

Perspectives on Primary School Literacy in Australia: ESL Parents and Years 3-6 Teachers

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List of Acronyms

| | |
|--------|---|
| BICS | Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills |
| CALP | Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency |
| CATs | Content Area Teachers |
| CLT | Communicative Language Teaching |
| DEECD | Department of Education and Early Childhood Development |
| DISGW | Direct Instruction Small Group Withdrawal |
| EAL/D | English as an Additional Language or Dialect |
| EFL | English as a Foreign Language |
| ELD | English Language Development |
| ELLs | English Language Learners |
| EMR | Eastern Metropolitan Region |
| ESL | English as a Second Language |
| LBOTE | Language Backgrounds Other Than English |
| LEP | Limited English Proficient |
| LOTE | Language Other Than English |
| L1s | First Languages |
| NAPLAN | National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy |
| NLS | New Literacy Studies |
| NNESs | Non-native English Speakers |
| NRP | National Reading Panel |
| Prep | Preparatory |
| SL | Scaffolding Literacy |
| SLC | School Leaving Certificate |
| VELS | Victorian Essential Learning Standards |
| WLA | Whole Language Approach |

Abstract

Australian schools are increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse, with large numbers of immigrant and refugee students from English as a Second Language (ESL) backgrounds. This study explores the perspectives of six parents from India, Indonesia, Nepal, and the Philippines, and five government school teachers on literacy pedagogy at a primary school in Victoria, Australia. The purpose of the study was to explore how their perspectives aligned regarding the education of ESL children. For this, research questions relating to parent perspectives, the practice of literacy pedagogy at the school, teacher perspectives, and home-school communication were posed. A qualitative case study approach was used to investigate the problem. Data were drawn from semi-structured group and individual interviews, a parent questionnaire, classroom observations, audio-recording of lessons, school newsletters, students' published work, photographs, the researcher's journal, and fieldnotes.

The findings reveal that in some areas of literacy pedagogy, parent and teacher expectations and perspectives were closely aligned and in some areas they diverged. Both groups agreed on aspects of literacy, including its experiential nature, the use of multiliteracies, the level of teacher support needed, and the value of extensive reading and autonomous learning. Their views differed in regard to prescribed textbooks, classroom teaching approaches, daily homework, regular testing, and home-school communication systems. The implications of these findings shed light on the challenges of home-school partnerships with new ESL parents, and provide a framework to develop better collaboration between parents and teachers. It is expected that this study will make a contribution to the field of TESOL research, and to an understanding of literacy pedagogy in culturally and linguistically diverse schools. This will lead to improved home-school partnerships, which will in turn help to strengthen ESL children's literacy learning.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the perspectives of six English as a Second Language (ESL) parents and five mainstream school staff on literacy pedagogy, at a primary school in Victoria, Australia. This chapter introduces the research topic, along with an account of my personal motivation to conduct this study. I position myself as a researcher, with several identity roles, such as daughter, student, teacher, and mother, each of which is relevant for my research. A brief description of my son's literacy learning in Nepal precedes a narrative of my family's arrival in Australia to pursue my PhD, and how my son's schooling here became the primary focus of the study. The experience of two newly arrived ESL parents regarding their children's schooling in Australia is also included to show the importance of this research. The research questions are posed, and an argument is presented regarding the significance of the study. Finally, an outline of the thesis is given.

1.1 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The world is changing rapidly under the influence of globalisation (Bello, 2010; Singh & Papa, 2010). One aspect of globalisation is people's mobility around the globe (Appadurai, 2009; Rizvi, 2009), due to economic, social, political, educational, and environmental reasons (Bello, 2010). Usually the purpose of migration, no matter what the specific reason, is the search for a better and more secure life in comparison to that in migrants' home countries.

One impact of migration can be seen in the classrooms of developed English-speaking countries, hereafter English-speaking countries, which are filled with children from diverse social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds (Thomas & Kearney, 2008). Teaching English literacy to children from such backgrounds has been an increasingly

important issue in the UK, the USA, Canada, and Australia. Among these countries, the UK has 10% of overseas born people whereas in the United States, Canada, and Australia the percentage of immigrant people is 11%, 18%, and 22% respectively (Borooah & Mangan, 2007). This implies that Australia, where this study is located, has the highest number of ESL students and parents compared to the other three countries.

In the countries mentioned above, many parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may have different literacy teaching/learning expectations from those of their children's mainstream school teachers. These different expectations perhaps arise from the understanding of literacy in different social contexts, because literacy is understood and valued differently in different societies (Finnegan, 1988; Heath, 1983; Robinson-Pant, 2000; Street, 1993). In Australia, for instance, literacy is viewed not as a set of skills, but as a social practice (Luke, Dooley, & Woods, 2011), which emphasises that literacy can be understood only in its social contexts (Street, 2009). Literacy practices are cultural ways of using literacy in a particular society (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). These practices are generally reflected in literacy pedagogy, because schools are those social institutions where values and beliefs of the wider society are expressed. In relation to ESL students, literacy pedagogy needs to take into account the development of English language proficiency. The understanding of literacy as a social practice and its implication in literacy pedagogy will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

As indicated above, Australia has the highest proportion of ESL children in schools in comparison to Canada, the UK, and the USA, and every year this increases. Because of this, the demography of Australian schools is in constant change. In such a context, it is important to learn about the ways that parents from diverse backgrounds and mainstream school teachers understand literacy, to see what extent their views

match, and to address the discrepancies, if there are any. Parents have an impact on literacy development, because if they are involved in their children's literacy learning, this can help children improve their learning and increase their achievement level (Barnard, 2004; Ford & Amaral, 2006; Rogers, Theule, Ryan, Adama, & Keating, 2009). There is a significant volume of research regarding second language pedagogy (Adoniou & Macken-Horarik, 2007; Currie & Cray, 2004; Gibbons, 2009; Grant & Wong, 2003; Kennedy, 2006; Pawan, 2008; Tardy, 2006). These studies relate to ESL learners and mainstream school teachers in English-speaking countries. Unfortunately, in relation to learners and teachers, there has been very little research conducted exploring ESL parent views on literacy, and even less which compares parent and teacher views. Therefore, there is a need for studies that listen to the voices of ESL parents concerning teachers and schools (Huh, 2006). Huh argues that in the absence of such research, there is a danger that the lack of consideration of, and knowledge about ESL parents may widen an already large gap between teachers and ESL students. This study aims to make a useful contribution to the knowledge in the under-researched area of ESL parent perspectives on literacy pedagogy by exploring the extent to which they match with teacher perspectives. For this, I use both literature and personal experience.

This study has emerged from my personal interest and investment in my child's own education. As J. Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and L. H. Lofland (2006) suggest, a researcher can begin her/his study by considering her/his own personal experience, particularly if conducting a qualitative research study in the field of social science. That is why the researcher's background is an important component of qualitative research. My background has played a strong role in my decisions about what I am passionate to explore in my research, and why.

The following section illustrates how I chose my research area of literacy teaching in Australian primary schools, and specifically, newly arrived ESL parents' and teachers' perspectives on it.

1.2 RESEARCHER IDENTITY AND INVESTMENT

I came to Australia in 2008 for further studies with my own views of literacy teaching and learning. What I found in my nine-year-old son's school in Australia, did not match with my literacy teaching perspectives from Nepal. Various questions started to occupy my mind: How is literacy taught in Australian schools? What do other new parents, who are also unfamiliar with the Australian education system, think about their children's literacy learning in Australia? What is the experience of Australian teachers with new students and parents from other countries? I became curious to learn about literacy teaching/learning in Australian schools.

1.2.1 Researcher's background

My own experience before coming to Australia was that of English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher, and teacher educator in Nepal, where I worked in teaching and teacher training for about 15 years. At the time of writing, my immediate roles are those of parent and researcher. I am from a typical middle class Brahmin family from the eastern part of Nepal. The first half of my life time was spent in a small hill town, Dhankuta, where my parents still live. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics in Nepal in 2001, the total population of Dhankuta Municipality was then 20,668. My father is a retired academic and, my mother a school teacher.

When I look back to the 1970s, when I was a small child, it was very unusual to have an educated mother in a family from a sociocultural background like ours. Among

my mother's contemporaries, on her side and on my father's side, she was the only woman I had ever known to be in employment. Being the daughter of parents who were teachers, my childhood was mostly spent with campus teachers (my father's colleagues), campus students (my father's students), and school teachers (my mother's colleagues). We lived in a boys' hostel, which also served as the teachers' quarters. I observed how reading and writing were valued in our family. I still remember whenever my mother used to clean the house, she chose to devote most of her time to the books: dusting, piling, and storing them appropriately. As a child I secretly believed that books must be our most valuable possessions, because my mother took care of them so well.

I have grown up with a strong sense of the importance of education. Our mother encouraged all of her five children to earn at least a Master's degree. Her education journey has also been interesting. She married our father at the age of 16, when she was in Grade 7. She was the lucky daughter in her family, as her father agreed to send her to school, although her three elder sisters did not receive the same opportunity. After getting married, she fulfilled her wifely duties, giving birth to five children and bringing them up. She was again ready to return to school herself when I (her youngest child) was in Grade 3. She did home study with my father's support and encouragement, preparing for the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examination, a national examination, which is administered in Grade 10. When a student passes the SLC, s/he is qualified to go to college or to apply to become a primary school teacher in Nepal. My mother sat for the SLC, which she passed, at the same time as my older sister, her first-born child.

She then successfully applied for a teaching job in a primary school. While she was doing the job, she continued her study. Upgrading her qualifications, she was promoted to the position of lower secondary level teacher. She had taken the SLC with

her eldest daughter and she sat for the examination for Bachelor of Education (BEd) with her youngest daughter, that is, with me. It was her intense desire to earn a Master's degree, but unfortunately illness and circumstances did not allow for this to happen. Setting herself as an example, my mother cultivated an undying passion for learning within me.

As for myself, I have observed very closely how education can transform people's lives. If our parents had not been aware of the importance of education, it is possible that my destiny would have involved being a less educated house-wife. Valuing education, I was a high achiever throughout my school, college, and university life. It may have been because of the family influence that I also went for a teaching job like my parents, older sister, and older brother. English was the most demanding subject to study in our college days. Our parents also realised the importance of English in Nepali society, therefore, they encouraged their children to take English as their major subject to study at college. It was a common belief at the time that if you were an English graduate, you would get a job easily. Thus, I was tempted to be a teacher of this demanding subject, English.

English is taught of course as a foreign language in Nepal. I started learning English when I was in Grade 4. Throughout my schooling (Grade 4 to Grade 10), I learned English via Nepali as the medium of instruction. In college and university, however, the medium of instruction was English and the main focus of students was to grasp the given content to pass the final examination. Most of the English teachers in college used to dictate readymade notes, prepared by themselves, so students were not required to read different books to find and absorb prescribed content in the syllabus. The notes were the content. More importantly, the notes were handy to read at the time of examination. At the university, teachers would give lectures. Students took notes and

learned the content by heart, based on a rote system. Students had only to read and memorise ‘prescribed content,’ with a goal to pass their examinations with high marks. I understood ‘teaching’ as ‘rote-learning based,’ ‘teacher-centred,’ ‘content-oriented,’ and ‘to prepare students to pass examinations,’ which I sometimes realised was not sufficient. For instance, as a student of English, I never got opportunities to use English in real life, instead, I was taught about English.

Although I always passed the examinations and secured good marks, I was not satisfied with my English proficiency. I wanted to use both spoken and written English fluently, not only to read the prescribed books, write answers to examination questions, and pass in the First Division, which was the second highest category. After graduating from university, I began teaching in a language college in Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. I had to teach English to those students who wanted to improve their English, from the SLC to Master’s level students, from different disciplines. There were two courses in English, basic English and advanced English, each lasting six months. I used to teach at the basic level, and at this language college, I tried to implement the ‘bookish knowledge’ that I had gained in my college and university. For this, I encouraged my students to use English communicatively. I realised that my lecturers had taught me about communicative language teaching (CLT), but they never used this approach to teach their lessons themselves. As a result, I did not feel I was a competent user of English, even though I was labelled as a good student. I did not want my students to suffer the same fate. I tried to use activities like role play, information gap, strip stories, picture description, and story telling in my lessons and my students seemed to love to participate in them.

After teaching English in this college for four years, I joined a university in the position of teacher educator. I had to conduct training programs for primary and

secondary level in-service English teachers from government schools. My efforts focused on encouraging teachers to teach English communicatively. Until this point, I had been involved in the use of English in the government sector only, as a student in government schools, as a student in a government college and university, as a teacher in a government college, and as a teacher trainer to provide training for government school teachers.

It was only when my son started his schooling that I came into contact with private schools for the first time. When I was young, private schools were not easily accessible to middle class families. There were a limited number of private schools in the country. In Dhankuta, where I did most of my schooling, there was no private school. I used to think such schools were for high class people who had a lot of money. Usually they were located in big cities, such as Kathmandu, Biratnagar, Dharan, and Pokhara. When it was my son's time to start school, the tables had been turned. There were a lot of private schools all around the country. According to local opinion, the difference in quality of education between private schools and government schools was a big issue. Government schools were being blamed for the apparently deteriorating quality of education and private schools got the credit for maintaining the quality of education. Because of this, the private schools had become the first choice of middle class people. The government schools mostly became the sites of learning for poor children. This situation continues today.

1.2.2 My son's schooling in Nepal

My son started his schooling when he was four years old. My husband and I had chosen a private school for our son for two reasons. Based on our observations, it was the best school near our house and in the beginning years (three-year-old play group and

kindergarten) the school had less of a study load for students compared to other private schools we knew. This seemed to us appropriate considering our son's young age. From Grade 1, the students' working load gradually increased. In this school, the pre-primary, primary, lower secondary, secondary, and higher secondary schools were all on the same campus. The pre-primary and primary level children attended a full day from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm. They were named 'junior students,' while the rest, the 'senior students,' came to school in the morning at 7:30 am and stayed until 2:30 pm.

The school was regarded as one of the best private schools in Kathmandu that middle class parents like me could afford. The medium of instruction was English, except for the teaching of Nepali. In the beginning years of schooling, our son did not have much homework. Whatever he could learn in school was sufficient. The school used prescribed textbooks in all school years from pre-primary level. For example, in English, at lower kindergarten level, where our son was first enrolled, he had reading and writing textbooks. The reading book had the alphabet (upper case and lower case), vocabulary, sounds, and grammar. Grammar was basic with nouns and pronouns and where to use a/an or this/that. In writing books, students did cursive and non-cursive writing, copying the examples given in the books.

By the time my son started Grade 4, he had to do a lot of study. He had about 15 prescribed books for different subjects. He maintained three notebooks for every subject: a class work notebook, a homework notebook, and a test notebook. This meant that he had to carry a heavy bag every day, at least eight books (for eight periods) for different subjects and three notebooks for each subject. Every day he used to bring home homework for one subject or another. He had an informal test every week, on a different subject each week. Apart from these informal tests, he had three end-of-term formal examinations each year, since the school had three terms a year. In a nutshell, the

system of teaching had not substantially changed from the time when I was a student. My son was occupied with his study most of the time, which was enough to assure us as parents that our child was doing very well in school. He was a high-achieving child, one of the best students in his class. In every examination he came first or second out of about 30 students. This was not only in curriculum subjects, since he was equally active in participating in extra-curricular activities, such as singing, dancing, and acting. While he was studying at Grade 4 level, my family arrived in Melbourne, Australia in late June, 2008 to begin my PhD at Monash University. I started to experience the differences in teaching/learning styles in Nepal and Australia when my son began to attend school in Australia in July of the same year.

1.2.3 Arrival in Australia: A trigger for the study

The following extract from my journal entry records my shock as a new parent in the Australian schooling system:

Sometimes my son brings a sheet of paper or topic book and completes his nominal homework within no time! Every day I ask him two questions, “What did you study today?” and “Don’t you have any homework?” His response for the first question: “Global warming/ sustainability (for the whole month!),” and for the second: “NO” (most often)! I wish he could spend more time in his reading and writing at home, but it is about a month of his schooling, and I have not seen him struggling with his study which was quite common in Nepal.

(Journal Entry, 6/8/2008)

In the beginning, I had thought I would conduct my research into the teaching of writing. However, my experience as a parent broadened my research interest. As soon as my son started his school in Melbourne, I was taken aback to see his empty school bag on the very first day. Where were his textbooks? Where were his notebooks? Where

were his pencils? Where was his homework? Nothing inside the bag except a lunch box and a water bottle! Well, maybe this was because it was only his first day, I thought. When the same situation continued in the following days, I started to wonder how teachers teach in an Australian school, after all. How do students learn to read and write without textbooks and without homework? I started a journal to record these questions and my reflections on them. The short extract from my journal entry on 6/8/2008 is given above as an example.

Thus, my motivation to conduct this study originally came from personal experience. I realised that parents like myself from language backgrounds other than English, may often have different understandings about how literacy should be taught and learned from Australian-trained primary school teachers. Being the parent of a Grade 4 child in Australia, I became aware of the differences between schooling traditions in Nepal and in Australia, particularly in my own field of English literacy and language teaching. This realisation and my curiosity about such differences led me to reflect on my own experience of literacy teaching in the context of my home country. For my complete journal entry at that time of dilemma see Appendix 1.

1.3 VIEWS OF OTHER ESL PARENTS

Because of my own concern as a parent, and because of my interest in the teaching of writing, I became interested to explore how literacy teaching actually is conceived and delivered in Australian primary schools. At the same time, I wondered what may be the feelings of other newly arrived ESL parents in Australia regarding literacy teaching and learning at their children's school. I began talking to the new ESL parents, whose children attended my son's school, to find out what they thought of their children's school in Australia. I found these parents had experiences similar to mine. For example,

two parental stories based on their informal conversation with me and recorded in my journal, are presented below. Their names have been changed:

Mina's son is in Year 5. She is worried about his study in Australia. Mina said when her son was in India, he used to study many subjects. He used to have enough homework but in Australia his study is very relaxing. He gets a worksheet for homework for a whole week. The son is happy because he can play a lot. She added, when sometimes she asks her son what he studied today, and to her great surprise, the son answers he actually does not know! Mina expressed her uncertainty in relation to her son's education in Australia, "These days, sometimes I feel we may have made a wrong decision by coming to Australia."

(Journal Entry, 8/9/2008)

The second story was recorded a week or so later:

Arban is from Mongolia. Her daughter studies at Preparatory level. Arban told me that every day she asks her daughter what she learned today, and to her disappointment the daughter's reply will be, "Nothing!" She also said that when she calls her mum back in Mongolia, the mum's first question is, "What is my grand-daughter learning in Australia?" Arban's response, "Nothing!" Then the mother gets angry and snaps, "Oh! if she is not learning anything there, why do you keep her? Send her back home!" Arban was worried that her daughter may not compete with her friends when they go back to their country. She added, "She may speak English fluently, but when study comes, what will she do?"

(Journal Entry, 19/09/2008)

These journal entries clearly show the concern of new ESL parents about their children's learning in Australia. I began to perceive that there was a gap between the new parents' and mainstream teachers' understandings of teaching/learning. At this juncture, I started to explore more systematically the theory and practice of literacy teaching in Australian schools. For the theory, I commenced reading the available

literature. As for the practice, I began volunteering at my son's school to observe literacy lessons, and continued my journal of personal reflection.

When parents move in two cultures of literacy practices, their home culture and Australian culture, for example, they are likely to find differences between them. These differences may create a conflict among parents as well as teachers. The communication between school staff and parents plays a critical role in strengthening home-school relationship and in developing children's literacy learning (Farrell & Collier, 2010; Feiler et al., 2008). In the case of ESL parents, research to date has paid little attention to home-school communication (Guo, 2007), an important aspect of literacy teaching/learning. The focus of this study is the literacy perspectives of newly arrived ESL parents who have been living in Australia for less than two years, and of the primary teachers teaching their children. It also focuses on the communication between school and parents.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on preliminary interviews and a survey of literature, I developed the research questions. The overall research question of the study was to explore, "To what extent do the perspectives of new ESL parents and Australian mainstream primary school teachers match on literacy practices?" To find answers to this question, the following sub-questions relating to parents, teachers, and school-parent communication were posed:

Parents

1. What are newly arrived ESL parents' perspectives on literacy practices in a mainstream primary school in Australia?

Teachers

2. What do teachers believe facilitates literacy development in new ESL students?
 - a. How do they teach literacy in the classroom?
 - b. In what ways do teachers encourage new ESL parents to support their children's literacy learning?

Home-school communication

3. How actively does the school inform new ESL parents about Australian literacy practices?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

A survey of the available literature reveals that there is a lack of studies which could bring out ESL parent views on literacy pedagogy. These parents, like any other parents, are concerned about their children's literacy development. Their views are important for mainstream schools to improve the existing literacy programs so that they can be more effective. While ESL parent perspectives need to be better understood, it is also a great challenge for mainstream teachers to support ESL students to succeed in literacy learning. Firstly, they may not be familiar with their students' home literacy practices and expectations and secondly, they have to meet the school curriculum demands. Enabling ESL students to access school learning is a double challenge, because teachers need to scaffold students' written language at the same time as they are helping students to move from first language into English itself (Adoniou & Macken-Horarik, 2007). It is important to explore how teachers cope with such a demanding situation and the kind of cooperation they need from ESL families.

It seems that both parties (ESL parents and teachers) face a similar challenge, i.e., how to support ESL children in their literacy development. Unfortunately, they may often be unaware of each other's pain and struggle. Against this background, I believe, the present study will shed light on difficulties in school-family partnerships regarding the literacy development of ESL children, and provide a framework for better collaboration between teachers and families.

Although the study stems from my personal motivation, its broader contextual origins can not be ignored. The context of literacy teaching/learning in Australia, with a special focus on the state of Victoria, will be discussed in Chapter Two. In addition, a brief overview of English literacy teaching in Nepal will also be presented in this chapter, to compare two social contexts of literacy teaching. The following section outlines the thesis structure.

1.6 OUTLINE OF THESIS

The thesis is organised into nine chapters. Chapter One has introduced the background of the study where I have positioned myself as a researcher, the research problem has been identified, the research questions have been posed, and the significance of the study has been presented. Chapter Two provides a detailed account of the context of the study, and discusses literacy teaching and learning practices in Australia with a special focus on Victoria. It presents an overview of ESL students, ESL parents and their relationship with schools, as well as curriculum documents along with other policy documents. Furthermore, to show an example of literacy teaching/learning in other countries, the literacy teaching/learning system of Nepal is given. Relevant research literature is reviewed in Chapters Three and Four. Chapter Three is divided into two sections: the theoretical framework of the study precedes the implications for pedagogy of these theories. Empirical studies conducted in the relevant areas are reviewed in

Chapter Four. Chapter Five presents the research paradigm and methodology of the study. In this chapter, the choice of a qualitative research approach, case study as research design, the procedures for selecting the research site and participants, the development of instruments to elicit data, data sources, ethical considerations, researcher reflexivity, and data analysis procedures are presented. Chapter Six introduces parent participants, including their children's school experience in home countries, and parental initial expectations from the Australian school. The details of data analysis and findings relating to parent participants are in Chapter Seven, followed by data analysis and findings about teacher participants in Chapter Eight. Chapter Nine discusses the findings of the current study in relation to theoretical concepts and findings of research studies conducted in other contexts. This chapter also compares and contrasts parent and teacher perspectives, and finally, presents the conclusion and implications of the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

CONTEXTS OF LITERACY TEACHING

Chapter Two presents the context of literacy teaching in Victorian schools in detail, and a comparison with the Nepali context. The chapter begins with definitions and descriptions of English as a Second Language (ESL) students and their parents, as ESL children's literacy learning is a focus of this study. Official policy documents set for home-school communication and home-school partnerships in Victorian schools are discussed. This is followed by a discussion of how literacy teaching is understood in Nepal, which provides insight into some ESL parents' perspectives on literacy. The tension for some ESL parents created by two different contexts of literacy teaching is also discussed. Finally, Victorian curriculum documents, literacy teaching approaches, and the national examination system for literacy are presented.

2.1 ESL LEARNERS IN VICTORIAN SCHOOLS

Australia is known as a multicultural and multilingual society all around the world. Each year, Australia welcomes more than 120,000 migrants from different parts of the world, according to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2010). Today in Australia, first and second generation immigrants make up 40% of the population, and one in four Australians was born overseas, with 14.2% born in non-English-speaking (NES) countries. As for children, 15% over five years of age speak a language other than English (Leeman & Reid, 2006). The *ESL Report* (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2008) indicates that 6,125 newly arrived students were enrolled in government schools in 2008 in Victoria alone, and that they speak approximately 130 languages in their homes. These statistics show that there is a substantial number of ESL school children in Victoria who have diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Children's education in Victoria is regulated by government policy. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) pursues the government's stated goal to provide high-quality education and training for lifelong learning to Victorian children. To ensure the equity of education that every Victorian child is entitled to, many Victorian schools have ESL programs to support the children who enter Australia every year from different countries (*ESL Report*, DEECD, 2008).

Different terms are used in the literature to indicate those students who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL) to their home languages. Such students are referred to as Non-native English Speakers (NNEs), English Language Learners (ELLs), Language Backgrounds Other Than English (LBOTE) children, and English as a Second Language (ESL) students. Among these terms, ESL is chosen intentionally in this study for both parents and students from language backgrounds other than English, for two reasons. First, the Victorian curriculum, *Victorian Essential Learning Standards* (VELS, see section 2.7) uses ESL in curriculum documents. Second, Paterson Primary School (pseudonym), where this study took place, also used the term ESL. However, it is noteworthy that in the new national *Australian Curriculum*, the term ESL has been replaced by 'English as an Additional Language or Dialect' (EAL/D). Dialect refers here to Aboriginal English (ACARA, 2011).

ESL learners are a highly diverse group in Victoria with adequate formal schooling to no previous formal schooling experience and with different stages of English language proficiency (*ESL Companion to the VELS*, 2005). Excluding those with no formal schooling, ESL learners can be divided into three groups, namely newly arrived learners with adequate formal schooling, newly arrived learners with limited formal schooling, and long-term English language learners, according to Freeman and Freeman (2003) and J. Miller, Mitchell, and J. Brown (2005). The learners from the first

group tend to be from educated and affluent families and are likely to encounter less difficulty in adapting to a new culture, socially and academically. The learners from the second group tend to be from poor family backgrounds, often with parents who work as labourers. Such students arrive in English-speaking countries with limited or interrupted formal schooling, and have limited academic knowledge and limited English proficiency. Research shows that they struggle with reading and writing in their first languages (L1s) or do not read or write in L1s at all. Not only this, they lack basic concepts in the different subject areas. Although the learners from the third group were born in an English-speaking country, they have limited opportunity to learn or use English. In addition, they do not develop literacy in their L1s and their English literacy skills are considerably below grade level (Freeman & Freeman, 2003; J. Miller, Mitchell, & J. Brown, 2005).

ESL learners include both permanent and temporary residents in Australia. Among them, there is a special group of Victorian students, who have entered on refugee and humanitarian visas and who fit the profile of the second group above. These students have had no, little or interrupted schooling in their home countries. Refugee students get additional support together with the existing ESL support. However, this group of students and their parents are not the focus of this study, as they were not highly represented in the school studied. The study focuses on the first group of learners, that is, those from stable and educated families who are relatively secure financially. This is the group that was accessible for the researcher.

In Victoria, a student is defined as ESL if either the student or one or both parents speak another language at home (*ESL Report*, DEECD, 2008). This means that, on the one hand, no matter how many years a student has been studying in an Australian school and how good her/his English is, if English is not his/her home language, s/he is

an ESL student. On the other hand, students who are newly arrived in Australia from other non-English-speaking countries and who need support to cope with mainstream Australian schools, are also ESL students. The latter category of ESL students is the concern of ESL programs (It should be noted that the term ESL was replaced by 'LBOTE' in the *ESL Report*, 2009 to mean students from language backgrounds other than English). To run the ESL programs, Victorian schools get special state and national per-student funding. The following were the criteria set for the year 2008, on the basis of which a school got this funding:

- Students are from an ESL background
- English is not the main language spoken at home
- Students have been enrolled in an Australian school for less than five years
- Students are eligible for student resource package (SRP) funding

(*ESL Report*, DEECD, 2008, p. 6)

According to the *ESL Report* (DEECD, 2008), an ESL student who has been in Australia for less than five years is still considered a new student and eligible for ESL support. For the purposes of this study, the ESL students and their parents are regarded as 'new' if they have been in Australia for no more than two years. At this stage they are still in a transition phase, but at the same time they have also had some exposure to the Australian schooling system. This enables them to compare schooling systems in Australia and in their home countries.

In Victoria, all government schools are clustered within nine geographical regions, four of which are centred on Melbourne and five non-metropolitans. According to the *ESL Report* (DEECD, 2008), two kinds of support are available to new ESL

students. They are (1) Intensive ESL programs and (2) ESL support available in mainstream schools. Intensive ESL programs are provided by English language schools and centres in the metropolitan areas. In these English language schools and centres, the students can learn from two to four school terms full-time, according to their needs. The main aim of Intensive ESL programs is to prepare the new ESL students for mainstream primary and secondary schools. These programs are targeted at the children of permanent residents, but if spaces are available, temporary residents' children can also be enrolled. For those students who cannot attend the language school or centre, an outposting program is available. Under outposting, there are intensive and visiting programs. In an intensive program, teachers from an English language school or centre are assigned to go to a mainstream primary school or a cluster of schools and deliver intensive programs to eligible students. The students take lessons of up to four days a week. In a visiting program, teachers from an English language school or centre visit different primary schools to give lessons where new ESL students are enrolled. This program is scheduled within the school's regular timetable (*ESL Report*, DEECD, 2008).

Apart from the ESL programs provided by the English language schools and centres, mainstream schools also provide ESL support to newly enrolled ESL students through various programs. Among school-based ESL support programs, the preferred program is direct instruction small group withdrawal (DISGW), where ESL students are withdrawn from mainstream classes at a certain time and given ESL lessons by an ESL teacher. At other times, these students learn together with mainstream students (*ESL Report*, DEECD, 2008). The DISGW was in practice in Paterson Primary School.

2.2 ESL PARENTS

Like ESL students, ESL parents are also either permanent or temporary residents in Victoria. As mentioned above, although some ESL parents are well educated and may not have a problem in the use of English as a language, issues springing from cultural differences and misunderstandings while dealing with the Australian schooling system may arise for them. It is true that for those ESL parents who are not proficient enough to understand school-related information given in English, interpreting and translating services in their first languages are provided by the DEECD via their children's school. Interpreting is to assist the parents in the following areas:

- Student enrolments
- Parent-teacher interviews
- Information dissemination about specific school programs
- Individual student issues relating to discipline or welfare, or to assist with an educational assessment

(ESL Report, DEECD, 2008, p. 39)

In 2008, on-site and the telephone interpretation services were provided to different schools in 67 and 55 languages respectively (*ESL Report, DEECD, 2008*). Apart from interpretation, translation services are also available to the ESL parents. The translation encompasses word limits in the following areas:

- Key items for newsletters: 500 words
- Notices to parents: 150 words
- Information on a program or activity: 250 words
- Special school/integration student reports: 500 words

(ESL Report, DEECD, 2008, p. 40)

Translation services were provided to schools to translate 333 documents in 41 languages in 2008 (*ESL Report*, DEECD, 2008). The purpose of providing these interpreting and translating services to the parents who are not proficient in English is to help them understand what is happening in schools and how the Victorian schooling system works.

Not all parents may be aware of these services, which include on-site and telephone interpreting and translation services. Moreover, although extensive, these services do not seem sufficient. As mentioned earlier, the new ESL students with about 130 home languages other than English were enrolled in Victorian schools in 2008. Providing on-site interpretation in 67 languages, telephone interpretation in 55 languages or translation services in 41 languages does not serve the ESL parents, who speak languages outside those provided. Furthermore, the translation service is also limited to a word count so that a parent may receive a translation of information into his or her language of up to 1400 words. While this seems a generous allocation, it is not always used or used unevenly. Some parents still struggle to comprehend issues and events at the school.

As an ESL parent, I myself have experienced that a school largely depends on written communication with parents. For instance, the school regularly sends fortnightly newsletters, important notices, extensive, twice-yearly children's reports, and consent forms. Prior to the children's participation in school events, such as school excursions, camps, and photographs, a consent form is sent home seeking parental permission. Communication is essential to bind school and families together. The following sections present home-school communication, and home-school partnerships respectively, which are part of the Victorian schooling system.

2.3 HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION IN VICTORIA

Before further discussion, it is worth pausing to consider the term ‘home-school communication,’ which is used throughout this thesis because of common usage. It is used in research literature and in the VELs and, I would argue, by most Australians. In the cultures from where my participants come, however, the term ‘school-home communication’ might be more accurate. This is because in cultures, such as my own Nepali culture, parents expect the school rather than themselves to initiate communication. This will be further discussed. According to DEECD (2010), there are mainly four ways of formal communication between home and school in Victoria. They are through student reports, parent-teacher interviews, school newsletters, and an annual report to the school community.

Student reports show how children are progressing in different curriculum areas. Parents receive a report card twice a year, at the end of Term 2 and at the end of Term 4 (there are four terms in a school year). The same report card is used in all government schools throughout Victoria. The report card has a list of learning areas and a student’s achievement is rated in these areas using a rating scale from A (highest) to E (lowest). This rating is accompanied by the class teacher’s and subject teachers’ detailed comments, with an indication of areas to improve, where the school and family can focus. There are spaces for a student’s and her/his parent’s comments as well. For a sample report card, see Appendix 2 (DEECD, 2010).

The parent-teacher interview is the only formal occasion where a parent gets an opportunity to talk to his/her child’s teacher individually regarding the child’s progress (DEECD, 2010). The interview, which normally lasts for 10 minutes, is held once a year in primary schools usually in July, after the student report card is sent home during Term 2. This gives parents an opportunity to review and further discuss with teachers

their child/ren's progress. At other times, as a parent I knew that, if parents had concerns about their children, they could contact the school any time and make an appointment with the principal or teacher/s to discuss the issues. This is highlighted in the school newsletters as well (*Paterson Primary School Newsletters*, 2009).

School newsletters are another way to connect a school and families (DEECD, 2010). Usually a hard-copy school newsletter is sent home fortnightly, where a parent can find all the information and activities related to his/her child's school. At the end of each year parents receive an annual report. The annual report summarises the achievements and progress of the school in that year.

The four formal communication systems, student reports, parent-teacher interviews, school newsletters, and annual reports are used in all Victorian schools (DEECD, 2010). In this study, the day to day implementation of the first three communication systems came under scrutiny, as parent perspectives were a central focus.

2.4 HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS IN VICTORIA

Home-school partnerships are also an important part of Victorian government schools. It is believed that such partnerships are strengthened if parents are involved in school programs. Indeed the term 'home-school partnership' implies the importance of home and parents in children's learning. This belief is based on research studies which show that if parents are involved in their children's literacy learning, this can foster the learning and increase their achievement level as well (Barnard, 2004; Ford & Amaral, 2006; Rogers et al., 2009). Several parental involvement programs are identified in Victorian government schools.

Parents can update themselves with general news about what is happening in education in Victoria and particularly at their children's schools, since every school term the DEECD produces an electronic newsletter for them. This newsletter helps parents to learn about the Victorian education system in general. As mentioned above, school newsletters, which publish all the events happening in the particular school or school community, are another source of information for parents. By reading these newsletters, parents can be up-to-date with their children's education.

Through parental involvement programs, parents can also be directly involved in school affairs. These programs include volunteering in school, participation in the school council, participation in the parent club/association, and participation in different programs organised by the school (DEECD, 2010). Parents can volunteer in different programs, such as school excursions, school camps, barbeques, working bees, book fairs, and setting up a Father's/Mother's Day stall (*Paterson Primary School Newsletters*, 2009). There are many events in the school where extra help is needed. Parents can also assist children in the classroom in reading or mathematics programs.

Another opportunity for parents to be involved in their children's education is through the school council (DEECD, 2010). The school principal, staff, parents, and community members make up the school council, which has between six and 15 members. The council assists the school to implement education policy. An election is held in March at the beginning of each school year to elect council members. All parents whose children are enrolled in that school are eligible to vote. Many schools in Victoria have a parent association, which operates in partnership with the school council to give input towards school decision-making. In addition, it organises social, educational, and fundraising activities.

It is hoped and expected that parents are strongly connected to schools to strengthen their children's literacy learning (DEECD, 2010). This is why home-school partnerships are emphasised and various opportunities for parents are provided so that they can be involved in their children's learning. However, for those parents who come from a culture where home-school partnership is not common, the importance of all these parental involvement programs may be a puzzle. They may hesitate to be involved in such programs, as expected by DEECD and the school.

The schools in the parents' home countries may often differ vastly from what they encounter in Australia. One example of difference is schooling in my home country, Nepal. The next section offers a snapshot of educational culture in Nepal. It should be noted that the term 'Nepali' is preferred to 'Nepalese' in written and spoken English in Nepal, and for this reason is used in this thesis.

2.5 EDUCATIONAL CULTURE IN NEPALI SCHOOLS

In any discussion of educational culture in the context of Nepal, the public debate between private schools and government schools is always high on the agenda. In recent years, private schools have attracted middle class Nepali parents who prefer them to the free government schools, despite their significant cost (Bhattarai & Gautam, 2005). One of the vast differences between government schools and private schools, and the main reason why private schools tempt the Nepali middle class, lies in the amount of English used. In government schools, the medium of instruction is Nepali and English is used only in teaching the language as a subject. Private schools offer the entire curriculum in English, so all subjects except Nepali are taught in English. Another demarcation line to judge the success of private schools and failure of government schools is the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examination result. As mentioned earlier, the SLC is a national examination and is held in Year 10. As a snapshot, in 2005, whereas 80% of

44,863 private school students passed the SLC, the pass percentage of 171,440 government school students was only 29% (Caddell, 2006). One of the main objectives of schools, therefore, is to be able to produce a maximum number of SLC graduates, particularly those scoring the top marks. In fact, a within-school ranking system is highly valued in Nepal, even from the very beginning, when children are at play-group or kindergarten level.

Caddell (2006) states that there are two categories of private schools in Nepal, elite private schools and budget private schools, where rural and poor children go. In my experience, there is an additional category between elite and budget schools, which can be named as ‘middle level’ private schools. Such middle level private schools cater for the children from almost all urban middle class families. The purpose of this study, however, is not to compare Nepali private schools and Victorian government schools. I am considering the Nepali middle level private schools to show my parental background, because my son attended this kind of school in Nepal. In addition, in a developed country, such as Australia, the government school system is better resourced.

Usually the middle level private school Nepali children grow up in a highly ‘examination-centred’ schooling culture. This can be seen as typical of many other non-English-speaking countries from where ESL children come (Lee, 2010; J. Li, 2010). Anecdotal evidence suggests that the middle level private school children are trained to read the prescribed textbooks thoroughly, do a lot of writing exercises based on those books, have regular homework, have sound grammar, take different kinds of class tests, term tests, and yearly examination even from the early years of schooling. Teachers must correct every child’s written work (homework or class work) thoroughly, e.g., grammar, punctuation, spelling, along with meaning or content. In language teaching, neither a whole language approach nor a genre-based writing approach (see Chapter

Three) is in practice, instead, skill-based language learning/teaching is valued. Further, all educational, and literacy activities in particular, that take place in Nepali schools, encourage the development of students' accurate recall of information.

I came to Australia with this understanding of teaching and learning, and specifically, of academic literacy teaching and learning. The mismatch between my understanding and Australian literacy teaching/learning practices created an initial tension in our household. A similar tension was felt by other Filipino, Indian, and Mangolian ESL parents I spoke to. The following section highlights this tension.

2.6 HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP IN AUSTRALIA: TENSION FOR ESL PARENTS

As discussed previously, if schools and families collaborate to support children's literacy development it is beneficial for students (Barnard, 2004; Ford & Amaral, 2006; Rogers et al., 2009). Such collaboration is expected in countries like Australia. In contrast, in many countries, such as Nepal, a school plays a major role in educating students. From my own experience, in most cases, parents pay money and it is the job of schools to teach their children so that they pass the examination with good marks. When parents in developing countries cannot pay, their children may or may not attend a public school. Even in public schools, it is the job of the school to teach. Students are supposed to read their textbooks and do the writing exercises thoroughly, so textbooks are highly valued at school and at home. The notion of a home-school partnership is not embedded formally in the Nepali schooling system. The only demand from the school on families is that students complete their homework every day. If not, they are punished the next day.

Yet in the Nepali context as in any other, parents are concerned for their children's education so they help them in their own way in reading and writing. They rely on children's textbooks and homework as a guide to children's academic progress. This means that if children can do all the activities given in their textbooks and do all assigned homework, they are regarded as good learners. If the parents themselves are educated and have time, they help their children in doing homework and reading textbooks. In the case of educated and busy and indeed less educated parents (who may have a lot of money but less knowledge in academic discourses), they organise a private tutor for their children.

In my family, in addition to preparing my son for school literacy activities, we used to buy him children's books for reading, encourage him to write poems, stories or personal letters or just ask him to copy something from a book to improve his handwriting. In this way, he was busy at home. He had limited time to watch television or play digital games. So in the first year in Australia, it was really hard for us to understand the different schooling culture. I still remember how my husband and I used to fight with our son every day over homework. We wanted to know what specific content he had learned at school, and were unhappy that he was unable to answer us, which I indicated in Chapter One. Furthermore, there was no homework book where we could check for details. From the conversation with my research supervisor, I gained the idea that in Australia, teachers in primary schools do not often use textbooks. Instead, they use a range of resources and follow the curriculum. My husband would nonetheless feel absolutely helpless not to find any textbook to refer to, to help our son. Three years after our arrival, our son still had no textbooks for him to refer to. As parents, we felt surprised and helpless.

The following section sheds light on the Victorian primary school curriculum on literacy teaching and learning, for mainstream and for ESL children. Teachers follow the documents that will be reviewed in the following section to prepare their lessons.

2.7 CURRICULUM DOCUMENTS IN VICTORIA

The key curriculum documents at the time of the study were the Victorian *Essential Learning Standards* (VELS, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2005, 2007) and *ESL Companion to the VELS* (VCAA, 2005) in Victorian state schools. It should be noted that the national curriculum was in development at the time of this study. It draws to a large extent on VELS.

The VELS was introduced in 2005 and started to be implemented in schools from 2006. It provides a framework to develop a whole school curriculum for the students of Preparatory (Prep) to Year 10. The VELS document (2007) identifies three core interrelated 'strands.' They are (1) Physical, personal and social learning, (2) Discipline-based learning, and (3) Interdisciplinary learning. In each 'strand' there are different 'domains,' for example, in Discipline-based learning, there are The Arts, English, Language Other Than English (LOTE), Humanities, and Mathematics. On the basis of these three 'strands,' schools plan their teaching and learning programs suitable for their students to achieve the essential statewide learning standards (VELS, 2007). VELS is an integrated curriculum, according to which every teacher is a literacy teacher. However, literacy teaching means English teaching in particular. It has three areas, namely reading, writing, and speaking and listening.

Another document, the *ESL Companion to the VELS* (2005), provides a specific framework for teaching English to ESL students in Victorian schools. ESL students also need to achieve learning standards in the three strands and all domains, but before that

they need to develop their English language up to the expected level. According to the *ESL Companion to the VELs* (2005), ESL students are defined as a diverse group at different stages of learning English, with varying amounts of education in their home countries. The ultimate goal of schools is to make ESL students equal to mainstream students in terms of their use of English, a prerequisite to understand other curriculum content areas. Thus, the *ESL Companion to the VELs* (2005) provides a framework for school teachers of ESL students.

Research indicates that normally it takes about five to seven years for ESL students to learn English for academic purposes to the same level as students who have been learning English all their lives (Cummins, 1984; *ESL Companion to the VELs*, 2005). Depending on background knowledge and ability, ESL students gradually acquire enough proficiency in English to learn effectively in mainstream classes. For some students it takes a comparatively shorter time and for some a longer time to achieve the level of their peers.

Students from Prep to Year 10 level in Victoria are categorised into three different stages. Prep to Year 4 students are at the ‘laying foundation’ stage. The curriculum focus at this stage is to provide students with fundamental knowledge, skills and behaviour in literacy. During the first years of learning in primary schools, teachers aim to create a safe and happy environment where students are valued, praised, and encouraged rather than constantly tested (DEECD, 2010). Year 5 to Year 8 students are categorised at the stage of ‘building breadth and depth,’ at this stage students go beyond the foundation stage and more extensive discipline-based and interdisciplinary capacities are developed. At the final stage of ‘developing pathways,’ Year 9 and Year 10 students explore areas of interest and focus on them. The stage of developing pathways is a bridge to relate students to their “future schooling and intended pathways

beyond school while developing their understanding of, and connection to, the community in which they live” (VELS, 2007, p. 2). For the literacy learning outcomes of Prep to Year 6 students, see Appendices 3 and 4 (DEECD, 2010).

It is claimed that the ultimate goal of literacy teaching in Victorian schools is to make students able to live their life successfully in their community or society. Literacy learning is not merely related to passing the examination, but more importantly it focuses on developing students’ understanding of how literacy works in society. However, an examination system still exists, which sets specific standards to be met. Not only is there an examination at the end of the final years of secondary school, students also have to take the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) in Year 3, 5, 7, and 9, which will be described in section 2.7.2. The following section presents the pedagogical guidelines given in the VELS to teach literacy in primary schools.

2.7.1 Literacy teaching approaches

As stated earlier, the Victorian curriculum is integrated and based on a whole school approach. The curriculum suggests that literacy is not taught in isolation as a subject, instead, in the course of teaching all the curriculum domains, for example, science, maths, and history, literacy is developed. The general belief is that all teachers are teachers of literacy (*Literacy and Numeracy Statement*, DEECD, 2009). A balanced approach for literacy teaching is targeted, which aims to develop students’ reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing competencies equally. In addition to this, the knowledge, skills and behaviours learned in one strand or domain can be used in another. For instance, if a child learns self-confidence and team work under the strand of ‘Physical, personal and social learning,’ or thinking processes under

‘Interdisciplinary learning,’ these are seen as essential components of literacy learning as well. Therefore, literacy does not have only one dimension, but is interconnected with many other things, addressed by a multiliteracies pedagogy.

In teaching reading, the ‘whole language approach’ is mentioned, without ignoring other reading skills. The concepts of texts and language are embedded together. Three aspects of language, namely contextual understanding, linguistic features, and reading strategies are considered while teaching reading. The curriculum aims to expose students to a variety of printed, digital, and media texts, either in oral or written form. Students have to respond to and create such texts. Through the use of texts phonology, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension skills are also taught. In terms of teaching writing, the main approach is genre-based. Genres include narrative, report writing, recount, description, explanation, procedure, exposition, and discussion (VELS, 2007). Students practise different styles of writing in learning to construct texts.

Students’ oral competencies and listening skills are equally important as reading and writing. Students are encouraged to develop their speaking and listening skills so that they are able to participate in formal interaction with an audience, either in school or in a wider social context. They are made aware of using academic language in oral communication, which is different from that used in everyday interpersonal communication. Along with reading, writing, and speaking and listening, students have to develop their viewing ability as well, to deal with multimodal texts. Even though reading, writing, and speaking and listening are mentioned under literacy explicitly in the curriculum (VELS, 2007), multiliteracies are also embedded. For example, according to the *Curriculum Information Evening* (2010, p. 7):

The reading dimension involves student understanding, interpreting, critically analysing, reflecting upon, and enjoying written and visual, print and non-print texts. The writing dimension involves students in the active process of conceiving, planning, composing, editing and publishing a range of texts, including writing for print and electronic media and performance.

(Paterson Primary School, 2010)

A range of resources and activities are used in literacy teaching. In addition, students have to be versed equally in digital literacy, and to know how to use a computer to present their work through electronic media.

2.7.2 NAPLAN

As the name suggests, the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), tests students' literacy and numeracy understandings. Literacy only is considered in this section. NAPLAN assesses students' achievement in three aspects of literacy: reading, writing, and language conventions. The test is taken as a national benchmark and conducted in all States and Territories. The NAPLAN is not only for government school students, but also for students from Catholic and Independent schools. Students in Year 3, 5, 7, and 9 take part in this test, as mentioned above.

On the one hand, the VELs curriculum document emphasises a very broad view of literacy learning, i.e., to make students able to live their lives successfully. For this, they have to be exposed to digital literacy, social literacy, and emotional literacy. On the other hand, however, NAPLAN is based on a more traditional view of literacy teaching, which reflects political trends (Snyder, 2008). This test is to examine the students' 'standard of learning,' which shows where each of them stands in relation to their peers nationally. NAPLAN assesses students' reading, writing, and language conventions

abilities, including grammar, spelling, and punctuation (DEECD, 2010). Students' cognitive abilities are tested through paper and pencil tests and other abilities are completely ignored. See, for instance, some Year 5 sample test questions in 2009 in Appendix 5 (VCAA, 2011). What seems clear is that VELs and NAPLAN are based on different assumptions about literacy and schooling.

Apart from the formal NAPLAN test every two years from Year 3 to Year 9, schools assess students' progress regularly following the guidelines given in the VELs. As discussed in section 2.3, schools prepare a report card for each student twice a year to inform parents about their children's progress in curriculum areas. As previously mentioned, at the time of writing this thesis, the national curriculum was being developed, but not in use. When my data collection started in 2009, the VELs was the document used. Interview questions to the parents, school principal, and teachers were related to the curriculum areas in VELs. I observed lessons which were prepared by the teachers following VELs guidelines.

The following table summarises the scope of the notion of literacy in Australia and Nepal. Nepal is taken as an example of an EFL country.

Table 2.1 Comparison of literacy understandings in Australia and Nepal

| Australia | Nepal |
|---|--|
| Literacy is for life | Literacy is to pass an examination, securing high marks |
| Practice of multiliteracies | Practice of print-based literacy |
| Qualitative judgment of students | Quantitative judgment of students |
| Home-school partnerships are highlighted to foster students' literacy learning | School is responsible to teach literacy |
| Use of a range of resources, no particular textbooks | Textbook-oriented |
| Project work and extensive reading for homework | Textbook reading and written exercises based on textbooks for homework |
| Mostly school-based assessment, on the basis of year-level outcomes and without ranking and scoring systems | Mostly school-based assessment but with strict ranking and scoring systems in each class |

2.8 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the contexts of literacy teaching in Australia and in Nepal have been outlined, and details of the Victorian curriculum goals have been given, particularly as they relate to the teaching and learning of literacy. Differences between understandings of the scope of literacy in different social contexts have been identified.

In the following chapter, a review of relevant theoretical and conceptual research literature is presented.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is one of two, which survey the literature relevant to this study. Chapter Three is divided into two broad sections. The first section discusses the theoretical framework adopted for the study, which is followed by the pedagogical implications of these theories in the second section. Since the study is related to school literacy practices, it is important to understand the impact of literacy theories in classroom teaching. This research focuses on literacy teaching, ESL students' literacy learning, and ESL parent and teacher perspectives on literacy pedagogy in primary schools in English-speaking countries. Thus, the theoretical framework is centred on understandings of literacy and literacy pedagogy. Broadly speaking there are two schools of thought concerning literacy, one that interprets literacy as a cognitive ability and another that sees literacy as a social or sociocultural practice.

3.1 LITERACY AS A COGNITIVE ABILITY VERSUS SOCIAL PRACTICE

A traditional view of literacy defines it as a cognitive ability located in individuals (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). Literacy as a cognitive ability suggests that literacy is related to 'technical skills,' such as cracking the alphabet code (Luke & Freebody, 1997), learning word-formation skills, phonics, grammar, and comprehension skills (Snyder, 2008). This view of literacy aligns with the primary definition of literacy as being able to read and write (Olson & Torrance, 2009). Before the 1990s, this cognitive and skill-based view of literacy was commonly held in the Western world.

Followers of the view of literacy as a cognitive ability believe that there is a 'single literacy' which is by implication practised everywhere in the same way. The problem with this view is that it creates a great divide between literate and non-literate societies. Literate societies are those which have written scripts and non-literate

societies are those with oral language only. This suggests that people of these two kinds of societies have different cognitive abilities, with literate people being more logical than those who are non-literate (Goody, 1968). However, it seems that the division of literate and non-literate societies is neither simple nor unproblematic (see C. Cooper, 2007; Finnegan, 1988). In reality, every society is cognitively rich.

A traditional view of literacy, with its focus on print literacy alone and one-size-fits-all model, therefore, has been criticised for not being able to address the diversity of literacy practices occurring around the world (Street, 1993). Against the view of literacy as a cognitive ability has emerged a more inclusive view, which emphasises literacy as a social practice (Luke et al., 2011; Snyder, 2008; Street, 1993; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009). According to this view, literacy is not treated as an isolated cognitive ability and a property of individual minds (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). Instead, it emphasises the understanding of literacy practices in their social and cultural contexts (Street, 2009). It is understood that literacy practices are context-dependent (Freebody, 2007; Street, 1993).

The second view of literacy, that is, 'literacy as a social practice,' is the theoretical base for this study as it is most prevalent in Australia. However, it should be noted that the issue of literacy as a cognitive ability versus literacy as a social practice has been mostly raised as a contentious issue in English-speaking countries, not necessarily in all parts of the world. For example, Asian countries, such as India, Indonesia, Nepal, and the Philippines, from where many ESL parents come, still use skill-based literacy pedagogy, which is underpinned by the view of literacy as a cognitive ability. In this study, school literacy practices, whether in Australia or elsewhere, are examined through the lens of literacy as a social practice. This reflects the idea that different literacy teaching/learning practices are valued in different

societies according to a range of sociocultural perspectives of literacy. For instance, if textbooks are compulsory in a Nepali primary school, this is because Nepali society values textbook reading in schools.

3.2 LITERACY AS A SOCIAL PRACTICE

As mentioned above, according to the view of literacy as a social practice, literacy is not limited to human minds, but it is understood in social contexts, where it is being used. Pahl and Rowsell (2005) use the term ‘domains’ to refer to social contexts. For example, home, school, and workplace are different domains, where different types of literacy practices exist. It is not necessary that these domains are always related to the same community. For example, literacy practices common in a primary school in Nepal may not be same as the literacy practices in an Australian primary school. Within Australia itself, there are different ethnic groups whose home literacy practices may differ. According to the view of literacy as a social practice, literacy practices of every social context or domain are potentially important.

The framework of this study is mainly informed by the theoretical ideas outlined by Brian Street, David Barton, Mary Hamilton, James Paul Gee, and Jim Cummins.

3.2.1 Autonomous and ideological models of literacy (Street, 1993)

According to Street (1993), there are two models of literacy, an ‘autonomous’ model of literacy and an ‘ideological’ model of literacy. The autonomous model of literacy, based on the view of literacy as a cognitive ability, emphasises transmission of knowledge without considering social factors. Street (1993) thus argues against the ‘autonomous’ model and proposes an ‘ideological’ model of literacy. He finds the autonomous model problematic for several reasons, as mentioned above, while discussing literacy as a

cognitive ability. Unfortunately, school literacy practices are often still based on an autonomous model of literacy (Street, 1993), where students from quite diverse social backgrounds follow the same curriculum.

Street's ideological model of literacy, on the other hand, examines literacy on the basis of particular social contexts where literacy is being practised. According to the ideological model of literacy, "literacy is understood in terms of concrete social practices; it is theorised in terms of the ideologies in which different literacies are embedded" (p. 97). In relation to school literacy practices, Street (1993) states that schools follow the autonomous model of literacy. This statement is debatable, however, nearly two decades later. Considering the fact that a school is a social institution where the current literacy practices of the broader society are reflected, there are, therefore, the elements of an 'ideological' model of literacy. Barton and Hamilton (2000) extend Street's (1993) ideological model of literacy further, suggesting six propositions.

Six propositions about literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 2000)

David Barton and Mary Hamilton's (2000) six propositions are useful to understand the view of literacy as a social practice, and may be considered as elaborations of Street's (1993) ideological model of literacy. The propositions are:

1. Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts.
2. There are different literacies associated with different domains of life.
3. Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others.
4. Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices.
5. Literacy is historically situated.

6. Literacy practices change and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making (as well as formal education and training).

(Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 8)

These propositions are associated with the social theory of literacy. Here, the term ‘practices’ means the cultural ways of enacting literacy, but not simply learning to do something repeatedly, or common tasks. Propositions 1 and 2 shed light on what Street (1993) mentioned about the Maktab, commercial, and school literacy practices found in the domains of Qur’anic schools, the fruit selling trade, and state schools respectively, in a village in Iran. In his observation, the literacy events used in the Qur’anic schools were not used in the state schools because these two social domains followed different social practices. For example, the Qur’anic schools were guided by religion, where the Koran and other sacred books were used as texts. Students were expected to recite the Koran without paying attention to any sound-letter relationship. However, the state schools taught students different subjects, and students were expected to read books for these. The state schools had to prepare students to succeed in mainstream Iranian life. Proposition 2 further indicates the concept of multiliteracies, which will be discussed in section 3.3.1.

Propositions 3 and 4 can be understood in the context of mainstream schools, where the school curriculum is based on the literacy practices of a dominant group in the society. Proposition 3 suggests that every society has dominant and marginalised literacy practices and that power relations exist in that society. For instance, in a multicultural country, such as Australia, where people use over 200 different languages in the home, the mainstream school curriculum is dominated by the English literacy practices of the dominant, middle-class, Anglo-Celtic group in Australian society.

Proposition 4 is related to the view that different literacy practices are used for different purposes. The broader Australian society requires children to be familiar with particular social practices via school literacy practices, if these students want to succeed in Australian society. Above all, these two propositions are helpful to understand that school literacy practices are also based on an ideological model of literacy rather than on an autonomous model of literacy, as Street (1993) pointed out.

Proposition 5 explains that history is an inseparable part of literacy. For example, the literacy practices used in Australian schools in the 1980s and 1990s may not be in use these days. To understand this change in school literacy practices, one should know something of Australian history, why some literacy practices are valued in one period and other literacy practices in another period. Proposition 6 is related to the dynamic nature of literacy practices. With the changing nature of society, literacy practices also change. The changes in literacy practices in schools in Australia brought by the development of technology can be taken as an example of the dynamic nature of literacy. These six propositions provide a useful framework to view literacy as a social practice.

Reading and writing can best be understood and acquired within the context of the social, cultural, political, economic, and historical practices to which they are integral (Snyder, 2008). That is, to understand particular literacy practices we need to refer back to the society where they are being used. To understand the literacy views of a broader society, school literacy practices are helpful because the school is a foundational part of that broader society.

3.2.2 Primary and secondary Discourses (Gee, 1996, 2002, 2011)

Gee (1996, 2002, 2011) is another key theorist whose ideas inform the view of literacy as a social practice. He distinguishes between primary Discourse and secondary Discourses (see quote below), which are broader than Barton and Hamilton's domains. The primary Discourse comes from family, where socialisation begins. One's first social identity is constituted by primary Discourse, and is the foundation for other Discourses. Secondary Discourses, on the other hand, are those with which people make contact in the outer world, for example, languages used in churches, schools or offices are secondary Discourses. All the secondary Discourses are acquired within a more "public sphere" than the initial socialising group of the primary Discourse (Gee, 2011, p. 154). Contact with different secondary Discourses means that many changes may happen in a person's primary Discourse. For example, it can hybridise with other Discourses or sometimes it can even die (Gee, 2002, 2011). Whatever transformations happen to our primary Discourse, it serves us throughout life, so Gee names the primary Discourse as 'life world Discourse' (2002, 2011). Secondary Discourses can be of 'dominant' and 'non-dominant' nature. The dominant Discourse is related to social status or power (see also Barton & Hamilton, 2000). 'Discourse' does not mean only the use of a particular language, but it covers people's beliefs, values or behaviour. Gee (1996) makes this clear:

Discourses are ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes. A Discourse is a sort of identity kit which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular social role that others will recognize.

(p.127)

To be a member of any Discourse community, one must know ‘social’ and ‘cultural’ practices, along with the appropriate use of the language itself. Gee distinguishes between Discourse with capital ‘D’ and discourse with small ‘d.’ Discourse with capital ‘D’ covers the entire social practices of a particular social space, for example, beliefs, values, language use, manners, clothes, body language, and other related activities. Discourse with small ‘d’ on the other hand means language use. In this way ‘discourse’ is a part of ‘Discourse.’ Four possible relationships can be found between primary and secondary Discourses. Firstly, if ideologies between two Discourses match, no conflicts arise. Secondly, if they differ, conflicts or contradictions are created. Thirdly, the Discourses are in constant negotiation or filtration, and finally they have the process of enculturation or assimilation. Filtering is a process “by which families incorporate aspects of valued secondary-Discourse practices into their primary Discourses” (Gee, 2002, p. 161). The degree of membership of participants in a particular Discourse is determined by the kind of Discourse relationship. While Gee discusses the views of Discourses in the context of first language learning, their implications in the field of ESL cannot be ignored, especially when ESL children are required to fit into mainstream dominant Discourses of their school. All of these school Discourses, including English literacy, are secondary Discourses for ESL students, which they have to learn to be a member of their school or classroom community.

If there are similarities between children’s home language practices (primary Discourse) and school language practices (secondary Discourses), then the transition from home to school will be a comfortable experience for such children. Not only is the transition comfortable, the school recognises, approves, and rewards them as well. These fortunate children are from those families whose primary Discourse matches the school’s secondary Discourses. On the other hand, other children including many ESL

children, bring to school their own first language practices (primary Discourse) and home country school literacy practices, but these do not receive any recognition in school (Green, 2000). As a result, they have to learn everything from the dominant culture, if they want to be accepted in that culture. It is really hard for ESL children to understand how literacy works in a new context. There is a danger that they can be labelled as deficient literacy learners or struggling readers.

Gee's notion of Discourses (1996, 2002, 2011) are not only related to ESL students. Their parents also move between the primary Discourse of their home and secondary Discourses in the community, for example, in the place of study or employment or their children's school/s. Such Discourse differences lie at the heart of Heath's famous study (1983) of three communities in the USA as well.

To understand ESL parent and mainstream school teacher perspectives, the notion of Discourses is very useful and helps to conceptualise important questions about literacy in schools. For instance, how do ESL parents interpret the discourses used in secondary Discourses in their children's school/s? Do they feel they belong to these Discourses (particularly in the Australian context)? How do they negotiate between Discourses? Do their Discourses contradict? How do they perceive their membership in various Discourses? The idea of Discourses/discourses also helps to understand teacher perspectives on literacy practices in school.

3.2.3 BICS, CALP, and power relations (Cummins, 1984, 2000, 2003)

ESL students in mainstream schools are known as 'language minority' students (Cummins, 1984, 2000; J. Miller & Windle, 2010) where the dominant language of a school is English. In the United States such students are termed Limited English Proficient (LEP) learners or English Language Learners (ELLs). These students need to

have control of formal English, as communication skills are not sufficient to be successful in school. Students need academic language skills too, which involve using both receptive and productive language, thinking and reasoning in all content areas (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002; Cummins, 1984, 2000).

Cummins (1984, 2000) investigated the problem of why language minority students in Canada seem to be English-proficient yet perform poorly in school content areas. He explains the phenomenon by suggesting that two sets of skills define language proficiency. The first involves what Cummins refers to as ‘basic interpersonal communication skills’ (BICS) and the second involves ‘cognitive academic language proficiency’ (CALP). BICS refers to context-embedded speech (where cues assist comprehension, such as facial expression, experiential activities, and body language or other visual elements), whereas CALP involves acts that take place in a context-reduced environment, requiring speakers to have ability to manipulate concepts and solve problems. He states that LEP/ELL students may need five to seven years to reach native-like control of the English language to perform well on academic tasks, as indicated in the previous chapter. To succeed in school, English language learners need to develop academic language proficiency and content-area knowledge and skills, as Freeman and Freeman (2003) have also pointed out. In recent days, the concepts of BICS and CALP have been extended into three dimensions of language proficiency. They are conversational fluency, discrete language skills, and academic language proficiency (Cummins & Yee-Fun, 2007). Conversational fluency is similar to BICS, whereas academic language proficiency is similar to CALP. Discrete language skills refer to rule-governed aspects of language, which include phonology, grammar and spelling. Cummins (2003) proposes that ESL students’ academic achievement is based

on how effectively their identities are negotiated with their teachers in the classrooms through interactions. He says:

Only teacher-student interactions that generate maximum identity investment on the part of students, together with maximum cognitive engagement, are likely to be effective in promoting achievement.

(Cummins, 2003, p. 50)

He discusses two types of power relations that can be exercised in classrooms, ‘coercive’ relations of power and ‘collaborative’ relations of power. Teacher-student interactions form an ‘interpersonal space’ between them, within which knowledge is generated and identities are negotiated. This ‘interpersonal space’ either reinforces coercive relations of power or promotes collaborative relations of power. If coercive relations of power are reinforced, in such a situation culturally diverse students are ‘disempowered.’ Conversely, if collaborative relations of power are promoted, then the operation of coercive power structures can be challenged by teachers as well as by students. In coercive relations of power, literacy practices of the dominant group in the society are imposed upon the students from minority groups, ignoring their background knowledge, culture and literacy practices. In such a situation students’ identity may be in ‘crisis.’ Therefore, collaborative relations of power are needed to empower the students from minority groups in mainstream classrooms:

Power is created in the relationship and shared among participants. The power relationship is additive rather than subtractive. Power is created with others rather than being imposed on or exercised over others. Empowerment can be defined as the collaborative creation of power. In the classroom, this happens (*in the form of collaborative relations of power – my addition*) or does not happen (*if coercive relations of power are in practice – my addition*) in the interactions

between teachers and students.

(Cummins, 2003, p. 52)

Cummins claims that children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds bring their diverse cultural, linguistic, imaginative, and intellectual resources to the classroom, and are thus an asset. Further, effective schools create instructional spaces where identity, intellect, and imagination are negotiated between teachers and students in ways that actively challenge coercive relations of power in the wider society (Cummins, 2003).

The main concepts of literacy as a social practice have been described in this section with reference to key theorists. To summarise, sociocultural theories of literacy highlight that literacy is related to more than an individual's mental activity alone. The task of sociocultural analysis is to understand how this mental functioning of the individual is related to the cultural, institutional, and historical contexts where the individual belongs (Wertsch, 1998).

3.3 OTHER DIMENSIONS OF LITERACY AS A SOCIAL PRACTICE

The concepts of multiliteracies, new literacies, and critical literacy emerged along with the view of literacy as a social practice. Even though, as Snyder (2001) points out, both 'multiple literacies' and 'new literacies' are associated with screen-based technologies, new literacies, unlike multiliteracies, do not refer to non-screen literacy practices, such as speaking or the use of other visual texts. Therefore, multiliteracies and new literacies are considered as two different concepts, and are addressed separately. Furthermore, Street (1997, 2003, 2005) uses the term New Literacy Studies (NLS) to mean the shift of a singular 'literacy' to plural approaches to define literacy on the basis of their use in

different social contexts. This began in the 1980s. It should be noted that NLS and multiliteracies are regarded as the same in this study.

3.3.1 Multiliteracies

Many people still think that the three Rs, Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic, are the foundation of sound education, whereas for others there are alternative forms of learning and making sense of the world (Fullerton, G. Danaher, Moriarty, & P.A. Danaher, 2004). These alternative forms of learning in relation to literacy are captured by the idea of multiliteracies, which has several interpretations (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). For instance, according to The New London Group (1996, 2000), multiliteracies emphasise different modes of meaning-making processes. There are six meaning-making processes, linguistic meaning, visual meaning, audio meaning, gestural meaning, spatial meaning, and the multimodal patterns of meaning that relate the first five modes of meaning to each other. According to Heath and Street (2008), multimodal literacies or multiliteracies mean systems of representation that include written forms that are combined with oral, visual, or gestural modes. But sometimes these modes can work individually or in a combination. For example, if somebody is in a new place and wants to learn some new culture, then s/he can use observation as a visual mode of learning, or if one is watching a film on television, there may not always be written forms, but still other modes of meaning-making are present.

Multiliteracies can be understood more clearly when considered as a combination of these broader modes of communication (The New London Group, 1996, 2000) along with meaning-making and situated practice of literacies (O'Rourke, 2005). Situated practice highlights social context in language use. Therefore, multiliteracies refer to diverse forms of literacy practice realised in different social contexts. A particular context includes the environment where literacy is in practice, the purpose of

literacy and the social and cultural background for using literacy (Charles, 2008). In this way the concept of multiliteracies has the following roles. O'Rourke (2005) claims it:

- broadens literacy from an emphasis on 'reading the word' to reading multi-modal texts,
- includes the assumption that in the process of becoming literate, students are making sense of the world and themselves in the world,
- assumes that literacy is also about communicating with, and understanding the communication of others,
- assumes that part of becoming literate involves developing the capacity to understand the influences of social, cultural, historical and political contexts.

(pp. 1-2)

Another understanding of multiliteracies includes a focus on particular sets of practices (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). For example, school literacy, vernacular literacy, cultural literacy, computer literacy, moral literacy, emotional literacy, media literacy, social literacy, to name some. The label 'literacy' is extended to areas where reading and writing are not necessarily connected. For instance, to gain 'moral literacy' and 'emotional literacy,' people may not necessarily need to read and write (Collins & Blot, 2003), instead, they can learn such literacies in their cultures and reflect them in their behaviours or attitudes.

Like 'literacy,' the notion of 'multiliteracies' is in itself a complex concept. Instead of associating multiliteracies simply with reading and writing practices whether using print or technologies, it is better to understand multiliteracies as different modes of learning and meaning-making to understand the real world. The term 'New literacies' is a subset of multiliteracies.

3.3.2 New literacies

New literacies are associated with screen-based technologies (Snyder, 2001), and emerged in the 1980s with the digital revolution. During that period there was a huge public uptake of computers. Then in the 1990s there was a rise of the Internet and the use of hypermedia. More recently, there has been the emergence of a networked information economy (Brockmeier & Olson, 2009; Dobson & Willinsky, 2009). Thus, new literacies are connected to the Internet and other information and communication technologies (ICTs), according to Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, and Leu (2008). In contemporary Western society, literacy looks beyond mere print literacy (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) to mean visual texts, symbolic texts, electronic texts along with print texts (Campbell & Green, 2000). Today's children experience childhood receiving information multimodally through television, the computer screen, and electronic games (Vincent, 2006).

Screen-based literacies are regarded as 'new' to distinguish them from 'old' print-based literacy, but interestingly among many rapidly emerging screen-based literacies, those which should be regarded as 'new' can also be questioned. For example, until the emergence of instant text messaging, email was 'new,' but in comparison to instant text messaging, email can be treated as 'old' literacy (Coiro et al., 2008). Similarly, with the appearance of social networks such as Facebook, instant text messaging has also become 'old.' However, for the purpose of this study, it is good to consider all technology-based literacies as 'new literacies,' as opposed to old print-based literacy (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). From this perspective, literacy practices related to television, radio or telephone can also be regarded as 'new' literacy practices to distinguish them from the print-based literacy.

There is no single definition of literacy which covers literacy practices all around the world. In their lifetime people encounter different situations where different literacies are valued. The literacy practices of a particular context can not be understood in isolation, so they should always be studied within that context.

3.3.3 Critical literacy

Critical literacy is related to the assumption that reading and writing involve social power and that a 'critical' literacy education would have to go beyond individual skill acquisition to engage students in the analysis and reconstruction of social fields (Luke, 2000). Freebody and Luke (1990) developed a model of early reading instruction that has now been widely used in schools in English-speaking countries, such as Australia. The model outlines four practices (Freebody, 1992; Luke & Freebody, 1997):

- **Decoding Practices:** As a code breaker a student finds out the relationship between sounds and letters and their combination to make a text.
- **Text-Meaning Practices:** As a text participant a student explores the ideas which are strung together to form a particular text. S/he is also conscious to find out what cultural resources have been used to create the text and what cultural meanings can be constructed from this text.
- **Pragmatic Practices:** As a text user a student explores the usefulness of such a text in his/her life or in other people's life in the contemporary society.
- **Critical Practices:** As a text analyst a student analyses the text from the point of view of the writer's as well as readers' interests, values and ideologies. S/he tries to find out whose voices are present and whose voices are absent.

(Luke & Freebody, 1997, p. 214)

It should be noted that this model does not propose a developmental hierarchy to move from ‘coding’ to ‘critical.’ Instead, it is assumed that lessons can address these different dimensions simultaneously, even at the earliest stages of literacy education. The theoretical framework of this study was constructed using the above mentioned ideas of sociocultural perspectives of literacy and literacy teaching/learning. The concepts which were useful and why they were useful for the study are summarised in the following table.

Table 3.1 Summary of sociocultural theories of literacy

| Theories | Definition | Concepts | Reasons to use for this study |
|---|--|--|---|
| Discourse/s (Gee, 1996, 2011) | Complete identity tool, including language, beliefs, values, social norms, body language, clothing | Primary Discourse Secondary Discourses Contradiction Negotiation Assimilation Power relations | To understand ESL parent and Australian primary school teacher perspectives on literacy pedagogy |
| Autonomous model of literacy (Street, 1993) | Skill-based, cognition-oriented and same to all | Same curriculum, textbooks, and examination system | To understand ESL parents’ home country school literacy practices |
| Ideological model of literacy (Street, 1993) | Social practice | Context-based, different in different social contexts | To understand literacy practices of different places and the values, beliefs and ideologies which underpin such particular literacy practices |
| Power relationships (Barton & Hamilton, 2000) | Minority groups are dominated by dominant group | Dominant literacies Minority literacies | To understand school literacy practices in Australia |
| BICS (Cummins, 1984, 2000) | Basic communication | BICS Conversational fluency | To understand ESL students’ English literacy development since |

| | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| | skills | Discrete lg. skills | neither Gee (1996) nor Street (1993) talks about ESL students |
| CALP (Cummins, 1984, 2000) | Cognitive academic language proficiency | CALP Academic language proficiency | |
| Power relations (Cummins, 1984, 2000, 2003) | Relationship between teacher and students | Coercive and collaborative relations Identities negotiation | To understand teacher-student relationship |
| Multiliteracies | Different forms of literacy, not print literacy alone | Multiliteracies | To broaden the views on school literacy practices and parental perspectives on them |
| New literacy | All technology-based literacies | Digital literacy | To broaden the views on school literacy practices and parental perspectives on them |
| Critical literacy | Literacy involves social power, goes beyond individual skill acquisition | Decoding Text-meaning Pragmatic Critical practices | To broaden the views on school literacy practices |

In this way, the data collected for the study were analysed in the light of these theories and related research. The resulting framework assisted in the interpretation of parent as well as teacher views on the literacy education of primary school children, and of the observed literacy classroom practices. The following section concentrates on the impact of these changes on the concept of literacy in pedagogical practice in schools, especially in English-speaking countries.

3.4 PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF SOCIAL THEORIES OF LITERACY

Instead of using the term ‘literacy teaching,’ the terms ‘teaching reading’ and ‘teaching writing’ are used throughout the sections 3.4 and 3.5, as these terms are used in the Victorian curriculum document, *Victorian Essential Learning Standards* (VELS, 2005). The focus of this section is to examine how social theories of literacy are reflected in literacy pedagogy. Four key aspects of pedagogy have been identified. They are (1) a whole language approach in teaching reading, (2) a genre-based approach in teaching writing, (3) use of multiliteracies, and (4) use of new literacies, all of which are discussed in the following sections.

3.4.1 Whole language approach in teaching reading

In mainstream schools in an English-speaking country, there may be students from English-speaking and non-English speaking backgrounds in the same classrooms. ESL students may get extra support (see Chapter Two) but in regular classes all students, no matter whether they are ESL or non-ESL, are taught the same content.

Recently reading has come to be understood as situated social practice (Baynham, 1995). The whole language approach (WLA) in teaching reading is associated with the view that literacy is a sociocultural phenomenon and inseparable from its social context (de Lemos, 2005). In a whole language class, children get many opportunities to interact with their peers or teacher to make meaning of the given text (Rich, 2004). As the term whole language suggests, while using this approach a teacher uses whole words as teaching units, not discrete sounds or letters. Children get opportunities to read real books. The goal of this approach is to develop students’ overall understanding of the text, not word by word accuracy (Snyder, 2008).

The WLA emphasises reading for meaning, and rejects the view that reading is merely dependent on a series of sub-skills which have to be mastered before meaning can be conveyed by written texts (de Lemos, 2005). It is based on child-centred approaches to teaching and learning (Rich, 2004; Snyder, 2008), which is why the text materials are selected on the basis of children's needs. Although the broad teaching topics are the same for all students, teachers can choose different texts and even different teaching methods to satisfy the particular needs of individual students (Rich, 2004). Students are given opportunities to read the materials according to their interest because the underpinning belief of a whole language approach is that children should be intrinsically motivated to learn and to make sense of their world (Rich, 2004).

Some of the general features of whole language classrooms are that "...children read and write daily; there are opportunities for children to interact; talk is important; children's literature (is used)...there are library and creative corners" (Rich, 2004, p. 9). Whole language teachers teach through a range of texts related to different social and cultural practices, which helps students to ask questions about the truth of texts (Taylor & Otinsky, 2007). The WLA is not a neutral practice of language but it addresses social, cultural, political, and historical aspects of the society where a particular text is written or read (Snyder, 2008). The WLA is also known as a top-down approach, where reading starts from the largest unit, the text, that is, the primary focus of reading is to make meaning of the given text in the given context (Baynham, 1995).

Although the WLA has been widely used to teach reading, there is an ongoing debate whether to use the WLA or a traditional phonics approach to teach reading in schools (Hempenstall, 1997; Mills, 2005a). Some critics (see, for instance, Donnelly, 2008) accuse the WLA of being unsuccessful in teaching reading. Donnelly emphasises

that children must have knowledge of sound-letter correspondence to be able to read, and therefore need phonics.

3.4.2 Phonics approach

Unlike the whole language or top-down approach, phonics is a bottom-up approach (Baynham, 1995), which starts teaching reading from the smallest unit upper-case and lower-case letters to the combination of these letters, syllables, words, phrases, sentences, and finally a whole text. Children are taught the relationships between oral sounds and written letters before they move to reading for meaning (Hempenstall, 1997). This approach is based on a traditional ‘rote learning’ approach.

In 2000, the American National Reading Panel (NRP) published its research-based report on reading instruction to children (*Teaching children to read*, NRP, 2000). The findings of the report show that at the early stage of reading, phonemic awareness instruction is effective, systematic phonics instruction improves reading, spelling, and of course to some extent, comprehension. The NRP’s report was criticised by Pressley (2002). He argued that the report emphasised skill-based instruction only. He recommended that the NRP should have included other issues of reading instruction, such as the literacy instruction that the children get at home, the use of television to increase their reading skills, community resources that can promote young children’s literacy, and positive effects of the whole language instruction. The debate over phonics or WLA has been ongoing for some years, along with research to investigate the best method of teaching reading.

Ryder, Tunmer, and Greaney (2008) conducted a research study on 24, six and seven year-old native English-speaking children with reading difficulties in a primary school in New Zealand to determine whether explicit instruction in phonemic awareness

and phonemically based decoding skills would be effective in a whole language instructional environment. They found that for children who possess high levels of reading-related knowledge, skills and experiences, the whole language approach is likely to be more effective. On the contrary, for children who possess low levels of essential reading-related skills and experiences, a fairly structured and teacher-supported introduction to reading is required. These children almost always benefit more from reading instruction that involves explicit and systematic instruction in orthographic patterns and word identification strategies. This may apply to ESL children as well.

Even though the whole language approach is the frequently used teaching reading approach in Western classrooms, the phonics approach can not be completely abandoned. With good readers, the whole language approach seems to be more appropriate, whereas for those learners who are at their early stage of reading, the phonics approach is very supportive. The inclusion of systematic phonics instruction within a broad literacy curriculum is found to have a positive effect in reading accuracy (Lewis & Ellis, 2006).

3.4.3 Genre-based approach in teaching writing

Writing is composed of two distinct abilities, namely, sub-skills such as spelling, and ideation. Ideation means the generation and organisation of ideas. Thus, when spelling and other sub-skills of writing are combined with the generation of ideas, this provides the basis for writing a text (de Lemos, 2005). An example of such a combination is genre-based writing, which focuses on a particular text type, such as a narrative, recount or report. Genre-based writing is taught with a range of purposes and audiences in mind, and the language needed for the genre is taught accordingly. Over the past two decades,

genre, first introduced by Halliday and Hasan in the 1980s, has increasingly taken a hold in both first language composition studies and second language writing (Tardy, 2006).

Genre theory focuses on the linguistic features of particular types of written text. Students are taught the different writing styles they need to master for success at school and beyond. This pedagogy encourages students “to learn to write by writing” (Thwaite, 2006, p.96). There are three broad categories and twelve sub-categories of genres identified by Gibbons (2009), as displayed in the following table.

Table 3.2 Different genres based on Gibbons (2009)

| Personal/creative genres | Factual genres | Analytical genres |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Personal recount | Information report | Explanation (causal) |
| Narrative | Factual or historical recount | Exposition/argument |
| | Procedure | Discussion |
| | Procedural recount | Literary response (interpretation) |
| | Temporal explanation | Historical explanation/historical argument |

All of these genres have different purposes, different organisation or writing style, and use different language features. For instance, if personal recount is a genre in question, its purpose is to retell a sequence of events based on personal experience, and past tense is used (Gibbons, 2009).

Genre-based approaches to writing have underpinned primary school curriculum documents in many parts of the world, such as Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Malaysia, and Hong Kong (Knapp & Watkins, 2005). Knapp and Watkins suggest that there are three key technologies for teaching writing in genre-based curricula. These technologies are genre, text and grammar. According to them, a particular genre relies on students' knowledge of a given social context. On the basis of the characteristics of this genre, students produce a text. Grammar is students' choice of correct sentence structures and vocabulary in writing their text within the genre in question. Derewianka (2003) expresses similar views on the nature of genre, text, and grammar.

3.4.4 Multiliteracies and digital literacies in practice

Traditional print literacy is still the most important part of school literacy practices (Hall, 2004). However, unlike in the past, print literacy, is not enough for those who live in contemporary developed Western society. The impact of New Literacy Studies can be seen in school literacy practices as well. As a result, schools follow a multiliteracies pedagogy which accommodates different kinds of literacies, for example, print literacy, oral literacy, visual literacy, digital literacy, social literacy, emotional literacy, and life literacy. The following extract gives a glimpse of how some of the multiliteracies present in:

interpreting environmental print, critiquing advertising, oral debating, using machines (fax, photocopiers, voice-mail), writing memos, using directories, itineraries and maps, internet transactions, SMS messaging, emailing, digital photography, dramatic and vocal performance, interpreting body language, and many other culturally and linguistically diverse textual practices for a multiplicity of cultural purposes.

(Mills, 2005b, p. 1)

The above mentioned activities include all six meaning-making processes identified by The New London Group (1996, 2000). Not only classroom activities but out-of-the-classroom activities are also equally important from a multiliteracies pedagogic perspective (Maynard & Waters, 2007; Varelas et al., 2010). Such activities may include theatre performance, sleepovers, excursions, and school camps. In the out-of-classroom contexts, students get opportunities to learn literacy in the real world and to explore the world. Further, they develop social skills and personal traits.

As discussed earlier, all screen-based literacy practices are regarded as new literacy practices (Snyder, 2001). New/digital literacy practices are also part of multiliteracies. School literacy practices are influenced by the vast development in communication technology in the world. Children of the 21st century are surrounded by different sorts of technological devices in and outside school. According to Prensky (2001):

Today's students – K through college – represent the first generations to grow up with this new technology. They have spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all the other toys and tools of the digital age.

(p. 1)

This means that schools have a responsibility to strengthen children's digital literacy that they are exposed to in the outside school. Computer literacy is an essential part of literacy lessons in schools. Teachers use online texts while teaching literacy, multimodal texts are common in the classrooms. Literacy lessons now require the Internet (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; Poynton, 2005). Current research shows that 92% of primary school children are confident users of the Internet (Valcke, Bonte, Wever, & Rots, 2010). Among the many examples given by Prensky (2001) of electronic

equipment that children come into contact with, the computer is most widely used in schools.

This section has explained how school literacy practices in developed Western countries reflect contemporary social theories of literacy. Since the present research is related to literacy teaching/learning in the Victorian context, the following section discusses the teaching of literacy in Victorian primary schools.

3.5 LITERACY TEACHING IN VICTORIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Even though the Victorian curriculum is designed on the basis of a sociocultural approach (Sirianni, 2005), which encourages a whole language reading approach, both approaches of reading instruction, ‘phonics’ and ‘whole language’ are in practice in schools (Snyder, 2008). Further, the VELS (2005) also clearly states the use of both approaches to teaching reading. However, phonics instruction is used differently in Victoria from phonics instruction in traditional ‘rote learning,’ which emphasises teaching letters, sounds or words in isolation or without relating them to meaningful contexts. Students are still taught the alphabet, the sound-letter relationship, and the pronunciation of words, but they are also taught that letters make sounds, sounds form words, and words have meaning (Snyder, 2008).

In teaching writing, genre-based writing, discussed above, is a core approach. VELS (2007) identifies Narrative, Explanation, Procedure, Recount, Description, Information report, Exposition, and Discussion, to teach to primary school students. Recount means both personal and factual, and similarly explanation can also be temporal, causal and sometimes historical (see section 3.4.3). While teaching genres, teachers do not ignore linguistic aspects, which are taught in reference to the particular genre in question.

Multiliteracies are also included in the integrated Victorian curriculum. Literacy lessons are connected with science, history, and performing arts, for example. The primary schools often produce a stage performance which includes literacy. Students have the opportunity to read a script, learn to work in a team, and to follow instructions on how to speak their dialogues appropriately. Incursions (e.g., inviting visitor in school, such as local fire brigade members to teach students about fire brigade), excursions, sleepovers, and school camps are essential parts of the curriculum (*Paterson Primary School Newsletters*, 2009), where children get opportunities to learn different life skills. In this way, social skills, personal traits, and life skills are seen as part of literacy learning.

Students are taught how to work in teams, how to gain self-confidence, how to take their turn while sharing their ideas, how to be organised, and how to develop critical thinking. Research also shows that children's development of personal characteristics or social behaviour and their literacy achievement are closely related (Miles & Stipek, 2006). Further, child self-control is related to his/her academic interactions with peers (Neitzel, 2009). As discussed in Chapter Two, the VELS mentions three strands of learning, namely (1) Physical, personal and social learning, (2) Discipline-based learning, and (3) Interdisciplinary learning. These three strands are interrelated and the things learned in one domain can be applied in others. Literacy is related to all three domains. Thus, the term 'multiliteracies' has a very broad implication in Victorian schools.

There is an ongoing public and political debate on the use of pedagogy of literacy teaching (Snyder, 2008). However, some researchers (Hamston & Scull, 2007; Snyder, 2008) point out, since there is not any single teaching reading/writing approach which fits in all situations, it is always good to use a 'crafted mixed method.' This is

particularly important for students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Hamston and Scull (2007) argue that, “There is a body of important research in Australia, as elsewhere, that strongly recommends a multifaceted pedagogical approach to meet the differentiated learning needs of students” (p. 13). The following section addresses ESL students and literacy teaching in mainstream classrooms.

3.6 TEACHING LITERACY TO ESL STUDENTS

As mentioned previously, after arrival in an English-speaking country, ESL students need a substantial amount of time to be proficient in English and to perform well academically in schools. During the students’ transition period, teachers must provide continuous additional support so that they will be able to grasp the content taught in the mainstream classrooms. Different research studies suggest different strategies that teachers can use to support ESL children’s literacy learning (J. Miller & Windle, 2010). These strategies could be the use of collaborative reading (Adesope, Lavin, Thompson, & Ungerleider, 2011), the use of scaffolding (Adoniou & Macken-Horarik, 2007; Gibbons, 2009; Pawan, 2008), and encouragement in the use of students’ L1s (Kennedy, 2006).

Adesope et al. (2011) reviewed 26 studies conducted on 3,150 ESL students in different English-speaking countries. Experimental and quasi-experimental data were included in these studies. The participants ranged from kindergarten through Year 6. They were exposed to different English literacy instructional interventions such as collaborative/cooperative reading, systematic phonics instruction, and multimedia-assisted reading. They found that collaborative reading interventions were most effective to develop ESL students’ reading ability. In collaborative reading students work in groups, which gives them an opportunity to engage in oral interactions with their peers to reach a shared understanding of meaning and to negotiate the meaning

cooperatively. However, to help students work independently in groups, the teacher needs to familiarise students with both the content and context of the text, so that they can understand the text. For this, scaffolding (Adoniou & Macken-Horarik, 2007; Gibbons, 2009; Pawan, 2008) has been found useful.

Pawan (2008) agrees that integration of content into language instruction is helpful to teach English language learners (ELLs). Scaffolding, she says, provides with teachers an effective means to integrate these two elements. To explore the content-area teachers' (CATs') scaffolding strategies, she conducted a study of 33 in-service CATs (15 elementary school, 6 middle school, 11 high school, and 1 adult education), who were pursuing professional development in an American university classroom over 32 weeks. She identified four kinds of scaffolding strategies, namely linguistic scaffolding (simplification of English language), conceptual scaffolding (to help students understand 'academic' and 'cognitive' concepts by using a range of possible tools, such as charts, metaphors, etc.), social scaffolding (use of social interaction to support and mediate learning, e.g., group work), and cultural scaffolding (based on cultural or language groups). Her findings also suggest that teachers' knowledge of cultural scaffolding seemed to be limited.

Even though Adoniou and Macken-Horarik (2007) argue for the use of Scaffolding Literacy (SL) techniques to help students in learning reading and writing they write, "Literacy pedagogies – even those most successful with native speakers of English – need adaptation if they are to meet the needs of ESL students" (p.5). According to them, SL is a pedagogy designed to scaffold students in reading and writing through the use of the challenging and age-appropriate texts. SL also aims to make knowledge about text and written language explicit. In this pedagogy, the strategies for teaching reading, spelling, and writing are embedded. In their project,

which aimed to trial the effectiveness of SL pedagogy in ESL classrooms across 18 primary and secondary schools in Canberra, Australia, 20 teachers participated. The project involved a cycle of professional development, classroom trials, observations, and follow up workshops. The participant teachers in the SL project were positive in the use of this pedagogy in their classroom, however, they suggested some changes, as follows:

1. Usually narrative texts were chosen for SL but the participant teachers suggested that there was a need to include non-narrative texts in the SL pedagogy.
2. It would be desirable to include ‘cultural inclusivity’ as a selection criterion for the text selection.
3. It was important to include linguistic and cultural resources of the students and their families, particularly in the early field building stages of the sequence.
4. There was a need to incorporate more field building experiences into the sequence.
5. There was a need to incorporate greater ‘message abundance’ in building understandings of language and of the context of challenging texts, particularly through the use of multimodal props in the Text Orientation and Language Orientation stages.
6. It was important to provide supplementary support on areas of language that ESL students find problematic, particularly as a support after the Text Orientation.
7. There was a need to shift the questioning in Transformations (syntactic level) from ‘Does this sound right?’ to ‘This sounds right because...’
8. The Spelling step needed to be expanded to encompass lexical study and pronunciation.

(Adoniou & Macken-Horarik, 2007, p. 13)

These teacher recommendations emphasise the inclusion of more content related to students' prior knowledge, experience, and culture in SL pedagogy for it to be more effective.

Some researchers state that there is a performance-gap in ESL students in comparison to their native English- speaking peers (Grant & Wong, 2003). According to Grant and Wong (2003), ESL students may have limits in their understanding, speaking, reading, and writing of English. As a result, about 30-40% of school-age ESL students fail to reach acceptable levels of English reading by the end of their elementary schooling. This stereo-typed belief is based on a deficit model of evaluating ESL students. In fact many of these learners are competent learners who should be provided with challenging tasks, which need to be scaffolded (Gibbons, 2009). Some researchers argue that ESL students should get an opportunity to use their home language along with English at the mainstream class, because this helps them to increase their performance level (Kennedy, 2006; Pahl & Rowsell, 2005).

Kennedy (2006) conducted qualitative research to explore the writing development of five Grade 1 students from different linguistic backgrounds in a mainstream English classroom in the United States. Her findings indicate that it was difficult cognitively and emotionally for students who speak different home languages to write and practise literacy in a monolingual classroom. She argues that if students are encouraged to write in their natural voices and in some cases, vocabulary from their home languages, this would increase their performance in composition. She suggests that teachers should validate students' languages and make them feel more comfortable and competent about their multilingualism. Even if this may sound useful, it is not practical to allow students to use their first language in a classroom where various

languages are spoken (J. Miller et al., 2005). No teacher could understand all these languages and assist students accordingly.

3.7 SUMMARY

This chapter introduced two views of literacy, namely as a cognitive ability and as a social practice. It has been argued that the second view is more appropriate for this study. The chapter then presented the ideas of six theorists who support the view of literacy as a social practice. It explained how their ideas of literacy generated the theoretical framework for the study. This chapter also presented the concepts of multiliteracies, new literacies, and critical literacy. The second half of the chapter explored the pedagogical implications of social theories of literacy in English-speaking countries as a whole, and with a special focus in Victoria, Australia. Finally, there was a discussion of pedagogical approaches to teaching ESL students in mainstream classrooms, where scaffolding was suggested as the most effective strategy to teach such students.

The following chapter presents a range of empirical studies which explore ESL parent and mainstream teacher perspectives on literacy teaching/learning in English-speaking countries.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH ON ESL PARENT AND TEACHER PERSPECTIVES

Having discussed sociocultural theories of literacy, and their pedagogical implications, I will now review in this chapter the empirical studies conducted in the research area.

Chapter Four begins with a review of studies on the perspectives of ESL parents, ESL students, and school teachers on education in English-speaking countries, since I did not find any study purely focused on parent perspectives alone. The second section focuses on parents' specific perspectives on English literacy teaching and learning and the importance of parents' involvement in literacy learning. The final section reviews studies on teacher perspectives. Parent and teacher perspectives on literacy pedagogy and on the education/schooling system overlap in some of the studies included in these two sections. Further, data for the studies reviewed in these sections were collected from five different groupings of participants, namely parents only, teachers only, parents and teachers, parents and students, and parents, students, and teachers. Parent and teacher perspectives, the focuses of this study, are highlighted throughout the chapter.

It should also be noted that there are few empirical studies on these perspectives, specifically in regard to ESL students and literacy. This suggests that there is a clear need for more research in this area.

4.1 EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ENGLISH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

The current study explores ESL parent and primary school teacher perspectives on literacy pedagogy in Victoria, Australia, however, it is relevant to survey studies of how ESL parents view the education system of English-speaking countries in general.

Studies of ESL student views are also considered here, because such studies are useful

to look at some of the common differences the students found in education systems in their home countries and English-speaking countries.

Three main issues emerge from the literature. They are (1) ESL parents and students frequently find differences in the education systems between their home country and an English-speaking country, (2) there can be a disparity between the intended purpose of the ESL program and how it is perceived by ESL parents and students, and (3) the ESL students, in particular, can find the education system of the host country discriminatory towards them.

One of the differences experienced by parents is the differing cultural expectations when it comes to assessment systems. Parents from Korean background, for instance, brought up in the expectation of score-based competitiveness in education, project the same expectation on their children in the United States. As a consequence of this, the Korean parents seem to be keen to see their children excel academically, so to help their children achieve top ranks, they organise private tutoring, even in the USA where the education system is not focused on competition, but on gradual improvement of students (Lee, 2010).

Lee (2010) conducted her study with eleven young Korean students who were studying in the United States, living with their parents. They were in Grades 2 to 10 and their study duration in the USA was from six months to five years. Her data were ethnographically oriented and came from unstructured interviews. In her study, like their parents, students experienced differences between the Korean and US education systems. They found the US education system free and loose in contrast to the fierce and competitive Korean system. This finding is similar to one of J. Li's (2010) findings related to students who had been in Canada for a short period of time (Following APA

suggestion, throughout my thesis I have used the authors' initials if there are two or more authors of the same surname). J. Li (2010) conducted her study with twelve, 13 to 19 years old Chinese immigrant children whose stay in Canada was from five months to ten years. She used semi-structured individual interviews and essay writing activity as her data sources. After conducting the interview, she asked her participants to write essays on three topics, 'My home,' 'My school,' and 'Myself and my future' within the time span of eight to ten weeks. In her article J. Li (2010) discusses themes which emerged from students' essays on 'My home' and 'My school.'

Interestingly, her findings related to the student views on differences between the Canadian and Chinese education systems, were affected by the students' length of stay in Canada. Those who were in Canada for a short period of time had different views from those who had been living in Canada for a longer time period. For example, Jenny, a 13-year-old girl, had been in Canada for five months and she compared the Chinese and Canadian education systems in her essay in the following way:

I cannot believe school is so easy in Canada. We have very few assignments. I can finish all my work in class. In China, school is formal and we must behave ourselves. We are not allowed to talk in class and we are required to write in good calligraphy. In Canada, we can talk in class, it does not seem to matter that much if we don't finish our assignment. In China, teachers give us lots of assignments and quizzes. They want us to do well on exams. In Canada, teachers are easy-going and carefree. They don't push you to do things. It is up to you to study or not.

(Jenny in J. Li, 2010, pp. 127-128)

On the other hand, Cherry, a 16-year-old girl, who had been in Canada for seven years had different views on the Canadian schooling system. She said:

Here, emphasis is put on the development of a student as a whole instead of just intellectual development...students are encouraged to develop their own learning styles. Most of the learning done in Canadian schools is through projects and other activities where the students themselves take the initiative to explore topics that interest them. Although some of the fundamental things are taught from textbooks, most of the things that students learn are from experience or their own research.

(Cherry in J. Li, 2010, p. 128)

In these two responses, Jenny's and Cherry's different understanding of the Canadian education system can clearly be seen. Jenny found it easy, thought she had less study, fewer assignments, no pressure from teachers and freedom whether to study or not. On the contrary, Cherry focused on students' opportunities to develop their overall personality, instead of paying attention to grades. According to her, exploratory learning was encouraged over rote learning, with students being in charge of their learning, rather than teachers. She seems to understand the goals of the Canadian education system. This finding has the implication that with time and experience, students can gradually broaden their understanding of education system in a different country, and the same may apply to the parents.

The studies show that, no matter whether participants are ESL parents or students, they are not happy with ESL programs (Gibson & Carrasco, 2009; Lee, 2010; J. Li, 2010; Wyatt-Beynon, Ilieva, Toohey, & Larocque, 2001). Some of the parents (Lee, 2010), for instance, were not particularly positive about sending their children to ESL specific classes, because they believed that being in an ESL class would not help children improve their English competency, since they associated most of the time with other ESL students, not with English-speaking children. According to these parents, their children would improve their English faster outside ESL classrooms. The student

perspective is not different from the parent perspective in this regard. For example, J. Li's (2010) study reveals that the ESL classes have a lot of negative consequences. They are unable to create natural English-speaking environment for newcomers. Because of the exclusion from mainstream classes, particularly the new ESL students, do not participate in classroom activities actively. In addition, they can not make friends with English-speaking students.

A comparative ethnographic study conducted by Gibson and Carrasco (2009) in California, USA and in Catalonia, Spain also found students not happy with ESL and Spanish second language classes respectively. The findings of this study were drawn from interviews with immigrant high school students, parents and teachers in both countries. In addition to interviews, extensive observation in classes and other school settings were also included. There were five participating schools from each country. According to the researchers, although English Language Development (ELD) classes organised for newcomer migrant children in the USA aim to improve their social and academic integration, the students feel they are being separated from their native speaker peers and deprived of learning authentic English.

Another study conducted by Wyatt-Beynon et al. (2001) to investigate the usefulness of an ESL program revealed a similar finding. In fact, the program was designed to meet the needs of newcomer immigrant adolescents to Canada, but the study shows the distaste of ESL students towards ESL classes. A student expressed his opinion in the interview in the following way:

Regular classes are where I learn things most important to me. Where there is a class of all Punjabi students, there is no point trying to learn English because you know you can speak Punjabi and ask for help in Punjabi. If you are in regular class among English-speaking students, you are forced to speak English.

There is no point to an ESL English class – it is a waste of time...Miss X doesn't ask you if you think you are capable in this subject, she just looks at your face and says, "No, you can't take these subjects." She just sees that our English speaking skills are not so good, but we can still read, write and listen to English and are we any less than any other students? They should give us a chance.

(Wyatt-Beynon et al., 2001, p. 410)

This expression indicates that the ESL students find the mainstream classes more challenging and effective than ESL classes, from the point of view of content taught as well as learning English. The above statement also shows the discriminatory attitude of some teachers, who underestimate students' ability, merely on the basis that they are from ESL backgrounds. The students in J. Li's (2010) study also found that the content areas of the mainstream school curriculum did not match with ESL students' previous experience and cultural lives. Further, they felt that there was a lot of discrimination against ESL students since they were labelled as 'FOB' (Fresh off the Boat).

Talking about 'discrimination,' Gibson and Carrasco (2009) compare the American and Spanish education systems, and state that both produce unwelcoming experiences for immigrant students in practice. For instance, cultural and linguistic diversity can be found in school discourses, but in reality the immigrant students are silent and alienated in school because of the domination of the dominant culture's educational practices. The immigrant students often feel marginalised either in using their home language or the host language, which may sound different from that of their native peers. Schools say that they pay attention to supporting the academic success of all students, yet migrant students often feel unsupported, silenced and marginalised. In

terms of the participation in extra-curricular activities, which are native student-centred, these children feel isolated.

These four studies on aspects of education in English-speaking countries for ESL background parents and students reveal the following findings:

1. There are differences between the education systems of English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries, which sometimes create conflicts in ESL families.
2. Students' level of understanding of the the new education system differs according to how long they have been living in their host country.
3. Both ESL parents and students find that dedicated ESL classes do not effectively develop children's English proficiency, socialisation skills, and academic achievements in other subject areas.
4. Student experience suggests that there is a gap between policy and practice in treatment of ESL students in schools. As a result, these students feel discriminated against and isolated.

The following section outlines studies of ESL parent perspectives on literacy education in English-speaking countries.

4.2 ESL PARENT PERSPECTIVES ON ENGLISH LITERACY TEACHING AND LEARNING

There is little research which explores ESL parent perspectives on literacy education in schools in English-speaking countries such as Australia, the USA, the UK, and Canada (Guo, 2007; Huh, 2006). However, the available studies raise a number of issues of concern for parents from non-English-speaking backgrounds regarding school literacy

practices in English-speaking countries. These include: maintaining the balance between children's first and second language, English-only education for bilingual children, ESL parents' English proficiency, parent-school communication, teacher support to individual students, and the use of traditional approaches in teaching reading and writing. The following sections present studies on these issues.

4.2.1 Maintaining the balance between first language and second language

Some studies (Huh, 2006; Worthy 2006) reveal that ESL parents want their children to learn both languages, their home language and English. Huh (2006) interviewed six Korean mothers of first grade ESL children who attended three different elementary schools in the USA. All of the mothers were well qualified: five had a Bachelor's degree and one had a PhD. They were from 33 to 36 years old. Their stay in the United States was from eight months to five years. Among these six mothers, three wanted to return to Korea after completing their work or study, and three planned to live in the US. All of the participants were married and their husbands were highly educated. One was a professor, three were post-doctoral faculty members, and two were doctoral students. This group of research participants is similar to the participants of the present study in terms of qualifications, marital status, age group, and the range of temporary and permanent residency in an English-speaking country. To express their views on teaching Korean and English, these six Korean mothers emphasised the importance of balancing the first and second languages at a school. All of them believed that incorporating their language and culture into the school curriculum would be the best way to make their children successful bilinguals.

Worthy's (2006) study with 16 Latino parents similarly shows the parents' preference for balancing their children's English and Spanish languages. These parents

had been living in the United States from eight months to 20 years. They were interviewed in the family home and at school. They were from a low-income community and had limited education, from Grade 6 to high school completion. Their children were in Grade 5 in a public school in Texas. Unlike Huh's (2006) Korean mothers, who thought that it was the school's responsibility to teach their children Korean language along with English, Worthy's (2006) Latino parents stated that it was parents' responsibility to teach their children Spanish. The school's responsibility was to teach English. These different opinions between Huh's (2006) and Worthy's (2006) participants may be due to a number of factors, including different socio-economic backgrounds and educational levels. In both studies, however, participating parents expressed a strong view in favour of maintaining bilingualism in their children.

In G. Li's (2007) ethnographic study of two Chinese Canadian families, the parents of one family, in particular, wanted their daughter to be bilingual in Chinese and English. These parents were not sure if they wanted to live in Canada. The father wanted his children to "act in Canadian ways at school and follow Chinese ways at home" (G. Li, 2007, p. 20). Like parents in Worthy's (2006) study, G. Li's parents said that it was parents' responsibility to teach Chinese to their children, not the school's. It should be noted that in comparison to the parents in Huh's (2006) study, the parents in G. Li's (2007) study had low academic qualifications and their stay in Canada was relatively short.

Song's (2010) qualitative study of two groups of Korean mothers has some interesting findings. Her data were drawn from individual and focus group interviews. One group consisted of 15 Korean mothers returning to Korea after some months in the USA. In another group, there were seven immigrant Korean mothers, who had been in the USA for at least five years. For the returning group, maintaining bilingualism was

not an issue but for the immigrants it was a dilemma. Although they were positive about bilingualism, they thought it was difficult to achieve. Therefore, they preferred their children to learn English to succeed in the American system. This finding indicates that even if ESL parents desire their children to develop their first language fully, they cannot ensure this. It may be because of their fear that if their children focus on learning both first and second languages, they will not develop English like their English-speaking peers, and will have more limited opportunities in the broader American society.

4.2.2 English-only education for bilingual children

Whereas the existing research shows some ESL parents want their children to develop both languages, their mother tongue and English (Huh, 2006; G. Li, 2007; Worthy, 2006), others think children's bilingualism hinders their academic progress in an English-speaking country. So they emphasise English literacy teaching/learning practices only.

S. Brown and Souto-Manning's (2008) study shows that some ESL parents prefer their children to learn English if they want them to succeed in a school in an English-speaking country. The researchers conducted their research with one Latino family to understand how they made sense of their two children's schooling experiences, in both Puerto Rico and the United States. The daughter was in Grade 2 and the son was in kindergarten in the US. Both parents had attained college degrees in Puerto Rico. This family had been living in the United States for about a year when this study took place. The parents in the study were found to focus entirely on their children's English, as seen in the following quotation:

When we are working on homework it is in English. Everything about school. All the books that we are buying and that we are getting we try to make them in English...I don't want him to get confused about the sounds and everything. He's learning everything in English.

(S. Brown & Souto-Manning, 2008, p. 37)

The immigrant Korean mothers in Song's (2010) study also had similar views on encouraging their children to learn English. They agreed that although they spoke Korean language at home, they preferred their children to focus more on learning English so that they could succeed at school as well as in the broader American society. The participating parents in both studies, S. Brown and Souto-Manning (2008) and Song (2010), identified proficiency in English as a key factor for success in an English-speaking country.

4.2.3 ESL parents' English proficiency

Whether ESL parents' English proficiency is enough either to support their children's literacy learning or to communicate with their children's school/teachers effectively is also an issue that has emerged from research studies (Bernhard & Freire, 1999; Huh, 2006; Worthy, 2006). Bernhard and Freire's (1999) study, although not recent, is relevant to the present study. They conducted their research in a Canadian school, investigating the perspectives of ten refugee Latin American primary school children, their parents, and teachers on the Canadian education system. All three studies (Bernhard & Freire, 1999; Huh, 2006; Worthy, 2006) show that the parent participants claimed to have limited English, and because of this, they felt they could not support their children's English literacy learning properly. In addition, they also indicated that their lack of English proficiency was a hindrance in the maintenance of effective communication with their children's school or teachers.

Walker-Dalhouse and Dalhouse (2009) conducted a study in the United States with three refugee Sudanese families. They interviewed three parents and three youths aged 18 and 19. All three parents, two males and a female were qualified, one father had a Master's degree in Divinity and another had a Bachelor's degree in Business, whereas the mother had Year 11 equivalent education. These parents stated in interviews that because of lack of English skills, some parents, not necessarily the participants themselves, were unable to make their children capable readers and writers of English. At the same time, these parents showed their willingness to work with school teachers if they had opportunities to support the development of their children's literacy learning.

These studies show that for some ESL parents, their lack of English proficiency creates two problems. Firstly, the parents think they are unable to support their children's English literacy learning, and secondly, their communication with school or teachers is problematic. Parent-school communication is discussed below.

4.2.4 Parent-school communication

The available research suggests that if parents are involved in their children's literacy learning, this can foster the children's learning and increase their achievement level as well (Barnard, 2004; Ford & Amaral, 2006; Rogers et al., 2009), as mentioned earlier. For this, there must also be effective communication between home and school, so that parents know what their children are learning at school and how teachers are teaching. Such family-school collaboration is highly regarded in countries like Australia, Canada, and the USA. Unfortunately, there is often a lack of coordination between the ESL families and school (G. Li, 2007). Sometimes the parents' lack of fluent English can be a problem. In Huh's (2006) study, one of the opportunities to interact with teachers was in a parent-teacher conference, but time was too short for parents to express their

concerns, according to the participants. In contrast to Huh (2006) and G. Li (2007), G. Li's (2006) findings suggest to us that there was not a serious communication problem between her participants, 26 middle class Chinese parents, and their children's schools or teachers in mainstream American schools. What is noteworthy in G. Li's (2006) study is that the participants' length of stay in the US was relatively long, on average, ten years, and another factor was that, 88% of them were highly qualified, with tertiary or postgraduate degrees.

Therefore, it was unlikely that a serious communication problem between this special group of parents and their children's teachers or school would emerge. Even though Huh's (2006) parent participants were also well educated, their stay in the USA was shorter, 4.2 years, on average. In G. Li's (2007) study of two Chinese Canadian families, both parents in one family were high school graduates from Hong Kong and had been living in Canada for about ten years at the time of data collection between 2000 and 2001. In the other family, although both parents had college degrees from China, they had been living in Canada for about two years and could not speak English. It seems that ESL parents' qualifications, their length of residence in the English-speaking country, and their proficiency in English may affect the parent-school communication.

Two further issues have been identified in the research literature, both of which relate to teaching.

4.2.5 Teacher support given to individual students

ESL parents in some studies report that teacher support is lacking in terms of feedback given to children's homework, close attention to individual students, and whether they are learning. For example, one mother in Huh's (2006) study expressed her feelings

about one teacher, “She does not give any feedback about my son’s homework. I wonder if she is concerned about my son” (p. 345). Similarly, parents complained that teachers did not care whether a certain child was present or absent in the class. They were only focused on their programs. This can be seen in one mother’s complaint in the following interview extract (Bernhard & Freire, 1999):

He is sometimes away from school for a week or two because of his asthma. She [the teacher] does not even seem to notice, she just continues her activities. To me this shows she does not give the child any importance for being himself. If they are there, fine, if they are away, fine too; if they learn, fine, if not, that’s fine too.

(pp. 85-86)

Parents in the above studies portrayed some teachers as indifferent individuals who did not care about students, whether they did homework, came to school regularly or progressed.

4.2.6 Parent views on literacy pedagogy

As mentioned in Chapter Three, there is an ongoing debate about the relative merits of ‘phonics’ or ‘whole language’ approaches to teaching reading. Some studies focus on ESL parents’ attitudes to the debate about phonics versus a whole language approach, and traditional versus genre-based approaches in teaching reading and writing respectively. For example, G. Li’s (2006) study shows that the participant parents are in favour of phonics and a traditional approach in teaching reading and writing. According to G. Li, about 81% parents believed that their children should be taught sound-letter relationships before reading a text itself. In addition, these parents valued their

children's extensive reading outside school. Most of the parents said that their children read every day at home. They also used public libraries to get resources for reading.

Similarly, the Chinese parents in G. Li's (2006) study preferred a skill-based traditional approach in teaching writing. They said that their children needed to spell correctly and they needed to know rules of grammar to be good writers. Further, they emphasised the neatness of writing, which could be achieved by copying from books.

Additionally, G. Li (2007) found that the parents valued homework to strengthen children's learning. A mother named Mei told G. Li that she demanded more homework from her Grade 3 son's teacher but she did not get a result. She said, "They told me they would consider my suggestions, but they didn't" (Mei in G. Li, 2007, p. 13). She further said:

From Grade 1 to 3, there is no homework, just play. Some kids do not know whether it's play or study. Some end up not learning much. All of a sudden, when they get to Grade 4, they have a lot of homework and they get an exam, and the kids can't handle it.

(p. 13)

It seems that Canadian teachers start giving homework to children only from Grade 4. Mei complained that the school also gave students too much freedom and teachers were not strict enough with students, which made discipline harder at home. Another parent, Mr. Tang, from the same study, mentioned that he did not like the school's emphasis on children's drawing, rather than on academic aspects, such as real reading and writing. Like Mei, he also felt that the Canadian teachers gave lots of freedom to students to choose what they wanted to do.

The parents in Bernhard and Freire's (1999) study said that they were also not happy to see their children not studying at school. A mother complained:

I think they should lead them more toward study, not just painting and playing all day...He never comes with something new, something I learned today, or look, now I know this. I think they should start to learn letters. Here at home I am teaching him to memorize them. But I think he should be doing this at school.

(Bernhard & Freire, 1999, p. 85)

Most of the ESL parents seemed to prefer traditional literacy learning approaches by memorising real text materials, given in books and homework, rather than learning creatively through playing, painting, and drawing.

4.2.7 Parental involvement in children's literacy learning

In their research review article, C. R. Cooper, Chavira, and Mena (2005) claim that families are a key factor in students' developing and sustaining educational aspirations. They have discussed six types of parental involvement in children's learning. They are (1) *Parenting*, assisting families with parenting, child-rearing skills, and home conditions for learning, (2) *Communicating* with families about school programs and student progress, (3) *Volunteering* at school, (4) *Learning at home* with homework and other activities, (5) *Decision-making* in school governance and advocacy, and (6) *Collaborating* with community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning. Among them, the writers say that *Learning at home* (type 4) appears to play the most direct role in students' achievement.

Many studies also show that if parents are involved in their children's literacy learning, this can foster children's learning and increase their achievement level

(Barnard, 2004; Ford & Amaral, 2006; Rogers et al., 2009). Sheldon and Voorhis (2004) support family and community partnerships with schools to improve students' literacy practices (see also, G. Li, 2007). They emphasise developing high quality programs, such as the organisation of different workshops for parents, more extensive distribution of newsletters or organisation of interactive homework (between parents and children), to encourage more parental participation.

Family-school relationships help strengthen children's literacy learning and there are different ways in which parents can be involved in their children's literacy learning. It is also important to consider how school teachers perceive parental involvement. The studies reported above reveal six broad issues of concern to ESL parents from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and show a range of perspectives on school literacy practices in English-speaking countries. These issues are:

- maintaining the balance between children's first and second language
- English only education for bilingual children
- ESL parents' English proficiency
- parent-school communication
- teacher support given to individual students
- parent views on literacy pedagogy

4.3 TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON ESL CHILDREN'S LITERACY LEARNING AND THE ROLE OF PARENTS

As indicated earlier, children's literacy success depends partly on parents' active involvement in school programs. This section looks at how teachers perceive the ESL

parent role to strengthen their children's literacy learning, and how they view ESL students in classrooms. The main findings arising from the studies reviewed are that (1) the mainstream teachers may have both negative and positive attitudes towards ESL parents and students, (2) they mostly find parents responsible for children's low achievements, (3) they can experience English language as a barrier for parents, (4) teachers usually expect parents to take initiative to communicate with teachers, and (5) there can be a disparity between parent and teacher understandings of literacy teaching/learning. Details of these studies are presented in what follows.

Henderson's (2007) study is based on the narratives told by two primary school teachers about Mustafa, a boy of Turkish descent and a son of two itinerant farm worker parents. The family's place of residence was in Victoria but every year they used to go to North Queensland for farm work. Even though it is a single case study, it offers insights into how mainstream school teachers evaluate students from linguistic and cultural backgrounds different from their own. Henderson (2007) found that Teachers 1 and 2 had different views about the same student, Mustafa.

According to Teacher 1, Mustafa was weak in reading, and his parents were part of the problem. According to this teacher, Mustafa's parents had not exposed him to print materials, or taken him to the library, and helped him choose books in English. In contrast to Teacher 1's views, Teacher 2 described Mustafa as a bright student, whose English was very good. He did not have serious problems in reading except for pronouncing some idiomatic terms incorrectly. He could write excellent poems, and was even eager to do additional work on the weekend. Teacher 2 said, "I didn't see any problems with him at all" (Henderson, 2007, p. 46).

Henderson argues that in the context of the school where his study took place, itinerant farm workers and their children were regarded as deficient. Because of this stereotyped common belief, Teacher 1 formulated her narratives highlighting Mustafa's weaknesses. Her responses were based on speculation. In contrast, Teacher 2 did not judge Mustafa, and found what literacy strengths he had. Henderson stresses that evaluating students and their families using a 'deficit logic' limits pedagogical approaches whereas identifying students' strengths expands pedagogical possibilities, and helps to strengthen literacy learning of students from diverse backgrounds.

A study conducted in Canada (Peterson & Ladky, 2007) focused on teacher and principal views on new immigrant parents' involvement in their children's literacy learning. Data were collected using surveys and interviews. In the first stage, the researchers surveyed 61 teachers and 32 principals from 32 schools. They then selected twelve teachers and ten principals for interviews. Their findings suggest that both teachers and principals agreed that there were specific barriers which could minimise the new immigrant parents' involvement in their children's literacy learning. For example, they found that many new immigrant parents did not find reading books for pleasure an important literacy activity because, according to one principal, "the parents don't see the academic value of it" (p. 894). A majority of the participants (85%) identified the English language as a barrier in the capacity of new immigrant parents to support their children. Another factor of the parents' limited involvement in their children's school life was their work responsibilities. Being new in Canada their main focus was to fulfil their survival needs, rather than their children's literacy needs.

In G. Li's (2007) ethnographic study of two Year 1 students, Sandy and Alana, in Canada, their teacher Mrs. Haines said that she was frustrated to find the Chinese parents uncooperative with the school. Not to see Alana submitting complete home

reading records in spite of her reminders to Alana's parents, the teacher wondered whether Alana's parents were involved in Alana's learning at home at all. G. Li argues that it was not the parents' disinterest towards Alana's learning but in fact there was a lack of communication between school teachers and parents.

Another ethnographic case study conducted by Huss-Keeler (1997) also reveals teachers' stereotyped perceptions of ESL parents' involvement in their children's literacy learning. The study took place in a multicultural urban primary school in the UK. The literacy learning of Pakistani children from five families was the focus of this study. Findings of the study indicate that a majority of the teachers say that ESL parents do not think it is their responsibility to help in their children's literacy learning. A teacher said in an interview, "A lot of them have the attitude that the education of their children is not their responsibility. It's the responsibility of the school and the school should get on with it" (p. 175).

Many teachers believed that usually ESL parents did not know English, thus, there was no need to issue the children's report cards. According to the deputy head, "There are no report cards because of the problems that the parents don't read English", (p. 174). Usually teachers expected parents to go to the school and to ask about their literacy program. This was in spite of the fact that the teachers knew the parents' English was limited. One of the teachers related the parents' reluctance to be involved in their children's education to their culture, saying, "Parents were not allowed in school in Bangladesh and Pakistan. School is very different, therefore parents are reluctant to come in" (p. 175). Although some teachers were aware of cultural differences, they did not use any strategies to inform the parents about the 'new' education system. On the basis of their perception that parents were not interested, teachers would not send school work home or lend class library books to certain children.

Studies show us that teachers' views are a combination of positive and critical observations. Teachers often recognise the students' hard work and some students' success, but frequently they also view ESL students in general as underperforming. The responsibility for underperformance, from the perspective of many teachers lies with the parents, according to studies surveyed above. The teacher perceptions about the ESL parents' involvement in children's literacy learning are frequently based on teachers' speculation and hugely influenced by a 'deficit logic.' Teachers often express the belief that parents neither supply sufficient print materials to their children nor support them at home. As a result, most of the ESL children are seen to be under-performing. Furthermore, the parents do not frequently communicate with teachers to inquire about their children's academic progress. Some teachers even conclude that ESL parents are not interested in their children's education because these parents think it is the teacher's responsibility to educate their children. In the worst instances, teachers then limit the literacy learning opportunities of children, such as inclusion in literacy groups or borrowing class library books, saying they are not 'ready' yet. They also overlook the progress the children are making only on the basis of their own assumptions. However, some writers argue that it is not always a lack of ESL parents' interest in their children's literacy development, but ineffective communication between family and school which seems to be more responsible for understanding ESL children's literacy learning at school and at home (Huss-Keeler, 1997; G. Li, 2007).

Teachers' attitudes are not always negative. Their judgement is based on their own literacy beliefs and practices (Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009), and sometimes can be quite positive (Henderson, 2007). In Walker-Dalhouse and Dalhouse's study (2009), a participant ESL teacher stated that ESL teachers and mainstream teachers face similar challenges to teach Sudanese students. One of the challenges is how to help

students performing below grade level. However, unlike the ESL teachers, who worry about how to improve these students' English proficiency, mainstream teachers "do not know what to do with them (to improve English) and worry that they are not teaching them the required subject matter" (Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009, p. 333). Even though the teachers were challenged by their students, they expressed positive views about the Sudanese students. They stated that these students had a positive attitude towards learning, were hard-working, and receptive to face the challenges to be literate in English.

To summarise the research findings on teachers' attitudes towards ESL parents and students, it seems that teachers have limited cultural knowledge of diverse populations and may misunderstand ESL parents' perspectives on either education or literacy. This limited knowledge on the part of teachers ultimately hampers the children's literacy development. In the context of America, school teachers' cultural understanding of Asian parents is inadequate (Kwon, Suh, Bang, Jung, & Moon, 2010). This can equally be applied in the context of Australia. Kwon et al.'s (2010) study was conducted to compare teachers' and Korean parents' educational perspectives in the USA. Their findings suggest that there were a lot of disparities between the perspectives of school teachers and those of the Korean parents. Teachers were found to misunderstand the Korean parents' educational beliefs, expectations about their children's academic achievement and parental roles to support their children's education. Although the study focused on comparing teachers' and the Korean parents' educational perspectives as a whole, the findings also reveal literacy understandings, from both points of view. In conclusion it can be said that:

1. Usually teachers in English-speaking countries use a ‘deficit model’ to judge ESL parents. However, they are found to have both positive and negative attitudes towards ESL students.
2. They find parents in some measure responsible for children’s below average performances, because according to teachers, ESL parents think that teachers must educate their children.
3. In teachers’ experience, the lack of English language proficiency among the parents means that they are unable to be involved in their children’s literacy learning.
4. Teachers expect parents to approach teachers if they have any concerns, not vice versa.
5. Many disparities can be found between parent and teacher understandings of literacy teaching/learning, partly because of different cultural understandings.

4.4 SUMMARY

Literature on the perspectives of ESL parents and mainstream teachers on literacy pedagogy was reviewed in this chapter, beginning with views, along with those of ESL students, on the education systems of their home and host countries. The literature review suggests that there is a gap between ESL parent and teacher understandings of literacy teaching/learning. For instance, school teachers often believe that ESL parents do not support their children’s literacy learning at home. In contrast to the beliefs expressed by the teachers, most of the parents in the studies surveyed show that they are keenly interested in their children’s learning, and eager to support them. Due to possessing different cultural beliefs and values, disparities are seen in them. A problem

which clearly emerges from this literature review is that there is a lack of sound coordination between home and school.

As indicated earlier, there is still a lack of research studies which bring out the voices of different groups of ESL parents on literacy pedagogy in English-speaking countries. More studies in this area are needed to help mainstream school teachers understand parents' diverse perspectives. This understanding would lead teachers to strengthen their relationship with ESL students, which ultimately fosters the children's literacy learning. Furthermore, even if there are some studies which explore ESL parent perspectives on literacy teaching and learning, there are very few studies conducted to compare parent and teacher perspectives. Such comparative studies help to identify where exactly the problems lie in the ESL parents' and school teachers' understanding of literacy and literacy pedagogy, and can come up with useful suggestions to solve those problems. It is important to know the views of both groups, school teachers and parents because they have to work in partnerships to help children develop literacy learning effectively. Therefore, I believe that this study will fill the existing gap in the research literature to some extent.

The following chapter presents the methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

METHODOLOGY FOR THIS STUDY

This chapter outlines the research paradigm and methodology adopted for the study. It explains and gives a rationale for the choice of ‘constructivism’ as the research paradigm, as well as for the choice of a qualitative case study. The process for collecting data includes an account of my position as researcher in the research process. Finally, the data analysis procedures are described and justified.

5.1 RESEARCH PARADIGMS

A researcher makes her/his decision to conduct a particular research study on the basis of how s/he perceives reality in the world (Birley & Moreland, 1998). The researcher’s viewing of the world is based on a ‘research paradigm.’ The research paradigm determines or at least suggests which methodology and methods to follow to approach that reality. This research study is based on ‘constructivism’ as a research paradigm, which will be explained in section 5.2.

According to Birley and Moreland (1998) and Krauss (2005), there are three main research paradigms, namely ‘positivism,’ ‘constructivism,’ and ‘realism.’ A researcher who believes reality is an objective phenomenon works within a ‘positivism’ paradigm. In contrast, a researcher who believes that reality is subjective may follow a paradigm of ‘constructivism’ (Krauss, 2005), exploring multiple realities, which are context and time dependent. A mixture of both objectivity and subjectivity lies within the paradigm of ‘realism.’ A realist believes that there are not multiple realities, but multiple perceptions of reality (Birley & Moreland, 1998; Krauss, 2005). Usually positivist paradigm researchers tend to use quantitative methods and constructivist paradigm researchers often use qualitative methods to carry out their research. Realists

follow a mixed methods approach. This study uses a combination of constructivist and realist research approaches.

There are some significant differences between qualitative and quantitative research. For instance, quantitative research is controlled, objective, and generalisable, whereas qualitative research is subjective and ungeneralisable (Nunan, 1992). Qualitative research avoids statistical techniques, which is why data are recorded in non-numerical form (Nunan, 1992; Silverman, 2000) such as “language of images, feelings and impression; they describe the qualities of the events under study” (Bouma, 1996, p. 18). The main purpose of qualitative research is to answer the question, ‘What is going on here?’ in some depth. Thus, it is a process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), and this is my preferred way of posing my research questions.

Wisker (2008) draws a clear dividing line between positivistic and constructivistic paradigms of research methodology, stressing that a positivistic paradigm is concerned with hypothesis testing. It uses large samples and produces quantitative data. On the other hand, a constructivist paradigm is concerned with generating theories. It uses small samples and produces qualitative data. In the field of academic research, both qualitative and quantitative approaches are used to explore useful and informative results, but they have different purposes (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004). The purpose of quantitative research is to discover answers to questions through the application of scientific procedures whereas qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world for interpretation (Davies, 2007).

However, ‘positivism-quantitative research’ and ‘constructivism-qualitative research’ connotations are not always clear. It is possible for qualitative researchers to follow positivism and for quantitative researchers to follow constructivism. It depends

upon how the researcher perceives the world. The reasons for my preference for qualitative research follow in the next section.

In fact, research paradigms are belief systems which determine an inquirer's world view. These belief systems are based on ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions (Guba & Lincoln, 2004). For example, if one is following constructivism, as in the present study, ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions can be as follows, according to Guba and Lincoln (2004).

Ontologically the researcher assumes that there is not an absolute reality in the world because reality is always relative. Because of the existence of multiple realities, what is real for one researcher may be interpreted differently by another. These realities are determined by people's social contexts and life experiences and represented by semiotic systems. For example, in the case of this study, the researcher, ESL parents, and the school staff may not share exactly the same views on literacy teaching/learning in Australian schools. Similarly, other researchers working with these participants may see the issue of literacy in different ways.

The ontological view of multiple realities leads the researcher to assume that knowledge or reality is constructed among the researcher and research participants subjectively. Epistemologically the researcher and the participants interact to construct the knowledge, with all views important in the process of construction. Finally, the researcher interprets this knowledge in the form of research findings.

The methodological stand of a constructivist is determined by his/her ontological and epistemological views. That is why the methodology followed by the constructivist researcher is 'hermeneutical' and 'dialectical' (Guba & Lincoln, 2004).

The researcher explores and interprets the realities through dialogues with her/his participants. Since the realities are constructed by people in a particular context and at specific time, they may differ in other contexts and times.

5.2 CONSTRUCTIVISM AS A RESEARCH PARADIGM

Given the nature of this study, the constructivist (Guba & Lincoln, 2004) and to some extent the realist research paradigm seemed most suitable. As a researcher I believe that people may perceive the same thing differently: in the context of the current study, people's understandings of literacy teaching/learning may be different. This philosophy aligns with the theoretical framework of this research, discussed in Chapter Three.

According to this framework, literacy is a social practice and it is understood differently in different societies. My ontological view, confirmed by my experience in different countries and different levels of society in each country, is that there are multiple realities. It is not plausible for me to believe that there is only one truth in the world, especially in social science fields, such as education. In the case of my research, ESL parents and Australian teachers may have different views in some of the areas of literacy teaching/learning, and speak from the worldview of their own social culture.

Research questions (see Chapter One) in this study were designed to be answered by qualitative data, that is, rich and detailed descriptive data. This is because "Rich data will give a researcher solid material for building significant data and a significant analysis. Rich data are detailed, focused, and full", (Charmaz, 2006, p. 14). Qualitative research is useful for describing and answering questions about participants and contexts. The researcher studies the perspectives of the research participants toward events, beliefs, or practices (Gay & Airasian, 2003). Qualitative researchers work from different epistemological positions to capture various aspects of social life, which would otherwise remain hidden (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004). It should also be noted that in

qualitative inquiry, the intent is not to generalise to a large population, but to develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2008).

Qualitative researchers collect data in natural settings which are authentic, flexible and open (Bouma, 2000; Knobel & Lankshear, 1999; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). In the same vein, Denzin and Lincoln (2008) point out, “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 4).

Knobel and Lankshear (1999) discuss six research designs commonly found in published reports of qualitative research studies (ethnography, action research, case studies, qualitative survey, narrative inquiry, and discourse analysis). This study was based on a case study research design but it also used some features of autoethnography and ethnography. The research design is described more fully below.

5.3 CASE STUDY

This study comprises a ‘case study’ which means that it focuses on the background, current status, and environmental interactions of a given social unit: an individual, a group, an institution, or a community (J. D. Brown & Rodgers, 2003). The aim of any case study is to understand the issues under investigation in detail (Birley & Moreland, 1998). One mainstream primary government school was used as a single case. At this school, six parents of Years 3/4 and Years 5/6 students, four English teachers, and the school principal were research participants, and can be considered as multiple cases within the site. Thus, it was an “embedded case study design” (Yin, 2009, p. 50), where the school was a single case which had embedded multiple units of analysis. The individuals were considered as units of analysis because the data generated from them were analysed at the individual level first. At another stage, similar and different

literacy views of Australian teachers and ESL parents were explored, and the analysis was conducted at the group level. Therefore, units of analysis were both individual and group.

Case studies, however, have been criticised as lacking scientific generalisation, as they are conducted on a small scale. This lack of generalisation poses a question about the reliability or trustworthiness of the study. It should be noted that most of the studies reviewed in Chapter Four (Bernhand and Freire, 1999; S. Brown & Souto-Manning, 2008; Henderson, 2007; Huh, 2006; Huss-Keeler, 1997; Lee, 2010; J. Li, 2010; G. Li, 2007; Song, 2010; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009; Worthy, 2006) were conducted with a small number of people. To address the issue of reliability, a case study can use multiple data sources. This is because a major strength of case study is that it has an opportunity to use many different sources of evidence, and triangulation of these sources (Yin, 2009).

As mentioned above, this case study has some features of ethnography and autoethnography. In ethnographic study, a researcher is highly involved with the research participants and research site to develop a close connection with them so that the researcher can understand the participants' view points (Cunliffe, 2009; Prasad, 2005). Like any ethnographer, I also made myself familiar to the research site and participants by establishing a close relationship with them. In addition, my own experience as an ESL parent was an important part of this study. A use of such self-experience is a feature of autoethnography (Anderson, 2006; Holt, 2003; Wall, 2006).

To collect qualitative data, Creswell (2008) suggests five steps. They are (1) identifying sites and participants, (2) gaining access, (3) determining the types of data to collect, (4) developing data collection forms, and (5) administering the process in an

ethical manner. All these five steps were followed while collecting data for this research, and the following sections elaborate these steps, where steps three and four are combined.

5.3.1 Identifying sites and participants

The study took place in a mainstream primary government school in suburban Melbourne in Victoria, hereafter known as Paterson Primary School (pseudonym), named after a famous Australian poet, Andrew Barton Paterson. This school was chosen for several reasons. The first and most important is that it had many students from diverse communities, speaking many languages. According to the *Paterson Primary School Information Handbook* (2009), 65% students of the total students in school were from an ESL background. Languages spoken included Bengali, Chinese, Greek, Hindi, Indonesian, Marathi, Nepali, Punjabi, Tagalog, and others. I, therefore, thought that my chances to capture ESL parents' multiple perspectives were high in this school. I would be able to compare and contrast their perspectives within the parent group and with Australian teachers.

It was likely that teachers teaching in such a school might also have much to share. Another typical feature of Paterson Primary School was that there were a lot of ESL students whose parents were postgraduate students. This was a practical advantage, which increased my chances of finding parents who could communicate with me in English. However, this may have biased the data sample in favour of more educated parents than is typical in state primary schools in Victoria. The third reason for choosing this school was that my son was studying there at the time of planning my data collection. Therefore, I hoped to gain access to this school more easily. As is usual in any mainstream school, in Paterson Primary School, there were students from both

English-speaking and non-English-speaking backgrounds and they were taught together in all classrooms.

Profile of Paterson Primary School

According to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD, 2010), there are 1,159 government primary schools in Victoria, with 306,304 students. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Victorian government schools are clustered into nine regions. Paterson Primary School was in the Eastern Metropolitan Region (EMR). There were 182 primary schools in the EMR, according to DEECD (2010).

In terms of student numbers, Paterson Primary School was regarded as a small school, according to the school principal. She said that she had worked at a primary school with 1,000 students. According to the *Government School Performance Summary* (DEECD, 2009), in 2009, 233 students were enrolled at Paterson Primary School, 110 girls and 123 boys. The school was funded by the federal and state governments. In addition, the school also charged parents (for example, for stationery items, excursions, and school camps) and raised funds by organising events, such as a barbeque, a Father's Day stall, a Mother's Day stall, chocolate selling, and cake selling programs. Based on the school's Student Family Occupation index, parents in this school were from a low-mid socio-economic background (*Government School Performance Summary*, DEECD, 2009).

The school taught students from Preparatory (Prep, age 6) to Year 6 (age 12). Except for the Prep level, there were composite groupings at all levels. Students from Years 1/2, 3/4, and 5/6 were taught together. There were three groups in each class of Years 3/4 and 5/6, the focus classes of this study. On average, there were 20 students in one class. The school programs were designed to cater for the individual needs of a

diverse range of students (*Government School Performance Summary*, DEECD, 2009).

The overall aim of the school was to develop a whole child and to build a range of skills and qualities that would enable students to face the future with confidence (*Paterson Primary School Information Handbook*, 2009).

The classrooms at Paterson Primary School had many resources. Students' work was displayed in every classroom. For ethical reasons, photographs of students' work were not taken because in some work students had their photos or names. Student work included their autobiographies, their write-ups of different genres such as procedures, recounts, explanations, and their drawings. There were posters and charts hung all around the rooms. There were a variety of books, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, newspapers, and stationery items, such as pencils, erasers, coloured pens, and drawing paper. In Years 3/4 and 5/6 each classroom had four computers, the ratio of computer use being five children to one computer. They also had printing and photocopy facilities. In addition, the school had a well-resourced library. Once a week all students had a library session for an hour. At this time students would go to the library, listen to the librarian reading books (related to their lesson topics), do library research, and choose books, either for free reading or for their project work. Every week, students were allowed to borrow two books at a time, but they could take class readers home every day (Fieldnotes, 2009). The following photographs provide a glimpse of resources used at Paterson Primary School.

Figure 5.1 Class readers



Figure 5.2 Resource books and posters



Figure 5.3 Resource books and charts



Figure 5.4 Computers in a class



Although the school used an integrated curriculum, explicit literacy teaching/learning was usually included in English lessons and covered the three areas of reading, writing, and speaking and listening. Ten hours a week were allotted to literacy teaching. Japanese was taught as a Language Other Than English (LOTE) for an hour a week at all year levels. Paterson Primary School had many typical positive features of a small government school.

5.3.2 Gaining access to the research site and participants

To gain access to a research site and find authentic data is an issue of concern in qualitative research. It is appropriate for a qualitative researcher to recruit her/his research participants in a setting where s/he has an easy access (Davies, 2007). Even though I could access Paterson Primary School as the research site easily, I experienced two tensions. These were to gain trust as a member of the school community, and to pursue my research goal with as much objectivity as possible. I felt it would be easier for me to develop a rapport and establish trust with my research participants because of my membership in the school community as a parent. At the same time, I had a challenge to win the school principal's and teachers' trust as a researcher. I had a different linguistic and cultural background from theirs. With the parent participants, however, I would share some common grounds. Like them, I was also an ESL parent and new in the Australian context. These commonalities made me confident that I would not have a problem to develop my relationship with parents. At the inception stage of this research project, I had to establish my 'good faith.' I found the teaching profession provided a common ground, which I could share with the school staff.

I used my Nepali teacher identity, along with my ESL parent and researcher identities to discuss my research project when I first met the principal. In spite of my

fears, she gave her verbal consent for it to take place. Since she was the gatekeeper, her approval was important to me. I also needed to develop rapport with teachers. I introduced myself to them as an English teacher in Nepal, a parent at Paterson Primary School, and a researcher at Monash University. With their permission, I entered the classrooms to observe their literacy lessons, as a learner in the Australian context. Gradually I started to build up my relationship with the principal and teachers. My regular visits to the classrooms, at first as an informal observer, then as a volunteer, assured teachers that I was not as a threat to them and it was not my purpose to judge their teaching. Instead, I was building my own understanding of literacy teaching in Victoria, by observing their lessons.

Before commencing my research in October 2009, I volunteered at the school by assisting the ESL teacher once a week from June, 2009 to September, 2009. In the first year of the study while I was developing my proposal, I observed several literacy lessons in different classrooms, from Prep up to Year 6. In addition, I participated in various school programs such as a parent-teacher meeting, a book fair, a book parade, the school theatre production, a healthy eating workshop, a working bee, a barbeque fundraiser, a curriculum night, and a 'celebration night,' where students' work was displayed.

My active participation in school activities gave me an opportunity to familiarise myself with the research site and research participants. When I was at the stage of commencing my research, I had established a good rapport with the school principal, teachers, and parents who might become my prospective research participants. The procedure used to select the participants is given below. The data collection process was followed by a successful application for approval from the university and DEECD's ethics committees respectively.

Parent participants selection process

To select the parent participants, purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2008) was used. The selection criteria were that (1) their stay in Australia was from six months to two years, (2) their children were in Years 3 to 6, and (3) the participants were able to communicate with me in English. ESL parents, whose stay in Australia was not more than two years, were termed ‘newly arrived’ parents in this study. Parents of Years 3 to 6 children were chosen because these children would have had exposure to school literacy practices in their home countries. Thus, their parents could make a comparison between school literacy practices in their home countries and in Australia. In addition, in comparison to lower grades, the students in higher grades were required to do more literacy work.

I planned to include only those parents who could communicate with me in English. Being a student, I could not afford the high cost of hiring interpreters or translators from other languages. English was thought to be a possible common language between the researcher and participants. Later, I realised that it was difficult to get parents who spoke enough English to communicate about the research. The other main problem to find parent participants was a practical one. The parents of older children (in Years 3 to 6) did not come to school either to drop off or pick up their children from the school, so it was hard to contact them.

Initially, it was planned to recruit the parents via the school newsletter. After consultation with the school principal it was decided to send home via class teachers a brief written explanatory statement and a letter to prospective parents who met the selection criteria. It was assumed that the interested parents would contact the respective teacher with their contact details and the teacher would pass on the information to me. I waited for their responses for about a month but did not hear anything from anybody.

Then I started visiting the school. Just before the school dismissal time, I asked any parents who were there, which class their children were in. When I found parents whose children were in Years 3, 4, 5 or 6, I introduced myself and explained my study orally and asked them if they were interested in taking part in my study.

Finally, six parents (one Filipino, two Indian, two Indonesian, and one Nepali) emerged as research participants by personal communication between me and prospective parent participants. They chose or were given pseudonyms. Among them, four, Binod (Nepali), Dewita, Lily (Indonesians), and Sharon (Filipino) could communicate in English and two, Nita and Tara (Indians) could understand English but were not comfortable speaking English. However, I could communicate with them in Hindi, my third language (after Nepali and English). After receiving the participants' oral consent, they were given a written explanatory statement for their reference and a consent form to be signed and returned to me.

In the case of the Hindi speaking parents, I explained the study orally in Hindi first. Although they had difficulty in speaking English, they could read English. Binod, Nita, Tara, and I could all speak Hindi language and we were from similar cultural backgrounds. This seemed an advantage to me. Perhaps the level of comfort, and even possibilities for data, may be higher when the researcher and participants share a language or culture. It should also be noted that Binod was my husband. I included him because he met the selection criteria. Interestingly, I experienced the opposite to my anticipation; it was more difficult to find parents than teachers to take part in the study.

Teacher participants selection process

As discussed in Chapter One, the overall goal of this research study was to explore whether ESL parent and Australian primary school teacher perspectives on literacy

teaching/learning match. For this purpose, along with ESL parents, classroom teachers were sought as participants. At the time of data collection, there were composite classes at Paterson Primary School, with three groups of Years 3/4 and three groups of Years 5/6, as mentioned above.

To recruit the teacher participants, the principal advised me to see them on their planning days when they did not have their regular classes. Accordingly, I approached all six teachers in Years 3/4 and Years 5/6. I explained my study orally to them. Although all teachers expressed an interest in taking part in the study, four teachers, two from Years 3/4 and two from Years 5/6 were selected as research participants. These teachers were chosen to keep a balance in number between Years 3/4 and Years 5/6 teachers, and to include some gender balance as well. Among them, three were female and one was male (the only male class teacher in the school at that time). Each of the teacher participants was given a written explanatory statement of the study to keep and a consent form.

Although two Years 5/6 teachers were selected in the beginning, some complexities arose while the data collection was in progress, and I decided to recruit another 3/4 teacher to replace one 5/6 teacher. This situation will be discussed in detail in the 'ethical considerations' section below. Eventually, there were three 3/4 and one 5/6 teachers as participants. These teachers were also given pseudonyms. The three female teachers were given the names Alice, Amber, and Ann and the male teacher was given the name Andrew. All of them described themselves as monolingual speakers of Australian English. Apart from the classroom teachers, the school principal was also invited to take part in the study, to provide insight into school policies and administration. She was given the pseudonym Hema, as she was originally from Sri Lanka.

The study was limited in terms of time and resources. It should also be noted that while on the one hand, the data sample is based on convenience rather than representativeness, on the other hand, the purpose of a qualitative case study research is not necessarily to represent the target population. A detailed description and interpretation of particular cases is one way of representing a whole phenomenon. The research findings are, therefore, still useful and allow comparison between similar cases. As has been shown above, Paterson Primary School is not unusual in Melbourne in its high proportion (65%) of ESL students. It is a rather small school, with an unusually high number of educated ESL parents studying at a nearby university.

5.3.3 Determining the types of data and developing data collection tools

To ensure reliability and validity in the research design, various triangulated data sources were used (Creswell, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Yin, 2009). According to Creswell (2008), data triangulation is a process which has three elements. First, data should be collected from different individuals so that evidence can be drawn using different perspectives. Second, there should be different types of data, such as fieldnotes, interviews, and other written documents. Third, different ways of data collection should be used to elicit a variety of data to explore the same thing. Bernard and Ryan (2010) extend Creswell's (2008) second idea to five kinds of data sources in qualitative research. They are physical objects, still images, sounds, moving images, and written words. This study used still images, sounds, and written words. Altogether there were the following nine data sources, reflecting the views of three groups, parents, teachers, and the school principal.

- focus group interview
- in-depth interviews

- observation schedule for lessons
- fieldnotes
- researcher's journal
- school newsletters
- students' published work
- parent questionnaire
- classroom photographs

Details of these data sources are given below.

Focus group interview

A focus group interview is a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic. Focus groups are important to give the participants a chance to query each other and explain themselves to each other. Such interaction helps to gather valuable data, especially from a diverse group of participants (Morgan, 2004). Before conducting individual interviews with the parents, I therefore arranged two focus group interviews, with three parents in each group. I chose to make two small groups of three participants each, partly because among my six parent participants, three were from South East Asian and three were from South Asian countries. I expected that these two groups of parents would offer me different views. The two groups were also formed partly because of the availability of parents and researcher at particular times.

I used focus group interviews for several reasons. The main purpose of the focus group interview was to capture the participants' broader experiences on the given topics, which could help me to sharpen the questions for individual interviews, as Morgan (2004) points out. In addition, it was hoped that, before talking individually, if

the parents were given a chance to talk in a group on the same topics, it would give them confidence to express their opinions. The group discussion would also be a good forum to familiarise me as the researcher with the research participants. The participants were given a list of topics (see Appendix 6) related to literacy teaching/learning, applicable to both in Australia and in their home countries, and asked to express their views on those topics. I decided to use discussion topics instead of interview questions thinking that the participants would feel more comfortable to discuss general topics, rather than to answer specific questions for the first time. In the focus group interview with South Asian parents, both English and Hindi languages were used, with a lot of code mixing and code switching.

Although a researcher's role can be both directive and indirect in the focus group interview (Fontana & Frey, 2008), in this study, my role was directive in the sense that I had developed the topics for discussion. Sometimes I had to clarify when uncertainties arose. Sometimes I had to request other participants to share opinions, when it seemed to me that one participant was dominating the group. As indicated by Morgan (2004), my role was active in directing the discussions.

In-depth individual interview

The purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in someone else's mind. We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe (Patton, 2002).

The in-depth interview is a communicative event based on partnership between the interviewer and the respondent/s who actively engage in the meaning-making process (W. L. Miller & Crabtree, 2004). I used a general interview guide or semi-structured interview, because it gave me freedom to ask questions of my participants to draw rich data without missing important issues. The in-depth interview offered me a chance to capture my participants' views of their world, to learn their terminology and

judgements, and the complexities of their individual perceptions and experiences (Patton, 2002). In addition, the open-ended interview questions allowed me not to restrict my participants' views (Creswell, 2008). Individual interviews were conducted with parents, teachers, and the school principal.

Some of the questions asked were individualised to particular parents. This was because those questions were developed on the basis of the responses that the parents had given in the focus group interviews. Apart from probes and prompt questions, the general questions asked to all parents during the individual interview are given in Appendix 7. It should be noted that Hindi language was used to interview two Indian parents, Nita and Tara, and that sometimes code switching and code mixing between Hindi and English were also present. English was used with the remaining four parents, Binod, Dewita, Lily, and Sharon.

Teacher interview questions were divided into three sections. They were (1) general questions which asked about teachers' experience with new ESL students, (2) lesson-related (the lessons were observed before scheduling interviews) questions, and (3) ESL parent-related (especially newly arrived) questions. The questions in sections one and three were same for all four teachers, whereas the questions in section two were different, since they were based on the particular lessons. Before asking the questions from section two, there was a stimulated recall activity. The teachers were asked to listen to the segments of lessons that they had taught (to which questions were related) so that they could remember the lessons and answer accordingly. I played the segments on tape. See Appendix 8 for an example of interview questions asked to a teacher, and Appendix 9 for the principal interview questions.

Most of the focus group interview topics and individual interview questions were derived from the literature reviewed, some were derived from observing school events, such as the whole school theatrical production and the school camp, and some were derived from my personal experience of literacy teaching/learning in Nepal and Australia. The interview questions were discussed with peers and supervisors before asking the research participants. All 13 interviews (two focus groups, six individual with parents, and five individual with teachers and the school principal) were audiotaped. Even though the main data sources for this study were focus group and in-depth individual interviews, other supplementary data sources were also used. They were classroom observation, fieldnotes, the researcher's own reflective journal, school newsletters, students' published work, parent questionnaire, and classroom photographs, which helped to triangulate data sets. These are discussed in the following sections.

Classroom observation

In addition to teacher interviews, classroom observation was used to gather data from the teachers. This was to help me to broaden my understanding of literacy teaching/learning in Victorian classrooms, and to give me an opportunity to compare what teachers did in the classroom and what they said during the interview, although this comparison was not a primary focus of the research. Altogether 16 one-hour lessons were observed in the school Term 4, 2009.

For classroom observation, parental consent was obtained in advance. It was decided to observe four literacy lessons taught by each participant teacher in order to see a sample of the ways they taught and to avoid generalisations based on only one lesson. Thus, 16 lessons were observed and audio-taped. In addition, a simple observation schedule (Appendix 10) was developed to focus observation, because in

qualitative research, self-designed observation protocols are preferred to predesigned ones to help a researcher to organise information in a better way (Creswell, 2008).

The observation schedule had four open topics: Resources, Teacher activities, Student activities, and Comments. The topic of resources, particularly, emerged from parent interviews. Teacher/student activities emerged from Research Question 2 (related to literacy pedagogy), from my own interest, and from my earlier Master's research (2003), which had explored the use of communicative activities in a language school in Victoria. I added the topic of comments to record anything unanticipated or something that would interest me. The observation form was discussed with supervisors and revised after I had piloted it in the first lesson (see Appendix 10 for revised version). To obtain a clear record of observed lessons, the handwritten information in the observation schedule including fieldnotes were typed (see sample handwritten fieldnotes in Appendix 11, where the piloted observation form was used). Immediately after the observation, I would therefore go to my office and type the fieldnotes on the schedule so that I could remember the lesson in detail. This helped me to elaborate my notes as well. In addition, I always added a post-observation reflection (see a sample in Appendix 12).

Creswell (2008) describes three observational roles of a researcher, namely (1) a participant observer, (2) a non-participant observer, and (3) a changing observational role. A participant observer develops a close connection with the subjects and the situation to be studied, involving, herself or himself, in the day-to-day life of participants. S/he has to understand everything from a native point of view (Prasad, 2005) being an insider, which is not possible within a short period of time. Unlike a participant observer, a non-participant observer observes her/his participants as an outsider, without interacting with them.

My observational role changed over the course of the research. I entered the research site in 2008, trying as a participant observer to familiarise myself with my research site and research participants. For this, I observed lessons informally, helped teachers to engage students in their tasks (especially in group work), volunteered in the ESL class (Prep to Year 6), and participated in many school programs. Later, at the time of data collection, I switched to my role as a non-participant observer. Once I set my digital tape recorder on the teacher's table (at the front), I simply sat at the back of the classroom and recorded my notes without becoming involved in teaching and learning activities.

Once the 16 lessons were observed, the individual interviews followed in Term 1, 2010. This gave me an opportunity to refine my interview questions on the basis of observed lessons, which was another practical purpose of the classroom observation.

Fieldnotes

Fieldnotes are an essential part of all qualitative data collection methods (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Creswell, 2008). There were three stages of fieldnotes in this study. First, my initial fieldnotes that I wrote during the unguided informal observation in 2008 to extend my own knowledge on literacy teaching/learning were in my journal, which will be discussed below. After the parent interviews with three parents, Dewita, Lily, and Sharon, I started to observe their children more closely to get to know them and to make sense of the parents' responses. Furthermore, my volunteering experience in ESL classes was written down. The fieldnotes of that time were the second stage. At the third stage, the fieldnotes were made during the 2009 lessons observation. These included how teachers taught, how students (especially new ESL ones) participated in the classroom activities, how teachers supported them, and gave feedback to them. In addition, sometimes my observation of new ESL students in the playground was also

recorded (see Appendix 13 for sample fieldnotes of three stages). Therefore, my fieldnotes included both descriptive and reflective fieldnotes (Creswell, 2008).

Researcher's journal

Being myself an ESL parent of a primary school child, I was keenly interested in my son's literacy learning in Australia. As described in the first chapter, the whole research study was triggered by personal experience, and my presence in the study cannot be ignored. From the first year of the PhD candidature I wrote a journal, based on the first kind of fieldnotes mentioned above. My first journal entry was on 06/08/2008 and the last was on 22/06/2010. The journal included my experiences with my child's literacy learning development in Australia, the differences I found between Nepali and Australian literacy teaching styles and the values expressed through them, my experiences of participating in various school programs, and my informal conversation with other new ESL parents, school teachers, and the ESL teacher. Selected data recorded in this journal are embedded in Chapters Seven and Eight, which report on findings relating to the research questions. For sample journal entries see Appendix 14.

School newsletters

A text itself is a representation of the society where it is produced (Prior, 2004). Because of this, the school newsletters were a very important data source for the study. Documents "provide valuable information in helping researchers understand the central phenomenon in qualitative studies" (Creswell, 2008, pp. 230-231). The school newsletters were sent from the school to parents fortnightly, and all the teachers including the principal herself mentioned 'newsletters' at interviews as a source to inform parents about all the activities related to the school, and to publish samples of student work. It was also important to explore what sort of information was given in the

newsletters and how the new ESL parents valued these. For this purpose all 20 newsletters from the year 2009 published in four school terms, five each term, were collected. The interviews explored parents' use of and responses to newsletters.

Students' published work

Even though the concern of this study is newly arrived ESL children's literacy learning in Australia, it does not focus on how children learn. Rather the research uses parent and teacher perspectives as data sources. Nonetheless, examples of children's written work were collected as products of the observed lessons and evidence related to parent or teacher views on the children's literacy development. For example, I was interested to see how far parent and teacher responses on teaching writing, lessons observed, and students' written work would match. The most accessible sources of their work were the school newsletters (see Appendix 15 for sample pages of a newsletter). It proved difficult in a practical sense to obtain examples directly from students, teachers or parents.

Questionnaire

To collect the parents' personal background details, a simple questionnaire was used (see Appendix 16). The use of a questionnaire was to save interview time. The questionnaire was given to the parents to fill out after completing the individual interview. These included details of language use at home, academic qualifications, occupation, age group, and gender.

Photographs

During the classroom observations photographs were taken as visual quotes (Prosser & Schwartz, 2004) to describe the real classroom situation in terms of resources available

and seating arrangements. These photographs were accompanied by audio-tapes and fieldnotes. Thus, they were supplementary data sources to observed lessons which could provide visual evidence of the context (Hamilton, 2000) where literacy was taught and learned. For ethical reasons, the students themselves were not photographed.

Apart from the journal, which began as early as Term 3, 2008, all other data were gathered within the time frame of five months. Data collection began in October 2009 (beginning of Term 4) and ended in February 2010 (beginning of Term 1).

5.3.4 Administering the process in an ethical manner

Ethical questions arise regarding issues such as gaining access to the research site, developing rapport with research participants, maintaining confidentiality or publishing the content from the study (Thorne, 2004). As this research involved gathering data from people, two separate applications, for approval by Monash University and DEECD ethics committees respectively, were submitted. Before commencing the data collection, the ethics approval from each of the institutions was obtained (see Appendices 17 and 18). During the data collection process, all ethical issues were highly respected and considered. One of the issues included the participants' free choice whether to take part in the research. The following example reveals how this was respected.

Before lesson observation started, it was agreed that each participating teacher would let me observe a total of four literacy lessons. For this, they would suggest the dates and time when they were teaching reading and writing. At the beginning, a Years 5/6 teacher agreed to take part in the study but after the observation of her first lesson, she did not inform me for a long time when her second lesson could be observed. Even though she had signed the consent form where it was clearly written that she would allow me to audio-tape her lessons, she looked uncomfortable and surprised while her

voice was being recorded. The teacher subsequently withdrew from the study, which I accepted, and another Years 3/4 teacher took her place.

5.3.5 Researcher reflexivity

One of the characteristics of qualitative research is its subjectivity. A researcher cannot separate himself/herself from the whole research process. Mason (2002) writes:

Qualitative research should involve critical self-scrutiny by the researcher, or active reflexivity. This means that researchers should constantly take stock of their actions and their role in the research process, and subject these to the same critical scrutiny as the rest of their 'data.' This is based on the belief that a researcher cannot be neutral, or objective, or detached, from the knowledge and evidence they are generating.

(p.7)

To gain a deeper understanding of the literacy practices at Paterson Primary School I entered the school in my dual roles as researcher and new ESL parent. In the case of literacy research, a researcher can increase his/her understanding of a social theory of literacy if s/he reflects upon her/his own literacy practices (Barton, 2000). In Chapter One, I discussed why I was motivated to conduct this research study, and my surprise at the differences between Nepali and Australian literacy teaching/learning practices.

In the years 2008 and 2009, I participated in most of the school events organised for parents. In addition, I observed several literacy lessons in all grades, Prep to Year 6. I observed closely day to day school activities through my son as well, for example, what he did in his school or in his class, or if he had any homework or project work. I would go through his writing book, help him to gather information for his project work.

I would listen to him. My active involvement in school activities gave me opportunities to learn about the school, and literacy teaching/learning practices at school. I recorded everything that I found useful for my study in my reflective journal. I used this journal as one of the data sources since, as Mason (2002) suggests above, a researcher cannot be neutral, objective or detached from the knowledge and evidence they are generating. In this way, in terms of the researcher's high level of involvement, a detailed description of the fieldwork, cultural familiarity with the school and teachers (Prasad, 2005) and the researcher's reflexivity, the study is ethnographic and autoethnographic.

When it came to parental involvement or classroom literacy teaching/learning practices, I was an insider. Interestingly, in all the classrooms that I had observed I was welcomed by teachers and students as 'Atul's mum,' not a researcher from Monash University. I soon realised that my identity as 'Atul's mum' was stronger than my identity as a researcher. It gave me an automatic membership in those classrooms, since Atul was a member of their school and because of him I was accepted. On the other hand, I was still an outsider among teachers in the staffroom. I could not enter into their discourses. I never felt that I was a member of their group despite the school staff's friendly nature and positive attitude towards me. This feeling may have been due to my introvert nature. My discomfort may also have been due to the relatively short time spent in my research site. An ethnographer ideally spends enough time in an environment to gain trust. For example, Heath (1983) spent nine years studying the literacy practices in her three focus communities. In terms of the time spent in the field, although mine is not a longitudinal ethnographic study, yet I came to know this school and its community quite well.

5.4 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

After gathering data from all sources, they were firstly organised systematically by type: parent interviews, questionnaires, teacher interviews, classroom observations, fieldnotes, photographs, researcher's journal, and school newsletters. Secondly, all audio-recorded interviews and classroom observations were transcribed as accurately as possible. All transcriptions were saved as digital files, and the computer software, 'Express Scribe' was used to transcribe the data. Attention was paid to recognise the participants' voices as completely as possible. I found the process of data transcription immensely time-consuming, and hired a professional transcriber to transcribe three teacher interviews and six lessons in the latter stages. This person focused only on what the teachers said, as student voices were difficult to understand.

5.4.1 Coding of interviews

When the process of transcription was completed, the data were analysed in participant groups. Firstly, the parent data were analysed. Since there were only eight interviews, two focus groups, and six individual, I decided not to use any computer software data analysis programs, such as NVIVO. During the first stage, the data from each interview were read and re-read thoroughly and broad codes were developed to obtain a general sense of the data. Codes were derived from participants' words, research questions, and literature review (Roulston, 2010). All the codes were labelled by different colours so that it would be easier to identify them at the later stages of data analysis. The coding process used was similar to the 'thematic coding' discussed by Creswell (2008) and Roulston (2010).

Altogether 19 codes were identified. The list of the initial codes are given in Table 5.1. Most of the terms used in these codes were taken from the discussion topics

of the focus group interviews and individual interview questions, and some arose from the context.

Table 5.1 Initial codes from parent data

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| 1. Satisfaction with education system of own country | 8. Different teaching systems/ways in home country and Australia | 15. Literacy beyond reading and writing |
| 2. Dissatisfaction with education system of own country | 9. Satisfaction with the Australian education system | 16. Literacy learning from the school play |
| 3. Areas of agreement among parents regarding the system of home country | 10. Dissatisfaction with the Australian education system | 17. Parental support provided in children's learning in the context of Australia |
| 4. Areas of disagreement among parents regarding the system of home country | 11. Areas of agreement among parents regarding the system in Australia | 18. Negotiation made in children's learning in Australian context |
| 5. Parental support provided in children's learning in the context of home country | 12. Areas of disagreement among parents regarding the system in Australia | 19. Views on importance of English learning (Australia/home country) |
| 6. Initial expectations of the Australian school | 13. Problems in adjustment with older children's literacy learning | |
| 7. Similar teaching systems/ways in home country and Australia | 14. Parents' understandings of the Australian teaching system | |

At the second stage of data analysis, similar codes were merged together. From the initial 19 codes, the following five codes were developed.

1. Parent views on literacy teaching in home country (merging the initial codes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
2. Early views on Australian literacy teaching system (before enrolling the children in the Australian school; initial code 6)

3. Comparison between literacy teaching systems in home country and Australia (merging the initial codes 7, 8)
4. Parent views on literacy teaching in Australia (merging the initial codes 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18)
5. Parent views on importance of English learning (Australia/home country; initial code 19)

The coded data were referred back to each of the research questions, namely:

Parents

1. What are newly arrived ESL parents' perspectives on literacy practices in a mainstream primary school in Australia?

Teachers

2. What do teachers believe facilitates literacy development in new ESL students?
 - a. How do they teach literacy in the classroom?
 - b. In what ways do teachers encourage new ESL parents to support their children's literacy learning?

Home-school communication

3. How actively does the school inform new ESL parents about Australian literacy practices?

To answer Research Question 1, the following themes (Table 5.2) were identified with the help of the above codes. At another level of analysis, what the parents said about the first nine themes were categorised under their expression of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. For this, all positive statements were listed under satisfaction and negative ones under the category of dissatisfaction. Parental views on

their role were listed using the theme of parent role to explore parent involvement in the support of the children's literacy learning.

Table 5.2 Themes from parent data

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. Education system | 6. Cultural differences |
| 2. Curriculum | 7. Home-school partnerships |
| 3. Literacy pedagogy | 8. Teacher role |
| 4. Multiliteracies | 9. Children's improvement in areas of literacy |
| 5. Student engagement at home | 10. Parent role |

The teacher and principal data were coded following the same iterative and filtering process used to code parent data, that is reading the data, and identifying the general codes, using different colours, then, merging similar codes together to develop themes. Firstly, the following 25 (Table 5.3) and 18 (Table 5.5) codes were identified from the teacher and principal data respectively.

Table 5.3 Initial codes from teacher data

| | | |
|---|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. Teacher understanding of literacy | 10. Differences in learning English in home country and Australia | 19. Experience with ESL parents |
| 2. Differences in teaching strategies between lower and higher grades | 11. Teacher's teaching strategies and expectations | 20. Beliefs about homework |
| 3. Explicit time allocated for literacy teaching | 12. Children's socialisation | 21. Role of school newsletters |
| 4. Benefits of composite classes | 13. Literacy learning from the school production 'Wonderland' | 22. Parent teacher communication |
| 5. Formation of ability groups | 14. Excursions/camping/sleepover as literacy learning | 23. Expectations from parents |
| 6. Teacher assessment and selection of texts | 15. Teacher suggestions for ESL students | 24. Tasks assigned to students |
| 7. Teachers' experience with new ESL students | 16. Selection of text materials/web sites | 25. Project work |

| | | |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| 8. Students' prior knowledge | 17. Teacher attention given to individual students | |
| 9. Teacher challenge | 18 Emphasis on real world learning | |

These codes helped me to develop the following eight themes (Table 5.4) to answer the Research Question 2.

Table 5.4 Themes from teacher data

| | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. Resources used and selection of content | 5. Use of multiliteracies |
| 2. Teaching reading approaches | 6. Individualised teaching |
| 3. Intensive reading | 7. Parent support at home |
| 4. Teaching writing approaches | 8. Parent-teacher communication |

Codes identified from the principal data are listed in the following table.

Table 5.5 Initial codes from principal data

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| 1. Gifted education | 7. Parent-school partnership | 13. Teaching style in Australian schools |
| 2. Australian schooling culture | 8. Experience with ESL parents | 14. Parent-teacher communication |
| 3. Emphasis on individual teaching | 9. Parental awareness programs organised in the school | 15. Role of school newsletters |
| 4. Ability-based teaching | 10. Beliefs on homework | 16. Issue of textbooks |
| 5. Use of streaming to group students | 11. Utilisation of children's after school time | 17. Message to parents |
| 6. Principal's own migrant experience | 12. Parental support given to children at home | 18. School production 'Wonderland' |

With the help of these codes the following six themes (Table 5.6) were developed to answer the Research Question 3.

Table 5.6 Themes from principal data

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Curriculum information night | 4. Parent support group meeting |
| 2. Parent-teacher interviews | 5. Parents as helpers program |
| 3. Celebration night | 6. School and class newsletters |

For the purpose of answering Research Question 3, all 20 newsletters of the year 2009, as mentioned earlier, were collected, read thoroughly and analysed thematically. Seven themes were identified on the basis of classroom observation (as a volunteer), my participation in school events, and literature reviewed. Those themes are listed in Table 5.7 below:

Table 5.7 Themes from school newsletters

| | |
|--|--|
| 1. Literacy-related events (directly related to the curriculum) | 5. Invitation for parents |
| 2. Student work | 6. Mention of public-concern events |
| 3. Home-school partnership | 7. Parent role to support children's literacy learning at home |
| 4. Suggestion to contact the school principal or child's teacher/s | |

Key words heard in interviews and lessons and key activities observed in the classrooms helped to devise the themes. For example, for the theme of multiliteracies, statements related to the computer, the Internet, the school excursions or the theatrical production 'Wonderland' were grouped together. All the ideas that occurred at the time of coding were written down in memos. Furthermore, the data segments related to literacy pedagogy from the principal's interview were also used to answer Research Question 2.

When the coding, memoing, and theme identification processes were completed, the data from other sources were compared and contrasted, exploring patterns and linkages among different themes. This means that classroom observation data, fieldnotes, researcher's journal, school newsletters, and students' published work were not just coded separately, but in relation to other data sources. In the final step, the data were interpreted thematically to report the findings of the study. Regarding parent data in Hindi, only those segments were translated into English which contributed to the findings. It is noteworthy that the data analysis process and research process went side by side, in general. For instance, to develop individual interview questions for parents, their responses in focus group interview were read first. Similarly, before interviewing teachers, I read all observed lessons thoroughly.

5.5 SUMMARY

This chapter has outlined all aspects of the methodology of this study. It has explained why constructivism was followed as the research paradigm, and the scope of the case study. The data collection process, including ethical consideration, has also been described in detail. Given the context of this research, the chapter has discussed the notion of researcher reflexivity as well. Lastly, it has explained the data analysis procedures.

The following three chapters present the participant profiles and findings of the research.

CHAPTER SIX

SCHOOLING IN THE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

This chapter is organised into three sections. The first section introduces the six parents from four different countries, namely India, Indonesia, Nepal, and the Philippines (pseudonyms used throughout). A brief description of their children's schooling in their home countries follows, as background for the parents' understanding of literacy practices. The final section outlines the parents' initial expectations of Australian schooling that they brought from their home countries. This background information provides insight into their perspectives on literacy teaching in their children's new school.

6.1 OVERVIEW OF PARENTS

This overview is based on data from the questionnaire and individual interviews. As Table 6.1 below shows, this group of parents comes from a range of Asian countries and is academically well qualified. Among the six parents, two were PhD candidates (Indonesia) in Australia at the time of data collection, one had earned a Master's degree in his country (Nepal), two held Bachelor's degrees (India, the Philippines), and one had passed Year 12 (India). Although Binod, Sharon, and Nita were working in Australia at the time of interview as manual labourers, they had previously worked in relatively high-status jobs in their home countries. Binod had been a journalist for a well known Nepali English language national daily, Sharon had been a bank employee, and Nita had been an agent in the post office. Before outlining their reasons for coming to Australia, the information about these parents is summarised in the following table, with their names in alphabetical order.

Table 6.1 ESL parents' background information

| Name | Country of origin | Gender | Age group | Occupation – home country | Occupation – Australia | First language | Language spoken at home | Duration of stay in Australia at the time of data collection | Residential status in Australia | Previous experience living abroad | Plans to return to home country | Qualification |
|--------|-------------------|--------|-----------|---------------------------|------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Binod | Nepal | Male | 30-40 | Journalist | Factory worker | Nepali | Nepali | 20 months | Temporary | Yes | Not sure | Master's degree |
| Dewita | Indonesia | Female | 30-40 | Lecturer | Student | Indonesian | English, Indonesian | 15 months | Temporary | Yes | Yes | Master's degree (PhD student) |
| Lily | Indonesia | Female | 30-40 | Lecturer | Student | Indonesian | Indonesian (70%), English (30%) | 18 months | Temporary | Yes | Yes | Master's degree (PhD student) |
| Nita | India | Female | 30-40 | Agent – post office | Casual worker | Punjabi | Punjabi | 19 months | Permanent | No | No | Year 12 pass |
| Sharon | Philippines | Female | 40-45 | Bank employee | Casual worker | Tagalog | Tagalog | 20 months | Permanent | No | No | Bachelor's degree |
| Tara | India | Female | 30-40 | Housewife | Housewife | Marathi | Marathi | 7 months | Temporary | Yes | Yes | Bachelor's degree |

These parents had come to Australia for different purposes. Dewita and Lily wanted to earn their PhD. Binod and Tara had come to Australia with their families, since their spouses were doing PhDs. Sharon's family had migrated from the Philippines looking for better life opportunities, and especially for their daughters' education.

For Nita, everything was available in India. She said that her family was wealthy and both of her daughters used to go to a private school. She and her husband had good jobs. She had worked in the post office and her husband was a motor mechanic, and they were living a relatively affluent life. Nonetheless, Nita mentioned they decided to move to Australia for one principal reason. She had two daughters and the couple did not want more children. In their society, however, sons were more valued than daughters. People kept reminding them, they thought unnecessarily, that they did not have sons. Nita complained:

Sometimes people used to tease a lot. They used to say, "You don't have a son! You don't have a son! Look, you have a lot of wealth, a lot of luxuries! But, what's the use? Who will utilise them?"

(Nita, Interview, p. 3)

In order to escape this social pressure, Nita's family decided to leave India. In addition, it was her husband's lifelong dream to live in a foreign country.

Except for Binod, who has one child, the other five parents had two children each, some of whom attended the primary school when this study took place. Among eleven children in total (see Table 6.2 below), Nita's and Sharon's elder daughters were at high school, while Tara's younger daughter was only two and half years old. At the time of the interviews, Dewita's daughter was at Prep level and her son was in Year 4.

Lily's daughter was in Year 3 and her son was in Year 5. Similarly, Binod's son was in Year 6, Nita's younger daughter was in Year 5, Sharon's younger daughter was in Year 4, and Tara's son was in Year 5. Altogether the literacy education of eight children in primary school was discussed in the interviews. The group included four boys and four girls. Dewita's daughter, however, was not included in the study because she had just started her schooling in Australia. Therefore, the main focus was on only seven children, but if applicable, data related to Dewita's daughter were also used to discuss parent perspectives, which follow in Chapter Seven. The list of their children is presented in Table 6.2. Ages given were at the time of data collection.

Table 6.2 Total number of children, including children at Paterson Primary School

| Parents | No. of children | Age | Children at Paterson Primary School |
|---------|-----------------|---------|--|
| Binod | 1 | 11 | 1 (Year 6) |
| Dewita | 2 | 6, 10 | 2 (Prep, Year 4) |
| Lily | 2 | 9, 10 | 2 (Year 3, Year 5) |
| Nita | 2 | 11, 16 | 1 (Year 5) |
| Sharon | 2 | 10, 17 | 1 (Year 4) |
| Tara | 2 | 2.5, 11 | 1 (Year 5) |

The following section gives an overview of the previous school experience of the children. The children were also given pseudonyms, chosen by me except for KC, which was chosen by her mother, Sharon. Further details on the children are presented in Table 6.3 below.

6.2 PREVIOUS SCHOOL EXPERIENCE OF THE CHILDREN

The children's school experience in their home countries offers some insight into their parents' perspectives on Australian literacy teaching/learning practices. It is likely that

the attitudes of parents are partly formed by the experiences of their children. For example, Binod had expectations based on his son's learning in Nepal. He said, "Atul was doing very well in Nepal. He had a lot of books and he had a lot of homework. And he was always busy and we had to help him" (Binod, Interview, p. 1). In this section, data from the questionnaire, focus group, and individual interviews are used to document the school experiences of seven children in their home countries, namely Nepal, Indonesia, India, and the Philippines. Table 6.3 presents background information on these seven children. Following the table, there is a brief summary of each child's prior schooling experience. I use a different subsection for each parent, rather than for each child.

Table 6.3 Seven children's background information

| Parent | Child/ren | Sex | Age at the time of data collection | Country and native language (L1) | Last grade completed in home country | Time spent in primary school in home country | Medium of instruction | Grade (Australia) | Time spent in primary school in Australia |
|--------|-----------|-----|--|--|---|---|---------------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| Binod | Atul | M | 11 years | Nepal (Nepali) | 4 | 5.5 years | English (Foreign language) | 6 | 20 months |
| Dewita | Ardhi | M | 10 years | Indonesia (Bahasa Indonesia) | 3 | 4 years | Bahasa Indonesia | 4 | 13 months |
| Lily | Aini | F | 9 years | Indonesia (Bahasa Indonesia) | 2 | 3 years | Bahasa Indonesia | 3 | 16 months |
| | Bayu | M | 10 years | Indonesia (Bahasa Indonesia) | 3 | 4 years | Bahasa Indonesia | 5 | 16 months |
| Nita | Diya | F | 11 years | India (Punjabi) | 5 | 7.5 years | English (2 nd language) | 5 | 19 months |
| Sharon | KC | F | 10 years | The Philippines (Tagalog) | 1 | 2 years | English (2 nd language) | 4 | 20 months |
| Tara | Kush | M | 11 years | India (Marathi) | 5 | 7.5 years | English (2 nd language) | 5 | 7 months |

6.2.1 Atul's schooling in Nepal

As mentioned in Chapter One, before coming to Australia, Atul had been studying in Grade 4 in a private school in Kathmandu in Nepal, where the medium of instruction was English. Teachers used Nepali language only to teach Nepali as a subject. Even as a ten-year-old child, he had to study hard. He had about 15 prescribed books for different subjects, such as English, Nepali, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. He maintained three notebooks for every subject: one for class work, one for homework, and one for tests. That meant that he had to carry a heavy bag every day, at least eight books (for eight periods) of eight to ten different subjects and three notebooks for each subject. Every day he had homework for various subjects. He used to have an informal test on a different subject each week. Apart from these informal tests, he had three end-of-term formal examinations each year. Atul was occupied with his study most of the time, which was enough to assure Binod that his child was doing well in school.

Usually Atul was a high-achieving child. He was one of the best students in his class, and in every examination he ranked first or second out of 30 students. In fact, Atul had started learning English at the age of three in 2002, when he had first come to Australia and enrolled in a childcare centre. At that time I, his mother, was awarded a scholarship to study for a Master's degree in Education in Australia. We had gone back to Nepal in 2003, and Atul was admitted there at lower kindergarten level, and continued until Grade 4 in 2008. He was equally active in both regular school subjects and in extra-curricular activities, such as singing, dancing, and acting.

6.2.2 Ardhi's schooling in Indonesia

When Dewita's family was in Indonesia, her daughter, Arti had not started her schooling. Her son Ardhi was in Grade 3 in a public school in a city. The medium of

instruction at school was Bahasa Indonesia. Like Atul, Ardhi also had many textbooks and a lot of homework every day. His mother pointed out:

In Indonesia, usually coming back from school, I'd have to pressure him [impatient clapping and voice], "Ardhi, do your homework." You have to do it because the teacher gave him, like five pages of homework. It's a lot, you know, for a nine-year-old kid.

(Dewita, Focus Group 1, p.12)

In English language classes Ardhi did not have extended texts. Instead, the focus was on learning grammar and vocabulary. Dewita did not think students were learning reading. She said, "They don't teach the kids to read; they teach them grammar" (Dewita, Interview, p. 2). In the teaching approach, phonics was used. Dewita made it clear, "In Indonesia you learn letter by letter, so you say, 'book' in Indonesian is '*buku*,' so you learn the letter alphabet is 'b' and then 'u,' that make a word" (Dewita, Focus Group 1, p.1). Ardhi did not have much exposure to reading English texts. In writing, there were a lot of copying exercises, where a teacher would write something on the board and the whole class copied it, or filled in the blanks. Synonyms and antonyms were also taught. Dewita said, "And they are not encouraged to write you know, like, write something on their own experience" (Focus Group 1, p. 4). The pedagogy used was a traditional 'English as a Foreign Language' (EFL) approach. As in Nepal, tests and examinations were part of schooling in Indonesia as well. Ardhi had exposure to English as a second language for the first time in 2002 in a childcare centre in Sydney. At that time Dewita had come to Australia to study for her Master's degree.

6.2.3 Aini and Bayu's schooling in Indonesia

Aini was in Grade 2 and Bayu was in Grade 3 in a private school in urban Indonesia when they left for Australia. The medium of instruction was Bahasa Indonesia. Like

Dewita, Lily said that her children did not get a chance to read extended texts in English. English teaching had focused on EFL techniques, such as vocabulary and grammar teaching. Lily stated that her children used to memorise words, their meanings, synonyms, and antonyms. The children used to bring home a lot of homework every day. She said:

In Indonesia children did not read a lot. Yes, they read but it's a kind of textbook-based. Very short reading passages for English. For example, it was like, basically focusing on the vocabulary enrichment.

(Lily, Interview, p. 6)

Comprehension questions were not asked to check students' understanding, and there were no real writing activities. Given its status as a foreign language in Indonesia, Lily said that primary school children do not get a chance to learn English every day in classrooms. English teaching starts in the second semester of Grade 1 for an hour a week. From Grade 2, children take English lessons twice a week (total of two hours). In Lily's experience, the English teachers at schools were not fluent speakers of English. Her family lived in a city with many private English teaching institutions, and Lily used to send her children to English private courses, where the instructors were native English speakers of English. She herself also used to teach her children at home. She emphasised:

I intentionally, intentionally taught my kids at home. They still got the course at school. They went to course [a private] and I also taught them once a week. I invited some of my neighbours at their age, yes, and I taught them and, yes, sometimes I taught them to write what they explained. For example, 'This is my book. My book is red. It's square. It is thick.' And they wrote.

(Lily, Focus Group 1, p. 4)

6.2.4 Diya's schooling in India

Diya studied in a private convent school in Grade 4 in Punjab in India before she came to Australia. As in Atul's school, the medium of instruction in her school was English as well. She started learning English at the age of two and half years. When asked to compare the English teaching systems in India and Australia, Nita did not find any broad differences, in the sense that in both situations children are taught in English. Diya's and Atul's schooling seemed very similar. Diya also had a lot of textbooks, ten to 15 at a time. She had to read them and answer questions based on those books. There were also grammar lessons. Nita said, "There are lessons, stories, and books from literature. There are three literatures, English, Punjabi, and Hindi. They all are taught simultaneously and using the same system" (Nita, Interview, p. 7). Diya had to do a lot of homework every day. There were different kinds of tests and examinations at her school. Writing focused on essay writing, grammatical exercises, vocabulary exercises, and comprehension questions-answers. Nita gave an example of an essay, "An essay about mother. You have to describe your mother. You have to describe yourself. Children write like that. Yes, such writing happens in lower grades" (Nita, Interview, p. 8).

6.2.5 KC's schooling in the Philippines

According to Sharon, KC was very young when she began studying in Manila in the Philippines. She was in Grade 1 when Sharon's family left for Australia. Although she was only in Grade 1, KC had textbooks and workbooks for different subjects, such as reading and language. She attended a Catholic school where the medium of instruction was English. Literacy teaching was based on a phonics approach. As Sharon explained, "In reading they just only not read the book but first they start kinder, they have to have sound and little by little they read the book" (Sharon, Focus Group 1, p. 2). Being in a

lower grade, KC did not have to do much writing. Sharon pointed out, “With KC, because she was only in Grade 1 at that time, a little writing, especially after vacation. They have to write in a paragraph about what they did”, (Sharon, Focus Group 1, p. 5). There was also homework. Notebooks were very important for copying notes from the blackboard. Sharon could review the notes and help KC to prepare for weekly tests. There was a mastery test after completing certain teaching topics, a scheduled test each term, and a final test at the end of the year. Apart from these tests, there were sometimes surprise tests.

In addition to these tests, according to Sharon, there were activity-based modules for each subject. These modules were prepared by teachers to help students practise the lessons that had been taught. They were presented in ‘activity books.’ Usually students had to complete the activities in school, so did not need to take the modules home. Sometimes, when they could not finish the assigned activities, then they took the modules home as homework.

6.2.6 Kush’s schooling in India

Kush was in Grade 5 in India before he joined his father in 2009 in Australia. He used to go to a private school in Gujarat where the medium of instruction was English. Like all other children mentioned above, he also had a lot of textbooks and everyday homework. Tara mentioned:

After doing two, two and half or three hours, homework would not finish in India. Kush hardly got an hour’s or half an hour’s free time after school. Then he had to sit for homework. I also needed to sit with him to guide him.

(Tara, Interview, p. 6)

There were weekly tests, monthly tests, term examinations, and yearly examinations. Kush was awarded a scholarship (state level) at Grade 5. To get this scholarship, he had to pass an examination in Grade 4. When he did this successfully, he gained confidence. Tara said, Kush was excelling in maths, science, English, and Marathi. In the case of languages, he was learning English, Hindi, and Marathi simultaneously. Like Diya, he also started learning English at the age of two and half years. His general knowledge also was excellent when he was in India, according to his mother.

6.2.7 Differences and similarities among the seven children

These seven children were from four different countries, India, Indonesia, Nepal, and the Philippines. There were some differences as well as some commonalities in schooling in their home countries. For instance, the Indian, Filipino, and Nepali children had English as a medium of instruction. As a result of this, they had more opportunities to read extended English texts in comparison to the Indonesian children, whose medium of instruction was Bahasa Indonesia. These were essentially the differences between ESL and EFL teaching and learning, however, Atul was an exception. The Indonesian children's English reading was limited to sentence level only, through grammar and vocabulary learning. In addition, these children also had limited exposure to English at school, one hour to two hours per week. The parents of the Indonesian children indicated there were no real writing activities at school, whereas the children from other countries had exposure to writing activities such as descriptions and essays, according to their parents. That is, in India and the Philippines the status of English was of a second language, whereas in Indonesia and Nepal it was a foreign language.

Yet Atul, Ardhi, Aini, Bayu, Diya, KC, and Kush had much in common in their schools in their home countries. The most obvious things they shared were the use of textbooks, daily homework, and a variety of tests and examinations. Furthermore, they all were city children. When they enrolled at Paterson Primary School in Australia, all seven children had had uninterrupted schooling in their home countries, equivalent to that of other children in their new Australian school. In fact, they had not just age-appropriate prior education, but quite intensive schooling prior to arrival in Victoria, Australia. What the parents expected from their children's schooling in Australia is presented in the following section.

6.3 PARENTS' INITIAL EXPECTATIONS

Each parent participant brought specific initial expectations with them on their children's literacy learning in an Australian school. These expectations were partly based on their own learning experience, the previous school experiences of their children, and also on their ideas of the Australian school context. A summary of the parents' initial expectations is given in Table 6.4, followed by a more detailed description.

Table 6.4 ESL parents' initial expectations on literacy teaching in Australia

| Parents | Initial literacy expectations on arrival in Australia |
|---------|--|
| Binod | Many textbooks, a lot of homework, not much free time, a lot of tests and examinations, like in Nepal. |
| Dewita | In comparison to Indonesia, a better education system, not much homework, standing up to speak in front of the class, self-expression, a lot of play. |
| Lily | Children will be guided to be more self-confident, more organised, they will use more of their right hemisphere of brain, there will not be too much academic burden (especially in mathematics), children will be fluent English speakers (not only English language learners). |
| Nita | Not much study (not much reading or writing) in primary schools, children's free |

| | |
|--------|---|
| | mind, a lot of play. |
| Sharon | Teaching like in the Philippines: use of textbooks, notebooks, homework (everyday assignments), tests, and examinations. |
| Tara | Good school (in relation to teaching learning activities), similar teaching systems (India and Australia), however, not much study, emphasis on self-learning, no hard work in comparison to India. |

These expectations provide answers to the first research question, discussed in the following chapter. These initial views on literacy teaching in Australian schools are summarised from the individual interviews with parents.

Among the six parents, Binod and Sharon shared the same initial expectations, such as having textbooks, regular homework, and specific tests. These expectations were based on how their children had learned in their home countries and how they themselves had gone through as students. The remaining four parents said that they expected to some extent that the literacy teaching systems in Australia and in their home countries would be different. They seemed somewhat more aware of what was going to happen in an Australian school. For example, even though Tara expected the Australian school would be like the Indian school, she had heard from her husband, who had come to Australia a year earlier than his family, that it was going to be different. In fact, he got the information about the school in Australia from his friend, whose son was in Year 6 in 2008. Unlike Binod and Sharon, Lily, Nita, and Tara had been in contact with other people who had had some sort of experience in the Western schooling system. Furthermore, Lily had read a lot about the education system in advanced countries like Australia. Dewita did her first degree and Master's in Australia, so she had detailed information about the Australian schooling system.

6.4 SUMMARY

This chapter has introduced the parent participants by providing a short profile, and some details of their children's schooling and English literacy experience in their home countries. Central to the information was whether English was taught as a second language or foreign language. Overall, it was seen that the children's prior education was quite intensive from a young age. The parents' expectations from the Australian school were also indicated, which mostly influence their understanding of the Australian education system as well as literacy pedagogy. This is elaborated in Chapter Seven.

The parents' subsequent firsthand experience of their children's schooling in Australia follows in the next chapter, which focuses on ESL parent perspectives on literacy teaching and learning in Australia and their role as parents.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ESL PARENT PERSPECTIVES ON LITERACY PRACTICES

This chapter reports on the ESL parent perspectives on literacy teaching and learning in a primary school in Victoria, Australia. Findings address Research Question 1, which deals with both levels of satisfaction, and with parental roles. The Research Question is given below:

What are newly arrived ESL parents' perspectives on literacy practices in a mainstream primary school in Australia?

Findings are presented into three broad sections, namely parent satisfaction, parent dissatisfaction, and the role of parents in supporting their children's literacy learning. Data for this chapter were generated from focus group interviews, individual interviews, and my own journal. To report the findings in Chapters Seven and Eight, participants' exact words are used, without making any grammatical corrections. In some instances, I have added some words to their statements to make what the participants meant to say, clearer. My words are put inside the square brackets. Some terms have been italicised, to show what the participants emphasised.

7.1 PARENT SATISFACTION AND INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL LITERACY

When the children started school in Australia, the parent participants of this study had an opportunity to observe their literacy learning directly. Their initial expectations were either fully or partly met to different degrees or were not met at all. In addition, they were aware of new areas of literacy teaching/learning in Australia, which they had not considered in their initial expectations. One of these areas, for instance, involved the use

of multiliteracies in teaching and learning. They also reflected on their role as parents in supporting their children's literacy learning.

The parents expressed both feelings of satisfaction (Table 7.1) and dissatisfaction (Table 7.2). Altogether twenty-five areas of literacy pedagogy were identified where they expressed their satisfaction. These areas are presented in Appendix 19. They have been categorised into five broad topics and listed in order of frequency of mention. Table 7.1 gives examples of each topic.

Table 7.1 Categories of parent satisfaction according to frequency of mention

| Categories of parent satisfaction | Number of areas within each category |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Literacy pedagogy | 11 |
| Multiliteracies | 5 |
| Home-school partnerships | 5 |
| Teacher's role | 3 |
| Children's improvement in literacy | 1 |

Although the parents seemed to be open and accepting of the literacy teaching/learning system in Australia and commented favourably about twenty-five topics, thirty-six topics were identified nonetheless, where they expressed their dissatisfaction (see Appendix 20). These thirty-six areas of dissatisfaction are grouped in seven categories and are listed in order of frequency of mention. Table 7.2 shows how the areas of dissatisfaction are categorised. Some areas do overlap with others.

Table 7.2 Categories of parent dissatisfaction according to frequency of mention

| Categories of parent dissatisfaction | Number of areas in each category |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Literacy pedagogy | 14 |
| Student engagement at home | 7 |
| Education system | 6 |
| Home-school partnerships | 4 |
| Curriculum | 3 |
| Teacher's role | 1 |
| Cultural differences | 1 |

The degree of satisfaction and dissatisfaction was different for individual parents. The following table shows the frequency of mention, with which each parent expressed their satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Table 7.3 Expression of ESL parent satisfaction and dissatisfaction

| Parents | Mentions of satisfaction in Individual interview | Mentions of satisfaction in Focus Group interview | S* – Total | Mentions of dissatisfaction in Individual interview | Mentions of dissatisfaction in Focus group interview | D* – Total |
|---------|--|---|------------|---|--|------------|
| Binod | 13 | 15 | 28 | 23 | 14 | 37 |
| Dewita | 23 | 8 | 31 | 7 | X | 7 |
| Lily | 22 | 10 | 32 | 12 | 2 | 14 |
| Nita | 20 | 17 | 37 | 24 | 24 | 48 |
| Sharon | 24 | 7 | 31 | 21 | 3 | 24 |
| Tara | 14 | 15 | 29 | 31 | 22 | 53 |

S* = Satisfaction D* = Dissatisfaction

From Table 7.3 it can be seen that overall, Dewita, Lily, and Sharon expressed satisfaction more often than dissatisfaction. In contrast, Binod, Nita, and Tara expressed dissatisfaction more frequently than satisfaction. The ways in which these parents expressed their satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the categories of school literacy practices listed in Table 7.1 and 7.2 are discussed in detail below.

Table 7.1 reveals that the most frequently cited topic about which parents expressed satisfaction was literacy pedagogy. Even though the area of multiliteracies could be included in literacy pedagogy, it is deliberately categorised separately in this study. This is because the participant parents highlighted this area as a completely new area in the field of literacy teaching in comparison to their home countries. The topics of multiliteracies and home-school partnerships were discussed most frequently, after literacy pedagogy. The parents also showed their satisfaction regarding the role of Australian teachers in some specific areas. All parents agreed to different degrees that they could see some visible improvement in their children. The following section presents each category in detail, in which the parents expressed satisfaction.

7.1.1 Literacy pedagogy

Although the parents in this study wanted their children to be bilingual, at the time of data generation, their emphasis was on learning English only. According to them, their children were already exposed to their mother tongue, so there was no need to teach it. For example, according to Binod, “Everybody can speak Nepali. We always give importance to English” (Interview, p. 4). They realised that without English their children would not succeed in life, because wherever they went in the world they would need English. As Lily said, “Every day I say [to my children], well, you know, when you are good in English, you can master the world” (Interview, p. 15). All the parents seemed to be most concerned about how literacy was being taught and they named different areas where they were satisfied. For example, in the category of literacy pedagogy, out of eleven areas, extensive reading, children’s autonomous learning, practical learning, and ESL programs were mentioned by parents most in terms of satisfaction. These areas are discussed below.

Extensive reading

All parents recognised the value of extensive book reading. They were aware that their children brought one or two books from the school library every week. Particularly, Dewita and Lily mentioned with appreciation the ‘Premier’s Reading Challenge’ program organised in Paterson Primary School. In fact, this program is organised by the DEECD, Victoria every year in all Victorian primary and secondary schools to encourage student reading. Students are challenged to read a certain number of books within a specified time. A graded list of books is also given, from which students can choose. If they read the specified number of books, they get a certificate signed by the Premier of Victoria. As Dewita said:

Ardhi doesn’t like reading but there was a Premier’s Reading Challenge! Certificate! From the Premier! You don’t get that very often! He worked hard to read. And they have the title [of the books], right? They have to look for the title.

(Focus Group 1, p. 17)

Dewita mentioned in an individual interview that Ardhi read 15 books, which she felt good. Dewita and Lily agreed that the premier’s certificate was a positive reward which could motivate children to read. Lily said it could also motivate children to go to the public library to find books:

They worked hard for it. He’ll get a certificate from Premier! Even I myself had to find books for him. Reading Challenge is very good. It really motivates them to go [to the public library].

(Lily, Interview, p. 15)

Binod also mentioned that he found the Premier's Reading Challenge useful to broaden Atul's general knowledge. The usefulness of the Reading Challenge Program was documented in my own journal as follows:

Yesterday my son brought home an interesting piece of information. It was a permission form to be filled up by parents to let him participate in Victorian Premier's Reading Challenge. I liked it! What a formal program to encourage children in reading! It was mentioned that students in Years 3 to 6 need to read 15 books independently, 10 of which must be from the challenge list. To access a full list of books the following website was also given: www.education.vic.gov.au/prc. What a golden opportunity that children get a chance to read 'short-listed' books at this early age!

(Journal Entry, 19/03/2009)

Nita's, Sharon's, and Tara's children did not take part in the Reading Challenge Program, although they were aware of the benefits of extensive reading. The following quotes by Sharon and Tara serve as examples:

KC has already been exposed to reading. She always borrows books from the library. That's every day [class readers]. They have different books. KC is improving her reading. I let her read what she has borrowed from the library.

(Sharon, Interview, p. 1)

Here, the school gives children books every day. If you read more, you develop your thinking power more. You know new words. Children can also remember what they have read. My son loves Chinese history very much so he brings books related to Chinese history and enjoys reading them.

(Tara, Interview, p. 3)

All six parents were positive about their children reading a variety of books to improve their reading, increase their repertoire of vocabulary, develop new ideas, develop their mind, and extend their horizon of knowledge. They expressed the view that if there were purposeful reading programs like the Premier's Reading Challenge, book reading would be more effective.

Emphasis on children's autonomous learning

Even though all six parent participants agreed that independent learning is emphasised in Australian schools, Tara highlighted this point much more than others. The parents believed children were not pressured to work at school at all. As a result, they learned freely and learning was fun for them. They learned for themselves, not for others and enjoyed what they were learning. The following quotes from Binod and Dewita clarify this point:

Here children learn for themselves and with enjoyment. He [Atul] is enjoying here. He doesn't like to be under pressure, actually. So he enjoys the freedom of thinking and freedom of study here.

(Binod, Focus Group 2, p. 19)

I like here. I like to see my kids pressure-free. The kids are not pressured to reading and writing, they are just encouraged.

(Dewita, Focus Group 1, p. 12)

According to these parents, whatever tasks students were assigned, they were required to do these by themselves. This kind of autonomous learning gave children satisfaction, as they could do the tasks on their own, and develop self-confidence. In addition, parents thought that their children would not forget such learning. Tara gave an example of her son's work:

Once Kush had project work about the human body. For this, he had chosen to work on the human heart. He searched the information on the Internet himself. He made a clay heart himself. He drew the drawings himself. He wrote everything himself. It was his best work. I felt very good. Such independent work develops his self-confidence. He thinks, “Well, I can do it.”

(Tara, Focus Group 2, p. 18)

This shows that these parents were aware of how their children were learning independently in Australia, and of the contrast of such project work with prior literacy experience. They agreed that in their home countries literacy teaching was based on rote learning. Their children had to follow textbooks and their answers to given questions were matched exactly to the set content of these books. All children in the same class had to get the same answers. Unlike in Australia, there was no room for children’s own ideas or thinking. The parents appreciated the scope and value of the wide reading and project work in the Australian schools.

Experiential teaching/learning

The parents also stated that the teaching in Australian schools was based on the children’s own experience or real life situations. Therefore, it was practical rather than content-loaded and rote-based. For instance, Binod’s, Nita’s, and Tara’s conversation is given below:

- Binod: In Nepal we had lesson like ‘Elephant.’ And students read, “Elephants have long trunks. They have four legs...” Like that. They don’t get any chance to see these things. But here learning is kind of experience.
- Nita: Practical.
- Tara: Yes, practically.

Binod: Practically. They [teachers] take them [students] to zoo and show them, “Look at these. These are elephants. They eat like that.”

Nita: Yes.

Tara: Reality.

Nita: Reality.

Binod: Yeah. And you can jump on the back. They can walk like that.

(Focus Group 2, p. 23)

The parents realised that teachers provided real contexts for the children and taught accordingly. Often these contexts included excursions, as given in the example above. Similarly, Dewita gave an example of how the school invited real firemen and a fire engine to the school to strengthen children’s knowledge about firemen’s work in the community. She said:

My daughter told me about the story of fire-fighters who came [to the school]. They [children] get to be on the fire-fighter bus and pretended to be the fire-fighter. She saw them, she get on the seat on the fire bus.

(Dewita, Interview, p. 6)

My own journal entry expresses the usefulness of the ‘sleepover program’ at the school as follows:

Last week my son had a sleepover at his school. The school wants “to teach students some risk-taking, i.e. to make students more confident, fearless and independent. If we always remain in our comfort zone we may not learn those skills which we need in our later life” (School newsletter, August, 2008). I have observed in Australia that children do not go to school only to gain knowledge but they learn various sorts of life skills, so knowledge is for life. On the contrary, in Nepal students go to school to gain knowledge, knowledge for

knowledge's sake, not for life's sake.

(Journal Entry, 20/08/2008)

These examples show that students were encouraged to learn literacy in real life contexts and with their experience, so that it would be more practical, useful, and meaningful.

The ESL program

The parents whose children were in the dedicated ESL program expressed positive opinions about the program at Paterson Primary School. They thought that in ESL lessons their children had opportunities to learn English in a style more or less similar to the learning in their home countries. Sharon noticed that KC had a spelling test every week in ESL class, in preparation for which she would help KC to read the given words, asking spellings, and their meanings. Nita knew that her daughter was learning grammar in her ESL class, whereas Binod mentioned that regular class teachers did not teach grammar. He was unaware of grammar taught in ESL lessons, because his son was not required to take these. An extract of Binod's and Nita's conversation is as follows:

Binod: We don't have grammar class here. In India or in Nepal, in my country especially we have grammars. They learn tense, adjectives, verbs.

Anita: They have!

Binod: They have?

Nita: Yes, in ESL!

Binod: I don't know!

Nita: They have tense like this.

Binod: Because my son didn't go to ESL.

Nita: Oh! Okay! Tense, same like in India. They learn.

(Focus Group 2, p. 9)

This conversation shows that these ESL parents regarded ESL classes as a context where their children had opportunities to practise familiar content and structure, with a targeted focus on vocabulary and grammar. Except for Atul, all other six children were in the school withdrawal ESL program.

7.1.2 Multiliteracies

All the participating parents identified the area of multiliteracies as new, and said that it was embedded in literacy teaching in Australia. They agreed that in the context of Australia, their children could not be considered as fully literate if they learned print literacy alone. According to Binod:

When I came here I realised that literacy is not only reading and writing. Something else is there because we are also learning culture here. We're from different culture. We are from another culture! I think if you come here, learn culture. Where is culture? On TV.

(Binod, Focus Group 2, p. 14)

Observing his son's literacy development, Binod started to be aware that literacy learning is not limited to reading and writing print texts alone. Other parents agreed with him that alongside print literacy their children must also know other forms of literacy, such as digital literacy and oral presentation. They also acknowledged emotional literacy and social literacy as aspects of literacy. They added that out-of-school programs, such as the whole-school theatrical production, school excursions, and

school camps helped their children's literacy development. Details on these aspects follow in the next four sections.

Digital literacy and multimedia

All of the six parents realised the importance of computers and the Internet to enhance their children's learning. They found them especially useful for their children to complete their project work. Tara said:

I asked him whatever information you need [to complete the project work], you go and find on the Internet. He first wrote his work in his notebook, then typed afterward.

(Tara, Interview, p. 19)

In response to a question about whether the Internet was useful for her daughter, Sharon answered:

Yes. Now, yes, because if they are researching, very helpful. She is the one doing the research about her project and I just check it if all the ideas and the facts are there.

(Sharon, Interview, p. 10)

All of the parents agreed that TV could be helpful for their children to develop English literacy. As Lily said:

Actually I allow them to watch TV. I know it's also exposure for them to English. So to me "that's another learning," quotation mark [gesture].

(Lily, Interview, p. 13)

However, all parents also expressed their view strongly that excessive watching of TV and excessive use of the Internet or other types of digital games could be harmful

for their children. This will be discussed in detail in the section on parent dissatisfaction.

Orality as a part of literacy

All the parents showed some awareness of the fact that speaking is a part of literacy learning. In a focus group interview, Dewita, in particular, emphasised ten times the importance of speaking. She strongly expressed her view, “I believe that the way you learn a language [is] by speaking. It’s not going to improve their language if you just read or exercise” (Dewita, Focus Group 1, p. 6). Following topics set for the focus groups, she meant ‘writing exercise’ by the term ‘exercise’ above. She further said:

I taught them to speak English and after that they can learn the grammar. If you hear my kids speaking, their grammar still sometimes messed up [laughter]. But they express themselves using English.

(Dewita, Focus Group 1, p. 4)

Other parents also expressed a positive attitude to the idea that speaking was part of their children’s literacy learning. They acknowledged that children needed to develop orality to excel in literacy. As Sharon said:

If you don’t know how to speak well, how can you ask your teacher about something that confuses the subject? And you can express more in speaking. There is report and you have to speak with your classmate about your report.

(Sharon, Interview, p. 7)

Sharon mentioned that the texts students produced in writing were often accompanied by an oral presentation in the class. According to her, writing and speaking go side by side, and speaking is even more effective for self-expression.

Children's personal traits and social skills

Among the six parents, Lily expressed her views most strongly on the importance of emotional and social factors which facilitate literacy. In the beginning, Lily's nine-year-old son, Bayu found it difficult to adjust in his new school. He was not happy to go to school and used to cry in his class. Lily observed Bayu's literacy teacher paying attention to developing his self-confidence, inter-personal communication, control of emotions, and social skills by encouraging him to work in a team and to make friends. As a result, to her great satisfaction, Lily detected gradual improvement in her son. She put it this way:

I see his improvement. His vast improvement is in his own personality. He is more self-confident. He does not feel inferior anymore. I can see that he can handle himself. He can handle his feeling. He can handle his emotion. Now I think he start to make friends.

(Lily, Interview, p. 12)

The remaining five parents also commented on the importance of emotional and social factors. The parents realised that unlike in their home countries, to be literate in Australia was not simply to know print literacy. Instead, children were expected to develop their personal and social skills along with reading and writing, and they commented that this was good for their children. The parents mentioned that out-of-school programs, such as school excursions and school camps helped their children develop literacy skills, and further enabled them to take part more in everyday literacy practices at school.

Out-of-school programs to develop multiliteracies

These parents also found 'out-of-school' programs helpful to develop different literacy skills in their children. The whole-school theatrical production, excursions, and school

camps are considered for discussion in this section. According to the participating parents, these programs provided contexts to develop literacy in their children.

In the third school term, 2009, the whole school was busy in the preparation of the school theatre production, 'Wonderland,' which was going to be performed in the fourth term. The production was regarded as a very important event in the school. I was curious to learn how the participating parents viewed this performance, because their children (except Tara, whose child missed this performance because he went to India at that time) also participated in it. Such school productions had no precedent in the home countries. It was found that the parents realised that the production was a useful literacy learning activity. As Lily said:

It's important. It's really influential to make kids, especially, they sing song. Every time I mention 'Alice,' my daughter says it's not /elis/ mum, it's /ales/, NOT /elis/ – /ales/, /ales/, /ales/. When girls play together, at my home, they hold on the paper 'Alice in the Wonderland' and have them practise themselves, practising things just like what they saw because they were not the main characters. So they pretend to be the main characters.

(Lily, Focus Group 1, p. 7)

Three parents, Dewita, Lily, and Sharon noted that such a performance would help children to improve their speaking, because they had to memorise the dialogue. In addition, according to Binod and Nita, their children learned acting, dancing, singing, and how to work in a team. They could feel the growth of self-confidence in their children as well. Binod and Nita agreed that their children learned to face many people in the theatre without fear. Further, they developed their cultural knowledge about costumes, for example, the kind of costume for a king or a queen or a joker.

The parents also found the excursions and camps organised by the school very useful to develop their children's literacy learning. Three parents, Dewita, Lily, and Sharon, emphasised the importance of excursions to develop their children's speaking ability. They were amazed to hear their children's improved English after they came back from a school camp. For example, Sharon expressed her surprise when she heard her daughter speaking English at home after she came back. She said, "When my daughter is talking [in English], oh, she is talking now! More talking!" (Focus Group 1, p. 10). In addition to the improvement in speaking, Lily noticed the development of her son's spatial knowledge. She stated that:

One thing that I really love from excursion is that I got impressed when my kid could tell me that he was going there to city and, "Mum, we went to that building. Let me show you that building." You know city is very crowded that I myself can not remember! And he could show me, "This is the way, no, no, after this intersection. Go that way and then the highest and the tallest building we went there." So they also get spatial intelligence and improvement from excursion.

(Lily, Focus Group 1, p. 9)

Nita learned her daughter, Diya had found out the secret of childbirth when she went to the IMAX (3-D movie theatre) for a school excursion. She said:

My daughter used to ask, "How is a baby [born]?" So they [teachers] took her there. I used to hide this secret from her, I had never told her. But the day when she came back after watching that movie, she said, "Papa! I got the secret!" Directly! "You people used to hide it from me – how is a baby! Look, finally I found it out!"

(Nita, Focus Group 2, p. 20)

It was a taboo in Nita's culture to discuss childbirth in front of children. She used to tell Diya that God gives children to people. Diya learned by herself that children are born from a mother's womb. In fact, Nita chose not to send her daughter to the school camp because of cultural reasons. According to her, in her culture boys and girls do not mix as in Australian culture. She had heard from Diya's friends that girls and boys are asked to choose their partners of the opposite sex and dance at the school camp, so she was careful not to let Diya go. In contrast, Binod related his son's learning from excursions, school camps, and sleepover programs to the development of Atul's life skills. He said about a school sleepover program:

He learnt to be [pause], that's the first time he remained isolated from his parents. And he learnt how to be alone, how to survive alone, he learnt how to make different food, how to play with friends. He remained with his friends without parents. And he made his own bed, that's the first time. He washed his dishes and kind of things, so he learnt survival act, I mean skills.

(Binod, Focus Group 2, p. 24)

According to these parents, before coming to Australia, they used to think literacy teaching and learning solely was a question of print literacy. By observing literacy pedagogy in Australia, they started to agree that being literate in the Australian context meant more than being able to read and write printed materials. In their new school, in addition to reading and writing, children needed to know many other things, for example, how to use computers and the Internet, how to report their work orally to other people, how to be socially balanced, and how to control their emotions in order to work with others.

7.1.3 Home-school partnerships

Another category of literacy teaching/learning where the parents expressed their satisfaction was home-school partnerships. Topics mentioned included parent-teacher meetings, parental involvement programs, and school newsletters.

At Paterson Primary School one formal parent-teacher meeting was held each year, lasting ten minutes, which seems short for an annual meeting. In addition, there were two celebration nights where parents could meet teachers and ask about their children's progress, and there was no time limitation. All the participating parents had had at least one opportunity to communicate with teachers either in the parent-teacher meeting or celebration night programs. All the parents were satisfied with the time given to parent-teacher meeting or to celebration nights, and no one complained that the time given to the interview was insufficient. However, Nita and Tara admitted that they felt some communication problems while talking to teachers. Dewita, Lily, and Sharon expressed a positive attitude about what teachers said during the interview. They felt that the teachers seemed to know their children well. To the question, "Are you happy with the teacher's responses about your child's improvement?," Dewita answered as follows:

Yes. He said Ardhi is adapt well with the class and he does all his work well and I said, "I'm worried about his [pause], you know, he's very shy and he just won't stand in front of the class to speak." He said, "No. Ardhi seems very confident." So what I thought was Ardhi was very inconfident. I said, "What about his reading?" And the teacher answered," His reading is good, but you need to encourage him to read."

(Dewita, Interview, p. 17)

Lily also expressed satisfaction by saying:

Yes. I could ask lots of questions to my son's teacher during parent-teacher interview. She's a very understanding teacher. She really understands Bayu. She knows Bayu's condition at that time and she told me that I don't need to force Bayu, just let him do his pace but he doesn't need to be burdened to go to school. The most important thing is that he's happy to go to school.

(Lily, Interview, p. 18)

Binod, Nita, and Tara were happy with parent-teacher conversations, from which they always received positive feedback from the teachers. However, they also complained they were left with many unanswered questions, which will be discussed in the parent dissatisfaction section below.

Five parents, Binod, Dewita, Lily, Nita, and Sharon had some experience of taking part in one or another parental involvement programs organised by Paterson Primary School. These programs mainly included a working bee, chocolate drive, book fair, barbeque, Father's Day stall, and Mother's Day stall. Except for the working bee, the main purpose of the other events was fund-raising. Since Tara had to take care of her daughter, who was two and half years old, she felt unable to participate. Those parents who were involved in such events found them useful because they had opportunities to interact with school teachers and other parents. Lily commented that the chocolate drive program helped her children directly to develop literacy learning, especially to enhance communication skills. She said, "To me that's also one way of learning English, one way of communicating to other people" (Lily, Interview, p. 23). Although it was her job to sell the chocolates, she encouraged her children to sell them, with her support. She explained her strategy:

I called my friend, “Hi, this is my kid, he wants to say something to you.” And I give over to my kid and they sell. And in one night it’s gone! In one day it’s sold out!

(Lily, Focus Group 1, p. 21)

Even though the remaining four parents, Binod, Dewita, Nita, and Sharon said the parental involvement was useful, or even indirectly helpful for their children’s literacy learning, they did not find these events directly helped their children’s literacy development. Binod found such occasions helpful to ask teachers about his son’s progress, saying, “We can talk to teachers about their [children’s] progress or what area we have to focus” (Binod, Interview, p. 10). For Dewita, the parental involvement was a platform to become a member of the school community. She said, “I feel it’s good [to be involved]. It’s like we are part of a community” (Dewita, Interview, p. 21). Sharon agreed with this. In contrast, Nita said, “It’s true that parental involvement programs help to maintain home-school relationship, but they are only for parents, they do not help strengthen children’s literacy learning” (Nita, Interview, p. 21).

School newsletters were another source of communication between parents and the school family. The school sent the newsletters fortnightly. Among the six parents, Binod and Dewita mentioned that they did not read the newsletters regularly but whenever they did read these, they had found them useful. As a full time PhD student, Dewita thought she did not have enough time to read them. Binod commented:

I like school newsletters because I don’t know what’s going on there but I can read that what students did, what teachers did and what other people did. And another thing, if my child or other kids write something and they publish it, it’s interesting to read what children can do.

(Binod, Focus Group 2, p. 44)

Lily, Nita, Sharon, and Tara said they read the newsletters regularly and found them helpful to inform them about the school's programs. Lily found the calendar on the front page useful. She said, "I read regularly, especially the calendar, so that I know, this day he will do this, he will do this" (Lily, Focus Group 1, p. 23). Sharon enjoyed the principal's message:

In the second page. The note of Hema [the school principal]. What are the activities being done for that week and the coming week, and some reminders. It's really helpful especially during the camp and the 'Wonderland.'

(Sharon, Focus Group 1, p. 23)

Nita and Tara stated that by reading the newsletters they could know about all the forthcoming events as well as past ones. In this way, whether they read regularly or not, all parents were aware that the school sent home newsletters to inform parents about the school's activities.

7.1.4 Teacher role

The parents also valued the support given by the teachers to their children. They highlighted three areas where the parents found teachers were highly supportive to their children. Firstly, the parents felt that teachers encouraged students' learning. For instance, according to Dewita, "The kids are not pressured to reading, writing. They are just encouraged" (Focus Group 1, p. 12). The second area was teachers' positive attitudes to students, especially regarding adjustment problems and treating all students equally. Thirdly, teachers gave positive feedback to students' work. Lily agreed that students were encouraged to be responsible for their learning, without teachers' interference. For example:

Kids are encouraged to individually do their homework, to have personal responsibility to accomplish their homework. In Indonesia, if he couldn't do the homework correctly, he got punishment for that.

(Lily, Interview, p. 17)

All six parents commented that there was a system of punishment, either corporal or verbal, in the form of scolding and humiliating, in their home countries. Teachers' encouragement was one of the reasons why the children enjoyed their learning more in Australia, as mentioned above. Of all the parents, Lily emphasised the positive attitude of the teacher to support her socially and emotionally struggling child. With his teacher's continuous support and positive attitude towards him, Bayu had started to gradually control his emotions and gain self-confidence and social skills. Lily could see a difference in him.

Binod, Nita, and Tara noted the Australian teachers' practice of treating all children equally, not discriminating between advanced and struggling students. As a result, according to them, a feeling of competition did not arise among children. This echoed their appreciation of the emphasis on autonomous learning, mentioned above. An extract of their conversation about equal treatment of all children is given below:

- Binod: Competition is bad here. They [teachers] don't want to compare each other. They think everyone is same.
- Tara: Children are free here. They feel everyone is equal. They are at the same level, and they like it.
- Nita: Yeah. They like it.

(Focus Group 2, p. 6)

The third area identified concerned positive feedback given by teachers to students' work, in contrast with the error focus in their home cultures. Dewita, Lily, and Sharon were mainly concerned with gradual improvement in their children's literacy in English. Whereas, Binod, Nita, and Tara were more concerned about their children's academic excellence, yet they too, mentioned that the teachers' appreciation of students' work was helpful. An example of this is as follows:

- Binod: Here, whatever a child has done, teachers appreciate his work!
Well done! You are a good boy! Marks are not given, and there is no competition too.
- Tara: Yeah, there is no competition.
- Nita: No question of competition!
- Tara: Yes, you have done great! It increases children's confidence level.
- Anita: Increases.
- Binod: Increases.
- Tara: Here teachers say, your work is very good, you can do it!
Teachers' appreciation is very important for children.

(Focus Group, p. 20)

The parents found the teachers' role important in encouraging their children's independent learning and the development of self-confidence.

7.1.5 Children's improvement in areas of literacy

Even though all six parents said that they had observed some improvement in their children's literacy development, Dewita, Lily, and Sharon expressed more satisfaction than Binod, Nita, and Tara. One area where they all expressed satisfaction was

improvement in their children's speaking ability. Apart from improving speaking, Dewita noticed her children improving in reading and writing as well:

I'm very pleased with the reading, my kids' reading. And I'm also very pleased with, you know, how they [are] able to write because in Indonesia we don't write much.

(Dewita, Interview, p. 7)

Lily, in particular, was happy to see her son's overall personality development, as mentioned above. Bayu's social adjustment and emotion control helped him to excel in other areas of literacy, such as speaking, reading, and writing. For Sharon also, speaking and reading were the areas where she observed more improvement in KC. Binod summarised Atul's visible improvement in the following way:

He is more perfect in speaking. His writing is improved. He is more confident. He has learnt some social skills and team skills, and he has become a good orator.

(Binod, Interview, p. 8)

This section has discussed aspects of parents' expression of satisfaction with school literacy practices. The parents mainly valued social, emotional, developmental, and experiential learning, which they had not experienced in their home countries. In addition, they also appreciated digital literacy practices and teacher support. Dewita, Lily, and Sharon, all from South East Asia, expressed more satisfaction overall than Binod, Nita, and Tara, who are all from South Asia. This is also reflected in the data in the following section. In fact, Dewita was entirely happy with the literacy pedagogy in the school. Her only dissatisfaction related to her son's engagement at home. The

parents' expression of dissatisfaction with school literacy practices is presented in the following section.

7.2 PARENT DISSATISFACTION

As Table 7.2 above shows, there are seven categories where the parents expressed their dissatisfaction. These have been identified in the interviews with parents, and are listed according to frequency of mention. The seven categories are:

- literacy pedagogy
- student engagement at home
- the education system
- home-school partnerships
- the curriculum
- teacher's role
- cultural differences

Examples of all categories are presented below and are illustrated with participants' responses.

7.2.1 Literacy pedagogy

Dewita did not express her dissatisfaction as such regarding literacy pedagogy.

However, at one point she said, "I don't know how my kids learn how to read in here" (Dewita, Interview, p. 4). Lily was dissatisfied because her children were not given tests or final examination and she was concerned about her return to Indonesia, where examinations were highly valued:

It's not good [not to have examination] *for me*, who clearly will not stay here for the rest of my life. We have to go back to Indonesia and in Indonesia everything

is in examination. They need examination.

(Lily, Focus Group 1, p. 12)

All parents were aware of the national examination, NAPLAN (see Chapter Two), but being in Australia for a short period of time, their children were exempted from this examination, except for Atul (who took it). No parent expressed an opinion about NAPLAN, although they all had experienced a lot of tests and examinations in their home countries. It should be noted that NAPLAN itself is controversial in Australia. There is a concern that schools may be unfairly compared because of their results and subsequently suffer funding penalties.

Binod, Nita, Sharon, and Tara expressed more concern than Dewita and Lily regarding literacy pedagogy, particularly about the lack of textbooks, daily homework or assignments, and different kinds of tests and examinations. They repeatedly raised these issues. In the absence of prescribed textbooks, all parents were unable to tell what exactly their children were learning at school. For example, Lily said, “I cannot find textbook here from school. And it’s very hard for me to know what they have been doing at school” (Interview, p. 2). According to Binod, Nita, and Tara, their children were learning less content in Australia and had started to forget what they had learned in their home countries. Even though the parents said their children wrote stories, recounts, and reports, they did not have a clear picture of how writing was being taught and expressed their anxiety, saying that their children were not learning much writing. In reading also, parents knew that their children read the books borrowed from either the school library or public library, but did not know what teachers were teaching inside the classroom. The following quotes from Nita and Tara show their feelings about the lack of textbooks and homework:

In India there used to be ten to 15 textbooks whereas there is not any here. As a result, parents have very little knowledge about what is happening at school. There is nominal homework. We need some more homework.

(Nita, Interview, p. 8)

Children forget writing after coming here! Kush's handwriting was excellent in India! Now he writes like a child in Grade 1 or 2! His writing speed has also become slow! You don't need to write here! No homework! No writing at school. I don't know what children study at school because there is not any textbook!

(Tara, Interview, p. 10)

It seems that these parents believed textbooks and homework were the clearest sources of information to know how their children were learning at school. Without those sources they were frustrated and could not figure out what teachers were teaching.

Another aspect of literacy pedagogy that these parents expressed their dissatisfaction about was the lack of regular tests and examinations in Australian schools, as mentioned above in the quote from Lily. Although Sharon was not as critical as Binod, Nita, and Tara regarding examinations, she preferred some kind of examination so that she could see where KC would stand among her peers. She said:

In the Philippines they teach children how to score. You have a mastery test, and then achievement test. And you have to pass it. They [children] have a notebook, notes what the teacher have taught, so I can see them and review them. After one week they have a test. When we first came here, we are very new, if there is test, I can know where you are [ranking] because there is always a test in the Philippines.

(Sharon, Interview, p. 4)

Binod, Nita, and Tara agreed with Sharon that regular assessment was needed, which could help them as well as their children to identify the areas where the children were weak and could improve. Binod mentioned that children needed examinations, but without burden. For example:

I think children need some examination, not as much as like in Nepal because it will be too much pressure for them. Examination should be there but without pressure. We have to know and children have to know what they are doing and where they have to improve themselves.

(Binod, Focus Group 2, p. 30)

Nita and Tara expressed their view that without examinations there was no competition among students and without competition, children did not study hard. For example, in response to the focus group interview topic, 'It is good that my child does not have to appear in examination', Nita said:

We do not feel good. Children must appear in examinations. If they do so, they will have the feeling of competition. If there is no examination, they are simply promoted to upper grades whether they have learned something or not. We as well as our children must know where they stand. Examination is a must.

(Nita, Focus Group 2, p. 25)

Five parents, Binod, Lily, Nita, Sharon, and Tara were in favour of regular testing, which they did not find at their children's school in Australia. In contrast, Dewita was against such testing, which would put pressure on children. Instead, she wanted to see gradual progress in her children. She said, "The teacher probably use some indicators that will show Ardhi's progress, or his competency or capability is suitable for this year, and that's all I need" (Dewita, Interview, p. 25).

7.2.2 Student engagement at home

All six parents expressed their dissatisfaction about their children's excessive use of the Internet, TV, and different sorts of electronic games at home. They wished to allow them to use such electronic devices for a limited time period, as mentioned above in the section on multiliteracies. Even Dewita, who was the most satisfied parent among all participants, felt this. According to her, electronic games distracted her son, Ardhi, from reading books:

I think he mainly play game a lot. He plays on his PSP or in X-Box or Wii all the time. Games is becoming a problem so I might need to confiscate some games.

(Dewita, Interview, p. 7)

Except for Dewita, who was happy that Ardhi did not have to do so much regular homework as in Indonesia, other parents stressed that the lack of homework and specific prescribed textbooks was problematic. The children watched television or played digital games almost all the time at home. Binod expressed his frustration in the following way:

There is no homework at home! "What did you do at school today?" "Nothing." "What do you do at home today?" "Nothing." Either he plays Nintendo or watches TV at home.

(Binod, Focus Group 2, p. 5)

He later qualified his opinion on playing digital games or watching television in an individual interview, saying that "too much is destructive." Lily, Nita, and Sharon

expressed similar worries about how their children were spending their time at home.

Two samples of statements are given below:

Now I try to minimise my children's TV watching time. I'm afraid they will get addicted to watch TV. In Indonesia they rarely watch TV, maybe watch TV only one hour per day but now more than one or two hours. There is very little homework. Electronic games are also distracting their focus from individual studying at home.

(Lily, Interview, p. 10)

Even though Tara had tried to limit Kush's time in front of the TV or using the computer and she had other activities to engage her son at home, she was still worried to see Kush not doing regular school homework. She showed her anxiety as follows:

We don't let Kush use the Internet a lot. We let him watch TV only for an hour every day. When he comes back from school I always ask him to do some homework and he says, "Mummy, there is not any homework today." This gives me little tension.

(Tara, Interview, p. 8)

According to these parents, excessive use of electronic devices was harmful for their children, mainly because these devices distracted them from reading and writing activities at home. The parents felt that what was happening in their households was caused by the lack of sufficient homework from school to engage the children. Their concern came both from their home backgrounds, and their own understanding of education.

7.2.3 The education system

Although literacy pedagogy, student engagement, and the education system itself overlap, they are discussed separately, because sometimes the parents expressed their views broadly, referring to the education system in Australia as a whole. Lily and Sharon made fewer statements about the education system than Binod, Nita, and Tara. According to the latter three parents, the education system in Australia is loose, and students are entirely free to do whatever they like. Through the lack of punishment, children do not feel any pressure in their learning. The following statement from Tara serves as an example:

Yes, Kush is free. He doesn't have any tension of school. If he does not feel competition, then why will he study? Children do not have a feeling of fear. "After coming here your dad will certainly gain a degree [PhD] but what will happen to you?" When I start thinking such things, my tension will increase!

(Tara, Focus Group 2, p. 5)

Dewita, Lily, and Sharon took it for granted that the Australian education system was better than the education system in their home countries, Indonesia and the Philippines respectively. Since Australia is an English-speaking country, they felt that their children would receive rich content in English. Sharon agreed that although she was not fully aware of how the Australian education system works, she was confident it was better, as she said, "Maybe we are only new and expecting the same, we know that this is *Australia* so the teaching is more beautiful than ours" (Interview, p. 5).

Except for Dewita, Lily, and Nita, the other parents stated that they had not yet completely understood the Australian education system. Binod was doubtful about whether it was good not to use prescribed textbooks. He mentioned:

I can't say anything about using textbooks. It may be a scientific thing. They may have research done and how can I say that we need prescribed books? They are doing what they are doing, maybe better than what I think.

(Binod, Interview, p. 13)

As mentioned above, Sharon agreed that she did not know exactly how schooling in Australia was working and how her daughter was learning at school. She said:

I'm not yet aware of how schooling here in Australia. I don't know what's happening, what she is learning. In the first year I only thought they are just playing or more on physical subject [like] running. I was looking for textbook and writing, what they had learnt.

(Sharon, Interview, p. 17)

After being educated in India, Tara was unable to say what Australian schools do, how they do it and why they do it. Because of this, she felt helpless to ask questions of the teachers. She expressed this view as follows:

Teachers talk to us but we can't ask them much because we don't know the system here. When we go to teacher meeting [in India] we talk to teachers. We know the system. We can ask about our children. I don't know much about here. When we don't know, we cannot say anything.

(Tara, Focus Group 2, p. 40)

Tara was more concerned that the school did not count her son's previous knowledge, but only his age. Not only this, the school did not allow Kush to be enrolled in Year 5, the grade he was studying in India. This was a frustrating situation for her. She thought her child would suffer because of the system:

Teachers did not ask anything about what Kush had already learned in India! We had brought all of his results since he was in Grade 1 but they did not look at them! The previous study does not count anything here! We kept saying he was studying at Grade 5 but they did not listen to us at all, and gave him an admission in Grade 4. They do whatever they want; they only enrol students at certain grade on the basis of their age! Kush lost a year which is not good! I keep saying to his dad that he will get his PhD but my son will be behind a year! He does not feel good because his friends will go to the upper grade [in India] and he will remain in the lower one!

(Tara, Interview, p. 31)

It seemed that Tara felt they did not do good for Kush by bringing him to Australia. She said time and again that Kush's dad could earn his PhD degree, but Kush could not benefit from schooling in Australia.

7.2.4 Home-school partnerships

Three areas of dissatisfaction were identified under the topic of home-school partnerships. They were the language barrier in communication with teachers, exercise of power from the dominant group in the school community, and a mismatch between the literacy practices of school and home.

Two parents, Nita and Tara, agreed that although teachers talked nicely to them, they sometimes could not express themselves fully because of the language barrier. Because of this, many of their questions remained unanswered. Binod also supported their view. The following extract of their conversation illustrates this point:

Nita: Sometimes we have language problem.

Tara: Mmm.

Nita: That's why sometimes we can't ask the things that we want to ask. Teachers talk fluently because English is their mother tongue.

Binod: It's hard to understand.

Tara: Mmm.

Nita: Sometimes we don't understand.

Binod: That's true. That's true.

Nita: So sometimes we keep silent.

Tara: The things we want to ask remain as they are, aren't they?

Nita: Yes. And because we don't have interpreters with us.

(Focus Group 2, p. 40)

As mentioned above, Dewita was the most satisfied parent. She stated that she preferred the Australian education system to the Indonesian one, because in Australia children get opportunities to express themselves and teachers encourage them to learn without pressure. Yet she expressed her dissatisfaction in the role of the parents' organisation at Paterson Primary School, which planned parental involvement activities. The following shows how she felt power relations worked at this organisation:

I found that most of these program has been planned by the *leaders*. So you have the same program over and over. If you have Bunnings barbeque last year, you have Bunnings barbeque this year. The parents of Paterson people, who organise these meetings, already know where to get what, what to do, and what to have. So you just go there and sit and listen. I've been to several meetings but last couple of months I don't go anymore because that's what I feel. Sit there, *they will plan everything!*

(Dewita, Interview, p. 22)

Bunnings is a major hardware company which supports all schools regardless of what system they belong to, by providing all the equipments, such as gas, tables, and marquee as well as a venue for a community barbeque. At one point, Binod also indicated that he was powerless to give his views to improve the current school program. When he was asked if he had any suggestions for the school, he said, “No, I don’t want, because my suggestion doesn’t work” (Binod, Interview, p. 12). By this, he confirmed to mean that his suggestion would not work to change the set school program.

The most important thing identified was the mismatch between the children’s school and home literacy practices. In the absence of sound knowledge about literacy pedagogy, the parents had developed their own strategies to engage their children. None of the parents had had the opportunity to observe even one literacy lesson to get an idea how literacy was being taught in the school. Lily and Tara, who were certain to go back to Indonesia and India respectively, seemed especially worried about their children’s everyday schedule. Even though Lily stated that free or extensive reading was good to improve their children’s reading, she felt there was a lack of academic reading. She had bought a set of textbooks for her children. She said:

It’s Excellendo [the publisher]. I always want my children to do exercise from that textbook. They borrow books from the library but it’s not the *academic books*. They borrow books like story books from the library. Therefore, I provide them with the *academic books* – Excellendo.

(Lily, Interview, p. 2)

Among the parents, Tara was the most recent arrival in Australia and she also seemed to be the most worried parent. She had planned to go back to India at the beginning of 2011 but I later learned that she left Australia with Kush six months early.

One of the reasons for her early departure was her feeling about her son's unsatisfactory schooling in Australia. Tara had developed a special routine to keep Kush disciplined at home because she believed that if Kush stopped working hard, he would not be able to cope with the Indian schooling system when he went back to India. She mentioned Kush's routine as follows:

We have brought all the textbooks of Grade 5 from India. We ask him to read those books. This is because he has to do his study when we return to India. That is why his habit should be maintained. Every day at least for half an hour he has to sit in a place and practise his reading and writing from his books.

(Tara, Interview, p.3)

Binod said that it was Atul's family who were encouraging him towards reading and writing, not his school, which focused on teaching speaking. He said:

Especially *we* encourage him to read. We go to public library and help him to choose books. Bring a lot of books. He also brings some books from school but that's not enough. We parents read and he also reads. He read almost one or two books in a day initially. He started writing because we also write and contribute in newspapers and other online media. His mum said that he can write stories, so he wrote and they got published too.

(Binod, Interview, p. 1)

According to Binod, it was mainly Atul's family background which was supporting him to excel in reading and writing, rather than the school.

7.2.5 Curriculum

Binod, Nita, and Tara explicitly said that they had seen no specific syllabus or curriculum from the school. Even though Binod had attended two 'curriculum nights' at

school, where teachers explained their yearly plan to parents, which he found generally useful, he felt his queries were not answered clearly. According to him:

It was obviously helpful but they were just briefing. And they were presenting the whole year program quickly. I didn't understand many things, it's because of the accent. Most of the parents have the same experience. I talked to some other people and they said that whatever the teachers are doing, they are doing, we have to be present there, and we attended the program.

(Binod, Interview, p. 11)

Nita was also aware of the curriculum night, although she was not present there in 2010. She said she attended one in 2009. According to her, the yearly curriculum night was not enough to keep track of everyday school activities. She said:

They sent the complete syllabus home in India. We would know what to do this week and what to do next week. But here, they give information once at the start of the year. Parents are too busy to remember this. It's not enough. They must send home the syllabus every month. Or if it is not possible, every term. We don't know anything, do we? They must tell us we include this and this in English.

(Nita, Interview, p. 8)

Tara agreed with Binod and Nita. According to these parents they lacked a specific curriculum, which they referred to as a syllabus, to know the exact teaching content. Such expectations were clearly drawn from prior experience, but are possibly not a concern of Australian parents.

7.2.6 Teacher role

To some extent all six parents showed a high level of satisfaction regarding the teacher's role in encouraging their children in learning, in supporting them to adjust in a new social context, and in appreciating each student's work equally. Yet Binod, Nita, and Tara were dissatisfied with teachers who always gave the same kind of feedback about all students' progress during parent-teacher meetings. According to them, the common expressions teachers used were those: s/he is excellent, doing very well, and "on track," whereas parents could not see any obvious improvement in their children's learning. Binod expressed his dissatisfaction as follows:

No, I was not happy with the teacher's responses. We didn't find any improvement at home. And when we went to school and asked the teacher about Atul's improvement, he said, "Oh, he's excellent!"

And I thought it's not the truth! Because we didn't find anything and the teacher was saying he is excellent!

(Binod, Interview, p. 7)

Nita found teachers were not specific enough about the areas where children had improved. She said:

Teachers say, "She is on the track!" But they are helpless, they can't help us. They can tell us she is good but can't show us any proof of what they did on a particular day and how my daughter improved or where she committed mistakes. Then she will also know where she had committed mistakes last time and how she has improved them this time.

(Nita, Interview, p. 18)

Tara felt the same. Even though Kush's teacher said he was doing well, Tara wanted to know in what way her son was good. She commented:

Whenever you ask the teacher, "How is he doing?" they reply, "Very good!" But what he studies there? I don't know anything! What are the reasons to be very good? We don't know!

(Tara, Focus Group 2, p. 36)

These quotes show that the parents wanted to see specific improvements in their children regarding content. Even if teachers said their children were improving, parents were not satisfied with such generalised responses. They wanted evidence, such as test scores or examples of student work with teachers' corrections, so that they could see clearly in which areas their children were strong and in which they were weak.

7.2.7 Cultural differences

Binod, Nita, and Tara discussed cultural clashes between Australian and home cultures, which they had experienced. Although Nita thought the school camp was good for her daughter, she did not send her because of cultural reasons, as mentioned earlier. Nita and Tara wore traditional Indian dress, and Nita's daughter wore a knee-length dress in summer rather than a short one. These Indian mothers said, in fact, their culture did not allow them to wear short dresses. They also agreed that their thinking was shaped by their culture, and their perspectives on literacy teaching/learning were guided by such thinking. Nita explained why she did not send her daughter to the school camp below:

Sometimes we fear this culture. My daughters' friends said that the teachers asked a girl to choose a boy and dance in camping. Children may divert to another direction because it's a free country and their mind is free.

(Nita, Focus Group 2, p.22)

According to Tara, wherever she goes in the world her identity as an Indian woman does not change. She made this clear:

Our mind is Indian, no matter wherever we go or how much we are educated. Our thinking is shaped by Indian culture. Even if we are in Australia, we can't be as free as Australians. We live here in the same way as we live in India. Our heart and mind are from India. For example, even if you are allowed to wear open dresses, you can't do that!

(Tara, Focus Group 2, p. 23)

Binod agreed with Nita and Tara. The above quotes are explicit examples of cultural clashes. Broadly, all views reflecting parents' dissatisfaction emerged from differences in literacy teaching/learning systems in Australia and the parents' home countries. This section has discussed ESL parents' dissatisfaction on various aspects of literacy teaching/learning, such as pedagogy, home-school partnerships, teachers' generalised feedback, and the Australian education system. The final section presents how these parents viewed their parental role in supporting their children's literacy learning.

7.3 PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S LEARNING

All parent participants believed that it was not only teachers' duty to help their children. As parents they themselves were equally responsible. Interestingly, even though they were involved in helping their children to complete project work, in encouraging them to practise reading and writing at home, in asking questions about their schooling, in participating in parent-teacher interviews, and in participating in other school programs, they did not feel that their role was strong enough to guide their children in literacy learning. The only person who did not express this view was Sharon, who felt her role

in Australia was the same as in the Philippines. Lily, for example, explained her less strong role in Australia:

If I compare my role now and when I'm in Indonesia, it's different. In Indonesia homework is so much. So regular. Students are burdened to heavy homework, so that parents are very very responsible to have children to finish the homework. It's very stressful. But here *no homework*, so thank God.

(Lily, Interview, p. 17)

In fact, Lily helped her son to complete his project work in a very extensive manner. In one of his projects her son was supposed to be a biochemical scientist and prepare a speech explaining his job. Lily described how she prepared Bayu for this project task as follows:

I and Bayu went to a friend of mine, who is also doing PhD in biochemistry. She explained him what a biochemical scientist does. I asked him, "Let's summarise." I gave him guiding questions, "What did she say about it?" "What did she say then?" "After that what happened?" With my guiding questions, he first tried to write in Indonesian and then tried to translate in English.

(Lily, Interview, p. 5)

In a sense Lily was relieved that their children did not bring regular homework, so that she had time for other household chores. She said, "In Indonesia I don't need to think about cooking, little things about grocery, cleaning houses, no. But here you have to be a super-mum" (Lily, Focus Group 1, p. 15). It seemed that she actively supported her children's literacy learning at home, but in her words, her role as a parent was not as strong as in Indonesia, because of the lack of regular homework.

Unlike Lily, Binod, Nita, and Tara, all were critical about the lack of homework. Because of the lack of specific guidelines from the school, which showed their children were learning certain content at school, so they could help them revise that content at home as well, these parents felt helpless. Furthermore, the lack of textbooks increased their anxiety about how to engage their children at home. The South Asian parents felt their role to help foster their children's literacy learning was now invisible. The following data from Tara expresses this point of view:

When I ask Kush, "What teachers taught at school today? Did they give any homework,?" he doesn't say anything! If a child brings homework parents feel good because they have already gone through that system, right? Teachers also don't tell us clearly that they taught this and this, and they will teach these ones! In India we got the syllabus of the whole year, we cover these content in this year, we will teach these particular things this week. We can help our children! Why can't we help?

(Tara, Focus Group 2, p. 34)

Dewita's role as a parent was active, even though she felt she could do more. She tried to support her children's literacy learning constantly. In addition to helping her son to complete his project work and listening to her daughter reading every night, she devoted a lot of time encouraging her son's reading. On the one hand, Dewita clearly said about Ardhi:

He's more like a visual kid. He's good at drawing and looking at pictures or movies, but not with texts. Since he was small he'd rather draw than write, he'd rather watch than read.

(Dewita, Interview, p. 2)

On the other hand, she kept trying to encourage him to read books, because Ardhi's teacher, Andrew, had suggested that she should do so. Dewita bought different varieties of books to stimulate Ardhi's interest. According to her:

I bought him story books but he doesn't like to read. I bought him Mark Twain, Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer and the adventure. He says, "I don't like it! I don't like that story!" I tried to buy him comics like Star Trek or Tin Tin. If it's comic book, it has only the small text with pictures because I know he likes visual. Somehow he doesn't like it either! I'll find something to make him read.

(Dewita, Interview, p.5)

Ironically, she bought outdated and tedious traditional books which few children read nowadays. In fact, she wanted Ardhi to read those books because she herself read them as a school student and enjoyed them. Dewita knew Ardhi's interest was in other forms of literacy than in print literacy. For instance, Ardhi was very good at digital literacy. He loved to use the computer. He even had his own blog, where he would write occasionally, but he did not like to write using paper and pencil:

He get his own blog and he write there sometimes. [I ask him], "Do you wanna write about this?" "Do you wanna write about that?" He says, "Okay I'll write it, but in my blog!"

(Dewita, Interview, p. 3)

Dewita was happy with this. When Ardhi asked, she had created the blog for him because she knew her son loved computer literacy more than print-based one. In spite of all her efforts to support, she felt she was not fulfilling her responsibility to support the children. She lamented, "I always think I should encourage Ardhi to read, but sometimes I forget and sometimes I don't have time. So I feel guilty" (Dewita, Focus Group 1, p. 18).

Even though all six parents agreed that it was not only the school's responsibility to teach their children, and that parents were also responsible for sharing the teachers' load, they did not feel their level of support was enough. In not giving enough support to their children, some parents found it was their fault. As Tara added, parents did not know how to support children, even if they wanted to. In practice, however, all of the parents supported their children in the ways that teachers expected, as will be shown in the following chapter. Parents were not necessarily aware that they were fulfilling teacher expectations.

7.4 SUMMARY

This chapter has presented ESL parents' perspectives on literacy teaching and related aspects in their children's primary school in Australia. There are two key findings to highlight their perspectives, namely the parents expressed both satisfaction and dissatisfaction to different degrees on literacy pedagogy, and they felt their role as parents was not significant enough.

They explicitly expressed their satisfaction in two areas: the use of multiliteracies at the school and their children's obvious improvement in literacy. They explicitly expressed their dissatisfaction in four areas: student engagement at home, education system, curriculum, and cultural differences. The parents expressed both satisfaction and dissatisfaction in three areas: literacy pedagogy, home-school partnerships, and the teacher's role. The data also showed that the three South East Asian parents from Indonesia and the Philippines were more satisfied than the three South Asian parents from India and Nepal.

Although the parents stated that they were helping their children in different ways to strengthen their children's literacy learning, they felt their support was not at

the optimum level due to various reasons, such as the lack of regular homework and their own time. The parents expressed a negative feeling that their parental role was weaker in Australia than in their home countries.

The following chapter outlines the findings related to the literacy pedagogy and home-school communication.

CHAPTER EIGHT

TEACHER PERSPECTIVES ON LITERACY PRACTICES AND HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

This chapter comprises three sections. A short introduction to participant teachers and the school principal is given before the following research questions are answered.

- What do teachers believe facilitates literacy development in new ESL students?
- How actively does the school inform new ESL parents about Australian literacy practices?

Following teacher profiles, the sub-questions related to literacy pedagogy and teachers' beliefs about how to strengthen new ESL students' literacy learning are addressed, namely:

- How do they teach literacy in the classroom?
- In what ways do teachers encourage new ESL parents to support their children's literacy learning?

Finally, the issue of home-school communication and partnerships is addressed. Data on teacher perspectives are drawn from individual interviews, classroom observation, fieldnotes, the researcher's journal, school newsletters, students' published work, photographs, emails, informal conversations, and an interview with the school principal.

8.1 OVERVIEW OF TEACHERS

Altogether five school staff participants, four classroom teachers and the school principal took part in this study. The principal is included here because she stated that she saw her role as that of a teacher first, and for her, the role of principal was a secondary one. As principal she was recruited as a research participant to gather information about the school policies and administrative aspects, but what she said

about literacy pedagogy was also relevant to the study. Like the parents and children, this group of participants was given pseudonyms. Among the four classroom teachers, three were female and one was male. The principal was female. All classroom teachers were in their 20s to 30s. The principal was in her 50s. All four teachers were born and educated in Australia and considered themselves to be monolingual English speakers.

The following table summarises the background information of the five staff participants from Paterson Primary School, and is followed by their profiles. They are listed in alphabetical order (see Table 8.1). The information for this section was gathered from individual interviews, classroom observation, and email conversations. The four classroom teachers were observed and interviewed, whereas the principal was only interviewed. For further clarification of some points or additional information, the principal and teachers were contacted via email after the time of the initial data collection.

Table 8.1 School staff background information

| School staff | Gender | Age | Qualification | Teaching experience | Year level taught during data collection |
|--------------|--------|-----|--|---------------------|--|
| Alice | F | 20s | BSc and BEd | 4 yrs | 5/6 |
| Amber | F | 30s | BEd | 9 yrs | 3/4 |
| Andrew | M | 20s | BEd | 3 yrs | 3/4 |
| Ann | F | 30s | Bachelor of Primary School Teaching and Human Movement | 7 yrs | 3/4 |
| Hema | F | 50s | MEd | 29 yrs | X |

Alice

Before joining Paterson Primary School as a full time teacher in 2008, Alice had worked as an emergency teacher for two years, one year in London and one year in Melbourne. She was teaching Years 5/6 students at the time of data collection. After completing a BSc, she started working as a Before and After School Care assistant. She enjoyed working with children and explored how to create different activities to engage them in the outside school program. She had also travelled to the USA and worked full time at a summer camp with children, which she loved. These experiences with children led her to decide to be a teacher. She then completed a BEd.

Amber

Among the four classroom teachers, Amber had the longest teaching experience, of nine years. Immediately after completing her BEd, she went to London where she worked as an emergency teacher for two years in a multicultural school, like Paterson Primary School. She then returned to Australia and taught in several schools in Melbourne before she joined the school, where she was one of the three Years 3/4 teachers.

Andrew

Andrew was the youngest teacher in terms of teaching experience. He had been teaching at Paterson Primary School for three years. He had completed his placement, which was a requirement of his training course, in the same school. Then when he finished his study, he was immediately employed there. Like Amber, he was one of the Years 3/4 teachers.

Ann

Ann had seven years of teaching experience. She started her teaching career in 2004 at Paterson Primary School, and had taught there for four years. Then she went to London, where she taught as an emergency teacher for one and half years. She came back to Melbourne and worked at different schools for about two months, which she did not enjoy, so she chose to return to Paterson Primary School. Like Amber and Andrew, she was also one of the Years 3/4 teachers.

It was interesting that all the female classroom teachers had been to teach in London during their teaching career. According to Alice and Amber, it is common among young Australians to have a working holiday in the UK. There is a strong demand for teachers there, and it is easy to get a teaching job. Particularly during her London teaching experience, Alice learned many classroom management skills, which she brought to Australia and used in her classrooms. She also learned to use interactive whiteboards and other new technology that was about to be implemented in Australian schools.

Andrew had not had any teaching experience abroad, but was employed immediately after completing his BEd. The common features of all these four teachers were that they were young, educated in Australia, monolingual English speakers, and they taught in the middle and upper grades. None of them was newly employed in the school. In terms of teaching experience, however, Amber and Ann were more experienced than Alice and Andrew.

Hema

Hema, the school principal, had spent a considerably longer time in the Victorian government primary school sector. She had worked in three different regions, Southern,

Western, and Eastern Victoria. During her 29-year career she had taken on different roles. She started off as a classroom teacher, became a leading teacher, a vice principal, and finally she came to Paterson Primary School in 2006 as the principal. She chose to come to this school because she was aware that the school was multicultural, the kind of school where she wanted to work. In the interview Hema said:

I was very keen to get a job in Paterson Primary School because for the previous five years I noticed it. I knew the current principal and she used to tell me about the multiculturalism at school and that was the way I wanted to work. I watched the school for five years.

(Hema, Interview, p. 5)

Hema had firsthand experience of being a migrant student because her family had migrated to Australia from Sri Lanka when she was 13 years old. Furthermore, since she attended primary school in her home country, she was aware of cross cultural literacy teaching issues as well.

The following sections of Chapter Eight look at the context of literacy pedagogy from the teachers' perspectives.

8.2 TEACHER BELIEFS ABOUT LITERACY PEDAGOGY

This section presents the classroom teachers' and the school principal's beliefs about what facilitates literacy development in new ESL students. To investigate how teachers teach literacy, data were analysed that had been collected from classroom observation, photographs, interviews, emails, and occasional conversations with classroom teachers, as well as researcher's fieldnotes and journal notes. As mentioned in Chapter Five, a total of 16 lessons were observed, each lesson lasting approximately one hour.

As explained in Chapter Two, an integrated curriculum is followed in Victorian schools, which means that literacy teaching occurs across all subject areas, such as mathematics, science, history, and geography. Nonetheless, there is room for explicit literacy teaching in the curriculum. According to the curriculum document, *Victorian Essential Learning Standards* (VELS, DEECD, 2005, 2007), ten hours per week are allocated to teach literacy, four hours for reading English, four hours for writing English, and two hours for doing project work or integrated teaching. All four teachers told me during the interview that they met the requirements of the curriculum by allocating ten hours per week for explicit literacy teaching.

By analysing the data gathered from all sources as mentioned above, eight themes were identified. These are:

- resources used and selection of content to teach literacy
- meaningful use of authentic texts versus formal teaching of grammar etc. in teaching reading
- importance of extensive reading
- genre-based approach in teaching writing
- importance of project work
- use of a multiliteracies pedagogy
- handling social and emotional issues
- emphasis on teaching to the needs of individual students

The details of these themes are given in the paragraphs below.

8.2.1 Resources used and selection of content to teach literacy

The teachers used a range of resources while teaching literacy, including various books, Big Books, worksheets from teachers' books, websites, newspaper articles, brochures/pamphlets, and real events (e.g. football games). The following table shows the materials used by the four teachers during lesson observations. The table is followed by a discussion of the use of these resources. Among the 16 lessons, nine were reading and seven were writing lessons. As mentioned earlier, these lessons were observed during the school Term 4, 2009.

Table 8.2 Resources used to teach literacy

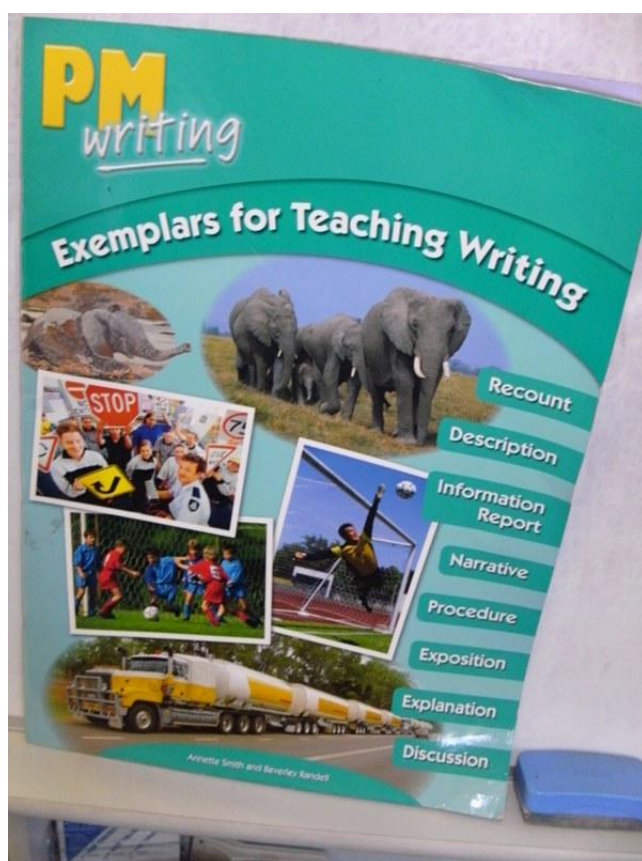
| Teacher | Resources: Lesson 1 | Resources: Lesson 2 | Resources: Lesson 3 | Resources: Lesson 4 |
|---------------|--|--|---|--|
| Alice 5/6 | Website, whiteboard, computer | Interactive whiteboard, worksheet, newspaper article | Class novel, interactive whiteboard, worksheet, computer | Interactive whiteboard, dictionaries, handout (reading text), newspaper article, worksheet |
| Amber 3/4 | Pamphlet (cyber bullying), interactive whiteboard, web page (to teach tenses) | Big Book (Report writing) | Big Book (Reading 'Australian animals'), a teacher reference book (figurative language), worksheet (passages with figurative language) | Interactive whiteboard, web page (to teach Onomatopoeia, but the laptop did not work), white board, worksheet, a teacher reference book (reading strategies) |
| Andrew 3/4 | Book (<i>Eureka Stockade</i> , whole class reading), worksheet (guided reading) | Big Book (to show a model of report writing, whole class, paying attention to different parts), whiteboard (to write a model class report) | Big book (<i>Possum Magic</i> , whole class reading), individual books <i>Possum Magic</i> (guided reading), worksheet (to do Possum Magic activity), sketch pad paper (to write 'onomatopoeic words') | Whiteboard (to write a model report), computer |
| Ann 3/4 | Interactive whiteboard, worksheet ('Drop Bear'), computer, books (independent reading) | Interactive whiteboard (to brainstorm ideas for a letter to Australian troops in Afghanistan), Christmas cards (to write to soldiers) | A photo of Ned Kelly, interactive whiteboard, book (<i>Ned Kelly</i>), an example of a poster, worksheet (to write students' own poster related to Ned Kelly), computer, whiteboard | Whiteboard, books (independent reading), interactive whiteboard (to list the 'un' words), flash cards (with short texts having 'un' words), book <i>Bushfire in the Koala Reserve</i> (guided reading) |

Apart from the above mentioned resources, each teacher had a laptop on their class desk. This was used for the interactive whiteboard and for retrieving Internet texts. Students had exercise books for writing drafts and taking notes. Table 8.2 shows that the four teachers used 16 different kinds of resources while teaching the literacy lessons, including technology, print, and visual materials. These materials were:

- websites
- computers
- interactive whiteboard
- whiteboard
- books
- Big Books
- newspaper articles
- brochures /pamphlets
- dictionaries (individual students)
- worksheets
- handouts
- sketch pad paper
- Christmas cards
- photos
- posters
- flash cards

Each teacher used at least six different kinds of materials in the four lessons observed. All four teachers used the whiteboard, books, and worksheets in their lessons. Except for one teacher, Amber, all teachers assigned students computer work. All except Andrew used the interactive whiteboard. Big Books were used by Amber and Andrew and web pages by Alice and Amber. One teacher, Ann, used the interactive whiteboard in all four lessons. As the name suggests, a Big Book was big enough to be seen and read by all students if held by the teacher (see example).

Figure 8.1 Big Book



Data from the interviews reveal that teachers themselves decided what materials to use, organising the literacy lessons on the basis of teaching topics, as suggested in the VELS Curriculum. They planned their lessons together for particular year levels every school term, on teacher planning days. They had different teaching topics for different terms. On these planning days, they would decide together what to teach every week.

Teachers did not follow any particular textbook, but instead, gathered different resource materials related to their teaching topics. They used different texts for different ability groups at the same year level. However, if appropriate, teachers would share the materials. Given the different abilities of students, it was not seen as necessary that all students in the same classroom would use the same materials. Whenever possible, the teachers used authentic texts. As Alice explained:

As starting off, we plan what our topics will be and what we're trying to get out of each week. So our grammar and our reading skill that our focus is for that week and all three levels [high, medium, low] will do the same skill focus but we will just direct our teaching to suit which abilities we've got. If we had [pause] because we had cinquain poems, every group in 5/6 was doing it, but it was just a matter of how we were teaching our particular group. Within the school we share websites that we found a lot, but also I do a lot of searching, I would type in a particular thing, I'm searching for website activities to do with punctuation, and then I'll have a look over the weekend, I'll look at the particular websites to see whether they're really valuable. Quite often I'll try and find text that's got real world applications, so it's come from the newspaper or it's come from a magazine. I often look for writing that's broken up into parts for my lower readers because big bodies of words is just too hard, too much work. *Spelling City* is a site that got referred to us from the ICT manager for our region.

(Alice, Interview, p. 10)

The other three teachers emphasised that they looked for texts on chosen topics such as Australian animals (Amber), or moments in history, such as the Eureka Stockade (Andrew), or famous Australian people such as Ned Kelly (Ann). In all three cases, the main teaching topic was, 'Learning about Australia.' They used the school library and reading rooms as sources for these texts. During the interview, Andrew confirmed that teachers did not rely on any prescribed textbooks. In fact, there was a

wide variety of resources that the teachers selected carefully and used to teach their literacy lessons.

8.2.2 Meaningful use of authentic texts versus formal features in teaching reading

In the Years 3-6 classroom observations, the teachers generally used a whole language approach in teaching reading. A wide variety of texts was used. Discussion of contemporary issues was also a part of literacy teaching. For example, at the time of lesson observation, an issue of cyber bullying arose in the school. Some students from Years 5/6 had been identified using the social networking site, Facebook, and harassing their friends. A student had written on his friend's Facebook wall something like, "I hate you and your club." In response, the topic of cyber bullying was taken up throughout the school, as teachers started to teach students how to use the Internet wisely and safely. In a lesson I observed, Amber used as a reading text a pamphlet on cyber safety (Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2009, see Appendix 21). The text was used as a whole-class reading, and this reading lesson serves as an example of the whole language approach in teaching reading.

Before reading the text itself, Amber established a context to make sure students would understand what they were reading. She tried to relate the topic to the students themselves so that the text would be meaningful to them. The following extract from the lesson illustrates this. Amber starts with a general caution about using school or other personal information on Facebook. Several students contribute their knowledge on the topic.

Amber: Alright, so we're just talking about cyber safety. We were just saying how, you know, keeping your personal information secret on the Internet? Not to put, yeah. If you've got your first name don't put your last name or address or your phone number on the

Internet to people. And it [the text] actually even says here don't put your school. So if you've got a Facebook or something like that, don't put your school down.

S1: How about MSN?

Amber: I wouldn't. Don't put your sporting teams. Why wouldn't you put your school or your sporting teams down on Facebook or something on the Internet?

S2: Because the people will look.

Amber: Yeah. So just say, there are some bad people in the world and if they wanted to come out and hurt you, they know what school you go to [inaudible].

S3: There's this special site and like it's about cyber bullying and everything and there's a special clip that has like this person is kinda creates a person like going on to Facebook and then you see like three days later, they go to this school and just met this guy in black just walking after her. Then you see when she goes home, through the window blind there is just a shadow walking past. Then she like the next day it's all black and she's just history.

Amber: Oh, that's horrible. You just need to be really, really careful.

S4: Even on Facebook like, if it's our school and like they take a picture of the yellow and green and colours and take a picture and if they take a picture, they can see your profile, and they might come and take you or something.

Amber: Exactly.

S4: They might have weapons, you know.

Amber: Let's have a look. "Check with your parents or guardian if you do decide to give out personal information or put it in your profile."

(Amber, Classroom Observation 1, pp. 5-6)

This extract shows the interaction between the teacher and students to construct meaning together on how to use the Internet wisely. In this way, Amber demonstrates a whole language approach, using a real text and topic, and constructing meaning of the text collaboratively with students.

Grammar and vocabulary teaching occurred in the contexts of reading and writing but not in isolation, or for their own sake. For example, Ann was looking at a student's report written on koalas, where she found the student had not used capital letters appropriately and had written some words incorrectly. She instructed the student in the following way:

There are areas where you need capital letters and you haven't got them. So what I'm going to ask you to do is go through it [the report] now and fix up all the places that you think you need a capital letter. Places like South Australia and New South Wales are still names, you need capital letters for them. So change those. If you were just writing a quick note to me and said, "I want to go to Queensland for my holidays," you could just write QLD. But in a written report you need to actually write the whole word.

(Ann, Classroom Observation 3, p. 17)

Amber discussed verb tenses in one lesson, telling the students that they needed present tense to write a procedure and past tense to write a recount, the writing genres students seemed to be familiar with. She also taught students about figurative language and onomatopoeic words. Ann was observed teaching alliteration. These teachers told students that they could find the use of either, figurative language, onomatopoeic words, or alliteration in different books, and could use them in their writing as well. This close attention to formal features of language was presented in the context of classroom language task use.

8.2.3 Importance of extensive reading

During observation, I found that Andrew particularly encouraged students to read class readers. Each morning he asked students if they had completed reading the previous day's reader and borrowed the new one for that day. On each visit I saw KC, the daughter of one of my participants, Sharon, changing her reader. Since Amber's and Andrew's classes shared the same shelf of class readers, Amber also encouraged her students to read them. In all four classrooms I observed book shelves with children's books.

At the time of interview, in the question, "What can help new ESL students to strengthen their literacy learning,?" all teachers including the school principal strongly suggested to give them different books to read and listen to them reading. For example, as the principal stated:

Do some reading. I understand that it's really beneficial to read. It doesn't matter what your child reads as long as it's suitable for a child. Parents need to spend 15-20 minutes at home just listening to their children reading.

(Hema, Interview, p. 11)

Andrew expressed his conviction that:

It's super-important for kids to read, and the more practice they get the better they're going to be at it. And reading will inform all areas of literacy. The better reader you are, it's going to help you. That's the simplest and easiest way for kids to get better at literacy, and we want kids to read every night and we want mum and dad to read with them every night and we try and encourage that as much as we can. We can't enforce it, we can't go around to everyone's house and get them to read, but it's something that helps us out – the more reading they do, the better they'll get at literacy.

(Andrew, Interview, p. 16)

Alice, Amber, and Ann all spoke about their encouragement of students' extensive reading. The Paterson Primary school staff agreed that the students' habit of reading a wide range of books would help them strengthen their independent reading ability and develop different reading strategies.

8.2.4 Genre-based teaching of writing

While teaching writing, all teachers were focused on teaching particular genres. In the seven writing lessons observed, four writing tasks were given, including poetry writing, report writing, personal letter writing, and poster creation. In Alice's class students were engaged in an individual writing task, which was followed by the teacher's explicit teaching and joint teacher-student construction of text. She was teaching the Modern Cinquain, a 5-line poem organised on a word count of 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, with words used from a particular word class. The structure of this poem is: Line 1, a noun; Line 2, two adjectives; Line 3, 3 verbs in -ing form; Line 4, four descriptive words to describe the noun in the Line 1; and Line 5, another noun for the noun used in Line 1. For example, Alice displayed the following Cinquain from the website of *Jenny Eather*:

House
Tiny, snug
Protecting, warming, welcoming
The family I love
Home

(Fieldnotes, Classroom Observation 1)

Amber's and Andrew's classes were grouped into four writing groups according to ability. Although Ann also had ability writing groups, in the lessons that I observed, students were working independently. Work done by reading groups and writing groups

were displayed on the wall. In all seven writing lessons that I observed, the Curriculum Cycle (Gibbons, 2002) was followed. First, there was whole class teaching, which included presentation of a model text explained by the teacher. In the next stage, teacher and students jointly produced a draft of a text such as a poem, report, letter or poster. Finally, students produced their own work. In Years 3/4 there was also sharing time, when students had to present their work orally to the class, standing up in the front of the classroom. There was no opportunity to observe sharing time in the Years 5/6 class.

Even though Amber and Andrew had separate classes, there was no partition to separate their rooms. Their classrooms looked like one big hall. Amber's class was on the left hand side and Andrew's on the right. According to these teachers, this proximity created a noise problem, especially while doing whole class activities, and when they were teaching the same content. As a result, they decided to do team teaching. To do whole-class activities in reading and writing, students in both classes gathered together on Amber's side, whereas they did other kinds of activities such as group work and individual work in their respective classes.

The following activities were observed in teaching writing in Alice's class:

1. The teacher explained the Modern Cinquain to the whole class.
2. They produced a model Cinquain collaboratively.
3. The teacher assigned writing tasks individually.
4. The teacher assisted students to find the right words.
5. The teacher asked students to recite their poems.
6. The teacher gave feedback.
7. Finally, the teacher asked students to type their poem on the computer.

In Amber's and Andrew's classes the activities were slightly different. These were:

1. The teacher read a model report from a Big Book to the whole class.
2. They produced a model report collaboratively.
3. The teacher assigned the focus group (guided) to write their own report with teacher scaffolding. During this time other groups worked on other pre-assigned writing tasks (related to their previous lessons).
4. The teacher asked students from each group to share their work with the whole class.

Usually for whole-class teaching and sharing time, when students presented their work to the class (Years 3/4), all students sat on the floor in the front, near the teacher's desk. At other times, like group work or individual work, they sat on chairs around tables. On average, a table was shared by four students. The guided reading/writing group sat on the floor with the teacher. The following pictures show the seating arrangements.

Figure 8.2 Floor for whole-class, guided group, and sharing activities



Figure 8.3 Tables and chairs for group and individual activities



Ann's two writing lessons were focused on letter writing and poster creation. Like the other teachers, she followed the Presentation – Practice – Production cycle of teaching. Talk about letter writing was heard in all four classes, but I had an opportunity to observe the actual lesson in Ann's class only.

The teachers used a real life situation and provided a context for students to write a letter. The son of a staff member at the school was in the army and had been posted to Afghanistan. Christmas was approaching, therefore, the task of all Years 3/4 students was to write a letter to the troops wishing them a Merry Christmas and admiring their work. The teachers actually sent the letters to Afghanistan. The same group of students also had another letter writing task. At that time, some American student teachers had come to Paterson Primary School. They had brought letters written by American students and the Paterson Primary students were asked to write replies to their new American pen-pals, which the American teachers would take back to America. At the time of interview Andrew explained why they were interested to ask students to write these letters:

We like to make learning as relevant to real life as we can, and you know, learning about the troops in Afghanistan, that's important and often if things are related to real life it has more meaning to the kids. We try and make our programs about real life all the time, but when there's stuff like writing a letter to the troops, or writing a letter to a possible pen-pal in the States, and to get something back from them, which we did, it drives on a whole new meaning and the kids love to do it. And those are the things that are important to learn about and be exposed to, because we're not in this little bubble, there's a world out there which is beautiful and terrible and everything in-between.

(Andrew, Interview, p. 16)

The teachers always tried to make students understand that literacy learning was related to their lives, not only to the school or classroom. The teachers provided a context and a lot of input so that students could write their own texts. An extract from the lesson where Ann was teaching her students to write a Christmas card to troops in Afghanistan is given below:

- Ann: What did we do with our letters to Afghanistan?
- S1: We just wrote like a brief one, introducing ourselves.
- Ann: We introduced ourselves, yes. What else did we do?
- S2: And introduce [inaudible].
- Ann: Yes, introduce ourselves to them. And what sort of things did you include in your letter? Country? Your age? Just a bit louder, because next doors really noisy.
- S3: We've got scary animals and [inaudible].
- Ann: What they might miss, is that what you mean? Yeah, absolutely, because they don't have kangaroos bobbling around, do they? No.
- S4: How they help them and they're heroes.

- Ann: That they're heroes, so we acknowledge the work that they did, didn't we? Do you remember what acknowledge means? We acknowledge the hard work that they did.
- S5: We think about it.
- Ann: Yeah, good girl. We recognise the work. Because remember we looked at the photos, we talked about it, we looked at the letters. We looked at all the different things that they do over there, the reason they're over there. [Now] we're looking at Christmas cards. And I'd like Kush to read the first bit for me. Why are we writing Christmas cards to the troops in Afghanistan? Why would that be the purpose of our lesson, Kush?
- Kush: Because it's not like every people are celebrating [inaudible].
- Ann: It's a bit hard to hear when you've got your hand over your mouth.
- Kush: Not like everybody's celebrating. Maybe some people celebrate, but not everybody.
- Ann: Good boy. Can you read this to me, please, Kush?
- Kush: The Christmas cards will be sent to Afghanistan. [inaudible]. They are away from their families. The people in Afghanistan may not know that it's Christmas. They may not get any presents. They may not be celebrating Christmas like we celebrate Christmas, or not be as special because they don't have their families.
- Ann: Yeah, because they are not with their families. What we are doing today is we are writing to the troops in Afghanistan. Starting with something like 'To dear troops' or 'To the troops' or 'Dear the troops in Afghanistan.' So maybe the first paragraph can be about introducing yourself. The second can be about what you do at Christmas time. The third can be some questions.

(Ann, Classroom Observation 2, pp. 1-3)

Before they started writing the letter, Ann established a context discussing with students what they had done so far and what they were going to do, and why they were sending the Christmas card to the soldiers. Furthermore, they discussed all the possible expressions that they could include in their letters, orally first. Ann set the criteria for the letter. She listed the information that students may have wanted to include in their letters on the whiteboard as well. The students' individual writing task was preceded by the collaborative writing. The following is an example of a student's letter which she read aloud at sharing time. This was audiotaped and transcribed:

Dear troops in Afghanistan, my name is... I hope you have a happy new year and a Christmas time. At Christmas I have a lovely feast.

At Christmas I hope you do too. We hope you have a great day. What will you do for Christmas Day? Do you talk with your family?

I go to Adelaide to see my family. I celebrate at Christmas. I go camping every holiday. Me and my family.

You are our heroes.

(Ann, Classroom Observation 2, p. 18)

Following the teacher's instruction the student wrote her letter in three paragraphs. She introduced herself in the first paragraph, asked some questions in the second, and what she did at Christmas in the third. In Alice's class, the Year 5 students were asked to write letters to the Year 6 students, wishing them good luck because they were going to high school the following year. Similarly, the Year 6 students were asked to write to the Year 5 students explaining how they had enjoyed their time with them in the composite class. For this task, Alice had assigned who was going to write to whom. She even made a red cardboard post box and asked students to drop their letters in the box, in clearly named envelopes.

Each of the examples of letter writing above had a real life purpose. The teachers also used contexts from real life situations in teaching other genres. For example, while teaching report writing, Andrew took the example of a football game. During the practice phase he and his students jointly constructed a report of the game. Likewise, Alice used the play 'Wonderland,' which all the students were familiar with, to practise writing a Cinquain poem. She said in the interview:

They saw that it could be a simple task. Sometimes when you say, write a poem on such and such, they sit there for ages going, "Oh my gosh, I can't do this! I don't know how to do this!" It was to show them that they could write a poem with ideas that they came up with, realise that it doesn't have to be this complex poem.

(Alice, Interview, p. 16)

The student work published in the school newsletters was also related to the genre that students were learning in their classes. For example, the following extract is from a recount written by a Year 5/6 student about a school excursion (for the complete text, see Appendix 22):

On the 8th of September, 2009, the 5/6s of Paterson Primary School went on an excursion to the Immigration Museum and Rialto Towers in the city of Melbourne.

The activities we did were great fun! We took a trip around the museum and saw a sad video of why other people came to Australia. It was very sad seeing how there was war and conflict and how people were driven out of their countries.

One interesting thing in the museum was the boat. It had three rooms which showed the size of an average room for accommodating a family. There was an 1840s Square Rigger, a 1900s Steamer, and a 1950 post-war room. It was very interesting to find out that how stinky and cramped the 1840s one compared to the small, but hygienic post-war room.

(Atul, *School Newsletter*, Term 4, 2009)

It can be seen that the use of real life situations and experiential learning were key aspects in teaching literacy at Paterson Primary School.

8.2.5 Importance of project work

All teachers emphasised project work with students, who were supposed to do projects each school term. The project work could be done in groups or individually. When I observed the lessons in Years 3/4, students were assigned to write a report on the topic 'Australia' for Term 4. It was an individual piece of work. Students could choose anything for their report that could represent Australia. Some of the topics students chose were kangaroos, koalas, Uluru, kookaburras, and Ned Kelly. Usually after writing up their project, the students had to present it orally, using PowerPoint slides.

Alice's topic for Term 4 was 'Health and Physical Education,' so she had assigned students a project with the title 'To investigate a local health service.' Students could display their work either in poster form or on PowerPoint slides. The project work was an extension of the 'topic' that the teachers were teaching in the particular school term.

8.2.6 Use of multiliteracies pedagogy

The use of a multiliteracies pedagogy was found inside and outside classrooms as part of the literacy practices of the school. The use of computers, the Internet, and oral presentations was observed inside classrooms. The teachers confirmed the high literacy values of out-of-classroom programs during interviews. These programs included the whole school theatre production, incursions, excursions, sleepovers, and school camps. Incursions were events where the school invited different people from the community,

for example, writers, police, firemen, sportsmen, and women. Students could interact with these visitors to learn about their jobs.

The computer was vital part of literacy teaching. All teachers had a computer group as one of their rotating reading and writing groups. The students in the computer group were encouraged to explore information on their own, especially to complete their project work. Students were expected to produce their final version of writing in a typed form, not a hand-written one. In addition, these teachers used text materials from websites. Amber pointed out:

With websites for teaching, we find them ourselves. However, we share them with each other. Julie has set up a web page where we can add useful resources we find for others to access.

(Amber, Email, 19/11/2009)

As mentioned previously, Alice added that some websites such as *Spelling City* were referred to them by the ICT manager of the South East region.

Every two years the school staged a theatre production, which in 2009 was 'Wonderland,' an adaptation of 'Alice in Wonderland.' Every student from Prep to Year 6 had a role to play, so it was truly a 'whole school production.' During the interview all the teachers, including the school principal, agreed that this production was very useful from the point of view of literacy learning. For instance:

The production had great literacy elements. Students had to learn the scripts, which they all got copies of them. We would do group reading of the script together. There's also a lot of speaking and listening tasks. I don't think a lot of them would have seen a script like that before. So that's exposure to a brand new type of text that they haven't seen before too. And because all of the children were included, it didn't matter if they were ESL children or if they were

children who have been in the school for a long time. So yeah, they all got to feel like they were important in that as well.

(Alice, Interview, p. 8)

Similarly, the teachers believed that incursions, excursions, sleepovers, and school camps were useful from the point of view of literacy development, in the following way:

Excursions and incursions are coupled with whatever our areas of study are. We pick and choose things that are specifically catered and what we feel will definitely complement what we're teaching. It is different from the program, engagement's high and kids are into it, they're paying attention, so they remember things, they learn more. It also often works as a catalyst for them wanting to learn more about the subject. Camping and sleepover programs are also very important. They develop life skills more than academic skills. Often a lot of the kids may have not been away from home before. It is a big step, and it definitely teaches them to be independent. That's probably the main aspect of it, and yeah, teamwork and looking after each other. It's part of their curriculum.

(Andrew, Interview, p. 10)

The teachers agreed that such programs were helpful to foster students' learning. Alice emphasised that out-of-school programs develop students' conversational skills, vocabulary, and confidence. Amber gave the example of how a planetarium excursion engaged the students via experiential learning. Ann pointed out the value of school camps for children's social, emotional, and literacy development.

Teachers were also aware of affective aspects of learning. Literacy learning, for all teachers, seemed to follow only if students were emotionally balanced, and the class and school were socially cohesive. Social and emotional balance was thus a prerequisite for learning. Teachers were frequently observed either in the class or in the school

telling students how to handle their emotions and how to behave appropriately. For example, in Alice's class Mustafa did not allow Bill to sit next to him. Even though Bill said it was his birthday so Mustafa should not disappoint him, Mustafa did not seem to care. Instead, he asked another student to sit on the chair where Bill wanted to sit. Unwillingly, Bill moved to another chair and started sobbing. Alice set a reading task for all students and approached Bill. She wished him 'Happy Birthday' and encouraged him to be happy, to find some other good friends, and to ignore fellow pupils like Mustafa who made him sad. Bill looked cheered up and participated in the classroom activities normally afterwards (Fieldnotes, 2009). In another instance, Andrew was observed in the school yard, asking an Asian student to look into his eyes while speaking, not avoiding his gaze (Fieldnotes, 2009). This cultural lesson arguably promoted social cohesion.

8.2.7 Emphasis on individualised teaching

All four teachers in interviews emphasised that every student has different literacy needs, so they plan their literacy lessons to cater for differentiated needs. During the classroom observation, I saw that they formed groups of students of similar ability. For example, in all three Years 3/4 classes Amber, Andrew, and Ann had four ability groups for both reading and writing. In contrast, in the whole Years 5/6 group (three classes) there were three ability groups, high, medium, and low, but, only in reading. Alice further divided the low group into four small ones. The teachers said that they had conducted different tests in order to identify students who had similar abilities.

In teaching reading, whole-class activities, small group (4-5 students in each group) activities, pair activities, and individual activities were all used. The whole-class reading was followed by group work in all reading lessons. While a teacher was working closely with a guided reading group, the other three groups worked

independently. All four groups rotated to do four activities, three independent, and one guided (in both reading and writing in the case of Years 3/4 students). The guided reading group worked with the teacher, who could observe individual student's progress closely. As Andrew explained:

We have three groups doing independent activities and then we'll have one group with us on the floor. They get an opportunity to see a group of five kids for half an hour, 35 minutes, specifically to see how they're going. So we're able to spend some real quality time with those kids. That's in, for example, literacy or writing. We have the same program for reading, writing, and maths and we'll spend that time with those children, so we get that time with them in group work situation.

(Andrew, Interview, p. 15)

Alice, Amber, and Ann all commented on the use of ability groups, in order to cater for the literacy needs of individual students. They were observed giving special attention to new ESL students. For example, in Andrew's class there was a student who had been in the school for only a week. When I inquired about the student, Andrew said:

Yes he is very new, he's only been here for a week. He came from an English-speaking school in Bangladesh. I've been having him in my focus groups, just so I can get an idea of his abilities. When I find out, I'll organise him into an appropriate group.

(Andrew, Email, 18/11/2009)

Hema, the school principal also emphasised individualised teaching at Paterson Primary School, using the idea to explain why prescribed textbooks were not useful. She said:

We don't have textbooks. We don't teach from textbooks. The reason why we don't teach from textbooks is we find that depending on one particular textbook doesn't serve the individualised teaching. A textbook might be suitable for certain child but very unsuitable for others.

(Hema, Interview, p. 21)

I commented about the flexibility of group work in my fieldnotes, which reflect on individual student's learning pace:

I feel like students are given freedom to work in their group. It was fine if some can't finish their work, it can be continued next day. Students work in their pace according to their level. Usually the teachers sit with the guided reading group. Time and again they check if the students are on the task.

(Fieldnotes, 2009)

This shows that the teachers' emphasis was on each student's gradual improvement following individual interests. Students were not required to finish the assigned tasks within a specified time. This section has described seven different aspects of literacy teaching used by the teachers at Paterson Primary School. The following section discusses the teachers' expectations of parents.

8.3 ENCOURAGEMENT FOR ESL PARENTS TO SUPPORT THEIR CHILDREN IN LITERACY

All four teachers agreed at interview that parents could support their children's literacy learning. However, they hardly ever made this explicit to the children during the lessons observed. Among 16 lessons observed, only two teachers explicitly referred to the role of parents. In a team-taught lesson, talking about cyber safety, Amber said:

Check with your parents or guardian if you do decide to give out personal information or put it in your profile.

Andrew added:

You go to 'privacy' and get a grown-up or someone else that knows how to use it to set it to the setting, where only your friends can see it or people you choose to see it, okay?

Amber concluded:

We'll give you this tonight, so have a read of it when you go home tonight. It's really important and it's really important that mum and dad read it too. Perhaps put it on the fridge or near your computer. Yes?

(Amber & Andrew, Lesson Observation 1, p. 6)

At interview, the parents commented that they were supposed to sign their children's diary after the children had read a reader or school library book. Otherwise, they felt that teachers did not make their expectations clear about what parents could do, as was mentioned in Chapter Seven. During the interviews with teachers, however, they suggested different ways in which parents could support their children. They could encourage reading, help complete project work, do what was suggested in the report card, and meet their children's teachers regularly. These specific teacher expectations of parents are discussed in the following paragraphs.

8.3.1 Support in reading and projects as homework

All teachers interviewed strongly emphasised that regular reading at home plays an important role to develop children's literacy learning. By 'reading' they meant active reading with understanding. Parents could ask different questions on what their children were reading. For example, "What's happening here? Who are the characters? What's the point of this? What do you think is going to happen next?" (Andrew, Interview, p.

19). By doing this, parents could help students develop different reading strategies. For those parents, who were not confident enough in English, simply listening to children reading could also make a huge difference, according to Hema, the school principal:

If we've asked them to listen to the child read then of course they need to, and it doesn't matter if they can't quite read the words that their child is reading; the child can help the parent understand and that motivates them to read anyway. They need to spend 15, 20 minutes at home daily just listening to their children reading.

(Hema, Interview, p. 17)

To expand children's reading, parents were expected to take their children to public libraries and help them to select books, according to Amber. By chance I had learned earlier about the importance of the public library to primary school students from a university lecturer. I had noted her comments in my journal, as follows (for the full text see Appendix 23):

Today I saw a Monash University lecturer. While we were discussing my research proposal, I complained to her that I could not help my son in his reading or writing because he did not bring any homework or any textbook. Then I asked her, "If the school does not assign any reading activity, how can children develop their reading?" She replied very naturally that they can go to the library!

(Journal Entry, 30/09/2008)

Until she told me this, I did not know that Australian teachers expected parents to take their children to the public library. All five school staff participants mentioned during the interview that they considered 15 to 20 minutes reading at home every day was homework. The *School Homework Policy* (2011) also indicates that homework

means reading either with parents or by parents for students from Prep to Year 4, and independent reading for Years 5/6 students on a daily basis. Accordingly, students in Years 3-6 were expected to borrow two books from the school library every week. They were given a diary in which they recorded their reading every day. Parents would sign the log to confirm their reading. The classroom teachers expected parents to make sure whether their children read at home by signing the diary. They further said, however, this was not regularly done.

As indicated earlier, project work was found to be a very important aspect of literacy teaching, both observed in the lessons and confirmed during teacher interviews. Children would usually get their project task at the beginning of the term, and were expected to present it towards the end of the term. For example, when I observed the literacy lessons in Years 3/4, the teaching topic was Australia, as mentioned in the previous section. All the literacy lessons were focused on this topic. The students were assigned a project to write a report and make a PowerPoint presentation on something related to Australia, such as Australian animals, Australian sports or places in Australia. Criteria for the report and an example are given in Appendix 24.

Even though two hours were allocated for project work every week, this time was not sufficient to complete the whole task at school, so students had to work on their project at home, which was homework according to the teachers. In this situation parents were expected to help their children to find resources for their project work and complete it on the due date.

All school staff interviewed agreed that giving children repetitive tasks to do on worksheets was not homework, and this could not extend students' knowledge.

8.3.2 Following up on the report card

The students' report card clearly stated what parents could do to help their children at home. The areas to improve would vary according to individuals. Parents were expected to follow up on things mentioned in their children's report card. Andrew pointed this out:

Usually with our reporting and stuff like that we will explain to parents in the report what they can do at home and different strategies that can help their children and different questions they can ask when they're reading to help build those strategies.

(Andrew, Interview, p. 19)

For example, in my son, Atul's report card for Year 5, Term 2, the following areas were mentioned, where parents could help him to improve his learning further:

- Encourage good study habits – set a regular time, pick a place, remove distractions, provide supplies and identify resources.
- Give praise and make criticism constructive.
- Read with Atul and encourage him to approach new literature.
- Discuss with Atul books he has read.
- Assist Atul in writing, knowledge of words and language through frequent learning of his spelling words and use a dictionary and thesaurus to expand his knowledge of the English language.

(Student Report, Year 5, Semester 1, 2009)

Since the teachers emphasised individualised teaching, they would ask parents of individual students to do different things on the basis of student progress. For example, Atul's teacher told me at the time of the parent-teacher meeting that Atul had

ability to write poems, which his peers did not have, so she suggested I should encourage him to read poetry.

8.3.3 Parent contact with teachers

Amber, Andrew, and Ann reported at the interview that most of the new ESL parents did talk to teachers to learn how their children were doing at school. For example, Andrew said, “I’ve had parents that have just come and they come in quite a lot and I’m able to chat with them a lot” (Interview, p. 18). However, Alice’s experience was quite different from others. She would have liked new ESL parents, in particular, to meet her after school to discuss their children’s literacy learning, but such parents would rarely approach her. According to her:

I would like if they came and visited me at the end of the day or you know once a month or something just to see how they were going ‘cause I can’t go out and find them so much. It would be nice if some more parents came to the door. But I think as they’re senior students, a lot of children walk to and from school now so there’s even less chance of me seeing them and saying, “Hi!”

(Alice, Interview, p. 21)

This means that even if teachers wanted to see particular parents, those parents were not always readily available at school at a convenient time. Once Alice had a new ESL student, who could read and write, but could not speak, so she wanted him to practise speaking English at home. By chance, one day she saw the student’s father waiting to pick up his son, so she approached him and said, “Over the summer can you really talk with him a lot in English?” (Alice, Interview, p. 18). However, this was not always possible. Alice expressed surprise that ESL parents did not make contact with her. She explained:

It's really interesting! They drop their children off in the morning and they pick them up in the afternoon and I don't ever see them. I wonder whether that's the way school is where they've come from, that you don't need to speak, you don't get involved in talking to the teacher. It's you know, the teacher teaches and then you help them at home. I'd quite like if they come to the door a bit more often and I could talk with them about things that they can do at home.

(Alice, Interview, p. 18)

From the comments above, teachers expected parents to be involved in their children's literacy learning, but the extent of the parent role was certainly up to parents.

The following section outlines how the school informed parents about school literacy practices.

8.4 HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

This section reports the findings related to home-school partnerships and communication. Data are drawn from interviews, researcher's journal, and school/class newsletters. The interviews with the principal and teachers focused on general matters. When asked specifically if there were particular programs targeted only to new ESL parents, Hema said:

We try to have our curriculum information nights. There is a program called 'parent as helpers,' so they come and find out how to help their children reading. It's mostly literacy, that program.

(Hema, Interview, p. 7)

The programs that Hema mentioned were for all parents, not particularly for new ESL ones. As she indicated, of course it is not easy for someone completely new to the Australian schooling culture, just to go to the school and find on their own how to help

his/her child/ren. There were indeed events which were designed to inform parents in general, about the school's functioning as a whole. Some of these were aligned with the programs set by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), such as parent-teacher meetings, described in Chapter Two, and some were specifically organised by the school, such as 'Parents as Helpers,' mentioned above, following DEECD guidelines. The programs organised to inform parents about literacy teaching/learning in the school were the curriculum information night, parent-teacher interviews, celebration nights, parent support group meeting, Parents as Helpers program, and circulation of school/class newsletters. All parents were expected to take part in such programs, which were announced in newsletters and by personal contact where possible. For example, my son's teacher once sent me an email, informing me about the 'Parents as Helpers' program. This may have been because I had expressed interest in researching literacy teaching at the school.

8.4.1 Curriculum information night

At the beginning of each year, the school organised a curriculum information night. In my personal experience as a parent, this was an overview of the main programs for the whole year. The program focused on the dissemination of information about curriculum areas, pedagogy, and the reporting system. Until 2009, it was organised for all parents of Prep to Year 6 at the same time slot. In 2010, the program was presented a bit differently. According to Alice:

For the start of the year we are having a parents information night and this year [2010] we're not doing it as a grade 3/4/5/6, we're just doing it as a grade 5/6. So we can be much more specific about the things related to the 5/6 kids.

(Alice, Interview, p. 20)

The school, thus, conducted information sessions separately to parents according to year level, each session lasting for 45 minutes, on a single night. For example, the information session for the parents of Prep-level students was organised from 5:00 pm to 5:45 pm, Years 1/2 from 5:45 pm to 6:30 pm, Years 3/4 from 6:30 pm to 7:15 pm, and Years 5/6 students from 7:15 pm to 8:00 pm respectively. In this way, if some parents had children in different year levels, they would not miss any sessions. As Alice mentioned above, the school organised the year level-wise curriculum information session to make it more specific about the things related to a particular year level. Even though all parents were expected to attend the curriculum information night, as a parent I felt it was more important for new parents. The curriculum information night was in fact the only formal opportunity available to learn about the school's teaching programs. The following journal extract recorded my experience:

Yesterday Paterson Primary School had a curriculum night for parents. Being new to the school, I found it fruitful. The teachers gave a general overview of the curriculum. My concentration was on literacy development where they mentioned different sorts of activities that they organize in teaching reading and writing, such as guided reading, independent reading, share time; shared writing, modelled writing, guided writing, independent writing in classrooms.

(Journal Entry, 26/02/2009)

I was from the teaching field, and also had observed some literacy lessons at the school, so I understood the terms used by the teachers above, but it is not necessarily the case that ESL parents in general also understand them. Teachers did not explain what they meant. The school principal, Hema, emphasised that if new ESL parents wanted to be involved in their children's learning, "Firstly they need to come in any curriculum nights that we hold to explain the program." (Hema, Interview, p. 23). Her expectation is clear but for many ESL parents this is a confronting or impractical suggestion.

Further, it may be hard for them to understand the whole school program just attending a single session of the curriculum night.

8.4.2 Parent-teacher interviews

The parent-teacher interview was a formal opportunity for parents to talk to their children's teachers face-to-face regarding the children's progress at school, or any concern they had. It consisted of ten minutes with the children's class teacher. In my experience, if parents had particular concerns about particular subject areas, like performing arts, physical education, LOTE or library, they could make a prior appointment to talk to specialist teachers for another ten minutes. At Paterson Primary school, the parent-teacher interview was organised once a year, one week or two weeks after teachers had sent the students' report home in Term 2. The discussion between parents and teachers was, thus, based on children's achievements until that time and what could be done to help children improve further. Teachers expected parents to ask questions if they had any (*Paterson Primary School Newsletter*, Term 2, 2009).

According to the teachers, often parents who were new, had questions related to the ranking 'A, B, C, D, E' in the report card (see Chapter Two). They were not happy when their children had a 'C' (average) in their report. As a parent, I was no exception, and my three participants, Binod, Nita, and Tara also expressed their dissatisfaction about this. Teachers tried to justify exactly what 'C' means in the Victorian schooling system, as Alice said:

Quite often I have to explain that the grading system is related to what's expected of them. They get a bit worried if they see a 'C' 'cause that doesn't sound very good but really a 'C' means that they're exactly where they need to be and anything higher than that [e.g., 'B' and 'A'] means that they're above average.

(Alice, Interview, p. 20)

At the curriculum information night program Hema tried to explain what 'C' stood for.

The following journal entry reveals this:

Hema said that parents are a bit confused about 'C' and explained that 'C' is equivalent to 'A' of early days. She gave her own example how her parents got cross to see 'C' in their children's report card. She mentioned 'C' is exactly where a child is expected to be in that year level in Victorian schooling system, whereas 'A' and 'B' mean the child was respectively 12 and 6 months ahead of her/his level.

(Journal Entry, 18/02/2010)

Even if Hema was trying to convince parents, her statement of 'C' being equivalent to 'A' was not convincing. In fact, I asked this very question about the meaning of 'C' to my son's teacher and did not feel happy that his performance was just 'average.' Hema agreed that the ESL parents may not have understood the contents of the report card. She said:

The report format might be a little bit difficult for ESL parents to understand because it's very technical. I was thinking as I was reading the reports that there might be a need for ESL parents to have maybe an interpreter sit with the teacher and the parent and actually explain the contents of the report.

(Hema, Interview, p. 18)

Paterson Primary School staff agreed that new ESL parents, in particular, were not happy with the 'A, B, C, D, E' ranking given in the student report card. They were trying to make such parents understand this.

8.4.3 Celebration night

Celebration nights were held at Paterson Primary School twice a year, usually towards the end of Term 1 and Term 3. Such nights were organised to celebrate students' achievements in curriculum areas during the particular term. Students' work was displayed in their classrooms. This could be project work, write-ups, drawings, and paintings. Sometimes, students would make an oral presentation of their project work so that parents could hear, not only see, their written work. According to Hema, all parents were expected to go and see what their children were doing at school. She said:

We have celebration nights where we actually display the child's work so that they get to know what their child is doing. I find that very beneficial. I think it's really important for them.

(Hema, Interview, p. 18)

Celebration nights were also a good opportunity for parents to talk to their children's teachers. The school sent home newsletters as well as flyers (or notices) about the celebration night. All of my participants went to the celebration nights, as did many other parents. Hema mentioned that they were the most successful parent involvement events.

8.4.4 Parent support group meeting

According to Hema, Paterson Primary School had a program called the 'parent support group meeting.' However, all parents did not have access to these individualised

meetings. The meetings were for parents whose children were highly gifted or lagging behind in their school work, and not all parents were aware of the program, including myself. At the time of data collection in December, 2009, there were about 50 children (out of a total of 233), who belonged to those two categories and their parents were in the parent support group, according to Hema. “It could be that they’re failing or it could be children who are highly gifted. We have about 50 children here who belong to each of those areas” (Hema, Interview, p. 16).

The concerned parent, the principal, and the child’s teacher had meetings twice a year for half an hour. Hema said that the parent support group meeting worked in the following way:

I sit down with them and we develop the goals for the child’s program with the parent so that they understand where we’re heading. With these ESL parents the teacher tends to do that in class, but if they feel they need an interpreter, then I get involved in that too. So we hire interpreters to come in and talk to them so that they understand.

(Hema, Interview, p. 16)

This meeting seemed to be targeted at a particular group of parents, so, many parents may not have known of its existence.

8.4.5 ‘Parents as Helpers’ program

To bring many parents into the school and strengthen the ‘home-school partnership,’ Paterson Primary School started a ‘Parents as Helpers’ program in 2009. The main purpose of this program was to have parents in the classrooms who could help with children’s reading. Basically the parents were expected to listen to children reading

aloud. The parents could go to any class, senior or junior, where they felt comfortable, not necessarily to their children's class.

I, for example, worked as a parent helper in 2010. Before going to the classroom, an information session was conducted. The following is my journal entry related to the 'Parents as Helpers' program:

Today there was the first 'Parents as Helpers' session at Paterson Primary school. The leading teacher of the school conducted this session. There were about 16 parent participants. The session was designed to inform the parents about how they can help classroom teachers, especially during literacy hours (but they can help in any area they are interested in or they have passion on). It is a good opportunity for parents to observe what actually happens inside classrooms.

(Journal Entry, 10/03/10)

The participation of only about 16 parents was not so encouraging and shows the parents' lack of awareness of this event. In addition to these main programs, there were several other opportunities where parents could be involved and broaden their understanding about Paterson Primary School, including the school council and the parents' association (see Chapter Two). To be a representative on the school council, interested parents could go through an election process, which was held each year in February or March. All parents were automatically members of the parents' association, which would meet every month to discuss different issues. In my experience, the school also organised many other programs where parents were invited either to volunteer or participate. These included a book fair, a book parade, school excursions, Harmony Day, and a Working Bee. By participating in such programs, parents could observe their children's activities in school. An assembly was held at the end of the day once a week,

where parents could also go and find out important information. The assembly reflected the activities going on in school. It seemed that not all parents were aware of the chance to learn about school happenings through the assembly. In my own case this awareness only came after one and half years at the school, when my son had become one of a number of school captains. That is, parents tended to be invited to attend for a particular purpose.

8.4.6 School and class newsletters

At interview, all school staff agreed that school and class newsletters were the main source of information for parents. They said they placed a high value on newsletters to inform parents about the activities and events happening in the school. The school newsletters were sent home fortnightly and the class newsletters every school term. At the beginning of each term, the class teachers would send a newsletter to parents explaining the programs for that particular term and class.

School newsletters were not only a source of general information but they also showcased student work. There was a section called ‘Kids Connect’ in the newsletters, where student work was featured. As mentioned earlier, whichever genre was being practised in the classroom, some examples published in the newsletter. Teachers would encourage their students to do a good piece of writing so that it could be published in the newsletter. For example:

I want to see every single person writing. I’m going to be coming. I’m gonna come around and listen to how your poem’s going. Put some effort in them. I’m going to be able to give it to Mrs. Williams for the newsletter. We haven’t contributed an article or things for the newsletter for a while.

(Alice, Classroom Observation 1, p. 12)

Twenty school newsletters published in 2009, were analysed for the sort of information for parents was given. Seven categories were identified: explicit literacy related events, student work, home-school partnerships, general suggestions about contacting the principal/teachers, explicit invitations, mention of public events, and parents' role at home. These categories are presented in the following table with accompanying examples.

Table 8.3 Categories found in the school newsletters 2009

| Categories | Examples |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Explicit literacy related events | Reading Labs: "This program, funded by Assistance Dogs Australia, provides children within our school the opportunity to develop their literacy skills by reading aloud to a fully-trained service dog" (2009, Term 1, 3 rd issue, p. 2). No further explanation was given about why reading aloud to a dog might be beneficial. |
| Student work | Two recounts on students' visit to IMAX Theatre (the Grade of the students was not mentioned) (2009, Term 2, 4 th issue, p. 4) |
| Home-school partnerships | "The working relationship between the home and the school is a vital link, ensuring a positive and productive education for every child" (2009, Term 1, 1 st issue, p.1). |
| Contact the principal/teachers | "Parents are encouraged to contact the school if they have any concern about their children" (2009, Term 3, 1 st issue, p. 1). |
| Invitation | "Please come inside the hall (at the assembly time) and join your children at this assembly, as your active participation and interest gives the students much pleasure" (2009, Term 2, 5 th issue, p. 1). |
| Mention of public events | Cyber bullying (2009, Term 4, 1 st issue, p. 1); Remembrance Day (2009, Term 4, 2 nd issue, cover page); Movember "Movember aims to raise awareness about men's health issues namely Prostate Cancer and Men's Depression" (2009, Term 4, 4 th issue, p. 4). ('Movember', in November, encourages fathers |

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| | to grow a moustache) |
| Parents' role at home | “Before the interview, talk to your child about their report; find out if there is anything they do not understand or would like further clarified” (2009, Term 2, 4 th issue, p. 1). |

Table 8.3 above shows that the school newsletters published all the important events related to the school, which could provide parents a lot of information if they read them thoroughly and regularly. Literacy events, student work, home-school communication/partnerships, and parent role are often highlighted there. The importance of the mention of public events was that they were often used by teachers as topics for practice in writing different genres. For example, on the occasion of Remembrance Day children were asked to write a poem on that topic. Unfortunately, my participants were not fully aware of this.

8.5 SUMMARY

This chapter has analysed the data relating to Paterson Primary school staff, the principal and specifically the four classroom teachers, regarding the research question on pedagogical aspects of literacy and home-school communication and partnerships. The key findings discussed in this chapter are presented in the following paragraphs.

Teachers used topic-based literacy pedagogy. They used a range of resources, and an individual teacher generally decided what resources to use in her/his class and with particular group of students in that class. The use of authentic and relevant texts was dominant in teaching reading, without ignoring formal features of language, such as grammar. A genre-based approach was the main approach in teaching writing. Teacher emphasis was placed on extensive reading and project work. A multiliteracies pedagogy

was central to the literacy program. Teachers emphasised individual student needs and differentiated instruction.

Teachers expected parents to support their children's literacy learning by doing several things, such as participating in children's reading at home, helping them complete their project work, implementing the follow up suggestions in the student report card, and contacting the classroom teacher regularly to learn how their children were progressing.

The school informed parents about literacy practices mainly by organising different events. These events are curriculum information night, parent-teacher interview, celebration night, parent support group meeting, and 'parents as helpers' program. In addition, the school sent school and class newsletters home regularly.

The following chapter discusses and interprets the findings of this research, which is followed by the conclusion to this thesis.

CHAPTER NINE

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, the findings relating to all research questions are interpreted in the light of a sociocultural theory of literacy and studies undertaken in other research contexts. Contradictions and tensions within the findings related to the parents are explored. The ESL parent and mainstream primary school teacher perspectives on literacy teaching and learning are compared to see to what extent they match. The home-school partnership is explored, and implications of the partnership to strengthen children's literacy learning are discussed. Recommendations are made in the areas where disparities are found between parent and teacher perspectives. This chapter also presents the limitations of the study, and suggests direction for further research.

9.1 INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS: RESEARCH QUESTION 1

Research Question 1 asks, "What are newly arrived ESL parents' perspectives on literacy practices in a mainstream primary school in Australia?" Findings relating to this research question were presented in Chapter Seven. Interpretations of these findings in relation to a sociocultural theory of literacy and also research findings from other contexts are given below.

Levels of parent satisfaction about school literacy practices at their children's primary school in Australia reflect their general understandings of school literacy. The ESL parents came from a range of countries, including India, Indonesia, Nepal, and the Philippines, and therefore, had various perspectives on school literacy practices, which were sometimes different from the literacy practices in the education systems they had come from. This is because literacy is a social practice and its use differs from one social context to another (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Heath, 1983; Gee, 1996; Street, 1993).

The differences in literacy teaching/learning practices can be seen as the result of two secondary Discourses (Gee, 1996). One is that of the children's school in their home countries and another is that of their school in Australia. Differences between the two Discourses were found to create tensions, anxieties and conflicts in the families. This was arguably because the new ESL parents did not have full participation in, or understanding of, the secondary Discourse of the Australian school. For example, these parents were not aware of classroom activities, student grouping arrangements, patterns of classroom talk, student-teacher and student-student interactions. These parents also did not know how widely the teachers selected the authentic texts suitable for different groups of students. These particular literacy practices were different from those in the schools their children had previously attended. As such, many aspects of the schooling Discourse required by the students in Australia were not readily apparent to these parents. This was the main reason of their dissatisfaction in some areas of literacy pedagogy.

The ESL parents expressed both satisfaction and dissatisfaction in some areas of literacy teaching and learning, which is a contradiction in Gee's terms. For example, on the one hand they were satisfied to see their children reading a variety of books, and on the other hand they were dissatisfied because the children did not have regular homework or regular tests. In addition, the idea of power relationships between dominant and minority cultures (Gee, 1996; Barton & Hamilton, 2000) illuminates the findings about parents' confusion (see also Cummins, 2003). The parents felt disempowered and most of the time they could not approach the teachers with their concerns. Sometimes, even if they approached the teachers they felt their query was not addressed satisfactorily.

At the same time when these parents came into the contact with the school, they started independently to make meanings of the literacy practices at the school. This was because being in a new social context, they saw themselves as active participants in social change (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000), that is, they themselves started making meaning of the Australian school Discourse, mostly by observing their children and by communicating with the teachers at limited occasions. Then they started negotiating and assimilating between Discourses. Sometimes the parents found similarities between school literacy practices in their home countries and Australia. These led them to express satisfaction in some areas of literacy teaching.

9.1.1 Appreciation of multiliteracies and children's literacy development

In two areas of literacy pedagogy, all six parents expressed their satisfaction. Even though the notion of 'multiliteracies' used at Paterson Primary school was new for them, they were aware of its importance in their children's lives. For example, they were all familiar with computers from their home countries, so when their children started using them for literacy learning at school, the parents were pleased. Based on their own observations and interactions with school teachers, the parents had realised that in order for their children to succeed in the Australian school, print literacy alone was not sufficient. Instead, the children should also be equipped with digital literacy, and learn social and emotional literacies. Parents were adjusting to the new secondary Discourse, which involved a process of negotiation of ideas about schooling. Parents were motivated to learn these ideas because they wanted their children to have the same learning opportunities as other Australian students, and indeed to compete with their peers.

The parents' satisfaction with their children's improvement in literacy learning can also be interpreted using the notion of 'Discourses.' In both secondary Discourses,

improvement is the goal of learning, thus there is no contradiction here. Parents observed their children improving their English speaking in terms of accent and fluency, vocabulary, reading skills, writing skills, social skills, and also noted aspects of personal development.

9.1.2 Dissatisfaction with aspects of literacy teaching

The parents' explicit dissatisfaction in some areas of literacy pedagogy can be interpreted as a result of contradictions between two secondary (i.e., school) Discourses. All six of the parents expressed dissatisfaction with how their children spent time at home. The parents expected homework and textbooks to keep their children engaged at home, which they had experienced in their home countries. In contrast to their expectations, they did not find daily homework and prescribed books in Australia. As a result of this, the children spent a large amount of home time in playing digital games or watching television. This created a conflict between the parents' expectations and what they perceived to be the school's expectations.

Three parents, Binod, Nita, and Tara, in particular, expressed their dissatisfaction about the Australian education system, which they found ill-defined and too easy. In terms of curriculum, the same parents were dissatisfied, feeling that the school did not provide them with specific information. All six parents agreed that they did not know how teachers teach inside the classroom due to a lack of specific curriculum. This was in fact a discourse they felt was missing from their children's learning experience. The three South Asian parents in particular, Binod, Nita, and Tara expressed dissatisfaction about cultural differences between Australia and their home countries, India and Nepal, which share similar cultural norms. In the context of Australia, they made negative comments on student freedom, including examples such as the mixing of boys and girls at school camps and short dresses. This finding can be

interpreted in the light of Gee's (1996) 'identity kit.' Gee stated that a Discourse is one's 'identity kit,' which not only shows the use of 'discourse' but includes all social practices of that Discourse such as beliefs, values and dress. The cultural clash between these parents' primary Discourse and new secondary Discourse led in part to their dissatisfaction.

9.1.3 Contradictions: literacy pedagogy, home-school partnerships, and the teacher's role

The parents expressed contradictory feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in three areas of literacy teaching and learning at Paterson Primary School. Those areas were literacy pedagogy, home-school partnerships, and the teacher's role. Once again, Gee's notion of Discourses (1996, 2011) helps to interpret this finding. The parents were trying to be participants in the secondary Discourse of the school in Australia, and they were going through a 'transition' phase. They were juggling the processes of contradiction, negotiation, and assimilation, as explained by Gee. In one sense, the parents expressed dissatisfaction due to the existence of power relationships between dominant and marginalised groups. The following paragraphs explain the parents' mixed feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

All six parents were satisfied to see their children reading books either by taking part in the Premier's Reading Challenge Program or borrowing books from the school library as well as from the public library. This was because all were familiar with print literacy practices in their home countries, so they could relate book reading practices in two different social contexts. Although their children had experience of reading textbooks in their home countries and they were reading different varieties of books in Australia, the parents knew the value of print literacy. There was no contradiction here.

The five children, Ardhi, Aini, Bayu, Diya, KC, and Kush were in the ESL class offered by the school, to improve their English so that they would understand the content areas of the curriculum better. Having 'satisfactory' English proficiency, Atul, Binod's son, did not need to attend ESL lessons. Thus, Binod, who made the comment that teachers in Australia do not teach grammar, was unfamiliar with the ESL program. Nita told Binod that grammar teaching happened in ESL lessons, but Binod's concern about grammar teaching in the mainstream classes remained the same. This is an example of negotiation of understanding about the teaching of grammar.

The parent dissatisfaction in the same areas where they expressed satisfaction can be explained by the contradiction between Discourses and by the idea of power relationships. For instance, on the one hand, the parents were satisfied that their children were reading widely, and on the other hand, they were dissatisfied that the children did not have prescribed textbooks, homework, and examinations. Coming from the minority groups the parents felt powerless to discuss their concerns openly with school teachers. This can also be interpreted by using Street's (1993) 'autonomous' and 'ideological' models of literacy. The ESL parents came from social contexts where school literacy practices were based on the autonomous model of literacy, i.e., all students must read the same textbooks and experience the same activities and assessment processes. In contrast, literacy practices in Australia are based more on an ideological model of literacy where practices are underpinned by the cultural belief that every individual learner has different literacy needs. Accordingly, neither particular textbooks nor the same assessment processes for all students were used by teachers at the school.

The parents were confused by these two stances in relation to literacy teaching. Lily said the books borrowed from the school library were not 'academic,' so she bought her children a set of textbooks to read at home and do writing exercises.

Similarly, Tara had brought all the Grade 5 textbooks from India for her son to practise reading and writing.

Dewita was the most satisfied parent. She, however, expressed her dissatisfaction at how the parent organisation of Paterson Primary School was dominated by a handful of parents. She commented that these parents took all the decisions about activities, events, and organisation, and said that other parents would be passive listeners. In fact, it can be interpreted that the decision-making parents were from the established or dominant group of English-speaking Australian parents and a power relationship (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Gee, 1996) existed between them and parents from other minority ethnic groups such as the Indonesian group, who felt disempowered. This can also be argued that, instead of collaborative relations of power, coercive relations (Cummins, 2003) were exercised within the parents' association, so that the parents from minority groups felt powerless. For example, Dewita felt her identity was in 'crisis,' because her voice was unheard by the parents from a dominant Australian society.

Another contradiction was found regarding the student 'freedom' within the Australian curriculum. For example, Binod, Nita, and Tara used the terms "freedom" and "no competition" to express both satisfaction and dissatisfaction. On the one hand, they stated that their children enjoyed learning in Australia, because they had 'freedom' of thinking and of study, which would make learning fun. Furthermore, their children developed their learning horizons and their minds. Likewise, these parents admired the fact that teachers in Australia treat all students equally, without comparing them with each other. They appreciated every child's work equally and did not give any scores. Because of this, there was no competition among children, which led them to develop self-confidence and keenness to learn and work harder as well.

On the other hand, these parents felt that their children had excessive freedom in Australia. Teachers would not penalise (or reward) students whether they did homework or not. Because of too much freedom, their children were not working hard and excelling in literacy learning to meet their parents' expectations. Binod, Nita and Tara also commented on the problem of "no competition, no study." According to them, their children needed to have a feeling of competition through examinations to push them to excel in their study. This contradiction resulted from a clash between different beliefs and values in the parents' primary and secondary Discourses.

9.1.4 Intergroup differences

A finding which emerged from the data was that the three South East Asian parents were more satisfied than the three South Asian parents. This finding suggests that in comparison to the South East Asian parents, South Asian parents found more differences between literacy teaching/learning in Australia and in their home countries. For example, Dewita and Lily's children did not have much exposure to English in Indonesia. They did not get the opportunity to read extended texts and their writing was limited to word and sentence levels. These parents were generally satisfied about whatever their children were learning in English, and they could see improvement. Another reason could be that both Dewita and Lily were familiar with the Australian schooling system, to some extent. Dewita had firsthand experience when she was in Sydney to earn her Master's degree, and Lily had read articles and talked to her university colleagues who had gone back to Indonesia from Australia. Even though KC attended an English medium school in the Philippines, she was only at Grade 1, a level where there was little content, Sharon said, so she was hopeful that gradually KC would be given more content in the upper grades.

The children of the South Asian parents, Binod, Nita, and Tara had similar experiences: Atul, Diya, and Kush all went to an English medium private school in Nepal and India respectively. Unlike KC who was in Grade 1 in the Philippines, Atul was in Grade 4 and Diya and Kush were in Grade 5 when they arrived in Australia. They were exposed to a number of extended texts in reading in English and they had to write a lot. These three parents found a reduced workload for their children in Australia in comparison to their home countries, which was the main reason for their dissatisfaction. Nita and Tara, however, heard from their relatives about the schooling system in English-speaking countries.

No previous studies conducted with ESL parents, many of which were reviewed in Chapter Four, have a finding related to intergroup differences. This may be because most studies were conducted with homogeneous groups of parents, such as Korean, Chinese or Pakistani. Although the group was small, with only six parents in this study, the parents from two different regions, South East Asia and South Asia, fell into the same two groups in their responses to literacy.

9.1.5 Parental role

The ESL parents said that they supported their children's literacy learning in various ways, such as by taking them to the public library to find books, listening to them reading and helping the children to complete their project work. On the other hand, they mentioned that due to the lack of daily homework and clear guidelines from the school about what teachers expected parents to do, their role was not as strong in Australia when compared to their home countries. This finding can also be interpreted using the notion of Discourses.

Among six parents, only Sharon said that she felt her parental role to support KC, her daughter, was equal in the Philippines and in Australia. She familiarised herself with the Australian context by doing what KC's teacher asked her to do to improve KC's literacy learning, such as encouraging her in reading at home. In terms of the parental role, Sharon's membership in the Australian school Discourse seemed to be overall stronger compared to that of the remaining five parents. Even if these parents wanted to help their children with literacy learning, their limited entry to the school Discourse left them confused. They were not sure whether the support they were extending to their children was sufficient.

In certain areas of parent-teacher communication, however, Dewita was an active member of the school Discourse. For example, Andrew, her son's teacher, had asked her to encourage Ardhi's reading at home, so she bought different genres of books to generate his interest in print literacy. Print was the dominant literacy at Paterson Primary School, yet Dewita knew that her son was keener on digital and visual literacies than on print literacy. She felt guilty for not giving enough time to encourage Ardhi to read and lamented that she was not fulfilling her parental role in this regard.

9.2 RELATIONSHIP OF PARENT-RELATED FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY TO FINDINGS OF OTHER STUDIES

The parents in this study found the Australian education system loose, free, and easy compared to the education systems in their home countries. This finding is similar to the finding of Lee (2010) and J. Li (2010), however, their studies focused on ESL students in the USA and Canada respectively. These studies focused on students, but no study dealing with ESL parent perspectives on the education system as a whole in an English-speaking country was found. It may be said that Asian people in general, whether parents or students, often find the education system of English-speaking countries easier

in terms of freedom given to students, fewer assignments and a less competitive assessment system.

It is noteworthy that in J. Li's (2010) study, the views of ESL students differed according to the length of their stay in Canada. One student who had been in Canada for five months said that there were not many assignments, teachers were easy-going and carefree and they did not push students to do things. On the contrary, another student who had been in Canada for seven years stated that in Canada emphasis was placed on the holistic development of students, not only on 'academic excellence.' Students were encouraged to develop their own learning strategies. Although the ESL parents in this study had been in Australia for a short period of time, they expressed both views. This may be because as parents they were more mature, observant, communicative, and critical than the students in the Canadian study, but still guided by their cultural values and beliefs.

The parents in this study expressed a positive attitude towards ESL lessons, unlike the parents in Lee's (2010) study. This may be because the children in this study had more opportunities to interact with their English-speaking peers in mainstream classes, since they were only withdrawn for ESL lessons for certain periods in a week, not for whole days, and at other times they were in mainstream classes. Because of this, the parents did not feel their children were excluded. Further, those parents whose children used to go to ESL classes seemed to be more informed about some aspects of English literacy teaching. For example, they knew teachers taught grammar, students had spelling tests, and the parents were given back the ESL notebook at the end of the year, where they could see what their children had learned throughout the year. Another reason for different parental views on the ESL program could be the time factor,

because Lee's (2010) participants had been in the USA for six months to five years, whereas the parents in this study had been in Australia for only six months to two years.

In terms of ESL parent perspectives on literacy pedagogy in English-speaking countries, the following six issues were raised in previous research studies:

- maintaining the balance between children's first language and second language
- English-only education for bilingual children
- ESL parents' English proficiency
- parent-school communication
- teachers' support given to individual students
- parents' views on literacy pedagogy

The following section discusses similarities and differences of findings in the present study. The first two issues come together in the following section.

9.2.1 Balance between first language and second language versus English-only

English-only education for their children in their Australian school was favoured by all parents in this study. While these parents were positive towards bilingualism like the parents in Song's (2010) study, they did not have an intense desire to teach their children their first language. They thought their children already knew their mother tongue, so more attention was needed to develop their English. This finding contradicts the findings of earlier researchers in different contexts, such as Huh (2006), G. Li (2007), and Worthy (2006). Their findings were that ESL parents prefer developing their children's first and second language equally. This difference may have arisen

because of the time spent in Australia. The parent participants of this study had been living in Australia for only seven to 20 months at the time of data collection. Being new in Australia, these parents may have been keen to see their children improve their English. Whether they were returning to their home countries or staying on in Australia, all parents equally expressed the desire to encourage their children to strengthen their English.

All six parent participants involved in this study said that their children must learn English, not only to fit into mainstream Australian society, but also to fit into a global society where English is the main language of communication. This finding aligns with the findings of S. Brown and Souto-Manning's (2008) and Song's (2010) studies, which highlight tensions between English-only and bilingual instruction within the American education system.

9.2.2 ESL parents' English proficiency

In this study, the parents' English proficiency was not a major issue which hindered their support to their children or communication with the school and teachers. In contrast, previous research studies (Bernhard & Freire, 1999; Huh, 2006; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009, Worthy, 2006) show that due to their lack of proficiency in English, parent participants felt unable to help their children in their literacy learning and to communicate with the school/teachers effectively. Only two parents, Nita and Tara raised the issue of their lack of English proficiency to express themselves, but not to understand what teachers say. Binod, Nita, and Tara said that it was sometimes difficult to understand the Australian teachers' 'accent.' None of the parents said that they were unable to support their children because of their lack of English proficiency. This difference in findings can be explained by the fact that this group of parents was

from a middle class social background in their home countries and quite highly educated, so for most of them, use of English was not problematic.

9.2.3 Parent-school communication

On the one hand, the parent participants involved in this study said there was not a communication problem between themselves and the school. Yet they expressed their lack of understanding of how literacy teaching/learning happens in the school. Unlike other studies, for example, Huh (2006), which show that parents' lack of fluent English creates a problem to maintain good communication between the school and parents, this study shows it is not always the parents' lack of English but also cultural differences, and sometimes power relations, which keep parents and the school at a distance. This study indicates that there was a lack of effective coordination between the school and newly arrived ESL families, similar to what G. Li's (2007) finding suggests.

9.2.4 Teacher support given to individual students

The parents involved in this study were highly satisfied with the support given by the Australian teachers to their children, which does not align with findings of other studies. For example, Bernhard and Freire (1999) and Huh (2006) show that parents were not satisfied by the support given by teachers in Canada and the USA respectively. The parents in this study seemed to be more critical than parents in other studies and they were therefore able to identify both negative and positive aspects of schools in Australia and in their home countries. Compared to the strict teachers in the latter context, they found the Australian teachers more supportive and encouraging. They felt time and effort were allocated to their children in supportive classrooms.

9.2.5 Parent views on literacy pedagogy

Most of the parent participants in this study expressed the view that they preferred a traditional approach to literacy teaching. This finding is similar to findings of other studies (G. Li, 2006, 2007). These findings related to the parents' preference for skill-based teaching approach and daily homework. Another finding of this study shows that most of the parents complained about their children's excessive freedom, which aligns with what was found by G. Li (2007). The parents in this research valued their children's extensive reading, and this finding is similar to the finding in G. Li's (2006) study, but it contradicts with what Peterson and Ladky (2007) found. This difference may arise due to the participating parents' academic qualifications. Only one parent, Dewita, was pleased with all aspects of the teaching, as she was very confident that the education system in Australia was much better than the education system in Indonesia.

A crucial finding of this study, not highlighted by the previous research studies, was the awareness and understanding of the newly arrived ESL parents of the practice of 'multiliteracies' in Australian schools.

9.3 INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS: RESEARCH QUESTIONS 2 AND 3

Research Question 2 asks, "What do teachers believe facilitates literacy development in new ESL students?" The findings relating to this question are discussed in Chapter Eight. Their interpretation in the light of sociocultural theories and the research literature is presented below. Note that teacher beliefs are not presented as 'statements' about beliefs, but through the literacy practices, and the practical activities of literacy teaching.

9.3.1 Use of topic-based literacy pedagogy

To suit the integrated curriculum, VELS (2005, 2007), which is based on a sociocultural approach to pedagogy, teachers used topic-based literacy teaching. As the view of ‘literacy as a social practice’ advocates such as Street (1993) and Barton and Hamilton (2000) argue, literacy is engaged with a society for different purposes by different people. This was reflected in the selection of a wide variety of teaching resources, relating to one topic. The teachers used different sorts of real-world texts, instead of limiting themselves to prescribed materials. As a result, students got an opportunity to read real texts, such as books, newspaper articles, pamphlets, and online texts on the same topic, which helped the teachers to cater for the needs of individual students. According to Rich (2004), the broad teaching topics can be same for all students, but teachers should choose different texts and even different teaching methods to satisfy the particular needs of individual students.

The teachers used a whole language approach (WLA) in teaching reading, an approach that emerged as a consequence of the view of ‘literacy as a social practice’ (Baynham, 1995; de Lemos, 2005). For example, Amber taught ‘Cyber safety’ in one of the lessons observed, which related to the social problem of cyber bullying. Students learned collaboratively about cyber safety through the use of a government pamphlet. Interaction between teachers and students to make meaning of an authentic text, as found in Amber’s lesson, is a characteristic of the WLA (Rich, 2004).

The teachers taught a variety of genres in writing lessons. As Gibbons (2009) points out, genre-based writing pedagogy demonstrates social purposes of writing, targeted to specific audiences, and using a specific style. For example, the Years 3/4 students were writing letters to the Australian troops in Afghanistan and to American

friends. They had a real purpose to write letters and real audiences. In this way, the teachers related the literacy lessons to students' real lives.

9.3.2 Use of multiliteracies pedagogy

The teachers used multiliteracies in their pedagogy, reflecting a social view of literacy (O'Rourke, 2005). The VELS curriculum also promotes a multiliteracies approach in teaching literacy. The teachers often used computers and the Internet along with print-based text materials. For example, the Internet was used to read online texts, and students in all classes were asked to write and publish texts on the computer. Pictures were an inseparable part of textual materials. The teachers used these pictures to ask questions about the reading texts, which helped students to understand the text materials. Speaking was also a focus of literacy teaching. There were a lot of opportunities where students had to make oral presentations of their work, or where they talked informally. In Ann's class there was sharing time, the last activity of the lesson, when individual students had to report orally to the whole class on work done by themselves, their pair or their small group (Fieldnotes, 2009). In addition, the teachers established contexts orally before they assigned students the writing tasks. These forms of literacy are also part of a multiliteracies pedagogy (Mills, 2005b; The New London Group, 1996, 2000).

Teaching children social skills was integrated into literacy teaching. For instance, Andrew's asking an Asian student to have eye contact with the teacher while speaking, can be taken as an example. It is generally understood that different societies have different social norms. Particularly in Asian cultures, looking into a teacher's eyes is considered rude and students are supposed to keep their head down and listen to the teacher, without speaking back. Coming from an Asian background the student felt uncomfortable looking directly at his teacher while talking; a behaviour required in the

Australian context. Gee's (1996) notion of Discourses helps to interpret this finding, as to be a member of a certain Discourse, one must know its social norms, which includes body language as well.

9.3.3 Emphasis on individual student needs

A finding of this research is that an individualised teaching approach was aimed for in Paterson Primary school, according to what the principal said. The individualised teaching approach was seen in the division of students into small groups, where the teacher's main focus was on individual students in the guided group, while other groups worked independently. This reveals the fact that a one-size-fits-all model, defined by the 'autonomous model,' of literacy (Street, 1993) was not used by the teachers. They knew that every individual student had different abilities and needs of literacy learning, so they said they devised their lessons considering every student's specific needs, a view close to the 'ideological model' of literacy (Street, 1993). To cater to individual student needs is a concern of the whole language approach (Rich, 2004) as well. In following VELs, the teachers were flexible in planning their lessons according to students' needs. This was another reason why they did not use any prescribed textbooks in their classroom.

9.3.4 Teacher expectations of parents

Following a social view of literacy, parents have a key role in modelling and encouraging their children's literacy learning, as Heath (1983) pointed out. The teachers expressed the belief that parents could support their children by participating in children's reading, helping them to complete project work, doing what was recommended in their report card, and contacting classroom teachers. The teachers mentioned that repetitive tasks such as filling in the blanks or reciting a list of spellings

would not extend student learning, so they emphasised exploratory learning, such as doing research for project work, with which parents could help. This belief of teachers was influenced by the kind of learning valued in the Australian society, an example of Gee's (1996) point that different societies have different values. Schooling reflects these values as shown by Heath (1983).

The teachers expected parents to take the initiative to talk to them if parents had any concern regarding their children's progress. Again, Gee's (1996) notion of Discourses helps to interpret this finding. It is an assumed cultural norm in Australia that parents meet with their children's teachers. With this understanding of the parent-teacher relationship, Alice expressed her surprise when she found that the new ESL parents did not come to see her, although she conceded that it might be their culture not to approach teachers. Her response shows that some mainstream teachers, like herself, were aware of cultural differences.

Communication of teacher expectations was supported by the school. The school informed parents through various ways, such as organising the curriculum information night, parent-teacher interviews, celebration nights, parent support group meeting, 'parents as helpers' program, and sending class and school newsletters home regularly.

These efforts and parents' responses will be discussed in detail in 9.4 below. The notion of Discourses helps to explain why the school's efforts were not always understood by parents and why teachers often failed to address parents' expectations.

9.3.5 Teacher views on ESL parents and students

In terms of teacher views on ESL parents and students, no teachers in the study used a 'deficit logic' to describe them, as was found in some of the previous research studies

(Henderson, 2007; G. Li, 2007; Huss-Keeler, 1997). The reason for this may be that Paterson Primary School was highly multicultural, so teachers there were more open and accepting. In addition, the school principal herself was from an immigrant background and this may have an impact on the school staff's attitudes towards people from linguistic and cultural backgrounds different from their own.

No teachers said that ESL parents were uninterested in their children's learning or responsible for their underperformance, also shown in other studies (Henderson, 2007; G. Li, 2007; Huss-Keeler, 1997). Instead, the teachers in this study acknowledged that it would take some time for new ESL students to adjust in the new school culture, and gradually every student would reach the expected level in the content areas of the curriculum, together with an improvement in their English proficiency. This view reflects the idea that ESL children may need five to seven years to improve their English proficiency and perform well in academic tasks (Cummins, 1984, 2000). These teachers also mentioned that not all ESL children come to Australia with poor English, and they had found some new ESL students with English as good as that of their English-speaking peers. However, the teachers expected parents to do several tasks to support their children and they found some parents were not fulfilling their duties. In relation to this, they did not say that parents were not interested in their children's learning as shown in other studies (G. Li, 2007; Huss-Keeler, 1997), but mentioned that the parents were busy. The teachers also knew that a number of parents at Paterson Primary School were postgraduate students.

Finally, the teachers in this study acknowledged there were occasional communication barriers between them and new ESL parents, a finding revealed by other studies (G. Li, 2007; Huss-Keeler, 1997). The teachers, however, said that the main reason for these barriers was cultural differences, as Alice indicated above, rather than

the parents' lack of English as other studies show. The teachers further expressed the view that parents should take the initiative to communicate with the school staff, as did the teachers in other studies, such as Huss-Keeler (1997).

9.4 ALIGNMENT OF PARENT AND TEACHER PERSPECTIVES

The main purpose of this study was to explore how the perspectives of newly arrived ESL parents and mainstream Australian teachers were related. A good match of perspectives, therefore, is likely to lead to parent satisfaction, while a poor match is likely to lead to parent dissatisfaction. It is not problematic when parent and teacher perspectives align but when they differ, children's literacy learning could be affected. Section 9.4.1 outlines the main areas where parents and teachers expressed similar views, while 9.4.2 discusses contexts where these two groups expressed different views. The results of this comparison represent a new contribution to the field, as such a comparison has not been made in previous research to this researcher's knowledge.

9.4.1 Matches between parent and teacher perspectives

There are certain aspects of literacy teaching/learning, where the parent and teacher views match. These views can be summarised as follows:

- literacy learning is fun
- literacy learning is practical and for life
- learning literacy means learning to be multiliterate
- teacher support strengthens student learning
- reading books at home promotes literacy
- self-motivated learning is to be encouraged

These are addressed separately below.

Literacy learning is fun

As mentioned in Chapter Seven, all six parent participants agreed that their children learned in a fun environment and enjoyed learning in their new Australian classrooms. Here, they said, children were tension free, unlike in their home countries, where they were pressured to learn literacy skills, teachers were strict, and students were punished if they did not follow exactly what teachers said. Binod and Nita even mentioned that their children did not want to go back to their countries because they were enjoying school life in Australia. This means that even if the parents did not know exactly what their children were learning at school, they were satisfied that whatever the children were learning, it was enjoyable and engaging.

To make their lessons interesting, teachers used a variety of authentic and attractive resources, and organised a range of activities (see Chapter Eight). They never punished students or made negative comments, but always gave positive feedback, no matter whether they achieved highly or little (Fieldnotes, 2009). During the individual interview, Lily mentioned that her son's teacher emphasised that the children's happiness in the classroom was her top priority. According to Lily, the teacher said to Lily's son, "Bayu, you just do whatever you can. You don't need to get depressed. Most important thing is you feel happy at school, you feel happy in the classroom" (Lily, Interview, p. 19).

Literacy learning is practical and for life

The interviewed parents and teachers both agreed that in Australia children do not learn in a rote fashion. Instead, they learn from their experience and they are provided real life contexts, as shown by letters to troops in Afghanistan and the topic of cyber

bullying. As other examples from Chapters Seven and Eight have shown, parents' and teachers' views match well on the importance of life related school incursions, excursions, sleepovers and camps.

Learning literacy means learning to be multiliterate

The importance of learning to be multiliterate was emphasised by both parents and teachers. What the parents said about the practice of a multiliteracies pedagogy in Paterson Primary School is discussed in detail in Chapter Seven. The teachers' use of the multiliteracies pedagogy was particularly observed during the lesson observations, and presented in Chapter Eight. Again, there was a good match between parents' and teachers' perspectives on the value of multiliteracies.

Teacher support strengthens student learning

All the parents interviewed agreed that teacher support at Paterson Primary School was very effective; it was necessary to strengthen children's literacy learning. They mentioned that because of the teachers' continuous positive feedback, their children were improving gradually and encouraged towards learning. The small size of the school in terms of student number (233 altogether) could be taken as an asset, because teachers knew all the students by their names. The teachers' main focus at interview was also to help every child reach her/his potential level. For this, they focused on fulfilling individual student's learning needs. They were observed giving positive feedback and being encouraging as the parents said. Regarding teacher support, parent and teacher perspectives matched.

Reading books at home promotes literacy

The parents mentioned that reading a variety of books at home helped improve their children's literacy skills. As discussed in Chapter Seven, they found the formal reading

programs, such as ‘The Premier’s Reading Challenge’ useful. They said it was good that every week the children borrowed books from the school library. Teachers at Paterson Primary School highly valued extensive reading. In fact, the teachers considered 15 to 20 minutes of reading at home was ‘homework.’ All the teachers interviewed agreed that they encouraged students to read different materials, such as books, magazines and newspapers every night. This demonstrates parent and teacher perspectives also matched well in regard to children’s extensive reading.

Self-motivated learning is to be encouraged

Another area of literacy pedagogy where the parents and teachers agreed was the importance of self-motivated learning. All parent participants agreed that children’s independent learning strategies are encouraged in Australian schools, and that this is positive. A sociocultural theory-based literacy curriculum, such as VELs, encourages a child-centred pedagogy, which leads to autonomous or independent learning, a key aspect of the Australian society.

It can be seen from the above that the parents were in agreement with teachers in some areas of literacy pedagogy. There were other areas where conflicts could be seen because of their different understandings about literacy teaching and learning.

9.4.2 Disparities between parent and teacher perspectives

The parents and teachers were found to be in disagreement in various aspects of literacy pedagogy. Disparities in their views were mostly in the areas where the parents expressed their dissatisfaction. The main differences of opinion were on:

- prescribed textbooks and literacy learning
- Australian literacy teaching approaches

- explicit curriculum/syllabus
- role of parents
- daily homework
- regular examinations
- role of school newsletters
- getting the message across

These are discussed in turn below.

Prescribed textbooks and literacy learning

One of the areas where teacher and parent perspectives did not match was on the use of textbooks. All parents interviewed said that their children used to have prescribed textbooks when they were in their home countries. From these, parents would know what was being taught in school. In contrast, children in Australia did not have textbooks as such. As a result, the parents said, they did not know what their children were learning at school. Five out of six parents expressed their frustration about how helpless they felt at not knowing the actual content teachers taught inside the classroom. They considered textbooks as the most essential part of literacy pedagogy in any context.

Teachers, on the other hand, had a different perspective regarding textbooks. As discussed in Chapter Eight, they emphasised catering for individual student needs. Therefore, the teachers said, they did not follow prescribed textbooks. According to the school principal, a book suitable for one student may not be suitable for the other. In the place of textbooks, teachers used different sorts of text materials on the basis of teaching topics. Their main focus of teaching reading was to teach students ‘reading

strategies' so that students could read a range of texts. The parents' views on textbooks reflected their need to understand the curriculum, while the teachers' views reflected their philosophy on learning.

Australian literacy teaching approaches

Disparities were seen in parent and teacher perspectives in some of the teaching approaches as well. In the question, "Do you know what your children learn in reading and writing lessons at their school?" All parents replied, "No!" They drew attention to the uneven development of skills in classrooms. Sharon, for example, said that her daughter borrowed books from the library, so she could listen to KC reading, but she did not see much writing being practised. Binod gave credit to his own family in the progress of Atul's reading and writing, not the school. According to him the school only helped Atul improve in speaking. In the question, "What is your child learning in reading at school?," all six parents mentioned books from the library, but that they did not know how teachers were teaching reading (or writing) inside the classroom.

Contrary to parents' responses, observation data showed that teachers taught reading and writing systematically. As mentioned in Chapter Eight, they used a whole language approach to teach reading and a genre-based approach to teach writing. They taught particular writing styles accompanied by grammar, vocabulary and spelling appropriate to particular writing texts. For example, in Amber's and Andrew's combined class, they were teaching 'report writing.' During the lesson, they told students that they had to use the simple present tense if they were describing animals and they had to use past tense if they were talking about history, such as in a description of Ned Kelly. They also said students should not use personal pronouns in their report. In the course of reading lessons, teachers drew students' attention to vocabulary and grammar. They were observed teaching figurative language, alliteration, onomatopoeic

words and tenses as well. They tried to encourage students to use them in their own writing and to make students aware of these language items while reading different sorts of texts. If parents had had the opportunity like myself to observe lessons on reading and writing, they may have shifted their perspectives regarding the specific content being taught.

Explicit curriculum/syllabus

In comparison to the South East Asian parents, Dewita, Lily and Sharon, the South Asian parents, Binod, Nita and Tara, showed great concern about the curriculum. They stated that the school did not give them any guidelines or syllabus, so they were unable to tell what exactly their children were learning at school or how to support them at home. According to these parents, what they got from the information night regarding the curriculum at the beginning of the year, was too general to understand what the curriculum was and how it worked.

The teachers in fact, had an extensive curriculum document, VELS, which guided them in their teaching programs. Although the curriculum and much other school-related information were readily available on the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) website, no parent mentioned about this website during the focus group or individual interview. This may mean that they did not know about this website or their awareness of curriculum relied entirely on the school as in their home countries. In fairness, it seems likely that most parents do not read through difficult online curriculum documents to understand their children's programs.

Role of parents

Although the parents were actively involved in supporting their children to complete project work and encouraged them to read different sorts of books, they did not feel they

were helping their children much to develop literacy learning. Five parents said that they had been more involved in their children's learning when they were in their home countries, because they needed to help their children complete daily homework. They expressed the feeling that their parental role in Australia was not strong enough. For example, Lily thought she was fulfilling only 25% or less of her responsibility. According to her, her role in Australia was less strong because she did not need to help her children complete their homework every day as she used to do in Indonesia. Similarly, Dewita thought she was fulfilling simply 15% of her normal parental role. However, they were doing what teachers expected.

The teachers suggested parents could support their children in three areas (see Chapter Eight). Firstly, they could encourage children to read every night for 15 to 20 minutes. Every teacher, including the principal, highly emphasised that reading a variety of books was very useful to develop children's literacy learning. Secondly, parents could help children do their project work. For example, they could help children to research and find information as Amber said, "If we are doing a project or something like that, we might be researching something so I guess helping them with research at home will be helpful" (Interview, p. 15). Thirdly, they could do what was suggested in their children's report card. Even though no parent, except for Sharon, mentioned they did what was suggested in their children's report card, all of them agreed that they supported in the former two areas. Even so, they still thought their role as parents was weak. This was because their prior experience was different from what they found in Australia.

Daily homework

Another area where teacher and parent perspectives did not match was the area of homework. All the parents interviewed showed a great concern regarding homework.

They said their children did not have regular homework. All parents agreed that they did not see any particular reading or writing homework given, except the project work. Because of the lack of homework, they said they were unable to know what exactly their children were learning at school. They said, although the children borrowed two books from the school library every week they would not read these books every day. There was no compulsion to read, and teachers did not punish students who did not. In such a situation, according to Nita, only “God-gifted children” could excel, not all children. Only Dewita did not complain about the lack of regular homework. The remaining parents wanted some regular work done at home with the name ‘homework.’ Binod, Nita, and Tara were frustrated to see their children having a lot of free time at home, most of which they spent in front of the computer or television. They saw this as wasted time.

The school on the other hand, had a clear homework policy, mentioned in the class newsletter, according to which every child was expected to do 30 minutes of homework every day. This excluded weekends and other holidays. All teachers were against worksheet-based repetitive types of homework, but which parents wanted to see. According to the teachers, such repetitive activities could not improve learning further. For them daily homework was to read 15 to 20 minutes and to do about 10 minutes of maths. Parents were expected to sign the student diary to show that their children had read something, as mentioned above. In addition, students were also expected to research at home to complete their project work, if the time available at school was not enough. Hema, the school principal explained clearly what homework meant to Paterson Primary School as follows:

We don't encourage parents to take their children home after school and give them mountains of academic work to do. I find homework for the sake of

homework is not beneficial in any way. Homework, whether the child actually goes and extends on the work that they've learnt or maybe explores skills that they've learnt at school or collects research materials or works on a project. That sort of homework is fine or if they have a particular English problem or maths problem, then go home and practise in it, it's all right but not continued homework day after day.

(Hema, Interview, p. 9)

Hema's view clearly differs from what parents expected as homework. She accepted that it was a big challenge for the school to make migrant parents, especially from an Asian background, understand exactly what homework means in the Australian context. This was because, according to her, "these parents come from very traditional backgrounds from Asian countries where keeping the child busy for hours after school is accepted as normal" (Hema, Interview, p. 10). Even if the principal was aware of the 'problem,' it remained the same. The outcome, in spite of a clear school policy, which teachers could explain, was that parents were uninformed about what homework their children were supposed to complete, and they wanted to see a lot more.

Regular examinations

Regarding examinations, parent and teacher perspectives similarly did not match. The parents thought their children should take tests on a regular basis so that both parents and children would know what they had achieved and in which areas they needed improvement. Because of the lack of such examinations, the parents were unable to know where their children stood among their peers. These parents were keen to see their children's rank in the class. Binod, Nita, and Tara added that since their children did not need to sit for any examinations, the children did not have a feeling of competition and obligation towards studies. As a result, they did not pay much attention to their studies and were not achieving what they used to achieve in the schools in their home countries.

Unlike parents' expectations of 'scores,' students' achievement was rated in an 'A to E' scale (see Chapter Two) in a school report card. This was not a ranking system, and was seen as unhelpful to parents in terms of estimating their children's position among their friends. According to Nita, almost all students of the same year level got 'C' in all curriculum areas, which was quite strange for her.

On the other hand, although it was true that teachers did not use examinations to rank students, they did however, continuously evaluate them in a formative way. The teachers also said that they did a lot of diagnostic tests at the beginning of each year and grouped students on the basis of their abilities, putting students of similar abilities in the same group. Throughout the year they evaluated students and when they found improvement in a student, they changed the group for that student. For example, if a student was in a 'lower level ability group' in the beginning, it was not necessary that s/he remained in the same group for the whole year. Students could be moved to the 'medium level ability group' or 'high level ability group' on the basis of their improvement on assigned tasks. Teachers always tried hard to support every student to reach their full potential in all areas. Thus, while it was true that the school did not rank students against parents' expectations, assessment was carried out informally without the parents being aware of it.

Role of school newsletters

The school newsletters were published fortnightly and sent home, with information relating to the school and up-to-date information for families. There were also class newsletters. At the beginning of every term, these newsletters were sent home to the parents of the year level. For example, there was a newsletter for Years 3/4 parents. In the class newsletter, the teachers of that particular class wrote all the programs that they

were going to do in the particular term. The school and class newsletters were primary sources to inform parents about the school activities and curriculum.

Although the parents interviewed said that they read school newsletters regularly, they mentioned that they mainly read only the front page, where a calendar was given so that they could know what events were going to happen on which day or date, in their children's class, for example, when there was an excursion or sleepover. No parent except Binod mentioned the student work published in those newsletters. In fact none of the parents made specific reference to the class newsletters. Even though the principal stated her belief that in comparison to parents at other schools with an Anglo-Saxon population, parents at Paterson Primary School read school newsletters, this did not seem to be the case.

Getting the message across

Although the school tried to inform parents about literacy practices at the school in different ways, these parents did not get the intended message. For the school staff, giving information about these programs to parents meant inviting them to participate in them, but for these ESL parents 'information' and 'invitation' meant two different things. For example, when I received an email from my son's teacher regarding the 'parents as helpers' program, I perceived it just as 'information,' not an 'invitation' but in fact she was inviting me to take part in the program. This happened because of cultural differences. In the Australian culture an indirect way may be used to invite someone, whereas in the Nepali culture it is direct. That is, until and unless you are asked, "You are invited to take part in...", you do not feel you should attend the program. Unlike in Australia, giving information does not mean that parents are really needed. This is the result of cultural norms within different Discourses.

This explanation can be applied to other programs offered by the school, such as the curriculum information night or parent-teacher interviews. At these events in Australia, parents are expected to ask questions or express concerns if they have any. This expectation is reflected in research literature as well. Whenever the relationship between the school and parents is mentioned, the word 'home' or 'parents' usually comes first, e.g. home-school partnerships (*School Newsletters*, Terms 1 & 3, 2009), home-school communication (DEECD, 2010), and parent-teacher interviews (DEECD, 2010; *School Newsletter*, Term 2, 2009). This may mean that it is the parents' responsibility to take an initiative to establish a relationship with the school, because schools are for 'their' children and they have every right to raise their concerns. In contrast, parents from other cultures, such as the Nepali culture, may feel uncomfortable to take the initiative to speak with teachers, because they have learned throughout their lives only to listen to teachers but not to ask questions, and to accept the school's decisions. In such a situation parents may expect teachers to take the initiative and to provide detailed instructions.

The aspects of literacy practices that Paterson Primary School valued were reflected in the texts published in school newsletters. In one of the newsletters (Term 1, 2009) there was a mention of a student reading aloud to a dog. This example reveals the place of dogs in different cultures, which are treated from my point of view like human beings in Australia. Imagining a student reading to a dog is not likely in many other cultures. Even though it was mentioned in the newsletter (Term 2, 2009) that parents were invited to the school assembly, it was not clear that attending this assembly was a way to get information as a parent. It seemed that the school staff assumed that all parents know what happens at the school assembly, which may not be true. I myself knew this only after one and half years at school. Public events were given top priority and always published in the newsletters, and the reason for this was that the information

about those events could be teaching content. Unfortunately, the parents did not know this and were worried about not knowing what the teachers taught inside the classroom.

It can be assumed that the school staff were the full members of the school Discourse and they expected parents to participate in the school community. For this, according to the principal and teachers, different opportunities were provided. Since they were members of the dominant community and more powerful, they did not need to learn about other secondary Discourses to which ESL parents belonged. Instead, they wanted the ESL children and parents to fit in the school Discourse. As one group were new and partial members of the school Discourse and the other full members, effective communication was not always easy, and there still existed many misunderstandings.

9.5 SUMMARY

This section has interpreted the findings of this study using sociocultural theories of literacy. Gee's notion of Discourses provided a key lens. His concepts of 'contradiction,' 'assimilation,' 'negotiation,' and 'power relations' were helpful to interpret the parent data. Teacher data were interpreted using different aspects of the view of 'literacy as a social practice.' Those aspects were a whole language approach and a genre-based approach to literacy, as well as multiliteracies and experiential learning. Similarities and differences between findings of this study and other studies were also presented. Finally, parent and teacher perspectives on literacy pedagogy were compared. In some areas, such as enjoyment of literacy learning, the importance of extensive reading, and the use of multiliteracies, their perspectives matched. There were other areas, such as the use of textbooks, daily homework, and role of school newsletters, where disparities were found in parent and teacher views. The next section addresses these disparities and makes some recommendations to improve the home-

school partnerships in multicultural settings. It also presents the limitations of the study and makes suggestions for further research.

9.6 BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Coming from different sociocultural backgrounds, parents and teachers in the study shared similarities in some respects. However, they were also found to have different understandings of certain aspects of literacy pedagogy, as discussed above. This group of newly arrived ESL parents comes from a traditional literacy teaching background, underpinned by a theory of literacy as a cognitive ability, activated when all children learn the same content, usually prescribed in textbooks. This perspective did not match that of mainstream Australian teachers. These teachers considered literacy as a social practice and believed that literacy teaching/learning materials were better found in real texts available in real society. Furthermore, these textbooks could not cater for individual student's needs. As for textbooks, disparities in other areas also resulted from these people's different social norms, values and beliefs.

If I go back to my research questions, the first two questions were related firstly to parent perspectives on literacy pedagogy and secondly, how teachers actually teach inside the classroom and speak about their work. The findings reveal that although teachers taught systematically, followed a curriculum, assessed children's improvement throughout the year, and aimed to cater for every single child's needs, parents were unaware of these practices. This shows that the existing communication system, which was the focus of the third research question, was not sufficient to inform new ESL parents, who were the focus in this study.

The most urgent issue to be addressed is to help newly arrived ESL parents become aware of the approaches to literacy pedagogy in Australia. It should be noted

that the group of ESL parents in this study was educated enough to analyse literacy teaching/learning practices in their home countries as well as those in Australia. In addition, they all were familiar with English language teaching, and the four children out of the seven, had English as a medium of instruction in their home countries. However, these parents still did not know what exactly Australian teachers teach in the classroom and how they teach content. What can the situation be therefore for those ESL parents who are less educated or educated solely in their first language? It is hard for them to collaborate with teachers without English language proficiency and the knowledge of the new school Discourse. For the educated parents who can communicate with teachers in English, it is however much easier to establish collaboration with teachers. Cummins (2003) says that collaborative power relations are helpful to negotiate identities between people from the dominant group and the minority group. The school teachers therefore need to exercise collaborative power relations more with the newly arrived ESL parents, so that they will be able to understand the previous school experiences of newly arrived students. At the same time, these teachers are able to make Australian literacy pedagogy clear to the parents.

The theory of Discourses says if one wants to be a member of a certain Discourse s/he must know all the rules and regulations of that Discourse in order to participate in it. For newly arrived ESL parents, classroom observation can be a starting point to participate in the Discourse of Australian schooling to know about what and how teachers teach in literacy lessons. The school principal stressed that parents may come into the classroom, but the problem is that parents are not sure if it is appropriate to enter the class and observe lessons. Although Hema said that the information regarding classroom observation is given in the school newsletter, no explicit information as such was found in a reading of newsletters for 2009. There were invitations for parents to come to the classroom to help their children on special

occasions, such as literacy week, science week, and numeracy week. Parents were also invited as parent helpers to listen to student reading or do whatever the class teacher asked them to do. These programs were for all parents, not for only new ones. The school could develop a mechanism to invite newly arrived ESL parents, in particular, to observe a series of literacy lessons. This would help them to understand literacy pedagogy and text materials used in those lessons. According to my experience, this is the best way to learn about the classroom practices. It should also be noted that when the teachers give indirect information to parents, this is simply 'information' for those parents. It is not perceived as an invitation, whereas for the teachers the information itself is an 'invitation,' as discussed earlier. So, invitations should be clearly spelled out with the emphasis that parents are really needed and appreciated. This would help to establish a collaborative power relationship.

In addition to classroom observations, a special curriculum night program or at least a dedicated session for newly arrived ESL parents could be organised to address the issues in detail of textbooks, homework policy, assessment system, literacy pedagogy, communication system, teacher expectations of parents, and parents' role to support their children and, parents also need the opportunity to raise these questions. Newly arrived ESL parents surely need explicit information on these issues as early as possible. Otherwise their excessive anxieties will take some back to their home countries, like Tara, who left Australia six months earlier than planned.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) provides a set of guidelines related to home-school partnerships which imply a collaborative power relationship. The recommendations of this study could be considered by the DEECD to strengthen the relationship between

Victorian school teachers and newly arrived school parents. This will make existing literacy programs more effective.

9.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is unique in the sense that, not only as a researcher but also as an ESL parent, I observed the literacy practices of Paterson Primary School very closely. Six parents and five school staff participated in the study from whom thick and descriptive data was collected, which was helpful to better understand this case study. Since a case represents the whole system, the features of the system can be found in the case itself (Stake, 2005). From this perspective, the findings of this study can be applicable to similar contexts to that of Paterson Primary School. In terms of population, the participants are highly educated, thus, the findings may not be generalisable, but human experience, which is influenced by a broader social system, can be generalised.

Despite having these strengths the study has some limitations. The data were collected within a limited time and space, so the study could only represent that time and space. As mentioned above, the study used a small sample size: six ESL parents and five mainstream teachers, who cannot be representative of all ESL parents and mainstream teachers in Victoria, Australia. In addition, it lacked father perspectives since there was only one father among six parents. This was because mostly mothers collected their children after school. Although the new ESL students' literacy learning was observed in school in 16 lessons, their home literacy practices were not observed. Finally, owing to the lack of funds to pay for translators and interpreters, the data could not be collected from parents with low literacy or from parents with limited or no English.

9.8 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study shows that more comparative studies are needed to understand ESL parent and school teacher perspectives on literacy pedagogy. To broaden the scope of further research, studies could be conducted with a wider population, not focusing on a single school. The group of parent participants in this study was from literate backgrounds that do not represent all ESL parents in Victoria. Many parents from refugee backgrounds, for example, have not had the benefits of prior education. It would be important to learn what different groups of parents perceive literacy pedagogy in Australian schools to be.

The issue of the importance of digital literacy has arisen in this study from a parent perspective. Even though all parents I interviewed favored digital literacy to some extent to help develop their children's literacy learning, at the same time they were worried that excessive use of digital media could be destructive to their children. This issue could also be further investigated, along with further research on the actual effects of structured homework and quantitative classroom testing.

The voices of students are missing in this research project. Further research could focus on these students' own accounts of their transitions between schools in their countries of origin and those in Australia.

It is hoped this study makes a small but significant contribution to understanding the issues that arise for ESL parents as their children enter Australian classrooms, experience new literacy practices, and new cultural norms and Discourses.

CODA: MY LEARNING AS AN ESL PARENT

I started this research with an understanding of literacy as a cognitive ability. In addition, for me, literacy pedagogy meant purely print literacy practices. In the course of my research, I developed my theoretical understanding of literacy and how it can be taught as a social practice. I got opportunities to realise the knowledge of social theories of literacy by observing the literacy lessons and other school activities at Paterson Primary School.

Until I started to observe actual lessons in the classrooms, I had often had many questions about the literacy teaching and learning practices. Gradually I realised, in fact that teachers were teaching systematically. The content was related to the students' lives and the outer world. Content was not fixed by using lessons from a textbook, but lessons were formed around real events as contexts. These events were familiar to students. For example, reading a text and writing a description about the Melbourne Cup, writing a poem about Remembrance Day or writing a report about a football match. From the perspective of literacy teaching, such public events were very important. Furthermore, bringing them into the classroom helped new ESL students to understand the Australian culture.

I found the classroom a miniature world where teachers tried to familiarise students with the things that they might need later in their lives. For example, students were practising the skills of editing, interviewing, researching, making PowerPoint presentations, and giving oral presentations. They were encouraged to paraphrase the texts that they had read, with the help of key words to write their own descriptions. In this way, students learned how to avoid plagiarism. It was amazing that as a PhD student, I was also learning the same things that primary school students were learning. Furthermore, students were taught literary terms, such as alliteration, onomatopoeia,

and figurative language, which I only came to know in Year 11. Students were exposed to a wide range of language and literacy areas. It was hard for a new ESL parent to know what exactly her/his child was learning at school.

It was true that students could gradually improve in the areas where they had interests and teachers helped them to explore their strengths and excel in them. For example, when my son was in the childcare centre in 2002/2003 in Melbourne, his teacher wrote in his report that Atul could concentrate during story time, could make up his own stories, could speak clearly and with confidence, and he was often a leader in his group. The important part of these comments was that after nearly five or six years, his primary school teachers also found the same strengths in him. It means that teachers in Australia focus on bringing out each and every student's potential by creating different opportunities and helping students excel in the areas of their interests. In the beginning, I used to complain that Atul was not learning anything at school but gradually I could see how he was progressing. In Year 5, he could write beautiful stories, and his teacher identified his story writing skill and awarded him as encouragement. The school also organised the Toastmasters International public speaking contest for Year 6 students, where Atul got a first prize. He was chosen to be one of the several school captains to give him an opportunity to develop his leadership qualities. The teachers recognised his qualities and gave him many opportunities to hone them.

The students' overall development was the main focus at the school, not only reading and writing or tests. I came to strongly believe that children were given a lot of opportunities by exposing them to a wider world to explore their interests and gradually sharpen them. Those interests could not always necessarily be academic ones. For example, if some students' interest was in sports, they could explore that or if one was

good at acting, there were opportunities for her/him to develop this quality. I learned that the teachers were supporting every student to “thrive, learn, and grow to enjoy a productive, rewarding, and fulfilling life” (DEECD, 2010). I started my PhD journey with the knowledge of a single notion of literacy and completed it with the understanding of multiliteracies, which I found very exciting and eye-opening.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

First journal entry

6/8/2008 Entry 1

Parents' expectation regarding literacy of young ESL learners: a reflection

I still remember when Atul (pseudonym), my 4th grader son, was in Nepal, used to carry a big bag full of different books and exercise books to go to school and he was busy doing his homework after school. Not only this, most of the time I (or his dad) needed to be available to prepare him for the next day's class test of English, maths, science, social studies or Nepali (one subject a day). In short, he was occupied with his study most of the time which was enough to assure us that our child was doing very well in school.

On the contrary, now, while he is studying in an Australian school, I can't see any books or notes-books in his bag. Sometimes he brings a sheet of paper or topic book and completes his nominal homework within no time! Every day I ask him two questions, "What did you study today?" and "Don't you have any homework?" Response for the first question: "Global warming/ sustainability (for the whole month!)" and for the second: "NO (most often)!" I wish he could spend more time in his reading and writing at home, but it is about a month of his schooling, and I have not seen him struggling with his study which was quite common in Nepal. In addition, I have not seen any of his written work being checked yet.

When I compare these two different schooling cultures, it compels me to ponder, "What is our son doing in his school? Is he studying well? Does he not need any text book for reading? Does he not do a lot of writing? Why does he not talk about different subjects? Why is he always relaxed? Why does he always talk about playing or fun making in school? ..." Such questions are enough for me to get worried. I suspect Atul is not getting "standard education" in Australia. He may forget all the things that he had learnt in Nepal. When he goes back to his country he may not be able to compete with his peers.

My worry about my child's schooling does not mean that I am totally ignorant about Australian education system. I know it is one of the most advanced countries in the world which caters quality education from the very beginning. There happens to be a lot of research works based on most recent learning theories to implement any sort of education program in a school. People have a networking for learning that begins in a family and ends in the world; it is not confined only within a school. Still, how does a school help a child, especially who is not from a native English speaking country, in literacy development? What is the evidence of that?

The other day one of the parents whose daughter also goes to my son's school was expressing the same views as of mine. He said that children are taught strictly in their country but he did not see any strictness in Australia. Children are free and always play. But he was hopeful that the education system might be better which he can not understand at this stage.

To conclude, I can say that there is no doubt children are being taught more scientifically and practically in Australia but are new comer parents, who have very

different experience and culture of schooling in their countries, satisfied or happy with their children's learning? Don't they expect more (or less)? I wonder if other parents also share my views.

Appendix 2

Sample student report card

SAMPLE PRIMARY TEMPLATE

(Note: while the version on screen is in colour, it will print in black and white.)

Stephen Campbell

Year 4 Semester 1

| Learning Area | Rating | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 | Year 6 |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Health and Physical Education | E | ● | | | | |
| Interpersonal Development | B | | | | ● | |
| Personal Learning | A | | | | ● | |
| Civics and Citizenship | C | | | ● | | |
| The Arts | D | | ● | | | |
| English Reading | A | | | | ● | |
| Writing | C | | ● | | | |
| Speaking and listening | B | | | | ● | |
| The Humanities | C | | | ● | | |
| Maths Number | C | | | ● | | |
| Space | C | | | ● | | |
| Measurement, chance and data | C | | | ● | | |
| Structure | C | | ● | | | |
| Working mathematically | C | | | ● | | |
| Science | C | | | ● | | |
| Design, Creativity and Technology | C | | | ● | | |
| Information and Communications Technology | A | | | | | ● |
| Thinking Processes | C | | | ● | | |

Work habits

| | Needs Attention | Acceptable | Very Good | Excellent |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Effort | | | ● | |
| Class Behaviour | | ● | | |

Ratings:

- A Well above the standard expected at this time of year
- B Above the standard expected at this time of year
- C At the standard expected at this time of year
- D Below the standard expected at this time of year
- E Well below the standard expected at this time of year

Legend:

- Your child's achievement this year
- The expected level of achievement

What Stephen has achieved

Stephen continues to read with enthusiasm, and can readily explain the main ideas in the books he reads, as well as predict what might happen next. In his oral report on 'families' he showed he can speak clearly, as well as keep his audience interested. In writing Stephen is beginning to use a wider range of kinds of sentences with more accurate punctuation.

Stephen has shown great improvement in his mental Mathematics and counting abilities. He can now add and subtract numbers to two decimal places, and add and subtract simple fractions.

In Science, Stephen has shown he can use measuring equipment accurately, and that he is able to draw sound conclusions from his observations. Stephen is working well above the standard expected in ICT. He is able to choose appropriate search engines on the internet and can do advanced searches very quickly to locate specific information.

In Civics and Citizenship Stephen produced a poster that showed he has a clear understanding of why it is important to look after our environment.

Stephen participates enthusiastically in team problem solving activities, provides reasons for the ideas that he presents, and listens attentively to the ideas of others. Stephen has successfully led a small team of students to set classroom goals and procedures this semester that will improve our learning environment.

Areas for improvement/future learning

In writing, Stephen needs to improve his punctuation and use of tenses, and continue to widen the range of sentence structures that he uses.

In producing artworks this semester, Stephen needs to focus on planning before he begins his work, and thinking through how he can use materials creatively. He also needs to make sure he hands in his assignments on time.

In Physical Education, Stephen needs to work on mastering basic movement patterns and skills, particularly balancing, hopping and rolling. By taking a more active part in activities, Stephen will also increase his fitness level.

The school will do the following to support Stephen in his learning

Stephen will read texts that contain a range of different sentence structures and use these as models for his own writing.

In the Arts, Stephen will have a range of different activities to do that will be designed to encourage him to use different materials, and think about how to use them in different ways.

In Physical Education, he will have a partner assist him with rolling, balancing and hopping activities.

What you can do at home to help Stephen's progress

Encourage Stephen to talk about his artwork when he brings it home. If possible, encourage Stephen to get involved in more physical activity out of school, perhaps by joining a club of some kind.

Student Comment

I really like using computers at school and am learning lots of ways to find information for projects. I found some new ways to do advanced searches.

I am not doing so well at sport or art. I will try out different things next year in drawing and painting, and practise more in P.E. I will also try and make my writing as good as my reading and speaking.

Attendance

Stephen has been absent for four days this semester.

Teacher: Ms Jill Foster

June 2006

Parent Comment (please insert comments and send back to the school)

We are happy with how Stephen has worked in school this year. We know he has trouble with his motor coordination. We have discussed this with him and we will try to find a group for him to join to help him improve his coordination. Stephen really likes the computer and often spends time finding information for school. He has talked about all the things he likes and is looking forward to next year.

Parent: *Melanie Campbell*

Date: June 2006

You can ask the school to provide you with written information that clearly shows your child's achievement in the subjects studied in comparison to that of other children in the child's peer group at the school. This information will show you in which 25 per cent of his/her peer group your child is performing.

Appendix 3

Literacy learning outcomes: Laying foundation stage (Prep to Year 4)

English - Level 1 (Prep)

Learning focus

As students work towards the achievement of Level 1 standards in English, they draw on a range of experiences and skills with texts and language used at home and in the community when speaking, listening, reading and writing to establish a foundation for English learning in the school context.

Students learn to read simple, predictable [texts](#) that have familiar content. Texts at this level have simple sentences and predominantly oral language patterns, and include repetition of phrases and illustrations that represent the main ideas such as picture books. Students learn that print text maintains a constant message, and they use title, illustrations and knowledge of a text topic to predict meaning in texts.

They explore the purpose, formation and conventions of print and develop a working understanding of how sounds are represented alphabetically. To make meaning they use context and information about words, letters, combinations of letters and the sounds associated with them. They expand their vocabulary and use illustrations to extend meaning. With support they select their own reading material from a small range of familiar texts.

Students begin to compose simple texts about personally significant topics for their own purposes and audiences. When writing words and simple sentences they draw on their knowledge of the alphabet and its relationship with the sound system, conventional letters, groups of letters and some simple punctuation such as full stops and capital letters to communicate meaning. They begin to recognise that writing is used to convey ideas, feelings and information, and they discuss the purposes of their writing and the sources of their ideas. They learn to form letters correctly and to use a range of writing implements.

Students regularly make brief presentations on a specified topic to small groups or the whole class, learning to speak at an appropriate volume and pace for listeners' needs. They practise sequencing main events and ideas coherently and self-correct by rephrasing when meaning is not clear. They contribute ideas during class and group discussion, and follow simple instructions. They learn to retell what they have heard and ask and answer simple questions for information and clarification.

Students learn and practise the skills of being attentive listeners in formal and informal classroom situations. They listen and respond to a range of simple texts, including books read aloud, audio tapes and films, and to brief spoken texts that deal with familiar ideas and information. Students begin to adjust their speaking and listening to suit context, purpose and audience in order to communicate meaning and to understand others. When sharing and responding to ideas and information in print, visual and electronic texts, students make connections with their own experiences and ideas.

Standards

Reading

At Level 1, students match print and spoken text in their immediate environment. They recognise how sounds are represented alphabetically and identify some sound-letter relationships. They read aloud simple print and electronic texts that include some

frequently used words and predominantly oral language structures. They read from left to right with return sweep, and from top to bottom. They use title, illustrations and knowledge of a text topic to predict meaning. They use context and information about words, letters, combinations of letters and the sounds associated with them to make meaning, and use illustrations to extend meaning.

Writing

At Level 1, students write personal recounts and simple texts about familiar topics to convey ideas or messages. In their writing, they use conventional letters, groups of letters, and simple punctuation such as full stops and capital letters. Students are aware of the sound system and the relationships between letters and sounds in words when spelling. They form letters correctly, and use a range of writing implements and software.

Speaking and listening

At Level 1, students use spoken language appropriately in a variety of classroom contexts. They ask and answer simple questions for information and clarification, contribute relevant ideas during class or group discussion, and follow simple instructions.

They listen to and produce brief spoken texts that deal with familiar ideas and information. They sequence main events and ideas coherently in speech, and speak at an appropriate volume and pace for listeners' needs. They self-correct by rephrasing a statement or question when meaning is not clear.

English - Level 2 (Years 1 and 2)

Learning focus

As students work towards the achievement of Level 2 standards in English, they extend their knowledge of how language is used in a range of written and spoken [texts](#). With teacher support and through the sharing of texts, students develop a consciousness of texts – how they are constructed and the purposes they fulfil.

Students work towards independence in reading short texts with familiar ideas and information, some illustrations, predictable structures, uncomplicated sentences, a variety of tenses and a small amount of unfamiliar vocabulary. These include imaginative texts such as stories and poems, [everyday texts](#) and informative texts in print and electronic form. They develop [strategies for reading](#) texts, for example predicting meanings using [semantic](#), [syntactic](#) and [graphophonic cues](#). They learn to self-correct when reading aloud. They read and retell ideas in sequence using unfamiliar vocabulary and phrases from the text. They comment and act upon information.

Students engage in individual, small group and teacher-directed activities in which they read a variety of texts and explore the wide range of purposes, contexts and audiences for which texts are produced. They learn to recognise that texts are constructed by authors, and distinguish between texts that represent real and imaginary experience. Through class discussions they consider the opinions and viewpoints of others and become aware that there are different interpretations of texts. They begin to connect the themes and ideas in texts to their own knowledge and experience.

Students write short texts that include several related ideas in sequence, and, where relevant, combine writing with drawing or computer graphics. They experiment with more complex grammatical features, such as ways of linking ideas in sentences using pronouns, conjunctions and adverbial phrases indicating time and place. They

begin to spell frequently used words accurately (for example, *come, going, like*), most words of one syllable with regular spelling (for example, *sharp, thick, star*), and some two-syllable words with regular spelling (for example, *sunny, playing*). They learn to use capital letters, full stops and question marks correctly. They learn strategies for planning, composing, revising and editing their writing. They begin to expand their vocabulary and use resources such as dictionaries and spell-checking software. They experiment with written and electronic publishing options. When handwriting, they practise correct letter formation.

In planned and spontaneous activities, students explore the [structures and features of language](#) in spoken texts. They become increasingly aware of how and why their own speaking needs to be varied to suit different situations and audiences. Students focus on organising their ideas to make themselves understood and, with guidance, develop strategies to improve oral presentations, for example, by varying volume and pace.

Students practise the skills of being attentive listeners in a wider range of contexts. They listen to spoken texts that deal with familiar ideas and information, recall some of the main ideas and information presented, and use questions to clarify meaning. They listen to and interpret texts such as serialised readings or films.

National Statements of Learning

This learning focus statement, in conjunction with aspects of the [Communication Level 2](#) learning focus statement, incorporates aspects of the Year 3 National Statement of Learning for English.

Standards

Reading

At Level 2, students read independently and respond to short imaginative and informative texts with familiar ideas and information, predictable structures, and a small amount of unfamiliar vocabulary. They match sounds accurately to a range of letters, letter clusters and patterns, and work out the meaning of unfamiliar phrases and words in context. They locate directly stated information, retell ideas in sequence using vocabulary and phrases from the text, and interpret labelled diagrams. They predict plausible endings for stories and infer characters' feelings. They self-correct when reading aloud and describe strategies used to gain meaning. They identify that texts are constructed by authors, and distinguish between texts that represent real and imaginary experience.

Writing

At Level 2, students write short sequenced texts that include some related ideas about familiar topics. They write texts that convey ideas and information to known audiences. They select content, form and vocabulary depending on the purpose for writing, and describe the purpose and audience for their own and others' writing. They use appropriate structures to achieve some organisation of the subject matter. They link ideas in a variety of ways using pronouns, conjunctions and adverbial phrases indicating time and place. They accurately spell frequently used words, and make use of known spelling patterns to make plausible attempts at spelling unfamiliar words. They use capital letters, full stops and question marks correctly. They reread their own writing and use a range of editing resources to revise and clarify meaning. They write upper- and lower-case letters legibly with consistent size, slope and spacing.

Speaking and listening

At Level 2, students listen to and produce spoken texts that deal with familiar ideas and information. They demonstrate, usually in informal situations, that they are able to speak clearly using simple utterances and basic vocabulary. They organise spoken texts using simple features to signal beginnings and endings. They vary volume and intonation patterns to add emphasis. They contribute to group activities by making relevant comments and asking clarifying questions to facilitate communication. After listening to short live or recorded presentations, they recall some of the main ideas and information presented. They listen to others and respond appropriately to what has been said.

Year 3 National Literacy Benchmarks

The benchmarks describe minimum standards. For this reason, the Year 3 benchmarks relate to Level 2 English standards. Links to the literacy benchmarks are located at [Curriculum Corporation](#)

English - Level 3 (Years 3 and 4)

Learning focus

As students work towards the achievement of Level 3 standards in English, they speak, listen, read and write with some critical awareness, using a growing variety of text types and show some appreciation of the role of formal discourses in English.

Students read an increasing range of [texts](#) including imaginative texts such as chapter books, junior novels and poems, as well as informative texts, in print and electronic form. Texts typically have varied sentence patterns, written language structures and some specialised topic-related or literary vocabulary, and ideas and information extending beyond students' immediate experience. Students use a range of strategies to interpret the main ideas and purpose of texts – for example, interpreting figurative language or linking information from headings – and explore characters' qualities, motives and actions. Through discussion, students develop their understanding of why interpretations of a text may vary, and how the choice of subject matter is influenced by context, the author's purpose, and the intended audience. They read more critically and learn about the use of some simple symbolic meanings and stereotypes in texts.

Students develop confidence in writing a range of imaginative and informative texts, including simple narratives and descriptions, and texts that explain, inform and express a point of view. They draw on their knowledge of texts and language and learn to use a variety of sentences in appropriate grammatical order, using suitable vocabulary for the subject matter including nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs, and punctuating appropriately to support meaning including exclamation marks and quotation marks. They learn to spell most one- and two-syllable words with regular spelling patterns (for example, *growing, found, might*), frequently used words which have less regular spelling patterns (for example, *because, there, friends*), and some other words of more than one syllable (for example, *yesterday, afternoon, money*). They make plausible attempts at spelling new and more difficult words. They experiment with combining verbal and visual elements to enhance the texts they produce.

Students develop [strategies for writing](#) to assist in planning and organising ideas prior to writing, and adapt their writing to suit their audience and purpose. They learn to use a range of resources, including information and communications technology, to revise written work and check spelling.

Students recognise that speaking and listening provide opportunities to exchange information, to share and explore ideas, and to express opinions and listen to the opinions of others. They participate in discussions, conversations and presentations in small and large groups, learning to vary their speaking and listening to suit the context, purpose and audience. In spontaneous, planned and rehearsed situations they learn how to project their voice adequately for an audience and to use appropriate spoken language features such as sequence and past tense when recounting an event. When speaking, they recognise the need to rephrase statements to clarify meaning and information.

Students develop skills in listening attentively during class and group discussions, and to factual spoken texts such as audio, film and invited presentations. They practise identifying the topic, retelling information accurately, asking clarifying questions, volunteering information and justifying opinions.

National Statements of Learning

This learning focus statement, in conjunction with aspects of the [Communication Level 3](#) learning focus statement, incorporates aspects of the Year 3 National Statement of Learning for English.

Standards

Reading

At Level 3, students read and respond to an increasing range of imaginative and informative texts with some unfamiliar ideas and information, vocabulary and textual features. They interpret the main ideas and purpose of texts. They make inferences from imaginative text about plot and setting and about characters' qualities, motives and actions. They infer meaning from material presented in informative texts. They identify how language is used to represent information, characters, people, places and events in different ways including identification of some simple symbolic meanings and stereotypes. They use several strategies to locate, select and record key information from texts.

Writing

At Level 3, students write texts containing several logically ordered paragraphs that express opinions and include ideas and information about familiar topics. They write narratives which include characters, setting and plot. They order information and sequence events using some detail or illustrative evidence, and they express a point of view providing some information and supporting detail. They combine verbal and visual elements in the texts they produce. They meet the needs of audiences by including appropriate background information.

They write a variety of simple and compound sentences and use verb tenses correctly. They use punctuation to support meaning, including exclamation marks and quotation marks, and accurately use full stops, commas and question marks. They use vocabulary appropriate to context and spell most one- and two-syllable words with regular spelling patterns, and frequently used words which have less regular spelling patterns. They use sound and visual patterns when attempting to spell unfamiliar words.

Speaking and listening

At Level 3, students vary their speaking and listening for a small range of contexts, purposes and audiences. They project their voice adequately for an audience, use appropriate spoken language features, and modify spoken texts to clarify meaning and information.

They listen attentively to spoken texts, including factual texts, and identify the topic, retell information accurately, ask clarifying questions, volunteer information and justify opinions.

Year 5 National Literacy Benchmarks

The benchmarks describe minimum standards. For this reason, the Year 5 benchmarks relate to Level 3 English standards. Links to the literacy benchmarks are located at [Curriculum Corporation](#).

Appendix 4

Literacy learning outcomes: Building breadth and depth stage (Years 5 to 8)

English - Level 4 (Years 5 and 6)

Learning focus

As students work towards the achievement of Level 4 standards in English, they consolidate and build on their foundational learning in English related to texts and language.

Students compose, comprehend and respond to an expanding range of [texts](#) in print and audiovisual and electronic forms that contain increasingly unfamiliar concepts, themes, information and issues. With guidance, they reflect on reading, viewing, writing, speaking and listening in ways that develop considered and critical approaches to a range of texts. These include extended [literary texts](#) such as novels, short stories, poetry and non-fiction; [everyday texts](#); and [media texts](#) including newspapers, film and websites.

Students explore the relationship between the purpose and audience of texts and their structures and features, for example: sentence and paragraph structure, grammar, figurative language and organising structures in print texts; features of visual texts; and sound effects, characterisation and camera angles used in film. They develop their knowledge of how texts are constructed for particular purposes, and examine and challenge generalisations and simplistic portrayals of people and social and cultural issues. They learn how to draw evidence from texts to support their points of view. They experiment with several strategies when interpreting texts containing some unfamiliar ideas and information, for example, reading on, using diagrams, and differentiating between statements of fact or opinion.

Students write texts for a range of purposes that demonstrate their developing understanding of the way imagery, characterisation, dialogue, point of view, plot and setting contribute to the meaning of written and [multimodal texts](#). They use this reflection, and their developing knowledge of the generic structures of different types of texts (such as narratives, reports and arguments), as the basis for composing an increasing range of written and spoken texts. Students become more systematic in their use of [strategies for writing](#) (including note-making, using models, planning, editing and proofreading) and make decisions about appropriate [structures and features of language](#) in texts for different purposes and audiences. They develop terminology or [metalinguage](#) to talk about and describe particular structures and features of language. They develop a multi-strategy approach to spelling, applying [morphemic knowledge](#) and an understanding of visual and phonic patterns, and select vocabulary for precise meaning.

Students engage in exploratory talk to share and clarify their ideas, to formulate simple arguments and to seek the opinions of others. They participate in oral interactions for different purposes, including entertaining, informing and influencing others. Students learn to sustain a point of view, and provide succinct accounts of personal experiences or events.

They experiment with spoken language features such as pace, pitch and pronunciation to enhance meaning as they plan, rehearse and reflect on their presentations. They build their capacity to combine verbal and visual elements in texts to communicate ideas and information by using, for example, presentation software or overheads.

When listening, students practise identifying the main idea and supporting details of spoken texts and summarising them for others. They begin to identify opinions offered by others, propose other viewpoints, and extend ideas in a constructive manner.

National Statements of Learning

This learning focus statement, in conjunction with aspects of the [Communication Level 4](#) learning focus statement, incorporates aspects of the Year 5 National Statement of Learning for English.

Standards

Reading

At Level 4, students read, interpret and respond to a wide range of literary, everyday and media texts in print and in multimodal formats. They analyse these texts and support interpretations with evidence drawn from the text. They describe how texts are constructed for particular purposes, and identify how sociocultural values, attitudes and beliefs are presented in texts. They analyse imagery, characterisation, dialogue, point of view, plot and setting. They use strategies such as reading on, using contextual cues, and drawing on knowledge of text organisation when interpreting texts containing unfamiliar ideas and information.

Writing

At Level 4, students produce, in print and electronic forms, a variety of texts for different purposes using structures and features of language appropriate to the purpose, audience and context of the writing. They begin to use simple figurative language and visual images. They use a range of vocabulary, a variety of sentence structures, and use punctuation accurately, including apostrophes. They identify and use different parts of speech, including nouns, pronouns, adverbs, comparative adverbs and adjectives, and use appropriate prepositions and conjunctions. They use a range of approaches to spelling, applying morphemic knowledge and an understanding of visual and phonic patterns. They employ a variety of strategies for writing, including note-making, using models, planning, editing and proofreading.

Speaking and listening

At Level 4, students plan, rehearse and make presentations for different purposes. They sustain a point of view and provide succinct accounts of personal experiences or events. They adjust their speaking to take account of context, purpose and audience, and vary tone, volume and pace of speech to create or emphasise meaning.

When listening to spoken texts, they identify the main idea and supporting details and summarise them for others. They identify opinions offered by others, propose other relevant viewpoints and extend ideas in a constructive manner.

Appendix 5

Sample NAPLAN test questions

The Box

Today you are going to write a narrative or story.

The idea for your story is "The Box".

What is inside the box? How did it get there?
Is it valuable? Perhaps it is alive!

The box might reveal a message or something that
was hidden.

What happens in your story if the box is opened?

Think about:

- the characters and where they are
- the complication or problem to be solved
- how the story will end.

Remember to:

- plan your story before you start
- write in sentences
- pay attention to the words you choose,
your spelling and punctuation, and paragraphs
- check and edit your writing when you have finished.



—

■ ■

■

■

—

A large rectangular area with rounded corners, containing horizontal lines for writing. The area is bordered by a thick black line.

DO NOT WRITE OUTSIDE THE BORDER

—

2

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM
LITERACY AND NUMERACY

LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

YEAR
5
2009

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Is this student a BOY or a GIRL? | <input type="radio"/> Boy | <input type="radio"/> Girl |
| 2. Is this student Aboriginal? | <input type="radio"/> Yes | <input type="radio"/> No |
| 3. Is this student a Torres Strait Islander? | <input type="radio"/> Yes | <input type="radio"/> No |
| 4. Does this student have a language background other than English? | <input type="radio"/> Yes | <input type="radio"/> No |

TEST INSTRUCTIONS

1. You must do your own work.
2. Do not speak to other students during the test.
3. Raise your hand if you need to speak to the teacher.
4. Follow all directions given to you by the teacher.
5. All questions must be answered using the pencil you have been given. If you need to change an answer, carefully erase it and write another answer.
6. To confirm you have the correct booklet, print your name below.

Print your name here:

0:40

SESSION 1
Time available for students
to complete test: 40 minutes

Use 2B
pencil only



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YEAR 5 LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

The spelling mistake in this sentence has been circled.
Write the correct spelling for the circled word in the box.

P1 We went to (scool).

P1

This sentence has one word that is incorrect.
Write the correct spelling of the word in the box.

P2 We bought fresh bred.

P2

P3 Which word correctly completes the sentence?

Do you have pet?

a

if

he

she

☐

☐

☐

☐

Shade one bubble.



Read the text *Cats and dogs*. The text has a gap.
Choose the correct word or words to fill the gap.

Cats and dogs

Some people like cats **P4**
they like dogs.

- ☐ more
- ☐ more best
- ☐ more than
- ☐ more better

P5 Where do the **two** missing full stops (.) go?

We are having a party It will be fun



Shade two bubbles.



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YEAR 5 LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

The spelling mistakes in these sentences have been circled.
Write the correct spelling for each circled word in the box.

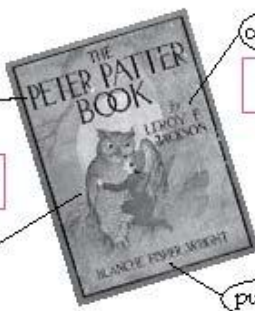
- 1 The baby was crying (becos) he was hungry. 1
- 2 She (thort) about the problem for a long time. 2
- 3 Rick measured the (lenth) of the string before he cut it. 3
- 4 My sister (gos) to dance classes. 4
- 5 Some spiders are very (dangerus). 5
- 6 We (finaly) finished our project. 6
- 7 The teacher drew a (kerved) line. 7
- 8 You must always exercise (cortion) when swimming in new places. 8

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YEAR 5 LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

The spelling mistakes in these labels have been circled. Write the correct spelling for each circled word in the box.

Book cover



titel 9

orthar 10

ilustrashun 12

publishor 11

Each sentence has one word that is incorrect. Write the correct spelling of the word in the box.

- 13 The ovarnighr rainstorm flooded the oval. 13
- 14 Jake sumtimes surprises his family by making biscuits for them. 14
- 15 A nurse helpes sick people. 15
- 16 The scientist was an expert in the feild of dinosaurs. 16
- 17 The bus stoped and the children got on. 17

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YEAR 5 LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

Each sentence has one word that is incorrect.
Write the correct spelling of the word in the box.

- | | | |
|----|--|-------------------------|
| 18 | I offen visit my uncle at the weekend. | <input type="text"/> 18 |
| 19 | My aunt was nitting a scarf. | <input type="text"/> 19 |
| 20 | Last week we went on an eckscursion. | <input type="text"/> 20 |
| 21 | The pirates found the presious jewels. | <input type="text"/> 21 |
| 22 | We could see the sails on the tall marsts from the shore. | <input type="text"/> 22 |
| 23 | There was great exitement before the fireworks commenced. | <input type="text"/> 23 |
| 24 | The school will hold its annuel swimming carnival next week. | <input type="text"/> 24 |
| 25 | The runners were exorsted after the race. | <input type="text"/> 25 |

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NATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM
LITERACY AND NUMERACY

READING

YEAR

5
2009

TEST INSTRUCTIONS

1. You must do your own work.
2. Do not speak to other students during the test.
3. Raise your hand if you need to speak to the teacher.
4. Follow all directions given to you by the teacher.
5. All questions must be answered using the pencil you have been given. If you need to change an answer, carefully erase it and write another answer.
6. To confirm you have the correct booklet, print your name below.

Print your name here:

0:50 Time available for students
to complete test: 50 minutes

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Use 2B
pencil only



YEAR 5 READING

Read *Helping our waterways* on page 2 of the magazine and answer questions 1 to 6.

1 What is the main message of these posters?

Shade one bubble.



- ☐ Land can easily be flooded.
- ☐ What we do affects waterways.
- ☐ We should spray pests and mow lawns.
- ☐ We should wear hats when working outside.

2 Why does Poster 1 say you should apply fertilisers and pesticides *only when the weather is fine*?

- ☐ Sunshine makes them work.
- ☐ You might get wet and catch a cold.
- ☐ Rain could wash them into waterways.
- ☐ They won't work if they get wet in the rain.

3 The words *aquatic life* in Poster 2 refer to

- ☐ bugs and insects.
- ☐ leaves and clippings.
- ☐ creatures in the garden.
- ☐ plants and animals in the water.

4 How do leaves and clippings kill aquatic life?

- ☐ They remove oxygen from water.
- ☐ They are turned into compost.
- ☐ They are eaten by fish.
- ☐ They cause run-off.

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YEAR 5 READING

5 According to Poster 2, what should we compost or mulch?

- ☐ fertiliser
- ☐ aquatic life
- ☐ garden waste
- ☐ oxygen from waste

Shade one bubble.



6 Why do the posters say *THE DRAIN IS JUST FOR RAIN* instead of saying *DON'T PUT GARDEN WASTE DOWN DRAINS*?

- ☐ They are comparing two things.
- ☐ It is clever to say one thing is another.
- ☐ The rhyme makes it easier to remember.
- ☐ People always do what they are told not to do.

Read *Little Hao and the Golden Kites* on page 3 of the magazine and answer questions 7 to 13.

7 Little Hao heard the sound of

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| the north wind. | a dragon. | kites. | drums. |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

8 Who flew a kite shaped like a dragon?

- ☐ Little Hao
- ☐ Lord North Wind
- ☐ Lord Noble Horse
- ☐ Lord Black Mountain

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YEAR 5 READING

9 The people said "Aaahh!" because

- ☐ the sunlight blinded their eyes.
- ☐ the dragon kite glistened above them.
- ☐ the dragon kite won the Emperor's prize.
- ☐ the wind was too strong for the dragon kite.

Shade one bubble.



10 Which word tells us that a kite flew high in the sky?

spread

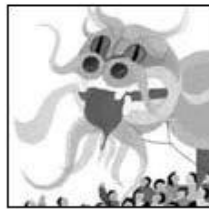
shining

soared

sparkled

☐
☐
☐
☐

11 Which kite belongs to Lord Noble Horse?


☐

☐

☐

12 Write the numbers 1 to 4 in the boxes to show the order of the following events in this story.

- ☐ The drums began to play.
- ☐ The people gathered by the steps.
- ☐ The people cheered their loudest.
- ☐ The fire kite sparkled.

Write one number in each box.



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YEAR 5 READING

13 The Emperor is most likely to award his prize to

- ☐ the kite that could fly highest.
- ☐ the kite that the people liked best.
- ☐ the kite that cost the most to make.
- ☐ the kite that belonged to the richest noble.

Shade one bubble.



Read *Should we pay for plastic bags?* on page 4 of the magazine and answer questions 14 to 19.

14 What was the focus of the students' research?

- ☐ how to make plastic bags cheaper
- ☐ how plastic bags contribute to pollution
- ☐ how many plastic bags are eaten by animals
- ☐ how much people would pay for plastic bags

15 Why has a question been used as the title of this text?

- ☐ to suggest the writer is an expert
- ☐ to argue that plastic bags kill animals
- ☐ to use humour to make readers laugh
- ☐ to encourage readers to think about the topic

16 Why are the words *break down* in brackets in the second paragraph?

- ☐ to give an example
- ☐ to give the meaning of *disintegrate*
- ☐ to tell readers how to say *disintegrate*
- ☐ to introduce a new idea to the readers

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YEAR 5 READING

17 What is the intended effect of including information about wildlife?

Shade one bubble.



- ☐ to convince the readers by using expert comments
- ☐ to show how detailed the research on wildlife was
- ☐ to exaggerate the impact of plastic bags on wildlife
- ☐ to make the readers feel guilty about using plastic bags

18 *Also, when plastic bags are made ...*

This paragraph is mainly about

- ☐ how plastic bags pollute the world.
- ☐ the ways plastic bags harm animals.
- ☐ the price people should pay for plastic bags.
- ☐ how many plastic bags people use each year.

19 The text suggests that people's behaviour will only change if

- ☐ other people change first.
- ☐ the environment is affected.
- ☐ they are affected themselves.
- ☐ an authority orders them to change.

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YEAR 5 READING

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Read *Tim* on the back cover of the magazine and answer questions P1 and P2.

P1 The story takes place on

- ☐ Monday.
- ☐ Tuesday.
- ☐ Wednesday.
- ☐ Thursday.

Shade one bubble.



P2 Write the numbers 1 to 4 in the boxes to show the order in which Tim dressed in this story.

- shoes
- shorts
- shirt
- socks

Write one number in each box.



Illustrations on page 4 adapted from *Little Ho and The Golden Kites* by Mavis Scott, A Little Ark Book, published by Allen & Unwin, 1995.

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The cover of the Reading Magazine 2009 Year 5 features a light blue background with intricate white and dark blue floral and vine patterns. A dark blue banner at the top contains the title 'Reading Magazine' in white, and the year '2009' is printed in dark blue to its right. A solid dark blue band at the bottom contains the text 'Year 5' in white. A small copyright notice is visible in the bottom left corner of this band.

Reading Magazine

2009

Year 5

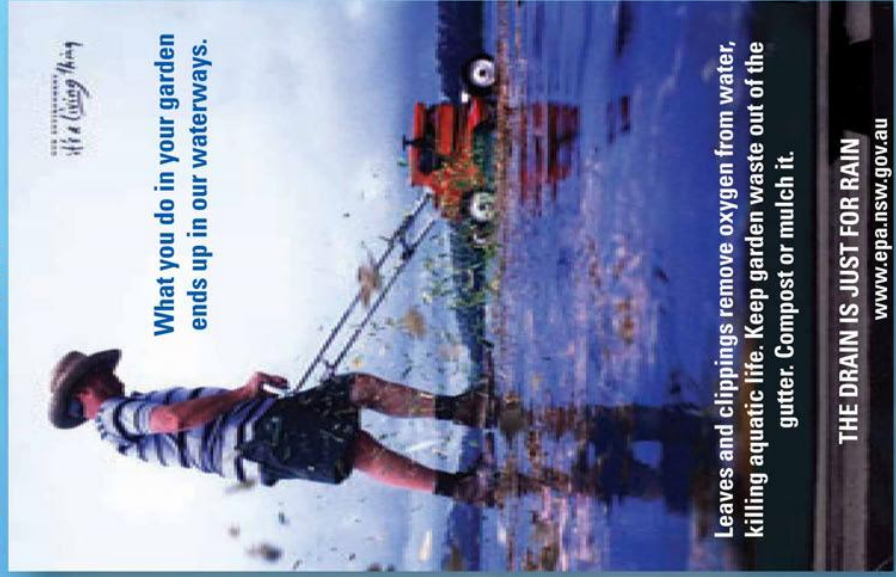
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Helping our waterways

Poster 1



Poster 2



An extract from

Little Hao and the Golden Kites

by Mavis Scott

*Each year the Emperor watched a kite competition
among the rich people who lived in his palace.*

Soon it was time for all the people to gather by the steps of the Palace
to see the rich nobles bring out their Golden Kites.

Little Hao heard drumbeats. The nobles were coming.

There they were!

First came Lord North Wind.
His kite was like a dragon,
shining golden in the sunlight.

"Aaaah!" said all the people.

"That one will win the
Emperor's prize."



Next came Lord Noble Horse. His kite was like a golden eagle
with its wings spread wide.

It soared into the sky. The people cheered and clapped.

Last of all came Lord Black Mountain. His kite was made like the flames
from a fire, and there were rich jewels in its tail. The fire kite sparkled
all over the sky.

The people cheered their loudest.

"That one wins! That one wins!" they called.



Some students are investigating how pollution affects the environment. They have researched the effects of plastic bags. This is what they have written.

Should we pay for plastic bags?



People should pay for the plastic bags they use for their shopping. According to experts from Clean Up Australia, Australians use over six billion plastic bags a year and many of these are used for carrying shopping home from supermarkets. Making people pay for these plastic bags would encourage them to use reusable bags.

Some plastic bags can last in the environment for up to 1000 years before they disintegrate (break down). Plastic bags are harmful to wildlife as they can kill animals, especially in the ocean.

Also, when plastic bags are made, dangerous gases are released that pollute the atmosphere. If we use fewer plastic bags there would be less air pollution, as well as less land and water pollution.

We need to reduce the number of plastic bags in the environment. Making people pay will help to stop them using plastic bags and force them to use reusable bags for their shopping!

Appendix 6

Topics for focus group interview

1. My child is learning to read and write English in the same way that s/he was learning home language in my home country.
2. My child is learning to read and write English in the same way that s/he was learning English in my home country.
3. Literacy means more than reading books and doing exercises (orally/ in writing) given in those books.
4. Preparing for the whole school performance of 'Wonderland' is a useful literacy activity.
5. School activities outside the classroom can also develop my child's literacy learning.
6. It is good that my child does not have to appear in examination.
7. It is my responsibility to help my child learn reading and writing.
8. I usually talk to my child's teacher to know how my child is improving his English reading and writing.
9. I go to parent-teacher meeting.
10. I participate in school programs if I know I am invited.
11. I regularly read school newsletters.

Appendix 7

Parent interview questions

1. What were your expectations when you first enrolled your child in the Australian school?
2. How is your child learning to read in Australia?
3. How is your child learning to write in Australia?
4. What are the main differences that you have observed between teaching reading and writing in Australia and in your home country?
5. Are you satisfied with your child's literacy development here?
6. Why do you think it is important for your daughter to learn English?
7. Are you happy with the amount of homework that your child takes home?
8. How does your daughter spend her time at home?
9. How do you support your child's current literacy practices?
10. How do you compare your role as a parent to support your child in her reading and writing in Australia and in your home country?
11. How useful do you find the school newsletter? Did your daughter's school use to send newsletter in your home country ?
12. Do you have any suggestion for the school?

Appendix 8

Teacher interview questions

Section One (general questions to all teachers)

1. Could you please tell me a bit about your career background?
2. What is the purpose of literacy lessons? How much time is allocated to literacy?
3. What is the purpose of composite classes?
4. What experiences do you have with new ESL children's literacy in
5. How do you feel about their socialization in school/class?
6. In your experience, what is the "range of English proficiency" among new ESL students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds?
7. To what extent are your new ESL students able to take part in class activities? How do you explain this? (prompt)
8. Preparation for the school production of "Wonderland" started in Term 3 and this production seems to be an important part of the teaching program. Does this performance have value in developing students' literacy learning?
9. How do you value excursions, camping or sleepover programs?
10. What facilitates literacy development in new ESL students effectively?
11. How do you select text materials or web sites (criteria/ types)? Do students also have access to those web sites?
12. How do you form groups and assign activities accordingly?
13. How do you divide your time to individual students?

Section Two (stimulated recall)

14. Which letter you were talking about (reference lesson 2; p. 6 and lesson 3; p. 15)?
15. Were students clear about syllable count, word count and structure count?
You didn't use the given poems ('Lorikeet', 'Sun', 'House') as texts. Was there any reason for that?
16. What was the purpose of reading in the writing class?

Section Three (questions about ESL parents to all teachers)

17. What is your experience so far in dealing with new ESL parents?
18. What kinds of comments do they make about teaching /learning English reading and writing? (homework/textbooks)
19. Do they ever communicate with you to ask about their children's progress?
How effectively ?
20. In what ways do you want these parents to support their children to strengthen the children's literacy learning?

Appendix 9

Principal interview questions

1. I know that you joined Paterson Primary School in 2006. But could you tell me more about your career background?
2. As a school principal, what are your experiences with new ESL parents? (who have been here for a short period of time)
3. Are there parental awareness programs to inform such parents about Australian literacy practices?
4. Can these parents be involved in academic activities (basically related to children's literacy development)?
5. How do you feel about the rate of their participation?
6. Are there any differences between other parents (Australian/ school familiar ESL) and these new parents?
7. Do such parents contact you to discuss about their children?
8. What do you expect from the parents to strengthen the school-family partnership? Why is it needed?
9. What do you do to inform the parents about their children's literacy learning?
10. What is the purpose of sending the newsletter home?
11. How do you expect new ESL parents to be involved in their children's literacy learning?
12. The school devoted a substantial amount of time in the preparation of the "Wonderland". Does this performance have value in developing students' literacy learning?

Appendix 10

Observation schedule

Date:

Class:

Teacher:

Time:

Student no:

Lesson:

| Resources used | Teacher activities | Student activities | Comments |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------|
| | | | |

Appendix 11

Researcher's handwritten notes

Students / Teacher Resources / Separation with a special need teacher
 Reading / Writing / Observation schedule

Date: 21/10/09 Time: 2:30 Class: 5/6 Teacher: Alice Student no. 1
 Lesson: Patterns / Cinquain (modern)

| | |
|--|--|
| Reading activities R. A./S./G./I. Sharing time Vocab/gram./sound | Seen Huge, bright glowing, heating, burning gives life to earth star |
| Writing activities M.W./S./G./I. Sharing time Gram./spelling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> asked about previous lesson structure teacher explained what to do instructed to draw a box (copy from the board) white board: syllables 2 Alice 4. likes the tigers |
| Speaking/listening activities Group d./oral p. Story/experience | Lorikeet colourful, noisy screeching, flying, landing mowing visitor every day parrot 6 falls over all the times 8 she gets annoyed when 2 cranky! House tiny, snug, protecting, warming, welcoming the family love home |
| Resources Written/visual/ Non/Printed/texts (from different cultures) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> interactive board / Jenny Fisher website examples with Lorikeet, Sun, house |
| Comments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a couple of ss were not taking their writing book; so the teacher asked them to do so a student was creating a discipline problem teacher went out |

R. A. = Read aloud (teacher) as model reading; S. = Shared reading; G. = Guided reading; I. = Individual reading; M. W. = Model writing (teacher)

why impatient ss?

(Poem writing)

word-count poem
 syllables = 11

| | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Teacher's behaviour | |
| Gives clear instruction | ✓ |
| Assigns tasks | ✓ |
| Involves new students in classroom activities | |
| Responds to student query | ✓ ✓ ✓ |
| Corrects errors (verbally/in writing) | ✓ (if wrong no. of syllables/words) |
| Follows up students' work | ✓ |

str

Line 1 1 word N. the title or name of the sub.
 Line 2 2 words Adj. describing the sub.
 Line 3 3 words Vs. describing the sub's actions
 Line 4 4 " Descriptive a feeling or opinion about the sub.
 Line 5 1 word noun another name for the sub.

Teacher sat with a student and helped to write the poem (word or syllable?)
 'actual football? a game?'
 'S read his poem'

| | |
|--|------|
| Students' behaviour | |
| 1. Listen to the teacher | some |
| 2. Carry the assigned tasks | |
| 3. Work in pair/group | |
| 4. Ask the teacher (or friend) for clarification if/s/he does not understand | |

① Tasks : whole class
 Teacher writing on the board
 • Wonderland
 • ^{weird} Dancing musical
 • dancing, singing, acting
 • through the looking glass
 • performance

② assigned them to find words to fit in the given syllables (Alice example)
 asked them to choose the 'sub.'

asked ss to supply the info.

• S. work reading (word pattern)
 • 2nd (syllable)

Wednesday 4th Nov
 11-12
 Observation schedule - 1

Date: 23/10/2024 Time: 9:30 Class: SP Teacher: Alice Student no. 11
 Lesson: Conquering

| | |
|--|---|
| Reading activities R. A./S./G./I. Sharing time Vocab/gram./sound | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> T. asked another word for 'rainbow'! another student helped 'colourful' The modern cinquain is a 5 line poem, organized on a word count of 1,2,3,4,1... using particular types of words |
| Writing activities M.W./S./G./I. Sharing time Gram./spelling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Returned to the same student (word poem) D. also printed R. showed her work |
| Speaking/listening activities Group d./oral p. Story/experience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very difficult to follow the teacher's sound to on the teacher's table a student was sent to the computer to type his poem |
| Resources Written/visual/ Non/Printed/texts (from different cultures) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Another ss - M. helped to find correct words to describe soccer D. showed his work |
| Comments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 ss. discussed on the so words (did not understand) 3rd time returned to the same S. (Completed the work) |

R. A. = Read aloud (teacher) as model reading; S. = Shared reading; G. = Guided reading; I. = Individual reading; M. W. = Model writing (teacher)

3

Appendix 12

Sample completed observation schedule – 1 (Typed after the lesson observation)

Date: 21/10/09 Wednesday

Class: 5/6

Teacher: Alice

Time: 2:30 – 3:30

Student no: 11

Lesson: Patterns/ Modern Cinquain (poem writing)

| Resources used | Teacher's activities | Students' activities | Comments |
|--|--|--|---|
| A webpage (Jenny Eather) was displayed on the interactive board (I have the information in a different sheet). The information was displayed throughout the writing lesson time. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Asked about the previous lesson (related to today's lesson)2. She displayed today's lesson on the interactive board and explained what they were going to do today.3. She asked students to copy the 'structure' of cinquain from the white board (inside a box).4. She explained what kinds (for word counting only) of and how | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Student supplied the answer.2. Listened to the teacher.3. Students copied the answer.4. Listened to her. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Some students did not take their writing book even if the teacher instructed them to do so.2. Some students were creating disciplinary problems (talking to their friends, calling out the teacher, making unnecessary noise)3. She sat with a student 3 times to help him write a poem and finally he completed his work.4. She insisted every student should do their task, but some were still reluctant.5. Now and then she was encouraging the students to write the poem so that she would help them to publish in the school newsletter or school magazine. |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| | <p>many words/syllables needed in each line (for words, referred to the interactive white board and for syllables she supplied herself): 1st line = 2 syllables; 2nd line = 4 syllables; 3rd line = 6 syllables; 4th line = 8 syllables and 5th line = 2 syllables</p> <p>5. Then she set a whole class task. For this she wrote the examples on the white board She asked students to supply the words; when she realised students could not, then only she used her own words. For example:</p> <p>Word count poem</p> <p>Wonderland</p> <p>Weird, musical</p> <p>Dancing, singing, acting</p> <p>Through the looking glass</p> <p>Performance</p> <p>Syllable count poem</p> | <p>5. Listened to her and supplied the appropriate words if they could.</p> | <p>6. She asked two students to type their work and hand it to her, they did it.</p> <p>7. The students looked very impatient. However at last, everybody completed and showed their work to the teacher.</p> <p>10. I actually do not know how many ESL students were there; I need to ask Alice next time.</p> <p>11. She visited every student and extended her help if they needed (especially finding appropriate words)</p> <p>12. There was a special need student who was supported by another teacher.</p> |
|--|--|---|---|

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | <p>Alice</p> <p>Likes the tigers</p> <p>Falls over all the times</p> <p>She gets annoyed when Robert talks (a student's contribution)</p> <p>Cranky!</p> <p>6. Asked students to write their own poem (either word count or syllable count). Asked them to choose their own subject, e.g., natural objects, sports.</p> <p>7. She read 2 students' poems and appreciated them.</p> | <p>6. Students wrote their poem in their writing book.</p> <p>7. Students listened to teacher reading.</p> | |
|--|--|--|--|

Information displayed on the interactive white board

The modern cinquain is a 5 line poem, organised on a word count of 1,2,3,4,1... using particular types of words.

Structure

| | | | |
|--------|---------|--------------|--|
| Line 1 | 1 word | noun: | The title or name of the subject |
| Line 2 | 2 words | adjectives: | Describing the subject |
| Line 3 | 3 words | verbs: | Describing the subject's actions |
| Line 4 | 4 words | descriptive: | A feeling or opinion about the subject |
| Line 5 | 1 word | noun: | Another name for the subject |

Examples given

| | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|----|--------------------------------|
| 1. | Lorikeet | 2. | House |
| | Colourful, noisy | | Tiny, snug |
| | Screeching, flying, landing | | Protecting, warming, welcoming |
| | Mowing visitor every day | | The family I love |
| | Parrot | | Home |
| 3. | Sun | | |
| | Hugh, bright | | |
| | Glowing, heating, burning | | |
| | Gives life to earth | | |
| | Star | | |

After observation reflection

I reached the class a bit earlier (may be at 2:25). It was the first class after lunch, so all the students were outside. I was standing outside the class when Alice came and I followed her up to the room. She sat at the computer and did something, maybe preparing for her lesson. When she finished, I just showed my instruments that I was going to use to collect my data (audio-tape and observation schedule) and explained their use.

When the bell rang, students started coming. The class was a real mess. I do not know, it may be because it was the last class of the day or something else. Alice gave some time to students to settle down. Then she had students' attendance and gave each student the performance tickets to take home for their family ('Wonderland'; would be performed on 29th of October). She had some students from another 5/6 teacher's class as well (the teacher requested Alice to watch them for about 15 minutes because she needed to finish her lunch). Because of this also there seemed many students here and there. Alice gave some books to that teacher's students and asked them to read quietly in the adjacent computer room. In the mean time some of her students went for Wonderland rehearsal. Then the class seemed a bit normal. Alice started her lesson.

In the neighbouring class (another 5/6 group) the teacher was showing some kind of movie, the noise could be easily heard even in Alice's class. Almost all the time of teaching either one student or the other was distracting the teacher. She was facing a great disciplinary problem. Although there were only 11 students, I felt very hard to concentrate because of students' impatience. The teacher also looked disappointed but she was trying hard to be friendly and smiling at the same time. I was thinking if these students were in Nepali classrooms, the teacher would slapped them hard so that they would have no other choices but be quiet

Although there were three examples (of Cinquain) displayed on the interactive white board, the teacher did not refer to them. She used examples from their own context. The term 'cinquain' was completely new for me. I realised that the teacher's main focus was she wanted her students to use correct structure (in terms of word count and syllable count) of the poem.

The room was big and students were scattered. So, students' voice was also not clear in the voice recorder. I had placed the voice recorder on the teacher's table. I sat at the back. All the time I was worried if my recorder would capture the data I need. Sometimes the announcements (twice or thrice) from the office would also create distraction.

In this observation schedule I had not considered the physical environment of the classroom. One of my supervisors has suggested I should take some photographs of the classrooms. For that I have to ask the teachers. Since it was my first day I did not tell this to Alice. Next time I will ask her. If she disagrees, then I will describe the classroom environment in detail (without the help of photos).

I piloted my observation schedule, I found it quite confusing. Next time I will use it differently, in a simpler manner.

Appendix 13

Fieldnotes over three stages (see Chapter Five)

1. Fieldnotes of first stage

20/11/2008 Thursday Entry 8

Worries

Now it's nearly the end of this year. During this time I got an opportunity to observe some of the lessons on literacy teaching in Paterson Primary School. However, I knew about different strategies used by teachers as well as by school to help students learn read and write, as a parent I had some expectations.

I agree I am not as dissatisfied as earlier days questioning my son's literacy development, since I realized how hard teachers are working in this area and how school has embedded different programs for the same. First of all, I want my son to come home every day with some sort of homework, so that he can devote at least some time after school reflecting in his reading and writing. I know, we are supposed to help him from our side which we are doing at our best but it is not as effective and strong as teacher's direction. He reads books for his entertainment but he is reluctant to practise writing. Secondly, I have never seen any sort of correction in his notebooks. I would love to see some red or green marks from teacher if Atul commits some mistakes and see his improvement in the same area next time. And I definitely like to read some encouraging words if he does something very good. I feel he is doing too little in the absence of school's strictness. I think he would show his real interest to develop his reading and writing if he were obliged to do some particular activities with his teacher's compulsory follow up. I am worried he may be left behind among his peers when he goes back to our country.

2. Fieldnotes of second stage

17/11/2009 I was with Andrew in guided writing group. Observing this lesson what I found interesting is – Ardhi. In focus group interview his mom, Dewita told me that Ardhi does not like reading and her statement was confirmed by Ardhi's expressions to see the reading worksheet. As soon as he saw the worksheet, Ardhi complained, "Oh, man! I don't like this!" Andrew was also commenting now and then (within 20 minutes 4 times) that Ardhi was not paying attention to the lesson.

19/11/09 In Amber's whole class reading session Aini, Lily's daughter, was asked to make a sentence using 'creep' in the past tense, which she could not. When I observed them in their rotation reading, Aini was working on her 'pictogram'. She asked KC, Sharon's daughter, the spelling of 'thought' and KC told her.

26/11/09 When I entered the room I saw KC changing her reader. Then she came to her seat and started reading... While I caught KC with a book, I saw Ardhi playing with building blocks.

3. Fieldnotes of third stage

1/12/09 I liked the individual guidance given by Ann to Dona (pseudonym). Dona had written her name itself with a small letter, 'dona'. Using the context of Dona's writing Ann gave her grammatical lesson (e.g., where to use capital letter, how to organize information, etc.). I think teaching grammar contextually like this can be more helpful for students, rather than teaching them, "In the beginning of the sentence we use the capital letter. For example, He is a boy..."

Appendix 14

Sample journal entries from each year of observation

04/09/2008 Thursday Entry 4

Last week I went to observe Amber's (3/4 B) class. However she did not teach English I got to learn a new thing i.e. the use of computer in the classroom. In my observation, I have seen kids using computer from Prep., but the difference is, they (prep, 1/2) were not assigned any special lesson on computer, they were just familiarizing themselves with the device playing with it. As it is an inseparable part of their classroom.

But in Amber's class it was used purposefully. Students were assigned to make their PowerPoint presentation on 'Ten ways of sustainability'. The very day, the teacher showed the class a student's work. Then I realized literacy is not related to language only, instead computer literacy is also equally important for children.

'PowerPoint' is not a new term for a primary level student here but in our case, we do not need it throughout our professional life if we do not want to use it (Some privileged institutions may have this facility but on an average people do not know how to make slides and use them). Although I have heard of it I have not used it yet. As soon as I knew that I have to make my presentation using power point at the time of my confirmation, then only I learnt some basics of it. I am happy Atul is learning to use power point at the age of 9, and I guess he knows more than me.

09/06/2009 Tuesday Entry 11

The other day Atul was telling me enthusiastically that he has participated in a debate. The topic of the debate was 'There should be homework for primary level students vs there should not be any homework'. He clarified that he wanted to speak for having the homework (he knows very well that his parents are after homework) but his teacher assigned him to speak against the topic, i.e. there should not be any homework. When I told him it was okay to speak against the topic in a debate he looked happy to see me supporting him. He asked me doubtfully, "Mum, will you help me find the information even if I am speaking against homework?" I assured him, "Yes, why not? We can find information for both – having homework or not having homework. If you collect facts for your speech (from research), then it will be difficult for your opponent to defeat you." Then he added, "Yes, my teacher also says the same – facts are strong."

From our conversation I realised that my knowledge of academic discourse (debate) was helpful for Atul to explore his ideas more. Before he was scared that whether I would allow him to speak against homework but when he knew that his mother knows what a debate is, he became more confident and secured. Thus, knowing academic discourses and supporting children are very important for parents.

10/03/10 Wednesday Entry 2

Today there was the first 'Parents as Helpers' session at Paterson Primary School. The Leading teacher of the school conducted this session. There were about 16 parents (except one all looked ESL!). The session was designed to inform parents how they can help the classroom teachers, especially during literacy hours (but they were suggested they can help any area they are interested in or they have passion on). It seemed that the school is trying to encourage parents to go to the classroom and help their children. It is

a good opportunity for parents to learn about what actually happens inside the classroom but surprisingly none of my research participants (ESL parents) turned up there.

There was a parent who helped last year too, especially listening to children reading and this year also she's already started helping in gardening. But last year I didn't know anything like such sessions. I read the ad in the school newsletter and once I got an email from a member of the 'Friends of Paterson Primary' (parents association) saying that they were looking for some parent representatives to listen to the children's reading. Then I immediately replied her that I was interested. Then she had forwarded that email to Mrs. G, the coordinator of senior grades. After that I did not hear anything from the school or the coordinator or anybody.





This time, Atul's teacher had emailed me regarding the information of the session, so I went to participate. I am willing to help the school but I don't know how they utilise me. Last year I helped in the ESL classes (but it was more in relation to my study). Basically I listened to children's reading and did some correction work (in draft writing).


Appendix 15


Sample pages of a newsletter

CONNECT

Growing - Caring - Achieving Together

| 2009 Term 3 Calendar | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| | | | September 10 SWIMMING  | September 11 |
| September 14 No Fitness Club.. SWIMMING  | September 15 CELEBRATION NIGHT  | September 16 NO FITNESS CLUB AFTER SCHOOL | September 17 SWIMMING PROGRAM FINISHES  | September 18 SCHOOL WILL DISMISS AT 2:30PM. |

| 2009 Term 4 Calendar | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|-------------------|
| October 5 SCHOOL RETURNS FOR TERM 4 | October 6 Reading Labs launch from 10am. | October 7 | October 8 | October 9 |
| October 12 | October 13 | October 14 | October 15 | October 16 |
| October 19 Fitness Club Starts—lunchtime | October 20 | October 21 Fitness Club after school | October 22 Active After School Program starts  | October 23 |




SCHOOL PHOTOS HAVE BEEN SENT HOME TODAY.


ISLAM EDUCATION notices sent home earlier this week—must be returned by TOMORROW.

There will be NO FITNESS CLUB next week.

TERM 4 FITNESS CLUB will start from 19 October @ Monday lunchtime and Wednesday after school



ACTIVE AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM CIRCUS FUN will commence Thursday 22nd October.



GOOD START BREAKFAST CLUB operates Monday to Friday from 7:45am in the Cubby.

From the Principal

PARTNERSHIPS ARE ESSENTIAL

It is well known that when home-based educational objectives clash with school-based objectives, the student normally resolves the conflict by rejecting the school. Research sends out a very clear message about the importance of partnerships in education. When parents express confidence in the school and teachers, and are involved in some way, their children are more likely to be happier and perform better academically.

We actively seek partnerships with our parents. This is done deliberately, because once forged, these partnerships have been found to result in;

- greater understanding by parents of their child's schooling,
- greater understanding by teachers of the students and their unique needs,
- better communication and understanding between home and school,
- higher pupil morale and confidence,
- increased academic performance,
- increased goodwill and mutual esteem between parents and 'their' school.

Conscientious parents all around the world are concerned about the education of their children. They want them to get the most they can from their schooling and to grow up as happy, caring and useful citizens. They also know that the school cannot do this on its own; they need strong parental partnerships. Partnerships are the 'educational glue' which assists children to have a happy and productive time at school.

As part of our efforts to forge the partnership between parents and our school, we organise **CELEBRATION NIGHTS** twice a year where your child's curriculum achievements will be displayed. Next week we will hold our second **CELEBRATION NIGHT** on Tuesday 15th September.

CELEBRATION NIGHT!

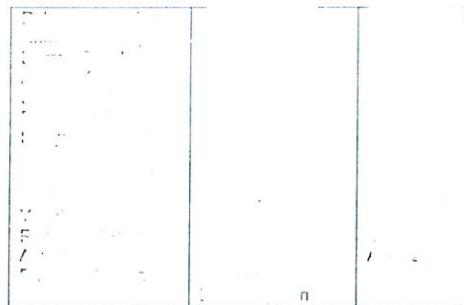


TUESDAY 15TH SEPTEMBER
6PM - 8PM

Dinner (hot plates) served from 5.15pm

WORKING BEE

We had a very successful Working Bee with lots of adults and many students. Many jobs were completed, some of which were long overdue. Gutters (which had gardens growing in them) were cleaned, sheds emptied of long forgotten debris, cupboards organised, chairs cleaned and many other jobs completed. It was a great 'Spring Clean'. Thank you to all the following parents and staff members who turned up:



It was a great day, not just for the jobs that were done but the pleasure of working beside you.

PARENT OPINION SURVEY

The 2009 Parent Opinion Survey was conducted over the past two weeks. The survey will gather parent feedback and individual schools will be able to access this information to further improve. The survey is conducted in Term 3 to ensure that families new to the school have received a report on their child's progress and can make informed comments. More than 61,000 parents across Victoria participated in the 2009 survey, providing approximately 1,600 schools with information about a range of issues important to parents.

To ensure the results of the survey are valid and representative, the survey is distributed to a randomly selected sample of parents within each school.

I would also like to assure all parents that I am always available to discuss any concerns or suggestions. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you would like to make an appointment.

LEAVING US?

Are you leaving us at the end of this year? Please let us know as soon as possible as class structures for 2010 are being constructed.

If you are travelling overseas and will not be back for the first day of school (Monday 1st February 2009), it is important that you advise in the Office before you leave.

PRINCIPAL

Kids Connect

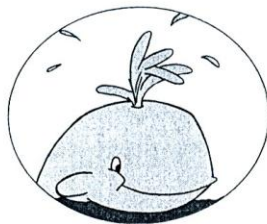
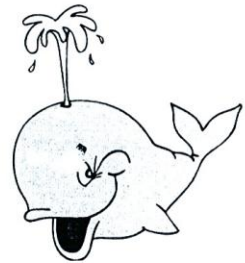


Students in 1/2 have been writing acrostic poems on sea animals.



Some sea stars are the colour red, brown, orange.
Eats with tummy out it eats sea creatures.
A sea star does not have a head.
Sea stars arm could grow back.
They eat clams, mussels and snails.
Are very small and lovely.
Roam around in the sea happily.

Wild animal.
Huge eyes.
A heart as big as a small car.
Likes to eat planktons and little fish.
Enormous animal.



Whales are gentle animals.
Harmless and friendly.
Are not fish but mammals.
Live in warm water.
Enormous like a monster.

People swim like penguins do.
Eating fish for lunch.
Need food.
Genius swimmers.
Under the water.
It's impossible to fly.
Native to Antarctica and Australia!



Appendix 16

Questionnaire for parents

General information

1. Where are you from (Your country of origin)?
2. Your Gender
3. How long have you been living in Australia (please enter the year and month that you first arrived in Australia, if remember date too)?
4. Is this the first time you are abroad?
5. Have you planned to go back to your country?
6. If yes, when?
7. What is your status in Australia (e.g., permanent resident, temporary resident, student.)?
8. What do you or your spouse do in Australia (occupation: **Optional**)?
9. What did you or your spouse use to do in your home country (occupation: **Optional**)?
10. What is your first language?
11. Which language do you speak/use at home?
12. Your age group (Please tick one) a. 20-30 b. 30-40 c. 40-45
13. Your academic qualifications.....

Appendix 17

Human Ethics Certificate of Approval



MONASH University

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
Research Office

Human Ethics Certificate of Approval

Date: 20 August 2009

Project Number: CF09/1814: 2009001023

Project Title: ESL parents' and teachers' perspectives on primary school literacy practices

Chief Investigator: Dr Marie-Therese Jensen

Approved: From: 20 August 2009 To: 20 August 2014

Terms of approval

1. The Chief investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, and a copy forwarded to MUHREC before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation. **Failure to provide permission letters to MUHREC before data collection commences is in breach of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.**
2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.
4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must contain your project number.
6. **Amendments to the approved project (including changes in personnel):** Requires the submission of a Request for Amendment form to MUHREC and must not begin without written approval from MUHREC. Substantial variations may require a new application.
7. **Future correspondence:** Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.
8. **Annual reports:** Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. This is determined by the date of your letter of approval.
9. **Final report:** A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
10. **Monitoring:** Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.
11. **Retention and storage of data:** The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.



Professor Ben Canny
Chair, MUHREC

cc: Ms Byanjana Sharma

Postal – Monash University, Vic 3800, Australia
Building 3E, Room 111, Clayton Campus, Wellington Road, Clayton
Telephone +61 3 9905 5490 Facsimile +61 3 9905 3831
Email muhrec@adm.monash.edu.au www.monash.edu/research/ethics/human/index/html
ABN 12 377 614 012 CRICOS Provider #00008C

Appendix 18

DEECD Ethics Approval



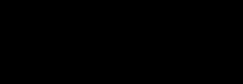
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Office for Policy, Research and Innovation

2 Treasury Place
East Melbourne, Victoria 3002
Telephone: +61 3 9637 2000
DX 210083
GPO Box 4367
Melbourne, Victoria 3001

RIS09179

Ms Bvaniana Sharma



Dear Ms Sharma

Thank you for your application of 27 July 2009 in which you request permission to conduct a research study in government schools titled: *ESL parents' and teachers' perspectives on literacy practices in a mainstream primary school in Victoria*.

I am pleased to advise that on the basis of the information you have provided your research proposal is approved in principle subject to the conditions detailed below.

1. Should your institution's ethics committee require changes or you decide to make changes, these changes must be submitted to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development for its consideration before you proceed.
2. You obtain approval for the research to be conducted in each school directly from the principal. Details of your research, copies of this letter of approval and the letter of approval from the relevant ethics committee are to be provided to the principal. The final decision as to whether or not your research can proceed in a school rests with the principal.
3. No student is to participate in this research study unless they are willing to do so and parental permission is received. Sufficient information must be provided to enable parents to make an informed decision and their consent must be obtained in writing.
4. As a matter of courtesy, you should advise the relevant Regional Director of the schools you intend to approach. An outline of your research and a copy of this letter should be provided to the Regional Director.
5. Any extensions or variations to the research proposal, additional research involving use of the data collected, or publication of the data beyond that normally associated with academic studies will require a further research approval submission.
6. At the conclusion of your study, a copy or summary of the research findings should be forwarded to Education Policy and Research Branch, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Level 3, 33 St Andrews Place, GPO Box 4367, Melbourne, 3001.



I wish you well with your research study. Should you have further enquiries on this matter, please contact Jonathan Howcroft, Policy and Research Officer, Education Policy and Research, by telephone on [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]
Dr Elizabeth Hartnell-Young
Group Manager
Education Policy and Research

21 / 8 / 2009

enc

Appendix 19

Areas where the parents expressed their satisfaction

1. Literacy pedagogies = 11

1. Reading books (a variety of books; children can read the books of their choice; 'Reading Challenge')
2. Emphasis on the use of children's right hemisphere of brain
3. No pressure in learning; learning is fun
4. Not much homework vs homework (Dewita; Lily, busy with her study and household chores, parents' role not much stronger)
5. Emphasis on the equality of all children (no discrimination between high-level and low-level students)
6. Emphasis on children's self and independent learning (not bookish; generation of own ideas; self-expressive, self-motivated, responsible for own learning – parents' role only supportive)
7. Emphasis on practical learning (based on the real world; can be useful in later life)
8. Emphasis on freedom of thinking and freedom of study
9. Importance of ESL program at school
10. Emphasis on project work (students' choice to select a favourite topic and work independently)
11. No rote learning (exploratory learning)

2. Multiliteracies = 5

12. Emphasis on students' personal traits and social skills (helpful to excel literacy learning)
13. Emphasis on development of children's speaking
14. Importance of "out-of-classroom" programs (sleepover; camping; school production)
15. Use of Internet, TV, computer games and drawing
16. New learning environment (children can learn new things)

3. School-home partnerships = 5

17. Usefulness of parent-teacher meeting (formal and informal both)
18. Importance of parental involvement programs (book fair, chocolate drive, working bee)
19. Importance of school newsletters
20. Acknowledgement of children's work (by publishing in the school magazine and newsletters)
21. Teachers' responses (in parent-teacher communication)

4. Teacher's role = 3

22. To encourage students' learning
23. Teachers' highly positive attitudes to students (to deal with students' adjustment problems, individual students' learning abilities)

24. Teachers' positive feedback on students' work (increases students' self-confidence; no teacher punishment; not a feeling of competition among students) and continuous support

5. Children's improvement in areas of literacy = 1

25. Visible improvement in children (speaking, reading, writing)

Appendix 20

Areas where the parents expressed their dissatisfaction

1. Literacy pedagogy = 14
 1. No hard work (not much content given; children face adjustment problem and they lag behind among peers when they go back to their home country)
 2. No(not much) writing (children forget hand writing, spellings)
 3. No frequent tests/examinations and transparent results (especially scores to compare with peers)
 4. No grammar teaching
 5. No prescribed textbooks
 6. In reading and writing not school's support but family's support counted
 7. Whole language approach in reading
 8. No notebooks
 9. No evidence to see children's improvement (textbooks)
 10. Children's decisions can be wrong (sometimes)
 11. Internet makes a child's mind passive
 12. English learning – without knowing meaning (in ESL class meanings should be given in mother tongue)
 13. Children forgot the things that they had learnt in their home countries (they were more knowledgeable there)
 14. Easy content (reference mathematics)

2. Student engagement = 7

- 15. No homework (in comparison to home country; how happy the parents felt when they saw their children's maths homework in Year 5)
- 16. Not much assigned reading (only free reading)
- 17. Not much study at school
- 18. Much time for project work (2-3 months)
- 19. Too much free time (TV, computer, digital games but too much problematic and destructive; sports)
- 20. After school discussion topics – not related to study (footy, drama, fun making)
- 21. Too much freedom – no better performance to meet parents' expectations

3. Education system = 6

- 22. Loose/free education system (no one cares whether children learn or not, no compulsion, no punishment, no fear, no excellent performance, no study, no tension, only enjoyment; if someone wants to be lazy, he is free to be so; only a handful can succeed, not all)
- 23. No competition (no challenge, no tension, no better performance)
- 24. Enrolment on the basis of child's age, not on the basis of his/her ability (no need to continue home country's grade level)
- 25. All children get same grading 'C' (arguments with teachers)
- 26. Not fully aware of the Australian teaching system
- 27. Children's background knowledge – not counted

4. Home-school partnerships = 4
 28. Language barrier in communication (South Asian parents)
 29. Parental involvement programs are led by specific people, they decide what to do and there are not any new programs; every year the same programs repeat
 30. Most of the time literacy activities done at home do not match with school literacy activities (except for project work)
 31. School programs – not compulsory
5. Curriculum = 3
 32. No guidelines from school (no syllabus)
 33. No knowledge what children are learning at school (helpless to support at home)
 34. General information (regarding curriculum) is not enough (specific content: weekly/monthly/terminally should be given)
6. Teacher's role = 1
 35. Same positive feedback to all students (s/he good, excellent, fantastic, on the track but “why so?” parents don't know)
7. Cultural differences = 1
 36. Cultural clash (in camping)

Be Social! when you socialise!

Social networking

MAKE FRIENDS AND STAY SAFE ONLINE



Social networking describes a variety of services like YouTube, MySpace, LiveJournal, Twitter and online games such as World of Warcraft and RuneScape.

Social networking sites are a great way to stay in touch with your friends and family. You can post information about yourself and display photos, tell everyone what you've been up to, play games and basically just hang out.

There are dangers. Bullying, people making inappropriate contact, over-the-top advertising campaigns, identity theft, scams and possible exposure to adult content can make places like these risky, but if you play it smart you can stay safe online.

Tips for KIDS

Keep personal information secret

Make sure you don't put any personal information on your profile. This includes your phone number, personal email address, home or school addresses, sports teams or the name of your school. Be careful when you post photos that they don't include any of this information either.

Check with your parents or guardian if you do decide to give out personal information or put it in your profile.

It's public!

Remember that you may feel that you are just talking to friends, but the whole world could be tuning in. Keep an eye on what's being posted and guard your privacy! Don't post photos that you might not want strangers to see.

Check out the features

Learn how to make your profile and other content you post public or private. You're the one in control here.

Think twice!

Posts to blogs and profiles can stay there forever. Your parents, future employers (and perhaps your children) may end up seeing it.

Remember

Not everyone is who they claim to be. Although it's great to have lots of online friends, including them on your friends list allows people you don't know to see all about you. This information could be used for a scam, to steal your identity, or worse.

Keep your online friends online

However, if you want to meet someone that you haven't met so far in person, ask a parent or another adult to go with you and always meet in a public place, preferably during the day.

Say NO!

Free offers are usually too good to be true and can end up costing you a heap. Sad to say, not all promises are real.

Be considerate—be yourself, but play it nice

Only post comments you would be happy to receive yourself. Don't post photos of other people without their permission. Remember, when you post photos you might be hurting the privacy of your friends too.

Tell a trusted adult

Don't respond if someone sends you nasty or bullying messages or asks you to do something that makes you feel uncomfortable. Instead, tell your parents or another adult you can trust.



Appendix 22

Student work published in the school newsletter

On the 8th of September, 2009, the 5/6s of Paterson Primary School went on an excursion to the Immigration Museum and Rialto Towers in the city of Melbourne.

The bus trip was really boring until Debbie (*pseudonym*) – one of the three adults on our mini-bus – taught us a fun new game which was based on Dragon Ball Z. We played it all the way to our destination, with me as grand-champion!

The activities we did were great fun! We took a trip around the museum and saw a sad video of why other people came to Australia. It was very sad seeing how there was war and conflict and how people were driven out of their countries.

One interesting thing in the museum was the boat. It had three rooms which showed the size of an average room for accommodating a family. There was an 1840s Square Rigger, a 1900s Steamer, and a 1950 post-war room. It was very interesting to find out that how stinky and cramped the 1840s one compared to the small, but hygienic post-war room.

We did some other activities before going out to the courtyard to eat our lunches. After that we went for a walk around Melbourne and learned some great facts about the Sandridge Bridge.

After the walk we went back to the museum for a break before strolling towards the high Rialto Towers. I am scared of heights and thought that I would have no fun there. Wrong! I had a great fun! It was fun looking at Melbourne from so high up and I enjoyed looking at Etihad Stadium up close!

I really liked the excursion and had lots of fun! I have learnt a lot while enjoying myself and hope there is an excursion like this again.

(Atul, *School Newsletter*, Term 4, 2009)

Appendix 23

Importance of Public Library: Researcher's journal

30/9/2008 Entry 6

Today I saw a Monash University lecturer. While we were discussing about my research proposal, I complained her that I could not help my son in his reading or writing because he did not bring any homework or any textbook. Then I asked her, "If the school does not assign any reading activity, how can children develop their reading?" She replied very naturally that they can go to the library!

I was amazed to hear her. I could not help thinking how naturally library reading is embedded to Australian schooling, even at the primary level. However it was a pity that new parents like me may not be aware of this. I got the idea that literacy education is not only a school's duty, which is usually the case in Nepal. At that moment I realised I must take my son to the public library if I wanted to help him in his literacy learning.

Appendix 24

Criteria for Report Writing (Written by teacher on whiteboard)

A: Criteria for the Report

Title

General statement

Description

Conclusion

Description can also have different parts, e.g., the following Report about Kangaroos has physical features, food, habitat and lifestyle for 'Description' section.

B: An example of the Report

Kangaroo (sic) (Title)

Kangaroos are native Australian marsupials (**General statement**).

Kangaroos have brown, red or grey fur. They have powerful hind legs, short arms and a strong tail (*Physical features*).

Kangaroos eat grass and plants. They are herbivores (*Food*).

Kangaroos live in the bush and on grassy plants (*Habitat*).

Kangaroos are mammals, they give birth to live young. The baby which is roughly the size of a bean, spends several months in their mothers' pouch until they can find food on their own (*Lifestyle*).

(Description)

Kangaroos are a great icon of Australia (**Conclusion**).

(Fieldnotes, Andrew, Classroom Observation 2)