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Everyone has a view of literacy¹: Learners' perceptions of
literacy and their practices at home and at school

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This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award
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¹ David Barton 1994: 48

ABSTRACT

This is an ethnographic study of how learners write about, speak about, depict and value their literacy activities at home and how this links with their performance at school. It also examines the shift in learners' perceptions of literacy through their involvement in the research project.

The theoretical framework for the research is drawn from the New Literacy Studies with its emphasis on the autonomous and ideological models of literacy (as formulated by Street) and on literacy as situated practice. The data is a series of literacy activities, of seven learner profiles made up of their writing, literacy inventories, photographic depictions, focus group discussions, semi structured interviews, and tasks assessed in the formal academic domain. Critical Discourse Analysis is used as a tool for the analysis of some of the data and traces the similarities and differences in the kinds of literacy activities that learners engage in, ranging from homework to hobbies, cell phones, conversations, computer games and so forth. Interpretation of the data also draws on Gee's theory of primary and secondary Discourses.

The study found that there is a link between how learners view their literacy practices at home and school and their performance at school. It reaffirms the theory that learners that are well-precured in formal academic literacy are advantaged in the formal school-based discourse. However, the study argues that capital which all learners, and particularly marginalized learners, brought with them to school could be used to enhance performance.

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Views of Literacy

Your roles and mine are clear, they've been defined
For this is how the system locks us in:
Assumptions cloud our eyes and make us blind
This way is right and that is close to sin.
The power structures keep a wall in place
And brick by brick full view's blocked out.
But this façade must have a little space,
To pierce the system, shake the stones with doubt.
Let's break down constructs, open windows wide
And look at views alive and always bright –
Let learners bring their changing worlds inside,
Give voice and paint the walls with their own light.
It's time to honour learners' literacies
And so embark on new discoveries.

Charmaine Kendal

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1. Chapter One: Questions from the Classroom

I find it useful for educators to keep in mind a simple triangle of their own practices, their students' practices and the society's practices.

(Barton, 2000: 174)

1.1. Introduction

This thesis has arisen from my observations of and discussions with the learners I have come into contact with in my teaching practice. As a teacher of English I have found that although I try to present material to my learners which is stimulating and instructive, this material is not always accessible to all. Furthermore, although in many instances I think that learners have understood what I have been presenting, they often are unable to use, or build on the material I have given them. This has led me to question my teaching methods, my perceptions of my learners and to look at what they are bringing into the classroom with them. In doing this, I have been interested in how they view, describe and value their literacy practices both at home and at school. However, in order to understand how my research questions have evolved, it is necessary to describe the teaching and learning environment in which this research takes place.

1.2. Background to the Study

The classroom in which I teach is a diverse one. It is made up of learners from different social, cultural, economic and racial groups. The classes I will be working with, for the purposes of this research, (Grade 10 and Grade 11) are composed according to subject choice and so are not streamed according to formal academic results. This, and the different backgrounds from which the learners come, means that learners have different levels of proficiency in different learning areas and bring different ranges of experience and perceptions to the English class. This wide range of expertise and perception is an important factor in understanding the nature of my classroom environment.

Mountainbrook², an urban, middle class school, is currently described as a 'former Model C school'. The background to this is that prior to 1991, in apartheid South Africa, the school's learner population was exclusively white. The school had been established as a white, English speaking, senior school in 1957. It has always had the description of a 'community school' for it has always drawn its learner population from the immediate, white, middle class, community. After 1991, with the move in government to open up all

² The name of the school has been changed.

schools to different racial groups, the school voted to become a 'Model C' school. This meant that anyone could apply for admittance to the school, but that the school could select whom it wished to admit. Initially the school was very selective about whom it admitted, and most of the learner population remained white and middle class. However, with pressure for more racial inclusion after 1994, the demography has been changing. Now, in 2006, although the school still draws predominantly from the surrounding community, the mix in the classroom is more varied.

I would like to point out how problematic it is to classify the components of the mix. Not only is such classification a sensitive one, considering South Africa's recent history, but it requires intrusive questioning to make any formal assessment. Furthermore, any form of labelling is an arbitrary construct which tends to distort reality. As far as class is concerned, there is more mobility in the new class structures than before and the dividing lines are not clear. When I speak of middle class, I shall be referring to the traditional community and area from which the school has drawn its learners. The aspect of race is far more problematic. While I am conscious that race is a social construct, for the purposes of this research, and in a society where social redress is an important issue, it is nevertheless a construct that needs to be addressed. I have decided to avail myself of the classifications used by the Department of Education when speaking of my learners, problematic as these classifications are. I do consider that the home language of the learner is an important variable. I therefore often refer to racial or language categories when speaking about the learners.

The majority of learners in the school (roughly 60%) are white and mainly English speaking. There is also a small group of white Afrikaans speaking learners and another group of learners from immigrant families, notably Greek and Portuguese families. Thirty percent of the learners are coloured learners who speak English and/or Afrikaans, or a variety formed from a mixture of both languages, where they switch from one code to the other. The final ten percent of the learners have English as a second language and speak Xhosa as a first language. This means that some learners are not being instructed in their primary language or in the same variety of English which they use at home. Of course, the make-up in every class differs depending on the learning area and the subject choices. So, in many ways my classroom environment is varied, rich and peculiar to the South African context. Although this mix is far from representative of the population, it is nevertheless diverse.

Acknowledgement of the diversity in my classroom is one of the factors that led to my research question. As I became interested in my learners' backgrounds, I began to see my classes in a more textured way. I began to see how varied the life-worlds of the learners were and as a consequence how they each looked through a different lens when they were in my classroom and responded in different ways to what I taught them. They also brought different competencies and skills with them. It made me wonder how learners viewed and valued literacy practices and whether their views and valuations correlated with their performances at school.

1.3. Views of Literacy

In examining the values that the learners (and their parents and community, as perceived by the learners) attribute to literacy practices performed at home and at school, I use Street's (1984, 1995, 1999, 2003) autonomous and ideological models as a framework. Although I do discuss his contribution to the field of the New Literacy Studies in the theoretical chapter, it is important to speak more specifically about his formulation of the autonomous and ideological models of literacy here as it relates directly to ways of seeing literacy. Street says that far from being neutral, literacy practices are always imbued with values and ideology and are seen, understood and valued depending on the way in which they are situated socially, culturally and politically. All literacy practices are situated within an ideological framework. This way of viewing literacy and this recognition of literacy practices which he terms the "ideological model", is different from what he terms the "autonomous" view of literacy, which was and still is a widely accepted way of viewing literacy. The autonomous model claims that literacy is a discrete entity. It does not position literacy among social practices and sees literacy as a neutral set of skills which nevertheless has the power to improve or civilise those who are exposed to it. By implication, then, those who do not possess literacy in the traditional sense, are uncivilised, backward and underdeveloped. Literacy is seen as something to acquire and obtain because of the benefits it can confer, both economically and technologically, and as a tool for advancement in the existing system. I shall use these autonomous and ideological models to analyse and assess the descriptions that the learners give.

Related to this are the assumptions that educators frequently make about the learners in their classes. Firstly, because there are so many sensitive issues around race and class in the South African context, teachers tend to overcompensate by denying that diversity is a factor in the classroom. This means that in many instances when the recognition of what the learner is bringing to the classroom is a significant factor, teachers shy away and find

it easier to assume that everyone is the same. Secondly, the classroom is often seen as distinct and separate from the social worlds in which the learners operate, a baseline from which all learners' performance can be measured equally. There is also the idea, which has operated strongly in the past and still has some currency, that learners coming into the system need to adjust and adapt to the system of which they are now a part. The assumption that this form of 'transformation' to the existing system will happen when learners are exposed to reading and writing, undermines what they bring into the classroom from their home and social backgrounds. When the 'miracle' of 'transformation' does not happen, it often results in teachers adopting a defeatist attitude. Closely allied to this is another assumption, that when a learner is unable to perform, it is because of a perceived 'deficit' in the home background. The essence of the problem lies in the assumption that reading and writing confer some hidden power which will transform the child and lead to success in the classroom.

1.4. Rationale for Research

As I observed my learners and their work, I began to see that if I was to understand why some were succeeding in the classroom and others were not, I needed to explore their literacy practices, both at home and at school. David Barton speaks of the importance of teachers "keeping in mind a simple triangle of their own practices, their students' practices and the society's practices" (Barton, 2000: 174). My first two research questions have been formulated in keeping with his advice and as an attempt to look more closely at these three aspects.

Much of the research in the field of the New Literacy Studies has been undertaken outside of South Africa. It is important that research is done in South African schools, focusing on the South African context. We need to generate theory and research which penetrate the complexity of the multifaceted, rapidly changing South African context and which is relevant and meaningful to our own situation. Luke (1996) lists six areas for research in education. One of these, he says, should be to ascertain

How texts and discourses are affiliated with kinds and levels of cultural capital and social power in institutional contexts: If power is situated and relational (Gore 1993), then critical discourse analysis needs to theorize and document the sociological conditions of textual production and interpretation.

(Luke, 1996: 39)

I hope that this thesis goes some way to documenting the practices and conditions operating in one small section of South African classrooms.

1.5. Research Questions

My first and basic research question is, “How do adolescent learners speak about, write about, depict and value their literacy practices at home and at school?” Leading from this I then asked, “How do these descriptions link with their performances at school?” As the learners and I became involved in answering these questions I observed a shift happening in some of the learners, which led to the formation of my third question, “Would there be any shift in the learners’ perceptions of literacy and their practices through being involved in a research project on literacy?” My final question is to consider my own teaching practice in the light of my research and to ask, “How might I transform my own teaching practice to meet the needs of all the learners in my classroom?”

In this chapter I have described how my research questions evolved. In the next chapter I shall explore the literature, studies and theoretical framework which informed my research.

2. Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

It is a useful starting-point to examine the distinct practices in these domains [home, school and work-place], and then to compare, for example home and school, or school and work-place.

(Barton, & Hamilton, 2000: 11)

2.1. Introduction

The New Literacy Studies is a suitable resource for examining my research questions because it emphasizes the concept of situated practice. As Barton and Hamilton say, the starting point is to look at the “distinct practices” in the different domains of school and home and then to compare them. Because of the strong focus on situated practice in my research, I have used as my theoretical lens the work of researchers in the field of the New Literacy Studies.

In this chapter I first review the development of the New Literacy Studies and some of the research done in the field. Then I give a brief description of the terminology I have used. I end the chapter with a more in-depth discussion of the theoretical constructs underlying my research.

2.2. Literature Review

I begin my literature review with a look at some of the movements that have acted as springboards for the field of the New Literacy Studies. The paradigm shift that constitutes the New Literacy Studies has already surfaced in this dissertation in Street’s descriptions of conceptions of literacy as “autonomous” or “ideological” with the New Literacy Studies definitely favouring the ideological model.

The first of these movements took the study of literacy out of schools and into the community. In the 1960s and 1970s anthropologists and linguists were concerned about underachievement in mainstream schools by those who were not part of the mainstream. Up until then the cause for lack of success by these students had been seen as their inherent deficit. In 1974 Dell Hymes in *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach* (quoted by McConnell, 1997: 346) proposed an “ethnography of communication” which took research out of the realm of school literacy into the patterns of communication of the communities from which the students came. These different

patterns and practical applications of language, or ‘speech events’, were considered in the ‘speech communities’ in which they occurred.

Another movement which looked at literacy in relation to social practices is the work of Scribner and Cole (*The Psychology of Literacy*, 1981, quoted in Prinsloo, 2005: 15). In their work with the Vai they argue that there are different forms of literacy of which schooled literacy is only one, productive of particular skills. They also stress the importance of researching literacy as it is practised in different contexts. These factors, that there are multiple literacies and that literacy should be studied as social practice, are important characteristics of the New Literacy Studies.

This shift into the community was also pivotal to the work of ethnographic researcher Shirley Brice Heath (*Ways with Words*, 1983), who focused on direct observation of the social practices of literacy, what she terms the “ethnohistory of writing”. Her work rests on the idea of teacher and pupil as ethnographers of the practices of literacy in the community. She moves away from literacy as a formal idea in the classroom to multiple forms and practices of literacy in the community and she attempts to see what effect social practices have on the students in the formal setting. Heath immersed herself in the communities of Roadville and Trackton for ten years and from her observations claimed that there is a strong link between performance at school and the literacy practices performed in the community and home. The conclusions Heath draws are that children who have been raised in middle class backgrounds are more likely to succeed in mainstream schooling because the values and practices in the home are similar to those at school. Students bring from home practices which they apply in the school situation and then they carry home the practices they learn at school. She further observed that some children are marginalized in mainstream schooling because the literacy practices which are a part of their own social worlds have no value in the traditional schooling system. In many instances these practices might even disadvantage them in the way they relate to conventional schooling. However, the wealth of literacy practices which these children do have, and which could be drawn upon, is either negated or stifled as they are required to conform to existing standards, which often lead to underachievement and a sense of failure in the children. Schultz and Hull (2002: 15) term this the “continuity–discontinuity theory”.

The third seminal movement is the work of Brian Street (1984, 1995, 1999, 2003), which I have already spoken of and which also focuses on the importance of studying literacy

as a social practice. He advocates the importance of ethnographic research, in context, to observe literacy practices and the values attached to them.

David Barton, (quoted in Prinsloo, 2005: 21) describes the work of these researchers, Scribner and Cole (1981), Heath (1983) and Street (1984) as the “classic studies” of the New Literacy Studies. Baynham (2004: 285) describes them as “first generation studies”. This is in recognition of the formative and ground-breaking nature of their work. I now discuss some of what Baynham considers “second generation” studies. I make reference to Barton in my research and use some of his terminology. I also look at Prinsloo, Breier, Baynham and Gee, and will discuss their contribution as it relates to my work.

David Barton (1994, 2000, 2001) uses an ecological metaphor to describe literacy and distinguishes between *literacy events* and *literacy practices*. The events are the particular occasions in which literacy is practised and used and the practices are the cultural norms and values which are attached to these events by those who are participating in the event. It is in this sense that I have used the terms in my thesis. Like Street, Barton stresses that there is not just one form of literacy. In different contexts people make use of different literacies.

The bulk of research in the New Literacy Studies has been undertaken in Great Britain, the United States of America, Canada and Australia, and all the research done in these areas reflect, in one respect, similar conditions. Often the studies dealing with diversity are of minority groups within an established Western tradition, for example Mike Baynham’s (1993) work with Moroccans in England or the work described by Schultz and Hull (2002) in the United States of America. As I mentioned briefly in the rationale, the situation is different in South Africa and the research in this country needs to be directed to the complexity of our social, economic, racial and cultural environments.

Prinsloo and Breier (1996) showcase research that looks at South African issues in the book *The Social Uses of Literacy*. Various researchers in diverse areas show how literacy works in specific situations, how it impinges on social conditions and how literacy practices are being adapted to suit the community. Gibson (1996) examines literacy practices by communities on three farms in the Western Cape; Breier and Sait (1996) study communication at a South African factory; Kell (1996) researches the literacy practices in an informal settlement in the Western Cape; and Prinsloo and Stein (2004) turn their attention to education and observe young children’s encounters with literacy in

South African classrooms. The book illustrates the transitional nature of South African society and the spaces in which on-going research should be conducted.

Another aspect of importance is the New Literacy Studies recognition of power embedded in certain literacy practices. Heath and others' work shows us how some individuals and communities are advantaged because their home and community practices accord with those of the dominant institutions of society, which perpetuate the existing systems of power marginalising those who do not have access to the systems and structures which operate in these institutions. In South Africa, the complexity is further compounded by the transitional nature of our situation as we move out of the Apartheid era. The classroom in which I teach still further complicates the issue, as it does not reflect the realities of the population outside the classroom. In the classroom, learners who outside the classroom form part of the majority, become marginalised, as they form the minority. The system that is favoured and carries authority in the classroom is therefore that of a small, mostly white, middle class minority.

James Gee is another "second generation" researcher whose work provides the theoretical lens through which I analyse much of the data of my project. Gee expands the notion of literacy to go beyond the level of reading and writing, introducing his view of "Discourses" which he describes as

...ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular roles by specific *groups of people*....They are always and everywhere *social*. Language, as well as literacy, is always and everywhere integrated with and relative to *social practices* constituting particular Discourses.

(Gee, 1990: xix. His italics)

In brief, what Gee says is that language or literacy does not exist in isolation but is part of an associated Discourse³. For Gee, language does not create the Discourse. It is the Discourse that creates the language. The relevance to the study of education is that the home Discourses of many children are not the same as the Discourses in the formal school setting. This gives rise to conflict, especially because of the power that is accorded

³ In order to distinguish between the word Discourse as Gee uses it and discourse as it is conventionally used, Gee capitalises the word. In my thesis, I capitalise the word when it is used in relation to Gee, but do not do so in other instances.

the school Discourse. Gee's work in the field has been formative and he has extended his influence into the New London Group which will also be discussed later in the chapter.

Closely linked to Gee's work on Discourse is the tool of Critical Discourse Analysis through which it is possible to examine how power structures, ideology and social practices are embedded in texts. In discourse analysis, the word "text" has a broad meaning, signifying written texts, through to conversations, interactions and visual texts. One of the main theorists in Critical Discourse Analysis is Norman Fairclough (1992) who analyses texts on three levels or three dimensions: the level of text as a product of social practice, as a reflection of discursive practice and then as a text in itself (Fairclough, 1992: 72)

Cameron (2001) describes the process of Critical Discourse Analysis as recognising that reality is not an absolute, but is constructed through "acts of speaking and writing" (Cameron, 2001: 51). The role of Critical Discourse Analysis is to examine carefully the way in which this is done, to look at both content and form. She says that "CDA looks for the ideological significance of the choices speakers and writers make, and for significant patterns in the distribution of their choices" (Cameron, 2001: 51). Similar to Cameron, Luke speaks of the importance of Critical Discourse Analysis to educational research because it "can tell us a great deal about how schools and classrooms build 'success' and 'failure' and about how students' spoken and written texts shape and construct policies and rules, knowledge and indeed, 'versions' of successful and failing students" (Luke, 1996: 22). I have used Critical Discourse Analysis as a tool in my thesis when I analyse how my learners speak and write about literacy practices in an attempt to understand something of the nature of this process of building success and failure. In doing so, I have made use of Baynham's (1995) adaptation of Fairclough's model (see Figure 2.1) Baynham describes his work as a part of the Critical Literacy tradition which he says falls into "linguistics and anthropology, and educational and social theory" (Baynham, 1995: 1). In the tradition of the New Literacy Studies, Critical Literacy relies on literacy being understood best in the context in which it is being used. It is therefore seen as having a social function. Similar to Street, literacy is also seen as ideological and therefore needs to be understood in relation to power. Baynham says that social practices and institutions can be evaluated and critiqued in the hope of change and a redistribution of power. This focus on transformation is useful for looking at South African classrooms.

A relatively recent development in the field of the New Literacy Studies is the formulation of the concept of “multiliteracies”, by the New London Group (2000), a group of researchers, including figures like, Gee, Cope, Kalantzis, Cazden, Fairclough, Kress, Lo Bianco, Luke, Michaels, Nakata, Bond, Newfield and Sohmer. Cope and Kalantzis describe multiliteracies as

a word we chose because it describes two important arguments we might have with the emerging cultural, institutional and global order. The first argument engages with the multiplicity of communication channels and media. The second with the increasing salience of cultural and linguistic diversity.

(Cope and Kalantzis, 2000: 5)

The Group sees the meaning-making process as made up of six design elements – linguistic meaning, visual meaning, audio meaning, gestural meaning, spatial meaning and “multimodal patterns of meaning that relate the first five modes of meaning to each other” (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000: 7). The New London Group seeks to meet the changing world order, but at the same time recognises the importance of diversity. It realises the importance of existing structures, yet also the need for change.

These researchers are also particularly concerned with pedagogy and a great deal of their research is related to classroom practice. In this respect their work is of great relevance to the research which I am undertaking (see Chapter Five). Their four components of pedagogy, Situated Practice, Overt Practice, Critical Framing and Transformed Practice (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000: 7) will be discussed more fully later in the chapter.

Included in “multiliteracies” is the development of research into the multimodal and multimedia literacy of information communication technologies⁴. Work in this field has been useful to me because most of my learners describe their literacy practices as including the use of cell phones, computers, and televisions. Once again, it is important to note that the contexts in which the New London group mostly works (United Kingdom and Australia) are different from the South African context. Terms like “emerging cultural, institutional and global order” and “the multiplicity of communication channels and media” as mentioned in an earlier quote have a different application in South Africa.

⁴ Information communication technologies (ICT): sometimes called, as listed by Prinsloo (2005:186) “technoliteracies (Lankshear and Snyder, 2000), digital literacy (Gilster, 1997), electronic literacies (Warschauer, 1999), silicon literacies (Snyder, 2002) and multiliteracies (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000).

Prinsloo in his doctorate (2005) discusses the danger of making assumptions about the 'new literacies' and their abilities to transform communities. He warns of the danger of treating the new technologies in the same autonomous ways in which literacy and particularly reading and writing were once considered. This argument is also put forward by Warschauer (1999) who cites examples in India, Ireland and Egypt of the failure of the new literacies to change circumstances, revolutionise people's lives or enhance their access to the new global order. This view is extended in an article by Snyder, Angus and Sutherland-Smith (2002), which looks at the ICT practices at home and school in four Australian families. Their findings reveal that it is not only access at home and school to the new technological resources like computers which ensures success educationally. It is children whose home environments support the systems in place at school and whose home environments echo the values at school that are able to access the new technology, and also to turn it into capital at school. A different approach to the value of ICT practices is presented by Gee (2003) in his book, *"What Video Games have to Teach us about Learning and Literacy"*, where he highlights what can be used from learners' experiences with ICT practices at home to change pedagogy. Chapter 14 of the New London Group's book, *Multiliteracies* (2000) contains a response by South African teachers, collated by university lecturers, Newfield and Stein, which looks at the application of the Multiliteracies Project in a South African context.

My interest in new literacies is in how they are used by learners as a means of social interaction and in some instances either as resistance to or escape from the established, institutionalised literacies. Here I have found Canagarajah's (1999) concept of "safe houses" useful. I discuss this concept more fully later in the chapter.

My focus in this thesis is on school research and in this respect the work described in *School's Out: Bridging Out-of-School Literacies with Classroom Practice* (Schultz and Hull eds: 2002) has been useful. The book describes Mexican, Cambodian and African American adolescents' out-of-school literacy practices and then examines how these impinge on performances in school, in contexts varying from after school facilities, to support programmes, to work with computer technology.

My review of the literature has convinced me of the need for more literacy studies in South Africa, focusing on the multi-faceted and complex educational settings here. More studies like Spengler (1997) and Kapp's (2004) would enhance the field. Thesen and Van Pletzen's edited collection in *Academic Literacies and the Language of Change* (2006) does this when it looks at diverse literacy practices, events and modes in one institution in

South Africa in an attempt to show the range and complexity of the South African context. The chapters by Nomdo and Van Pletzen for instance, highlight how students struggle at university and have difficulty in becoming competent in the language of academic discourse. Furthermore, the capital which these students bring to the university does not always gain currency because it is not recognised in the formal academic domain and so many students become ‘failures’ and drop out. This is similar to the problem that I experience in my teaching situation. As I mentioned in the rationale, the South African context is a context in formation – changing and unfolding as the new democracy emerges. It is therefore important that this context finds expression in South Africans’ research.

Closely related to work in the New Literacy Studies is the work of cognitive psychologist, Jim Cummins (1996). Cummins works with language proficiency and in particular how bilingual and multilingual students develop language proficiency. He also stresses the importance of recognising the diversity of students and how their abilities in the classroom cannot be assumed.

My research questions all require the examination of literacy practices in and beyond the classroom, which makes them socially situated. The focus is on how literacy is observed and practised. Implicit in these questions is the belief that literacy is not a singular entity but changes from one situation to another. These aspects are all relevant to the field of the New Literacy Studies. My final question considering my own teaching practice in the light of my research fits into the New Literacy Studies field because it is an observation of situated literacy practice in the classroom, based on what has been presented from the social context. It is an attempt to understand the attitudes and values embedded in literacy practices and to look at the interplay of power as learners move from one context to the next.

2.3. Clarification of Terminology

Performance

I use the word “performance” in my dissertation in a very specific way. When I ask in my question: “How do these descriptions link with their performances at school?” I am envisaging different kinds of performance. Firstly, I wish to see if there is a link with the descriptions my learners give of literacy practices at home and school, with their assessed academic performance at school. I use as my measure of performance the departmental regulations, objectives and assessment, where there is a syllabus which states very clearly

that the learner has to achieve 40% to pass⁵. The breakdown for marks in Grade 11 is 80 marks for oral work, 120 marks for a cumulative written mark, and then 100 marks for both Language and Literature. Within the different categories, a breakdown of the performance criteria is given. For example, rubrics have been designed to help teachers to measure performance in different genres of writing. I shall look more carefully at these in my analysis of data. Furthermore, at this level of schooling, the weighting is more on the formal, impersonal, essayist, prose type of written work. This is the level of performance which is assessed and carries authority.

Secondly, I focus on the spontaneous types of performance which happen in the classroom, where learners perform in written and oral work that is not assessed – class discussions, orals and personal forms of writing. The Department encourages this kind of activity, but since it is not formally stipulated and assessed, it often depends on the teacher's own initiative whether it occurs. This type of performance evolves more from the experience and backgrounds of the learners, but being unregulated it is not formally valued and frequently goes unnoticed as a form of resource. Related to this kind of performance is where learners transfer literacy practices from school to home and vice versa and how they use these literacy skills in mediating for those around them.

Thirdly, I consider another type of performance which is not formally evaluated namely extra curricular activities, like fashion shows and school magazine work. I shall also be looking at literacy performance in this sphere.

My research attempts to draw attention to these different types of performance and the roles they play. I show that there are learners who are marginalised because they are unable to perform on the formal, academic level and are given little acknowledgement for the literacy skills they do possess in the areas in which they can perform. I am also concerned with how these informal resources can be used, so that learners might move from proficiency in the informal types of performance into competency in formal, assessed performance.

⁵ I am not using the assessment standards for the new Further Education and Training Band because the learners in my sample are Grade 11 learners are currently operating under the old system.

2.4. The New Literacy Studies

A key theoretical construct in describing and analysing my data is Gee's concept of Discourse⁶ – primary and secondary Discourses. According to Gee (1990) every person first acquires a 'home-based Discourse', or what he calls a primary Discourse. It appears natural and is the framework which supports the secondary Discourses learnt outside of the home. Through immersion in the primary Discourse our identity is shaped and it is through immersion in the Discourse that we become conversant with the rules, the norms, the conventions and the accepted and valued behaviours of the Discourse. This is the realm of the 'private role' of the individual. Of course, these Discourses are not singular and the edges between one Discourse and another can become indistinct. When I look at the way in which my learners represent their home practices, I shall be looking closely at their primary Discourses and the values they attach to them. Furthermore, for many of the learners, there are aspects of secondary Discourses which become assimilated into the primary Discourse.

The major way in which primary and secondary Discourses differ is that whereas primary Discourses are acquired almost 'unconsciously', secondary Discourses are learnt, or taught. School-based Discourse are secondary Discourses. When my learners speak of their experiences of literacy in the school-based Discourses, there is the potential to look at these experiences critically and evaluate them because they have been instructed in the skills and practices. Gee further explains how, because of the act of being taught the Discourse, students have a meta-knowledge about it (Gee 1990). Gee says that school-based Discourses carry with them an authority, or a power which often makes them seem more important than other secondary Discourses. Whereas the primary Discourse emanates from the private role of the individual, many of the secondary Discourses, and particularly the school-based Discourse, emanate from the public domain.

Gee speaks about the interface between the primary Discourses and the secondary Discourses of school and emphasises that the flow from one discourse to the other could be a natural extension, or it could be a site for conflict (Gee 1990: 91) if there is a mismatch of values, attitudes and practices. When there is a filtering from one Discourse

⁶ Later Gee (2001) refers to "semiotic domain" in place of Discourse. His 2003 definition of semiotic domains is: "any set of practices that recruits one or more modalities (e.g. oral or written language, images, equations, symbols sounds, gestures, graphs, artifacts, etc) to communicate distinctive types of meanings." (Gee 2003:18)

to another, and where one Discourse builds on the other, the student is advantaged. In later articles Gee speaks of some domains being “precursors for another domain” (Gee 2001: 6). When a child comes into one domain with precursors from another domain which contains elements of that domain, the child could be called “well-precursed”. When the reverse happens, the child is “poorly-precursed” (Gee, 2001: 7).

In examining the way in which my learners describe their literacy practices, I shall be looking at secondary Discourses in which they practise literacy. Amongst these is what Gee (1990: 183, borrowed from Amy Schuman), calls the ‘borderland Discourse’, where students ‘borrow from’ their primary and secondary Discourses and create amongst themselves a new Discourse. In my literature review I mentioned a similar concept related to this, namely, Canagarajah’s “safe houses” which are networking sites where students use literacy activities to interact and communicate with each other. Canagarajah sees “safe houses” as fulfilling five functions: firstly as sites for resistance where students can express their criticism of the institution without being penalised for their beliefs; secondly as sites which allow students to “collaborate” and interact to counter the “boredom” of the classroom; thirdly places where students can feel “pride” for their own discursive traditions; fourthly the “safe house” is a “subversive site” in which views different from those propounded by the system can be expressed; and finally, an educational site, which although not recognised formally, can lead to productivity in the formalised educational sphere (Canagarajah, 1999: 192). Although my learners might not express political resistance, as Canagarajah describes, there are ways in which I can use Canagarajah’s model of “safe houses” to describe and analyse certain of their literacy practices.

In this dissertation I present the process whereby learners become aware of literacy and conscious of their own literacy practices. A part of my discussion will be about the transformation that has taken place in the learners’ own views as they moved from the autonomous view of what literacy can do for them to a greater understanding of the importance of the literacy activities they practise at home. I think that my learners’ exploration of their literacy practices could be regarded as a form of personal mediation as defined by Barton (1994: 67). According to Barton, mediation happens on three levels - the personal level where individuals mediate their experiences and construct their own views of reality; the social construction of reality, where others mediate our experiences for us; and through texts – books, films, advertisements, sms messages and so on. I will

be referring to some of these forms of mediation when I work through the interviews, which contain my learners' descriptions of literacy practice.

Another set of theoretical constructs I have found particularly useful is provided by the work of the New London Group. This group of the New Literacy Studies researchers (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000) has created a model consisting of four components to assist teachers in approaching diversity and the imbalance between advantaged and disadvantaged learners in the classroom: Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, Critical Framing and Transformed Practice. Situated Practice acknowledges the importance of existing practices, both in pedagogy and in the life-worlds of students. Because not everyone is equipped with the same knowledge, through Overt Instruction learners are systematically supplied with "meta-languages which describe and interpret the Design elements of different modes of meaning" (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000: 244). Critical Framing allows students to stand back, interpret and be critical of what they are learning. The progression from these three stages is to Transformed Practice which allows for the evolution of new designs and putting these to work in other contexts or cultural sites (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000: 248).

2.5. Fairclough's Three-dimensional Conception of Discourse

For the Critical Discourse Analysis of pieces, I have made use of Fairclough's three-dimensional model. This model recognizes that texts are not merely language, but are created socially on many levels. The most obvious and visible level of text is the text as it stands. Here grammar, patterns, use of language and means of expression are all significant. Beyond and carried within the text is the less obvious level of text as discursive practice. At this level, there are three main considerations: the production of the text, the distribution of the text and the consumption of the text. This level looks at how the text has been created and assimilated. The context of the text is important here. The outer dimension is text as social practice. At this level there is analysis of why the text is the way it is. Which ideology is operating to create the conventions for the text, which power structures determine the way the text is created and which institutions entrench the conventions of the text, are all aspects of the text as social practice (Fairclough, 1992). I have made use of Baynham's (1995) adaptation of Fairclough's model (see Figure 2.1)

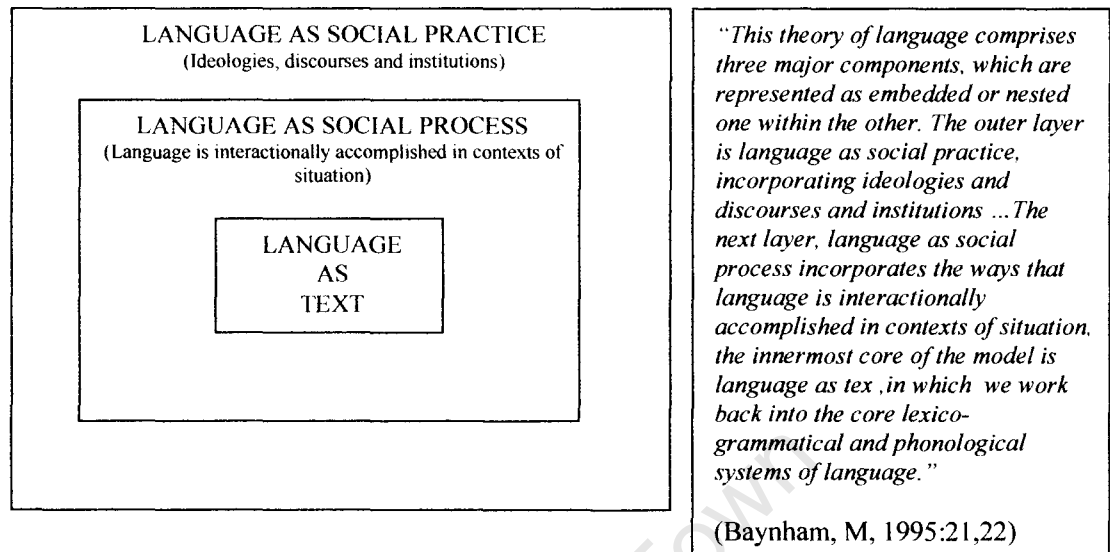


Figure 2-1 Model by Mike Baynham showing the three major components of language.

2.6. Conclusion

In conclusion, these are the major theoretical frameworks I have used in my thesis. I have positioned myself firmly in the field of the New Literacy Studies as I have looked at literacy as situated practice and have seen literacy practices as multiple and operating within certain ideological frameworks. I have made particular use of the work of Gee and Barton in framing my work. Another group of theorists in the field, the New London Group have also formed a part of the lens. In the area of Critical Discourse Analysis, my work has been influenced by Fairclough and I have used Baynham's adaptation of his model in interpreting many of the texts in my data.

3. Chapter Three: Methodology and Research Design

For those researching language within the field of education, ethnographic methods hold a particular appeal because of their attention to contextual detail within small naturalistic settings and to insider interpretations and meanings.

(Martyn Hammersley, 1994: ix)

3.1. Introduction

As the quote above indicates, ethnographic methods “hold a particular appeal because of their attention to contextual detail”. In this chapter I will be examining the way in which I used ethnographic methods in my research design and both the advantages and disadvantages of such methods in my particular case. I will also describe the sample I used for research, my position as researcher and my impact on the research. The final section of this chapter deals with a description of the data used in the study.

3.2. Research Design

Mouton (2001: 148) describes ethnographic studies as

Studies that are usually qualitative in nature which aim to provide in-depth description of a group of people or community. Such descriptions are embedded in the life-worlds of the actors being studied and produce insider perspectives of the actors and their practices.

As the New Literacy Studies focus on situated practice, and hence on observation either by the participants or the researcher, or both participant and researcher, qualitative study will be best suited to this theoretical framework. Situated practice requires a theoretical framework which includes contextualised observation and therefore the results and analysis of data are likely to be interpretive and qualitative.

According to Mouton, the second characteristic of ethnographic studies is that they seek to provide “in-depth descriptions of a group of people or community”. Le Compte and Preissle use the word “holistic” (1994: 3) to describe the in-depth study of a community. This too suits the New Literacy Studies approach. It is only through thorough observation and communication that the depth needed for qualitative analysis and interpretation of

data can be created. My final sample group is very small, seven members in total, which allows for penetration through questions and follow up of answers. The study is interactive and there is communication with the participants throughout which makes it highly intensive. The research aims to be descriptive to examine the values and practices surrounding literacy. For that reason the final aspect of Mouton's definition applies which says that in order to understand situated practice, the study needs in some way to be "embedded in the life-worlds of the actors being studied".

In my research design, my first research question was exploratory and descriptive to establish how learners describe attitudes to literacy activities and values associated with literacy events in both the home and school, and how these are all related to their life-worlds. Because the learners were active in the process of data collection my study tends towards what Mouton describes as participatory research (Mouton 2001: 151). He describes the "subjects of the research (research participants)" as being "an integral part of the design".

A further aspect to ethnographic studies is that they are frequently collected from a large range of sources or that they could be "eclectic" (Le Compte and Preissle 1994: 3). My research relied on a large number of semi structured and unstructured interviews, written pieces by learners, photographs and an inventory. In keeping with ethnographic methods, statistical analysis forms a very minor part of my thesis (Hammersley, 1994: 2).

There were various stages to the research design. The first was the formulation of the premise or problem. This was generated from observation of my learners' practices and performances in the classroom and in extra-mural situations. The second phase, after I had formulated the first question, was gathering the data. Initially I used the large sample of two classes as a pilot study to test the feasibility of the study and then I collected in-depth primary data from the select sample group. The data covered various forms to create a holistic and full profile of each learner. There was self response, participant observation, photographic depictions, focus group discussions and semi structured interviewing of each member of the sample. Some of the data relating to my second research question, in particular to do with the aspect of performance, were samples of work from the students created as part of the school programme. In ethnographic terms these might be considered part of "naturalistic research" (Mouton, 2001: 148). The large variety of forms of data was a means of ensuring validity through triangulation. It was also an attempt to enhance what Nunan (1992: 14) calls the two central components of

well structured ethnographic studies – reliability and validity. Reliability “refers to consistency of the results obtained from a piece of research” and validity is the “extent to which a piece of research actually investigates what the researcher purports to investigate” (Nunan, 1992: 14). In building up a full picture through a wide variety of sources, I have tried to fulfill these two criteria.

During this process of data collection, another level of the study developed which referred to the third research question: “Would there be any shift in the learners’ perceptions of literacy and their practices through being involved in a research project on literacy?” This required collection of data of the on-going change taking place in the learners. The question itself was only formulated once the study was under way. This process where “Ethnographers frequently develop or redefine purposes as they proceed through the research activity” has been called “recursivity” by Le Compte and Preissle (1994: 37). Throughout the collection of data, recursivity took place as I reformulated and refined all of my research questions and included more data.

Once the data had been collected, it needed to be collated and analysed. The tools used for this process varied according to the nature of the data, but in all cases the process was interpretive, sometimes using discourse analysis where written texts and spoken texts were analysed, sometimes measuring against the school performance standards as set out by the Education Department. This will be explained more thoroughly later in the chapter.

The final stage of the research was collating all the evidence into profiles for the learners and interpreting and writing up the data according to the theoretical framework. The discussion drew together the evidence which answered, explained or expanded on the research questions.

There are strengths and weaknesses to this research design. As I have previously mentioned, one of the strengths is the rapport which is established between the participants and the researcher and the familiarity the researcher has with the context and the participants. It was easy for me to have access to my subjects and their work because they were all in my classes. All I needed to do was to invite learners to be involved. However, there was the possibility that because of the imbalance in the power structure (teacher to learners) the learners, who were very much participants, did not perform naturally and might subconsciously have adapted their answers, observations and conversations to suit me. This could be seen as a weakness of the design. However, this

problem is present in any kind of design and not peculiar to ethnographic design only. As Hammersley (1994: 7) points out, such bias occurs even in highly controlled, scientific situations. The counter argument is also expressed by Cameron, et al. (1994: 23), who speak for the interaction of researcher and subjects when they say, “We want to argue that interaction enhances our understanding of what we observe, while the claims made for non-interaction as a guarantee of objectivity and validity are philosophically naïve”. Therefore, I have tried to be aware that there might be this imbalance and have used triangulation to try to neutralize the problem. I have also been aware of the possibility of subjectivity and realise that what is being presented is the world-view of the learners, and the interpretation is being done by a participant observer with her own world-view operating. As LeCompte and Priessle (1994:44) argue

Ethnography builds the subjective experiences of both participants and investigator into the research frame, thus providing a depth of understanding often lacking in other approaches to research. This practice is a self-conscious attempt to balance observer bias and reactivity of participants.

A further weakness that could be leveled against this study is the lack of generalisability, but as Nunan points out, generalisability is not a criterion for ethnographic research. Of more importance is “validity in terms of comparability and translatability” (Nunan, 1992:69). Comparability means that the study needs to be constructed in such a way, with enough clarity and transparency, that the results and interpretations can “serve as a basis for comparison with other like and unlike groups” (Nunan,1992: 69). This rigour of description of the procedures and methods of categorization and analysis would then ensure that translatability is possible, and that “comparisons can be conducted confidently” (Nunan, 1992: 69). That is why I have included extra data and information in the Appendices. I have tried to describe my procedures, my data and my analysis as explicitly as possible so that there can be comparability and translatability.

Table 1, in Appendix A, is a summary, based on Mouton’s table (2001:148), of my research design and gives an overview of the various facets of the design.

3.3. Sample

The sample I used for my study is from my English Language classes. It is made up of 15, 16 and 17-year-old male and female learners from two classes. Before I conducted the study I explained the research to my learners and invited them to take part. An initial piece of work was done by all the learners (sixty in total). I then asked for volunteers from the Grade 11 class for a more in-depth study and from these finally selected 7 learners who with their parents signed consent forms (See Appendix B). I stressed confidentiality throughout and obtained permission from the Western Cape Education Department and the principal of the school to conduct the study. The selection for the group was made according to the following criteria: I wanted to reflect the diversity of race, gender, class and academic abilities of the learners in the class. Of the seven learners in the group, four are female and three are male; three are English speaking white learners; one is a Xhosa speaking learner; three are coloured learners who are bilingual in English and Afrikaans (two of these bilingual learners said they also spoke a mixture of both languages); three learners live close to the school, four learners live within the school's catchment area, but on the outskirts, and one learner lives in a township (It takes him about an hour to travel to and from school each day by bus or taxi). So the group reflects a wide diversity and range of backgrounds and at the same time is fairly representative of the diversity of the school.

3.4. My Position as Researcher

My relationship with the learners is that of their English teacher so we are familiar with each other. As I mentioned previously, I realize that there is a danger in this in that they might often have presented data which they thought I would have liked them to present. Another potential problem is that, because I have taught them for a while, I needed to be watchful of my assumptions about them and their abilities. However, the advantage to being in this position is that there is already a rapport and an open, established attitude of trust on both sides. This has led to the learners speaking freely and revealing aspects which they might not have found easy in more formal conditions with a stranger. There were times when I sat back and observed the learners without interfering, for example in examination conditions or in various class discussions. These observations I often recorded in a journal, which I kept during the period of data collection. The journal acted

as a means of recording and clarification. This is a typical excerpt of one of the entries in the journal:

By sheer coincidence I happened to be in Michael's Home Economics' exam. I observed him when he was writing the paper. It was so interesting to see him doing so. When he was doing the multiple choice questions, he read actively – in other words, he mouthed the questions as if he were speaking to someone, he used his hands and facial expressions to give emphasis to important words. Then when he gave the answer, he mouthed, "Definitely, yes" and shook his head. Only then did he write the answer on his paper. This could be because his reading is not very strong. It could be because he was afraid he would misread. It could also be related to the oral tradition which is more familiar to him. I tend to think it is a combination of all three.

(Personal Journal, 26 May 2006)

This journal entry gives a flavour of the reflective position I assumed as researcher. There were other times when I was a more active participant, for example as a participant in the discussions. In the semi-structured focus group discussions or interviews, I developed points or probed into a point with questions to extend the thinking of the learners. The learners and I became very close through the process and learnt a great deal about literacy and each other. The observations that I make therefore are made from the standpoint of participant observer and I acknowledge that in my role as both teacher and researcher I have influenced the line of thought of the learners. I have tried to make it clear in the description of data in the thesis, when I have used data where I have probed, or developed a line of thought. Cameron et al (1994) highlight the position of power which the researcher assumes in a position like mine. It is important to be conscious of it at all times. Whenever possible I tried to keep the lines of communication open with my learners, telling them exactly what the work they were doing was being used for. Telling learners what I had observed, I often referred to the research in lessons. Sometimes I referred back to the learners for questions about the accuracy of my observations. I did not however, show them the final draft of my thesis in detail because I feel that there are certain aspects of the discussion which might create an unhealthy awareness of difference in the learners, which could lead to insecurity or lack of confidence in them. I have tried in all other ways to comply with the characteristics listed by Cameron et al. which empower learners through seeking "their active co-operation which requires disclosure of the researcher's goals, assumptions and procedures."(Cameron 1994: 23)

When my role shifted into assessing performance in the domain of formal schooling, I used my professional judgment and experience as a teacher, using the criteria as set down by the department. However, I realize that even this assessment, because of the subjective nature of essay marking, is also interpretive and in this way I am a participant researcher.

3.5. Collection of Data

How learners write about, speak about, depict and value literacy practices at home and at school

In this section I describe the data which I collected from learners to establish how they write about, speak about, depict and value literacy practices at home and at school. For an overall view, a summary of the data presented below is included as a table in Appendix C.

How learners write about literacy practices: Reflective Essay

The first piece of work, entitled *My Reading Journey: a Reflection*, is a narrative account (written in the form of a reflective essay) and commissioned by me as part of my learners' school writing portfolio. I used the practice of reading as a lead into the topic of literacy. In the essay, learners were asked to recount their memories about and attitudes to reading and other literacy practices from their earliest memories up until their entry into high school. Then they were asked to write how they felt about reading at present and whether they considered reading an important practice, both inside and outside of school. This question also touched on the formalised reading period⁷ at school. Furthermore, learners were asked to consider reading in the broadest sense, for example whether they considered watching a visual presentation, like a television programme, as a process involving reading or literacy. Before the essay was written, I had an informal class discussion about reading and literacy practices. I helped the learners in their construction of this essay by providing them with questions they could use to structure their essay if they wished (see Appendix D). The aim of the essay was to establish a general feeling about how the learners represented their home reading and literacy practices. At this stage of my investigation I was not yet sure of the direction in which I wished to move and so I wanted the essay to be as broad as possible. I was interested to see the variety of textures and nuances of description. I felt that only once I had looked at the broad spectrum could I select my profile learners. At first I wanted to select two groups of profile learners from

both grades, but made a decision that for the scope of this dissertation, one group of Grade 11 learners would suffice. When I analysed the essays for the whole class, I interpreted various common strands, and looked at differences. This formed the basis for the questions I would structure for the in-depth work with the profile learners.

This essay was also used as a piece of writing in the profiles. I used Critical Discourse Analysis to interpret the values and practices attached to reading and literacy.

How learners write about literacy practices: Inventory

In order to gain a more specific view of how significant various literacy activities were in the lives of the learners, I devised a literacy inventory (See Appendix E) which I asked the profile learners to fill in and then collated. They marked off how significant certain activities were in their lives. There were four levels of significance for each activity, ranging from totally unimportant, to very important. In order to guide learners and establish uniformity in what was measured at each level, descriptors were given.

I included in the inventory one category which I discovered as the research developed. This is “physical activity”. As the learners started expanding their views on what literacy was, and as I observed them in their activities at school, I noticed how important this area was as a means of communication amongst learners. It is a form of coding and decoding through physical gestures and positioning. This appears in concerts when they dance and in sports games and other similar activities. The New London Group speaks of “gestural meaning” (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000: 7). I also used this category in the inventory to get an idea of how literacy compared to other activities in learners’ lives.

How learners speak about literacy practices: Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions took place with all seven of the profile learners together and with me as co-ordinator. At first I tried to get one of the learners to co-ordinate the questions, but this did not work successfully. The pattern that became established after a while was that if there was some issue that needed to be developed or clarified, I intervened. In total, we met for three sessions, each lasting fifteen minutes. The questions (See Appendix F) explored what the learners understood by the term literacy and asked them about various practices of literacy in the school and at home. It also made them consider what literacy

⁷ Reading period: Three days a week, a half an hour session is set aside for the learners to read a novel or similar book. It is an interesting space in which personal reading and formalised school reading overlap.

practices they valued and thought were important or not. I recorded and later transcribed these discussions. I used the categories in my research question – how they write about, speak about, describe, depict and value their literacy practices as a basis to describe the data and analyse it.

How learners speak about literacy practices: Interviews

I also conducted a 30 minute private, semi-structured interview with each learner based on the questions in Appendix G. In this way I gathered a full and textured picture about how the learner saw literacy and literacy practices carried out in the home, the community and the school. In these interviews I was also able to ascertain how different literacy activities were valued. These interviews were recorded and then later transcribed.

How learners depict their literacy practices: Photographic depiction

Inspired by Hamilton (2000:18) who describes the use of photographs to capture literacy activities as “observable, but frozen moments of a dynamic process” and because I still felt that I did not have a full enough picture of their descriptions of their home literacy activities, I supplied disposable cameras to the learners and asked them each to take six photographs of literacy activities in their home. Kress and Van Leeuwen speak of the value of visual representation when they say, “Visual structures realize meanings as linguistic structures do also, and thereby point to different interpretations of experience and different forms of social interaction” (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996:2). I was hoping to capture some nuances in the photographs which I might have missed in my other data collection, or else to use the photographs to build up a fuller picture of literacy practices. My instruction was very broad so each learner could choose whatever he or she wished to photograph. After the learners had seen their photographs, they answered a questionnaire (see Appendix H) to explain their choice of photographs, to say whether the photographs were staged or not and to establish how they valued particular activities. Each questionnaire was specially designed to question the particular photographs taken by each learner.

How learners perform in the formal domain of school: The term mark

I looked at the formal record of the learners for the subject “English” for the term. I looked at how the learner performed according to the criteria set in these areas – Written

work, Literature, Language, Oral work and an overall average. I then compared these marks with the class averages.

How learners perform in the formal domain of school: Formal written work

The Discursive Essay

The discursive piece of writing is the most formal piece of writing the learners had to do and therefore required advanced language proficiency. It assessed the learners' abilities to construct a coherent argument, write in essayist-prose style, use a formal and fairly impersonal register and use evidence to justify opinions.

Transactional Writing : The Formal Letter

Transactional writing was a letter to the press and it required that learners understood the conventions of writing a formal letter, could express their opinions clearly and could use very precise language. It was also an extension beyond a text, as it was a letter written on a book that had been read. There was therefore a high degree of expertise required in manipulating an existing text.

Analytical Writing: The Setwork Essay

The setwork essay was performed during a controlled exam condition and the question was directed towards evaluating the learners' understandings of the book and to constructing and developing an argument on a particular theme in the book. The style required was formal, concise, fluent and directed towards establishing a clear argument. Another reason why this piece was an important one to include in the data collection is that it was the only piece written entirely by the learner and was not a product of some form of mediation.

Creative Writing: Poem

The final piece for analysis was the creation of a poem based on the experiences of a character in a book the learners had read. The learners therefore had more choice in structuring the piece. The more affective aspects of expression and response were measured: sensitivity to the character and the situation, use of language to express emotions and use of imagery.

All of these written pieces are part of the Grade 11 syllabus. Before each piece was written full instruction was given about what was required of the genre and the conventions for the genre. Some of the genres, for example the discursive essay, learners have written in Grade 9 and Grade 10. Others, for example the reflective essay, are new to them. These pieces were all written for the learners' portfolio with no mention of their being used in research.

How learners perform in the formal domain of school: Formal expository speech

This oral which was recorded and transcribed, was a formal, prepared expository speech the learners presented to the class. It evaluated the learners' abilities at researching a topic, conveying their ideas orally in a formal way, and delivering their speech.

How learners perform informally

There is a great deal of discussion that happens during the course of an English lesson and this was an important part in my analysis of the learners' performances in the informal areas of school-based Discourse. Included in this were my observations of learners informally outside the classroom, and performing in extra curricular activities in the school like concerts and parent-teacher meetings. Many of these observations I recorded in my journal.

3.6. Method of Analysis

The methods used for analysis in ethnographic studies are very important as they are what give the study reliability (Nunan, 1992: 62). Because of the variety of data that form part of this research design a number of different tools were used for analysis, but there were two basic forms of analysis. On the one hand, there was the analysis of data which related to my first research question of how learners describe their literacy practices at home and at school. For the analysis of this data, I used mainly Critical Discourse Analysis, interpretation of data based on categories formed from questions I asked in the focus group discussion and interviews, and visual analysis of photographs. The second form of analysis related to the second research question which looked at performance in the formal domain of school, in the English class more specifically. Here, I used as a basis for analysis the assessment criteria as stipulated by the Education Department. In the following section, I shall describe all of these methods more fully. The tools for analysis used for each kind of data are listed on the table in Appendix C.

Critical Discourse Analysis

I have already spoken about the suitability of Critical Discourse Analysis for ethnographic studies in my theoretical framework. I have used as a basis for my analysis the model which Baynham (1995) proposes (see Figure 2.1). The way in which I have applied this model is to analyse on three levels the texts (written texts,

transcripts of discussions and interviews) which I have collected. Firstly, I looked at the innermost level – the level of text – at what had been said and how it had been said. I examined why particular words, phrases, intonations and grammatical structures had been used. At the next level I considered the ways in which the language used arose out of the social context and situation in which it had been produced. The third level of analysis encompassed the values and power structures which create and hold what is expressed in the text, the basic ideologies which give rise to what is being said and how these values and ideas are perpetuated. In this way, there was an in-depth analysis of data on three levels as space allows in this dissertation.

In-depth analysis of data: Categorisation

Le Compte and Preissle (1994: 241) consider that, “Discovering or establishing units of analysis constitutes one of the primary tasks in processing ethnographic data”. I have analysed much of my data through categorization. I have used the questions in the semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and in questionnaires as a means of creating various “loose” categories. I have then compared and contrasted the various answers given to me by the seven profile learners and built up profiles which contain the information relevant to each of the learners.

When I was working with the literacy inventory, I used a slightly different process (see Appendix E). To give a visual representation of how learners responded I created a bar graph by converting the time frames into four levels. From that I could see the different values and emphasis for each learner (see Appendix E). The analysis was another attempt at triangulation of data.

Visual Analysis of Photographs

The way in which I analysed the photographic depictions was guided by the work of Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996: 12). I have taken as a premise for the photographs their statement that,

The interest of sign-makers, at the moment of making the sign, leads them to choose an aspect or bundle of aspects of the object to be represented as being criterial, at that moment, for representing what they want to represent, and then choose the most plausible, the most apt form for its representation.

(Kress,G and Van Leeuwen,T, 1996: 12)

I have analysed the photographs bearing this quote in mind and acknowledging that the photographs carry with them different levels of interpretation. As I used three levels of interpretation for the Critical Discourse Analysis, I have done so with the analysis of photographs. Firstly, I considered the compositional framework for example aspects like the placement of objects and the framing in the photograph. Secondly I have considered the interactive framework which includes the distance of the shot, and the point of view of the shot. The third level is the representational aspect. Here I have considered whether the photograph has a narrative structure (where there is some form of story being told) or a conceptual structure (where there is just classification of objects) as explained by Van Leeuwen and Jewitt (2001). I have analysed all the photographs each learner presented, and have gathered together the patterns or main ideas. I have done this in conjunction with the answers on the questionnaires. Because of a lack of space in the thesis, I have included in my results only the most salient information.

Analysis of Formal Performance

The purpose of the data on performance in the academic domain of the English classroom is to see whether there is any link between how learners describe their literacy practices at home and school and their performance at school. I have therefore chosen to look at how learners are assessed at school and have used the same analytical tools that are prescribed in that domain. I wish to see whether the capital that the learners bring from home is recognised and valued in the formal school domain. I therefore use the criteria set by the institution that decides on the assessment standards.

When I analysed the written pieces as profile pieces measuring performance, my in-depth analysis was similar to discourse analysis. It was different from Critical Discourse Analysis in that it was related only to the level of text. I created four basic categories to study all the written pieces: structure, register and tone, content and language as represented in Appendix I. This is a simplified version of the guideline rubric from the Department of Education (See Appendix J).

Another form of analysis in the formal performance was the formal oral evaluation. As with the writing, I used the criteria from the Education Department (see Appendix K).

Analysis of Informal Performance

The analysis of data here was completely interpretive and drawn from my own observations and what formed part of the learners' descriptions for me.

3.7. Conclusion

The function of this chapter on methodology has been to describe the research design and its components. I have looked at the characteristics of ethnographic studies and shown how they apply to my design. I have described the stages of the research design and how the data was collected. In doing so, I have looked at the strengths and weaknesses of the design and the ways I have tried to overcome the assumptions or flaws. Nunan advocates that, "ethnographers need to present their methods so explicitly that their report can be used as a procedural manual by those wishing to replicate the research." (Nunan, 1992: 59). This chapter has been my attempt to do just that.

4. Chapter Four: Seven Views of Literacy – The Profiles

Every person, adult or child, has a view of literacy, about what it is and what it can do for them, about its importance and its limitations. Everyone has a way of talking about literacy, they use a set of metaphors to do with literacy, they have what in fact is a theory of literacy.

(Barton, 1994: 48)

4.1. Introduction

Barton claims that “every person...has a view about literacy”. In this chapter I build up seven profiles which examine seven different views about literacy. Each profile, describes what the learner speaks about, writes about, depicts and values about his or her literacy practices at home and at school, and uncovers each particular learner’s “theory of literacy”. What I have done in each case is to describe the data and to build up a picture of each learner. However, because of the nature of Critical Discourse Analysis and visual analysis, I have in certain cases given some commentary about the learner’s perceptions. Because of the shortage of space available in this thesis, certain parts of the data, especially those parts relating to performance in the formal domain of school, have been included as appendices.

4.2. Aimee⁸

Background

Aimee comes from an English speaking, white, middle class family. Previously, she attended the local primary school and lives within the catchment area of the school. Aimee’s mother works in a law firm and her father is a businessman. Her descriptions of her home and school literacy practices, emphasise success at school and strong support of the education system

How Aimee writes about, speaks about, depicts and values literacy practices at home and at school

In Aimee’s reflective essay, she has very definite views about reading, which she equates with literacy. She says, “My family feels rather strongly about children being brought up

⁸ The names of the learners have been changed to protect anonymity.

in a reading environment.”⁹ This positive view is further enhanced by the word “love” being used five times in the essay in relation to reading activities. She also writes how she has strong memories of being read to and how she now reads to her younger siblings.

When she writes about being taught to read there is a close link between home and school as can be seen in her linking together the two domains in this one sentence, “I was taught by my parents at a very early age and also by my teachers.” Later she uses the word “supportive” to describe her family input. The strong motivation from the parents is also clear in the following statement where Aimee describes her mother teaching her nursery rhymes. “She used to say everyone will know them and you will not, so that made us learn them.” The word “made” is compelling and reinforces the first part of the sentence which indicates a sense of being part of a larger, established community which values this activity and sees it as important to keep abreast with the standards set by the community. Just as Aimee’s parents teach her, or mediate for her the literacy practices from school, so Aimee mediates for her younger siblings by helping them with their homework.

When Aimee describes the practice of forced reading at school in the designated reading period, she sees it as a “waste of time” because “most of the pupils at our school are not interested in reading and they enjoy wasting their time playing with their cell phones or talking instead of gaining knowledge out of an interesting book.” This sentence indicates Aimee’s value system in relation to written text. Her use of the words “wasting time” indicates that she does not value the sms text highly, as opposed to formal reading where you can “gain knowledge”. The use of the pronoun “they” to describe those who do not read, labels them as “other” as opposed to the use of the word “I” to describe herself. This shows the separation she feels from this group of learners in this respect and her alignment with the process of reading.

In the essay Aimee explains her preference for novels because they are “somewhere that you are by yourself and can be in another world”. This statement indicates a value attached to a particular kind of text, which in turn is a reflection of the way in which that text is considered and used by the community of which Aimee is a part. Firstly, Aimee is able to escape through the use of the text and go into another world. The space in which Aimee lives allows her to withdraw into this private world. When she speaks again later in the group discussions about television, film and computer games, Aimee does not see them as proper reading because for her, the activity of reading needs to be creative. The

⁹ When I have quoted any data from learners I have done so verbatim.

activity of watching she sees as passive. This idea she expresses in the following way in her interview, "I don't see literacy as watching ...if you are reading you produce it yourself. You are imagining it. If you see it, it is just there."

The next source I shall examine is the literacy inventory (see Figure 4.1.) which questions how important school-based literacy is in Aimee's life. There is a discrepancy here because the literacy activities which Aimee lists as most practised in her life and the ones given prime position are smsing, and writing notes to friends, and yet she does not consider them "important" in her essay and interview. Only after these does she acknowledge formal literacy like the homework categories. Included in this category are reading novels and religious texts and listening to music. The other activities are all insignificant to her. This lack of interest in the internet and computer games is also evident in Aimee's essay where she describes them as "boring".

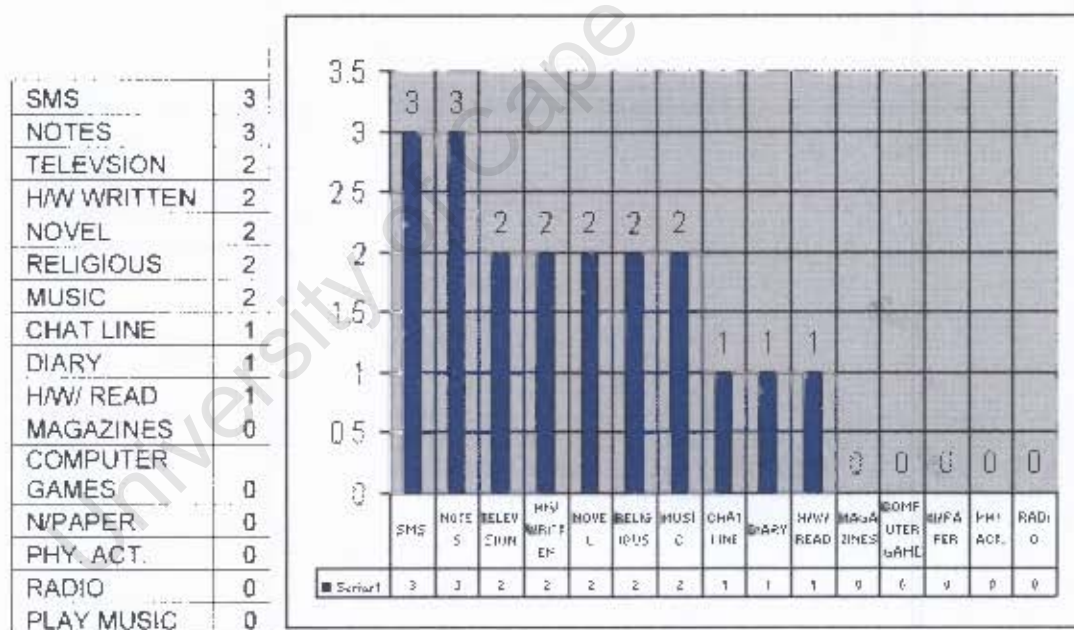


Figure 4-1 Aimee's Literacy Inventory showing the significance of various activities in her life at home.

When Aimee speaks about literacy activities in the focus group discussions she mentions the conflict between the formal literacies (homework) and the more informal (cell phone). "At the moment I don't have my phone...¹⁰ I think my parents thought I used it too much, that's why they took it away... Homework is probably the most important." These lines, besides expressing what has happened, also reveal how Aimee thinks her parents regard

¹⁰ Ellipsis indicates pausing.

her activity on the cell phone and the value they attach to homework. What emerges from this statement is that Aimee sees her parents as being active members in her education. This is reinforced in that at the “Meet the teachers” meeting at school, where parents and learners are strongly invited to attend to discuss the learner’s progress with the teachers, Aimee and her mother were the only ones of the profile learner group to attend the meeting. It was also significant that Aimee came with her mother as it is voluntary for learners to attend.

Aimee’s depiction of literacy in her home through her photographic representation supports the views presented above. I examine two of the photographs in detail here. (see Figures 4.2 and 4.3)

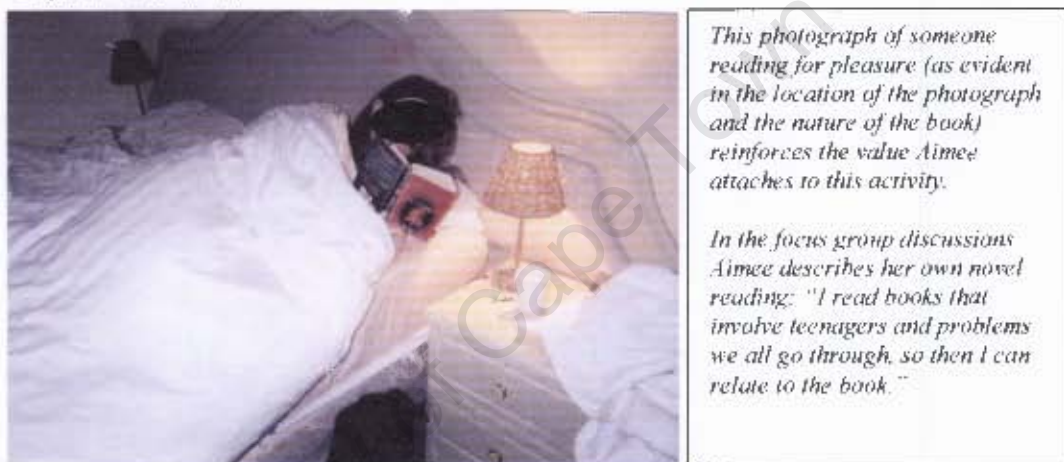


Figure 4-2 Aimee – Photograph One.

Aimee took the photographs half way through the data collection. By this time in the research her view of literacy had broadened to include other forms of literacy activities, like communication through speech and using cell phone and computer technology. This is depicted in the next photograph (Figure 4.2) where the girl is talking over the cell phone. The composition of the photograph is interesting. The vertical profile of the girl indicates the private nature of the literacy activity.

At the representational level, all Aimee’s photographs are narrative, in that they tell some kind of story. This shows how Aimee sees literacy activities as involving people doing something, either with each other or with technology. All of the photographs are naturalistic, medium distance shots, with the activity centrally placed on the photograph. This gives the impression that the activities are for Aimee a part of life at home.



Figure 4-3 Aimee – Photograph Two

Figure 4.3.

Aimee says that this form of literacy is very important and that it plays a large part in her life.

When she was asked whether the other items in the background of the photograph associated with literacy (the books, the photographs, the certificate) were meant to be a part of the picture, she said that they were not. This illustrates how these objects are assimilated into her life and do not stand out as special.

One observation Aimee made in the focus group discussions of sms writing shows the relationship between home and school: "It's like it's in your head. In one of my essays I saw that. In my essay my mom circled all the sms words and I was surprised to see how many there were." Aimee's mother intervenes in her school work and the way Aimee speaks indicates that the occurrence is regular and natural.

The in-depth interview with Aimee confirmed much of what she presented previously. She also said that if you do not have literacy you "can't do anything because you can't go to the shop, because you have to read the labels on the products. You can't drive either". When I probed with a further question to extend the view, asking how people (of which there are many in South Africa) who had had no formal schooling managed, she admitted that she had "no idea" and had "never thought of that before". This indicates the strength of the assumption that in order to function in society you need literacy, as well as what Aimee's view of 'normal' is – it includes in it being literate, that is, able to read and write. Aimee wishes to be a dental technician when she leaves school and sees literacy as a way to help her getting there. She says, "It [literacy] will help you to get there." Aimee holds an idea in her mind of where she wants to go and what she needs to attain that. Study, and therefore literacy, is her key to success in her profession. As in the previous activities, in this interview there is a clear distinction for Aimee between "literacy for fun" (reading magazines and sms) and literacy for formal purposes – work, or in order to achieve some goal.

I asked Aimee whether in her family they ever discussed serious issues. She gave a glimpse into her home practices when she spoke of family evening discussions and said, “The whole family will sit in the lounge or the kitchen and we will discuss things, what happened in the day. That is the main part of communication for the day”.

Another literacy activity which Aimee mentions in her literacy inventory is her habit of writing in a personal diary. When I asked Aimee about it in the interview, she described how the process evolved: “At the beginning of the year, I thought it might be quite fun to look back at the end of the year at what I did every single day. It’s not long. It’s just a few words that I write in”. This is a similar escape into another world or space through the use of text which Aimee describes in reference to her novel reading. She says, “It is something that is just mine. I don’t get a lot of space. In the family I don’t get a lot of things because I have two sisters and this is mine.” The repetition of the word “mine” reinforces the notion of individuality and separation. When I asked Aimee if she considered writing in her diary a form of literacy activity, she was prepared to see it as such, but the value she attached to it was a personal one. She uses the words “It’s a part of my life”. This reflects how natural it is for Aimee to use text to express herself. It also shows how much text is used in her home and community as a means of personal expression and communication.

The link between home and school

In the interview, I asked Aimee about the link between school and home and vice versa. She was prepared to acknowledge that there was a carry over of literacy activities from school to home.

- Aimee: Well, we get setwork books and I normally read the setwork books twice, to get the whole point. Homework as well. I do quite a lot of homework at home.
- Interviewer: Are there certain things that you practise at home that you find yourself bringing into your school situation?
- Aimee: Not, no...we don’t really read magazines at school, smsing, we are not allowed to bring cell phones to school, so smsing not really and we don’t really watch tv at school. I don’t think we are bringing anything from home.

My questions led Aimee to the domain outside the classroom, the informal space in school. Here she was prepared to admit that the informal literacy activities that she practised at home, like listening to music and watching television, did come into conversations with her peers.

Music...is quite a big one. Conversations with friends... *Prison Break* is a big one at the moment, so people will say, "Do you know what happened?" Then someone will say what happened. We don't really go into it with that much detail

Aimee considers these interactions with her peers as social activities and perfectly spontaneous and natural. Here Aimee and her friends are mediating the text of the film as they explain to each other what has happened and what has been missed.

To sum up, when Aimee describes her literacy activities at home, she speaks about how strongly her family values reading and how her family considers children being brought up as readers as important. She represents a home in which all types of literacy are encouraged, but in which the formal school-based literacies are valued above others. Various forms of written texts and their uses are familiar in Aimee's life. There is a strong emphasis on homework being done – other literacy practices like watching television and messaging over the phone are not allowed until the homework has been done. There is a conscious effort to maintain standards and to conform to the ways in which literacy is practised by the community.

Aimee represents her own values as being a love of reading and a love of gaining knowledge. When she speaks of her reading, she sees it in two ways. In the first instance, there is the entertainment value, where she escapes into another world, especially when reading novels, and then secondly, there is the more formal aspect of reading which helps her to increase her own general knowledge. Aimee has a definite hierarchy of importance when she speaks of literacy activities. The formal activities closest to school-based literacies are seen as more valuable. There is a clear distinction between literacy for fun and literacy to learn and this does provide an area of conflict or tension where Aimee has a preference for the informal literacies, especially smsing.

Assessment of Aimee's performance in the English class: formal academic domain

If one looks only at the marks Aimee obtained for English, of the seven profile learners, she obtained the highest marks (9% above the class average). Closer inspection of the marks shows Aimee's strongest point as her writing mark (25% above the class average)

	LANGUAGE	LITERATURE	WRITTEN	ORAL	TOTAL	%	
	100	100	120	80	400	100	
AIMEE'S MARKS	51	45	90	54	240	60	C
AVERAGES	50	40	62	53	204	51	

Figure 4-4 Table showing the marks Aimee gained for English in the second term examinations

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, when I look at Aimee's performance in written work at school, I use the departmental standards for evaluating it.¹¹ In the different genres, where the example is given for her to follow, Aimee does well. Where she has to create her own structure she does not do as well. In creative work she is able to express herself fluently. In her use of tone, Aimee is able to adjust it according to the genre, but at times she either lapses into informality or her writing becomes stilted when she tries to be too formal. When Aimee is working at home and is able to do research or get help from others, her content is full. When she is working in controlled situations at school, she does not know how to use the content to develop her argument. The same applies to her sentence structure and language use. When she has time to edit her work, or has help in editing her work, the language usage is good, but in exam conditions she finds it difficult to self-correct.

In the formal expository oral presentation in class, Aimee's was well researched and she used pictures to support her largely factual content. It was impersonal with very little of Aimee's own opinion and in her presentation, Aimee distanced herself from the class by looking down often. This made it clear that Aimee does not feel comfortable about presenting individual orals to the class. However, her preparation beforehand and her research gave her some confidence and compensated for her unconvincing performance.

Aimee's performance in the informal domain of school

Aimee is shy in the classroom. She rarely makes observations unless asked to, but does chat to her friends and writes notes to them. She has also kept a low profile in extra-curricular activities in school. This does not seem to be an area that can offer much for analysis.

¹¹ See Appendix L for an in-depth analysis of Aimee's writing

4.2. Manya

Background

Manya is a white, English speaking middle class learner. She is the middle child in a family of three. Her father works on a wine estate in the area. Because of the lack of space available, I have tended to compare Manya's situation with Aimee, and not to go into too much detail when there are strong similarities.

How Manya writes about, speaks about, depicts and values literacy practices at home and at school

When Manya writes of her childhood memories in her reflective essay, she refers to "memories of being read to". Part of the family "routine" was when her mother and father "used to read to me before I went to bed every night". The use of the word "routine" indicates that enjoyment through using text was part of the family's lifestyle. However, another way Manya values this activity is seen in the statement, "It taught me a lot and helped me in playschool to recognize words and helped me with spelling." There is a link established between the activity of reading and preparation for formal schooling and an assumption of what reading is capable of doing.

Manya uses the word "enjoyed" to describe her attitude to reading. A key moment in the day is when her parents tell her stories "about which interesting events happened during the course of the day". Manya describes the potential of reading in her reflective essay when she says, "I think it increases your general knowledge, improves vocabulary and the tone and register in the way a person approaches another." The way in which Manya has worded this opinion and her use of meta-language reflects that she is conscious of the reader in her written piece – her English teacher – but it also conveys a sense that Manya supports the notion that reading confers certain skills which will be beneficial. Later in the same essay she writes that "reading helped me with my languages". This power of reading to improve the writing and speaking processes is repeated by Manya in the focus group discussion later. She indicates that the written word is important, because it is fixed: "Like books, because it is written, big words...and you can learn". There is an authority to the written word which Manya considers important and which is linked with formal school literacy practices.

When Manya writes of her memories of primary school and reading, she mentions how she “used to have reading groups where parents of the learners would volunteer to help with a child’s group”. Literacy practices are a product of the community and the active participation that these parents give to the practice of reading illustrates the value they attach to it. The activity must have been significant for Manya because she remembers it. This example illustrates one way in which values towards literacy activities are transferred in a particular community.

Manya expresses her reading preferences as “a lot of magazines, and sometimes newspapers if a particular issue interests me. I am constantly smsing and receiving smses which is also a form of reading, but not a very beneficial or educational one”. Manya has a hierarchical view of the importance of different kinds of reading practices. She finds pleasure in reading the occasional novel, where she escapes into her own world. She describes it as, “When I find a good book that interests me, I won’t put it down and will get really into it.”

Manya’s spends the most time on what she calls “less beneficial” activities as her literacy inventory (see Figure 4.5) shows. The most important activity is family conversation. She places her written homework in the next category, together with watching television, smsing, chat line and reading novels or listening to music.

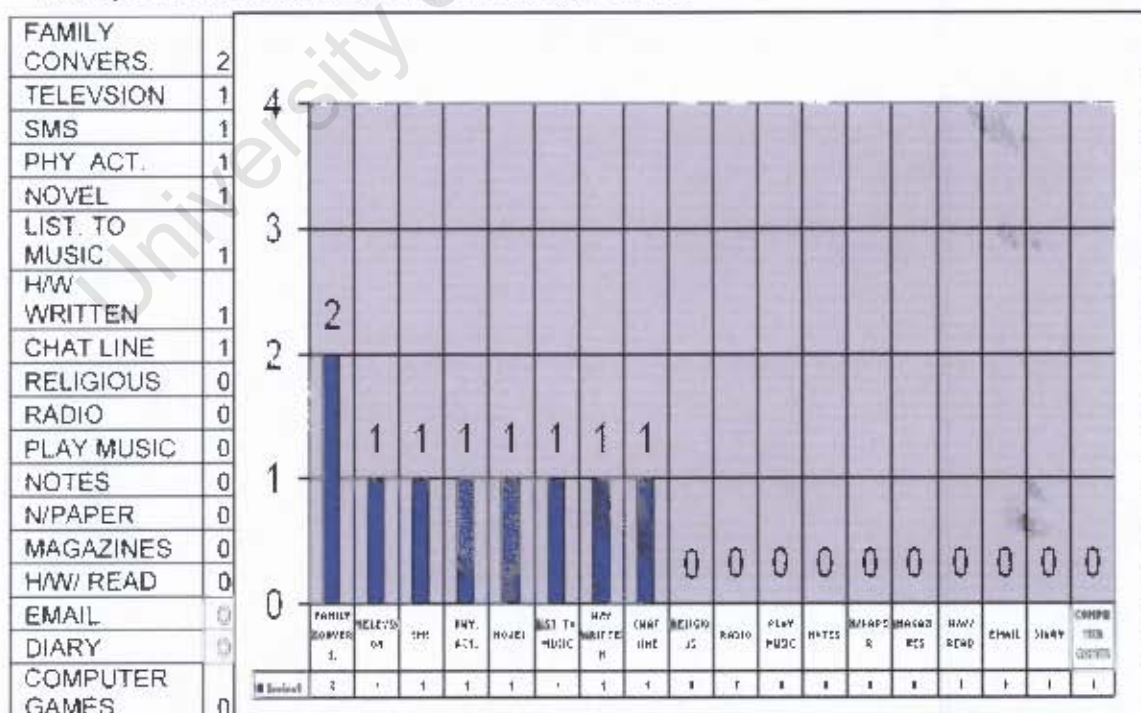


Figure 4-5 Manya’s Literacy Inventory showing the significance of various activities in her life at home.

Manya's photographs at the representational level are conceptual rather than narrative. All of them, except for one, categorise objects used in literacy activities. These objects are all placed centrally and their frontality speaks directly to the reader, thus emphasising their importance.



Figure 4.6.
Manya sees all these objects as related to literacy activities. She says reading "forms a fairly big part of my life."

Figure 4.7.
The radio she describes as a form of entertainment, and includes listening to music as a literacy activity.

Figure 4-6 Manya – Photograph One Figure 4-7 Manya – Photograph Two



Figure 4-8 Manya – Photograph Three

Figure 4.8

The magazines are a significant part of Manya's life. She values them because she says "They have lots of articles and information." She enjoys reading about the lives of celebrities. Manya also feels that "magazine are" a good substitute for reading if you do not read much". There is a discrepancy between what Manya says here and her literacy inventory which rates her magazine reading as insignificant.



Figure 4-9 Manya – Photograph Four

Figure 4.9

Manya has included items in a grocery cupboard as they have writing on them. The literacy activity is when, "People read what is on these products and how to use them."



Figure 4-10 Manya – Photograph Five

Figure 4.10

Manya included the shopping list as it is "used by all the family members" who write their shopping needs on the list.

This photographic representation shows a well resourced home. The photographs have been consciously composed as can be seen with the magazines placed in a fan arrangement to show the names. Manya does art as a subject at school and her responses often show an understanding of the concept of visual literacy. In the focus group discussions and in her interview Manya spoke about visual literacy and how important signs and symbols are in the process of communicating an idea. When I asked the group about different forms of literacy in the community she referred to the stained glass windows in her church: “Wouldn’t the stained glass windows in the church be a form of literacy? They tell a story”. When I asked Manya in her interview what she wanted to do when she left school, she replied, “Something in the film industry to do with art or designing.” She saw literacy and knowing about literacy skills, especially visual literacy, as helping her because “It has a lot to do with images. It’s like the movies and things like that and getting your point across. You use visual stuff in the movies.”

The link between home and school

Manya describes the link between home and school as “A merging from one to the other because you learn from both sides and apply to the other one. Or a mix.” She also describes a dialogue between home and school. “If you are reading something or are speaking about something... you take it to school and tell other people at school about it. What this reveals is an ease about sharing the world of the home with the world of the school and vice versa.

In summary, Manya writes about, speaks about, depicts and values literacy practices at home and at school in a very similar way to Aimee. The main difference is that she places more emphasis on visual literacy and signs and symbols than Aimee. Also she is more open to other forms of literacy, but still sees the formal academic literacy activities as most important. Finally, Manya acknowledges more readily the merging and carry over of home and school backgrounds.

Assessment of Manya’s performance in the English class: formal, academic domain.

Manya’s results (see Figure 4.11) show that she is 14% above the class average for writing. Her Literature mark is 10% above class average. In other areas, for example language and oral work, Manya is close to the class average. Manya’s total mark for the term is 6% above the class average.

	LANGUAGE	LITERATURE	WRITTEN	ORAL	TOTAL	%	
	100	100	120	80	400	100	
MANYA'S MARKS	51	50	76	50	227	57	D
AVERAGES	50	40	62	53	204	51	

Figure 4-11 Table showing the marks Manya gained for English in the second term examinations

An in-depth table showing Manya's assessment of written tasks is included in Appendix L. General comments about her writing indicate that she understands that different genres require different approaches. She is able to structure and paragraph in a variety of genres. She is also able to vary and apply different registers and tones to different genres appropriately. In discursive and analytical work, she is able to sustain and develop her arguments. Manya shows competent use of language and her grammatical structures are mostly correct.

When Manya presented her formal oral to the class, she was shy and tense and looked down often. She delivered her oral quickly and there was little variation in tone, except the ends of the sentences where her voice rose slightly. The content of the oral was well researched and it was structured logically, which made it easy to follow. In some ways the oral was more like an article or essay being read. The tone of the oral and register both suited the formality of the piece. There was a distance between the speaker and the audience and there were no personal references or anecdotes in the oral. Manya appeared confident about the subject matter she was dealing with but tended to read too much.

A summary of Manya's performance in the formal academic domain of the English classroom paints her as a learner who has mastered the more basic skills and is moving towards what Cummins (1996) describes as context reduced, cognitively demanding work. She understands what is required of her in terms of conventions, register, tone and style, although she still needs to develop these skills.

Manya's performance in the informal domain of school

Although she is shy, Manya does make contributions and offers her opinions in informal class discussions. She listens to others and responds to what they have to say. She does not play an active role in extra mural activities and so it is difficult to measure her performance here. She has not mentioned any extra curricular activities outside of school.

4.3. Luke

Background

Luke comes from an English speaking, white, middle class background. He attended the same primary school as Manya and Aimee and lives roughly in the same area. His mother is a hairdresser and his father is a businessman. Luke prides himself on his technological skills, an area in which his father strongly supports him.

How Luke writes about, speaks about, depicts and values literacy practices at home and at school.

Luke has memories of being read to before bed when he was young. He describes other memories of his father telling him stories, “about his childhood and what happened to him.” His mother would sing nursery rhymes to him in German but he had “no idea what she was saying. She told me that’s the sort of thing they were taught by their parents when they were kids. I tried to look interested.” Here there is the aspect of the literacy practice being sustained by the community as the mother tries to keep alive a practice that she grew up with. The fact that he “tried to look interested” indicates that he has picked up on what he feels is important to his mother.

Luke has memories of his mother teaching him to read when he “was five to six”. He implies that the process was not a smooth one when he makes the following comment: “I don’t know how my mom put up with me. She was loving and patient with me.” Implied in these sentences through the words “put up with me” is a sense of failure. It is not clear whether this activity happened in support of the school programme or whether it was something initiated by his mother. However, what is significant is that there is no mention of the teacher, so for Luke it is the mother who is the most important agent in the process. Luke’s memories of his father teaching him to read when his mother was not at home are not fond ones. He describes being sent to his room when he made mistakes, to practise until “I thought I could do it without any mistakes.” The father giving the responsibility to Luke to practise might well be the basis of a strong attitude, which I discuss later, of independence and self-responsibility that Luke shows in his teenage years. However, it is significant that both Luke’s mother and father participated in this literacy activity with him and that the activity was in support of the formal school programme. This indicates the connection between the school and the home.

Elsewhere in his essay, Luke describes an early pattern of resistance to the formal academic situation in the classroom. He says, "I remember reading comics when I should have been doing geography or maths because my teacher at the time was so boring and spoke so slowly that I had to preoccupy myself with something else."

When Luke writes of conventional reading habits in his home, he describes his mother as reading novels and his sister as reading text books because she is studying. He aligns himself with his father in his choice of novels "of action and adventure." Luke spoke of his enjoyment of computer games, and there might be a connection between his love of adventure and action novels and the computer games he plays. Referring to reading novels, Luke acknowledges that he does not really "read that much" now.

In the literacy inventory (see Figure 4.12) Luke describes the most significant activity in his day as computer programming. Music and physical movement follow next. He enjoys movement and this could be one of the reasons he found the slower teachers boring and in his teenage years does not enjoy reading novels that are not "gripping" and filled with action. The interactive nature of the computer, the practical application of following instructions and the speed of the computer might be linked to this urge to move and account for his preference for screen based texts over reading novels. The same might apply to magazine reading (which is significant in his literacy inventory) which is also a much more interactive literacy activity with the mix of visual and textual information. Luke added computer programming and cooking to the list of activities on the inventory. He does not consider playing games on the computer in the same category as programming, which is more important to him. Luke plays a musical instrument and also enjoys listening to music. The functional aspect of reading and interpreting recipes is another category which Luke considers important in his life.

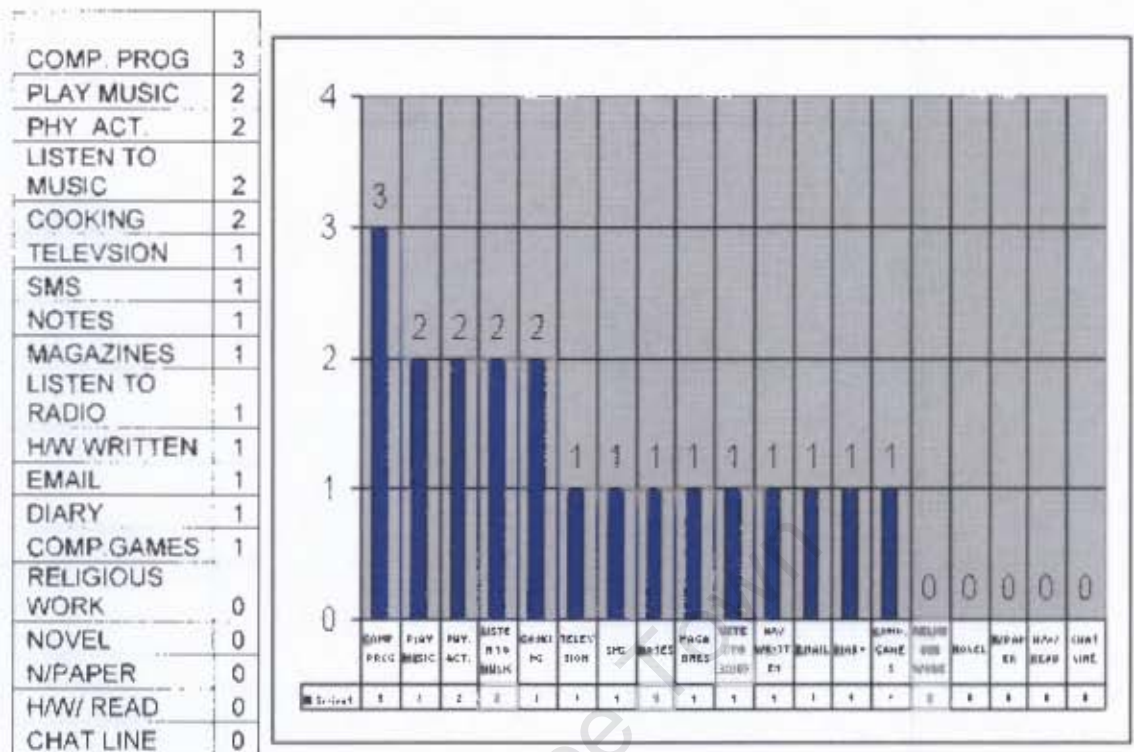


Figure 4-12 Luke's Literacy inventory showing the significance of various activities in his life at home.

The interest in technology is reflected strongly in Luke's photograph collection. At the representational level it is conceptual as he gives a classification of objects used in literacy activities. His photographs are bold and confident in their close up perspectives, where they take up the entire frame.



Figure 4-12 Luke – Photograph One



Figure 4-13 Luke – Photograph Two

Figure 4.12(Far Left)
Luke sees listening to music as a literacy activity which "plays a big role in people's lives." It plays a big part in his life.

Figure 4.13.(Left)
Luke considers games as having the capacity to "teach us something depending on what you play". Luke also mentioned the way in which this activity dates. "Later on there will be something new or better"



Figure 4-14 Luke – Photograph Three

Figure 4.14
 Luke says that reading "is a good skill" and that it has "value." His preferred form of "hard copy" reading is magazines.



Figure 4-15 Luke – Photograph Four

Figure 4.17
 Luke describes the computer as "modern day's biggest form of reading and interaction via games, music, videos and work." He values this object "a lot" and sees it as "very important" as his "job depends on it".

Over the three sessions of the group discussions, Luke was the learner who contributed most. Right at the beginning, when I asked the group what they understood by the word literacy, Luke's reply was, "I think literacy is more written...a book or a hard copy". It is significant that he uses computer terminology, "a hard copy", in his definition. Luke described a variety of literacy activities, ranging from graffiti and tagging, to reading novels, to choreography for dance, to advertisements (especially when connected with sport). He spoke of the different kinds of literacy that he is exposed to at school, for example visual literacy, maths literacy, computer literacy. All of these literacies he linked with some function, and there was not a sense of one kind being more important than another. In the group, Luke speaks of literacy in relation to his computer. He speaks of reading, "books and magazines on your topics and things....to gain further knowledge". Then he speaks about the writing of programs on his computer and for his computer. "You get different languages for computers... I write programs for cobalt, which is a computer language in ones and zeroes". In the personal interview I asked Luke about the importance of conventional texts and computer texts. This is a transcript of the interview.

- Luke: Nowadays everything you do is practically on computer. If you go to a business, everything they do will be on a computer. Book keeping nowadays is done on excel instead of writing in books.
- Interviewer: So do you think that the emphasis in schools should be shifting more towards computer type literacy? How do you feel about that?
- Luke: To me, computers should be a fixed subject like English and Afrikaans, because later on in life you will need to use a computer, be it through your job or just with friends.

This extract of the interview is important because it highlights the value that Luke places on the two types of literacy activities: conventional and screen based.

Link between home and school

I mentioned earlier Luke's sense of independence and responsibility for his own work. When I asked him whose responsibility it was to develop literacy skills he was firm in his answer that it was his own. He said, "It's my prerogative...It's up to me". Later in the interview I asked him what he thought was the school's responsibility in developing literacy skills. He said that "The school just has to show you the basics. How to interpret and watch around you with literacy... what to interpret. You can find out yourself. They just basically guide you". This independence is reflected in the way in which Luke transfers learning from home to school and vice versa, in the area in which he feels confident – his computer literacy. In this area, the skills he takes from school and the skills he brings to school from home complement each other. This transcript from his interview with me shows the flow from the one domain to the other.

Interviewer: Do you ever take any of your literacy skills from home to school?
 Luke: More my computer literacy skills. All my projects and things. I get information from school, take it home and do what I can with the programs I have. To an extent at home the programs I have are newer releases than the school's programs, so I can do more.

Rather than considering his home practices as inferior to the school's, here we see Luke considering his expertise at home on an equal footing.

If one considers the ways in which Luke writes about, speaks about, depicts and values literacy practices at home and at school one sees that he does come from a home environment where the conventional school-based literacy activities are supported and encouraged. He describes his home environment as well resourced, where he has access to modern technology and support for it. He is more focused and uses this technology both for 'work' and for socialising.

Assessment of Luke's performance in the English class: formal, academic domain.

Luke's mark for Literature is well below the class average, while his written and language work are above average. His oral is in line with the class average (see Figure 4.16).

	LANGUAGE	LITERATURE	WRITTEN	ORAL	total	%	
	100	100	120	80	400	100	
LUKE'S MARKS	58	27	72	51	208	52	D
CLASS AVERAGES	50	40	62	53	204	51	

Figure 4-16 Table showing the marks Luke gained for English in the second term examinations.

Closer examination of Luke's written work (see Appendix L for details) shows that he understands what the conventions of the genres for the written pieces are. His difficulty lies in framing his argument. He struggles to express himself and often his sentences are long and unbalanced. At times, in the more formal, analytical pieces, he lapses into a conversational tone. However, he is able to work with cognitively demanding, context reduced material.

Luke presented his oral topic on a subject he feels he knows well – computers. He was not really prepared for the oral, which was evident in his poor introduction and conclusion. His oral was full of facts, but they were presented in a listing fashion, which tended to make the oral become repetitive. At times he lapsed into informality (“Ja, that’s about it”). Throughout the oral, Luke spoke about an imaginary “you” – you get this or you find that. Despite the overuse of the second pronoun, Luke was able to distance himself from the class and present a formal oral that met the requirements of academic discourse.

Luke's performance in the informal domain of school

Because of his knowledge of technology, Luke is often called upon by his peers in the informal domain of school. The extract below shows how there is a networking of computer resources brought from home to school and how Luke acts as mediator in this area.

Luke: Well, I lent to Adrian a game, and I have already finished with it. Later on he'd come to me and on a certain level he'd ask me what to do.

Luke's performance is not limited to computers though. He has a reputation amongst his peers for his understanding of cell phones. He also brings music to school and other programs he has downloaded.

4.4. Charnay

Background

Charnay is a coloured learner who speaks English, Afrikaans and a mixture of English and Afrikaans. Charnay lives on the fringes of the school catchment area and attended a primary school in the area close to where she lives before she came to Mountainbrook High School. It is only in her high school career that she has been at a previously advantaged school. Her father works as a prison warden and her mother is a clerk. One might assume from these factors that Charnay's family are moving into or establishing themselves in a middle class community.

How Charnay writes about, speaks about, depicts and values literacy practices at home and at school

When Charnay writes of her past she says that she "does not really remember being read to" although her mother says that "she read to me on a daily basis when I was about eight / nine years old" before bed each night. Charnay enjoyed reading in primary school and says that "those were the times when reading was FUN and not complicated". The implication is that for Charnay now, reading is not fun and it is complicated.

Throughout Charnay's reflective essay she is grappling with the interplay between the values, conventions and norms of the formal academic domain, which she sees as important, and those of her private life, which she sees as unimportant, but which she enjoys more. The word which Charnay uses to describe the continuous print literacy that she is exposed to at school, is "important". She uses this word four times in her essay and always in relation to the good that reading can do. This is because "Reading can help you to gain knowledge" and "If you can read you will be able to write." However, Charnay admits that she does not enjoy reading novels much because they are "too long and boring." She writes in her essay how she much prefers reading a "magazine or a newspaper." When Charnay speaks of her literacy activities like sending emails and sms messages, she describes them as being "short and exciting and get to the point quickly". Yet she later says that these forms of literacy activities are not "good" because "you get

into the habit of using cell phone language” with all its problems. It appears that Charnay has divided literacy practices into those which are educational and those which are for everyday living and entertainment. The underlying tone when Charnay speaks of reading “all” magazines and newspapers is one of enjoyment. Another area of enjoyment for Charnay is rap music because “Rappers speak about their life and especially their childhood and you can sometimes relate to what they are saying.” However, she vacillates again later in the essay when she makes the statement “I do see television, films and computer games as a kind of text but not an educational form”. Then, she is quite adamant when she concludes with, “A sms is not educational at all because you are not gaining knowledge or learning anything”. She says this of computer games: “there are certain techniques, skills that you have to read/learn, many computer games come with a pamphlet maybe telling you about the game or listing some useful tips or ‘cheats’”.

In Charnay’s essay she is conscious that she is producing it for her English teacher. This is reflected in her use of meta-language. She uses terms like “tone”, “anticlimax”, “colloquialisms” and “abbreviations”.

Charnay describes story telling in her home, in her essay. She particularly enjoys it when her Grandmother talks to her about the apartheid times. She describes her parents as reading the newspaper and the bible. Other literacy activities in her home are when she reads to her brother or helps him with his homework. Unlike the previous profile learners, Charnay does not mention her family’s attitude to reading or to the school-based activities.

Charnay’s literacy inventory (see Figure 4.17) confirms what she has written. The importance of school-based literacy activity is evident in how much time Charnay spends on her homework. This is clearly the most significant activity for her. What the literacy inventory does reinforce is – the importance of watching television, Mxit¹² and other more informal literacy activities, like smsing, reading magazines and so on. When Charnay filled in the inventory, she added cooking to it

¹² Mxit: an internet link via the cell phone which allows subscribers to communicate in groups similar to chat rooms on the internet. Participants can invite friends into the chat group and the person can decide whether or not to join the group. It is also possible to trace who has visited the chat room. The connection is extremely cheap (2c to connect) and so a good option for adolescents. Smsing is expensive because each message is charged for. In Mxit the cost is just for the connection, once you are connected you can write as many messages as you choose .

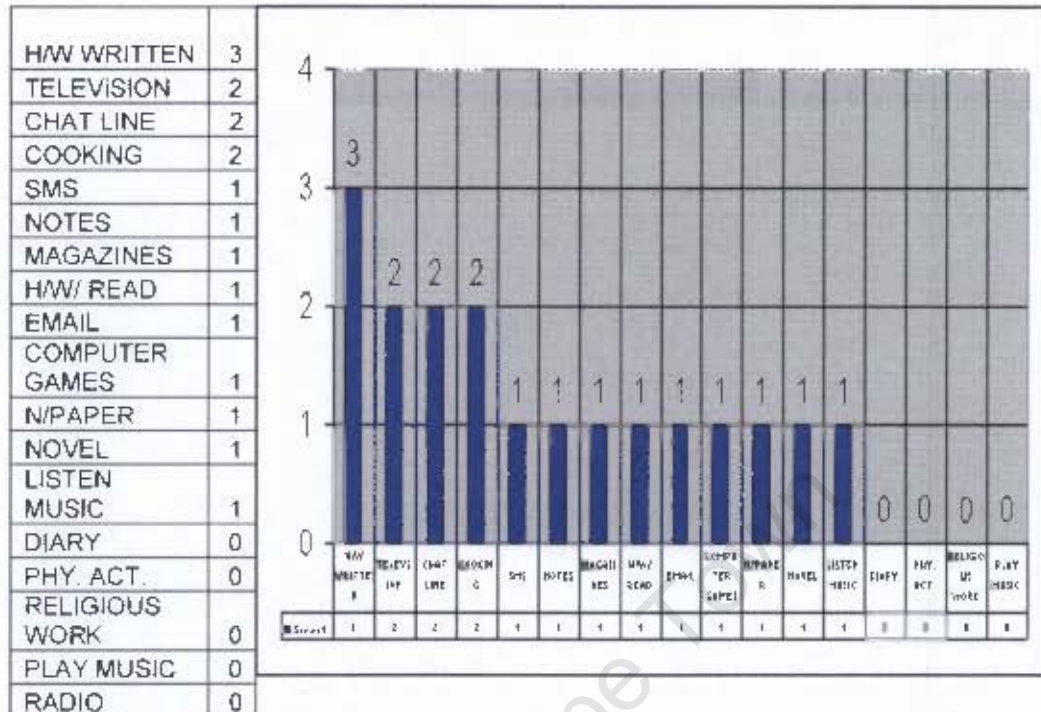


Figure 4-17 Charnay's Literacy Inventory showing the significance of various activities in her life at home.

Charnay's photographic representation reflects much of what she portrayed in her inventory and her reflective essay. In the questionnaire accompanying the photographs she says her photographs were sometimes posed. There is a selection of narrative photographs and categorization. Another telling factor about Charnay's photographs is that there were often people doing something in the photograph. For Charnay, literacy is what people do and often in groups.

Figure 4-18 Charnay – Photograph One



Figure 4.18.

For Charnay watching television is an important activity from an educational and entertainment value. The photograph was posed. In her interview Charnay spoke of how she enjoys literacy activities which involve "pictures".



Figure 4.19

When asked how she would describe this kind of literacy activity Charnay said "A computer has many educational, fun games you could do. You can email your friends. Go onto the internet and look up different websites."

Figure 4-19 Charnay – Photograph Two

Charnay was a keen participant in the focus group discussions. In these she reinforced a number of ideas she has presented elsewhere. She says that she realizes that "every day we are doing literacy". She maintains that school literacy is "much more educational" and her use of sms messaging and Mxit is what she enjoys. When she speaks of Mxit, she describes it like this:

It's like very addictive. It's because I go off and then I want to start with my homework, but I do my homework and that at the same time. My literacy is that all the time, all the time, all the time...and my homework.

Link between home and school

Charnay does speak of a flow between school and home. She mentions one instance where she had read an article in the newspaper at home and discussed with her mother what they had studied at school relating to the article. She also describes her father helping her brother with his homework in the evenings. However, she does not speak of her parents actively engaged in her school work.

In summary, Charnay does see a flow between home and school and vice versa, but she speaks of her personal literacy practices at home as quite distinct from the educational ones, even when she is doing them at the same time. Charnay enjoys using her cell phone and computer and watching television. She does not enjoy reading novels, but rather enjoys it when texts, of any sort, are accompanied by pictures.

Assessment of Charnay's competence in the English class: formal, academic domain.

Inspection of Charnay's results for the mid term examination shows that she is above average in the class (see Figure 4.20). She is close to the class average for Language and

Literature. Her written work is above the class average and her oral mark the same as the class average.

	LANGUAGE	LITERATURE	WRITTEN	ORAL	total	%	
	100	100	120	80	400	100	
CHARNAY	53	43	78	53	227	57	D
CLASS AVERAGES	50	40	62	53	204	51	

Figure 4-20 Table showing the marks Charnay gained for English in the second term examinations.

Close analysis of Charnay's written work (see detailed analysis in Appendix L) shows the reason for her mark being so high above the class average. When Charnay is given instruction in her written work, she follows it and in that way she is able to perform well. A comparison of work done at home and work done at school shows that she edits and works on her pieces at home, but under exam conditions struggles to express herself. In exam conditions, in an attempt to establish formality, her writing becomes stilted or the sentence structure is incorrect. When she is writing reflectively or with a personal tone, she tends to repeat herself and the sentences are too conversational for formal writing. She had difficulty with the analytical network essay and could not structure her points into an argument. There was a tendency to lapse into storytelling. It seems as if she transfers her skills in conversational English into the written mode.

In her oral work, Charnay was confident and researched and prepared her speech well. She spoke directly to the class.

To sum up, where Charnay is given direction and has some form of scaffolding in the written area, she performs well. Independent work is more difficult for her and her performance suffers. She also tends to carry her skills from spoken language into the formal written genres.

Charnay's performance in the informal domain of school

In informal oral work and class discussion Charnay contributes freely. Socially she communicates with her friends at break times and through the use of her cell phone and notes. Charnay is not involved in extra mural activities at school.

4.5. Helen

Background

Helen speaks English as a first language at home, but also speaks Afrikaans. She is a coloured, middle class learner who has been through her schooling in previously advantaged schools. Helen speaks of a close link between school and home and describes her parents as supporting her in her school activities, especially when she was younger. Her stepfather is a chartered accountant and her mother works as a clerk.

How Helen writes about, speaks about, depicts and values literacy practices at home and at school

Helen begins her reflective essay with the words, "When I was young my mother used to read to me". She repeats this a number of times through the essay, speaking also of her mother helping her to learn to read. Helen places great value on the activity of reading which she sees as something which is inculcated. This is evident in her description of when she reads to her young cousins. She says that "I take my cousins into a room and I read them a story. They enjoy it a lot and so do I. It makes me happy to see them enjoy reading, I hope it stays like that when they grow up." She is continuing a pattern of reading which her mother began with her. A telling statement Helen makes in her essay is, "Parents should get their children into reading when their child is young, so that the child can enjoy reading when he or she is older..." She puts the responsibility squarely onto the parents to develop the habit of reading. When Helen was younger she loved "mystery novels" but now she enjoys "reading magazines". Helen says that there "are books everywhere in my home" as her mother and stepfather read "murders and mysteries." Helen's own room is also filled with books – even the ones she read as a child.

Helen describes other literacy activities in her home in her essay. She writes of her grandfather and her mother telling her stories of their apartheid history and of her own reading "the newspaper (sometimes) smses, and magazines the most and sometimes I read and send emails".

These activities are expanded more fully in her literacy inventory (see Figure 4. 21). Here Helen shows how significant Mxit is in her life. That and listening to music are the activities she describes as most significant, then watching television and physical activity. Later, in her interview she described her love of dancing to me and that is why the physical activity rates so highly.

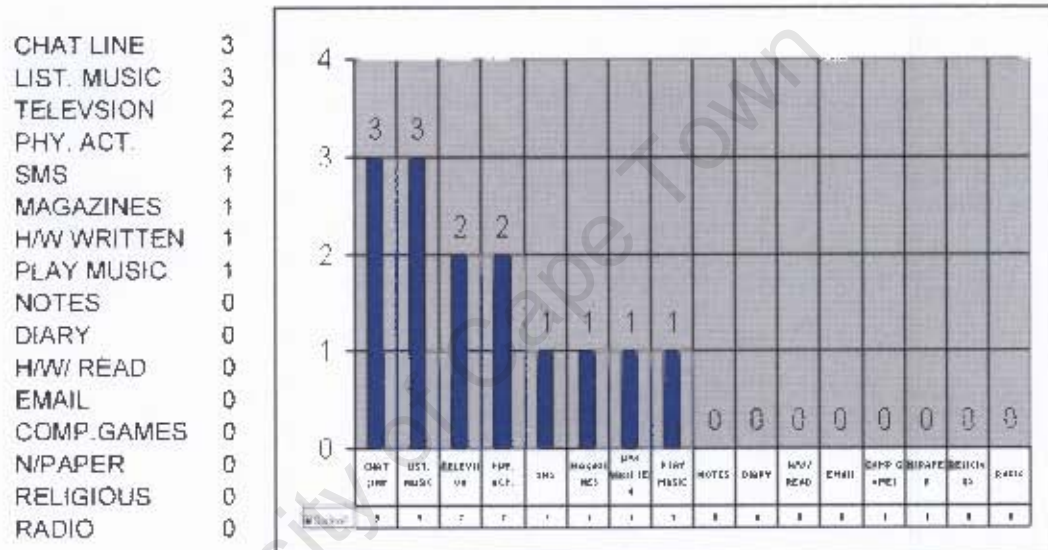


Figure 4-21 Helen's Literacy Inventory showing the significance of various activities in her life at home.

Helen's photographic representation is narrative in nature. All of the shots involve people and they are all involved in some form of literacy activity. The shots are all middle distance and in every case the eyes of the person are averted or directed in the act of reading or watching. In some of the photographs the body language of the person is relaxed – reading on a bed, or on a couch, and in others the body language is more rigid working at the computer, sitting at a table doing homework. There is the distinction between the literacy activities related to formal academic work or those related to pleasure or entertainment. In a few of the photographs there is evidence of books in the room, reinforcing what Helen said in her reflective essay.



*Figure 4.22
This photograph of Helen reading her novel is a posed one. She has however, created it to show certain values she attaches to this type of activity. Firstly, there is the relaxed pose of the reader, indicating it is a pleasurable activity. Secondly, its location is another sign that it is an activity performed for enjoyment.*

Figure 4-22 Helen – Photograph One



Figure 4.23

This photograph forms a contrast with the previous one. Here the position is more formalised, indicating the importance of the activity. In the questionnaire Helen said, "I think that homework is a big part of our school lives. It is part of studying and learning. I value this activity because it helps me to learn my school work."

Figure 4-23 Helen – Photograph Two

In many ways what Helen has to say in the focus group discussion and interview about literacy activities is similar to what she writes about in her reflective essay. Because of lack of space I am only going to mention two areas of interest that she speaks of. The first is the way Helen perceives her dancing and regards it as a literacy activity. Firstly, Helen sees it as a form of expression, what Gee might call "producing" or "writing" (Gee, 2003:18). She says in the focus group

For me the way I express myself is through dancing. When I am in a good mood, I express myself through it. When I am in a bad angry mood, I express my mood through dancing.

In the interview Helen describes this view again. I probed to find out exactly what she meant by dancing being a form of literacy activity. This is the transcript from the interview

- Helen: I see it as a form of literacy because that is the way I express myself. Other people express themselves through writing. I express myself through dancing.
- Interviewer: And so what did you bring into the fashion show?
- Helen: I choreographed Chicago (one of the items) and my dancing and I choreographed all the shows I danced in.

The other literacy activity to which Helen attaches a great deal of importance is Mxit. In the focus group discussions I asked how much time was spent on Mxit and she replied, “A lot... Because chat lines that we go on are two cents per message, so I spend a lot of my time...a lot”. When I asked her about the value she placed on different literacy activities, Helen seemed to have a clear distinction in her mind between the educational value attached to certain literacy activities like reading on the one hand and those activities which were frequent in her life like smsing and reading magazines.

Link between home and school

Helen sees a direct link between the home and school as far as the formal academic literacies are concerned. She also sees it as part of the parents’ responsibility to teach and maintain formal academic practices, as the following answer to the question of responsibility shows:

I think it is my responsibility and maybe my parents as well. In reading my mother was very responsible. I think she got me reading at a very young age. When I was younger she always got me reading. I think it is maybe your parents from a young age. And then the teacher should take over as you come to school.

There is one area where Helen finds expression for her literacy practices from home, at school, and that is dancing.

Assessment of Helen’s performance in the English class: formal, academic domain

Helen’s performance in English presents a picture of someone who is still formulating and learning the discourse (see Figure 4.22). Her marks in the class are two per cent above the class average as the chart below indicates.

	LANGUAGE	LITERATURE	WRITTEN	ORAL	total	%	
	100	100	120	80	400	100	
Helen	52	48	60	53	213	53	D
CLASS AVERAGES	50	40	62	53	204	51	

Figure 4-24 Table showing the marks Helen gained for English in the second term examinations.

In her written work, Helen does not always understand the conventions or how to structure writing. Her best writing is reflective, which is not as formal as the other pieces. In the analytical network piece, her style of writing is more reflective than analytical, with opinions on general issues rather than on the book itself. The problem seems to be that she did not fully understand what the question was asking and so had difficulty in structuring the answer and in giving the required information.¹³

In her oral work, Helen was quite shy. She spoke softly and looked down often. Her topic was researched on the web so most of it was not in her own words. There was little contact with the members of the class, and mainly with the teacher.

Helen's performance in the informal domain of school:

There is a clear distinction between the shy, retiring Helen who presents a formal oral to the class and the Helen who choreographs and dances in the school fashion show or school assemblies. It is in this area that Helen comes into her own. She brings from home her skills as a dancer and this is capital which is recognized and used. Her peers admire these skills and they ask her on a regular basis to help them with producing numbers and dancing with them.

¹³ A full explanation of this is given in Appendix L.

4.6. Ricardo

Background

Ricardo comes from a coloured family which he describes as speaking English and Afrikaans and a mixture of both. He did not attend a primary school in the area and he lives on the fringes of the school's catchment area. His uncle is on the maintenance staff of the school. His father is an artisan and his mother works as a clerk. It appears as if Ricardo's family are moving into the middle class.

How Ricardo writes about, speaks about, depicts and values literacy practices at home and at school

Ricardo's reflective essay was very short and followed his own format. When Ricardo begins his reflective essay, he starts by stating how important reading is "Reading is very important in order to expand our knowledge". In his next sentence he qualifies what he means by reading which includes not just "reading writing but pictures and listening." The rest of his essay deals mainly with the story telling practices in his home. So, although he speaks of the importance of reading, the literacy activities he describes in his home do not include school-based literacy. He describes how his father "reads the newspaper & mother reads the bible every evening just before bed time". He paints a picture of the family "sitting in the living room everyone doing their own thing", with his uncle or his grandfather telling him bible stories. These stories would always have a moral to them and would be used as a point of instruction. He finishes the essay by saying, "I am not shore if this is true but when I talk about reading I always get this picture."

The literacy inventory (see Figure 4.25) supports this view where the activity that plays the most importance in Ricardo's life is a focus on listening – in this instance to music. When I invited the learners to add anything to the inventory Ricardo added writing his own poetry and music. The act of producing seems to be more important to Ricardo than reading novels, which is a practice he does not do at all. He speaks of how he started reading the *Da Vinci* code, but "now I see it's coming out on a movie, now I am not worried about it. I think, why must I read it? I rather wait for the movie to come out."

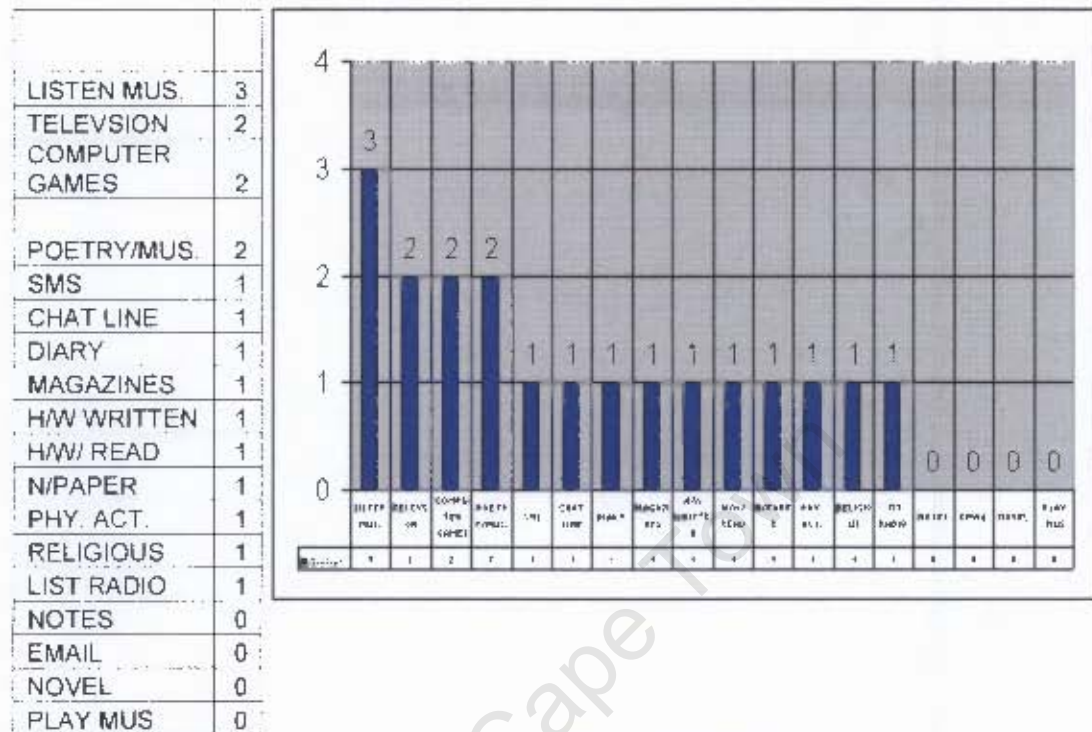


Figure 4-25 Ricardo's Literacy Inventory showing the significance of various activities in his life at home.

Ricardo is the only profile learner not to have a photographic representation. Although he took the camera home, the photographs he took did not come out. I asked him what the content was of the photographs he took. He said that they were of the computer, of his stereo because he listens to music every day and of his song book. This is a book that Ricardo uses to write his music in. "I've been writing for about seven years. Almost every evening I write a verse, so that I can improve my vocabulary." The last two photographs were of his father reading the newspaper and his mother reading the bible. He spoke of his mother's reading like this, "My mom is a very religious person & every night she reads her Bible, Sometimes she lets me read important verses in it."

The picture which seems to be emerging is of someone who has not grown up in a traditional middle class family where the practices which are close to the school-based literacy practices are reinforced, entrenched and maintained. Rather, Ricardo describes a home and community where different literacy activities are practised and valued. These became more evident in the focus group discussions and in the in-depth interview, for example this comment on the graffiti in his community:

But sometimes it is not always bad. It can be a help to someone.....like in areas there by us there's lots of violence and stuff like that....and some of them (referring to the graffiti) have a nice comment and you think, "Whoa, where did they come with something like this? ...There's one like,..... "Live now".....there's a lot of violence around us....

Ricardo also spoke of the story telling in his family. In the focus group discussions, he describes it as a communal activity, "Everybody in my household watches television together." This sense of community is also evident when Ricardo speaks of family gatherings at Sunday lunch. I asked Ricardo if he thought the telling of jokes was a literacy activity. His response was that it was, "Ja...it is like a story. Like you reading out a story and I am just listening." When I asked Ricardo in the interview what literacy meant to him, he described it as "understanding the message". He expanded on this in the following way:

Ricardo: I think literacy is reading, getting information from somebody else's perspective putting it in your words, visual literacy, reading it and like understanding what is there and what they have got to say.

Interviewer: And writing?

Ricardo: I feel the same way about writing. Understand what the message is.

Ricardo carries this meaning of literacy – understanding the message – further when he applies it to his soccer games. He says in the interview that in the game "You have to be aware of what this player going to do, Is he going to be off-side now?" In the focus group discussions he describes it like this, "In soccer, if someone plays offside, the ref must know....it will be unfair to the other team. Even if you play you must know that I must be offside now. You reading the game all the time"

All these examples show that Ricardo's view of literacy is more varied than the traditional view of literacy and the practices he values are not highly regarded in the formal academic domain. This applies particularly to his description of his enjoyment of music. I have mentioned that Ricardo enjoys listening to music. This is how he describes, in the focus group discussions, what happens in the process:

Ricardo: I listen to music. I listen to what the people saying and like the beat is going well with the words I like the song ... If it's .How can you say....I don't know which word to use.....If I listen to the music I will express myself by singing along with it....you understand...

Interviewer: And do you create your own words and music?

Ricardo: Do I write my own stuff? Ja... I write my own stuff ...If I am feeling I am gonna go party tonight ..I write about that...

Link between home and school

When I asked Ricardo to describe how he felt about school-based literacies, he said that they were not “natural” to him, which indicates the lack of correlation between his home literacies and his performance in the formal academic domain. Home is natural, school is not. There is no connection between the literacy activities he practices at home and those at school, except for one area, poetry. He feels he has an affinity with school poetry because he can rap.

In the same interview, Ricardo spoke of how he brought his rapping skills to school to be used: “I write songs at home so when we do poems I think I bring songs to school and help me with my poems.

Elsewhere Ricardo mentions that he “loves poetry” because he can understand it. When I asked Ricardo whose responsibility he thought it was to develop literacy skills. He answered that he thought it was the parents’ responsibility. This is a value that he has acquired being part of the group and listening to others verbalise it.

When you are young it’s your parents’ responsibilities because you don’t know what is going on and then as you get older, you should learn from what they taught you and then you should try building it up more. I think parents should encourage their children more. I know I wasn’t as encouraged as I am now after the class. (*referring to the group discussions and research project*)

To sum up, it appears from the way Ricardo describes literacy practice at home, that there is not a close link between the home and school. When he comes to school, he is entering a space which is not “natural” to him. In the next section I shall examine how he performs in that space.

Assessment of Ricardo’s performance in the English class: formal, academic domain.

Ricardo is below average in every area except oral work. In his aggregate he is 5% below the class average. (see Figure 4.26)

	LANGUAGE	LITERATURE	WRITTEN	ORAL	total	%	
	100	100	120	80	400	100	
Ricardo	45	32	54	54	185	46	E
CLASS AVERAGES	50	40	62	53	204	51	

Figure 4-26 Table showing the marks Ricardo's gained for English in the second term examinations.

In written work,¹⁴ when Ricardo has been taught the structure, he can model his writing to suit the conventions of the genre. He is also able to use the correct register and although he sometimes lapses into informality, his tone is appropriate. Ricardo has problems with the technical aspects of language. This could be because he describes his home background as English and Afrikaans. His spelling is often phonetic and he has difficulty in his use of verbs and often when his sentences are not kept simple, he makes structural errors. In the more formal essays, like the discursive writing or the analytical setwork piece, Ricardo has difficulty in developing his line of argument. The area where he did perform well was in his creative writing, the poem.

Another area where Ricardo does perform well is oral work because this is the area where he feels very confident. From his discussions of his home interactions, performance is valued highly, especially in how a joke or a story is told. When Ricardo gives an oral or tells a story in class he finds it important to engage with the class and to make them laugh. In his formal oral when he spoke about rap, he spoke from his general knowledge and did not do any extra research, so it was quite short. What he did do to entertain the class in the oral was to perform a few lines of impromptu rap. When Ricardo speaks, he has a non-standard accent, his sentences are very rhythmic and the beat is similar to rap. As with writing, he often uses non standard forms with his verbs and concord. Although he feels confident in his orals when he is performing for the class and speaks "of the words just flowing", in the formal classroom situation, Ricardo holds back in certain circumstances, like class discussions on setwork books

¹⁴ A full summary is given in Appendix L.

Ricardo's performance in the informal domain of school

Ricardo is greatly respected by his peers. This is for his skills with spontaneous rapping. Recently, at a fashion show at school, he was asked to take on the role of one of the master of ceremonies introducing the numbers. He described how he experienced this.

- Ricardo: I just did it every day. I did it at the practices and it just came out perfect, so then I decided , "I'm just going to do it like this".
- Interviewer: So did you think it was bringing something from you home
- Ricardo: Oh yes, I also thought that maybe I could be a presenter. Now that I know people look at me like that, Ja he can talk well....

This is one area outside of the formal academic domain where Ricardo's skills can be recognized. I have also observed Ricardo helping senior leaders with their performances of the more informal assemblies at school. Sometimes he appears on stage. At other times he mediates for them by writing the rap for them and directing them in their performances. Ricardo describes in his reflective essay and interview, how much his family enjoys performance (as in performing). At the fashion show spoken of above, I happened to sit next to his whole family in the audience. They were all there to support him, a clear indication of the value they place on his efforts in that area.

The other area where Ricardo performs in the informal domain of school is in his sport. I have mentioned how Ricardo sees playing soccer as a literacy activity.

4.7. Michael

Background

Michael speaks Xhosa , English, Afrikaans and has attended, as a sponsored learner, a 'Model C' school since his formal schooling began. Although the family that sponsor him have emigrated, they still fund his schooling and Michael now lives with his parents in a township. He has to travel quite far to get to school every day. Michael's parents are both elderly and when they did work, his father was a gardener and his mother a domestic worker.

How Michael writes about, speaks about, depicts and values literacy practices at home and school

Michael begins his reflective essay with the statement, “As a young boy growing up I can remember my friends’ moms reading to us in bed when I stayed over at my friend’s house.” This immediately places the practice of reading outside of his own home practice. He then goes on to write about what does happen at home: “rather than read to me, my dad would tell me stories – sometimes stories about his bachelor days before he met my mom, sometimes even folk tales, with a life value, moral to the story.” These stories are for instruction as Michael writes that he can “apply these morals or life values to my own life and learn from them”. His mother tells him bible stories.

When he writes about his memories of learning to read he describes them in terms of failure as he “was in the lowest/slowest group”. He also writes about how difficult it was for his parents to help him with his homework because they were not English. Michael remembers how when he was in Grades 3 or 4, he would always pick the easiest books to read. He places a value judgment on this because “Now at this stage in life I realize that I had made my mind up in Primary school that I was not interested in reading.” Michael acknowledges that the school and his “English speaking friends parents supported” him so that he could read and write by the time he finished primary school.

When he writes of his current literacy activities, Michael describes how he sometimes reads to a nephew in Grade 5 who is living with his family.

In the essay, Michael places a value on reading. This value echoes the same sentiments that all the other learners have given. “I am well aware that reading is very important because it helps when in school.” He ends his essay by describing the various literacy activities practised at home. His dad “enjoys reading the newspaper, Xhosa Bible, and even text books and diconary.[*dictionary*]” His mom “enjoys the Afrikaans Bible and the Daily Voice [*a local newspaper*]” Finally Michael writes of how he mediates when he helps “both my parents by reading their bank accounts or statements and then translating to them what it means.” Michael’s reluctance to write is evident in the length of the essay. Whenever he is given a piece of writing to do, Michael does not fulfill the requirements for length. Michael still does not enjoy reading and writing and he says he would “rather make an expensive phone call than sms someone.” Considering how little money there is to spare in the family, the word “expensive” is very apt.

Michael's literacy inventory (see Figure 4.27) seems to support the views in his essay. The two highest categories are listening to music and watching television. In total, only six of the seventeen categories are of any significance in Michael's life.

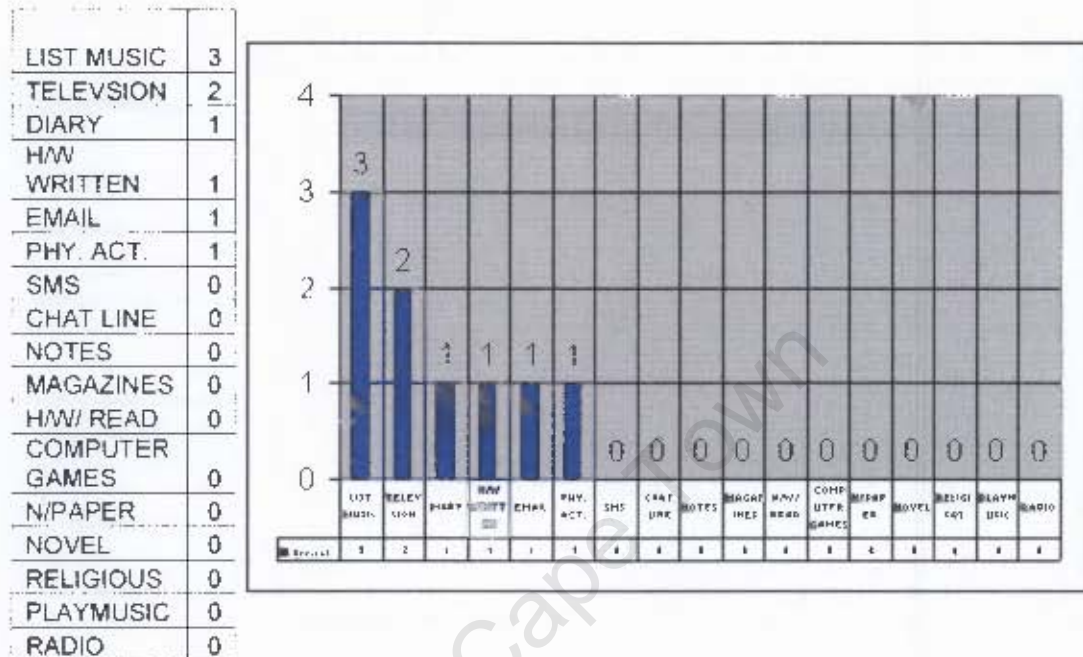


Figure 4-27 Michael's literacy inventory showing the significance of various activities in his life at home.

Michael took only two photographs (see Figures 4.28 and 4.29). When I analysed the photographs and the questionnaire attached to them, I observed that Michael showed only photographs reflecting his father's literacy activities. However, when I spoke to him in his interview and during the focus group discussions, Michael was able to express his varied literacy activities in greater detail

Figure 4-28 Michael – Photograph One



Figure 4.30
 Michael says he took this photograph of his father reading the newspaper and listening to the radio because, "the radio plays a huge role to my dad it keeps him up to date with world events." He also says that "The radio is always on from early in the morning till late at night." It is "important" to his father but "My mom gets irritated. She says it is a waste of electricity"

Figure 4-29 Michael –Photograph Two



Figure 4.29

This photograph is a close up of a section of the previous one. It shows more items of print literacy – the bibles on the table and the newspaper again. Michael mentioned to me that the television was broken when these photographs were taken, which might account for there not being a photograph of that literacy activity.

Initially, Michael stated very clearly during the focus group discussions that his definition of literacy has to do with reading or writing, i.e. print literacy. As the group discussion progressed though, he modified his definition.

There would be different kinds of literacy...visual literacy... so I would say you get different kinds of literacy.....visual. So I must change my point it might be wrong. Literacy is not just reading, you get different kinds of literacy....I am not sure.....

This opened him up to other possibilities. He gave this textured description of literacy as practised in his community.

I live in the township and in the spaza shop, that's like the local shop and you maybe see on the wall, that people in the community put up posters announcing a big soccer game that's going to be on over the weekend or that someone has a hair salon at their house and.....like say 38....road....I suppose those are all forms of literacy that I see around me.....

When it came to describing the literacy practices in his home, Michael developed what he had written about in his essay. He gave this description:

In my family there is not very much reading. From a young age my parents did not read to me much. I was more told stories about things that have happened in their life. My mom will tell me things that happened in their life. I remember the other night my mom telling me about when she was young and how the one house burnt down. And how funny it was and how she ran away. It was probably more my interest. ... my parents telling me about their past. And I mean, I remember from my dad as well. ... he would tell me fable stories with a meaning to them. And he still tells me those stories now that he is old. My father is quite old and I am his only child, I think that he wants mecos I am his only child. That's why he tells me all his favourite

stories...stories so that I can find out the meaning to them as well. And make use of them.

As Michael talks and gives his explanation, he too talks in stories, for example his telling of the story his mother told.

When Michael speaks of the school-based literacies, he has a distinct sense of failure. He speaks of how teachers have always told him how important reading is and he accepts blame for not being able to read by describing himself as being "lazy". However, when he talks of his literacy practices in his community, the situation is reversed. He is full of confidence.

Interviewer: Do you think that you have an advantage over the other people in your community?

Michael I do because I think that the education I have received from young is a very big help for me. A typical example is my one closest friend who is in my community, he is also my age (18) but he is in Grade 9 and he always, he actually sometimes comes to me and asks me for help as well.

Link between home and school

For Michael there is little link between the literacy practices at home and those at school. However, there is a flow of literacy practices from school to home when Michael acts as mediator in his community or as this interaction shows, when Michael uses what he has acquired at school to his advantage.

Michael: The other night I was at youth¹⁵, and the youth speak Afrikaans and English and I was quite new at the youth and I spoke English and everyone sort of gasped. I don't think they expected me to speak as well as I did.

Interviewer: Was it a mixed group?

Michael: Ja, mainly coloureds and Africans.

Interviewer: Do you think their opinion of you changed when you spoke like that?

Michael: Yes, I think so. I think it did because when I went there, everyone was quiet and I didn't know who to speak to and all that. I felt quite insecure. Then I spoke like that. Then some of the guys afterwards came up to me and said, "What school do you go to" and I said, "Moutainbrook" and I think that is also the thing. It sort of gives me that confidence. When people ask me what school I go to, and I say "Moutainbrook" they say, "wow".

When I asked the reverse question, whether he brought any literacy skills from home to school, Michael said he did not think he does. He mentioned how Xhosa might be useful.

¹⁵ A social gathering at church for young people.

However, that is not a form of capital that is recognised beyond Grade 9 because of the school he attends.

I asked Michael whose responsibility he thought it was to develop literacy skills. He felt it was the parents' when the child was young, "but that at a certain stage it is my responsibility, at school, when I get homework. Still at primary school it is my parents' responsibility and then the individual's".

Assessment of Michael's performance in the English class: formal, academic domain

A breakdown of Michael's marks (see Figure 4.30) shows that in written work, literature and language he is well below average and did not pass. However, his mark for oral work was one of the highest in the class. The discrepancy between the performance in the more formal, analytical and conventionally constrained written pieces and the more informal genre of orals is very large.

	LANGUAGE	LITERATURE	WRITTEN	ORAL	total	%	
	100	100	120	80	400	100	
Michael	31	25	28	58	142	35	F
CLASS AVERAGES	50	40	62	53	204	51	

Figure 4-30 Table showing the marks Michael gained for English in the second term examinations

The emphasis on story telling comes out in Michael's essay writing.¹⁶ His best piece of writing was the reflective essay. One reason for this might be because the genre is closest to speaking and Michael wrote as if he were telling a story about himself. In the formal discursive essay, he did not develop an argument, but rather gave the stories of two created characters to prove his point. He developed only one point in the argument and then he did it via the stories. Although Michael is sensitive to the different registers in which he should be writing, he often does not have the vocabulary for formal writing and might just put a slang word into quotation marks to sidestep the problem. Michael does not know how to be explicit in his writing. He often assumes that the reader knows what

¹⁶ A full outline of his written pieces is in Appendix L

he is talking about. This happened in his setwork essay where he wrote 119 words instead of the required 400.

When it comes to oral work, Michael is confident and enjoys it. His expository oral was supposed to be formal and contain some research, but Michael did not do any extra research and his oral was more personal. He delivered his oral in a confident, conversational way.

Michael's performance in the informal domain of school

Michael is very popular with his peers and uses his communication skills very well. In class discussions and group work, Michael takes charge. He reads the context well, he can harness the rest of the members in his group and he develops their points. Even if Michael does not know the answer, he will read facial expressions and ask for clues to help him. His good communication skills and his popularity have all contributed to his being elected as a representative for the school's Representative Council for Learners. Michael is also a keen rugby player and takes a strong leadership position here. Michael feels confidence about literacy activities in the oral mode. This confidence is of benefit to him in the informal domain of school and is capital that is recognised.

4.8. Conclusion

What I have done in this chapter is to sketch seven different views of literacy of seven different learners. I have looked at how each learner writes about, speaks about, depicts and values different literacy activities at home and school. I then looked at the performance of learners at school in both the formal academic domain and in the informal domains of school. In the next chapter I shall discuss and analyse the data I have presented here.

5. Chapter Five: Answering the Questions: Conclusions, Recommendations and Reflections

We start from the position that people's understanding of literacy is an important aspect of their learning, and that people's theories guide their actions. It is here that a study of literacy practices has its most immediate links with education.

(Barton, & Hamilton, 2000: 14)

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter I seek to answer my research questions by analysing the data from the previous chapter. Firstly, I discuss what has emerged from the profiles about the different views of literacy and their link with performance. Then I consider the resources and barriers to school performance. I conclude the chapter with recommendations that have arisen from the data.

5.2. Views of Literacy

The Autonomous View

What emerges from the discussion with all of the learners is a strongly held autonomous view about literacy. Without exception each of the learners spoke initially of literacy as being directly related to formal reading and writing and of the benefits that print based literacy as used in schools, can confer. They all recognized that in order to succeed in life, it was important to develop these particular skills of reading and writing. Those who came from middle class backgrounds described how responsibility for the perpetuation of the traditional school-based system of reading and writing was assumed by their parents and further entrenched as they reinforced it at home. Those who were from emerging middle class families, even though they did not describe the practice of the school-based literacies as occurring much at home, had also, through their exposure to the system, assumed its values and saw it as the parents' responsibility to pass it on to their children. All the learners recognised the importance and the authority of school-based academic literacies, which is understandable because that authority is inherent in traditional academic institutions. Even later, though the learners described literacy practices which

were more significant in their lives and which they practised more, these were all valued as inferior to formal literacy and as having little authority.

Moss (2001) argues that the power of the formal school discourse is so entrenched that it will continue to perpetuate itself and she raises an argument where she considers whether the 'informal' literacies practised by learners would ever be recognised. She examines Bernstein's (1999), argument that because of the hierarchical structure and authority of the school-based discourse (which he calls Vertical Discourse) little transference is in fact possible. The Horizontal Discourse, which could be the home based primary discourse, he says, would change in its form and authority if it were to merge into the Vertical Discourse. Moss ends her argument by calling for an examination again of the power of the institutionalised vertical Discourse and its relationship with the horizontal Discourse:

There is good reason to look again at what the relationships are between schooled literacy and literacy in the wider community, exploring what schooled literacy comes to stand for, for whom, at which times.

(Moss 2001: 160)

What I have seen in my research, is that the autonomous model is certainly entrenched in the traditional school-based secondary Discourse. However, one of the ways to dislodge that power is to make teachers and learners aware of what is happening and how the power is operating. They need to examine the values they hold about both the Vertical and the Horizontal Discourses. One way to do this is to allow teachers and learners to become researchers themselves. This I shall discuss more fully later in the chapter.

Expanded views of literacy

As the research developed, learners' views about literacy expanded. They began to see their literacy practices at home and at school in a different light. Smsing, computer games and programming, sport, advertising, visual design, dance and cooking, which were not seen as literacy activities before, were all seen as such, as were the more informal activities of discussions of film and music at breaks at school. With the expanded notion of literacy, there was a shift in values. At first learners found it difficult to break away from the emphasis on the importance and authority of school-based literacy. Then as their views expanded, there was conflict between the value of the literacy activities which were significant in their lives and which they practised more often, and an autonomous view of literacy. By the end of the research

project they were beginning to value their own literacy practices differently as they saw how significant they were in their lives.

The answer to my first research question, “How do adolescent learners speak about, write about, depict and value their literacy practices at home and at school” is that their first and strongest view about literacy is the autonomous view. However, as the research developed they came to describe an expanded view of literacy and with that a shift in how they valued different literacy practices. The next question to consider is how the views the learners have of literacy affects their performance and whether it is possible that as their views expand so their performance will alter. This seems to contest Moss’ view of the insignificance of the horizontal discourse.

5.3. The link between views of literacy and performance

My data reinforces what Brice Heath (1983) and Gee (1990) say in that those learners who described support from home and reinforced behaviours at home as being closest to the school-based Discourse seem to perform better in English in certain fundamental ways. Their immersion in certain activities, certain ways of speaking and handling texts at home, predisposes them and their expectations in some ways to the school-based Discourse. It is as if they have been trained at home for school and in this sense they are advantaged. The same does not apply to learners whose home-based Discourses are further removed from the school-based Discourses. Even though these learners speak of the importance of school-based Discourses, and in particular reading, the belief in the value of the school-based Discourse is not enough to lead to proficiency in the Discourse. Their performances in the academic Discourse are, as a result, below the established standards and norms. In this sense, these learners are disadvantaged.

However, there is another dynamic operating, and that is that learners derive confidence from what they enjoy and practise at home and think they are good at. Even if the capital they bring to school is not recognised as capital in the school system these learners have a positive attitude to other formal literacy activities at school which are similar to what they practise at home. For example, Ricardo loves his rapping, which is not a formal academic literacy practice but which he describes as poetry. He believes he is good at rapping and because of that he speaks of how he loves poetry at school. He does not perform very well according to the formal assessment, but he feels good about the activity. The chances of his eventually performing well in that area are stronger than in areas where there is no enjoyment. There is also a good chance that he will bring some of the skills from his

literacy practices at home and use them at school. The point I am making is that the link between home literacy practices and performance at school goes beyond the level of marks and is very closely related to attitudes and values. When the learner feels something is natural, or enjoys an activity at home, even if it is not in alignment with formal school literacy, this could permeate into the literacy activities at school.

This counteracts what Moss argues. What my data seems to indicate is the possibility for learners to use those skills from their literacy practices from their life-worlds as a base for the more formal activities at school. It is not, as Moss argues, a case of the one discourse transforming into the other when it is assimilated by the more powerful discourse; rather the one discourse provides a ladder or scaffolding into the other and gives meaning to the other. Teachers could transform their teaching and their learners if they were to use the capital which their learners brought to school. I speak about this more in my recommendations. Another point to note about the horizontal discourse is that it is not as flat or one dimensional as Moss seems to argue. Closer inspection of this discourse does show that there is a hierarchical structure to it. Some of the profile learners, for example, spoke of cooking as a literacy practice at home. This activity contains within it a developmental and hierarchical structure as learners develop and refine their skills in this area. The mediation practices that learners enact with each other as they explain films and television programmes move beyond the realm of content to analytical aspects of motive, intention and analysis and evaluation of performance. Gee (2003) argues that a great deal could be learnt from the learning process that happens when learners play computer games and he suggests that the skills that they are developing and practising could be used by teachers to transform their teaching practices. The complexity of the processes operating in the horizontal activity of playing a computer game indicates that far from being limited in scope, the horizontal discourse can provide ways in which the vertical discourse can be enhanced and even transformed.

My data also revealed that learners are performing beyond the narrow range of formal academic literacy, beyond the English classroom, in dynamic and meaningful ways and this is because the capital they are bringing from their home discourses is being recognised and used by their peers, the school and their communities. This performance is closely related to some of the situations envisaged by the New London Group (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000) when they speak of multiliteracies, Critical Framing and Transformed Practice. I refer here to Michael's communicative literacy which transforms itself into leadership skills in the school and his mediation skills as he helps those in his home and community; Ricardo's peers draw on his rapping expertise in school concerts; Luke

mediates with his knowledge of the new literacies as he networks with his peers about computer technology and computer games; and Helen uses her dancing and choreography to design items for the school fashion show. Despite the fact that all the learners spoke of the importance of developing school-based literacies for their futures, it is possible that these literacy activities I have just described will provide as much, if not more of a preparation for success in the future. Analysis of the data seems to indicate that those who are most immersed in the school literacies, like Aimee, almost seem to be constricted by it. Aimee describes a view of literacy, strongly supported by her home, that is very close to the autonomous view and even as the research developed she found it difficult to expand her view. Her performance is limited very much to the formal academic domain.

There is a further area of performance which the learners describe related to their informal domain at school, which is similar to Canagarajah's "safe houses" (1999: 192) which I described in my literature review. Of the five functions of safe houses, my learners use their informal literacy activities like smsing, Mxit, private notes and emails for four of them. In the first instance, from my observation they use it as a site of resistance to formal schooling, as can be seen from their notes to each other written illicitly during class which contain their own spelling conventions and syntax and which seem to rebel against standard English. The second instance also applies when learners use these literacy activities as a means of expressing their boredom. Luke spoke of his reading of comics during lesson time as a means of escaping the boredom of a slow teacher. Thirdly, very often these activities carry with them a secrecy and are performed stealthily to emphasise a feeling of collaboration and solidarity amongst the learners – the surreptitious sms messages during lesson time bear testimony to this. In the fourth instance, the conventions, which a literacy activity like smsing have evolved, carry with them a stamp of a particular identity with which my learners connect, which they seek to develop and which they are proud of. It is possible that these 'safe houses' could be used by teachers as a way to strengthen teaching, perhaps through the use of networking to keep connected in the preparation of group orals or short discussions amongst learners about a topical point in the lesson. Perhaps the note writing could be given more status as a form of writing and could be used as scaffolding into journal writing and then into the more formal kinds of writing. The teacher would need to be sensitive though, to the nature and function of 'safe houses' and recognise the significance and need of such a literacy site.

The answers to my second research question, "How do these descriptions of literacy link with their performances at school" highlight how learners' conceptions and experiences

of literacy practices could function as both resources and barriers in their school performance. My data shows that there are resources that some learners bring to school from their home discourses which are in alignment with the school-based discourses and these do enhance their performance in the formal academic discourse, but might sometimes carry with them a limitation as learners strive to conform. There are also barriers that arise when the home discourses are different from the school-based, for example when the language spoken at home is different from the language at school. On the other hand, there are resources which are not in alignment with the formal school-based discourses which learners use as resources to enhance their performance at school and finally, in the flow from home to school, learners find their own expression in the informal performance amongst each other.

5.4. Learners as Researchers

I have already touched on the third research question in the previous section “Would there be any shift in the learners’ perceptions of literacy and their practices through being involved in a research project on literacy?” and have indicated that there was a shift in perception and values. This was as a result of the awareness that the learners gained from examining the concept of literacy and how it manifested in their lives.

My own observations of the way the profile learners have applied this broader view of literacy in the classroom, since we began the research, is that they have all become more aware of what they are doing in the classroom. Through the discussions about literacies, they have come to develop a meta-language, a way of speaking about literacy. This is illustrated in Luke’s interview when I asked him whether his view of literacy had changed. He said:

- Luke: To an extent yes, because, I’ve found out what I do at home is quite a big thing and what I do at school, all around me is literacy. It has opened my eyes quite a bit.
- Interviewer: Do you think you would perhaps be able to view your home practices as more having more value and authority
- Luke: Probably yes, now that I know what I am doing.

Whereas in the beginning they all defined literacy as ‘reading a book’, by the interview with me most of them had expanded the view. Ricardo defined literacy as “Understanding the message”. At the same time, being in the project and listening to the others speaking, opened up his eyes to the value of what the existing system had to offer as he described to me in his interview:

I learnt that reading is more important than I used to think it was. When I

have children I am going to force them to read, because I know that it widens your vocabulary and you understand more. Your knowledge will be more...I think knowledge ...is great...you can expand your mind to different places in the world. The more you read, the more you have literacy in your life, the more you learn

The most significant factor in the learners being involved in research was: as they were allowed to expand their view of literacy, so they were allowed to expand the values they attached to literacy practices and this opened up opportunities for them. This made the experience of learners being researchers truly educational and in line with the following:

We start from the position that people's understanding of literacy is an important aspect of their learning, and that people's theories guide their actions. It is here that a study of literacy practices has its most immediate links with education.

(Barton, & Hamilton, 2000: 14)

5.4. Recommendations

The final question is "How might I transform my own teaching practice to meet the needs of all the learners in my classroom?" The answers I have found from this research apply not only to me, but to teachers of English in general and they form the basis of my recommendations.

Firstly, as the New London Group say: "The question of differences has become a main problem that we must now address as educators" (New London Group, 2000 : 10). It is important that English teachers are alert to the diversity in their classrooms. Before any transformation of teaching can take place, there has to be an understanding of the dynamics of difference in the classroom. The first step is to realise that every learner brings with him, or her, a different set of resources and barriers, and to find out what these might be. The best way in which to understand what the learner is bringing to the classroom is to carry out research. It is important for educators to participate in some form of research with their learners on an on-going basis because the world is a dynamic and changing place and the learners who come into the classroom will be a changing population. Cummins describes the folly of educators not being actively involved in a learning process when he says that "If teachers are not learning much from their students, it is probable that their students are not learning much from them" (Cummins, 1996: 4).

The next step in the process of change is to involve learners in this research. This process of both learners and educators becoming involved in research on literacy heightens awareness and changes the relationship between the educator and the learner as it empowers them both as they become partners in the journey of discovery. This accords with what Barton recommends:

One of the best ways for students and others to increase their understanding of literacy is for them to reflect upon their own practices and the everyday practices around them. They can do this by carrying out research on literacy.

(Barton, 2000: 167)

Although my learners did not carry out research in the traditional sense, they did certainly 'reflect upon their own practices'. By introducing them to the concept of literacy and asking them to think about it and examine in their lives the literacy activities which took place, they were opening a door to research. English teachers could include in their practices written pieces which lead learners into investigations of their own literacy practices. This could range from the sort of reflective essay I used in my research to surveys, interviews and collages which examine different forms of literacy and values attached to them. The information the teacher gains from this research will be important for the English teacher in understanding something of the life-worlds of the learners.

Following on logically from this is the next step in the process of change and that is that English teachers need to use the resources which their learners bring to the classroom to develop their teaching programmes. For example, one learner might find it easy to research a topic on the internet whereas another might not have any references, either in the form of reference books or technology to research a topic. Even when there is technology at home, there might not be the support in how to use the technology and the data which has been collected. In order to assure equity teachers need to provide assistance in some way to make sure that the learner who does not have access is not further disadvantaged. In structuring the programme for study teachers could use passages from magazines that learners read, or even ask learners to bring their own passages from their reading sources. If listening to music is a literacy activity learners enjoy, the lyrics of songs can be used in poetry as a springboard into formal poetry. Text books need to break away from the formal divisions into language and literature and the concept of literacy as embracing multiple forms needs to form part of their structure. Where learners have talents through which they express themselves, like dancing or story telling, the orals in

the class could be structured in such a way as to offer learners who feel comfortable with that form of expression an opportunity to express themselves. There need not be any major throwing away of practices that are present in the teaching of English, but rather an inclusion of some practices which have previously been regarded as fringe practices.

The principle which underlies what I am describing is situated practice, which is described by the New London Group (2000:33) as

immersion in experience and the utilisation of available Designs of meaning including those from the students' life-worlds and simulations of the relationships to be found in workplaces and public spaces.

The next recommendation is to teach more explicitly. While immersion in a Discourse seems to promote understanding of conventions and practices for some learners, it does not work for others, especially those who are not well-precured. This means that different genres and the different conventions and ways of writing in these genres need to be taught more explicitly. For example, learners need to see model answers so that they know what they need to do to structure their own answers. When they write formal essays, besides being given examples of essays written in the genre, they also need direction in how to plan and structure their essays as well as direction about which register is appropriate. This process of explicit teaching is described by the New London Group as Overt Instruction (New London Group, 2000 : 33).

When learners become more aware of literacy activities in their lives and in the school, they will begin to develop a critical awareness of the practices in which they are involved. Before any critical framing can take place there needs to be observation and understanding of what is happening and this is part of the language teacher's function. An on-going, critical evaluation of different texts, what purposes they serve, whose interests they serve and how they convey entrenched systems of privilege and power is necessary. Educators through this process can become the facilitators of and participators in Transformed Practice (New London Group, 2000 : 33).

Previously I used the quote by Cummins (1996 : 4) that if "teachers are not learning much from their students, it is probable that their students are not learning much from them". I think this lies at the heart of Transformed Practice. If the whole process of teaching is going to be alive and grow, it is imperative that it begin with the teacher observing the learners carefully and learning from them, not only learning from them, using what they

have to offer and meeting them where they are. When there has been a meeting, then in the process of sharing and developing, Transformed Practice will arise.

5.5. Reflections

I began this dissertation with the intention of understanding my learners more. I suspected that beyond the façade of my accumulated assumptions, beyond the edifice of educational requirements and stipulations and beyond the social constructions perpetuated by the community I live in, lay a scene untravelled, one that I had not yet seen. My suspicions were well founded. The windows that opened up before me as I began this exploration, revealed seven different views of literacy. Each view that I discovered was unique, each contained its own texture, its own form, its own different nuances of meaning and its own potential. Yet as I look at these views now, I realise there is another window that has been opened, and an eighth view exposed. That is the expanded view of my own understanding. Having undertaken the journey to understand my learners, I have taken the blinds from my own window and as a result I have broadened my own view of literacy and teaching practice in the English class.

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7. Appendices

Appendix A : Table showing Research Design and Methodology

TABLE ILLUSTRATING RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY		
Research Type	Ethnographic: Participant observation	
Design Classification	Empirical: Classroom observation of learners and their work Analysis of descriptions given by learners of their own practices and values	
Data	Textual data Primary data	Written work of learners Transcripts from focus groups Transcripts from interviews Photographic representations of learners Inventories of learners Examples of school written work from learners Transcripts from learners' formal orals in class
Sample	General and small selected sample group	Grade 10 and Grade 11 classes Selected group of 7 Grade 11 learners
Control	Low control	Because the work is ethnographic and aimed at naturalistic observation, there were no controls put in place to ensure a controlled environment. The researcher was a participant observer often prompting with questions and leading discussion.
Key research questions	Exploratory and descriptive	<u>Question 1:</u> "How do adolescent learners speak about, write about, depict and value their literacy practices at home and at school?" <u>Question 2:</u> "How do these descriptions link with their performances at school?" <u>Question 3:</u> What effect would being involved in such a project have on the learners' understandings of literacy? <u>Question 4:</u> "How might I transform my own teaching practice to meet the needs of all the learners in my classroom?"
Theoretical framework	The New Literacy Studies theorists, Jim Cummins, Critical Discourse Analysis.	Key words: literacy, literacy activities, literacy practices, situated practice, primary Discourse, secondary Discourse, borderlands, autonomous and ideological models, mediation, pragmatic and syntactic modes, Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, Critical Framing and Transformed Practice.
Mode of observation	Participant observation by subjects and researcher	

/Sources of data	(Primary data) Semi-structured interviewing (individual and focus groups) Documentary sources
Analysis	Interpretive Critical Discourse Analysis Performance measured against assessment criteria of Education Department
Strengths	Intense, well rounded profiles of learners In depth analysis Learning process for participants
Limitations	Lack of generalisability Non standardisation of measurement
Main sources of error	Bias of researcher Manipulation of data by participants Rigour of analysis

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Appendix B: Consent Letters

Letter of consent to parents and learners asking for permission to use learners work in research.

20 March 2006

Dear

Although I am your child's English teacher at school, I am writing this letter to you in a personal capacity. I am currently doing my Master's degree in education at the University of Cape Town and am required to do research for my thesis. My research question is in the field of literacy and I would need to use examples of learners' work and have interviews with them. Most of my work will come from actual work done in the course of my teaching, but I will need to meet individually and with small groups of learners for interviews. This will not impinge in any way on the learner's school work.

Your child has expressed a willingness to be part of this study. Please may I have your permission to work with him or her? I would appreciate it if you would indicate your permission in the space provided below. There is also a space for your child to indicate his or her permission.

Your child will remain anonymous in all work I present or write up. I appreciate your co-operation in this matter.

Yours truly
Charmaine Kendal

Supervisor at UCT:
Ermien van Pletzen

(Please complete this and return it to school as soon as possible)
PARENT /GAURDIAN

I,give permission for
..... to take part in the research project.

Signature:.....Date:.....

LEARNER:

I,.....am willing to take part in the research
project.

Signature:..... Date:.....

Appendix C: Summary of Data and Methods of Analysis

COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA				
RELATION TO QUESTION ONE	SAMPLE	TYPE OF DATA	ANALYSIS OF DATA	PURPOSE OF DATA
How do learners <u>write</u> about and value their literacy practices at home and school?	Stage one: All Grade 10 and 11 learners in English language class.	Reflective essay	Categorisation based on questions.	To establish a general feel about how learners felt about literacy practices and what they had experienced. To consider how to select profile groups.
How do learners <u>write</u> about and value their literacy practices at home and school?	Stage two: 7 profile members	Reflective essay	Critical Discourse Analysis Categorisation.	To see how learners write about and value their literacy practices at home and school.
How do learners <u>write</u> about?	7 profile members	Literacy inventory	Collating results. Comparing against each other. Representation on bar graph.	To rank activities according to the importance they play in learners' lives.
How do learners <u>speak</u> about and value their literacy practices at home and school?	7 profile members	Focus group discussions (semi structured)	Transcribing recordings and interpreting data. Categorisation. Discourse analysis	To see how learners speak about and value their literacy practices at home and school.
How do learners <u>speak</u> about and value their literacy practices at home and school?	7 profile members	Interviews (semi structured)	Transcribing recordings and interpreting data	To see how learners speak about and value their literacy practices at home and school.
How do learners <u>depict and value</u> their literacy practices at home and school?	7 profile members	Photographic depiction and questionnaire based on photographs	Visual interpretation of photographs Categorisation of data on questionnaires	To see how learners depict and value their literacy practices at home and school.
RELATION TO QUESTION TWO	SAMPLE	TYPE OF DATA	ANALYSIS OF DATA	PURPOSE OF DATA.
Is their a link with assessed performance	7 profile members	Formally assessed results at school: The Term Mark	Assessment. Comparative interpretation. Analysing results	To evaluate the performance of each learner according to the standards of the institution and to see if there

at school in English as a learning area - general?			in terms the class average.	is a link with how they describe their literacy practices.
Is their a link with assessed performance at school in English as a learning area – formal writing?	7 profile members	Different writing pieces performed in the formal school discourse: <u>Discursive essay</u> <u>Transactional writing – formal letter</u> <u>Creative writing – poetry</u> <u>Analytical writing-</u> Setwork essay	Work analysed according to the assessment requirements of the education department	To examine the writing skills of each learner in the formal academic school discourse and to consider how that links with how literacy activities are spoken about and valued at home.
Is their a link with assessed performance at school in English as a learning area – formal orals?	7 profile members	Formal oral.	Work analysed according to the assessment requirements of the education department.	To examine the oral skills of each learner in the formal academic school discourse and to consider how that links with how literacy activities are spoken about and valued at home.
Is their a link with performance at school outside of the classroom, in the informal domain of school?	7 profile members	Observations by researcher of the learners in different extra curricular situations at school. Observations recorded in a journal	Interpretive. Reflection on data	To see how the learners performed in areas of school life where there was no formal assessment.

Appendix D: Guidelines for Reflective Essay

Questions to guide learners in reflective essay:

My Reading Journey: A Reflection.

Past:

- What are your memories of being read to?
- Do you remember ever reading to siblings or teaching them?
- Did anybody tell you stories when you were little? Who? Where?
- Do you have any memories of how you felt about reading when you were little or in primary school?
- What language did you speak at home when you were little? Is this the same language you were taught in, in school?
- Who taught you to read? Do you remember being taught to read?
- Who helped you when you were learning to read?
- Did you learn nursery rhymes as a child?
- What kinds of storytelling happen or happened in your home?

Now:

- If you do not enjoy reading now, can you give a reason why?
- What is your feeling about reading at school?
- What is your attitude to reading now? (consider the following as reading – novels, sms, email, newspapers, non fiction magazines,

- rapping)
- Do you think reading is important?
 - What kinds of reading materials have you been exposed to in your home? What do you store at home?
 - Do you ever read to or for other people in your home?
 - Who in your family reads? What do they read?
 - Do you see television and films and computer games as a text?
 - Why? Why not?
 - When you are busy in these activities do you consider yourself as involved in reading?
 - If given a choice, would you rather discuss something than read it?

Appendix E: Literacy Inventory

Please fill in the following information as accurately as possible. Consider a “normal” day during the week, during school times. Think of your life as it is at the moment. Remember there are only 24 hours in a day so be realistic in your estimation. Circle the option which best suits you.

How much do you?

1.	Watch television on a regular school day?	Over three hours	One to three hours	1 to 60 minutes.	Not at all
2.	Sms on a regular school day?	Over 30 times a day	10 to 29 times a day	1 to 9 times a day	Not at all.
3.	Go on to chat line on a regular school day?	Over three hours in total	One to three hours in total	1 to 60 minutes in total	Not at all
4.	Write notes or letters to friends on a regular school day?	More than five notes/letters in total	Three or four letters in total.	One or two letters in total.	Not at all.
5.	Write in a personalized diary on a regular school day?		More than one page entry	One page entry	Not at all
6.	Read magazines on a regular school day?	More than five in total	Three or four in total.	One or two in total.	Not at all.
7.	Do WRITTEN homework on a regular school day?	Over three hours	One to three hours	1 to 60 minutes.	Not at all
8.	Do READING homework on a regular school day?	Over three hours	One to three hours	1 to 60 minutes.	Not at all
8	Email on a regular school day?	Over three hours	One to three hours	1 to 60 minutes.	Not at all
9.	Play computer or play station games on a regular school day?	Over three hours	One to three hours	1 to 60 minutes.	Not at all
10	Read the newspaper on a regular school day?	More than one newspaper a	One full newspaper a day	Some parts of the	Not at all

		day		newspaper a day	
11	Do physical activity eg sport, dance, gym on a regular school day?	Over three hours	One to three hours	1 to 60 minutes.	Not at all
12	Read a novel or a similar kind of book (not at school)	More than four novels a year	Two or three novels a year	One novel a year	Not at all
13	Read or work with religious texts (bible, prayers) on a regular school day?	30 minutes or more	20 -30 minutes	1 - 10 minutes	Not at all
14	Listen to music on a regular school day?	All the time	From 30 minutes to one hour	Up to 30 minutes	Not at all / only background, incidental music
15	Play a musical instrument on a regular school day?	Over 1 hour	30 minutes to an hour	Up to 30 minutes	Not at all
16	Listen to the radio on a regular school day? (not music- news etc)	More than an hour	From 30 minutes to one hour	Up to 30 minutes	Not at all / only background, incidental music

Is there any other literacy activity you perform at home which has not been included on this chart?

What is it?.....

How long do you spend on it ?.....

LEVEL ONE:	An insignificant amount of time spent on activity OR Frequency of activity: Never, odd occasion
LEVEL TWO:	Very little time spent on activity OR Frequency: Hardly ever
LEVEL THREE:	Greater importance in life OR Frequency: Regularly but moderately
LEVEL FOUR:	Activity highly significant, very important in life OR Frequency: Most often and regularly.

Table showing levels of significance used in Literacy Inventory

Appendix F: Questions for Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group Questions:

1. What do you think the word “literacy” means ?
2. What sorts of literacy activities (happenings) take place in your home environment?
3. What sort of literacy activities take place in your community (e.g. commercial spheres, religious spheres, sporting etc)
4. What sort of literacy events take place at school?
5. When you think of literacy activities, do you think of them as something you do with others, or something you do alone?
6. Which literacy activities do you see as being important? Are some more important than others?
7. How do you think literacy influences or will influence your life?

Appendix G: Questions for In-depth Interview

Guideline questions for individual interviews:

GENERAL QUESTIONS:

1. What do you think the word ‘literacy’ means?
2. Would you consider yourself ‘literate’?
3. Do you think it is important to develop literacy skills? Why/Why not?
4. What do you want to be when you leave school?
5. Do you feel that literacy will help you to get there?
6. Whose responsibility is it to develop literacy skills?
7. Do you view all texts as equally important (magazines, the bible, school essays)?

PRACTICES AT HOME:

8. Do you feel comfortable reading and writing at home?
9. What sorts of literacy activities take place in your home?
10. Do you ever talk about language or texts or writing in your home?
11. At home, are there literacy events you perform with other people?
12. Do you ever go to the library? Do you remember going when you were young? What were your feelings about it?
13. Do you see a visit to the video store as similar to visiting the library
14. Do your family think literacy is important?
15. Do family members help you in your practice of school literacy at home? Who? How?
16. Do the people in your family pun or play on words? Who does? Are there any other kinds of word games you remember playing?
17. Do you consider some of the activities you do with peers, as literacy?

- What value do you place on them? (e.g. notes, rapping, song lyrics)
18. Do you consider some of your very personal activities, like writing in a diary as literacy?
 19. Do you ever transfer any of your school literacy practices to your home situation? Why?
 20. Do the people in your family enjoy performing (either in telling stories or in making jokes)?

PRACTICES AT SCHOOL:

21. How do you feel about the reading and writing you do at school?
22. Do you think reading and writing are linked or do you see them as separate activities?
23. Do you think that literacy at school is more important than the literacy you perform at home?
24. Do you ever perform school literacy practices at home? What are they? Why?
25. Do you ever transfer aspects of your home literacy events to school? Which?

PRACTICES IN THE COMMUNITY:

26. Where do you see literacy practices happening in your community?
27. Do you feel confident using your literacy skills in the community?
28. Do you sometimes help others in your community with literacy skills? How? Why?

Appendix H: Samples of Questionnaire accompanying Photographs

(note: each learner received a different set of questions, depending on the photographs taken)

1. Photo 1:
Why did you choose to photograph this particular object in relation to literacy? Explain the connection.

How much of a part does this object play in your life?

How do you value this object? Do you see it as important?

Is this activity a singular activity or is it performed with others?

Was this photograph posed or was the person involved in the activity when you took the photograph?

If it was posed, why did you choose to stage it this way?
2. Photo 2
Why did you choose to photograph this particular object in relation to literacy? Explain the connection.

How much of a part does this object play in your life?

How do you value this object? Do you see it as important?

Is this activity a singular activity or is it performed with others?

Was this photograph posed or was the person involved in the activity when you took the photograph?

If it was posed, why did you choose to stage it this way?

There are other objects of literacy besides the main focus in the picture. Were you aware of that when you took the photograph. What relation do they have to literacy?

3. Photo 3

Why did you choose to photograph this particular object in relation to literacy? Explain the connection.

How much of a part does this object play in your life?

How do you value this object? Do you see it as important?

Is this activity a singular activity or is it performed with others?

Was this photograph posed or was the person involved in the activity when you took the photograph?

If it was posed, why did you choose to stage it this way?

4. Photo 4

Why did you choose to photograph this particular object in relation to literacy? Explain the connection.

How much of a part does this object play in your life?

How do you value this object? Do you see it as important?

Is this activity a singular activity or is it performed with others?

Was this photograph posed or was the person involved in the activity when you took the photograph?

If it was posed, why did you choose to stage it this way?

5. Photo 5:

Why did you choose to photograph this particular object in relation to literacy? Explain the connection.

How much of a part does this object play in your life?

How do you value this object? Do you see it as important?

Is this activity a singular activity or is it performed with others?

Was this photograph posed or was the person involved in the activity when you took the photograph?

If it was posed, why did you choose to stage it this way?

There are other objects of literacy besides the main focus in the picture. Were you aware of that when you took the photograph. What relation do they have to literacy?

6. Is there anything else you could have included in the photograph selection which you consider as important in literacy activity in your life?

7. Since the time you began the project with me, have you noticed any change in

Your understanding of the word literacy?

Your attitude to different literacy activities at home?

Your attitude to different literacy activities at school?

Appendix I: Categories for Analysing Formal Written Pieces

GENRE	STRUCTURE (understanding convention)	REGISTER + TONE (formality, appropriateness)	CONTENT (handling of topic, logic)	LANGUAGE USE (vocabulary, sentence structure)
Discursive	Both sides of argument presented. Ends with personal opinion. Introduction and conclusion Paragraphing	Formal Logical Analytical	Presents balanced view Full Developed sustained points	Formal diction Full sentence structure Grammatically correct
Transactional (Formal letter)	Set format according to accepted conventions	Formal, polite Own opinions expressed in this letter	To the point Informative Opinions well justified	Standard English. Full sentences
Creative (Poetry set on a book)	No set conventions Learners own expression	Congruence between theme and intention	Related to the emotions and feelings of the character in the book. Interpretive, extension beyond the text	Imagery Figures of speech Poetic devices Creativity of expression
Analytical (Setwork)	Argument formulated and developed. Introduction and conclusion Paragraphing	Formal Logical Analytical	Presents balanced view Full Developed, sustained points Justifies opinions Reference to text (not storytelling)	Formal diction Full sentence structure Grammatically correct

Appendix J: Departmental Rubric for Written Work.

Creative Writing (40)	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 1
	7-8	5-6	3-4	1-2
Planning, coherence, introduction, conclusion	Thorough planning, effective introduction and conclusion	Planning evident, introduction and conclusion adequate for task	Some evidence of planning, ineffective introduction and conclusion	No evidence of planning, no introduction and no conclusion
	7-8	5-6	3-4	1-2
Originality in handling topic	Handling of topic shows originality	Handling of topic shows some originality	Some attempt at originality but topic generally handled in mundane way	No originality Muddled handling of topic
	7-8	5-6	3-4	1-2
Paragraphing, development of topic	Essay paragraphed well. Logical and effective connectors used between paragraphs	Adequate paragraphing. Topic handled systematically. Logical connectors between paragraphs	Some attempt at paragraphing but little topical unity within paragraphs. Topic handled in a mundane way. Few connectors between paragraphs	Solid writing (no paragraphs) Muddled handling of topic
	7-8	5-6	3-4	1-2
Register, tone awareness of audience and purpose.	Register used skilfully. Subtle use of tone enhances essay. Purpose of essay fully achieved	Appropriate register used. Some skilful use of tone. Purpose of essay achieved	Register appropriate to this purpose but little skill in use of tone. Purpose of essay barely achieved	Little awareness of appropriate expression. Purpose of essay not achieved
	7-8	5-6	3-4	1-2
Vocabulary, sentence structure, idiomatic use of language, spelling, punctuation.	Excellent use of vocabulary, correct sentence structure, spelling and punctuation, mainly correct language usage	Wide range of vocabulary, correct sentence structure, few errors in language usage, spelling, and punctuation	Adequate vocabulary, sentences mostly correct, some errors in language usage, spelling and punctuation	Limited vocabulary, poor sentence structure, errors in language, spelling and punctuation

For structure I looked at how well the genre had been mastered, and this included the accepted conventions for that particular genre. For register and tone, I considered whether the formality of the piece was appropriate – at times the work required a personal, informal tone, at others a more formal, ‘prose essayist’ style. Here I also considered the style in which the piece was written. This depended on what the genre required. For content, I looked at explicitness, at how well an argument was developed (if that was a criterion for the genre), at how the learner expressed him or herself in the genre. Language use focussed mainly on vocabulary, sentence structure, linking of paragraphs and grammatical proficiency. This form of analysis was applied to all the written pieces.

Appendix K: Rubric for Oral Evaluation

PRESENTATION	POSTURE The position, posture of the body. Is the learner tense, relaxed, at ease, formal	EYE CONTACT How much eye contact does the learner have with the audience?	PACE +VOLUME Does the learner speak clearly? Does the learner control and modify pace and tone?
CONTENT	RESEARCH Does the learner speak from personal experience? Has the learner done research?	INFORMATION Is the content full? Is it relevant? Is it interesting?	STRUCTURE How has the oral been structured? Is it random or does it have a plan?
LANGUAGE	TONE (FORMALITY) Is the register correct? How formal is the language?	FLUENCY Does the language flow? Is it the learner's own words?	VOCABULARY How well is the language expressed? Is meaning clear?

Appendix L: Table Showing Analysis of Written Pieces of Profile Learners

Aimee

GENRE	STRUCTURE (understanding of convention for this type of writing)	REGISTER + TONE (formality, appropriateness)	CONTENT (handling of topic, logic)	LANGUAGE USE (vocabulary, sentence structure)
Discursive Essay Assessment: 26/40 (hand written: final copy) Produced at home	States argument clearly in the introduction. Short paragraphs which could have been developed. Follows the instruction to argue the topic. Paragraphs not linked. Appears to be some form of planned structure because there is a sequence to the paragraphs.	Attempt at writing impersonally (third person). Some first person sentences, use of second person. No personal anecdotes, but personal opinions expressed (I don't see why) Gender: Attempt to maintain equality - use of "he or she" Readership: written as if speaking to the teacher.	Valid points but they are not developed fully. Last two paragraphs not on the topic Not enough depth to the essay. No development of points, no examples. Ideas do not flow into each other or link. Introduction and conclusion just a repetition of the topic. " That is why I agree with the topic have chosen for my essay because I agree with the topic. No research or references to other texts or examples to expand meaning.	Errors of concord. "if a learner is caught... they should not be able" Colloquialisms. isn't, don't Common errors (confusion between affect /effect) Punctuation : possessive apostrophe often left out. Comma splice. Sentence structure: Mostly correct, but does switch from third, to second to first person in one sentence. "If you are legal I don't see why the school he or she attends should have a problem with it.

				<p>No sms writing.</p> <p>Mostly compound and complex sentences, but often clumsily constructed.</p> <p>"If you look at the circumstances it isn't that serious for smoking and drinking but is your decision to drink or smoke."</p>
<p>Transactional (Formal letter) Assessment: 29/40</p> <p>(Typed: final copy)</p> <p>Produced at home</p>	<p>Almost perfect in format.</p> <p>Follows the template given to students as an example. Little variation of her own.</p>	<p>Formal</p> <p>Gives her own opinion which this genre requires, but lacks sincerity. "My response to the biography is it is great and full of surprises. It touches the reader's heart reading certain passages. You can feel....". The switching of voice from her own voice (1) to third person (reader) and then the second person (you) contributes to this.</p> <p>Readership: Sense of a reader: Editor.</p>	<p>Gives a brief account of the book. Some gaps in the summary which suggests some of the sentences may have been lifted.</p> <p>Gives summary of the book and opinion. No recommendation of who might enjoy the book.</p>	<p>Sentences are a bit disjointed at times: "Readers will find this biography rather interesting and full of surprises they enjoy the biography."</p> <p>Could be more concise "The title of the book I am writing to you about is "Calendar Girls", the author is Tricia Stewart and the publisher is Pan Books."</p> <p>No significant or repetitive language errors.</p>
<p>Creative (Poetry) Assessment 18/20</p> <p>(Typed: final copy)</p> <p>Produced at home</p>	<p>Has created her own structure. 12 lines to poem Free verse. Attempt to use poetic devices- rhyme (irregular), personification, metaphor, sentences structured as for poetry, but at the end lapses more into prose although written like poetry.</p> <p>Title: "Sunflower poem" No sense of the purpose of the title.</p> <p>Reader: Addresses the sunflower in the poem.</p>	<p>Register formal.</p> <p>Poetic style.</p> <p>No distinctive voice in the poem</p>	<p>Good use of imagery. "the youth pined away with desire" "the pale virgin cloaked in snow"</p> <p>The content is not clear and seems a bit disjointed at times, but it works because of the genre. It is not clear whether this has been deliberately designed or if it is because she has lifted lines from a section in the book to make the poem.</p>	<p>No significant or repetitive language errors.</p> <p>Language used poetically, descriptively.</p>
<p>Analytical (Setwork) Assessment: 14/30</p> <p>Hand written: Exam piece.</p> <p>Independent work – No direct help from home.</p>	<p>Understands that the essay involves some argument about the text.</p> <p>Introduction is not clear. "I agree with this statement" – not explicit about what she agrees with.</p> <p>Attempt to create a conclusion which sums up the argument.</p> <p>Gives her own opinion on the topic.</p> <p>Provides arguments and uses evidence from the book to back them up.</p> <p>Reader: teacher reading the piece. At times assumes the reader is aware of information and so does not explain fully.</p> <p>Structure: Has stuck to the</p>	<p>Attempt at formality.</p> <p>Use of "you" detracts from the formality of the piece. "makes it fine what Zoot and Mary are doing and you are allowed to do it."</p>	<p>Does not consolidate points or relate them back to the topic.</p> <p>She is aware that she needs to use the text as evidence and not storytelling. The evidence from the book is more like listing. She does not develop into something to extend her argument.</p> <p>Does not understand or interpret the question properly so the content is not relevant often.</p>	<p>Weak and confusing.</p> <p>"Zoot does not work and he play's his words that's how he gets what he wants for free."</p> <p>"The author writes how it is fine about being a wore and when it hurts Mrs knight so she could not send her children over to see their aunt because of what she does"</p> <p>Sentences long with clauses joined haphazardly.</p>

	format of introduction, argument, conclusion. There appears to be a plan to the essay which has been followed. Ideas not linked.			
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MANYA

GENRE	STRUCTURE (understanding convention)	REGISTER + TONE (formality, appropriateness)	CONTENT (handling of topic, logic)	LANGUAGE USE(vocabulary, sentence structure)
Discursive Assessment 23/40 Work produced at home	Introduced well but no conclusion. Good discursive genre – presents different viewpoints. Paragraphing with each paragraph developing an argument.	Formal. Impersonal. Written in third person Suits genre, although lacks own opinion at the end. Readership: As if to teacher.	At places not logical, but generally maintains a good argument for both sides. Appeal to higher authority (law) to give emphasis	In attempt to be formal, sometimes the sentences are too long. Cumbersome. Complex sentences. Full construction. Diction – formal mostly. Colloquialisms: okay Passive construction Punctuation: mostly correct except for possessive apostrophe.
Transactional (Formal letter) 25/40 Done at home.	Not entirely correct, no date, no title to letter, no ending salutation. Follows the template given. Little experimentation.	Formal. Personal. (I am absolutely...) Correct tone and register. (persuasive, sincere) At times addresses imaginary “you” Reader: directed to editor.	Supports own opinions with content from the book, but could have given more detailed opinion.	Good flow. Well structured sentences. Vocabulary appropriate.
Creative (Poetry) 18/20	Creates own structure. 15 lines Innovative and original.	Sensitively written	Expands the text of the biography skilfully.	Creative use of participles and rhyme. Good rhythm to some lines. Use of metaphors.
Analytical (Setwork essay) Written under exam conditions. 21/30	Good introduction and conclusion. Has addressed the topic well. Argument logically constructed.	Formal Impersonal	Reference to the novel and arguments well supported with evidence. Manipulates text to give evidence for argument. No storytelling. Actual grappling with the argument. Speaks of the author as creator of characters.	Sentence construction good. Could link points more clearly. Tenses appropriate.

LUKE

GENRE	STRUCTURE (understanding convention)	REGISTER + TONE (formality, appropriateness)	CONTENT (handling of topic, logic)	LANGUAGE USE(vocabulary, sentence structure)
Argumentative 24/40	Defines his topic to begin with but needs to integrate it into the essay. Misses out on the other part of the definition – slave. Contradiction in conclusion.	Formal. Attempt to draw in the reader through the use of “you”	Full, but tends to repeat the one point without expanding on the topic.	Lack of concord. Switches from third to first person and second person. Vocabulary good. Problems with apostrophe.
Transactional (Formal letter) 25/40	Formal. Format correct but does not go beyond the template.	Style appropriate. Formal yet expresses his own opinions	Full. Gives detail and examples.	Punctuation errors. Minor errors.

Creative (Poetry) 11/20	Free verse. Short, lines to build up tension. Visual representation at the end.	Use of alliteration. Descriptive writing.	Paints a clear picture.	Good pace. Adds to tension.
Analytical (Setwork) 12/30	Introduction not clear. It is easy to see that he did not understand the question. His format is correct, but not the content. Has left out half of the essay.	He tries to be formal, but makes it conversational by including , for example, "yes" at the beginning of a paragraph – as if talking to the reader.	Misunderstands the argument completely and so gives his own opinions instead of looking at the question. Includes irrelevant material.	At times the sentence structure is clumsy. Mixes pronouns.

CHARNAY

GENRE	STRUCTURE (understanding convention)	REGISTER + TONE (formality, appropriateness)	CONTENT (handling of topic, logic)	LANGUAGE USE(vocabulary, sentence structure)
Discursive 28/40 handwritten	Good conclusion Well structured argument	Formal. Appropriate although at times the sentences are too long in an attempt to maintain formality	Tends to jump, so not always coherent. Good back up with examples.	Sentences too long. Lack of concord. Often the auxiliary verb is missing. (missing) Wrong use of preposition.
Transactional (Formal letter) 27/40	Format correct. Little deviation from the template given.	Formal. Personal.	Some of the phrases sounded as if they have been lifted from the blurb. Very full. Strong personal opinion.	Often does not use caps and punctuation. Could this be as a result of the smsing?
Creative (Poetry) 12/20	Free verse. Good rhythm in the centre section but then more like prose.	No real voice. Describes the event, but lacking authentic voice.	Not on a specific event. Paragraph does not explain fully.	Cliché Not much imagery.
Analytical (Setwork) 11/30	There is no reference to the question at all. Not really analytical – more story telling.	Attempt at formality, but this makes the sentences too long.	Aware of the content but does not know how to frame it into an argument. Inclusion of unnecessary information – storytelling.	Sentence structure faulty. At times too long.

HELEN

GENRE	STRUCTURE (understanding convention)	REGISTER + TONE (formality, appropriateness)	CONTENT (handling of topic, logic)	LANGUAGE USE(vocabulary, sentence structure)
Discursive 25/40 (hand written)	Format not completely understood – headings.	Formal	Good. Presents both sides of the argument.	Lack of concord. (a learner ... their) often. Good flow. Complex and compound sentences.
Transactional (Formal letter) 25/40	Format correct. Followed the template.	Style a little pedantic. Sentences could have been more concise.	Very full Own opinion also expressed. Comment on the story but not on the text.	Sentences could be more streamlined.
Creative (Poetry) 10/20	Experimentation with rhyme.		Too short. Instructions not followed.	No imagery
Analytical (Setwork) 14/30	Genre wrong. Tends to be more discursive than analytical. Tries to give an introduction and conclusion	Writing too personal for this genre	Not relevant in places. Does not really tackle the question.	Sentence structure sometimes faulty. Too rambling for this type of genre.

	and then round it up, but too many personal opinions			
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RICARDO

GENRE	STRUCTURE (understanding convention)	REGISTER + TONE (formality, appropriateness)	CONTENT (handling of topic, logic)	LANGUAGE USE(vocabulary, sentence structure)
Discursive 21/40(typed)	Introduction and conclusion. Follows the format for an argumentative essay.	Formal. Slang creeps in at times.	Too short. Some of the points could have been developed.	Spelling weak (phonetic) Verbs sometimes not for standard English(confusion between did and does) Style very simple.
Transactional (Formal letter) 20/40	Confusion about the publisher, the editor and the writer. The format of the letter is correct otherwise.	Formal.	It is not evident from the letter whether Greg read the book or not. The content is extremely thin and relates merely to the physical appearance of the book.	Mostly a copy of the template. Little original work.
Creative (Poetry) 12/20	Structure is written like a conventional poem, but as it reads, it follows the rhythm of a rap. Strong beat falling on a rhyming word.		Describes the attempt at the world cup.	Choice of words simple but effective use of rhyme
Analytical (Setwork) 13/30	The format of the essay was good. He tried to work systematically through the characters to build up an argument.	The register on the whole is formal. There is no evidence of colloquialisms or slang.	The argument misses the point of the essay question. While he does look at the immorality and the different treatment, he discusses whether it is moral to have double standards rather than why the author has done this.	Spelling is phonetic. Sentences weak, but on the whole are improving and better than earlier work. Tenses are good for this type of essay

MICHAEL

GENRE	STRUCTURE (understanding convention)	REGISTER + TONE (formality, appropriateness)	CONTENT (handling of topic, logic)	LANGUAGE USE(vocabulary, sentence structure)
Discursive 19/40	Not long enough. Presents one side of the argument. Introduction is weak. No linking of paragraphs or ideas.	Attempt at being formal, but conversational in tone. Use of "baffling" Storytelling style.	Does not really present a full enough argument. Stories as he uses them, are not appropriate for this genre.	Spelling weak. Lack of concord in places. Simple sentence construction. Often there is no break between sentences.
Transactional (Formal letter) 14/30	Although he was given the format, Gabriel has not followed the convention fully. (titling, heading)	Much too colloquial. Use of slang 'jol'	Very thin. It sounds as if some of the words were taken off the blurb. Letter is much too short.	Poor sentence construction – Sometimes incomplete, sometimes stringing together sentences.
Creative (Poetry) 11/20	Attempted rhyme, which works in places. At times the rhythm borders on prose.	Tone appropriate for creative writing.	Good use of metaphor to describe the family around the table. Lacking the five line paragraph that was supposed to explain the poem	Spelling weak. (mist – missed/ neva gonna – never going to / sent – scent)
Analytical (Setwork) 5/30	Much too short (119 words instead of 450) Only three paragraphs long – introduction, one paragraph and then the conclusion	Attempt to be formal Puts colloquialisms in quotation marks " get away with murder"	Analysed the question. Although he has understood the question, and given some evidence, he has not gone beyond an analysis of what the question is asking him to do.	"made to be like it is normal" faulty idiom. No main clause to some sentences.