretive case study. In order to understand the phenomena under investigation—the development of voice and growth as a writer—I sought to describe the factors and the processes through which James made meaning as he engaged in social interaction. The findings reported in this chapter are rooted in this interpretive orientation.

In the remainder of this chapter, I present the context of James’ literacy experiences in the Kindergarten classroom, including the district’s Kindergarten philosophy, the teacher’s beliefs about learning and literacy, a detailed description of Quiet Choices Workshop, and James’ interests and experiences outside of the classroom. Then I address the first issue of how he constructed voice through the use of multiple sign systems by explaining James’ choices. Next, I elaborate on the appropriations he made in his compositions. Then I explain the responses he received as a result of the choices. Finally, I discuss how James’ participation in Quiet Choices Workshop supported him as a writer by explaining changes in his understanding of genre.

The case of James was situated in the context of his literacy experiences. The context of James’ literacy experiences included four aspects important to understanding his voice development and growth as a writer. First, James was a literacy learner in a particular school district and Kindergarten classroom. Second, his teacher, Carrie, held a particular set of beliefs about learning and literacy. Carrie’s beliefs influenced James’ literacy experiences in school. Third, one specific literacy experience in Carrie’s
The School District’s Kindergarten Philosophy

The school district valued a caring, social constructivist environment for the full-day Kindergarten. Carrie implemented this value in three ways: (a) developing a learning community, (b) using social learning practices, and (c) honoring individual interests and experiences.

A statement in the Kindergarten Mission Statement (2006) addressed the value of forming a learning community: “Providing students with a quality education and equipping them to become members of a caring, respectful community of learners is the essence of our program” (n. p.). Building the community of learners began the first day of school at the orientation for students and parents. The focus was on creating a sense of security by becoming familiar with the Kindergarten procedures of the school. The principal communicated this value to the parents, “We want your child to feel comfortable here and part of a community of learners” (field notes, August 28, 2007). Carrie also noted the importance of community building; “The first month of school is really about building a community of learners. The children must have connections” (personal communication, August 30, 2007).
Social activity was fundamental to learning and present in the *Kindergarten Mission Statement* (2006): “Students will begin to learn and communicate effectively as a member of a whole group, small group, or as an individual” (n. p.). The classroom structure fostered social interaction. The children sat at flower petal shaped tables and instruction included small group and partner activities throughout the day.

The *Kindergarten Mission Statement* (2006) included recognition of children’s varied interests and experiences. It read, “We will capture their interest and excitement as together we solve the mysteries of learning. We acknowledge and appreciate every student’s unique gifts and experiences with the goal of encouraging social, emotional, physical, and academic growth” (n. p.). Carrie invited and honored the child’s “gifts and experiences” during three events in the classroom: (a) sharing at the daily morning meeting; (b) sharing once a week with each of three Kindergarten classes; and (c) composing *Weekend News* each Monday morning, a text in which the children told of their activities and experiences at home. The Kindergarten teachers referred to the collective group of the three classes as “the Kindergarten neighborhood.” The three events allowed the children to receive public acknowledgments of accomplishments and interests. The value of a caring, social constructivist classroom was also evident in Carrie’s beliefs about learning and literacy.

**Carrie’s Beliefs About Learning and Literacy**

Carrie’s philosophy of literacy learning highlighted the importance of authentic reasons for reading and writing, while gradually releasing the responsibility to the learner (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). She embraced a broad definition of composing by equally
honoring drawing, talking as storytelling, and writing through the presentation of mini-
lessons on “telling your story.”

As stated in chapter 3, Carrie utilized a balanced literacy approach for instruction. She did not use the basal series adopted by the school district. The children experienced read alouds, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading daily. On a daily basis, Carrie facilitated interactive writing (McCarrier, Pinnell, & Fountas, 2000). This meant the students generated messages and they shared the task of composing sentences on large chart paper. Carrie invited students to “share the pen” with her (McCarrier et al., 2000) as she scaffolded the writing task. In this activity, children witnessed demonstrations of writing by the teacher and other students.

Carrie constructed a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) where learning, identity, and culture were interwoven and honored. Children’s identities involved various affiliations based on their experiences and interests. Carrie encouraged the children to draw upon their experiences and interests when they composed texts. In a reciprocal manner, literacy learning shaped the children’s identities. Children socially interacted during composing and shared their compositions. The responses they received from others influenced their identities. Thus the identities children constructed molded their literacy experiences whereas the literacy experiences were a means to reveal their identities (McCarthey & Moje, 2002).

Carrie viewed the development of voice as an ongoing journey. She defined voice as:
[It is] the process of developing who they are as composers. In every child, there is a voice or story waiting to be told or heard. It is our priority to release that voice in a morally, socially acceptable way. So while they are developing their own voice, they are assimilating many different voices to make their own voice unique. (personal communication, March 6, 2007)

Carrie saw her role as one in which she fostered the development of voice by inviting children to create compositions that were meaningful to them. Her quote acknowledged the complexity of voice for young composers and this stance influenced her development of Quiet Choices Workshop.

*The Context of Quiet Choices Workshop*

Carrie developed Quiet Choices Workshop two years ago in response to her reflections on the composing processes of Kindergarten children. Her goals were (a) to provide demonstrations of various ways to “tell your story,” (b) to offer choices among sign systems, and (c) to create an environment where children support one another in their literacy learning.

Quiet Choices Workshop was a 45-minute period and its format mirrored writing workshop (Calkins, 1994; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Graves, 1983; Murray, 1987). Writing workshop is a process-oriented approach to teaching writing that values children’s cognitive process and their personal and cultural interests. The three components of writing workshop include a mini-lesson in which the teacher demonstrates one aspect of writing, independent writing time, and sharing their writing with
classmates. During the independent writing time, the children interact with peers and confer with the teacher about their writing.

The feature that separated Quiet Choices Workshop from a traditional writing workshop was that Carrie valued each of the sign systems—talking as storytelling, drawing, and writing—as equivalent forms to tell a story. Talking as storytelling meant children orally composed stories without written text. When children chose talking as storytelling, they either sat alone, in small groups, or in front of the whole class.

Carrie began Quiet Choices Workshop with a mini-lesson, followed by composing time, and concluded with sharing from the author’s chair (Graves, 1994). The author’s chair was a designated place in the classroom where the children shared their work and received feedback from Carrie and his peers.

The mini-lesson lasted approximately 5-10 minutes and children sat on a rug while Carrie sat on a chair next to the easel with chart paper. The brief lesson consisted of a clear teaching point, a demonstration, and a guided practice to actively involve the emerging learners. A range of mini-lessons emphasized the variety of ways the children could tell their stories including stories using drawing, writing, and talking, or any combination of those sign systems.

The composing time of Quiet Choices Workshop was a 20-30 minute period when children worked alone or with others on a composition while Carrie circulated the classroom to confer with them. They had the freedom to choose what they composed as well as how they composed. Carrie encouraged children to compose both functional and compositional writing (Ray & Glover, 2008). Functional pieces included signs and
posters for the classroom, messages and requests for friends and family, and artifacts—lists, tickets, and maps needed for dramatic play. For compositional pieces, Carrie encouraged the children to compose stories on topics that they really cared about. She posed questions to ask about their interests, experiences, and expertise. Carrie regularly asked two questions: “What kind of story do you want to tell?” and “How do you want to tell your story?” She honored the topics children chose, including topics with action, physical conflict, and violence. In January, children began to regularly choose book making. Carrie posted a list of potential types of books for composing. The list included ABC books, counting books, I like books, I can books, my favorite things books, and all about books. The freedom to make choices allowed students to engage in meaningful, authentic composing.

Carrie gave the children choices among various materials located in an “art cart” while they composed. The materials included markers, colored pencils, stamps and ink pads, various colors of lined and unlined paper, construction paper, blank books of various sizes from 3”x 5” to 8”x 10,” various types of stationary, envelopes, and scissors that cut decorative edges. Additionally, Carrie offered puppets, a tape recorder, and an extensive classroom library of quality children’s literature for creating oral compositions.

While instrumental music played softly, Carrie encouraged social interactions during Quiet Choices Workshop. Children selected with whom they composed and where they sat, stood, or laid as they composed. Once or twice a week, Carrie extended this invitation to compose with peers in the adjoining Kindergarten classroom. On such days, Carrie and her colleague left the door open and gave the children permission to visit their
“Kindergarten neighbors” to tell and share stories. As a result of these interactions, the children became aware of one another’s composing processes and regularly conversed about the content and form of their compositions. James never chose to leave the room. However, there was one day when James’ triplet brother, Stan, left his adjoining classroom and joined James and Daniel to compose collaboratively (field notes, February 21, 2008).

For sharing, Carrie drew the children back to the rug and invited volunteers to share their compositions from the author’s chair. After the children shared their texts, Carrie and their classmates provided feedback through comments and questions.

The following sections provide the results of my analysis, the case of James as a polyphonic literacy apprentice. In the Greek language, polyphonic means having characteristics of many voices. James’ case represented his multiple, dynamic, and socially situated development of voices that illustrated his membership in various cultural clubs (Smith, 1988). As a member of various cultural clubs, James utilized his accumulation of experiences to voice his compositions as a Kindergarten student, a brother among a set of triplets, an animal lover, a bull riding expert, a storyteller, an illustrator, and an author.

Introducing James

James turned six when school began. He is one in a set of triplet brothers who spent much time together. James also has a younger sister and brother who were twins. He frequently wore cowboy boots, jeans adorned with a large metal belt buckle, and a denim jacket. On a parent survey at the beginning of the school year, his mother reported
that his interests outside of school include playing outdoors with his brothers, riding his four horses, and playing with his cars while watching *Hot Wheels*. His favorite television shows included bull riding, *Sponge Bob*, *Power Rangers*, and *Star Wars*. James enjoyed movies about Lane Frost, (a deceased world champion bull rider), John Wayne, and westerns in general. James’ mother described her son as “very friendly and loveable” (parent survey, September 1, 2007).

In school, James and his brothers were placed in three different Kindergarten classrooms. At the beginning of the school year, James experienced difficulty being separated from his brothers. He struggled with independently articulating his needs and ideas. From his first day in Kindergarten, I observed James to be attentive with adults and peers but cautious prior to engaging in academic activities. He consistently remained eager to interact with his brothers when the three Kindergarten classes united for recess.

As explained in chapter 3, James quietly stood on the sidelines of peer interaction, intently observed his peers, and consistently chose drawing over other sign systems. Therefore, I was curious about how he would develop voice as a composer and how he would grow as a writer when offered a variety of sign systems.

*The Development of Voice*

In this section, I describe how James developed voice as he (a) made a variety of choices, (b) appropriated cultural resources from his official and unofficial spheres, and (c) received responses from others. The three ideas serve as the three themes to answer the first main research question: How does a Kindergarten composer develop his voice through the use of multiple sign systems during Quiet Choices Workshop?
Three Choices

In response to question 1a, which asks what choices James made, I describe three kinds of choices James made daily during the composing time of Quiet Choices Workshop. The three kinds of choices included: (a) his position in the composing community, (b) the sign systems he used to create his compositions, and (c) the genre of his compositions. My goal in looking at James’ choices regarding position in the composing community, sign systems, and genres was to learn how the choices were part of his voice development.

Given my prolonged engagement from January to April in James’ classroom, I was able to document his choices and the subsequent changes in his compositions. Thus, I was able to observe James’ voice development as a dynamic process while he composed with multiple sign systems. In the following sections, I explain three choices James made as he composed. First, I explain the importance of each choice, define the categories, provide the frequencies, and describe the changes in his choices during the study. Second, I provide a vignette to show the presence of the choices in one day.

From August through November, when I observed the entire class for the purpose of selecting a focal child, James typically chose positions alone on the periphery of the composing community—meaning he sat outside of any peer group. He drew while labeling the illustrations with written language to compose texts about his interests and experiences. In January and February, James chose to gradually enter a mini-community of composers with three peers—Daniel, Nicholas, and Louis. As James composed alongside and with the boys, he began to choose drawing and writing. James also used
talking as storytelling and a combination of talking and drawing while he composed a
diverse variety of genres. In March and April, James chose positions alone, and alongside and
with peers, and he predominately chose drawing and writing as he explored composing
texts that were fiction and hybrids (Kamberelis & Bovino, 1999; Knobel & Lankshear,
2008; Pappas, 2006). By hybrids, I refer to texts in which James blended nonfiction and
fiction.

James’ choices during composing changed over time. I observed and documented
the choices James made from January to April. Thus, I can describe his choices in the
following categories.

*Position in the Composing Community*

James’ position in the composing community was relevant to my study because
his choice of position afforded him varying degrees of social interaction. By position, I
refer to how James chose to participate and interact with peers during composing time—
the period during Quiet Choices Workshop when he created compositions. Social
interaction was one aspect of how I defined voice as a dynamic process therefore
investigating the degree to which James interacted with peers was important.

Throughout this study, James engaged in one of five positions in the composing
community. Every day he composed, James moved frequently from one position to
another. His choices varied a lot and showed that he changed in how he interacted with
his peers—no participation, passive participation, or active participation. I created five
categories to describe James’ positions in the composing community: compose privately,
compose parallel, compose while conversing, compose collaboratively, and compose
before an audience. In Table 3, I define the categories and state the frequencies for James’ choice of position in the composing community.

Table 3

James’ Choices of Position in Composing Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Number of days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Composing privately</td>
<td>James chose to sit alone while absorbed in composing. He did not choose to sit by particular peers or converse with peers.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composing parallel</td>
<td>James chose to sit by his peers who were also composing. He did not initiate conversations with his peers but frequently paused from his work to observe their work. If a peer asked James a question or made a comment, he briefly responded and then returned to his task.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composing while conversing</td>
<td>James initiated conversation with others about the content of his compositions and stated personal connections to the content.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composing collaboratively</td>
<td>James and his peers shared the goal of creating one composition by jointly composing.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composing before an audience</td>
<td>James independently created an oral composition about a puppet while he sat in the author’s chair.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* I collected data during the 30 days of from January to April. As mentioned earlier, Quiet Choice Workshop occurred four times a week (Monday through Thursday) and I observed James during each session in the eight weeks of data collection with two
exceptions. He was absent one day (March 19, 2008) and school was not in session on the Monday after Easter (March 24, 2008). Therefore I observed James for 30 days during Quiet Choices Workshop from January to April.

I chose to analyze James’ position during each day for two reasons. First, I wanted to see if his position varied when more than one day was needed to complete a composition. I found that James remained in the same position for every day needed to complete a composition. Second, I wanted to see if James chose more than position in the same day. I found there was only one day when James chose two different positions. On February 4, 2008, James composed parallel as he created a drawing for his mother and then he composed before an audience as he used talking as storytelling about a puppet. My documentation of James’ daily choice of position revealed that once he chose a position, he remained there for the 20-30 minutes of composing time with this one exception on February 4, 2008.

James most often preferred to parallel compose or privately compose. From January to April, he selected composing parallel 32 % of the time and composing privately 35% of the time.

The data show that James’ choices changed from January to April. He consistently chose to compose parallel and compose privately during each month, but varied in his other choices of positions. Table 4 illustrates James’ choices of position by month to provide a portrait of how his choices varied.
Table 4

*James’ Choices of Position by Month*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Composing privately</th>
<th>Composing parallel</th>
<th>Composing while conversing</th>
<th>Composing collaboratively</th>
<th>Composing before an audience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>February</em></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* On February 4, 2008, James chose two different positions—composing parallel and then composing before an audience. This was the only day when he chose more than one position.

James’ choice of position throughout the study allowed him to gradually become a member in the mini-community. In January, James only chose to compose parallel and compose privately. In February, there were three changes in James’ choices of position. First, James moved frequently from one position to another. Second, he chose every position at least once. Third, for the first time James chose to compose while conversing, compose collaboratively, and compose before an audience. James also continued to compose privately for nearly 50% of the days in February. His choices in February showed a new pattern and demonstrated that he actively participated with his peers as well as composed alone.
In March and April, James chose to spend a majority of his days composing parallel and composing privately and he also chose to compose while conversing and compose collaboratively. His choices in March and April demonstrate that James continued to make choices with others, but there were also days when he was intent on composing as reflected in his choice to work alone and focus only on his composition.

James’ choice of position in the composing community was important in three ways. First, James’ freedom to choose a position allowed him to change as a participant in the mini-community. Initially, he composed alone and later he composed alongside and with peers as he casually conversed and cooperatively engaged in common goals. Second, James’ choices of position placed him near peers who offered scaffolds through assistance and social interaction. Third, his choices of positions provided him with a clear view of peers’ demonstrations through actions and artifacts (Cambourne, 1988). Each of these factors allowed James a comfortable position needed to compose.

A close analysis of James’ position revealed that when he chose composing parallel, composing while conversing, or composing collaboratively, he chose to sit with members of a specific mini-community of composers. By mini-community, I mean a subgroup of students within the larger composing community of the entire class who regularly composed together during Quiet Choices Workshop. James chose to sit with the mini-community that included Daniel, Louis, and Nicholas. As stated earlier, Daniel, Louis, and Nicholas became socially affiliated within the first month of school while James remained on the periphery. The literacy practices of Quiet Choice Workshop afforded James the freedom to sit with the three boys so he was able to gradually become
a member of the mini-community. In the 10 days when James chose composing parallel, he was always positioned with at least one of the three boys—Nicholas, Louis, or Daniel. Every day James chose composing while conversing, he sat with Daniel. James also chose a position with Daniel every day he collaboratively composed.

When I examined the first and last day of the intense data collection period from January to April, there was quite the contrast. On the first day, James composed parallel as he drew and wrote. On the last day, James composed collaboratively and he provided assistance to Daniel as they used only writing to create a note to Daniel’s mom. James directed Daniel to write the format and the content.

The data showed that James varied his choice of position while composing. Sometimes James chose to focus on only his composing agenda without choosing to observe or interact with peers—privately compose. Other times, he chose to passively participate with peers as when he chose to compose parallel. There were also days when James chose to actively participate with peers while he composed while conversing, composed collaboratively, and composed before an audience. Choices in position afforded James the opportunity to assume different roles in the mini-community. His roles included a range: working alone, responding to questions, observing peers’ demonstrations, providing assistance, and mentoring peers. Thus different positions supported different roles as James changed in how he participated in the composing community.

Since James had the opportunity to choose a position, he had the opportunity to choose places in the classroom where support was shared through social interaction and
demonstrations. He also had the opportunity to determine the kinds of roles he wished to assume. The importance then of the freedom to choose a position was evident in his ability to change as a participant in the mini-community of composers. With this understanding of James’ choices of positions, I turn to a look at his choices of sign systems in the next section.

**Sign system**

During the study, James chose one of six sign systems when he composed. James’ choice of sign systems was important because the use of sign systems was directly stated in my definition of voice. I was interested in how James used multiple sign systems—“multiple ways of knowing—the ways in which humans share and make meaning” (Short et al., 2000, p. 160).

His choices of sign systems included: drawing (using only illustrations to convey meaning), talking as storytelling (using oral language to describe a puppet or tell a story using illustrations in a picture book), writing (using only written language to convey meaning), drawing and talking (using illustrations and oral language), writing to supplied illustrations (using illustrations supplied by Carrie and written language), and drawing and writing (using illustrations and corresponding written language). Drawing is frequently viewed in writing workshop pedagogy as a way young children represent ideas. However, talking as storytelling is not a common practice in writing workshop. Carrie modeled the use of talking as storytelling and encouraged the children to use talking to tell their stories.
I chose to analyze his choice of sign systems during each day, just as I analyzed his position in the composing community. I did this because I wanted to see if his choice of sign systems changed when he worked on the same piece over several days. I found that James always stayed with the same sign systems for each day needed to complete a composition. For example, during the three days James worked on the four-page book, “Animal Book,” he used drawing and writing everyday. James did not vary in his choice of sign systems within a composition on any day. However, there was one day, February 4, 2008, when James composed two pieces using two different sign systems—first he drew a picture for his mom and then used talking as storytelling. As previously explained, this was also the day he chose two different positions.

Table 5 explains the six categories, definitions, and frequencies for James’ choices of sign systems from January to April. An example of each category for James’ choices of sign systems is presented in Appendix F to enhance the clarity of the definitions.

When I observed James’ choices of sign systems, I saw two important observations. First, James preferred to compose with drawing and writing. The data showed that James chose drawing and writing on 20 of the 30 days in January through April. In every month, James clearly preferred drawing and writing over the other sign systems. When composing with drawing and writing, James always drew first and then composed the written text. I asked him about his preference of drawing first and he revealed his reasoning as, “When I draw, it helps me to know what I want to write. It is
Table 5

*James’ Choice of Sign Systems*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Number of days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>Used only illustrations to convey meaning.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking as storytelling</td>
<td>Used oral language to describe a puppet or tell a story about the illustrations in a picture book.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Used only written language to convey meaning.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing and talking as storytelling</td>
<td>Used both illustrations and oral language to create a multimodal representation.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing to supplied illustrations</td>
<td>Used illustrations supplied by Carrie (four sequential events of a wordless story) and written language to create multimodal representations.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing and writing</td>
<td>Used illustrations with corresponding written language to create multimodal representations.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

easier to draw” (informal interview, April 25, 2008). Carrie also noted that she observed James chose to draw first in composing activities outside of Quiet Choices Workshop.

Second, the data showed that James’ choices changed from January to April. In January, James used two choices of sign systems: talking as storytelling, and drawing and writing. In February, James chose four different sign systems: drawing, talking as storytelling, drawing and talking, and drawing and writing. In March and April, James
did not repeat the choices of drawing, and talking as storytelling. Instead, he chose two sign systems in March: drawing and writing, and writing to supplied illustrations. He also chose two sign systems in April: writing, and drawing and writing. Thus, James’ choices in April and May represent a shift to composing all texts with paper and pencil (as well as markers and crayons). Table 6 shows when James’ choices of sign systems occurred during January through April.

Table 6

James Choices of Sign Systems by Month

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Drawing</th>
<th>Talking as storytelling</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Drawing and talking as storytelling</th>
<th>Writing to supplied illustrations</th>
<th>Drawing and writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As his experiences in Quiet Choices Workshop expanded, his choices of multiple sign systems expanded. In March and April, James used writing every time he composed during Quiet Choices Workshop. Up to that point, he only used writing on 10 of the 17 days. He combined the use of drawing and writing for 10 of the 14 days in March and April and used supplied illustrations in 3 of the 14 days. Thus, James demonstrated a preference to compose texts on paper as books and messages. Each time James composed
with the use of multiple sign systems, his choice also reflected a particular genre. His selections of genres are explained in the next section.

My analysis revealed the importance of James’ freedom to choose familiar sign systems. He initially selected the sign systems of drawing and talking as storytelling. These were sign systems with which he had prior experience. As Horn (2005) argued, young children enter school with such experience so honoring talking as storytelling is student-centered. Additionally, James related that drawing was an activity that he enjoyed outside of school. Thus, James’ opportunity to select familiar sign systems gave him a comfort level to compose in the same way he chose comfortable positions in the composing community.

Genre

James selected one of six genres when he composed from January to April. Genre describes “the kind or form of writing” composed for specific purposes and audiences (Ray & Glover, 2008, p. 136). It was important to examine James’ selection of genre because understanding of genres develops through social interaction within communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991)—the Kindergarten classroom and the mini-community of composers. My definition of voice included the component of social interaction. Therefore James’ voice development included composing particular genres.

Traditionally genre is used to categorize written texts, but I expand the use of genre to categorize every composition James created during Quiet Choices Workshop. As previously stated, a composition is defined in this study as a text or “chunk of meaning that has unity and can be shared” (Short et al., 2000, p. 165). Thus, I categorized each
composition regardless of the sign system James used. For example, when James orally composed a text about a puppet, I categorized the composition according to the features listed in the definitions below.

To distinguish genres, I used three features discussed by Ray and Glover (2008) to create the categories. First, I analyzed how the text was organized. Texts that moved through time with an initial event, sequent events, and concluding event were labeled narrative. Texts that moved through a listing of ideas related to a common topic were labeled non-narrative. Second, I examined James’ stance concerning the content. If he created the events, I labeled the text fiction. If he reported factual information, I labeled the text nonfiction. When it was not clear to me if the information was created by James or reported as facts, then I asked him “what kind of piece” he composed to gain an understanding of his stance. Third, I analyzed James’ purpose by looking at whether the composition informed or entertained the reader. I acknowledge that as James composed, there was blurring in his purposes, but I used the salient features to categorize the compositions. I also encompassed the idea that James engaged as a way to entertain himself.

During January through April, approximately 67% of his compositions involved some element of fiction, meaning they appeared in the categories of narrative fiction, non-narrative fiction, narrative hybrid, or non-narrative hybrid. His remaining compositions were classified as nonfiction or messages. Table 7 lists six categories, definitions, and frequencies to explain the genre of the 15 compositions James composed from January to April.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Number of compositions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-narrative</td>
<td>Organized through a list of statements.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nonfiction</td>
<td>Included informational statements.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Author’s purpose was to inform.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-narrative fiction</td>
<td>Organized through a list of statements or events.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Included fictional statements and events.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Author’s purpose was to entertain.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative fiction</td>
<td>Organized through the movement of time.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Included fictional story elements (setting, characters, events).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Author’s purpose was to entertain.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-narrative hybrid</td>
<td>Organized through a list of statements or events.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Included both factual statements and fictional events.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Author’s stance was to both inform and entertain.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative hybrid</td>
<td>Organized through movement of time.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Included factual information and fictional events.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Author’s stance was to inform and entertain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message</td>
<td>Served a functional purpose to convey meaning to others.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drawings and writing that were intended for another person.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following examples for each category clarify the definitions.

*Non-narrative nonfiction.* An example of non-narrative nonfiction using drawing and writing is represented in Figure 4.

The goat climbed [a] mountain.

A Nan[ny] keeps her baby safe.  The goat eats grass.
A goat can climb a tree.

Figure 4. “Goats,” non-narrative nonfiction, February 25-28, 2008.

“Goats” is a non-narrative nonfiction piece because it is organized through a list of statements, includes informational statements, and James’ purpose was to inform. He described the text as “real” and stated he wanted to “tell about the goats and what they do” (field notes, April 25, 2008).

Non-narrative nonfiction. An example of non-narrative fiction using talking as storytelling is represented in the transcript for “Harry Bubbles” (February 4, 2008).

His name is Harry Bubbles. (Laughter erupts for approximately 10 seconds while several children repeat the name, Harry Bubbles, Harry Bubbles). Harry Bubbles eats bananas. He plays with his friends and they swing on vines. He hides in a tree when enemies come. He hides behind the tree and holds on tight and goes like this (squeaking the mechanism in the monkey). This elicits
laughter from the children.) He lives with his mom and dad and eats scorpions in can. (Again the children burst into laughter.) (transcript, February 4, 2008)

I labeled “Harry Bubbles” as non-narrative fiction because it is organized through a list of statements about a make-believe animal, and the author’s purpose was to entertain. James described his purpose, “Make them [peers] laugh.”

*Narrative fiction.* The category of narrative fiction is provided in Figure 5.

I might get eaten by a shark.

I’m putting in dirt.
I am getting hot.

Hurrah!

Figure 5. “Sand,” narrative fiction, March 18, 20, and 21, 2008. From COLLECTIONS, Friends and Family, Grade K, Theme Book. Copyright © by Harcourt, Inc. reproduced by permission of the publisher. Appendix G includes the permission letter from the publisher.

“Sand” is a narrative fiction because the story moved through time, James composed dialogue the children in the illustrations shared to create events. He explained that his purpose was “tell a story about kids on a sunny day” (April 25, 2008).
*Non-narrative hybrid.* An example of non-narrative hybrid is shown in Figure 6.

A baby can hatch.     A t-rex bit a triceratops.

*Figure 6.* “Dinosaurs II,” non-narrative hybrid, March 25-27, 2008.

“Dinosaurs II” is a non-narrative hybrid because James blended nonfiction and fiction in a list of two informational statements and two illustrations. James’ explanation provided me with an understanding of his blending. James explained the first page as, “Real and pretend. A dinosaur really hatches from an egg but I made up the exploding volcano emergency [in the illustration].” James justified his label of “pretend” because the drawing on the first page did not really happen. Then he explained the second page, “This is real. T-rex is a meat eater. He really ate him” (informal interview, April 25, 2008).
**Narrative hybrid.** In a similar text about dinosaurs, I saw an example of a narrative hybrid. It is represented in Figure 7.

*A baby runs.*                  *A raptor grabbed the baby!*

*A raptor grabs the baby!*       *A baby dies.*

**Figure 7.** “Dinosaurs I,” narrative hybrid, February 18-20, 2008.
“Dinosaurs I” is a narrative hybrid because the text moves through time and James’ comments reveal that he blended nonfiction and fiction. James described “Dinosaurs I” as “Part is real. Part is fake.” He explained the first page, “This is fake” (referring to the baby running as an event he created). Then on page two he shared, “This really happened.” James discussed page 3, “This is real,” and then described page 4 as “Real” (April 25, 2008). James noted the true facts included: raptors ate other baby dinosaurs and after the babies were eaten, they died.

Messages. Examples of messages are represented in two sign systems: drawing and writing. An example of a message using drawing is represented in Figure 8.

![Figure 8](image)

Figure 8. “A Picture for Dad,” message, February 6, 2008.

I categorized “A Picture for Dad” as a message because James stated, “I will give this to Dad to tell him I like when we play basketball” (field notes, February 6, 2008).
An example of a message using writing is represented in Figure 9 as a note James and Daniel composed collaboratively to Daniel’s mom (April 10, 2008).

![Image of a handwritten note]

**Figure 9.** “A Note to Daniel’s Mom,” message, April 10, 2008.

In the note to Daniel’s mom, the format included three features of written messages: the opening “Dear Mom,” the content of a request with a question, and the closing “from Daniel.” James described the purpose was “to ask Daniel’s mom if he could get a Mohawk” (April 10, 2008).

I saw differences when I looked at James’ choices of genres. In January through February, James composed five different genres: non-narrative nonfiction, non-narrative fiction, narrative fiction, narrative hybrid, and messages. In March and April, James composed three different genres: narrative fiction, non-narrative hybrid, and messages. However, he most frequently chose narrative fiction. James’ choice of genres then revealed a dynamic process of expressing his ideas in different forms. In choosing
different genres and including different features in his compositions, James demonstrated that he made decisions and acted like a writer. Table 8 shows James’ selection of genres from January to April.

Table 8

*James Choices of Genres by Month*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-narrative nonfiction</th>
<th>Non-narrative fiction</th>
<th>Narrative fiction</th>
<th>Non-narrative hybrid</th>
<th>Narrative hybrid</th>
<th>Messages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ten of James’ 15 compositions were texts with fictional elements—meaning texts that included some element of created events. When I refer to texts with fictional elements, I refer to non-narrative fiction, narrative fiction, non-narrative hybrids, and narrative hybrids. James spent considerable time—21 of his 30 days—creating texts with fictional elements and his composing process consisted of two important features: experimenting with various sign systems and creating hybrids.

First, when James composed fictional texts, he played with a variety of sign systems—talking as storytelling, drawing and talking as storytelling, writing to supply illustrations, and drawing and writing—for substantive time. James first explored texts with fictional elements by choosing talking as storytelling. Over a one week period, from
January 31 to February 7, James chose talking as storytelling four days to explore the genres of non-narrative fiction and narrative fiction. The complete transcript of his first narrative fiction—“The Long Dog”—using talking as storytelling on January 31, 2008, appears in Appendix H. James used the illustrations in a picture book, Pretzel (Rey, 1944) as scaffolding to create the characters, events, problem, and solution. His use of the illustrations reflected the use of a mentor text (Ray, 1999)—meaning James used the book as a model for content and form. He heard multiple demonstrations of the narrative organization of a text from Carrie’s daily read alouds and his mother’s read alouds “several times per week” (parent survey, September 1, 2007). James repeated the same choices one week later when he used The Pinkish, Purplish, Bluish Egg (Peet, 1963) as a mentor text and orally composed “The Bird Nest.”

In both compositions, “The Long Dog” and “The Bird Nest,” James selected a familiar sign system—talking as storytelling. From this point forward, James’ choices predominately reflected exploration of texts with fictional elements. In his choices and final products of “The Long Dog” and “The Bird Nest,” James’ dynamic process of expression—his voice—revealed he was an oral storyteller of make-believe.

Second, James combined fiction and nonfiction to create a non-narrative hybrid and a narrative hybrid. For example in the non-narrative hybrid, “Dinosaurs II” (see Figure 6), James used the organization of listing information, but blended the “true and pretend” information and explained the specific components of the book. Therefore the text was not exclusively nonfiction or fiction. The manner in which James blended the
elements of fiction and nonfiction resulted in his creation of a new genre and he stood as a *story weaver of fact and fiction*.

Looking at James’ choices of genre showed that he chose his reasons to write and his audience. Thus he engaged in authentic composing for real audiences as opposed to contrived writing for pretend audiences. His freedom to choose the kind of piece meant his choice was driven by real reasons. Similar to the comfort level James found in choosing his position and sign system, James also chose genres that were comfortable. The genres he chose aligned with real reasons on his writing agenda as a six year old—an agenda that included telling stories, stating information, and relating messages. James’ process of experimenting while making his three choices was so intriguing that it is worthwhile to examine the interaction of the choices in depth. I present a view of the interaction in the following section.

*Choices in an Early Composition (January 30, 2008)*

In this section, I share a vignette from January 30, 2008, to show James’ choice of position in the composing community, choice of sign systems, and selection of genre. James made the three decisions each time he engaged in composing time during Quiet Choices Workshop. In this vignette, James first chose parallel composing—meaning he chose to sit by peers who were also engaged in composing, and he did not initiate conversation with them, but he responded to their questions. Second, James chose drawing and writing as sign systems. Third, his genre selection was non-narrative nonfiction book about animals, a topic of interest to James.
As Carrie told the children they could begin their composing time on January 30, 2008, James immediately gathered his materials and chose his position in the classroom. He quietly walked to the table where Nicholas and Louis engaged in making books and James began his third day working on “Animal Book.” James returned to the drawing of the dragon on page 3 that he started the previous day. He finished the drawing by illustrating the fire and then proceeded to write the sentence. First, he verbalized the entire sentence and then spoke one word at a time as he wrote the word. James methodically placed his finger after each word to insure appropriate spacing. Carrie previously modeled appropriate spacing in a mini-lesson with the goal of making writing “easier to read.” Figure 10 depicts James’ four-page “Animal Book” and includes the text as he read it upon completion.

The turtle buries eggs!
The alligator ate a person.

The dragon blows fire!
Throughout the composing time, Louis and Nicholas conversed while composing, but James remained silent. As James started the fourth and final page, Louis asked him two questions and gave a compliment. James responded to each question. The conversation is documented in the following portion of the transcript.

Louis: What are you making?

James: An animal book. (He responded by continuing to draw the crab without taking his eyes off the drawing.)

Louis: What animals are in the book?

James: A turtle, alligator, a dragon. (Again he did not make eye contact with Louis.)

Louis: I like your drawings.

James: Thanks. (James looked up from his drawing and made eye contact with Louis as he spoke this thank you.)
Louis kindly smiled in response. James quickly returned to his composition. He remained serious throughout the entire composing time. In this brief exchange between the two boys, James sat alongside Louis and answered his questions as evidence that he was interested in Louis’ comments. However, James did not initiate conversation. Following this dialogue, James finished drawing the crab and wrote the corresponding sentence to complete his book.

In “Animal Book,” James projected his voice as an expert animal reporter. His voice represents one of the multiple voices James created during the course of the study. Each time James engaged in composing, he was required to make three kinds of choices—position, sign system, and genre—and his choices were connected to his multiple, dynamic, and socially situated voices.

As James composed, he also appropriated content and form from his cultural worlds. The second theme, James’ appropriations of cultural resources, is discussed in the following sections.

**Appropriations of Cultural Resources**

As previously defined in chapter 1, appropriate in this study means to take the content or form of another source and make them one’s own. The definition is based on Bakhtin’s (1986) assertion that all words belong to someone else. It was important to examine James’ appropriations because my definition of voice included the appropriations of the language and experiences within the social context. Speakers, authors, and illustrators regularly appropriate the resources of their cultures. For example, James used the form of a simple picture book when he created “Animal Book.” James
placed one illustration and one sentence on each page. The text structure was a listing of informational statements and the repeated sentence structure included: “The (name of animal) (verb) (direct object).” It is likely that James heard many books read to him at home and at school that consisted of this form.

For research question 1b, which asks what appropriations James made in his compositions, I conducted a detailed analysis of his compositions—both the artifacts in which he used drawing and writing and the transcripts of compositions in which he used talking as storytelling. Therefore I looked for the appropriations in James’ drawing, talking, and writing. My goal in documenting his appropriations was to understand how James used the culturally and socially situated resources as he developed voice.

I found James appropriated resources from the official school culture, his unofficial childhood culture, and both cultures combined. James’ official school culture represented the practices guided by the teacher and the literacy curriculum, including the literacy tasks, topics, and texts. From the official school culture, he appropriated visual representations in mentor texts (Ray, 1999), written language in mentor texts, demonstrations in the classroom, and conversations about content. James’ unofficial childhood culture included the wide range of cultural experiences he shared as an outdoorsman, an animal lover, a dirt bike rider, and a member of a mini-community of composers. From his unofficial childhood culture, James appropriated his “lifework” (Calkins, 1994, p. 3), movies and television shows, songs, and elements of humor. “Lifework” is a term Calkins used, “Writing does not begin with deskwork but with lifework” (p. 3). I found that James relied on his lifework to generate compositions. His
life was filled with knowledge of animals, bull riding, fishing, dirt bikes, and simply playing outside. Within one composition, James also appropriated resources from both cultures and indeed did that in 9 of his 15 compositions. In the following sections, I provide examples of James’ appropriations as he composed.

**Appropriations of Official School Culture**

When I looked at James’ appropriations over time, I found James relied exclusively on appropriations from the official school culture in five compositions. In each of the five compositions, he composed parallel or composed privately. James chose to appropriate the illustrations in mentor texts, the written language in mentor texts, demonstrations provided by Carrie and peers, and conversations about content in the composing community. Table 9 explains the categories, definitions, and frequency of James’ appropriations from the official school culture.

A clear example of James’ exclusive use of appropriations from the official school culture appears in “The Napping House” (April 7-9, 2008). James appropriated the content in the illustrations and written language from the mentor text, “The Napping House” (Wood, 1984). James also appropriated Carrie’s demonstration during a mini-lesson in which she modeled how to choose one character and tell the story from his perspective. James focused on only the flea as the main character in his three page book shown in Figure 11.
Table 9

Appropriations of Artifacts in Official School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Number of compositions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual representations in mentor texts</td>
<td>Used illustrations and photographs in books as content for characters, events, dialogue, problems, and solutions.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Example: James orally composed “The Long Dog” (see Appendix H for the complete transcript) by generating the characters and events from the illustrations in the picture book.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written text in mentor texts</td>
<td>Used the written text in books as content for facts, settings, characters, and events.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Example: James wrote the text for “Goats” (see Figure 4) based on the facts in a book Carrie read aloud titled “Goats” (Potter &amp; Barley, 1990).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrations of form in the composing community</td>
<td>Used artifacts and actions that modeled kinds of composing - cards, notes, informational texts, and make-believe stories.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Example: James composed “A Picture for Dad” (see Figure 8) after Carrie presented a mini-lesson on how to compose a piece that tells people you care about them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations of content</td>
<td>Used content—informational facts—discussed in conversations as part of lesson content.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Example: James used content from a whole class conversation about meat-eating dinosaurs hunting for food in his text, “Dinosaurs I” (see Figure 7).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The flea see[s] a rainbow.

The flea is waking up everyone.

Everyone came out.

Figure 11. “The Napping House,” April 7-9, 2008.
“The Napping House” was one of five texts in which James appropriated the content and form from the official school culture. In this piece, James created his voice as a story reteller—retelling the story “The Napping House” by Wood (1984) and relying on the illustrations and written text to scaffold his retelling. “The Long Dog” is another example in which James appropriated the content and form of a picture book, Pretzel (Ray, 1999) from the classroom library. James composed using talking as storytelling. The entire transcript of “The Long Dog” appears in Appendix H and reveals his appropriation of the content (based on the illustrations) and the form (based on the familiar narrative story structure). The five pieces in which James used appropriations from the official school culture reflect the impact of the school culture. Specifically, James’ appropriations show the mini-lessons served as demonstrations of how writing can look and sound and then James chose to create his texts to reflect the demonstration.

**Appropriations of Unofficial Childhood Culture**

Over the course of the study, James also used appropriations from his unofficial childhood culture. The data revealed that James exclusively used appropriations from his unofficial childhood culture in only 1 of his 15 compositions. However, he made the most use of appropriations from his unofficial childhood culture when he combined them with appropriations from the official school culture. James used appropriations from both the official school culture and the unofficial childhood culture in 9 of his 15 compositions.

A clear example of James’ appropriations of only his unofficial childhood culture appears in “Treasure Map” (February 21, 2008). James, Daniel, and Stan (James’ brother from the adjoining Kindergarten classroom) composed collaboratively using drawing and
talking as storytelling to create “Treasure Map.” The boys drew treasure maps that quickly became scenes reflective of the movie, *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man’s Chest* (Stetson, Oman, Hedricks, & McLeod, 2006) as they narrated a story. Daniel led the dialogue that chronicled the events of Jack Sparrow and the pirates in the sea. In the boys’ narrative fiction, a squid eats Jack Sparrow, the pirates try to help him, and the boat sinks. James introduced song lyrics from the song “Bad Day” (Powter, 2007) as dialogue in the story. Figure 12 shows the scenes the boys created and referred to as treasure maps.

*Figure 12. “Treasure Map,” February 21, 2008.*
The treasure maps were accompanied by an oral composition to narrate the events. James contributed to the oral composition in the following excerpt of the transcript.

Daniel: Jack Sparrow di…di…died. Jack Sparrow is out of the squid!

Hey guys, can you see bubbles? Guys read this. Jack Sparrow dies. Jack Sparrow dies. So it is. No! Jack Sparrow! I see his face. He’s floating in the water. Yeah, he is floating in the water dead.

Stan: Jack Sparrow is right here.

Daniel: I tried to warn you guys about the squid. He ate me once alive.

Kill him. Kill him.

James: Get him!

Daniel and James together: Kill him! Kill him! ARRR!

James: I’m a good pilot.

Daniel: ARRRRRRARRRR! James, help me!

James: Guess what? The pirates saying this: “You had a bad day. You take it one down. You sing a sad song, just to turn it around” (Powter, 2007).

Daniel: James, help me! Please captain.

James: Captain got dead when they sink. I’m the captain and I say, “I had a bad day.”

Daniel: PUSSHHHHSHHHHHHHHHHHH (referring to the boat sinking).
In the transcript, James borrows Daniel Powter’s (2007) lyrics, “You had a bad day. You take it one down. You sing a sad song, just to turn it around,” to fit the scene where the pirates are truly experiencing a bad day. He spontaneously used the lines from the song to create dialogue as the “pilot” or the “captain” of the ship. In this example, James created a voice as a *singing storyteller*.

Table 10 provides the categories, definitions, and frequencies of James’ appropriations of his unofficial childhood culture.

Table 10

*Appropriations From Unofficial Childhood Culture*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Lifework” (Calkins, 1994)</td>
<td>Used knowledge from his experiences and interests with family and friends as content.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Example: In “A Dirt Bike Race” (March 31, April 1-3, 2008), James used his experiences in riding a dirt bike as the topic for his book.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movies and television shows</td>
<td>Used characters, settings, and events from movies and television shows as content.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Example: In “Dinosaurs II” (March 25-27, 2008) (see Figure 6), James drew a scene from <em>Jurassic Park III</em> (Spielberg, 2001) in a non-narrative hybrid.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Songs</td>
<td>Used song lyrics as content.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Example: In “Treasure Map” (February 21, 2008), James used lyrics from the song “Bad Day” (Powter, 2007) as part of the dialogue in the narrative fiction texts composed through drawing and talking.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Element of humor</td>
<td>Used silly, made-up names and events as content.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Example: In “Harry Bubbles” (February 4, 2008), James named the puppet Harry Bubbles and this elicited outbursts of laughter from the children in his audience.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data showed that beginning on February 5, 2008, his appropriations reflected a change from his typical pattern of choices. At this point, James began to compose with others—composing before an audience, composing collaboratively, and composing while conversing. James always used appropriations from both cultures when he composed with others. In these positions, he used appropriations of movies and television shows, songs, and the element of humor most often. Prior to composing with others, James did not use appropriations of movies, television shows, songs, and the element of humor.

A clear example of James’ intentional use of appropriations from both cultures appears in his composition “Big Fat Momma” (February 5, 2008) composed before an audience. The transcript of the oral composition includes:

This is Big Fat Momma. (Children burst into laughter. James pauses and laughs with them.) Big Fat Momma jumps on this guy when she sees danger. (Again the children laugh.) She jumps on this crazy guy to keep the kids safe. Big Fat Momma protects people.

In this text, James created a voice as a comic storyteller. First, James’ selection of a puppet and his use of talking as storytelling was an appropriation of a demonstration
Carrie provided in a mini-lesson (field notes, February 4, 2008). Carrie showed the children various ways to use a puppet to create a narrative fiction or non-narrative nonfiction. James chose to use a puppet to create a non-narrative hybrid—combining both facts and fiction through a list of informational statements. Second, James appropriated the name of the main character—Big Momma—from the movie *Big Momma’s House* (Lawrence, Kwatinetz, Liber, & Micchan, 2000). The movie is about a Federal Bureau of Investigation agent who goes undercover as a grandmother to protect a single mom and her son. Third, he added the word “fat” to the character’s name—creating the name, Big Fat Momma. The addition of “fat” elicited bursts of laughter and therefore I determined he also appropriated the element of humor.

James’ appropriations were met with approval as the majority of the children laughed and six children stated they saw the movie. Louis and Nicholas regularly saw movies on the weekends and wrote about their experiences on Monday mornings in the text Carrie referred to as *Weekend News*. Thus, James knew that Louis and Nicholas—members of the mini-community of composers—were interested and knowledgeable about movies. He used the knowledge of his audience when he composed before an audience.

As an apprentice of composing, James had membership in the official school culture and the unofficial childhood culture. He borrowed the content and form from the resources in both cultures to compose during Quiet Choices Workshop. When James appropriated the cultural resources, he engaged in a dynamic process of talking as storytelling, drawing, and writing as a means to develop voice. Previously I stated
Carrie’s definition of voice included, “So while they [children] are developing their own voice, they are assimilating many different voices to make their own voice unique” (personal communication, March 6, 2007). James’ appropriations from the official school culture and his unofficial childhood culture represent his assimilations of many voices.

James’ composing voices also earned him responses as he engaged in the use of multiple sign systems. The responses James received from others in the composing community are presented in the next section.

*Responses as Acceptance for Voicing*

As an answer to question 1c, which asks what responses James received in the composing community, I analyzed the responses James received from Carrie and from his peers when he shared from the author’s chair. James volunteered to share 6 of his 15 compositions from the author’s chair. My goal in examining the responses was to learn about identities James formed as a result of his composing choices. It was important to learn about his responses and identities because both influenced his development of voice.

I found two themes to describe the responses he received from others: verbal responses and nonverbal responses. First, James received verbal responses of connections, compliments, and questions. Second, James received nonverbal responses of physical gestures, facial expressions, laughter, applause, and appropriation. The responses from Carrie and James’ peers were always positive. My analysis did not reveal any social struggles due to negative responses when James shared his six compositions from the author’s chair.
I developed three categories to describe the verbal responses James received from others. James received the most responses from the category of connections. Connections are reflective of the typical response young children wish to share when someone reads a book. James also received compliments which Carrie modeled and encouraged. The compliments predominately took the form of “I like (a particular aspect of the illustrations or topic was recognized),” and “That is (some aspect of composing was recognized).” The questions James received often addressed his peers’ desire to know more information (for example, “What else do alligators eat?”) or asked about James’ specific experience with a topic (for example, “What kind of dirt bike do you have?”).

The interactions gave him the message that sharing his work could elicit interest through connections and questions, and praise through compliments. Table 11 explains the categories, definitions, and frequencies for verbal responses.

Table 11

*Verbal Responses as Validation for Voicing*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connections</td>
<td>Statements that relate a common experience or interest.</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For example: “I saw the movie <em>Big Momma’ House</em>” (field notes, February 5, 2008).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliments</td>
<td>Statements that provide praise or give approval.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For example: “That’s a really good book!” (field notes, January 30, 2008).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>Inquiries about James’ composition that show an interest in his work. For example: “Where do you ride your dirt bike?” (field notes, April 3, 2008).</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to verbal responses, Carrie and James’ peers also shared nonverbal responses when he shared 6 of his 15 compositions from the author’s chair. The nonverbal responses of laughter and applause were easily observed due to the audible sound of the responses. The nonverbal responses or physical gestures and facial expression were often subtle and sometimes occurred within seconds. Therefore, I had to closely attend to the entire audience.

Applauding for James after he shared his compositions was the expected and routine response Carrie established. Thus James received applause for each of the six times he shared from the author’s chair. The physical gestures were all from members of the mini-community of composers—Louis, Daniel, and Nicholas. The facial gestures were shared by Carrie and Louis. James’ texts were met with laughter four times when James used a puppet to compose non-narrative fiction.

Table 12 explains the five categories, definitions, and frequencies for the nonverbal responses James received from others.

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical gesture</td>
<td>Pat on back, nod of the head, or slapping hands as “high five.”</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facial expression</td>
<td>Smile directed to James or raise of eyebrows as approval.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laughter</td>
<td>Children laughed as acceptance.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applause</td>
<td>Children clapped after James shared his compositions.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriation</td>
<td>A peer chose to use James’ text as a mentor text. (Ray, 1999).</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each time James shared from the author’s chair, he received both verbal and nonverbal responses. For example, when James shared “Animal Book” on January 30, 2008, the responses he received included:

Ally:  One day I was walking in the woods and I saw a turtle egg. (connection)

Bryan:  Do turtles lay eggs? (question)

James:  Yes, they do.

Carrie then directed a smile (facial expression) to James and nodded her head (gesture) in approval.

The children gave him a round of applause. (applause)

Carley:  You wrote a book, James! (compliment)

In this example—James’ first time to share from the author’s chair—he received six quick responses that provided acknowledgment of his composing efforts.

The data showed that James’ choices as a composer were met with praise from his peers. James’ smile as he left the author’s chair each time indicated that perhaps he was pleased with the responses he received. When James sat in the author’s chair and shared with members of the composing community, his work was acknowledged. The verbal and nonverbal responses James received from his peers and from Carrie were all positive. Therefore the responses demonstrated that James received unconditional acceptance for his choices. The nature of the responses align with Cambourne’s (1988) call for responses to be readily available, non-threatening, unconditional, and without penalty if the conventional forms of the language are not produced on subsequent attempts.
Summary for Development of Voice

James developed multiple, dynamic, and socially situated voices as he made three kinds of choices, appropriated cultural artifacts, and received responses from members of the composing community. His choices of five positions in the composing community varied regarding his degree of social interactions with peers. Over the course of the study, James frequently moved from one position to another depending upon his preference to socially interact with peers. James had six choices among sign systems and his choices changed over time. In January and February, James chose various sign systems and he did not always use writing. His choices changed in March and April when James always chose a sign system that required him to compose written language—drawing and writing, writing to supplied illustrations, and exclusively writing. When James chose positions and sign systems, he also selected 1 of 6 genres for his composition. From January to April, James chose narrative fiction most often.

James was a textual borrower (Bakhtin, 1981) when he used appropriations from the official school culture, his unofficial childhood culture, and a combination of both cultures in his compositions. The data showed that James most frequently blended the use of both cultures in his texts. Nine of his 15 compositions included this blending. When James shared compositions from the author’s chair, he always received positive responses—both verbal and nonverbal—from Carrie and his peers. Thus James’ work was unconditionally accepted.

The interaction of the choices of position, sign system and genre helped him engage in a process that enabled him to write in an increasing number of genres. James
chose various positions in the composing community, sign systems, and genres, appropriated resources from the official school culture and his unofficial childhood culture, and received responses when he developed multiple voices as a literacy apprentice.

*Growth as an Emerging Writer in Understanding Genre*

In this section, I describe how James grew in his understanding of genre as a way to show how Quiet Choices Workshop supported him as an emerging writer. I was interested in how James’ understanding of genre—a kind or form of writing—developed over time. I viewed genre as a writer’s sense of what he is making with writing (Ray, 2006). Therefore, I examined his responses to questions about his purpose and intended audience. Then I compared his responses to the genre categories previously explained. The genre categories were based on the features present in James’ compositions.

*Changes in Understanding of Genre*

For question 2a, what changes occurred in his understanding of genre, I analyzed James’ responses to questions about his purpose and intended audience. I was interested in his purpose and intended audience because they form his vision for his writing—his sense of what he created with his writing (Ray & Glover, 2008). Therefore each time James composed a text in January through April, I asked him two questions. First, I asked James about his purpose, “What did you want to do in this story (or piece)?” Second, I asked about his intended audience, “Who would like this piece?” My analysis aligned with the interpretive stance of my investigation as I sought to reveal the meanings James brought to his understanding of genre.
On the day he completed each text, I asked James about his purpose for each piece. He explained his purpose for 8 of his 15 compositions, including 3 messages, 4 of the 6 narrative fiction texts, and 1 non-narrative nonfiction text. He was unable to answer the question for the other 7 compositions and he responded with “I do not know” or he shrugged his shoulders.

At the end of data collection, I conducted an informal interview with James and Daniel on April 25, 2008. I chose to include Daniel because James regularly composed and conversed with him and I wanted to provide a familiar setting of conversation where he felt at ease and understood the rules of the discourse (Baturka & Walsh, 1991; D’Amto, 1986 as cited in Graue & Walsh, 1995). I shared scanned copies of the boys’ compositions and audio recordings of their compositions with the boys. I again posed the same question that I asked at the time of composing. In the final interview with the help of a friend, James explained his purpose for each composition. Daniel quickly responded to my question about purpose each time I asked him, so James had a model to follow.

An example of Daniel’s model was evident when I asked both boys about the books they composed on dinosaurs. Daniel responded first by explaining, “My book is nonfiction. Right here is real (pointing to the page). The t-rex could kill this in one bite. The whole thing [book] is real” (informal interview, April 25, 2008). Daniel’s response gave James a model, but James did not copy Daniel’s response. Instead, he carefully explained the specific pages in his narrative hybrid (see Figure 6) and stated, “I wanted to make up a story with a book and tell what dinosaurs really did. The real part” (informal interview, April 25, 2008).
James’ responses to the question, “What did you want to do in this story (or piece)?” allowed me to construct the following four categories listed in Table 13 which show James had various purposes in mind as he composed.

Table 13

*Categories for Purposes of James’ Compositions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Number of compositions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participate as a storyteller</td>
<td>To “tell a story.”</td>
<td>“I wanted to tell a story with a book. I like to tell stories with animals.” (field notes, February 7, 2008).</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate knowledge or expertise</td>
<td>To demonstrate his knowledge or expertise as a way to inform others.</td>
<td>“To teach them [his peers] about animals.” (informal interview, January 30, 2008).</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show &amp; tell as a dual purpose</td>
<td>To show his knowledge or expertise and tell a story.</td>
<td>“Tell a story. Tell about what dinosaurs did and the baby died.” (informal interview, April 25, 2008).</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convey a message</td>
<td>To tell his audience an idea or make a request.</td>
<td>“Tell Daddy I love him.” (field notes, February 6, 2008).</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stating an intended audience was more difficult for James. At the time he composed each piece, James stated an intended audience for 6 of the 15 compositions. He again responded with “I do not know,” or he shrugged his shoulders for the other 9 compositions. When James composed messages, he was able to state the intended
audience for each of the three messages due to the specific nature to which each message was addressed. He was also able to state the intended audience for one non-narrative nonfiction text (“Animal Book”) and two narrative fiction texts (“A Dirt Bike Race” and “The Napping House”). Both narrative fiction texts were composed near the end of the study in April, as was one of the messages (A Note to Daniel’s Mom).

I asked the same question again in April during the informal interview with Daniel. James was not able to provide an intended audience for two compositions—both narrative fiction pieces he composed using talking as storytelling about illustrations in a picture book (“The Long Dog” and “The Bird Nest”). Although I shared the audio recording and he stated his purpose was to “just make up my own story,” James did not provide an intended audience. I was unable to determine if he did not have an intended audience, if he simply created the text for himself and he did not view himself as an audience, or if he was not interested in answering my question.

When I inquired about James’ intended audience at the time he completed the piece and in the informal interview (April 25, 2008), I observed something interesting. James always stated specific family members or classmates as the intended audience except for one composition. In April, he explained a specific audience for “Goats” would be, “Farmers would like this book. Daddy says we will get a goat so Daddy will like this too” (informal interview, April 25, 2008). James’ response of “farmers” was his only response that represents an audience outside of his class and family.
Alignment of Vision and Genre Features in Compositions

For question 2b, how did his purpose align with genre features present in his compositions, I compared James’ purposes with the features I used to categorize the compositions. My goal was to see if the vision he stated for his writing aligned with the features he included in his text.

For every composition, I found that James’ statements of purposes for his writing aligned with the categories for his genres. As stated earlier in this chapter, the categories were based on three features—organization of the text as either non-narrative or narrative, James’ stance about the content as either fiction or nonfiction, and the general purpose to inform or entertain. I found that each time James described his purpose was to participate as a storyteller, he described genres of non-narrative fiction and narrative fiction. When James’ purposes were to demonstrate knowledge or expertise, his compositions were categorized as non-narrative nonfiction. For compositions when James stated he wished to show and tell as a dual purpose, his compositions were classified as hybrids. For compositions that he wanted to convey a message, his texts were indeed messages.

Table 14 summarizes the alignment of James’ stated purposes and the categories for his genres that were based on structural features common to the genres.
Table 14

*Alignment of James’ Stated Purposes and Categories for Genres*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category for stated purpose</th>
<th>Category for genre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participate as a storyteller</td>
<td>Non-narrative fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Narrative fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate knowledge or expertise</td>
<td>Non-narrative nonfiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show &amp; tell as a dual purpose</td>
<td>Non-narrative hybrid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Narrative hybrid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convey a message</td>
<td>Messages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My analysis of James’ voice development consisted of an examination of his choices, appropriations, and responses from others. Analyzing his understanding of genre consisted of categorizing his purposes and comparing them to the features of his texts. Thus, the nature of my analysis parsed out layers of James’ voice development and changes in his understanding of genre. Now I turn to a view in context to understand the components of voice development and growth as a writer.

*The Case of James as a Polyphonic Apprentice*

The freedom to choose from a variety of choices fostered James’ voice development as a literacy apprentice. One way to understand his growth is to look at a profile of his composing choices in October when I initially observed James during my look at the entire class and then look at a profile of his composing choices in April near the end of the study. First I share a vignette that shows James’ voice as a *quiet illustrator*
in the fall when he composed a wordless picture book, “The Bull Rider.” Then I share a vignette that represents James’ voice as an *award-winning author and illustrator* of narrative fiction, “A Dirt Bike Race,” in April. The two vignettes show the changes in his demonstration of voice and his growth as a writer.

*James: A Quiet Illustrator*

On October 23, 2007, James chose a position for the first time at Nicholas’ table. This table regularly served as the locus of bookmaking activity. In the prior weeks, James sat alone at the periphery of the composing community as he consistently composed from his assigned seat and only created single page drawings. His new position was paired with a change in the materials. He selected a blank, 5” x 7” book to create his first picture book. It consisted of three pages and he orally titled the text, “The Bull Rider.” While he composed, James was intent on creating his drawings and he did not talk to the three children seated at the table. The composition is shown in Figure 13.

![Figure 13. “The Bull Rider,” James’ first picture book, October 23, 2007.](image-url)
James wore a t-shirt with a bull rider on it and the bull was depicted with his feet off the ground and extending upward. He drew a similar representation of a bull rider and a bull to display his expertise about bull riding. James established a setting with the baseline and skyline including the sun, made deliberate color choices, and added specific details of the chaps and spurs. When I approached him to invite him to converse while drawing, he politely answered my question about the kind of story he was telling with a brief response, “a bull riding story.” As he quickly returned to his drawing, I interpreted this as his desire to attend to his composing task. When James completed his book, I again invited him to tell me about it. He labeled each page with a series of words as his eyes remained on the illustrations. James stated individual words for each of the pages. On page 1, he simply stated, “A bull rider, a cowboy, sunset, and sky.” He “read” the remaining two pages in a similar manner: “Horse, cowboy, sky, sunset” and then “Bull rider and cowboy.” From the detail in the pictures, I saw many ideas represented. When I probed further by asking, “What have you drawn here?” and “What is happening here?” James’ responses remained labels as he stated, “Chaps, spurs” and “Riding a bull.” Although the drawing hinted at action as seen in the position of the bull and the cowboy, his oral language did not include any action, statement of facts, or narrative events. It simply consisted of labeling.

In this early composition, James used drawing to represent his ideas. His choice of composing parallel was the first time I saw that he chose to sit with peers. Carrie confirmed my observation. Additionally, James composed his first picture book although
his description of the book did not allow me to discern it was fiction or nonfiction, or if it was organized as non-narrative or narrative.

In his debut as an illustrator of a book about bull riding, James began to explore his voice as a composer. This wordless picture book served as a turning point in his composing development. From this point on, James moved from his assigned seat and chose a table with Nicholas, Louis, or Daniel.

James’ voices continued to emerge as he worked and played as a Kindergarten literacy apprentice. From the publication of “The Bull Rider” in October to the publication of “A Dirt Bike Race” in April, James constructed multiple voices as an apprentice. The next vignette represents changes in his voice and growth as a writer.

James: An Award-Winning Author and Illustrator

On a rainy day—April 3, 2008—James entered the classroom after lunch aware that it was time for indoor recess. He immediately walked to his bin where he kept his current composition, “A Dirt Bike Race.” Without stopping to hear directions from Carrie regarding the activities available for recess or seeing what his peers might select, James sat at his assigned seat and began to work on his book. He composed by drawing pictures and writing sentences to tell the story of a suspenseful dirt bike race. At the conclusion of recess, Carrie drew the children to the rug for a brief mini-lesson prior to the composing time. James then returned to “A Dirt Bike Race.” He worked diligently as he segmented words by whispering syllables or phonemes.

The book details the events of a dirt bike race from the starting line to the finishing line and keeps the reader in suspense as it nears the end. James used illustrations
with deliberate color choices and written text of sentences to create the book that he described as “a real story” supporting his response with “There are real dirt bike races. I watch them on TV.”

James appeared to be in the “flow zone” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), where there was no difference between work and play. He used indoor recess time during two days and all of his composing time during four days of Quiet Choices Workshop to create this multimodal book and then proudly placed a rubber stamp that read “Seal of Approval” with the image of seal on the front cover. He explained, “This means the book got an award. It is a really good book.” Carrie routinely read books that received the Caldecott Award for children’s picture books and she always pointed out the image of the medal on the book cover. Figure 14 shows James’ entire text.

“A Dirt Bike Race”

The “e” on race represents the teaching point provided by Carrie as she conferred with James after he completed the book. She used this as an opportunity to teach the pattern of “consonant, long vowel, consonant, silent e.”
It is on the road.

It will jump.

It jumps!

A dirt [bike] is in the lead.

A dirt bike passes the other dirt bike!

The dirt bike is almost in the lead!
The dirt bike is close to the lead!  
A dirt bike is almost at the finish line.  

A dirt bike is very very close to the lead.  

The dirt bike wins the race!  

*Figure 14.* “A Dirt Bike Race,” March 31, April 1-3, 2008.
This vignette near the end of the study illustrates a young man who saw his work as an author and illustrator worthy of an award. “A Dirt Bike Race” represents a new choice for James. He made a choice to work privately as he used drawing first to represent the events, and then he independently added the writing in the text. Previously, James was only observed to use drawing and writing to compose narrative fiction when he composed parallel or composed while conversing with peers.

James’ purpose in composing was to participate in the activity of telling stories that were important to the children. This was one of the central practices embedded in the composing community, as Carrie frequently reminded the students that they could create any story important to them. When I asked, “What did you want to do in this story?” James said, “Write a story about dirt bikes. I just wanted to.” His statement that he “just wanted to” revealed that his choice to compose was something he wanted to do rather than he was required to do.

James received an important response from Colin regarding his composition. Colin appropriated the content and form of James’ book, using it as a mentor text to compose his own version—“Dirt Bikes.” Colin’s actions show he viewed James’ book as a text he wished to emulate. Figure 15 shows Colin’s text—“Dirt Bikes”—as an appropriation of James’ text.
Dirt Bikes

It's goes fast.

It is lost.

It is in the dirt.
In this vignette, James made his debut as an ambitious author and illustrator of fiction. He arrived at a point where he privately composed by drawing and writing a 12-page text on a self-selected topic. Over time, James used the choices offered in Quiet Choices Workshop to explore his voices. In “A Dirt Bike Race” composed in April of his Kindergarten year, James ultimately saw himself as an award winning author and illustrator.

In the case of James, his choices over time reveal his multimodal exploration using drawing, talking, and writing. James explored the genres through a variety of sign systems as he chose positions for himself within the composing community. His compositions show movement from “junior member” of the literacy club (Smith, 1988) with his creation of “The Bull Rider” (October 23, 2007) to expert member of the writing club upon the publication of “A Dirt Bike Race” (March 31 to April 3, 2008). In October,
James used detailed illustrations to create his first “book.” In April, James declared his book award winning and he proudly watched as Colin modeled his text after James’ text.

Summary

The purpose of my study was to examine how a child constructs voice through the use of multiple sign systems and how engagement in Quiet Choice Workshop supports an emerging writer’s understanding of genre. In order to explain these phenomena, I described James’ three kinds of choices—his position in the composing community, sign systems, and genre. I found that James varied each of his choices.

Then I explained James’ appropriations from the official school culture, the unofficial childhood culture, and his blending of both cultures. I found that James blended both cultures in a majority of his compositions. He always used appropriations from unofficial childhood culture when he composed with others.

James’ choices and voices earned him both verbal and nonverbal indicators of acceptance as responses from others. All observed responses James received carried the message of unconditional acceptance of his composing efforts.

I also found that James’ understanding of genre changed. In October, James was not able to state a purpose for the wordless picture book. In January through April, at the time of composing the texts, James stated a purpose for 8 of the 15 compositions. At the end of the study and with modeling by a peer, James stated a purpose for all compositions. Furthermore, when I compared James’ stated purpose to the genre category, I found his purpose aligned with the features present in his actual compositions.
As a polyphonic apprentice in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), the variety of choices offered to James fostered his development of multiple voices. Early in the year, James stood on the periphery of the composing community. He looked to more knowledgeable others for demonstrations. In April, James stood as the more knowledgeable other as Colin looked to him for demonstrations and appropriated the content and form of James’ award winning book. James clearly changed in how he participated in the community of practice. His changes occurred in a classroom where choices were given and voices were fostered as he grew to demonstrate an understanding of genre.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

Introduction

My interpretive case study is situated in a sociocultural perspective. Children learn about literacy based on what is valued in their culture from the more experienced members (Bakhtin, 1981; Owocki & Goodman, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978). As children learn about literacy, they change as participants in the social practices of the community (Dyson, 2001b; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990). In the teaching of writing to young children, Cambourne’s (1988) conditions for literacy learning highlight the processes of writing and extend the theories of Vygotsky and Bakhtin. Cambourne posited the presence of eight conditions increases the probability of engagement in learning. When children explore writing, they use multiple sign systems to scaffold the complexities of writing (Dyson, 1986b). A goal of my study was to relate a child’s development of voice and growth as a writer to his use of multiple sign systems within a community of practice.

I used an interpretive case study (Erickson, 1986) to reveal a thick, rich description of James’ development of voice when he used multiple sign systems and to explain how the use of multiple sign systems supported James as an emerging writer. Two main research questions with related subquestions framed my inquiry:

1. How does a Kindergarten composer develop voice through the use of multiple sign systems during Quiet Choices Workshop?
a. What choices does he make regarding his position in the composing community, his choice of sign systems, and selection of genre?

b. What appropriations does he make in his compositions?

c. What responses does he receive from others in the composing community?

2. How does Quiet Choice Workshop support an emerging writer’s understanding of genre?

a. What changes occurred in his statement of purpose and intended audience for his compositions?

b. How did his purpose align with the genre features present in his compositions?

In this chapter, I discuss my findings and place them in the current context of literacy research for young composers. Then I present the limitations of the study and the pedagogical implications. Finally, I raise questions for further research.

Discussion of the Findings

Question One: The Development of Voice

Vygotsky (1978) maintained that learning occurs within the social and cultural context and all writing is engendered in earlier forms of communication. Dyson (1986b) viewed young literacy learners as symbol weavers—using drawing, talking, dramatizing, and writing as they compose. I found that James’ voice development aligned with Vygotsky’s theoretical position and Dyson’s findings. Importantly, Carrie implemented Cambourne’s eight conditions of literacy learning which support the growth of writing. The presence of the conditions fostered James’ development of voice.
My response to question one shows that James developed his voice through a dynamic process of using multiple sign systems while appropriating the culture’s language and signs, engaging in social interactions, and forming identities in composing communities. The multiple sign systems under investigation were drawing, talking as storytelling, and writing exclusively or in combination with one another.

In order to explain the nature of James’ voice development, I examined his three kinds of choices, appropriations of cultural resources, and responses from others in the composing community. Analyzing the three components provided me with an understanding of how he developed his voice in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) from January to April.

**Three Choices**

Each day James engaged in composing time of Quiet Choices Workshop, he made three kinds of choices—his position in the composing community, sign systems, and genre. I developed categories for each of his choices and described how his choices changed over time.

*Position.* James chose one of five positions in the composing community and he moved frequently from one position to another. The positions varied regarding his level of social interaction with peers. James chose to compose privately when he chose to intently focus on only his composing task, did not interact with peers, and sat at his assigned table. He composed parallel when he sat with peers, observed them without initiating conversation, and only responded briefly to peers’ questions. In the additional three positions—composing while conversing, composing collaboratively, and
composing before an audience—James actively participated with peers. He chose to compose while conversing when he initiated conversation while he created a composition. James chose to compose collaboratively when he shared the task of composing one common text. When James chose to orally compose in front of peers, he chose to compose before an audience.

James preferred to compose parallel 32% of the time and compose privately 35% of the time. In January, he composed parallel and composed privately. In February, James started to move from one position to another, chose every position at least once, and for the first time actively participated with peers by composing while conversing, composing collaboratively, and composing before an audience. In March and April, James continued to prefer to compose parallel and compose privately, but he also composed while conversing and composed collaboratively.

James’ choices of position varied throughout the study and showed that young writers prefer different positions when they compose. James chose different positions depending upon his purposes and his choices were deliberate. Additionally, my study documented the importance of choice in forming a small supportive writing community. Within the mini-community of composers, James observed peers’ demonstrations of artifacts and actions (Cambourne, 1988). Thus, James’ opportunities to make choices allowed him to change in the way he participated as a member of a mini-community of composers and he changed as a writer.

*Sign systems.* James chose 1 of 6 sign systems when he engaged in composing time of Quiet Choices Workshop. Carrie equally honored each of his choices. Sometimes
James chose only one sign system: drawing (using only illustrations to convey meaning), talking as storytelling (using oral language to describe a puppet or tell a story about illustrations in a picture book), or writing (using only written language to convey meaning). Other times James chose to create multimodal representations with two sign systems: drawing and talking as storytelling (using both illustrations and oral language), writing to supplied illustrations (using illustrations supplied by Carrie and corresponding written language), or drawing and writing (using illustrations and corresponding written language). Overall, James preferred drawing and writing. In 20 of the 30 days, James chose drawing and writing. Additionally, James always drew first when he used both sign systems. He stated that drawing his ideas first, helped him to determine the content of his writing.

There were changes in James’ choice of sign systems. In January, James chose drawing and writing, and talking as storytelling. In February, he chose drawing, talking as storytelling, drawing and talking as storytelling, and drawing and writing. Three of his sign system choices in February did not involve composing written text—drawing, talking as storytelling, and drawing and talking as storytelling. In March and April, James showed a shift in his preference to use sign systems that always resulted in compositions on paper. During these two months, all of James’ choices of sign systems involved composing written text—drawing and writing, writing to supplied illustrations, and writing.

My analysis illuminated the importance of giving children the opportunity to choose among the sign systems of drawing, talking as storytelling, and writing. Whn
Carrie gave James the opportunity to choose his sign system, she James the opportunity to choose familiar sign systems—ones with which he had prior experience and felt comfortable to him. The familiarity of his choices provided a comfort level needed as he composed. Children typically enter school with experience drawing (Horn & Giacobbe, 2007) and orally telling their stories (Horn, 2005). Initially, James chose drawing and talking as storytelling. In the end, James exited kindergarten as a competent, independent early writer, as evidenced in his 12 page narrative fiction, “A Dirt Bike Race.” Although James had the choice of sign systems, he still acquired the expected competency as a writer near the end of Kindergarten. The story of James shows that he designed the format for his engagement in composing and the use of particular sign systems was not imposed.

**Genre.** James chose 1 of 6 genres for each of his compositions. Although genre is traditionally used to categorize written compositions, I categorized all of James’ compositions regardless of the sign system he used. In order to categorize the texts, I attended to three features of James’ compositions. First, I examined the organization of the text to determine if it was narrative (movement through time with an initial event, sequent events, and concluding event) or non-narrative (movement through a listing of ideas related to a common topic). Second, I analyzed James’ stance about the content as either fiction (he created events) or non-fiction (he reported informational statements). Third, I looked at James’ general purpose to see if the composition informed or entertained the reader. I established six categories to describe James’ genres: non-narrative nonfiction, non-narrative fiction, narrative fiction, non-narrative hybrid,
narrative hybrid, and messages. The categories of hybrids reflect texts in which James combined elements of both fiction and nonfiction. When James was given choice, he composed a variety of genres. Thus, allowing James to choose his genre and giving him the freedom to create new genres invited him to compose for authentic purposes and audiences.

When I examined James’ genres over the course of the study, I saw that he spent a substantive amount of time—21 of the 30 days—creating texts with fictional elements. By this I mean James composed texts that were non-narrative fiction, narrative fiction, non-narrative hybrids, and narrative hybrids. The interaction of the choices of position, sign system and genre helped him engage in a process that enabled him to write in an increasing number of genres. James experimented with sign systems as he composed the texts and created hybrids as a way to experiment with fictional texts. James’ opportunities to make choices about his kinds of texts allowed him to expand his repertoire of genres. For example, when James composed “Dinosaurs II,” a non-narrative hybrid (March 25-27, 2007), he composed while conversing with Daniel as he used drawing and writing. By using detailed drawings to convey the information and events, he kept one foot in the familiar. By composing while talking with Daniel, a peer who also composed a book about dinosaurs, James placed himself in a position that was comfortable and safe. Their conversations also provided support for the composing task as the boys discussed possible events to include in their books. James’ movement to compose a new genre—a non-narrative hybrid—allowed him the opportunity to expand the kinds of texts he composed.
Cultural Appropriations

James appropriated content from the official school culture, his unofficial childhood culture, and both cultures as he composed. He relied on appropriations from only the official school culture in 5 of 15 compositions and in each composition he composed parallel or composed privately. James exclusively used appropriations from the unofficial childhood culture in only one composition. He blended appropriations from both cultures in 9 of his 15 compositions. When James composed with others in the positions of composing while conversing, composing collaboratively, and composing before an audience, he always used appropriations from his unofficial childhood culture.

The unofficial childhood culture was shared among all members of the mini-community of composers and created a bond of experiences that each member shared. Thus, James chose familiar and safe content that was accepted by his peers, similar to the manner in which he chose comfortable positions and familiar sign systems. James’ use of appropriations of his unofficial childhood culture showed an emerging awareness to use content in his texts that kept his audience engaged.

Responses as Acceptance for Voicing

When James shared 6 of his 15 compositions from the author’s chair, he received only positive verbal and nonverbal responses from Carrie and his peers. The verbal responses included connections, questions, and compliments. The nonverbal responses included physical gestures, facial expressions, laughter, applause, and appropriation. The nature of the responses align with Cambourne’s (1988) call for responses, as a condition for literacy learning, to be readily available, frequent, non-threatening, unconditional, and
without penalty if the conventional forms of the language are not produced on subsequent attempts. The opportunity to share his work with peers and Carrie afforded James responses that affirmed his choices and his final products as a composer.

My study documented that James’ choices—his position in the composing community, sign systems, and genre—were helpful to his learning because he changed as a participant in the composing community. James initially stood as an apprentice on the periphery participating with familiar sign systems. In January, James chose positions alongside others who were “bookmakers” and only responded to his peers’ questions without initiating conversation. He predominately relied on talking as storytelling, drawing, and drawing and talking as storytelling in the early months of data collection. Then James chose to compose with others as simply opposed to compose alongside others. He also chose to use writing in all compositions created in March and April. Ultimately in April, James grew to compose alone, share a narrative fiction with the entire class, give his book an award, and become the “more knowledgeable other” whose work served as a model for another apprentice.

James developed multiple, dynamic, and socially situated voices while making choices, appropriating cultural resources, and receiving responses from others. He used scaffolds to participate in the mini-community of composers—a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). James’ choices and subsequent compositions showed that he internalized the composing process and he ultimately demonstrated that he could write independently. Thus, the interactions among James’ choices, appropriations, and responses from others were significant because they allowed him to grow as a writer. The
case of James showed that when a teacher allowed a young child to choose his position, sign systems, and genres, the teacher allowed the child to construct the format for new learning which fostered his development of voice and genre understanding. James’ freedom to construct a comfortable, familiar, and safe format led to his ultimate ability to compose independently.

*Question Two: Growth as a Writer in Understanding of Genre*

In order to understand how Quiet Choices Workshop supported James as an emerging writer over time, I looked at how James’ understanding of genre changed during the course of the study.

*Understanding of Genre*

In my interpretive case study, I was interested in the meaning James attached to the phenomenon. Therefore, I examined his understanding of genre through the factors that he described. I asked him about his purpose for writing (“What did you want to do in this story or piece?”) and his intended audience (“Who would like this story or piece?”). At the time he composed each piece, during January through April, James answered my questions about the purpose for 8 of the 15 compositions. At the end of the study, in April, with a peer modeling responses to the same question, James stated a purpose for every composition. Additionally, his purposes for each composition aligned with the categories for the genres—based on the features present in the compositions. Therefore, I saw that what James said about his vision was indeed present in his compositions. James grew in his understanding of genre.
James was not required to write specific genres; rather he had choice in the kind of compositions he created. Through choices, James composed multiple genres for authentic purposes and audiences. Additionally, his purposes matched the features present in his pieces. James made decisions about his purpose and intended audience and then constructed a piece to meet his vision. Thus James’ choices and subsequent compositions showed that he engaged in the processes that writers use and he learned to use writing to communicate.

My findings suggest that Quiet Choices Workshop was an effective instructional approach for James to develop voice and grow in his understanding of genre because Carrie fostered an environment based on Cambourne’s (1988) conditions of literacy learning. I elaborate on Cambourne’s work by explaining how the conditions specifically relate to my study. In Table 15, I present the following explanation to link Cambourne’s conditions of literacy learning to my study.

Thus, my study extends Cambourne’s (1988) conditions for literacy learning by showing the importance of choice. When all conditions were in place for James, he developed voice and an understanding of genre. Furthermore, James’ three kinds of choices became scaffolds in the task of writing. James used his choices of sign systems and positions as “coping strategies” (Cambourne & Turbill, 1987)—structures that scaffolded the unrest associated with composing and then he took a new initiative—either for the first time or for subsequent repetitions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cambourne’s conditions of literacy learning</th>
<th>Cambourne’s definition of condition</th>
<th>Relationship to my study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immersion</td>
<td>The learner must be immersed in a range of texts.</td>
<td>James listened to and viewed a variety of mentor texts across multiple sign systems and genres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstration</td>
<td>The learner needs demonstrations – as artifacts and actions – of how texts are constructed and used.</td>
<td>Carrie and James’ peers demonstrated how texts are created with multiple sign systems across genres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>The learner engages when he perceives himself as a member of the community of composers and sees engaging with demonstrations as worthwhile and safe even if attempts are not correct.</td>
<td>James gradually became a member of the mini-community of composers and the classroom community of composers. He moved from the periphery to passively participate, and then to actively participate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>Members of the composing community – the teacher and other learners – expect the learner to compose. Additionally, the learner has an expectation that he will compose.</td>
<td>Carrie expected James to make his own choices of position in the composing community, sign systems, and genres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>The learner has the task of making decisions about specifics of when, how, and what to learn. All decisions are supportive and meaningful to the learner.</td>
<td>James had the responsibility to make his choices of position, sign system, and genre. Additionally, he used sign systems and positions as coping strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use</td>
<td>The learner experiences time to compose for authentic reasons and for authentic audiences.</td>
<td>The composing time of Quiet Choices Workshop offered James opportunities to compose for authentic purposes and audiences four days a week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximations</td>
<td>The learner uses approximations to writing and understands that mistakes are part of the learning cycle.</td>
<td>James had the freedom to use sign systems—drawing and talking as storytelling—as approximations to writing. Each sign system was equally honored.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses</td>
<td>The learner receives responses from others in the composing community as indicators of unconditional acceptance.</td>
<td>James received both verbal and nonverbal responses from Carrie and his peers each time he shared from the author’s chair. Additionally, he acknowledged himself with a self-imposed award for “A Dirt Bike Race.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
James’ choice of sign systems as coping strategies aligned with Cambourne and Turbill’s (1987) definition of the coping strategy called “related activities” (p. 9)—behaviors that functionally relate to writing. James chose the sign systems of talking as storytelling, drawing, and supplied illustrations as coping strategies to scaffold the task of writing. In 14 of his 15 compositions, James used drawing, talking as storytelling, or supplied illustrations—either exclusively or in combination with writing.

When James’ choice of position in the composing community was with peers—the three categories of composing while conversing, composing collaboratively, and composing parallel—his position functioned as a coping strategy and aligned with Cambourne and Turbill’s (1987) category of “assistance from and interaction with other children” (p. 9). In 6 of his 15 compositions, James chose a position with peers.

Carrie demonstrated and accepted the use of multiple sign systems in composing and allowed James to choose his position in the composing community. Given the expectation to write, James chose sign systems and positions as coping strategies. Through prolonged engagement in coping strategies, James then took initiatives to compose in new genres. His initiatives were new steps that resulted in the final products—compositions of various genres. The relationship among the components is represented in Figure 16.
Figure 16. Coping strategies as a bridge across time. Carrie expected the children to write while using coping strategies. James chose to use coping strategies which resulted in initiatives as evidenced by his compositions of various genres with multiple sign systems. For example in “The Long Dog” composed on January 31, 2008 (see Appendix H), James used the coping strategy of talking as storytelling about illustrations in a picture book while he also took the new initiative to compose a narrative fiction. The coping strategy—as a comfortable choice—bridged the expectation to write and the initiative to compose a new genre.

Giving children the freedom to make choices can be unsettling to teachers, especially for children whose school performance is initially concerning, as was James’ performance. However, James’ choices of position and sign systems afforded him scaffolds to support the challenge of writing and develop an understanding of genre.

In my study, the data showed that choice was essential to voice development. James’ choice of every sign system was equally honored and accepted as writing. Despite recent discussion on the value of the sociocultural context, semiotics, and the use of multiple sign systems, policy continues to focus on a narrow view of literacy. Multimodal literacy research like this study holds potential to inform administrators and policy makers of the benefits associated with a broader view of literacy. My study tells the story
of a child who at first appeared to be a reluctant writer. Carrie offered James opportunities to make choices about his position, sign systems, and genres and then James actively and deliberately made his choices. Even when James experienced the freedom to make choices, he still met expectations as a writer at the end of Kindergarten.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations exist for every study. Biklen and Casella (2007) suggest that qualitative researchers evaluate limitations within their own study as a way to assist the reader in understanding the study. I offer the following limitations within this definition so the reader might more thoroughly understand the nature of this study.

First, I studied a Kindergartener who initially stood on the perimeter of social interaction, and was a child of concern based on his interactional competencies and his use of oral and written language. My study focused on the case of James and his growth as a writer. I did not investigate how engagement in Quiet Choices Workshop supported a more able emergent writer in this particular classroom.

My analysis of the responses from others included responses from Carrie and James’ peers. I was interested in how their responses influenced his composing processes and products. I did not consider the responses I shared with James in my role as a participant-observer, although my interactions—as sings of interest in his work—carried the potential to influence James’ decisions regarding composing.

As one researcher in the classroom, I attempted to focus on the responses James received that were verbal and nonverbal. However, it is possible that I missed some significant responses since many were quickly conveyed and subtle. For example, I
documented that Carrie smiled directly at James as an acknowledgement of his efforts. If I was not looking directly at Carrie, I might miss her response. Video taping the observations would increase the likelihood of documenting additional less obvious responses.

Finally, I did not take into account responses from others outside of James’ Kindergarten classroom. Certainly when James took his texts home, there were responses he received from parents, siblings, and possibly other family members that I did not consider yet contributed to his identity as composer.

Implications

Pedagogical implications exist for my study and I explain them in this section. I maintain the stance that literacy research is a service to teachers, and best accomplished through working with teachers, not around them (Wollman-Bonilla, 2002). I worked with Carrie as I learned about her reconceptualization of Quiet Choices Workshop and then documented James’ voice development and growth as a writer. Thus, I provide the following pedagogical implications as conversational points that respect teacher decision-making and honor children as individuals. My intent is to present points that teachers might use to determine the effective practices for particular groups of children.

Currently in early childhood teaching, there is a rush to expect young children to read and write. Teachers experience the pressure to find and use just the right the program as a way to make sure all children meet grade level expectations. Teacher-directed skills and strategy-based lessons replace child-centered, open-ended periods of play and exploration of literacy (Wohlwend, 2008). Writing is defined as a limited list of
skills and restricts the broad repertoire of signs which young children use. However, in contrast to scripted programs that limit teacher and child choice, my study shows the importance of small choices as tools for learning as a way to maintain a student-centered approach. James grew not only as a writer but in his perception of self as a writer. The development of voice necessitated the freedom to choose a position in the composing community, sign systems, and genres.

My study suggests that early literacy teachers should give children who are in the process of solving the literacy puzzle the freedom to choose their position in the composing community. There might be times when children choose to compose alone as James did when he was both intent on producing a composition and secure in his composing processes. There might also be times when children select positions in mini-communities where they feel secure as an apprentice. Children can wisely choose positions with peers that support them as writers through assistance and social interaction with others. Young writers might then potentially receive further scaffolding from the more knowledgeable others around them. For example, as James chose positions, he situated himself where he needed to be while composing and he received further scaffolding.

Teachers of early literacy might also consider what happens when children are given freedom to choose their sign systems, rather than mandating children to compose with only drawing and writing. Children might then be able to make choices that honor their development as a composer. As Vygotsky (1978) reminded us, all writing is engendered in gesturing, talking, dramatizing, and drawing. James’ preference to always
draw first because drawing “helps me to know what to write” (informal interview, April 25, 2008) verified Graves (1975, 1983) and Calkins’ (1994) assertion that drawing assists children in planning, rehearsing, and organizing.

Early literacy teachers might consider the importance of inviting children to compose in genres of their choice as a way to foster the development of a vision (Ray, 2006) for writing. Children could then write for authentic purposes and audiences. In their daily lives, children encounter natural reasons to write—such as messages to share with family and friends, lists of items for parties, newly acquired factual information to report, and stories to share with others. At six years of age, James showed us that children are not too young to choose their genres. He deliberately chose his genres to align with his purposes and audiences. When children experience choice in writing various kinds of texts, they can learn the lifelong competency that writing is a way to communicate.

Teachers should encourage and accept children’s appropriations from both the official school culture and the unofficial childhood culture. Appropriating mentor texts from the official school culture provides children with ideas for content and form. Teachers should reflect on the importance of carefully selecting read alouds since books shared in the classroom have the potential to serve as mentor texts for young authors. Appropriating content from unofficial childhood cultures gives children familiar and comfortable points of reference. Teachers need to understand that children are textual borrowers (Bakhtin, 1981). Then teachers can honor children’s choices from both cultures as a way to support them in new literacy tasks. Using appropriations from both cultures might also allow children to develop audience awareness while socially
interacting with peers. Although teachers are often concerned when children use content from movies, James showed that appropriating movies served as a scaffold when he was faced with literacy task of composing a text in front of a specific audience. James referred to movies as a way to connect with and gain the approval of his audience and then he received affirmation of his composing when he chose to share with others.

Finally, teachers should reflect on how choices during composing time might foster the use of coping strategies—structures chosen and constructed by children that support the unrest associated with composing (Cambourne & Turbill, 1987). The use of coping strategies allows the children time to feel comfortable and confident with composing and fosters their willingness to take initiatives with other aspects of composing. James demonstrated that a young child can self-select appropriate scaffolds and take initiatives with new tasks. Children require varying amounts of time to internalize new learning and the use of coping strategies gives children a supportive structure to make the learning their own. When James used drawing and talking as storytelling, he chose scaffolds to give himself time to internalize the task of composing narrative fiction prior to writing narrative fiction texts.

Questions for Further Research

From my study, several questions for further literacy research can be considered. In this section, I elaborate on four questions to extend my research.

First, although this study involved the sign systems of talking as storytelling, drawing, and writing, further investigations might look at composing through dramatization, artwork through other materials, or using the computer. Thus a worthwhile
question would consider, “How do composers develop voice through the use of
dramatization, visual arts, and computer graphics?”

Second, although James was an emergent literacy learner in Kindergarten, there
are other populations of children who are often marginalized resulting from a narrow
view of literacy (Siegel, 2006). Valuing children’s choices of multiple sign systems as
approximations to writing could potentially create a bridge for their deeper understanding
of literacy. Future studies might consider, “How does the use of multiple sign systems
assist children in first, second, third, and fourth grade who have not met success with
writing?” Additionally, an investigation of specific groups of children might ask, “How
does the use of multiple sign systems in writing workshop for children with specific
learning disabilities and with limited English proficiency foster their voice development
and growth as writers?”

Third, future research could examine the role of the small supportive writing
communities as communities of practice in the development of voice and growth as a
writer. My study showed that James consistently chose to work with the same group of
boys. Thus important questions would examine, “How does the discourse within the
mini-community support peers’ growth as writers?” and “How does the language of
various mini-communities vary in the way members support one another?”

Fourth, additional research is needed to examine how children’s stamina changes
over time when they are allowed to use multiple sign systems to compose. A specific
look at the amount of time children spend engaged in each of the sign systems could be a
way to describe changes in their writing stamina and could potentially support a wider
view of what counts as writing. A valuable investigation would study, “What changes occur in young writers’ writing stamina when they use drawing, talking as storytelling, and writing to compose?”

Conclusion

My study chronicles the development of James as a polyphonic apprentice. I described how James developed multiple voices as he reported facts, shared messages, performed silliness, told pretend stories, and made requests. James used a dynamic process of choosing positions in the composing community, sign systems, and genres while appropriating cultural resources and receiving responses from others. James’ dynamic process and his subsequent responses resulted in multiple identities and voices. As he chose positions in the composing community, sign systems, and genres, James’ freedom to choose fostered his development of voice. James learned to write as a way to inform, entertain, and share messages. Thus, he learned how to communicate through his writing.

Each of the sign systems James chose were equally accepted since the practice in the composing community embraced various ways to tell a story. Even when James stood as an emergent writer, his choices of other sign systems were honored. The freedom to select from a variety of positions, sign systems, and genres invited James to explore his construction of voices. Furthermore, there was acceptance of appropriations from both his official school culture and his unofficial childhood culture and James received positive responses from others in the composing community that acknowledged his composing and voicing.
In a final interview, I observed James as a competent, proud author and illustrator who understood that writing was an important accomplishment in Kindergarten. When I asked James what he did with his books after he took them home, he replied,

I tell Mommy to save my books. She puts them in a pile and when I was at preschool, she saved them and when I am in high school we can see all of the writing and we can [re]member when the first time I was a[n] author in Kindergarten and when I wrote this book (pointing to a book) and this book (pointing to another book). Then everybody can see my award too (referring to the stamp he placed on the cover of “A Dirt Bike Race”). (April 25, 2008)

It is clear that James saw himself as an author. His identity emerged as he participated in Quiet Choices Workshop and composed books. The artifacts of his books supported his identity as a composer and they were so important to James that he felt they should be saved for years. Notably, James voiced that he wanted others to see his compositions “the first time I was a[n] author.”
APPENDIXES
APPENDIX A

INTERACTIONAL COMPETENCIES OBSERVATION FORM
Interactional Competencies Observation Form

Name ______________________    Date ______________

R = regularly present
S = sometimes present
N = not yet present

_____ Listens when others speak in small group and whole group

_____ Speaks clearly and audibly; uses comprehensible speech

_____ Responds to teacher’s questions

_____ Responds to peers’ questions

_____ Elaborates on teacher’s questions

_____ Elaborates on peers’ questions

_____ Asks teacher questions

_____ Asks peers questions

_____ Participates in group talk activities assigned by the teacher
    (discussions, dramatizations, sharing drawn & written compositions)

_____ Participates in spontaneous group talk at tables and centers

_____ Initiates conversations with peers

_____ Builds on others’ ideas

_____ Elaborates coherently on self-selected topics

_____ Elaborates coherently on instructional topics

Note. This observation form was adapted from:


Kidwatching: Documenting children’s literacy development. Portsmouth, NJ:
Heinemann.

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APPENDIX B

FUNCTIONS OF ORAL LANGUAGE
Functions of Oral Language

Name ______________________   Date ____________

Shares stories of personal experiences

Retells stories heard as read alouds

Explains how to do or make something

Creates imaginative worlds

Note. This observation form was adapted from:

Functions, Features, and Social Processes for Drawing and Writing

Name _____________________    Date ____________

Features of Drawing

Functions of Drawing

Features of Writing

Functions of Writing

Social Processes while Drawing and Writing
APPENDIX D

SELECTION OF JAMES
Selection of James

In this appendix, I elaborate on the findings from phase I concerning James’ interactional competencies; functions of oral language; and functions, features, and social processes of drawing and writing. The findings during this phase were used to select James as the focal child. Using the three tools described in chapter 3, I observed James, conversed with him, and collected his compositions.

**Interactional Competencies**

James’ interactional competencies revealed that he was on the periphery of social interaction during Quiet Choices Workshop. This meant he intently listened to and observed his peers and only responded with brief responses when Carrie and his peers asked questions. James did not regularly participate in, elaborate on, or initiate conversations. He often required several prompts from Carrie to participate in conversations about instructional topics. Table D1 classifies James’ interactional competencies based on my observations during phase I. It was created at the conclusion of the phase in late November.
Table D1

*James’ Interactional Competencies as of November 2007*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regularly present</th>
<th>Sometimes present</th>
<th>Not yet present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listens when others speak in small group and whole group.</td>
<td>Elaborates on teacher’s questions.</td>
<td>Elaborates on peers’ questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaks clearly and audibly; uses comprehensive speech.</td>
<td>Asks teacher questions, usually in small groups or one to one.</td>
<td>Asks peers questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responds to teacher’s questions cautiously &amp; timidly in whole group.</td>
<td>Participates in group talk activities assigned by the teacher (discussions, dramatizations, sharing ideas).</td>
<td>Initiates conversations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responds to peers’ questions with brief responses.</td>
<td>Participates in spontaneous group talk at tables and centers.</td>
<td>Builds on others’ ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elaborates on self-selected topics - when conversing with teacher.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elaborates coherently on instructional topics – with questions from teacher as prompts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Functions of Oral Language

I found James was not able to orally share sequential, coherent accounts of personal experiences, retold stories, and explanations about his interests without prompting by Carrie. When he shared stories of personal experiences and retold stories that were previously read aloud, he often required questions from Carrie to clarify the sequence. For example, James played the role of the Wolf in *The Three Little Pigs* and Carrie cued him by asking questions about what happened next. When James was asked to orally elaborate on his drawings, he only responded with labels for the detailed illustrations. Although his peers regularly created imaginative worlds through talking, I did not observe James use oral language in this manner. Table D2 summarizes what I learned about James’ functions of oral language.
Table D2

*Summary of James’ Functions of Oral Language as of November 2007*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function of oral language</th>
<th>Description of oral language competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shares stories of personal experiences</td>
<td>Required prompts from Carrie to clarify sequence of events about personal experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retold outdoor adventures with brothers to teacher. Used complete sentences, but lacked coherent sequence of events. Carrie asked questions to prompt him to clarify (field notes, September 27, 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shared a peacock feather with whole class but lacked coherent sequence,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carrie again asked questions to prompt him to clarify (field notes, October 16, 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retells stories heard as read alouds</td>
<td>Not observed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explains things, or how to do or make something</td>
<td>Used labels of nouns when asked to explain his drawings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Required questions as prompt to explain the events of bull riding episodes (field notes, October 23, 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creates imaginative worlds</td>
<td>Not observed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Functions, Features, and Social Processes of Drawing and Writing

When James composed on paper, he created detailed drawings with deliberate color choices and depicted settings, characters, and events. Figure D1 represents one of James’ typical drawings in which he used deliberate color choices and many details. This drawing shows a bull rider, a bull, and the clown who enters the ring to distract the bull. As previously stated, James was highly interested in the sport of bull riding. He intently drew the specific clothing including chaps and a vest with details like the fringe and a belt buckle.

Figure D1. “The Bull Rider and the Clown” (October 17, 2007).

James composed only one composition that included written language during Phase I. After Carrie presented a mini-lesson on the reasons we write thank you notes, James composed a thank you note to his dad as a way to say “thank you for doing stuff with me” (field notes, November 17, 2007). Figure D2 depicts the thank you note. James composed it as he copied the words, “thank you” and “Dad” from classroom print. This was not a required composition, but one that James chose to complete independently.
Figure D2. Thank you note to Dad, 11-17-07

Table D3 summarizes what I learned about James’ use of drawing and writing and the social processes he used.
### Table D3

*James’ Drawing and Writing Competencies, as of November 2007*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drawing and writing competencies</th>
<th>Description of drawing and writing competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Features of drawing</td>
<td>Chose own topics for drawing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initially drew basic and recognizable drawings with some detail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Then moved to detailed illustrations with deliberate color choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Included facial expressions on people and animals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used lines to depict action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functions of drawing</td>
<td>Drew pictures for parents and teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drew pictures to represent personal experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drew multiple frames to create a 3 page book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Features of writing</td>
<td>Independently copied print in the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did not choose to write labels unless encouraged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relyed on adult to segment the word then labels with beginning sounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functions of writing</td>
<td>Composed a thank you note to his dad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This was his only self-selected written composition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social processes</td>
<td>Initially composed alone without talking to peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In late October, sat at the table that was the locus of bookmaking and composed his first picture book of three pages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listens intently to peers at this table.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does not initiate conversation with peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responds to questions peers asked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does not choose to share compositions from author’s chair.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


James was chosen as the focal child because he did not fully interact with members of the class and he was tentative about using oral and written language. He consistently chose to compose with the sign system of drawing. His illustrations included detail and deliberate color choices. James’ composing processes and products with drawings showed me that he would provide the data to answer my research questions.
APPENDIX E

SAMPLE OF JOTTINGS ON FIVE LINES OF FOCUS DURING OBSERVATIONS
Sample of Jottings on Five Lines of Focus During Observations

Date: February 21, 2009

Description of Composing (when, where, with whom, topic):

Beginning of composing time - James sat @ table w/ Daniel. (This was Daniel's assigned table) - they were immediately joined by Stan (James' brother) from the other class. Classroom - Daniel suggested they "make treasure maps for us guys."

Sign systems and materials:

Drawing - J & A started map while D discussed facts of Caribbean series - then D suggested they add Black Sparrow to map - other 2 boys started a second scene on 2nd paper.

Appropriations:

Drawing - Talking as storytelling - 3 boys collaborated to make map - talking to narrate events - others assumed roles of characters as they created dialogue.

Drawing - I initiated storyline & characters from Pirates of Caribbean.

Debt Man's Chain - J & I followed D's lead by singing long next event & adding dialogue. - I used Daniel's poster's lyrics to "Bad Day" to describe Captain's Day.

Social interactions with others:

J协作ed w/ A & D to compose text (narrated by talking-stories)

3 boys were cooperative, shared materials, took turns talking, accepted each other's ideas,

I consistently built off of D's ideas - repeated them too (see transcript) - and added own ideas.

Responses from others:

They (3 boys) did not share from author's chair.

J - James  D - Daniel  S - Stan
APPENDIX F

EXAMPLES OF CATEGORIES FOR JAMES’ SIGN SYSTEM CHOICES
Drawing

An example of drawing as a sign system category appears in Figure F1.

![Drawing](image)

Figure F1. “A Picture for Mom” as an example of drawing (February 4, 2008)

Talking as Storytelling

An example of the sign system category, talking as storytelling, is represented in the transcript from James’ composition, “Harry Bubbles,” composed while he held a monkey puppet:

His name is Harry Bubbles. (Laughter erupts for approximately 10 seconds while several children repeat the name, Harry Bubbles, Harry Bubbles). Harry Bubbles eats bananas. He plays with his friends and they swing on vines. He hides in a tree when enemies come. He hides behind the tree and holds on tight and goes like this (squeaking the mechanism in the monkey. This elicits
laughter from the children.). He lives with his mom and dad and eats scorpions in
can. (Again the children burst into laughter.). (transcript, February 4, 2008)

Writing

An example of writing as a sign system category is shown in a note James and
Daniel composed collaboratively for Daniel’s mom. It is a request for Daniel to get the
same hairstyle as James. On April 10, 2008, James came to school with gel in his hair and
it was styled upright. Daniel referred to the style as a “Mohawk” although that was not an
accurate label.

![Image of a note]

*Figure F2. “A Note to Daniel’s Mom” as an example of writing (April 10, 2008)*

Drawing and Talking

An example of drawing and talking as a sign system category is seen in the
composition James collaboratively composed with Daniel and Stan, “Treasure Map”
(February 21, 2008). The following is an excerpt from the transcript that narrated the
drawings Daniel and James each made of “Treasure Map.” Daniel led the narration and James followed his lead with a few lines.

Daniel: Jack Sparrow is coming back. I can see him. Now he is coming back!

     Jack Sparrow! Jack Sparrow is here! Look what Jack Sparrow shoted
[shot]. A bazooka. Right here a bazooka.

James: Jack Sparrow is dead.

Daniel: Yeah, but do you know what the great news is? Knives! Look at these
     knives. Jack Sparrow is dead. Jack Sparrow is dead. Jack Sparrow is
dead. Here is the blood coming out of him. There’s the squids. Squids.
     Jack Sparrow got eaten by squids. Right here are tentacles. Look how
much he has….blood. OH! I can see Jack Sparrow. He’s alive! Oh yes!


Daniel: Jack Sparrow di…di…died!

Stan: Jack Sparrow is out of the squid! Hey guys, can you see bubbles?


     NO…Jack Sparrow….I see his face. He’s floating in the water. Yeah, he
is floating in the water. He is floating in the water dead.

James: Jack Sparrow is right there.

The drawings that accompanied this transcript are represented in Figure F3.
Figure F3. “Treasure Maps” as drawings accompanied the transcript about Jack Sparrow.

(February 21, 2008)
Writing to Supplied Illustrations

An example of writing to supplied illustrations appears in Figure F4.

*Figure F4.* “Sand” as an example of writing to supplied illustrations (March 20, 2008). “I am getting hot.” From *COLLECTIONS, Friends and Family*, Grade K, Theme Book. Copyright © by Harcourt, Inc. reproduced by permission of the publisher. Appendix H includes the permission letter from the publisher.
Drawing and Writing

An example of drawing and writing as a sign system category is shown in Figure F5.

Figure F5. “Dinosaurs I” (page 2), as an example of drawing and writing, (February 20, 2008). “It eats a baby.”
Ms. Christine Walsh
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Hermitage, PA 16148

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APPENDIX H

TRANSCRIPT OF “THE LONG DOG”
Transcript of “The Long Dog”

James composed this narrative fiction composition through talking while using Pretzel (Rey, 1944) as a mentor text (Ray, 1999).

They drank their mommy’s milk.

They’re full

“Look,” said the dog.

“Look,” said the dog.

“Look,” said the dog.

“Look,” said the dog.

Some of them are growing.

Some of them are not.

They were different sizes.

The mother was VERY big.

She almost lost weight.

They were ready for sale.

And the mother dog had a ribbon on it.

And all of the kinds by where the mother dog is and all the dogs and all the children came by.

Then the mother dog left.

Then everyone was there and everyone was looking at Mother Dog.

Mother Dog saw the black dog.

The gray one wanted to play but he didn’t want to.
Then he made a circle.
And his head was in it.
The black dog looked him like he was crazy.
And the black dog jumped into the water and get his ball back at the worker’s shop.
Then he couldn’t get out and he was crying.
And his ball is in there.
Then the gray dog grabbed him and he attacked.
He was not crying.
Then they liked each other. They was playing.
All the dogs walked to their home and the bunny was standing by and there were flowers.
And there was all kinds of dogs at the school. THE END!
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


Baturka, N. L., & Walsh, D. J. (1991, April). *In the Guinness Book of World Records it says that a girl stayed in kindergarten until she was 13: First graders who have been retained make sense of their world*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago.


*COLLECTIONS, Friends and Family, Grade K, Theme Book*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt, p. 18.


