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A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies into Practice: A Case Study in One Grade One Literacy Classroom

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Education

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Abstract

With the rise of technology, literacy concepts in the 21st century have challenged traditional literacy practices that have relied primarily on print media. Recent research has alerted early-years educators to the new understandings and significance of multiliteracies. These new understandings will better prepare classroom practices that purposefully design learning opportunities to accommodate diverse young learners in an era of evolving education.

This qualitative case study responds to these imperatives by showcasing a lived story of a grade one teacher who has implemented multiliteracies pedagogy in her classroom. Multiliteracies pedagogy has facilitated her effort in creating meaningful learning opportunities for young children based on their diverse interests and needs. Using a narrative analysis approach, the study suggests that applying multiliteracies pedagogy not only motivates the grade one children to take ownership of their learning but also transforms the way the teacher makes sense of her teaching.

The findings highlight those power structures that encourage the teacher to move forward and those that hold her back. The research concludes that teacher education plays a critical role in preparing and supporting an early-years educator to be successful; further, both the educator and the young learners' ambition to engage in actively designing teaching and learning is influenced by the academic expectations from the school board, parents, and resource availability.

Keywords

multiliteracies, multiliteracies pedagogy, design, learning opportunities, children's diversity, teacher education, academic expectations, resources availability

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This case study explored an early-year educator's experience of implementing multiliteracies pedagogy into practice. Attention was turned to one teacher, Jennifer (pseudonym), a Grade One teacher at a public school in Ontario, Canada. Multiliteracies pedagogy enabled her to draw on her students' different interests, intentions, talents, and knowledge in order to design learning opportunities to support their learning and development. The purpose of this study was multifaceted: (1) to examine how a pedagogy of multiliteracies facilitates young learners' literacy development; (2) to understand ways in which young learners' difference and diversity are valued; (3) to investigate what learning opportunities are created by multiliteracies pedagogy in the classroom; and (4) to find out what resources and support are needed when implementing multiltieracies pedagogies in the classroom.

1.1 Coming to the problem

Most of my memory in relation to schooling in China is full of dreary 'learn to test' scenes. Literacy learning to me meant being able to read fluently, write academically, and score in the top percentile throughout my six years of elementary life. What I experienced outside of school made no difference in the classroom, a place where I was treated as a passive recipient of knowledge, with few opportunities to explore things that I found intriguing. As a child, my interest, curiosity, creativity, life experience, and playful nature were relentlessly stifled and ignored by the prescribed and highly standardized way of teaching, learning, and testing.

When I was in grade five, I fell in love with comic books while losing interest in classroom reading, writing, and the race to the top. My school test scores plummeted and my teacher who implicitly dictated everything within the classroom considered me as 'deviant' and 'inferior'. I was ashamed, confused, and worried, but at the same time convinced that I was not permitted to love anything except 'school stuff'. I was soon

forced back on the 'right track' of school academic study again, and my comic books ended up in a landfill. I did not understand at that time, that my desire to read comics would lead to a diminished identity at school, or that reading and writing academic texts were the only avenues that led to success at school.

Determined in part to better understand those early experiences, I decided to take on a career in teaching. As a teacher, I continued to be deeply influenced by the examination-oriented educational system in China. However, I realized that the definitions of literacy and school success should be much broader than the linguistically-based and examination-driven understanding that was privileged in the school system. I also found that there were multimodal ways for students to explore literacy and learning both in and beyond the school context. I heard students tell stories through drawings; I saw them represent ideas through gestures; I watched them communicate through playing; and I found that some of them were more interested in digital texts than print-based texts.

It was while studying at the Faculty of Education at Western University that I became aware that there was a wide range of modes of representation and multiple texts that can be used to support children's learning and development. Through professional study, I understood that, with the expansion of technologies and the continuous changing nature of literacy, "there cannot be one set of standards or skills that constitute the ends of literacy learning" (New London Group, 1996, p. 64). Most importantly, I found that students' differences regarding culture, language, funds of knowledge, interest, and gender were not barriers to teaching and learning but assets of school success (Cummins, 2001). However, even as my understanding of early literacy learning and teaching was enriched, I still questioned how to capitalize on a wide variety of skills, abilities, experiences and interests young learners bring to school to create opportunities to scaffold their learning.

My story and confusion resonated with many colleagues in the same program at Western University who were early years' practitioners. They too expressed frustration while trying to apply child-centered approaches in the current academic and accountability-driven classroom environments (Kagan, Carol, Comer, & Scott-Little, 2006). Fortunately,

Pyle and Deluca (2013) point out that early year educators within Ontario maintain enough autonomy to tailor academic mandates, and choose their curricular stance and pedagogical approach. Through further communication with my colleagues, I found that some of them were employing multiliteracies in their classroom to facilitate literacy teaching and learning. Thus, I wondered how multiliteracies pedagogy chosen by the teacher could encourage young learners to actively pursue their interests, and make meaning in accordance with their capacities.

1.2 Rationale for the study

The questions of 'what counts as literacy in early childhood?' and 'what does it mean to be literate?' have inspired researchers and educators to address the need for children to develop multiliteracies, and the complex ways in which children make meaning using multiple modalities in various contexts (e.g., Flewitt, 2013; Gillen & Hall, 2013). Researchers find that early literacy teaching is still grounded in psycholinguistic and cognitive views of development, while other key elements such as sociocultural differences, children's agency, identity, family and community resources are often neglected (e.g., Razfar & Gutiérrez, 2013).

New information, mass communication, and changing technologies have dramatically transformed literacy and learning, increasing options students have to make and express meaning in 21st century classrooms (Cooper, Lockyer & Brown, 2013; Walsh, 2011). More recently, global connectedness and sociocultural diversity have altered the demographics of students by bringing together people from diverse cultures and speak non-dominating languages (NLG, 1996). These changes have prompted a reconsideration of the traditional literacy curricular and pedagogy, and the roles both teachers and students play in the rapidly changing era (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008; Kim, 2013). In the early stages of schooling, literacy is increasingly recognized as multimodal, requiring various forms and texts, and that pedagogical choices and practices attend to children's personal and cultural backgrounds (Hall, 2013).

Under such a changing climate, many scholars believe that a pedagogy of multiliteracies can respond to the demand of new literacies, while providing an adequate interpretation

of what constitutes appropriate literacy pedagogy. Multiliteracies theory explains how to inspire children to be active designers of their own learning by embracing differences, change and innovation (e.g., Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Westby, 2010). Therefore, it is important to conduct a study at a school classroom where the multiplicity of literacy is recognized, and students' diversity is valued. Specifically, it is of much significance to examine the value of multiliteracies for young children in diverse early literacy classrooms. This study focused on a grade one teacher's lived experience with multiliteracies pedagogy. It explored how the pedagogy of multiliteracies opens up opportunities for young children to expand their literacy skills in a diverse classroom and in the world beyond it. It also investigated in what ways the multiliteracies pedagogy prioritizes what students have rather than what they lack to optimize their agency, imagination, creativity, and encourages them to pursue their ambitions.

1.3 Research Questions

According to NLG (1996), the role of classroom pedagogy is "to develop an epistemology of pluralism that provides access without people having to erase or leave behind different subjectivities" instead of assimilating or "making homogeneity out of differences" (p. 11). To date, many researchers and educators argue that the pedagogy of multiliteracies can open up possibilities of capitalizing on children's diversity. The researchers and educators encourage students to transform existing meanings to design new meanings, as multiliteracies appreciate the relationship between school and outside school resources and environments (e.g., Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Jewitt, 2008).

This study was designed to describe the complex nature of an early literacy teacher's work when interacting with diverse students in the twenty-first century. It also provided a lens to better understand how the teacher encouraged young students to take ownership of their learning by welcoming their diverse difference, and how her choice of multiliteracies pedagogy influenced children's meaning making in an elementary classroom in Ontario in an era of new literacies and new technologies. Specifically, my study asked following research questions:

1. Why is multiliteracies pedagogy important in the early-years classroom where children with diverse needs and experiences explore their learning multimodally?

2. In what ways do adopting multiliteracies pedagogy create various learning opportunities for the teacher to draw on her students' diverse identities and to encourage their development in meaningful and creative ways?

3. What specific learning opportunities are created by the multiliteracies-oriented teacher?

4. What resources and materials are needed, used, valued and produced when applying the multiliteracies pedagogy to design learning opportunities for diverse classrooms?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

For the past ten years of my teaching career, I have been associated with hundreds of students ranging from grade one to twelve in China. Although there were similarities between students of the same age, they entered school along with diverse capabilities, knowledge, life experiences, and interests. Unfortunately, such differences of each student were almost invisible in schools that focus on norm-based criteria and a one-size-fits-all approach to education.

However, I had never imagined that this type of standardized education would be part of the Canadian landscape. As accountability movements sweep public education in North America, literacy curriculum is often narrowly recognized as a set of academic standards. These standards specify what children should learn and what content should be taught, and assess if students have learnt what was prescribed (White, 2011). This accountability context moves the focus away from following children's lead to following the lead of standards and test results in early childhood education (Kagan et al., 2006). The most obvious negative impacts of standards are that they are not always based on background of how children grow and learn, and often do not take into account children's needs, capacities, and unique characteristics (Strauss, 2014). Consequently, they constrain opportunities for children to engage learning in a diverse, multimodal, and technological

world, whiling pushing teachers to focus on test results. According to the Education, Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) website, "Student achievement results have always been considered key indicators of educational quality, and student scores on large-scale assessments are the subject of public interest" (EQAO, 2010).

In Ontario schools, literacy teaching and learning is an important focus, while literacy development lies at the heart of the elementary curriculum (Ministry of Education of Ontario, 2006). The provincial document indicates that literacy is based on skills such as listening and speaking, reading, writing, and viewing and representing, so that it is of great importance to effectively engage students and make sure they develop the set of 'literacy skills' and succeed in schools. Although the Ontario government is committed to enabling all students to reach their potential, every student is unique and each must have opportunities to achieve success based on his or her own interests, abilities, and goals (Ministry of Education of Ontario. 2010).

Thereby, this study discussed how a pedagogy of multiliteracies in a Grade One classroom created opportunities to support learning and communication in a dynamic and diverse environment. It also explored if the teacher and the children achieved what multiliteracies call for: "active participants in social change", "active designers", and "makers of social futures" (NLG, 1996, p. 64).

The purpose of this study was to explore an early-years educator's experience using multiliteracies pedagogy in an early literacy classroom in Ontario, Canada. The best approach to understanding an experience is by using a qualitative research design. A qualitative research lens allowed me to understand, think, and interpret the teacher's story and experience towards multiliteracies in early-years classroom in Ontario. A qualitative lens also provided me various sources of data to critically reflect and analyze the impact of a multiliteracies pedagogy on the diverse early-years students (Creswell, 2009). Moreover, I used a case study method to closely examine the relationship between multiliteracies and children's learning and development. This statement mirrors the idea of Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) who state that applying a case study method

allows researchers to present a comprehensive and thorough description of the problem, and provide a unique example of real people in real situations.

In order to closely understand the teacher's experience, thoughts, and feelings about multiliteracies, I undertook qualitative data collection with a variety of data sources. Specifically, I conducted two times of in-depth interviews with the teacher. The first interview happened in early of March, and the second follow-up interview happened in the end of March. The data were also collected from many informal conversations and talks with the teacher, the artefacts of the teacher, as well as the personal narrative reflection the teacher wrote. The rich data sources connect Creswell (2007) who claims that gathering valid and detailed data involves a wide variety of information and materials.

1.5 The Organization of the Study

In chapter one, I provide a brief introduction to my study and depict my concerns about how to promote young children's literacy learning and development by attending to their diversity. Chapter two reviews the relevant bodies of research literature on what is known about multiliteracies and pedagogy. Chapter three describes the specifics of my study, its methodological underpinnings and methods. Chapter four presents the lived story I constructed with the participant. In chapter five, I discuss the findings and suggest some implications for educators, researchers, and policy makers to consider in the future.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

2.1 Overview

Prior to investigating what multiliteracies may bring into the early literacy classroom, and analyzing various data and artifacts collected from teacher, I had to identify and consolidate existing literature on multiliteracies. I first examined the sociocultural and technological influences in the twenty-first century that have promoted the theory of multiliteracies to represent the complexity, fluidity, and diversity in literacy learning and teaching (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; NLG, 1996). Then, I looked at the ideas of learning by design and learning through multimodal approaches to facilitate young children's learning and development (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008; Walsh, 2011). Next, I highlighted recent literature and research on a pedagogy of multiliteracies that focus on the role of agency in the meaning-making process, and how to create learning opportunities to accommodate students' diverse needs, interests, and experiences (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Jewitt, 2008). Then, I turned to a new assessment underpinned by a multiliteracies theoretical framework that focuses on what students possess instead of what they lack. This assets-based approach to assessment aims to optimize student agency in learning and development (Clark & Moss, 2011; Jacobs, 2013). Finally, I explored literature on multiliteracies that open up possibilities by drawing on children's diversities (Dyson, 1990; Hibbert, 2013; Kim, 2014a), as well as the importance of teacher's education in implementing multiliteracies pedagogy into practice (Ball, 2000).

To conduct the literature review, I used Western Library's Education Graduate Program Databases. I thoroughly examined about 50 journal articles and books related to early-years literacy, multiliteracies pedagogy, the notion of design, students' diversity, early-years assessment, as well as teacher education. I also reviewed reference lists from key scholars in the field to find possible additional sources. Specifically, I searched for words, phrases, themes, and concepts that explain the term multiliteracies and that would frame a mutual relationship between multiliteracies and students' diversity embedded in teaching

and learning. Fundamentally, the literature on multiliteracies lays the cornerstone of this study since it provided a rich textual account of multiliteracies and its pedagogy to be reviewed, understood, analyzed and interpreted. While not all reviewed studies identified the methodologies employed by the authors, it is obvious that this body of literature contains empirical studies that employed quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches, including ethnographies, case studies, narrative inquires, and experimental studies.

The literature review is divided into four sections, specifically including (1) the 'why' of multiliteracies: social and technological transformations; (2) the 'what' of multiliteracies: multimodality and learning by designs; (3) the 'how' of multiliteracies: a pedagogy of multiliteracies and new assessment; and (4) multiliteracies in use: valuing students' diversity and teachers' education.

2.2 The Why of Multiliteracies

In the twenty-first century, learners require an expanded definition of literacy and broader skills to support their activities in the new economy. They have to develop multiple skills in nonlinear environments using a range of tools (Cooper, et al. 2013). The change of learning needs have given impetus to redefining literacy as multiple literacies that stand for the complexity, fluidity, creativity, and diversity of learning and teaching in the 21st century (NLG, 1996). Thus, the concept of multiliteracies was coined as a way to respond to what it means to be literate in an ever-changing environment. Broadly, multiliteracies deal with multiple meaning making approaches, mass communication channels, cultural and linguistic diversity, as well as a wide variety of resources (Jewitt, 2008; NLG, 1996).

This section traces the conventional views about literacy and explains two critical reasons for the emergence of multiliteracies. Moreover, this section highlights the sociocultural and technological changes that make multiliteracies necessary to ensure education, especially early childhood education, addresses the evolving world today. Recent book chapters and journal articles obtained from my courses of the Master's program at Faculty of Education support my literature review in this section.

The changes to social, cultural, and private life constitute one of the most important factors in the development of multiliteracies. Historically, literacy emphasizes the value of communicating in daily life, which requires people to read and write certain symbols in particular settings and activities (Scribner, 1984). As such, schooling is seen as a place where people acquire literacy as an autonomous and monolithic set of skills or competencies to develop their cognitive skills and make them better citizens (Jewitt, 2008; Street, 2003). The idea of reading and writing words and sentences based on common rules and standardized usages is challenged by current social conditions of global capitalism, new demands on the workforce, changes in our public and private lives, and shifts in the communicational landscape (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

The traditional society in which people were destined to be submissive to authorities and workplaces is replaced by, or at least is in transition to an emerging 'knowledge society' (Street, 2003). Within this context, "value is increasingly located in the intangibles of human capacity, organizational flexibility, business processes, customer relationships, brand identity, social networks, technological know-how, product aesthetics and service values" (Kalantzis & Cope, 2010, p. 201). Along with the effects of globalization, and ever-increasing multiculturalism and multilingualism, literacy in these changing times is no longer seen as a single, separate, static, and fixed set of language skills. A new understanding of literacy is reflected in one of the foundational papers written by the New London Group (NLG) in 1996. In their A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures, the NLG (1996) created the word 'multiliteracies' to recognize the idea of textual multiplicity instead of conventional bounding by a set of decoding and encoding skills required for reading and writing. NLG (1996) uses the term multiliteracies to address the realities of increasing local diversity and global connectedness in the context of the changing social and changing communicative landscapes, saying "dealing with linguistic differences and cultural differences has now become central to the pragmatics of our working, civic, and private lives" (p. 64).

Increasingly, there is considerable agreement among many researchers and educators in the literacy field about endorsing the idea of multiliteracies. For example, Gee (1996) believes that "there are many different sorts of literacies, and many literacies connected

in complex ways with different discourses" (p. viii). Kalantzis, Cope, and Fehring (2002) assert that literacies are multiple: they address the changes of an ever-increasing diversity of culture and language, while "shaping the way in which meaning is created and exchanged, and they are generating a dynamic plurality of texts" (p. 2). Rather, meaning making is influenced by linguistic and cultural differences and by the uses of a range of symbolic conventions, moving from one context to another and from one culture to another (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). The changing society requires a new educational response in which learning is not encapsulated in the old basics of the 'three Rs'— reading, writing and arithmetic (Kalantzis and Cope, 2008). Instead, the key challenge is to move beyond linguistic boundaries to multiple and multimodal texts, and connect to wide range of the culturally and linguistically diverse contexts in contemporary education (Jewitt, 2008). Therefore, being literate nowadays requires multiple languages, multiple meaning making skills, and multiple communication approaches. For this reason, many researchers believe that the multiliteracies framework not only supplements traditional rules of literacy learning and development but also enriches the various existing teaching practices and pedagogies (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008; NLG, 1996).

The second reason that explains the need for implementing multiliteracies, especially for young learners, is due to the digital technology revolution. As adults, we may struggle with the power of ever-expanding digital technologies and media that assist the flow of information in daily life; however, for "young children born into this technological epoch, there may be no choice, it is simply a way of being" (McTavish, 2014, p. 320).

Undoubtedly, there have been dramatic expansions of digital technologies in the twenty first century, and they have inevitably changed nearly every aspect of people's lives and influenced the way people study, work, communicate, entertain, and socialize (NLG, 1996; Walsh, 2013). The shifts have seductively promoted new types of digital and media texts that can engage children's interest, and encourage their learning potential (Razfar & Gutiérrez, 2013). This important and powerful role of technology can "destabilize the functions, uses, values and meanings of literacy anywhere" (Street, 2006, p. 6). As the second major aspect shaping the way both educators and learners think about literacy

proposed by NLG (1996), digital technologies mediate how both the word and the world are presented to young learners.

In addition to print literacy, there is a growing appreciation that literacy now can hardly be separated from the widespread use of screen-based texts and interactive digital media. For example, Kress (2006) argues that literacy is no longer isolated from a vast array of social, technological, and economic influences, and he points that the medium of contemporary literacy practices has been switched from a centuries-long dominance of print texts to the increasingly popular use of screen. This insight mirrors the stance of Street, Pahl and Rowsell (2009), who claim that the screen-based texts and contemporary communications are rapidly superseding print literacies with complex digital literacies in the field of early literacy learning and teaching.

Obviously, meaning making in a multimedia world requires a variety of text forms integrated with information and technologies. Increasingly, researchers argue that various timely modes and electronic affordances can be utilized to scaffold learning in an era of digital technology. For instance, Walsh (2011) argues that digital versions of texts may make reading more appealing and engaging for students because on-screen reading incorporates multisensory activities such as searching, viewing, drawing, and navigating. Also, according to Gillen and Hall (2013), literacy practices nowadays are necessarily associated with technology. They suggest that many children often utilize technologies that are part of their environments when playing and learning. Though the patterns of interaction with technologies vary from child to child, "children are developing a wide range of skills, knowledge and understanding in their use" (p. 13). This is discussed further in Rowe's (2013) study of preschoolers as writers. She finds young authors can always find ways to integrate digital communication and composing tools into their writing at school. Thanks to the affordance of computer and Internet young authors can have a medium to connect their literacy acquisition with interests, and social interactions.

The new understandings have motivated researchers to reflect on how information and communication technology (ICT) has become integral to the literacy experience and how young learners can benefit from digital tools. For instance, Walsh (2011) shows a number

of examples of children's different learning habits caused by the availability and affordance of technologies found at home. She suggests that classroom contexts need to acknowledge these changes, and teachers need to develop pedagogies that include digital technologies to meet changing curriculum objectives and assessment requirements.

There is compelling research evidence indicating that young children's learning and development can be enhanced when they engage in multiple literacies involving digital technologies. For example, Flewitt, Messer and Kucirkova (2014) investigated the effectiveness of using iPads to create rich combinations of symbolic representations and diverse set of texts so as to extend opportunities for early literacy learning. Their study found that the "combination of immediate feedback with tangible and satisfying end products motivated children to engage with and commit to digital-based literacy activities, and to be drawn to them like bees to a honeypot" (p. 11). Similarly, Lynch and Redpath (2014) analyzed the use of smart technologies to support literacy learning and teaching in an Australian school; they found that the portability, the 'touch' interface, and the simple navigation system of personal portable computers can support independent learning activities that "involve students' production and communication of knowledge, positioning the learner as a producer, an active community member and, at times, a teacher" (p. 169).

Today's young children are learning differently and diversely as technologies become increasingly embedded in everyday life. When both students and educators are surrounded by digital technologies and media content in and beyond school settings, "their identities, group affiliations, and fan identities are highly mediated through those popularly available media outlets" (Razfar & Gutiérrez, 2013). A number of researchers are devoting their efforts to inspire educators to understand the nature of the changes in literacy and its practices; they demonstrate how the shifts in communication require literacy pedagogy that accounts for multimodal texts and multimedia technologies (e.g., Comber, 2013; NLG, 1996).

2.3 The What of Multiliteracies

Central to multiliteracies are the complexity of meaning making where texts and resources are multimodal, and the proliferation where meaning makers are active "re-makers of signs and transformers of meaning" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 173). Highlighted by Jewitt (2008), multimodality concerns plurality of text forms and changing social and semiotic landscape: "meanings are made through many representational and communicational resources" (p. 246). While the notion of design has emerged in response to the active and transformative meaning making process in which educators and learners are enthusiastic, creative, and devoted designers (NLG, 1996). In this section, the discussion is organized by themes of multimodality and learning by design, drawing on a range of examples of multimodal research as well as studies on concept of design. Resources for this section are mainly from reading materials from my Master's courses.

Multimodality is hardly a new concept, but due to technologies and diverse culture, it has become more visible to educators (Kim, 2014a; Rowsell, 2013; Stooke, 2010). As discussed previously, contemporary literacy inevitably encompasses socially interactive meaning representations where texts are produced and understood in multiple forms and through a variety of modes to response to changing environments. Consider, for instance, word-processing, mind-map, desktop publishing, multimedia presentations, and various Apps. These modes, according to Luke (2000), take into account not only how meanings are made through combinations of diverse modes, including linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, and spatial, but also emphasize a vast array of social, cultural, economic, and community factors. This idea echoes Kalantzis and Cope (2008) who state that meaning making under the influence of technologies is growingly being made multimodal in which "written linguistic modes of meaning are part and parcel of visual, audio and spatial patterns of meaning" (p. 197).

It is increasingly recognized that early-years literacy learning and teaching is now inescapably multimodal, requiring the integration of texts with not only language but image, gesture, movement, music, speech and sound (Hall, 2013; Jewitt & Kress, 2003).

Moreover, Flewitt (2013) explains that in an increasingly complex technological world, childhood literacy learning is constructed with the use of both print and digital media. Digital media requires interpretation through multiple modes of approaches, such as combinations of spoken and written language, images, icons, sounds, layout and animation. This communicational modality is a "fusion of meaning and form" (Jewitt & Kress, 2003, p. 10), and takes into consideration the communicator's environment as well as the "perception of the audience and what he or she imagines they want" (p. 12).

Ongoing debates and research have elaborated on the multimodal ways in which meanings are made in different semiotic resources. Social network sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and online blogs, are key areas of multimodal communication in students' everyday life (e.g., Kalantzis & Cope, 2008; Rowsell, 2013). Early literacy is also no longer bounded by the ability of reading and writing print-based text (Comber, 2013). Young readers and writers are required to simultaneously deal with different modes of text, image, sound and gesture in visual, media, or digital texts. For example, in Rowe's (2013) study on recent trends in research on young children's authoring, she points out that early childhood authoring has moved beyond the conventional field of print literacy to technologies and broader semiotic notions of multimodal meaning making, and sociocultural practices. Literacy nowadays encompasses communication, comprehension, the capacity to analyze text critically, and the skills needed to understand communications technologies, video, television, and new media, as well as the ability to use a wide range of information to function in daily life (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2005, cited in Stooke, 2010, p.10).

Considerable evidence has shown that multimodality is of great significance in current early childhood education within the changing communicative environments. For instance, Walsh (2011) took a mixed-method and multiple case studies approach to explore current diversifying educational landscapes, illustrating specific examples of ways in which teachers and young learners are engaged in multimodal literacy learning. The findings confirm the conceptualization of multimodal literacy and demonstrate diverse literacy practices. Also, Flewitt (2013) reviewed recent studies of early year literacy that adopt a multimodal approach and provided examples of how multimodal

perspectives can facilitate early literacy learning. The research shows that the changes from print-based literacy to multiple literacies through combinations of diverse modes can lead to valuing young children's cultural and linguistic experiences and their uses of variety of symbolic conventions in early years education. As a result, early literacy researchers demand both policy makers and practitioners to acknowledge the rapid changes taking place in terms of meaning making and symbolic representation. They argue early years educators should be able to represent their knowledge in an equally diverse manner, navigate vast amounts of information, and extend their repertoire of literacy practices to support learning with different forms of textual, graphic, linguistic, gestural, technological, and symbolic languages (e.g., Flewitt, 2013; Hall, 2013)

Learning by design is another central emphasis in multiliteracies theory. The multiliteracies notion privileges the concept of design, arguing classroom learning needs to be purposefully organized around a much wider concept of communicative practice and representation than what was currently presented to students (Street et al., 2009). Multiliteracies certainly supports traditional skills such as reading and writing in any form, but NLG (1996) believes school curriculum and classroom pedagogy should be wisely designed to address diversity through the transformation but not the assimilation or integration of the individual learners. Such ability of designing also allows students to be active designers to think, reason, and manifest critically in learning processes, and to be able "to design their own futures" (Westby, 2010, p. 66).

The multiliteracies framework focuses on designs of meaning making (Kalantzis et al., 2002). The designs involve all identities of meaning makers, and meaning-making modalities that are inclusive of the diverse needs and ways of understanding. Through designing process that encourages imagination, vision, and problem solving, individuals experience, conceptualize, analyze, and engage in learning (Kalantzis & Cope, 2010). Jewitt and Kress (2003) state that as active designers, students "use the resources that are available to them in the specific socio-cultural environments in which they act to create signs, and in using them, they change these resources" (p. 10). Researchers express that learning by design serves as a professional provocation: thoughtful and premeditated learning design opens up possibilities to conform to students' diverse needs and interests,

promote belonging and learner transformation (e.g., Burrows, 2010; Kalantzis & Cope, 2008).

Typically, NLG divides design into three components: the designed, designing, and the redesigned. According to Cope and Kalantzis (2009), 'the designed' also refers to available designs. It also involves various discourses, including the well-known linguistic organizational structure, meaning making resources, and syntactic patterns associated with a variety of narrative and expository genres, and comparatively less-known visual, computer, or media literacy (Westby, 2010). These available designs require educators and students to develop metalanguage to understand and express explicitly the differences between texts, and relate these to the contexts of culture and situation in which they seem to work (NLG, 1996).

Secondly, Cope and Kalantzis (2009) see 'Designing' as "the act of doing something with Available Designs in representing the world" (p. 176). It is a connection between past and new experiences through oral, written, visual, audio, gestural, spatial, and other multimodal patterns that relate to meaning making. The design symbolizes a transforming process, "remaking the world by representing the world afresh" (p. 167). Cope and Kalantzis (2009) believe the 'Redesigned' is the outcome of 'Designing'. One person's designing becomes a resource for another person's Available Designs. They argue this circulation of designing process or the transformational process is the essence of learning. As noted by Westby (2010) "students take available designs, interpret them, and then transform them for their own purposes" (p. 67).

Research on multiliteracies further highlights the importance of purposefully designing learning to engage teachers' thinking, viewing, and reflecting their teaching, in the meantime, to encourage students as confident agents in their learning (e.g., Burrows, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). For example, Kalantzis and Cope (2010) illustrate how the learning by design project creates new environments for teachers and students to make meaningful choices about what and how they learn to achieve new higher standards of performance. In their research, they clearly define teachers as designers of learning environments for engaging students, rather than curriculum follower and textbook

instructor. They also argue that teachers should design learning experiences that allow learners to take more responsibility for their learning. Teachers also need to design meaningful assessment approaches to track "progress all the time to make sure their teaching is right for each learner's needs" (p. 204). Jewitt (2008) argues that when learning happens by design, educators can conceptualize the relationships between modes, pedagogy, curriculum and context, and provide a more flexible and dynamic frame that responds to the interests of meaning makers and the demands of the context. This idea connects to Burrows (2010) who finds that learning by design is a pedagogical typology, which "suggests the impetus for deep learning lies in teachers carefully choosing, orchestrating, sequencing activities into a coherent pedagogical design" (p. 294).

Digital openness, multimodal fluidity, and intrinsic e-learning environments not only create a dynamic resource for teachers as designers to plan, deliver, revise, reflect, and improve their work, but also allow individual students to be more active producers of hybrid texts instead of being passive recipients of information. Therefore, it is of great importance for teachers to be able to purposefully design learning opportunities in their own contexts so as to recognize and harness individual potential. This designing capability can help learners develop metalanguage to actively participate in learning and development (Comber, 2013; NLG, 1996).

2.4 The How of Multiliteracies

Research on multiliteracies has inspired educators to purposefully create engaging and supportive environments with rich opportunities for students to actively explore various texts and become fully engaged in a variety of literacies (e.g., NLG, 1996). This conceptualization highlights a pedagogy of multiliteracies that responses to how learning can be meaningfully designed for "a process of self-recreation" (Cope & Klantzis, 2009, p. 184). Such transformative pedagogy requires a different way of thinking about assessment approaches that can also provide students with abundant opportunities to become active meaning makers. In this section, I included literature on how learning is encouraged by a pedagogy of multiliteracies, and multimodal approaches to assessment.

The multiliteracies pedagogical framework outlines useful principles to design opportunities to support learners to become active meaning makers. Changing literacies and technologies brings enormous opportunities and possibilities to learning, teaching and everyday classroom practices across the educational settings. This change in pedagogy must address students' interests, needs, personality, identity differences, culture and language diversities, as well as funds of knowledge are becoming ever more accentuated (Moje & Luke, 2009). Thus, current educational curricula and pedagogical practices need to be reconceptualized to encompass the multilingual, multimodal, and multiliterate practices that students face in and beyond the classroom (Gee, 2000).

NLG (1996) defines multiliteracies pedagogy as "a different kind of pedagogy, one in which language and other modes of meaning are dynamic representational resources, constantly being remade by their users as they work to achieve their various cultural purposes" (p. 64). This argument resonates with Cooper et al. (2013) who argue that within the framework of multiliteracies pedagogy, learners are supported through a pedagogy that provides them with rich opportunities to be able to multimodally examine diverse information source and content, to critically explore the information, and to become active meaning-makers and effective communicators.

Research on multiliteracies highlight the importance of engaging students with multiliteracies pedagogy because it is creative, productive, constructive, and most importantly, transformative (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; NLG, 1996). The pedagogy of multiliteracies pedagogy includes four dimensions that were originally called situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed practice.

The first dimension, situated practice, means that teachers engage students in learning by drawing on their experiences and connecting learning with what they already know (NLG, 1996). By valuing students' knowledge, interests, and relationships developed outside school settings, teachers create opportunities for students to share and expand upon them in the learning process. The second dimension, overt instruction, means that teachers facilitate students' development of metalanguage in direct and explicit lessons (NLG, 1996). Through overt instruction, educators provide strategies to encourage

students take ownership of their learning. Third, critical framing means that teachers help students to recognize the contexts of their learning, and relate what they learn to broader contexts so as to develop their critical thinking ability. Finally, the fourth dimension, transformed practice, refers to the expansion and re-creation in process of learning and teaching. In this dimension, learners are encouraged to creatively apply what they learned into practice. By taking meaning out of one context and adapting it to other contexts, students are redesigning and expanding knowledge.

Drawing from Jewitt (2008), the sequence of multiliteracies pedagogy is not necessarily linear, but it always starts from students and their experience. In their recent research, Cope and Kalantzis (2009) further examine the knowledge process using the four components of multiliteracies pedagogy. They prioritize the connection and transformation between experiencing the known to conceptualizing the new, suggesting that a pedagogy of multiliteracies recognizes both teacher and student agency in meaning-making process. Initiating from students' experiences that are meaningful to them, teachers design strategies purposefully and appropriately to engage their students in various modes of meaning making, and thus scaffold student learning. Cope and Kalantzis (2009) point out that this new transformative pedagogy encourages varied perspectives, experiences, interests, knowledge, modalities, and divergent learning orientations; it seeks to value differences and "those who do not fit the norm" (p. 188).

The usefulness of the pedagogy of multiliteracies has been found in many research undertakings that deal with students' cultural and linguistic diversities, students with language impairments and special needs, new approaches to literacy teaching and learning, and ESL learning. Some examples of research on multimodality and multiliteracies in early-years learning are discussed below. For instance, Stein (2003) conducted a literacy project called 'Olifantsvlei Fresh Stories' for young children in grade one and two. In the study, students were associated with multimodal literacy practices and opportunities fostered by situated practices. In the project, children managed to represent doll figures through actively seeking, contextualizing, and transforming a wide variety of semiotic resources in their local context. Stein describes the relationship between multimodality, creativity, materiality, and identity within

different contexts of meaning making. As a result of engaging in situated practice, young learners turned to be active learners and designers of their own literacy learning and exploring.

A case study conducted by Giampapa (2010) also explains a multiliteracies pedagogy that draws on the linguistic and cultural forms of capital and identities of young children. The research illustrates how multiliteracies pedagogy creates opportunities to capitalize on students' diverse resources, and how students carve out interpersonal spaces and assert their identities, sometimes beyond a teacher's expectation. Through multiliteracies pedagogy, young children can be encouraged to take ownership of their studies to engage with multimodal texts, to construct multilayer knowledge, to build up different skills, most importantly, to become active learners. In the meantime, early years educators are challenged to design and negotiate teaching content in their own contexts so as to recognize and harness individual learners' agencies and their attributes in learning (Cooper et al., 2013).

Similar to what multiliteracies pedagogy emphasizes to a teacher, an active designer of learning and teaching with openness to differences, change, and innovation, new approaches to assessment begin from what children have, seeking what children can do or locating their assets rather than deficits to support their agency through multimodal approaches (Clark, 2001). As discussed before, conventional mono-literacy is placed in a system of rules and standards, while the formal, text-based assessments strive for results of transmission of disciplinary or prescribed knowledge rather than young learners' unique personality in their own ways (Kagan, 2003). The standardized teaching, learning, and assessing leads to children as passive receptacles of knowledge, opening up few opportunities for them to explore the world (Strauss, 2014).

Many researchers suggest that within the norm-referenced and standardized environment, students' agency, imagination, creativity, and unique characteristics are relentlessly ignored, while their learning is statistically monitored and quantified with few opportunities to explore their potential in real life contexts (e.g., Dennis-, Reuter & Simpson, 2013). Similar to the call for changing printed-based, mono-literacy to

multiliteracies, a demand for multiple methods of gathering information in an ongoing process has won support. For example, White (2011) utilizes 'dialogic approach' to invite early childhood educators to engage in dialogues of uncertainty with their young learners, caregivers and local community to "generate truths that are less concerned with outcomes than an appreciation of others through polyphonic means" (p. 49). This dialogism enables educators to deeply recognize and appreciate young learners' powerful agency through their multimodal approaches of making sense of the world. Also, the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (2008) described leaning and development as complex and dynamic, so that "the most effective assessment procedures are characterized by a combination of methods and sources of information" (p. 9). Therefore, evaluation for early childhood education is to understand children from different perspectives, which should be based on the continual process of seeking and interpreting evidence about their learning and development through observations, dialogues, interviews, discussions, documentations, and meaningful activities (Blandford & Knowles, 2012). The continuous process of multimodally collecting information about students' making sense of the world requires teachers to play not only as educators, but also observers, partners, listeners, designers, interpreters, and friends. Such mode of assessment, according to Kagan (2003), that directly leads to improvement for teaching, promotes children's learning development, and is "needed as a part of any quality early care and education program" (p. 117).

Further, some researchers view assessment practices in early childhood education as a co-constructing and co-authoring process that involves the students in self-assessment, encouraging them to discuss their own learning and development (e.g., Blandford & Knowles, 2012). When educators support students to become active participants who are able to collaborate in decision making in their learning context, both educators and students can obtain a sense of belonging and satisfaction as they find a place for their ideas and strengths (Council of Ministers of Education Canada, 2014). Similarly, Hlebowitsch (2012) argues that by understanding Schwab's (1969) "idea of personalized or differentiated teaching that accounts for different learning strengths and that recognizes different profiles of individual potential and capacity" (p. 4), teachers can

utilize diverse resources, multiple strategies, dynamic assignments, and various assessments to scaffold individual students' learning and development. This argument resonates with Clark and Moss (2011) who use the Mosaic way of getting to know early years children better by listening to their visual, verbal even silent voices. They find that young children are so capable that they can demonstrate their skills and competencies through dialogues, conferences, discussions, and negotiations. The information gathered from different modes and resources serve as a springboard for caregivers to conduct more in-depth reflection, interpretation, evaluation, and construction for children's meaning making progress. Clark and Moss (2011) contend that "listening to young children has the potential to be both used as an evaluative tool and to become embedded into early years practice" (p. 12).

New approaches to assessment in early childhood education focus on supporting students' agency, assets, and diverse needs rather than detecting their deficits or aligning with standards. These approaches comply with multiliteracies' call for educators and students to be active participants in social change, active designers of teaching and learning, active makers of social futures (NLG, 1996).

2.5 Multiliteracies in Use

The New London Group (1996) argue that schools must shift from functioning in assimilation and homogeneity to reconfiguration and capitalization on students' diversities. Diversity here is not only concerned with the multiple layers of identities that learners developed in their private lives but also with "the different subjectivities-interests, intentions, commitments, and purposes-students bring to learning" (NLG. 1996, p. 72). Rather than an attempt to ignore and erase the different subjectivities, multiliteracies perspectives envision the connection and transformation between school and beyond school life worlds - starting building knowledge from students' cultural and linguistic background, various lived experiences and multimodal repertoires (e.g., Cummins, 2001; Jewitt, 2008). This core aspect of multiliteracies calls for teacher education and professional programs to better prepare educators to teach diverse students

(Ball, 2000). In this section the importance of recognizing students' diversity and teacher education is emphasized.

Substantial bodies of scholarly and professional literature indicate students' diverse experiences and resources developed beyond school can be carefully recognized and purposefully harnessed. For instance, Hall (2013) comments that young pupils from diverse neighborhoods have rich funds of knowledge and community literacy practices. By tapping into early learners' local practices, accepting their lived experiences, and inviting their diverse knowledge and skills, educators can effectively engage them in literacy learning. This perspective explicitly resonates with Comber (2013) who suggests that with proper conditions and support, young learners' diverse language and life experiences can be utilized as productive resources for their learning in the early childhood classroom.

Multiliteracies and multimodal perspectives demand early childhood teachers take into account and draw on students' out of school experiences, interests, and knowledge to build classroom practices and scaffold learning (e.g., Flewitt, 2013). This 'difference as assets' rather than 'difference as deficit' model sees diversity as an opportunity, and helps educators "engage with and gain access to students' agency, cultural memory, and home and school learning within local contexts" (Jewitt, 2008, p. 255).

Researchers point out that students' literacy identity is represented by both his/her life and school context that are overlapping and dependent on each other (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Also, based on Cummins et al. (2005), students' knowledge and experience acquired outside school in informal settings play a critical role in shaping their identities and cognitive functioning. The process of identity negotiation is mutually complementary in classroom because when teachers value different identities of their students, they will find more opportunities to scaffold their learning and development accordingly.

There is a considerable body of research in favor of attending to children's diverse outside school interests and experience to motivate their scholastic pursuits. For example, a case study conducted by Dyson (1990) shows that early literacy learners can be purposefully supported by acknowledging and drawing upon different experiences and

resources children bring to their learning process. Dyson claims, “terms like meaningful and scaffolding can become meaningless if they do not allow us to see and allow space for the diverse intentions and resources of our children” (p. 17).

Similarly, Marsh (2006) observed how migrant young children actively develop school literacy skills through digital media that they are engaged with at home. The case study demonstrates that the connections between literacies developed at home and school are interactive and reciprocal. Through valuing the young learner’s literacy learning experience beyond school, this study suggests that literacy learning in twenty-first century is firmly underpinned by drawing on multi-layered relationships children developed from their life worlds, and scaffolding them in purposeful and engaging approaches. Such scaffolding according to Dyson (1990) comes from teachers who can purposefully design learning opportunities that connect to uniqueness of individual student.

More recently, in her narrative study, Hibbert (2013) argues that multiliteracies theories encourage teachers to construct and build classroom practices based on leaners’ knowledge, experiences, capabilities, and interests. By presenting a scenario of ‘learning is child’s play’, she suggests it is necessary for early-year educators to customize learning for young children.

How do educators understand the importance and address the challenge of capitalizing on students’ difference? According to Ball (2000), teacher educators should take theoretical frameworks that can prepare teachers to work effectively with diverse students into consideration. When developing teachers engage with theories and pedagogical approaches during their teacher education programs, they are more likely to apply them in practical teaching experiences. Drawing on Vygotsky’s sociocultural perspective regarding internalization, Ball (2000) conducted a study to examine the ways in which a teacher education program is designed to train primary and secondary school teachers and how teachers are enabled to teach literacy to diverse pupils. He commented that “the interpersonal encounters with advanced theory and principles that undergird effective

literacy teaching can lead to intrapersonal transformations in how prospective teachers envision, plan and eventually implement teaching strategies for students" (p. 253).

The importance of early-years teacher education connects to the work of Hall (2013) who explores the effectiveness of early-years literacy teaching and learning. Much attention is given to the ongoing professional development that guides early-years educators to creating their own solutions for raising children's literacy achievement. In particular, Hall (2013) argues that the quality of literacy teaching in the early years of schooling can be significantly enhanced through programs with research-based interventions for teacher professional development. In addition to professional learning, Hall regards teachers as learners who need to be aware of "the transformation of a self, aligned with the transformation of the practices engaged in and valued in local and wider communities of learners" (p. 537).

Multiliteracies pedagogy responds to the current emphasis on diversity and multiculturalism in education, which also calls for new teachers to employ appropriate pedagogies and modalities to recognize students' needs and design learning opportunities for them (Kalantzis & Cope, 2010). These new teachers should be educated in teacher education programs where they learn to promote "multiculturalism versus assimilation, nationalism, or instrumentalism" (Ball, 2000, p. 252). Although the importance of multiliteracies and multimodality has been officially recognized by many educational systems such as state curricula in Australia, South Africa, and Canada, "the implication of this work for teacher education is still emerging" (Jewitt, 2008, p. 261).

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Overview

As described in Chapter One, my own concern regarding how to value and take advantage of children's diversity in their school learning and development, as well as the passion of being a researcher in the field of early childhood education drove me to carry out this classroom-based study. My research intention guided me to situate the study in the paradigm of qualitative research. In particular, a qualitative case study served as a methodology of investigating a teacher's experience of enacting multiliteracies pedagogy into her literacy lessons. In this chapter I explain the research design and methodology of the study. I focus more attention to specific methods used during data collection and analysis. My discussion in this chapter also includes the selection of my research participants, ethical consideration, and trustworthiness of the study.

Since the purpose of this study was to gain a deep understanding of how an early childhood educator in Ontario implements multiliteracies theory into the classroom, the teacher's experience of using a pedagogy of multiliteracies in her early-years classroom was emphasized. The study mapped out specific learning opportunities the teacher designed by drawing on a multiliteracies pedagogy to accommodate the rich diversity of her students' experiences, interests, and intentions within a grade one classroom in Ontario, Canada. And, this classroom-based study demonstrated multiliteracies as a notion that supplements teacher's traditional classroom practices and supports young children's literacy development (Cope & Kalantzis (2009). It also fulfilled what NLG (1996) hope to achieve: "to make some sort of difference for real children in real classrooms" (p. 89).

It was also the intent of this study to investigate resources and support that the educator valued while implementing a pedagogy of multiliteracies in the classroom. By listening to and recording the voice and experience of frontline practitioner in the field of year childhood education, this study not only provideed some practical implications for other

early-years practitioners to draw on, but also revealed how policy makers can best support teachers in their daily implementation of a multiliteracies pedagogy.

This case study allowed me to closely investigate and understand the teacher's lived experience with diverse children, and gather multifaceted accounts of information in relation to multiliteracies pedagogy. It explored the following research questions:

1. Why is multiliteracies pedagogy important in the early-years classroom where children with diverse needs and experiences explore their learning and development multimodally?

2. In what ways do adopting a multiliteracies pedagogy create various learning opportunities for the teacher to draw on her students' diverse identities to encourage their learning and development in meaningful and creative ways?

3. What specific learning opportunities are created by the teacher through applying a multiliteracies pedagogy in the classroom?

4. What resources, materials, and support are needed, used, and valued when applying the multiliteracies pedagogy to design learning opportunities for diverse young students?

3.2 Qualitative Research and the Social Constructivism Paradigm

I chose to design this study following the principles of qualitative research and more specifically, the social constructivist paradigm. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) see qualitative research as:

> multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive naturalistic approach to its subject matter… qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use of and collection of a variety of empirical materials … that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives. (p. 2)

This definition reveals one of the most distinctive features of qualitative research that "forms around assumptions about interpretation and human action" (Clandinin, 2006, p. 4). As "a means of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2009, p. 4), qualitative research helped me to understand and interpret the experience of an early-years' teacher who enacts multiliteracies pedagogy in the classroom in Ontario, Canada.

In order to better understand the nature of qualitative research, it is necessary to identify the 'philosophical worldview' (Creswell, 2009) or 'paradigm' of inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) that influences the practice of the research and the methods selection. The social constructivist paradigm, according to Kim (2014), particularly tends to identify qualitative educational research, and provide "ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions for researchers to interpret the world" (p. 2). It also helps researchers explain why the methods chosen for the study best suit their research intentions (Creswell, 2009). Situated within the realm of qualitative research, social constructivism discovers individuals' subjective meanings of experiences in settings individual live and work (Creswell, 2009). Drawing from Kim (2014), the constructivist paradigm highlights the construction of meaning in social, cultural, and historical contexts so as to understand or interpret human experience. This meaning construction in context of social constructivism assumes that reality is socially constructed and that meanings can be interpreted in wide variety of ways. While the goal of social constructivism is " to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studies" (Creswell, 2009, p. 8), social constructivist theorists requires researchers to be actively involved in discovering meaning and understanding process rather than being isolated from it (Kim, 2014).

As a researcher, my broad intent for this study was making sense of the teacher's perspectives and experience on multiliteracies theory in an Ontario early-years setting, which fit into the constructivist paradigm. According to Spector-Mersel (2010), social constructivism conceives of reality as socially constructed, fluid, and multifaceted. Through the participant's story, we "gain a sense of continuity and identity, connect with others, learn our culture and adjust our behaviors" (p. 211). Following this ontology of

social constructivism, I examined the holistic nature of the participant's experience to bring together elements of cognition, emotion and motivation, locality and universality, and past, present and future (Spector-Mersel, 2010) to illustrate why and how the enactment of multiliteracies pedagogy could help with young children's literacy learning and development.

As discussed in Kim (2014), the social constructivist paradigm assumes the understanding of the meaning of human action is an interpretative process, and it "emphasizes the researcher's detachment from subjects and from the phenomenon under study" (p. 4). Based on this belief, I carefully considered the circumstances in which the stories are produced and carefully listened to what the participant says and does in the multiliteracies classroom. At the same time, I acknowledged that my personal, cultural, and historical experiences shape my interpretation of the teacher's views and experiences within a multiliteracies framework. This epistemology of social constructivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) provided me with a richer picture of my participant's experience.

Multiple views, events, and meanings were explored and interpreted through ongoing dialogues as the study progressed. Therefore, the paradigm framework of social constructivism guided my research purpose and consequently the data collection and analysis methods.

3.3 A Qualitative Case Study Methodology

As the purpose of this research was to gain a deep understanding to an early-years practitioner's experience with the enactment of multiliteracies pedagogy in the classroom in Ontario, I applied a qualitative case study to examine what Stake (2005) calls a bounded place, or a case, within a specific situation. According to Creswell (2007), a case study is a qualitative strategy in which researchers examine in depth a program, event, activity, or one or more individuals as case(s). Creswell (2007) also points out that the case is bounded by time and activity, and researchers need to collect detailed information over a period of time. Case study methodology enables both the researcher and the participants to investigate how and why questions (Yin, 1994). Using a variety of data sources, case study describes a picture of what is being studied in details.

The case study methodology enabled in-depth exploration of multiliteracies practices within the early-years classroom. In order to understand the early-years educator's lived experiences with multiliteracies and children's literacy learning, I used narrative analysis approach as a data analysis method to explore how multiliteracies create learning opportunities attending to children's diversity, and thus promoting their literacy learning and development.

Case studies typically can be applied to examine either a small group or a particular participant in order to find the details of the case and provide in-depth descriptions (Day Ashley, 2012). Researchers suggest that case studies can give the reader a clear picture about phenomena observed along with multiple sources of data in a specific situation (e.g., Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). Therefore, in my research, I focused on one teacher who implements a pedagogy of multiliteracies to create opportunities for young learners to develop their literacy, and provide readers with rich insights about what was happening in the classroom.

Applying a case study method allowed me to present a comprehensive and thorough description of the problem by using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Creswell, 2007). The case study method also provided me with an unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly. This portrayal of what it is like to be in a particular situation enabled me to catch the "close up reality of the participants' lived experiences of, thoughts about and feelings for a situation" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 254).

3.4 Participant Recruitment

Since the purpose of this study was to gain a deep and better understanding of how an early childhood educator implemented multiliteracies theory with literacy learning, the educator's experience of using a pedagogy of multiliteracies in Ontario was the top priority for selecting research participants. As Stake (1995) explains, the first criterion for choosing a case "should be to maximize what we can learn" (p. 4). Additionally, the participant was purposefully chosen based on the criteria that a pedagogy of multiliteracies was used to teach literacy regularly in the early years in Ontario, Canada.

Given my limited time and resources as an international student in Canada, I took convenience sampling to look for suitable participant. Jennifer (pseudonym), a master program student in multiliteracies, was interested in the study. She has been teaching for more than twenty years in Ontario. Before teaching early-years students, Jennifer had worked in a large public school with junior students for 11 years. At the time of this study, she taught 20 students in Grade One in Riverrun Public School (pseudonym).

At our first meeting at her school, I explained the purpose of my research; Afterwards, Jennifer agreed to participate in my research. Upon receiving the approval from both the Western university ethics office and the School Board where the participant worked for (see Appendix A), I handed out the Letter of Information and Consent (see Appendix B and C) to Jennifer. She signed the consent form with a clear understanding about what the research was about and what she would be asked to do during the research process. My participant then selected her pseudonym, Jennifer.

3.5 Data Collection

The educational context of this case study was Riverrun Public School (pseudonym), situated on the site of one of the oldest school sites in Ontario with a strong academic focus. According to Conhen et al. (2007), gathering the qualitative information involves a wide variety of data collection methods so as to provide readers a rich picture of the phenomena being studied. Therefore, the data collection sources in my research included many sources: one, in-depth interviews with the participant, transcriptions of audio recordings; two, artifacts such as the participant's multiliteracies literature review, her personal narrative reflection; and three, the Prezis the participant made. Data was collected after receiving ethics approval from Western Research Office and the School Board for which Jennifer worked.

In-depth Interviews

Because this study was qualitative in nature and sought to capture personal narratives, I used in-depth interviews as a method to collect information and provide a lens to better understand Jennifer's lived experience. Drawing from Cohen et al. (2007), the interview

is “a flexible tool for data collection, enabling multi-sensory channels to be used: verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard” (p. 349). Interviews enable the researcher and research participants to discuss their interpretations of the world, and “to express how they perceive situations from their own point of view” (p. 349). My research questions sought answers to why and how implementing a pedagogy of multiliteracies works for diverse young learners. Thus interviewing the teacher who enacted the pedagogy of multiliteracies helped me gather direct information bearing on the research objectives. In-depth interviews with open-ended questions helped me to understand Jennifer’s perspectives, beliefs, what she has experienced, and what she is experiencing. In-depth interview provides a way for a researcher to cross his or her own membrane of knowing, and to stand in other’s position to learn meaning and share significance (Mears, 2012). In this way, “in-depth interviews offer a path to discovery and greater understanding” (Mears, 2012, p. 171). During the interviews, I either took notes or used a voice recorder to keep a record of Jennifer’s responses. I was mindful of being an interested third party to listen to the participant’s story without being judgmental (Cohen et al., 2007).

As lived-experience was of utmost importance in my study, I conducted two in-depth interviews with Jennifer. The first face-to-face interview focused on Jennifer’s prior experiences with and current understandings of multiliteracies (see details in Appendix E). It included her Masters program learning experiences with multiliteracies that influenced her classroom practices, and current efforts to incorporate multiliteracies pedagogy into her classroom. Both interviews took place in her classroom and in the school library. Each interview lasted from 30 to 60 minutes, and was transcribed. The follow-up interview focused on successes and struggles with implementing multiliteracies pedagogy in her Grade One classrooms. For example, we discussed resources that were used previously, materials that are needed in the future, as well as her future teaching considerations. After the interview, Jennifer was invited to write her personal reflection on her multiliteracies beliefs and practices.

Artifacts

Except from interviews, data was also collected artifacts from the participant, including Jennifer's personal narrative, Prezis that Jennifer made to illustrate how multiliteracies work in her classroom, and a literature review she wrote about multiliteracies. Physical artifacts are another important source of data that help to verify other data sources and enhance the process of triangulation (Stake, 2005). These artifacts allowed me to understand the participant's beliefs and perspectives about multiliteracies. They also provided a richer picture of learning opportunities in the multiliteracies classroom. Using various data resources allowed me to provide more compelling and accurate results during the study (Yin, 1994).

With these data in hand, I also investigated the physical and social environments of Jenneifer's school and classroom. This allowed me to contextualize the environments in which the participant implements multiliteracies pedagogy to create learning opportunities for the children. I also explored some information about the students with which Jennifer worked. This gave me insight into the reason why the participant implements multiliteracies pedagogy. Additionally, I asked Jennifer about the curriculum she used in order to find out whether or not the curriculum influenced her enactment of multiliteracies pedagogy. Finally, I provided some general information about Jennifer herself so as to fully contextualize the data and "attend to the embodied nature of the protagonist" (Polkinghorne, 2006, p. 17).

Schwab's (1973) notion of commonplaces indicates that the teacher, learners, milieu, and subject matter interactively depend on each other. As described in chapter four, the interconnectedness of these four commonplaces helped frame the factors that influence her implementation of multiliteracies in the Grade One classroom to support children's learning and development.

The use of multiple data collection sources is of much significance in terms of research validity because "multiple methods and sources are often made use of to achieve in-depth understanding of cases through the triangulation of methods and sources to confirm emerging findings and to point to contradictions and tensions" (Day Ashley, 2012, p. 102). These multiple sources of data contributed to the objectivity and transparency of the

study, which in turn, allowed me to present a rich description of the participant's lived experience in a real world context (Robson, 2002).

3.6 Data Analysis

Qualitative researchers often use words in their analysis, make interpretations of the data, and construct stories about those they are studying (Clandinin, 2006). Qualitative data analysis is an iterative and reflexive process that begins as data are being collected rather than after data collection has ceased (Stake 1995). Thus, during this study, data collection and analysis were conducted simultaneously.

I began collecting data with what Cohen et al. (2007) describe as a 'wide-angle lens', and then, by sifting, sorting, reviewing, and reflecting on them, I organized the data with a focus on multiliteracies pedagogy. In order to organize, account for and explain the data, I noted patterns and themes from the extensive data collected through interviews, personal reflections, and other artifacts from the participant. Abiding by the principle of what Cohen et al. (2007) regard as 'fitness for purpose' I adopted open coding to "generate categories and define their properties and dimensions" (p. 561). I carefully transcribed the interviews and conversations, and examined the participant's personal narrative, literature review, and Prezis. Then, I labeled them with keywords and made notes for common categories. With my research questions in mind, I highlighted and circled repeated words and phrases in the transcripts, looking for possible themes.

In this process, I took a narrative analysis approach to "configure the diverse elements of data into a unified whole in which each element is connected to the central purpose of the action" (Polkinghorne, 2006, p. 11). There are different ways of analyzing narrative data and analytical processes, but an experience-centered one focuses more on meaning and understanding about the person and the situation (Bold, 2012). Polkinghorne (2006) states, a bounded system of study is a critical requirement for narrative analysis in qualitative research to reveal uniqueness of the individual case and provide an understanding of its particular complexity. As such, I concentrated on the participant's experience of enacting multiliteracies in her Grade One classroom. This enabled me to reflect upon and articulate themes that arose from the story to provide a more detailed

discussion of the meaning in the data (Bold, 2012). Then I contextualized the data in a fully "nested manner" (Iannacci, 2007, p. 60) so as to necessitate various factors that shape a participant's experiences within the study.

As described by Polkinghorne (2006), "narrative analysis is the procedure through which the researcher organizes the data elements into a coherent developmental account" (p. 15). To achieve this, I constantly reviewed, organized, and synthesized the data into a coherent explanation of how the participant applied multiliteracies in the class. During the analyzing process, I was mindful that "a narrative configuration is not merely a transcription of the thoughts and actions of the protagonist; it is a means of making sense and showing the significance of them" (Polkinghorne, 2006, p. 19). Thus, I engaged in understanding the participant's experience and identified key issues present in her story of practice. I then presented the story through my voice.

I shared the story with the participant and conducted a member check by requesting her feedback. This tactic reduced the possibility of misrepresenting participant, and at the same time allowed me to build the story with the participant collaboratively. This process assisted me as a researcher in learning and understanding the participant's experiences while inviting the participant to learn about herself (Keats, 2009).

According to Bold (2012), there is no single process to analyze and present narrative data so that the narrative analysis can start at any point within an iterative process. I collected data, synthesized, and analyzed them; then I generated further interview questions and conversations that were prompted from my data to better understand the participant's lived experience. Throughout this process, there was much sorting, re-reading, reordering, and resynthesizing of the texts. This retrospective analytic process helped me to "review the data for recurring themes of interest and relevance to the inquiries" (Bold, 2012, p. 121). Additionally, I took an analytic-interpretive approach to juxtapose different texts of the data. This approach enabled me to "reflect upon and articulate patterns themes, narrative threads, and tensions in the data" (Iannacci, 2007, p. 60).

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are of great importance throughout the whole research process (Stake, 1995). Before starting the research, the study was first submitted to the Western research ethics office to review. I was responsible for ensuring that the participant was well informed of the nature and scope of the study, and what she was supposed to do during the study before she consented to participate. After obtaining the ethics approval notice, I handed out the Letter of Information to the teacher and invited her to sign informed consent documents. I made sure that the participant's privacy and confidentiality were maintained. At no time will the participant's identity be revealed. The data I collected was kept confidentially under locked protection. Additionally, the transcripts of interviews were given to Jennifer to obtain her feedback and confirm the accuracy of the information. I ensured her that she has the right to change or delete any part of the transcript or her written work.

It was essential to ensure the participant felt comfortable sharing information regarding to the research questions. So I built rapport with Jennifer, being respectful and sensitive to her needs. I also made myself available to answer any questions relating to the research so that the participant was kept informed. During the data collection process, I kept the work visible by updating field notes from my interview transcription. Member checking was carried out in order to address the concern of misunderstanding data. I also remained open to suggestions to enhance fairness, relevance and validity.

3.8 Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of a qualitative study includes credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, which present that data are comprehensive and the findings are reliable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility is seen as the truth of the research, meaning if the interpretive stories described in chapter four accurately represent the participant's lived experiences. To establish a level of credibility I triangulated the data sources, conducted a member check, and devoted about four months in the site with the participant to carry out the research. Transferability refers to how readers can relate to my findings in their own contexts. As stated in Lincoln and Guba (1985) "transferability

depends upon the degree of fittingness ... so that anyone else interested in transferability has a base of information appropriate to the judgment" (p. 124). From this perspective, I provided clear and explicit accounts of participant's lived experience with multiliteracies so that readers can understand, interpret, and resonate with the results. In qualitative research, dependability is another entry when consider the quality of data collection and the viability of the results. It is measured by whether study results can be repeated, and the context can be clearly understood (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I provided a detailed and as accurate account of the data as possible to allow readers understand the story. However, as the results of this study were interpreted through my personal perspective, it is likely that different researchers and readers may have different interpretations. Finally, confirmability is defined as researcher's ability to avoid bias and establish reliability (Cohen, et al., 2007). I established confirmability through using the participant's voice wherever possible and being reflective when writing the report.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), all these criteria are important to establish trustworthiness to enable readers to understand the findings and trust the results being presented. As a researcher, I was mindful of this, establishing trustworthiness in a process of triangulation, member checking, reflexivity, and being transparent.

Chapter 4

Findings

4.1 Overview

In this chapter I present a story regarding my participant's enactment of multiliteracies pedagogy in her Grade One classroom. The findings responded to the research questions all from the teacher's vantage: why multiliteracies are important in early-years classroom, what and how learning opportunities are created by using a pedagogy of multiliteracies attending to young children's diverse backgrounds, and what resources and materials are used and needed when applying the multiliteracies pedagogy for young students.

The information presented in this chapter was constructed around four recurring themes as a result of interpreting and analyzing data. The four themes are listed as following:

- Understanding and experience of multiliteracies,
- Multiliteracies pedagogy created learning opportunities in the classroom,
- Use of multiliteracies to harness students' diversity, and
- Resources used and needed in integrating multiliteracies into the classroom.

As stated in chapter three, I took a narrative analyzing approach to deconstruct and reconstruct the participant's experience with multiliteracies pedagogy. I also triangulated the data from interviews, artifacts and personal reflections to promote trustworthiness. To contextualize the findings, I begin this chapter by describing the school, the classroom, the students, and the participant. In the next part I present the descriptions of Jennifer's experience and understanding of multiliteracies. Through exploring Jennifer's experience, I discovered why she implemented multiliteracies pedagogy into the Grade One classroom. This chapter also underscores the positive transformation brought by incorporating multiliteracies into Grade One teaching and learning, as well as the importance of teacher education. Following this, I describe the meaningful learning opportunities that resulted from Jennifer's application of multiliteracies pedagogy. The configuration of those opportunities indicated that Jennifer's integration of multiliteracies with her existing literacy practices motivated students to actively take ownership of their study. What followed for the rest of chapter four are the resources Jennifer utilized to

incorporate multiliteracies pedagogy and the supports she would need in the future. All data presented in this chapter was based on Jennifer's narrative accounts. Also, in this chapter, all students' names in Jennifer's story were in coded with pseudonyms.

4.2 Contextualizing the Field

Analyzing narrative data requires the researcher to not only include descriptions of the context, environment, and setting in which the participant develops his or her actions, but also be mindful of the importance of significant other people in affecting the actions and goals of the participant (Polkinghorne, 2006). Therefore, I present information about the school and the classroom setting in which the participant worked, and the children the participant directly worked with. Information was drawn from the school website and handbook, my visits to the classroom, and the transcripts from interviews.

The school

At the time of the study, Riverrun (pseudonym), an elementary public school, was part of a large school board in southwestern Ontario, serving students from Junior Kindergarten to Grade Eight (ages 3-14). According to the school website, developing students' problem solving capability was the goal of the school, and students were encouraged to utilize their prior knowledge, past experiences and newly obtained skills to achieve the goal as problem solvers. The school also put much emphasis on students' academic development, using assessment and evaluation to measure students' achievement and success.

According to Jennifer, the school mostly drew from local students in the largely upper middle class neighborhood. The school population was about 500. The overwhelming majority of the students were native English speakers with only a few of them coming from non-English speaking countries. The school did not provide ESL courses, as there were no students qualified for ESL support. The school employed 18 classroom teachers for Grade One to Grade Eight with student-teacher ratio of roughly 20 to 1 in primary level (Grade One to Grade Three), and 26 to 1 at the intermediate and junior level (Grades Four to Eight). Drawing from the school website, parents and caregivers were

warmly welcomed and invited to work as volunteers and support the educational and extra-curricular activities.

The classroom

Jennifer's Grade One classroom was bright and joyful with a clutter of papers, books, crayons, color pencils, and various materials for artwork. The whole classroom wall was well organized and cheerfully decorated with posters including anchor charts, one hundred's charts and various student resources that assist children with their work. Outside of her classroom there was a bulletin board called "Grade One." She referred to this place as a showcase of young children's learning and exploration. On the bulletin board, rubrics of children's learning and curriculum expectations were posted every week based on Jennifer's purposefully designed themes. Particularly, she rotated every child's work up on the board, showing students' progress and accomplishments weekly. This routine motivated these children to create and pursue their goals.

Immediately to the left of the entrance was a display center on the wall. It was occupied by students' writing and artwork. There were students' mailboxes right below the display center where each student put his or her folder in (see Figure 1 and 2). On the left side of the classroom, tables were filled with baskets of books sorted by reading level and subject, while on the right side there were ten workstations Jennifer purposefully designed for her young learners. Books organized by difficulty levels formed the basis of her reading programs. The teacher's desk mounted up in the right corner of the room with a computer that Jennifer used to create lessons, send feedback to parents, and access the Internet throughout the day. There was an overhead projector and a Smart board that she used to guide students' learning. There was also another computer beside her desk, which was mostly used by children during the workstation time. Jennifer had another round table, which was placed on in the back of the classroom. Four chairs were set around the table so that she can easily communicate with children during guided reading time.



Figure 1. A picture image of the students' mailbox and desk in Grade One classroom



Figure 2. A picture image of the display center in Grade One classroom

Directly behind her desk, against the wall, was a storage closet that hosted different teaching materials, books, and curricular documents. During our interview sessions, Jennifer indicated that she loved reading and learning, which provided her timely knowledge and inspirations to design meaningful activities, to modify instruction, and to accommodate children's diverse needs. In the middle of the classroom, there were neatly

displayed children's desks. The children each had a desk of their own. Jennifer usually had four to five desks pushed around to facilitate children's discussion and teamwork, but the seats of the children rotated regularly in order to support collaboration between different peers. In front of the classroom, there was a large carpet where children could sit comfortably during whole group learning. Jennifer used a tabletop whiteboard and a SMART board (see Figure 3) to provide visual support for instruction and scaffold for all lessons. The layout and the arrangement of the classroom were so flexible that all students could comfortably engage in their learning, and interact with their teacher and peers in either groups or individuals.



Figure 3. A picture image of the SMART Board and carpet area in Grade One classroom

The students

Jennifer's Grade One class had twenty students with fourteen boys and six girls, aged between five and seven. Jennifer enjoyed working with comparatively larger number of students as she could always brainstorm and get various responses from them. "With twenty, there is a flow of energy of movement in the lesson," she noted.

According to Jennifer in an interview, all students were Canadian, but each of them had quite different experiences, knowledge and skills, and had a variety of varied learning styles and capability in the area of literacy. Jennifer indicated that these students' abilities were broad, ranging from above ministry expectations of level four (students' achievement that excels the provincial standard) to needing additional educational assistance. According to Jennifer, those children who needed extra help were one to two years behind their peers.

Jennifer told me that as a request from school board, all students in her class had to take the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) twice a year. In September 2014, students had taken it once, but they were required to take another one in May in 2015. The DRA is a standardized reading test used to determine a student's instructional level in reading, which is a purely print based test. There were nine of them who did not meet the benchmark of DRA in September 2014, and they were identified as struggling with reading. Jennifer said she had to administer the DRA to those struggling readers throughout the year to make sure they were actually at that level.

4.3 The First Interview with Jennifer

According to Polkinghorne (2006), in addition to the outside context and environment, it is very important for researchers to "attend to the embodied nature of the protagonist" (p. 17), and concentrate on participant's inner self, such as his or her past experience, interests, purposes, plans, motivations, as well as struggles and emotional states in narrative analysis process. Therefore, in addition to contextualizing the environment in which Jennifer worked, I also synthesized the historical, and individual aspects of her experience so as to present "a unified story" (p. 20).

When I arrived at school at 8:20 A.M., Jennifer just finished an interview with a parent. She was dressed for interviews in a long sleeve shirt and black dress pants: "Today is an interview day," she said. When I settled down with my recording device, Jennifer began describing her responsibilities as well as the literacy programs at the school. As a full-time teacher, Jennifer had to coach literacy, mathematics, social studies, art, health, as

well as gym activities for 20 Grade One students and had about 184 minutes of duty in a 10 days cycle.

One of her responsibilities is maintaining ongoing communication with parents through class Dojo, text message, and class planner was one of her responsibilities in a school day, in addition to face-to-face interviews. She said, “I am a parent too, I know what’s going on between me and the class so daily communication helps facilitate a good school day to have that trio: kids, parents and me.” To her knowledge, parents have been happy with the literacy development of their children, which relieved some pressure from her. In an interview, she said, “I do have the pressure the parents want their kids to read, the school board wants kids to read by the end of grade one.” Thus, she was dedicated to helping educate parents on how to read with their children. She has given resources to parents in the class with their children who are struggling with literacy, and this has substantially helped them. She said “I brought parents in and I showed them working one to one how to effectively read with struggling reader and have supported them when they go home to read with their children.”

With more than twenty years of teaching experience, most of Jennifer’s teaching years was with junior students. She was recently working with Grade One students as she thought “it was time to experience something new.” Jennifer said her literacy program basically included guided reading, independent reading, read aloud, and journal writing. As one of her routines of the day, Jennifer said that she had to meet her young learners in small groups according to their reading proficiency, and worked with them accordingly in a guided reading program. She told me that during each group session, she must maintain a running record of each student so that she could consistently monitor their reading progress and move their reading level as soon as they were ready. According to Jennifer, the school board required primary teachers to do running records at least twice a week. She reported spending considerable time helping struggling readers. She used to guide the struggling readers every single day, but at the time of this study she met them three days a week because she found it was more effective when both students and teacher could have a break in between. Having had a daughter who struggled with reading in a French immersion school, Jennifer understood the important role of teachers in

promoting children's reading proficiency. Thus she was passionate to teach children how to improve their reading.

Jennifer then introduced her independent reading program to me. She said students were supposed to choose five books, including two 'at their levels', one below level book, one non-fiction, and one free book. Students could keep those books and switch them in about eight school days. This program was meant to build children's confidence, and practice their reading independence. It was a Friday morning, a prize day for the Grade One students. Jennifer pointed at two storage boxes that were full of toys and gadgets, saying, "If they can count 50 or 100 tally marks in their independent recording card, they can choose a prize in there." Jennifer referred the read aloud program as "a hook for literacy instruction", where she read a story for children, inspiring them to explore how exciting books were, and how much information was in there. It was an opportunity for young children to discuss literature, demonstrate reading strategies, make connections and inferences, identify the characteristics of the story, and learn problem-solving skills.

Jennifer reported that writing a journal was a Monday task for every young child after they engaged in some activities or spent a weekend with their families or friends outside school. She valued children's experiences beyond school, and wanted to learn what interests students when they write about their lives outside of school. She expressed in the interview, "You can see the progress happen through the journal, and it also transforms their practice because they should be able to bump it up". After writing, Jennifer said, young writers would be invited to stand on a small stage to share their stories with the entire class.

When I asked Jennifer about the programmatic curriculum that influences her literacy practices and pedagogy, she stood up and grabbed two books out of her book cabinet. They were the Ontario Curricula (for Grade one to Eight) for writing and reading. Interestingly, Jennifer said that she used to see them as the driver for the content and skills which must be taught to children at the school. However, after learning multiliteracies program, she began to regard the curriculum as a skeleton system of the body to guide people to move forward, and she believed in being consistent across the

province through the structured curriculum. However, Jennifer also indicated that there should be muscles and meat to support the skeleton system. She said proudly, "All my lessons are linking to the curriculum, but I also consider students' particular values and beliefs. What is relevant to them? What is motivating to a six year old? Find this out, and weave the curriculum into that, and the students are experiencing engaging and meaningful literacy."

She thought that structuring reading and writing curricula was important in providing the foundation for creating engaging and exciting lessons for students. At the same time, she said, "this skeleton foundation looks like to be grade one learners' curriculum but most of those are made by policy makers." To her knowledge, teachers are not sitting on the board to devise the curriculum. She thought it was usually people mostly have removed from the classroom for years, if not decades that were making policy. Thus, she called for teachers to take the reality of the class into consideration in every day's teaching and learning while following the curriculum.

4.4 Multiliteracies Learning Experiences

In our first interview, Jennifer told me that she was introduced to the term multiliteracies while completing her master's degree. Her decision to enroll in a masters program stemmed from her fascination with teaching reading and encouraging people to love reading. This inspired her, so she started searching online in Canada. She did not find any master program in literacy studies, but she found a prestige university that was offering a master program called multiliteracies:

> All I knew was that multi is made up from multiple so I thought, ok, I know there is oral, there is reading, and there is writing, and there is media. So I know those four, and I would like to learn more about that.

The program attracted her so she applied and was accepted. Jennifer expressed her thoughts about learning multiliteracies. She expressed both appreciation and challenge in studying the courses of multiliteracies program. Jennifer put the theories into practice right away, and connected it to the Grade One: "For example, when I was learning integrating digital technology into students' literacy learning, I tried it out. I did Prezis. We had animations, and we have done cartoons. They quite liked it."

During our conversations, Jennifer commented that the assigned readings on multiliteracies theories, interactive discussions with peers, writing assignments for each course, and reflecting on theories and practice in her master program helped her obtain a deep understanding of multiliteracies. Jennifer also indicated that the professional learning not only provided advanced theories and reflective experiences for her but also enriched her teaching practices. This interpersonal encounter with multiliteracies theory and principles led to intrapersonal transformations (Ball, 2000) in Jennifer's teaching. Thus, Jennifer appreciated studying multiliteracies, saying, "as a result of my multiliteracies course, I altered several aspects of the school day."

Drawing from Jennifer's literature review on multiliteracies for her master's course, I understood that as a grade one teacher, her goal was to provide an engaging curriculum for young learners. She also wanted to use multiliteracies to enrich her literacy programs. She hoped to use multiliteracies to nurture literate students who not only enjoy reading and writing but also being critical thinkers in both their personal life and global society. In the literature review, she wrote,

> Multiliteracies is a relatively new pedagogical approach to literacy instruction in a school setting. It is an educational practice by classroom teachers to create reflective critical thinking students for our 21st century global community. Learning about multiliteracies has confirmed my practices and pushed my pedagogy to an enriched student centered approach. While designing lessons, I consider, how to include visuals and technology, how to engage the students to value their perspective and interests, how I can make it relevant to their experiences, and meet the various levels of academic development in the class.

Jennifer argued that multiliteracies could be implemented as early as Full Day Kindergarten to scaffold young children's literacy learning and development because she agreed with the underpinnings of multiliteracies: educators and students are active learners, active designers, and active participants of social change in the twenty-first century (NLG, 1996). In an earlier interview, she commented that teachers would often ignore young learners' diverse identity with traditional literacy approach, but with multiliteracies, teachers could value their subjectivity and take advantage of their experience beyond school. She believed that by purposefully designing opportunities attending to young learners' interests and needs would motivate students to read and write without giving up what they found intriguing.

Jennifer expressed that one of the foundations of the Multiliteracies is to value students and what they bring into the classroom, something she had not done previously. She commented in the interview, "something that I redesign since I have started learning about multiliteracies is having them share with what they write in the journal (experience outside school), which I never did before learning multiliteracies." She used to regard the programmatic curriculum as her driving force, following every detail listed in it. She scarcely made connections with students' outside school life. Now through learning of multiliteracies as well as reading other literatures such as 'make it stick' and 'how children succeed', she realized that she has to always simulate students' new knowledge with previous knowledge and personal connections and work from there. She reflected in an interview on how to use the classroom information to connect to the curriculum and real world events:

> If we were going to talk about a book on playgrounds, when the children do playgrounds we would talk about the book. I would ask them, where is the playground you have been to? What does it look like? Can you describe what you see in the playground? And we would open up the book and we will talk extensively about the book. When you see the word 'climbers', that's a special unique word to that book, you are not expected to read that word but they can do the first few sounds fish lips or sound chunky monkey. As doing the picture work you will front-load your brain, drop those ideas into their heads, "yes, those are climbers, you have been on the climbers before." I have given those vocabularies to them in front ready to their short memory, then we go through the book extensively, and talk about all pictures and then we go back to the beginning and we get started to reading and use these strategies to find out where they are and guide them along the way.

Jennifer said that she had taught the Junior Grades for 15 years, which made she feel a bit uncertain at the beginning of accepting the Grade One position because she never formally taught any early-years child how to read and write. According to Jennifer, "in grades 4, 5, and 6, children knew how to read but grade one is a big deal as it is the biggest literacy continuum taking children from non-readers to readers in elementary school."

Jennifer expressed that in order to better equip her to face the new challenge of teaching early literacy, she consulted her mentor and colleagues from the Literacy Task Force. She had a diagnostic assessment to the Grade One students, investigating whether they know

the letters of alphabet, and whether they could make the sound. Then she found that some children really knew the letters of alphabet and can read well, but some just mimicked them without actually knowing the sounds they make that could help with their reading. "There is such a huge difference between kids can read and kids cannot read when completing a math question independently, the biggest challenge is how you get kids not reading to reading."

Learning with the multiliteracies program inspired Jennifer to learn and explore many strategies and tools for child to learn how to read, and read better. She incorporated the Beanie Babies strategy to help young readers read better. Young readers were encouraged to use the picture to understand the texts, use fish lips to sound out the words, Skippy Frogs to skip the word and hop back, and Chunky Monkey to look for sounds in the word that are similar. The little beanie babies were tactile and visual. Jennifer's used different sound effects to symbolize each beanie baby. Young learners were equipped with this toolbox during their reading time, and many of them found it helpful. However, it did not work for every struggling reader in the classroom. She realized that her graduate experiences with and understandings of multiliteracies, would serve her well in assisting struggling readers. An example she referred to was a child called Ron who was really having difficulty blending sounds. In an interview, Jennifer said:

> Ron is a unique case of my six years of teaching in Grade One. He can say 's', 'a', but really hard for him to say 'sa', 'sad', or 'sat'. After trying conventionally print-based methods to coach him, he was not blending but kept saying the single sound over and over again. So I take his arm and tap it, and I will say 's' with a tap and 'a' with another tap, and I say to him you know we want to hear this' sa', and I stroke in his arms. He has got that tactile information as well as the auditory one as well as the visual one of seeing the line completely blinded underneath the 'sa' in print. When he actually blended the sound 'sa' he could say 'sad', 'sat' as I put the resonant 't' and 'd', after it. So I find that the more multimodality I could bring into the lesson as long as it is not overloading his cognitive ability the more successful he can be. The biggest thing is to know what works for them. And kids are struggling all areas now they can read the math worksheet, they can read simple books, the simple social study instructions.

Jennifer also indicated in the interview that gestures, visual images, and sound effects were fun and effective instructional modalities in her Grade One reading sessions so it stimulated her thinking for the multimodality. She wove it throughout her literacy

lessons. For example, Jennifer used a gesture of punch to open hands with sounds to help children understand and remember important conjunction words such as first, next, then, and finally in writing. She also drew 'punches' underneath the texts so children could visually see that as they read. "It is something like a memory chip, or a clip of information." Realizing digital texts with images and sounds were helpful to guide children write personal narratives, Jennifer made Prezis, added music, and linked video to the instruction. This multimodality, as a key aspect of multiliteracies (NLG, 1996) not only engaged motivate grade one children learn to read and write, but also facilitated Jennifer in reaching more students interests and to understand them better.

Jennifer told me in the interview that it seemed children hardly had much writing practice in the new Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) program so that they were almost all below what they should be for writing. She thought it was a big jump for children from FDK to Grade One so she had to make it less pressure but more fun to motivate them to write. Taking journal writing as another example, Jennifer indicated some shifts brought by introducing multiliteracies into the journal writing process. She said that previously, children spoke about their weekend in groups prior to writing. Now through 'Mill to Music', they had to move, dance, and march around the classroom to music. When the music stopped, children were prompted to tell a person besides about his or her story happened during the weekend. She believed that during the process children enjoyed not only the challenge of quickly stopping their bodies mid movement but also the pleasure of sharing their stories to different friends randomly chosen by the music. Jennifer stated that when children started writing, they were also encouraged to draw pictures to symbolize what they would like to describe in the unlined space at the top of the page in their journals. The old static journal writing was blended with audio and gestural movement, and was enriched with speaking, listening, drawing, writing, and interpersonal communication. Jennifer believed that by consciously integrating multimodal texts in learning students' engagement would increase so she could reach more students in their zone of proximal development. She pointed out,

> Like today, during journal writing, I said, "if you want a sentence starter, sit on the carpet." Then everyone got left except one student, which was really cool. This is February, I mean this was not my class when they first came

> in see me. So now they do not even want to copy of the board they want to go off and write on their own. Like Liam who is really struggling to write a whole sentence, but today he said, "it is like some words are missing" when he read it himself. He said, "Oh, I forgot the word 'on' in there." There were some spelling errors in his journal, but as grade one teacher, as long as they can read their work, that is the goal. So you have not only got child start to read but write his own sentences.

Jennifer prioritized making connections between students' academic study with their interests and knowledge, as it is significant for the construction of literacies. In an earlier interview, Jennifer said she was supposed to value what the students were doing outside school and give them a stage to share their experience. She thought valuing what students knew and enjoyed doing outside school, and providing opportunities to share their stories could empower students.

Jennifer told me in the interview that respecting children's needs and interests through multiliteracies activities brought a sense of ownership to her Grade One students. She found the more opportunities she provided students to share and make connections to their outside school worlds, the more they could see the value of what they were learning. She said,

> What I m realizing this year is with multiliteracies I do not have to come up with all ideas by myself. I can present a concept or an idea and then they can elaborate on it, and they can bring their ideas to transform that practice. So I'm happy that they can come to me with their ideas like desk change, book creation. They are comfortable to come to me and say something like, "let us put it in this way, or can we change or try this?" It feels as they have an increased ownership on their behalf in the classroom. If they can take ownership of their learning that is really the goal to make them problem solvers, and to be critically literate.

The biggest idea Jennifer believed that she had learned from Multiliteracies program was to value the students' knowledge, needs, and interests, respecting their power as active learners to acquire different skills in the changing and increasingly diverse social environments. She said in the interview:

> So the multiliteracies that I'm learning in the Master program has also shifted my understanding of valuing more students as learners who need to feel the power of literacy first hand, and are powerful. I traditionally had all the power, I took it from them, saying you have to read this book, write this topic, do this study. Now, I try to find information from their home life and incorporate that into the school and give them as much choice in their literacy activities as possible. A good

> example of this year is the monsters they made out of construction paper during Halloween. When a student named Leon presented the three monsters he created at home, everyone in the class was impressed. In an effort to validate student voice and make increased connections between their interests and classroom activities, I provided time and space for all students to create monsters. I let them go and experiment with that so they feel empowered and come to school happy then they turned to be more available to learn. So you have to value their interests and give them the power so they can have some piece of day that they are in control of.

In her literature review, Jennifer regarded multiliteracies as an important supplemental approach to her Grade One classroom. It enriched her teaching practices, facilitated her literacy programs and encouraged young children to actively participate in their learning and exploring. In her literature review, Jennifer was optimistic of using multiliteracies to provide a variety of opportunities to motivate her young learners, especially those who struggled to read. She believed that making connection to students' prior knowledge, activating their agency and interests, and building from what they have was a key to their success. It seems that her Masters program in multiliteracies played a pivotal role in shifting Jennifer's teaching practices with multiliteracies.

4.5 Multiliteracies Learning Opportunities

Data presented in this section illustrate the rich learning opportunities for young learners in the Grade One classroom brought by the enactment of multiliteracies pedagogy. It responses to the research questions: In what ways does adopting a multiliteracies pedagogy create various learning opportunities for the teacher to draw on her students' diverse identities; and what are these specific learning opportunities? According to Jennifer in the interviews, the four components of multiliteracies pedagogy were interwoven in the Grade One classroom in their school day, which resulted in ongoing opportunities for students to enthusiastically engage in learning. She stated that multiliteracies creates an environment of authentic, engaging, and meaningful learning in which students naturally engage in different conversations, critical discussions, and shared literacy activities with enjoyment. She explained how components of multiliteracies pedagogy work for her literacy practices, and how they provide rich learning opportunities for young children.

Situated Practice

In both her literature review and some Prezis she made, Jennifer indicated that she valued what students do outside of school and wanted to learn what interests them. Journal writing was an essential way of connecting students outside school experience to classroom curriculum. She told me during the interview, when children wrote in their journal, she did not dictate what to write in their writing. She just allowed them to write about what interested them; she responded to, and commented on their entries, encouraging them to continue to develop their skills. Normally, she used overt instruction to create two or three sentence starters the children could use to help them begin their journals. "You can see the progress happen through the journal, and it also transforms their practice because they should be able to bump it up since the activity becomes internalized." Drawing from interviews with Jennifer, she said that quite often children stayed focus on a particular theme or topic that means something or are fun to them. She mentioned that when children engaged in their creation of story they were actively seeking words and expressions that could help them complete their writing. Through this recurring writing process, they gained new understandings and knowledge that they set out to explore. Jennifer showed me some students' journal writing delightedly. Some children just drew their stories, some wrote random letter, some even invented spellings to capture their ideas. Jennifer believed they were exploring and finding new territory. After each journal completion, Jennifer reported that she would encourage students to share their stories, comment on each other's work, and provide more information on the subject or story one shared with the intention of inspiring them to write more next time. She said in an interview,

> If it was just an audience of me it is not as powerful so I realized that using the situated practice to connect what happens in communities outside of school, they could transform their experience to literacy practice as they were building on their sentences. I realized that they need to share for more than just me as an audience but the whole the class as the audience.

Jennifer also described in her literature review, "I was pleasantly surprised that students were focused and energized when they listen to a peer read from their journal, and connect to each other's experience such as visiting a hotel with a water park. The

multiliteracies framework reminds teachers that literacy is about actively communicating."

In the interview, Jennifer also talked about how students loved sharing their stories from their journals. For example, they required to share all of their work in the end of the week instead of following what Jennifer proposed sharing only five in a week. They even remind Jennifer to let them share. She specifically exemplified two students' response to journal sharing, She said,

> Tarry said, "this is my best journal writing ever, I think you are going to laugh about what I wrote today." Someone like Ron, I held his journal back and said "you cannot share this until you bring back your guided reading book." He needs a lot of support at school to be successful and he is highly distracted. That was my hook because I knew all the kids are so motivated to share what they did on the weekend. Ron wanted to do that so he brought it back the following day and I let him share. When he was sharing, I was like 'wow' it was so great. And the kids reflected, and they said that was a full school journal. I was like "was it a full school journal? Let us talk about why it was." So we use his entry to discuss with the class the goals of a Monday morning journal entry. The literature was meaningful to Ron, and to the students to share what I'm looking for in the journal. The sentences begin differently, he did not repeat the same idea over and over again, and I could hear his voice of being excited in the activities he did.

New London Group (1996) argues that "to be relevant, learning processes need to recruit, rather than attempt to ignore and erase, the different subjectivities, interests, intentions, commitments, and purposes that students bring to learning" (p. 18). By implementing situated practice, a specific component of multiliteracies pedagogy that values the experience each student brings to classroom, Jennifer recognized the need for providing an open forum for students to share and discuss experiences and events that are meaningful to them. When students can bring their diverse knowledge, experiences and interests to the learning situation, it inspires active meaning makers and designers (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008).

Critical Framing

Jennifer reported that critical thinking and problem solving were two skills that she sought to foster in young learners. She said that multiliteracies pedagogy was not only interwoven throughout literacy programs and activities, it was also extended to math and

social studies. In an interview, she explained some examples of how a pedagogy of multiliteracies calls for students to step back from the text and critically think about its message. For example,

> During read aloud time, I read a story for them but I stop after a pivotal point of the story. I will ask them what they think it is going to happen next based on what is already happen. So they are making good inferences on what is occurring in the text. I wrote down what they said. I'm given a lot of answers, which does not take a lot of time but allows me to check for their understanding and ability to infer. They are making connections between what I'm reading with their thinking. We do that like a pattern as we go along with the story and I can identify who really understands the story and who is able to make higher connections. With the read aloud, I'm doing a modeling of higher level thinking that I want them to develop, especially the critical literacy component. Here during read aloud I connect with multiliteracies critical framing, interpreting and analyzing the texts, making it social, showing their ideas and thoughts, as well as evaluating other peers' perspectives. So we talk about why this folktale is so popular, what you think it is trying to teach us, what is the message here? As long as they can identity what the message is with evidence from the story and their understanding, it is valid. So I'm also teaching that in the guided reading program as the books get more difficult usually around level F there is more meaning in the literature and they can discuss what the author's message is, what the critical literacy component and I will explain to them the same thing I just mentioned. So we are bringing the social practice into that. Before, during, and after reading our class discusses the "big idea." As a group we wonder what the author's message is to the reader. In the classroom we have seven posters of potential messages from the author: acceptance, enjoyment, kindness, generosity, educational, courage, and perseverance. We also have a blank poster in case the class decides on a new message. For example, in the book "The Big Potato", the famer cannot pull out the big potato so he keeps trying and solicits more people in community to help pull over the big potato. Finally in the end everyone helps and they pull out the big potato. One student in the group thought it was kindness, the people are showing kindness and offering their help, which is true. While someone else like Cam thought it was perseverance because the farmer never give up, he kept trying to get the potato out. They are both equally valid and equally interesting from a critical literacy perspective, both of those are great examples of biggest idea in the story.

According to Jennifer in the interview, prior to the implementation of multiliteracies pedagogy, there were not many opportunities that students could fully exercise their agency in Grade One classroom prior to implementing a multiliteracies approach as she controlled the class most of the time. By the time of the study, however, she reported that

she had ensured various opportunities for students to initiate ideas, exercise power, and develop critical thinking across the curricula. She said,

> Yesterday we were talking about text Birthday Noodles and why it is important when you are making a recipe that you follow the steps. There was one child who felt it was not important and other child interjected saying it was important because it would not taste good if you did not follow what it said to do. We said that perhaps when you list ingredients it is not necessarily important if the ingredients come in order, but the actual steps have to come in order when you cook. So they are reading at the grade one level but they also engage in critically. When we were doing math and reading about 'Measuring Penny', I said wait a second, look at this image. Why do you think this picture is right, and why do you think this is wrong? They quickly identified the errors in the picture. They were saying "are they measuring how tall dogs are but one dog is standing up, one dog is sitting, the other dog is kind of couching over on his leg so that not right. So I realized critical framing does not just happen in the literacy block it happens throughout the day. That is also a cool component to multiliteracies in this classroom. We are actively engaging in the framework throughout the day.

As Cope and Kalantzis (2009) state, critical capacity is one of the most powerful aspects of learning. Reflected in Jennifer's Prezis and multiliteracies literature review, children in her classroom develop this kind of analyzing, reasoning, deducting, connecting, inferring, and evaluating ability throughout the curriculum. This also reflects Jennifer's active involvement in helping learners to "denaturalize and make strange again what they have learned and mastered" (NLG, 1996, p. 86).

Transformed Practice

In one of the Prezis that Jennifer made, she used an analogy of literacy as a movement to symbolize a continual exchange of information, knowledge, skills, and understanding within different contexts in multiliteracies. Jennifer stated that "the learner is not waiting to be taught, but rather is fully engaged in the movement of a variety of literacies in different situations." In one of the Prezis, She described,

> I try to connect more of what is occurring in the outside world with classroom expectations, and inspire students to apply what they learnt to the real world situations. An interesting example of this was the Prezi I created as a result of my brother's photos of a "Sunday Morning Squirrel" struggling to get a cup off of its head. The photos aroused heated discussions among students. For example, Cart said, "it can't breathe because it needs fresh air and it has the cup on its head."; Aide stated, "If I was a squirrel I would use the tree to scrape the cup off my head."; Nick said, "I think he's trying to scrape it on the ground

> because he can't get it off." Tarry said, "I think that someone littered and that's the reason the cup is on its head."; and Mark said, "it's kinda sad the way litter affects wild life. It reminds me of the way the plastic rings that hold cans together wrap around bird's necks or the way the whale in British Columbia got trapped in 100 meters of fishing net last week." Then I added a video as the students requested to see more examples of how pollution can harm animals. After the Prezi, students requested to create posters to educate others about the environment. They drew pictures and asked for more information on pollution. Several students who previously would only write their name, were motivated to write "no" and "no litr" on their posters. Recently, during independent reading, two students made connections between a video and a book that showed an image of a whale being caught in a net.

Jennifer thought it had been the most challenging shift in her early-years classroom to honor students' creative perspectives and out-of-expected designs, though she knew that transformed practice of multiliteracies inevitably involves creativity and innovation. She recalled an event that happened the other day in an interview,

> I can speak to a classroom example that we just did. It was our grade one Nunavut project. The kids created a group mind map. I demonstrated a mind map on the white board, how you place the main idea in the middle, and off to the sides are the supporting details such as landscapes, schools, and animals of Nunavut. When they went to their seats they just drew all their ideas everywhere, so their mind map resembled a big spider, and their ideas were definitely not organized in one area. I let them continue with it. They ended up creating a mind map that was more like a twenty-legged spider. It was not organized, and included colorful lines extending from the main idea of Nunavut but it was all very random. It was really difficult for me to see how that was a good mind map. So looking at this big, extra large mind map, like poster size board, I'm thinking that this is really disorganized, I think they need to redo it. But when I printed out some pictures of three main ideas of landscapes, schools, and animals of Nunavut so they can have that visual image to support their literacy. I realized maybe it was what I wanted to do. That was not the idea of multiliteracies approach, it was not valuing their perspectives as well, and just because I wanted the mind maps look better does not mean they would necessarily look better or be better from their perspective. So I printed off all pictures, let them choose which pictures they wanted to use, and they began to read their own words and cut out pictures to match those words. It is a very authentic activity where they were bumping up the quality of the poster without redesigning it just because I said to redesign it. They were very happy just to add those pictures. Then surprisingly, what I found is that they ended up adding more words. The students found the pictures that they liked, then they added the words on their poster just so they could then also add the pictures. My model was to have the students write three ideas for the landscape, three ideas for school and choose three animals to talk about, but what they created was a much better representation of their literacy abilities. This was the result of me honoring and valuing their

> perspective. And what is really going to be a big idea here, what is really going to help them learn about reading and pictures, and support to get them read their mind map? Although it stills looks very spider-ish, it is authentic to them. And it has a visual component of pictures and I feel that we are ready to move on now. You could feel the energy in the room from them, working from something that is already designed to redesigned. I originally wanted the redesign to be a re-do but this is not an authentic intention of multiliteracies. Sometimes it means just to transform it into something different. So instead of just words on the mind map, now they have a visual mind map. They did not have redo it like the teacher asked them to do it nice and neatly on the page. And really, for them to do that I'm probably only targeting about four kids in the class who are able to do that without support. Then I'm setting myself up for frustration because for them to redesign it is according to my parameters, it is not within their zone of proximal development because they show me their own proximal development with that spider mind map as example. We were all so proud, we put them on the bulletin board and we are going to move onto the next step from there.

Jennifer considered literacy as a fluid and ever-changing movement. In a Prezi, Jennifer wrote, "Effective and engaging literacy requires a continual exchange of information and movement." The multiliteracies showed her that students' perspectives were valuable. As the classroom teacher Jennifer had to honor the students' creative work, rather than fall back to traditional practices of conforming to standards and expectations.

4.6 Multiliteracies Activities to Value Students' Diversities

Jennifer told me during the interview that she thought the critical idea behind the multiliteracies, and between the four dimensions of pedagogy of multiliteracies was valuing the learners in 21st learning environment and what they bring into the classroom. She believed that when learners' perspectives, ideas, experiences, interests, and knowledge are valued, students tend to be more intrinsically motivated and independent. In her Prezi, Jennifer mentioned that capitalizing on the diversities that individual students developed from their life world prompted her to locate her pedagogy orientation in multiliteracies. It also shaped her student-centered classroom practices.

Jennifer introduced a recent personal narrative writing project to me, arguing that she welcomed children to reflect and vote on six writing strategies that they found the most useful. Surprisingly she said,

> It is very interesting to know the highest-level kids when they voted on what they felt was their most important writing strategy, they did not choose the media literacy (one cartoon video describing how to write a good personal narrative) which I thought everyone would choose. It was very informative, it was engaging, it was colorful, repetitive, but I found that my higher literacy level people they did not necessarily chose that so that is what I found in multiliteracies: you have to try it out and see what is the good fit for that person because all learners are different. What I found powerful was that almost all of my lower level kids voted for the media literacy strategy. So I'm like, okay, so now I know if I really want them to understand, I'm going to go and incorporate more animation into my lessons rather than just me talking at them and have them doing it. If I show them something on the Smart board that is moving, littering with flashing words and symbols and drawings and they are going to understand it better. And if you look at that (showing me with the vote) you will find I have 11 votes for the video of the cartoons for personal narrative which is the highest vote out of that 6 strategies we used to write personal narratives.

Power dynamics had shifted when Jennifer took students' voices into consideration. The multiliteracies highlights the importance of purposefully design learning to engage teachers as designers instead of curriculum implementer or textbook deliverer; in the meantime, to encourage students as confident and active agents in their learning (e.g., Comber, 2013; Kalantzis & Cope, 2008; NLG, 1996). Under such a safe learning environment, Jennifer's role was not merely a teacher pouring knowledge into students' minds; instead, as she wrote in the literature review, she played as a resource manager, a partner, an advisor, and a facilitator in students' active exploring process.

Drawing from Jennifer's narrative, there were many other examples of how she used multiliteracies to value students' outside school experience and harness their diversity in her Grade One classroom. For instance, Jennifer reported in one of the Prezis that she creatively set up Super Learner Centers for the Grade One students according to their learning needs and interests. She described that the centers were designed for groups of four to five students who rotated through four center activities. These activities included reading with a friend, math games, building exercises, and a creation station. Because of the highly energetic students, Jennifer said she redesigned 10 workstations for them to work both independently and collaboratively. Jennifer stated, "children could work with math ideas on Math station, they could do artworks on Creation station, and they could play with media literacy on the classroom computer as well as the class Smart Board."

She believed that workstations allowed students more space to vigorously learn and explore based on their own knowledge and interest in the classroom. Jennifer wrote in the Prezi, the students have voiced that they prefer workstations to Super Learner Centers as they provided more choices and free time.

Another example of respecting and harnessing young children's diversity was the inclusion of independent reading. Jennifer mentioned in the interview that she valued students as capable learners so they can choose independent reading texts each week based on their preferences, reading capability, and knowledge. She said, during the independent reading time in class, students read books for approximately 10 minutes every day. She rotated between students to listen to them read, while making notes and providing them with specific feedback. On Wednesdays, students could choose anyone that they would like to work and read together, sharing stories, and helping each other with reading and understanding the book. She also told me that each day a different student had the power to give readers a tally mark for reading. Once a student earned 50 tally marks they could choose a prize from the prize box, which motivated the young readers.

Take children working on the smart board in the computer lab as another example. Jennifer told me in the interview that young children were encouraged to do all computer activities on their own. They logged in and out, navigated, changed font, and experimented all by themselves rather than following the overt instructions. She said that children could choose anything they would like to develop on the smart board, words, symbols, and etc., According to Jennifer, some children were good at drawing, some were good writers, and some of them were fond of mathematics. Consequently, she reported proudly, young children ended up teaching each other, learning new skills they were interested in, and challenging new things by experimenting. She told me that quite often when children created something with drawings, words, shapes, and pictures, they would print it out and were highly motivated to bring their work home as a symbol of accomplishment.

Jennifer pointed to the upper level of the left wall in her classroom and told me that there displayed six learning skills that students need to improve or achieve, including responsibility, independent work, initiative, organization, collaboration, and self-regulation. According to Jennifer, these learning skills were from Ministry expectations and supported by the School Board. She created this in collaboration with a grade three teacher. The Grade one students reflected on their learning skills at the end of each month. Jennifer said young learners could self-assess according to criteria under each learning skill, and choose a new goal for the following month. Jennifer respected her young learners' perspectives, allowing them to choose the skills they would like to achieve based on their own judgments on progress and behavior each month. She argued that when children took control of their own learning and development, they became engaged in reflection, and would feel education was something they do rather than something that was done to or for them.

4.7 Resources Used and Needed in Integrating Multiliteracies

The answer to the fourth research question was elaborated in this part. When Jennifer was asked about the resources and materials that she used to support integrating multiliteracies into her classroom, she responded excitedly, "this is really a good question". She continued,

> If I can talk about the reading programs, the school has phenomenal resources called Literacy Place. We have a room full of baskets (of books) at levels. There are about 8-10 groups of stories, a story with 6 books, and what to do for guided reading practices. I go to that room and I pick out highly colorful, interesting, visual books to bring to the guided reading table. I also have not-so-fun books they are from A to Z, it is a scaffold reading program where you build on the previous words on the next book. The lowest group needs those as they need more practice at level B, than we have available in our resource room. We only have 8 books but my kids need more practice with high frequency words at level C. I have my own copy of A to Z level books. I probably have 300 A to Z books. In addition, I think it calls 'Abrams', they are low vocabulary high interest books, and kids in DRA level 8 have been reading those books. Just as with the lowest group, there is not enough literature in one basket for them to gain increased skill and confidence with their level. But those high interest books from Abrams, use the multimodality of visual image and print together to learn how to read. It is scaffolding unlike the boring black and white books I have accumulated.

> Regarding multiliteracies, it has to be engaging texts I apologize to parents when they have to have A-Z books because they are the black and white, they are stapled together and not engaging but as I try to explain they need more practice so they go through the colorful books and they move to black and white books. There is also probably 1000 books in my independent reading program, they pick two at their level, one easy, one free, and one non-fiction so they are empowered in that way in social practice. They put these books into their bags and switch them approximately every eight days. The power of multiliteracies shifts mostly happen in independent reading when they have power to choose books they like from over 1000 books. For my read aloud I usually go the public library, websites, or Pinterest for suggestions, or teachers who posted great ideas, and critical literacy books. In multiliteracies, critical literacy program right now they are talking about engaging texts for primary students. I'm always looking for rich texts to read to the kids. Some really cool texts I have read are 'Good Trade', "The Day the Crayons Quit" and 'Those Shoes'. During read aloud the students engage in discussions around the illustrations, the print, and the big ideas.

Reading was the main focus of Jennifer's literacy lesson, and the resources she used built upon her reading programs. Because her young learners would have another Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) by the end of May, her focus on reading was meant to prepare children for the DRA. Despite her best efforts, Jennifer mentioned some pressure that she felt when she tried to give students the individual help that they needed to achieve the DRA expectations. In a comment made early on this study, Jennifer stated, "if students do not reach benchmark of the DRA, it is a challenge." "When you place the kids for their next year's class they (Grade Two teachers) want to know the DRA, so you kind of feel that teacher pressure of who reached the benchmarks or who did not. And you also feel the teacher pride when you have a lot of kids making that benchmark, it is a sense of accomplishment when I am placing students into the grade two class that they have reached their benchmark."

Jennifer found that digital technology facilitated her students' learning. She indicated in the interview that multiliteracies pedagogy needs technological resources as a support. So she wanted to incorporate more technology such as iPads and SMART Boards into the classroom. She said, "I teach through the smart board, kids are learning how to manipulate it so we make that as the center. If I'm using that (smart board) as multiliteracies tool they should try to use that too." Young children in the Grade One loved the SMART Board, and they wanted to go to SMART Board to learn and create.

Jennifer noted, “Motivation wins, but access to the SMART Board and computer room is limited.”

4.8 Conclusion

In order to investigate my research questions, I conducted two rounds of interviews with a grade one teacher. I also collected artifacts such as Prezis, literature review, and personal narrative reflection from the teacher. From these data sources, I was able to construct a unified story about the grade one teacher’s lived experience with multiliteracies. Following the story, I presented why she implemented multiliteracies into her classroom and how the enactment of multiliteracies created learning opportunities for children to explore the world. By elaborating specific learning opportunities, I also was able to find out the resources and materials the teacher used and needed to support the implementation of multiliteracies in her classroom. In chapter five, I discuss the story to give further insight into some recurring ideas that I noticed.

Chapter Five

Discussion and Implications

5.1 Overview

In this chapter, I draw attention to a few recurring ideas in the participant's accounts of her lived experiences with multiliteracies pedagogy. This study provided insights into early-year teaching and learning implementing a multiliteracies pedagogy. I also compared the findings to the existing research literature about multiliteracies pedagogy to contribute to an important and growing body of work. Particularly, the study confirms, extends, and uniquely demonstrates from a Canadian and an early-year teacher's perspective previous findings that multiliteracies pedagogy is necessary to ensure education deals with the changing and diversifying world today (e.g., Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Gee, 2000; Kalantzis & Cope, 2008; Kalantzis et al., 2002; Jewitt, 2008; NLG, 1996), that multiliteracies pedagogy can provide rich opportunities to engage students in learning (e.g., Cooper et al., 2013; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gee, 2000; Giampapa, 2010; Jewitt, 2008; NLG, 1996), and that multiliteracies perspectives envision students' diversity, and connect students' outside school experience to the classroom (e.g., Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Hibbert, 2013; Kim, 2013; Marsh, 2006; Jewitt, 2008).

The three dominant ideas presented across the lived story of the Grade One teacher, and worth discussing were: (1) integrating multiliteracies into the early-years classroom transformed both the ways the teacher made sense of teaching based on her learners and the children explored their learning (e.g., Cooper et al., 2013; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Gee, 2000; NLG, 1996), (2) implementing multiliteracies in practice requires the support of teacher education and technology tools as they are of great importance in terms of preparing early-year educators to meet the challenges of the constantly changing classroom (e.g., Ball, 2000; Jewitt, 2008; Kress, 2006; Luke, 2000; Street, 2003), and (3) multiliteracies approaches should be meaningfully integrated into early-years standardized assessment to multimodally support both teacher and children's agency (e.g., Blandford & Knowles, 2012; Clark & Moss, 2011; Jacobs, 2013). The findings of this study can lead to improvements in early-years practices in Ontario by providing a

lens for educators to understand the effectiveness of applying multiliteracies to scaffold diverse young learners. They also have meaningful implications for teacher education and professional learning programs. If early-years educators could be equipped with advanced theories and up-to-date pedagogical strategies, they would be better prepared to deal with the rapid changes in education. Specifically, I hope this study can inspire a reconsideration of assessing children with multimodal texts and approaches instead of a one-size-fits-all test, rubric or checklist.

5.2 Multiliteracies pedagogy: A Transformation Impetus

Multiliteracies pedagogy has stood the test of time (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009), and it has proved to be a useful approach to teaching and learning in today's education (Cooper et al., 2013; Kalantzis & Cope, 2008; Westby, 2010). What matters in multiliteracies is to acknowledge that "meaning making is an active, transformative process, and a pedagogy based on this recognition is more likely to open up viable life courses for a world of change and diversity" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 175). As data indicated previously, Jennifer expressed that by implementing multiliteracies pedagogy into her classroom, she transformed both her way of being an early-years teacher and her perceptions of young children's learning.

The existing literature confirms the findings that speak to multimodal teaching for diverse learners in the twenty-first century and the need to respond to rapidly changing literacies and technologies (e.g., Jewitt, 2008; Kress, 2006; Street, 2006; Walsh, 2011). Jennifer reported that she recognized the demands of multiple texts being associated with multimodal approaches in early-year education. She implemented a pedagogy of multiliteracies in the classroom, purposefully creating an engaging environment for students (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008). From her perspective, the application of multiliteracies not only enriched her classroom practices but also transformed her way of teaching. Jennifer said that she used to hold centralized power in the classroom, dictating lessons to the children. For instance, she used to mandate that students read specific books, write on preset topics, and behave in uniform ways. Adopting multiliteracies pedagogy allowed Jennifer to value young children as powerful learners as a

multiliteracies approach emphasizes learning multimodality and learner diversity (Jewitt, 2008; Kim, 2013). This shift encouraged Jennifer to provide young learners with multimodal texts and resources so that they could learn and create as active explorers (e.g., Hall, 2013; Walsh, 2011). Instead of being an authoritarian, Jennifer became a welcoming guide who encouraged young learners' agency. For example, she allowed the grade one students to choose a new learning skill to achieve each month based on their self-assessments.

Jennifer said that she acted as a designer of learning environments to engage children (Jewitt & Kress, 2003; Kalantzis & Cope, 2008; Kalantzis et al., 2002), and a resource manager to provide children with various materials and support, rather than someone who controlled the classroom. This, according to Jennifer, has brought vigor to both her work ethic and that of the young learners. For example, when a student brought in three Halloween monsters he made from home, and shared his creative experience with the rest of the class; other students became inspired and wanted to create monsters as well. Jennifer then provided them time, space, and materials to experiment and make their unique monsters. Similarly, she purposefully designed the Nunavut project for children to make sense of three main ideas of landscapes, schools, and animals of Nunavut. She provided students with color pictures of these three main ideas to support children's print texts on the mind map.

The findings of this study were consistent with the research literature that illustrates the transformative role of multiliteracies regarding inspiring learner's active learning. An example of such learner transformation is found in Giampapa's (2010) research on cultural and linguistically diverse children. In addition to changing her teaching strategies, Jennifer believed that a multiliteracies approach also changed the way the grade one children learned the knowledge and explored the world. When children could actively take ownership of their own study, they were more likely to put more time and effort into their work. They actively sought words to help them write a journal and requested opportunities to share their stories. Under such circumstances, they were no longer recipients of information, but rather pursuers of knowledge and skills. In their Nunavut project, young children were supposed to use three ideas to illustrate preset

themes but they came up with far more than three, and they redesigned what the teacher modeled for the class. When students act as active learners, they "use the resources that are available to them in the specific socio-cultural environments in which they act to create signs, and in using them, they change these resources" (Jewitt & Kress, 2003, p. 10).

A multiliteracies approach embraces the complexity of knowledge and communication, and supports children's various ways of knowing, thinking, interpreting, expressing, doing, and creating (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Hesterman, 2013). In their Nunavut project, the spider-like mind map children made was entirely beyond Jennifer's expectations. She noticed that when she valued their perspectives and allowed them to create according to their knowledge and interest (Dyson, 1990; Hibbert, 2013), her students were excited to be energetic meaning makers, artists, and innovators. The multiliteracies pedagogy also inspired Jennifer to attend to children' diverse needs and interests so as to encourage learner transformation (Burrows, 2009; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009), and to ensure that all young learners were academically engaged. This shift to a 'new teacher', according to Kalantzis and Cope (2008), is a must for adapting to new changes in the information age.

Being aware that children come to school with a range of abilities, experiences, and knowledge, Jennifer fostered an atmosphere wherein student voices were heard and respected. Students could raise their opinions, ideas, and problems, and could vote on an activity. Jennifer also said that she respected students' difference and designed learning opportunities to take advantage of them. This "difference as asset" rather than "difference as deficit" model sees diversity as an opportunity, and helps "engage with and gain access to student agency, cultural memory, and home and school learning within local contexts" (Jewitt, 2008, p. 255).

The grade one children had the freedom to choose any topic that they liked to write on in their weekly journals, and could design smart board texts according to their interest and knowledge. Without the fear of following the teacher's orders, students were more willing to take risks and enjoy their exploration. As researchers of multiliteracies suggest,

"from birth a child actively seeks to make and understand messages and meanings in accordance with their interests and using available resources" (Hesterman, 2013, p. 159). When they created work that combined drawings, words, pictures, and numbers through the smart board, they requested to print their work out and take it home as a symbol of scholastic achievement. This way of learning and experimenting reflected what Council of Ministers of Education Canada (2014) called a sense of belonging and satisfaction as students actively find a place for their ideas and strengths.

Children in Jennifer's grade one classroom experienced multiliteracies pedagogy through overt instruction (e.g., teacher directed phonemic lessons, decoding skills, and reading strategies), situated practice (e.g., sharing their experiences, making connections, working with peers and buddies), critical framing (e.g., interpreting the big ideas behind the texts, evaluating peers works, environment protecting), and transformed practice (e.g., book making, designing mind map, and creating post). Jennifer's multiliteracies pedagogy took children's perspectives and agency into account, welcoming them to connect what they knew to what they learned (NLG, 1996). Jennifer pointed that this was evident in their journal writing and sharing. Their interests and outside-of-school experiences were said to be meaningfully connected so that they could initiate learning by seeking help with words and expressions from teachers, which they made part of their writing. Consequently, young children had opportunities to transfer what they learned to new contexts of learning. For instance, they could critically question big ideas in texts, and they could relate pictures such as 'a cupped squirrel' to environmental protection issues (see the section of 4.5).

Young children in the grade one classroom were fully engaged in learning opportunities, following their own interests, agendas, and procedures (Dyson, 1990; Kim, 2013). They voted on and chose strategies that worked for them in writing; they reflected on their learning skills each month and set a new goal for the following month; they made creative artwork on the Smart Board and at the workstations; and they requested an open forum to share and demonstrate their stories and experiences. In their active learning process, the grade one children were not receivers of knowledge; they were explorers, inquirers, investigators, and instigators of their own study. In their creating and designing

process, they did not simply use the resources that they were given. Rather, they were fully "makers and re-makers of signs and transformers of meaning" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 175). This was evidently reflected in their making spider-like posters and smart board creations. Messy as they seemed, these creations symbolized their way of active learning and exploring.

5.3 Integrating Multiliteracies Pedagogy with Literacy Learning

The findings in Jennifer's stories in chapter four reveal that she implemented multiliteracies to understand and value the diverse identity of individual learners, and connect their experience beyond school to study in school (e.g., journal writing and sharing, Halloween monster making). She engaged the young learners in practices related to their interests by integrating multimodal instructions (using beanie babies, making media presentations, facilitating learning with gestures and movements), and provided opportunities for them to create new, meaningful texts (e.g., workstations, smart board creation, mind map designing). She encouraged children to take ownership of their learning in ways that integrate many aspects of multiliteracies theories and multimodality (e.g., learning skills reflection, writing strategies voting).

There were many instances of multiliteracies pedagogy in Jennifer's literacy classroom. The principles of multiliteracies were not used in a linear mode; they occurred randomly, simultaneously, and interactively (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Jewitt, 2008; NLG, 1996). At times, the same activity involved four areas of the multiliteracies pedagogy. For example, in the personal narrative writing project, Jennifer modeled the steps and skills required for the writing, and activated children's background knowledge. When students began writing, they incorporated drawings, and sought help from the teacher and peers to facilitate the process. After the writing was completed, children shared, commented, and critically questioned each other's work.

In literacy lessons, both the print-based literacy and the new literacies played important parts in the grade one classroom. Reading and writing of print-based texts were still highly valued in the grade one literacy lessons. Jennifer commented that "no matter what education changes in 21st century, people still need to read and write." Many print-based

instructional methods and strategies were incorporated into her literacy programs such as whole group meetings with teacher directed discussions around a storybook read aloud, leveled books for independent reading, and guided reading with small groups of children divided by their reading proficiency.

In addition to this print-based literacy, Jennifer also incorporated new literacies, providing authentic contexts to practice reading and writing, collaborating, socializing, and creating. For example, Jennifer used the SMART Board, a digitally interactive whiteboard to deliver lessons and facilitate interactions with students. On the SMART Board, Jennifer delivered lessons, wrote notes and comments in digital ink, drew charts and images. She also accessed the Internet, searching for information and playing meaningful videos for children. She collaboratively worked with the children to design literacy practices in the classroom, and employed a multimodal perspective to facilitate children's literacy learning and development.

Multiliteracies pedagogy enabled Jennifer to construct and build literacy practices that she perceived as based on students' knowledge, experiences, capabilities, and interests. For instance, Jennifer regarded journal writing in the Grade One classroom as welcoming because it provided an inviting and supportive environment for children to share what happened outside school. She also believed that the new ways of journal writing made writing accessible for her students. The writing process was not static; instead, it included dance, movement, socializing, storytelling, drawing, listening, and giving feedbacks. When children were seen motivated, they spontaneously came to cherish the special writing time and write in a lively and engaging manner. As Hibbert (2013) states, multiliteracies theory encourages teachers to create the conditions customizing, personalizing, and adapting to learners and their learning.

5.4 Tensions and Supports in Enabling Multiliteracies

Although Jennifer did not see the reading and writing curriculums as a driving force of her literacy practices, she took much pride in the fact that her lessons directly aligned with the curriculum and connected to student's social lives. Jennifer put much emphasis

on young students' reading, which was clearly reflected in time, resources, and strategies she allocated for young learners throughout their literacy programs. This focus to some extent curtailed other opportunities for children to explore things that they found interesting, such as sharing written journal stories. As Jennifer previously described in the interview, young learners required more chances to share, and they reminded Jennifer to let them share.

Jennifer extensively used leveled books that were aligned with DRA to focus on reading, which compromised her ambition to create more opportunities for young learners to develop multiliterate skills. Rather, it led Jennifer to turn the grade one into an academic environment with the aim of ensuring that children could read well in 'their levels' by the time they are in grade two.

Jennifer endeavored to use multiliteracies pedagogy in the Grade One classroom, but she was still heavily tied to DRA, and substantially confined by the expectations and requirements set by the Ministry and school board. The learning skills that Jennifer required young learners to achieve in her classroom each month were based on Ministry expectations; the minimum two times a week of running records as well as two times of DRA every year were board requirements. The 'market solutions' purchased by school board led Jennifer to believe DRA as a good way to measure reading despite it being solely print-based and highly standardized.

Jennifer felt great responsibility to build children with confidence and multi-literate skills to succeed in their Grade Two study. However, the expectations from parents, board, and the DRA prompted Jennifer to focus on young learners' academic skills development, especially in their reading proficiency success. All these facts drove her to comply with "procedural display" (Hibbert, 2013, p. 4), and act as a good teacher to fulfill an accountability framework that is pervasive.

The existing literature also confirms the study findings that speak to the importance of digital technology in the 21st century teaching and learning (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008; Kress, 2006; Luke, 2000; NLG, 1996; Razfar & Gutiérrez; 2013; Street et al., 2009; Walsh, 2011). Jennifer found digital technology to be helpful in terms of motivating

children. This resonates with many scholars who believe digital versions of texts may make the reading more appealing and engaging for students because on-screen reading not only incorporates multisensory activities in a more open-ended format such as searching, viewing, drawing, and navigating in a touch screen but also integrates with hybrid combinations of still and moving images, icons, sounds and animations (e.g., Flewitt, 2013; Razfar & Gutiérrez, 2013; Walsh, 2011).

Jennifer tried to integrate digital texts into her literacy lesson and incorporate more technology to promote teaching and learning because it is also pivotal for implementing multiliteracies pedagogy in her Grade One classroom. As many researchers have stated, literacy pedagogy now must account for multimodal texts associated with information and multimedia technologies (e.g., Kress, 2003; NLG, 1996; Westby, 2010). This was certainly evident in this study. When Jennifer made Prezis that blended animation, video, sounds, and images to guide children's personal narrative writing project, young learners were entirely engaged. She used an animated video explaining personal narrative writing to help children with their own writing. Over half of the students then voted for this animated video as one of the most useful tools for their writing.

The findings in chapter four show that most resources and materials Jennifer used were print-centric for the reading programs (e.g., the A-Z printed off scaffold books, the literacy place books, and the high interest and low vocabulary books for guided reading program, and 1000 independent reading books). This suggested that there was a deficit of multimodal and digital resources that Jennifer could integrate into the reading programs. To integrate multiliteracies into early-year teaching and learning, more practical applications of multimodality (such as the SMART Board) that teachers can put to use immediately into the classroom deserve special attention.

Jennifer spoke often about valuing children's interest, staring from what they have, and providing opportunities to engage them in learning. She skillfully integrated print literacy and multimodal texts using digital technologies to scaffold children's learning and exploring. She understood that the biggest idea underlying multiliteracies was recognizing, valuing, empowering, and making use of students' diverse agency. This

guided her classroom practices and inspired her to explore effective strategies for struggling readers. As many examples described in chapter four, it became clear how important a teacher's understandings, beliefs, perspectives and experiences about multiliteracies learning and teaching are to young children in the 21st century.

In order to support educators in applying such a multiliteracies approach into their classroom practices, this study found that, as other scholars revealed, teacher education was a key component (Ball, 2000). Drawing from Jennifer's story of how her Master's program introduced her to multiliteracies, it was apparent that teacher education plays a significant role in prompting the notions of multimodality, active meaning maker, as well as the holistic pedagogy. As stated in her personal reflection, "to facilitate my understandings of the Master's course material, I apply theories to classroom practices soon after learning them." The transformation brought new vitality, energy, and motivation to her classroom; in the meantime, this changed her previous way of teacher-centered teaching.

5.5 Getting Children to Read and the Standardized Assessment

Jennifer was aware of the importance of providing the children with engaging learning opportunities through multiliteracies pedagogy. However, getting children to read practically dominated her Grade One literacy programs. The significant amount of time and resources allotted to reading events suggested that reading was Jennifer's priority. This priority particularly resulted from Jennifer's passion for teaching children to read and requirements from the board to take the developmental reading assessment (DRA). Jennifer wanted to offer multimodal opportunities to engage students with reading in the classroom, yet there were still teacher led instructions and rote rehearsals in order to prepare for the DRA. This was clear during the guided reading and independent programs in which the students were asked to read, and sometimes talk with few opportunities to develop multi-literate skills.

Jennifer was in favor of DRA despite the fact that this standardized test was exclusively print based. She thought it was an excellent tool to collect data so as to accurately understand students' reading levels. Once she knew students' reading levels she could

then assign different strategies to help them improve. On the other hand, the DRA was also burdensome as reflected in an earlier comment she made: "if students do not reach benchmark of the DRA, it is a challenge." The challenge, as Jennifer mentioned was from the parents who focus on their children's literacy development, from the school board who put much emphasis on academic learning, and from the colleagues who would consider children's reading proficiency as criterion to measure how well they learned in grade one. Most importantly, she challenged herself by devoting significant amount of time and resources to helping students reach their benchmark. She wanted her students to feel what she called 'a sense of accomplishment' when moving on to grade two.

The field of early childhood education has not escaped from the negative backdrop of aligning with standardized curricula and assessments (Kagan et al., 2006). However, the focus on one-size-fits-all curriculum and assessment is based on linear forms of criteria, and can scarcely create meaningful opportunities to promote students' multiliterate skills (Dennis et al., 2013; White, 2011). This formally prescribed assessment strives for results of transmission of disciplinary knowledge rather than taking students' unique personality and multimodal ways of learning into consideration (Kagan, 2003; Strauss, 2014).

To escape from conventional ways of teaching and learning, however, Jennifer had to return to a set of early learning standards, such as standardized expectations that define outcomes children should achieve; standardized curricula that articulate contents children should learn; and standardized assessments that "determine if students have learned what was intended" (Kagan et al., 2006, p. 27). This emphasis, according to Kagan et al. (2006), "could induce a new approach to pedagogy, moving away from following children's lead to following the lead of a set of standards" (p. 27). Ironically, when an early-years educator spared no effort to implement multiliteracies to address challenges in the 21st century literacy, the standardized curriculum and assessment had yet to keep pace with advances in understanding what means to be literate.

5.6 Implications for Practice and Future Research

The findings related to the research questions suggest bringing a new pedagogical framework, the pedagogy of multiliteracies, into the Grade One classroom was effective. Drawing from Jennifer's lived experiences, multiliteracies pedagogy enriched her classroom practices, altered her previous pedagogical stance, and created rich opportunities for children to access learning and exploring. Most significantly, multiliteracies pedagogy incorporates multiple ways to motivate both teacher and children's agencies as it sets out to "redesign the social futures of young people across boundaries of difference" (Jewitt, 2008, p. 245).

Additionally, multiliteracies pedagogy emphasizes the notions of textual hybridity, learning complexity and learner diversity, all of which create rich opportunities for teaching and learning. Therefore, my study connected theoretical knowledge of multiliteracies to day-to-day teaching and learning in early childhood education in Ontario. This will also expand the previous literature on the ways in which multiliteracies can positively transform early-years teaching and learning.

In this study, multiliteracies pedagogy was found to supplement and enrich Jennifer's classroom practices, rather than replace them. She talked about interweaving multimodality, and integrating technological tools to engage students' literacy learning. At the same time, she recognized the importance of capitalizing on students' outside school experience so she redesigned the journal-writing practice. By implementing multiliteracies pedagogy, Jennifer also learned to value students' perspectives. These practices, based on her narratives, have brought much dynamism and vigor into the Grade One teaching and learning.

As the NLG (1996) states, "there cannot be one set of standards or skills that constitute the end of literacy learning, however taught" (p. 64). Thereby, this study provides a lens for early-year educators to better understand the Grade One teachers' lived experience about implementing multiliteracies in the literacy classroom. It also provides an opportunity for frontline educators to learn multiliteracies framework, and learn how multiliteracies pedagogy can be used to create an engaging learning environment. The more frontline early-educators understand the transformative function of multiliteracies,

the more they can reflect on their own philosophical beliefs about teaching and consider more applicable strategies to enrich their classroom practices.

Another implication for practice is for teacher education and professional development programs. Based on Jennifer's lived experience, it was clear that the early-year teachers need opportunities to learn up- to-date knowledge and skills to better meet their learners' needs. For example, Jennifer indicated in recalling her learning with her Master's program that it was difficult to deeply understand the multiliteracies concepts. She said that, even after rereading articles from her master's program, she took a while to figure out what how the pedagogical principles of multiliteracies could affect the grade one level.

Multiliteracies programs open access to a broader world in which teachers can enrich their teaching practices and extend their pedagogical repertories. For Jennifer, multiliteracies motivated her to listen to children's voices and connect their academic study with outside school experiences. In this way, a multiliteracies pedagogy becomes increasingly pivotal in pre-service and in-service teacher education courses, and in teacher training programs (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

As Ball (2000) argues, "learning is facilitated through the assistance of more knowledgeable members of the community and culture" (p. 231). The multiliteracies program provided Jennifer with a context where she could turn to experts of multiliteracies for help. Every time she read about a theoretical reading or talked with her program colleagues about how multiliteracies promote children's learning, she would connect it to her classroom and create an environment of engaging learning. This resonates with Ball (2000) who elaborates that developing pre-service and practicing teachers' engagement with theories and pedagogical approaches in teacher education programs is connected with their practical teaching experiences.

Besides the teacher education that Jennifer followed, the support from the school board, the Ministry of Education, or professional learning opportunities to learn and develop multiliteracies are also of great importance. Perhaps when teachers are required to invest in students' diverse identities both in and outside of school, teachers should be first

invested in. Also, when teachers are required to multimodally scaffold students' learning in the 21st educational context, a firm foundation should be given to teacher professional development.

Thirdly, according to the Ontario Ministry of Education (2010), current assessments are mainly based on students meeting particular learning goals and standards for each subject. The assessments specify expectations that represent content standards, and preset criteria to assess students. Such literacy mandates like DRA can compromise teachers' agency and ability to multimodally scaffold students' learning and development. Similar to the call for changing print-based and mono-literacy to multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; NLG, 1996), a multiliteracies approach of gathering information multimodally is needed for assessing young learners' reading or literacy progress (Jacobs, 2013). The multiliteracies assessment should be "affective engagement with images, inclusion of students in the creation or manipulation of visual texts, and explicit compositional concepts and development of a meta-language" (Jacobs, 2013, p. 625). Alternatively, a combination of methods with a variety of sources of information in an ongoing process to determine what assets students have instead of detecting their deficits has won increasing support (e.g., Blandford & Knowles, 2012; Clark & Moss, 2011). Thus, this research proposes designing assessments that comply with the nature of multiliteracies to assess how students engage with multimodal texts in their unique ways. By prioritizing what young children have rather than what they lack, an approach of multiliteracies can optimize their agency, imagination, creativity, and encourage them to vigorously pursue their success.

Jennifer was particularly interested in using what she learned from multiliteracies to help struggling readers. Future research needs to investigate how multiliteracies can help struggling readers from their prior knowledge, and motivate their interest. Educators should also question whether or not current assessment practices are sufficient to understand our children's competencies and hear their voices. As Greenleaf and Hinchman (2009) argue, "we are in danger of discounting the reading proficiency students have if we limit our survey to school reading tasks" (p. 8).

Another area that would be worthwhile for future research would be to continue to involve children as participants, and look at their perspectives and learning experiences within a context of multiliteracies pedagogy. It would be interesting to see if similar findings would be possible when including children as participants in the study. Also, as this case study focused only one teacher's literacy lesson, additional case studies of different teachers integrating multiliteracies into different lessons could contribute to the knowledge base regarding multiliteracy pedagogy in practice.

5.7 Concluding Remarks

The lived story of Jennifer's enactment of multiliteracies pedagogy resonates with my previous learning and teaching experiences regarding how to value and capitalize on young learners' different backgrounds. It reminds me "early childhood education is committed to beginning with the child" (Kagan et al., 2006, p. 27). The story, particularly, evokes my joyless childhood school memory. I was seen as non-academic when I chose comic books over school books; I was identified as a loser when I failed in school testing. I felt ashamed during primary school. It was the standardized assessment lens that educators were looking through it blinded them to see me differently.

When I saw the young children who were defined as struggling readers in Jennifer's class, such sour memory stirred in me. I started wondering if young learners were really given time and space to learn at their speed and explore things that they find interesting. Despite Jennifer's best efforts in adopting some engaging practices to attend to young learners' diversity drawing upon the framework of multiliteracies pedagogy, traditional assessments still see those who do well particularly in print based ways as competent and successful. I could not stop thinking: Why do we have to portray a young learner as struggling, or lagging behind their peers by assessing them in a solely print text? Can do we redefine young learners' literacy competencies by seeing their critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving ability, and social interaction that Jennifer was trying to emphasize?

Jennifer valued young learners' engagement with traditional print literacies. She was required to assess and evaluate student achievement based on certain criteria. However,

emphasis on standards "has led many schools to over-focus on assessment at the expense of meeting children's developmental needs and teaching meaningful content" (Strauss, 2014, What is the problem section, para. 4). Thus, I have to caution the use of traditional assessment in early-years learning. As Strauss (2014) argues, not only can standardized assessment be detrimental to young learners, but also be damaging to early-childhood education when so much emphasis is put on academic learning but other things, like play is lost. Perhaps policy makers should re-examine their stance in light of early years assessment and reflect on how to better empower young learners.

What multiliteracies pedagogy values and maintains are ideas missing in many teacher-centered, curriculum-oriented, and print-based early childhood educational settings. I hope the findings in this study can provide a source of practical knowledge for teachers from which to draw and reflect. It is also my particular hope that this story can lead to improvements in teacher education, and transformations in standardized assessments.

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Appendices A

Western Research

Research Ethics

Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board
NMREB Full Board Initial Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Mi Song Kim
Department & Institution: Education,Western University

NMREB File Number: 107637
Study Title: A PEDAGOGY OF MULTILITERACIES INTO PRACTICE: A CASE STUDY IN ONE GRADE ONE LITERACY CLASSROOM
Sponsor:

NMREB Initial Approval Date: March 10, 2016
NMREB Expiry Date: March 10, 2017

Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Western University Protocol	Received February 11, 2016	
Letter of Information	Teacher	2016/02/10
Instruments	Interview questions	2016/02/10

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

[redacted]
Ethics Officer, on behalf of Dr. Riley Hinson, NMREB Chair

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information: Erika Basile ___ Nicole Kaniki ___ Grace Kelly ___ Katelyn Harris ___ Vikki Tran ___

This is an official document. Please retain a copy for your files.

Appendices B

Letter of Information for Teacher

A Pedagogy Of Multiliteracies Into Practice: A Case Study In One Grade One Literacy Classroom

Xing Meng
Mi Song Kim

Letter of Information for Teacher

Introduction
My name is Xing Meng. I am a Master Student at the Faculty of Education at Western University. I am currently conducting research in multiliteracies that stand for a new approach to literacy pedagogy, highlighting textual multiplicity and learning complexity. In particular, I would like to explore an early years teacher's experience about enacting a pedagogy of multiliteracies into literacy classroom to create learning opportunities for young learners.
I would like to invite you to participate in this research.

The purposes of the study
The purposes of this research are (1) to examine how a pedagogy of multiliteracies works for young learners' literacy development; (2) to understand ways in which young learners' difference and diversity are valued; (3) to investigate what specific learning opportunities created by multiliteracies pedagogy in the classroom; and (4) to find out what resources and support are needed when implementing multiltieracies pedagogy in the classroom.

If you agree to participate
If you agree to participate in the study you will be asked to participate in one to two times of in-depth interview, which may take up to 30-60 minutes each time, depending on the communication process. If two rounds of interviews needed, the total anticipated time would be 60-120 minutes. The interview topics may include your thoughts and experience toward multiliteracies, descriptions of your current multiliteracies pedagogy, and your understandings of the types of opportunities that are created for your students attending to their interests. The location of the interview will be one of your choosing and the interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. The transcripts of interviews will be given to you in order to obtain your feedback and confirm the accuracy of the information. After the interview is conducted, I will also invite you to write and share your own written story about your beliefs regarding multiltieracies. Your story can be between 1-2 pages in length. Besides, I will photocopy some of your artifacts such as your lesson plan, teaching materials, and class reflection in order to help corroborate other data. These photocopies of your artifacts may be used in presentations of the

research to enhance the data triangulation process. If you agree that I may use your lesson plan, teaching material and class reflection for this purpose please indicate this in the attached consent form. You have the right to change or delete any part of the transcript or your written work. No information will be used in the research without your approval.

Confidentiality
The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information that could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. I will use pseudonyms in ensure the anonymity of your identity. After interview, the audio recordings of your interview will be immediately uploaded and encrypted onto my laptop, which is password protected and all audio recordings of your interview will be thoroughly disposed after 5 years. Any and all information including the physical artifacts you provide will be kept confidentially in a locked place for the duration of this study and will be disposed after 5 years.

Risks and Benefits
There are no known risks to participating in this study. However, this study aims to connect theoretical knowledge to day-to-day practices in early childhood education in a Canadian context. Your participation will help us describe the complex nature of early literacy teacher's work when interacting with diverse students in one classroom, thus providing lived information for policy makers to think about how to best support early years educators in their daily classroom practices. Second, through listening to the voice and experience of a frontline practitioner in the filed of early literacy teaching and learning, participating in this study will provide some practical implications for other early-years practitioners to draw on and reflect. Additionally, participation in this study is likely to help us find out more about the curricular and pedagogy needs of in early-years literacy classroom and we hope that these will help early-years practitioners to better serve young children in the future.

Compensation and Rewards
A thank you card will be given to appreciate participation in this research.

Voluntary Participation
Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide to withdraw from the study for any reason, any written or taped data that has been collected will not be used.

Questions
If you have any questions about the conduct of this study you may contact the Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario. If you have any questions about this study at any time, please contact me at [redacted] and my email is [redacted]. You may also contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Mi Song Kim, at [redacted] ext. [redacted], and her email is [redacted].

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Appendices C

Consent Form for Teacher

A Pedagogy Of Multiliteracies Into Practice: A Case Study In One Grade One Literacy Classroom

Xing Meng
Mi Song Kim

Consent Form For Teacher

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent: Xing Meng

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent: _____

Date: _____

Appendices D

Consent Form For Teacher Collecting Artifacts

A Pedagogy Of Multiliteracies Into Practice: A Case Study In One Grade One Literacy Classroom

Xing Meng
Mi Song Kim

Consent Form For Teacher Collecting Artifacts

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to the use of copies of my lesson plan in presentations of this research.

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO**

I consent to the use of copies of my teaching materials in presentations of this research.

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO**

I consent to the use of copies of my class reflection in presentations of this research.

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO**

Printed Name of The Teacher: _____

Teacher Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent: Xing Meng

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent: _____

Date: _____

Appendices E

Possible Research Questions

A Pedagogy Of Multiliteracies Into Practice: A Case Study In One Grade One Literacy Classroom

Xing Meng
Mi Song Kim

Possible Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your literacy program (i.e., design, what theories does it draw on etc.)

2. Tell me about the position you currently hold (include: duties, responsibilities, daily routines, and interactions with children and co-teachers/parents).

3. How familiar are you with multiliteracies pedagogy? When did you first know the term?

4. Do you think multiliteracies is important in your classroom? Why?

5. What components of multiliteracies pedagogy do you think are taking place within your classroom? In what ways?

6. What are the specific learning opportunities (practices) created by enactment of multiliteracies pedagogy in your classroom? Do you think whether they are effective or not, and why?

7. In what ways do you think implementing a pedagogy of multiliteracies can help children's literacy development in your classroom? Any examples?

8. What resources, materials and support are important when you incorporating the multiliteracies pedagogy in the classroom? Are there any obstacles?

9. Do you think students various diversity can be capitalized on by using a pedagogy of multiliteracies? Why? / In what ways?

10. Have you ever experienced a time where your views about multiliteracies-related teaching and learning conflicted with that of others? (i.e., with either your colleagues, pre-service field experiences, parents, or governmental policies). If so, how did you deal with situations like this?

Curriculum Vitae

Name:	XING MENG
Post-secondary Education and Degrees:	Yunnan Normal University Kunming, Yunnan, China 1999-2003 B.A. The University of Western Ontario London, Ontario, Canada 2014-2016 M.A.
Honours and Awards:	AER Graduate Scholarship for Literacy Studies in Education 2014-2015, University of Western Ontario Faculty of Education Graduate Student Internal Conference Grant 2016, University of Western Ontario
Related Work Experience	English Teacher Arts and Science College of Yunnan Normal University, China 2003-2007 Exchange English Teacher Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi, Thailand 2008-2010 English Teacher City College of Kunming University of Science and Technology 2011 English Placement Teacher Dimensions International College, Singapore 2012-2013

Publications

Paper Presented at Academic Conferences:

Meng, X., & Kim, M. S. (2016, June). *Multiliteracies for young culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) children: Literature review*. Paper presented at the Canadian Society for the Study of Education. Calgary, Alberta.