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## Uncovering the Myths of Shared Reading English Picture Books for Chinese Families: A Narrative Inquiry

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

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## Abstract

This doctoral research explored the experiences of Chinese parents in parent-child shared reading on English picture books (EPBs). It was unique in its approach, taking the perspective and standpoint of the parents as the research stance, and was one of the few studies in the existing literature to do so. The Narrative Inquiry proposed by Polkinghorne (1995) was adopted to explore Chinese parents' voices, especially the unspoken ones. The study aimed to learn from Chinese parents' experiences, provided valuable insights into their reflections and expectations of their family literacy activities, and contributed to the limited research on English family literacy in the Chinese context.

The findings of this study suggest that, in the current Chinese context, parent-child shared reading practices on EPBs were influenced by their beliefs about literacy, which were highly shaped by their own literacy experiences, as well as the socio-cultural environment, SES, and educational level in which they were situated. The results contributed to a better understanding of how Chinese parents explore their literacy beliefs to reflect their experience of the parent-child shared EPBs reading by making these activities unique, relevant, and meaningful. In addition, the study revealed that these parents showed open-mindedness and inclusiveness towards topics, such as language skills and pedagogical framework, related to shared reading and had a solid learning awareness and motivation to implement family literacy practices. However, the study also highlighted the deficiencies in their socialized family literacy support system. And the impact of the unregulated commercialized environment of education on their implementation of English family literacy activities.

The study provided more background literature for future research on English family literacy in China and further insight into future exploration of parent-child shared reading on EPBs and English family literacy in the Chinese context.

## Keywords

Family literacy; parent-child shared reading; early year childhood literacy; English

picture books; English family literacy; Chinese families; home literacy environment; multiliteracies pedagogy; literacy belief.

## Summary for Lay Audience

This study investigated how Chinese parents experience reading English picture books with their children and aimed to learn from their experiences about their reflections and expectations of family literacy activities. The study is unique because it uses the parents' perspective as the research stance, which is uncommon in existing research.

The study used Narrative Inquiry as the methodology to explore the voices of Chinese parents, especially those that were not spoken. It found that implementing parent-child reading practices on English picture books was highly influenced by parents' experiences and related to their current socioeconomic status, education level and other reasons.

The findings suggest that Chinese parents value shared parent-child reading and consider it useful for their children's literacy development. They also show an open and inclusive attitude toward topics related to shared reading, such as language skills and instructional frameworks. However, the study also revealed areas for improvement in their socialized family literacy support systems and the impact of unregulated commercialized educational settings on their implementation of English-language family literacy activities.

Overall, this study provides important insights into Chinese parents' experiences with English picture book parent-child reading and highlights the need for further research. It also sheds light on the challenges and opportunities for family literacy activities in China.

*Dedicated to my beloved Jiang, Runmei & Ryan  
for their love, endless support, and encouragement.*

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# Chapter 1

## 1 Introduction

Children's literacy skills evolve very young as family members share readings and activities (Baker & Scher, 2002). Since the early 2010s, many Chinese scholars and early childhood education and literacy experts have recommended shared reading between parents and young children (Hu & Xiang, 2016; Zhang, 2009; 2017;). With the increasing popularity of English in China, many Chinese parents have shared English picture books with their children to support the younger ones' English language development (Huang, 2013). However, Yan and Deng (2006) indicate that as the auxiliary system in China for family English learning is not sound, the parents' corresponding professional guidance is limited. After over a decade, little is known about Chinese parents' experiences of home-shared reading, particularly with English picture books (EPBs) (Jiang, 2019; Xin, 2017). Based on the literature review on parent-child shared reading in China National Knowledge Infrastructure between 2010 and 2020, Tian, Xu, and Zhou found that research in this field is generally growing. However, there are still problems such as lack of research objects, unbalanced urban and rural research, lack of certain breadth and depth of research content, less use of comparative analysis in research methods, lack of diversity and comprehensiveness, and single perspective of researchers (Tian, Xu & Zhou, 2022).

This research examined Chinese parents' experiences engaging in shared reading activities of EPBs with their children. It explored their experience conducting parent-child shared reading of EPBs in the Chinese context. Findings contributed to a further understanding of how Chinese parents reflect their expectations of the parent-child shared reading of EPBs to improve their experience with shared reading activities by making these activities unique, relevant, and meaningful. Also, this paper contributed to the lack of research on English family literacy in the Chinese family context and provided more background literature for future studies. By exploring the experience of Chinese parents, this study provided more insights for future studies on family literacy in China.

The theoretical framework of this paper consists of two interwoven parts. First, I draw on the sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) of children’s learning and literacy acquisition. Exploring meaning-making in Chinese parent-child interactions and literacy practices in the family was helpful. In addition, the multiliteracies theory (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) expanded my perspective through “learning by design” to view the whole process of knowledge construction of Chinese families on EPBs shared reading. Finally, Cummins’ (2006) nested pedagogical orientations gave me a structure to logically construct the relationship between the two theories in this study. I expected the findings to contribute to English family literacy, where my personal experience and research interests dwell. The relational ethics of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2007) supported me in attending to relationships, tensions, and silences of parent-child shared reading in the Chinese family context.

## 1.1 Coming to the Research

This research emerged from my interest in exploring the experience of Chinese parents in their family literacy activities of shared-reading English picture books with their children. Both my personal and professional experiences primarily inspired this research.

When my daughter was three and a half, we moved from Beijing, China, to London, Canada. At the time, I had just finished my first Ph.D. program in Journalism in China and knew very little about the Canadian primary education systems and the family literacy programs here. However, relying on my previous learning and literacy skills, some family activities, like parent-child shared reading and reality/digital education games, could help my daughter adapt to the new school language environment and assist her cognitive development. Therefore, shortly after we started our new life, I bought her an electronic device and downloaded several English language learning software for young and elementary learners. Every evening, I would accompany her to the public library near our apartment to read English picture books in line with her age, interests, and language levels. After entering the full-day kindergarten, she soon received specific help from the ESL teacher. I also participated in many family literacy programs organized by her school for ELL families to help children improve their language/literacy skills. What impressed me the most was that in the mailbag brought back by my daughter

every day, there were 2 to 3 English picture books she selected related to emotional development, social rule acquisition, rhythm awareness, learning skills, identity, and other fields. Occasionally, I also received guidance from the school on language/literacy skills appropriate for her language development. These experiences became a treasured memory for my family at the beginning of our life in Canada.

Two years have passed quickly. My daughter entered elementary school at age six, and our shared reading has continued happily. She still needed to attend ESL classes when she was in grade one. Compared with her peers, however, both her interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) were not considered deficient by her ESL teacher (concepts defined by Cummins, 1984). An ancient Roman proverb says that teaching is the best way to learn. To encourage my daughter to keep enjoying our reading activities, I started an online podcast for us, which provides bilingual reading programs for children learning English and Chinese worldwide. We recorded our discussion about a picture book and talked with each other in English and Chinese, mainly in code-switching between the two languages. Sometimes, we would sing English nursery rhymes together and discuss our feelings.

When I guided my daughter into bilingual discussions, I would use various skills and techniques from my area of expertise, including phonemic/ phonological awareness, print awareness, book knowledge, and alphabet knowledge. Moreover, because my educational paradigm was rooted in the theory of multiliteracies (New London Group, 2016), the idea of transformative learning for children had become a core belief in our family's shared reading activities. Our discussions are light, lively, and constructive. It was not until much later that I realized that this state of well-being was beyond the reach of many Chinese families in our podcast. Therefore, our podcast soon received 10k+ subscriptions, and many parents in China sent us messages, either encouraging us or asking me questions about parent-child shared reading.

As the number of parents' questions grew, I established a personal blog to provide subscribers with academic information and storytelling related to early childhood language/literacy development, especially family literacy. I received thousands of

questions, and the most frequently asked questions included, “How do you choose the right book?” “How do you carry out parent-child shared reading activities at home?” “How do you help children develop good reading habits, such as building intrinsic motivation?” Moreover, especially “How do you learn English well?”

In particular, between 2016 and 2017, I received hundreds of comments with weekly questions, mostly about learning methods, reading skills, language learning, and literacy. These questions were exhausting and triggered my thinking about the direction of my research. I sketched my “research puzzle” (Clandinin & Caine, 2008, p. 543). At first, I had the idea of helping them solve their problems. Therefore, I wanted to write a problem-solving dissertation in the early stage of my study proposal. Under the guidance and inspiration of my supervisor, however, I gradually realized that the problems in front of me might not be the whole story and the core of the issues. After feeling lost for a long time, I asked myself, “Why not start with the experiences and stories of these anxious parents, learn about the experiences that come into their lives and families’ shared reading activities, view the first-hand information from an academic perspective, and then think about how to help them more effectively in future?”

I will take my doctoral thesis as the starting point of my academic life about family literacy. Naturally, my topic was determined, and my position was unequivocal. In this study, I was an insider, mainly a Chinese mother who conducted family shared reading activities of English picture books, and an outsider, a researcher of family literacy.

## 1.2 Background/ Context

In early childhood literacy, the process and mechanism underlying children’s language and literacy development have been the focus of research for many years. Early literacy is considered to play an essential role in children's development, such as school academic performance (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Trelease, 2006), socialization (Taylor et al., 2004), and socioemotional development (Rose et al., 2018).

Studies confirm that early language and literacy development in childhood influences students’ future academic achievement (; Coyne, 2006; Davis-Kean, 2000; DeBruin-



Parecki, 2009). Werner and Smith (1992) believe that literacy strongly predicts academic success. Cunningham and Stanovich (1997) show that children's literacy and language skills levels between the ages of 4 to 6 strongly predict future academic achievement even through high school. Those exposed to family literacy activities in preschool will have a more robust beginning than their peers who do not (Hindman & Morrison, 2011).

Studies also show findings about the connection between parental daily interaction/intervention and children's early literacy acquisition (Allimore & Goldenberg, 1993; Bennett et al., 2002; Bus et al., 1995; Dodici, 2003; Karrass & Braungart-Rieker, 2005). In English-speaking countries, extensive literature specifically focuses on home interactive shared reading in early childhood (Baker et al., 1997; Bus et al., 1995; Calkins, 1997; Guryan et al., 2008; Landry et al., 2008). Parents' reading has proven to be a significant source of language input for their children, especially because children's books contain more specific words than parents express in their daily conversations (Montag et al., 2015). Parent-led shared reading in early childhood keeps children motivated to engage in literacy practices in the long run (Baker et al., 1999; Baker & Scher, 2002; Saçkes et al., 2016). The long-term effect of parent-child shared reading in early childhood is also reflected in some skills related to literacy acquisition, such as letter naming (Wagner et al., 1994), vocabulary accumulation (Farrant & Zubrick, 2012), reading comprehension (Mol & Bus, 2011), phonological and printing awareness (Snow et al., 1998), and symbolic representation (Dodici et al., 2003). Moreover, these literacy skills continue to be of great significance and value as children start reading independently (Merga & Mat Roni, 2018).

In addition to academic advantages, studies have proved that parent-child shared reading can also enhance family bonding (Barratt-Pugh & Rohl, 2015), improve emotional expression skills (Garner et al., 2008), contribute to children socio-emotional development (Rose et al., 2018), facilitate reading habits and motivation (Lee, 2017), and develop the capacity of concentration (Lawson, 2012).

Although the approach to assessing parent-child relationships is multidimensional, Ganotice et al. (2017) note that parent-child shared reading, especially those filled with

dialogue and interaction, may positively impact specific dimensions of the parent-child relationship. Some natural interactions occur when parents and children read together, including hugging, laughing, positive comments and praise, and encouraging touch. These behaviours will work together to build the parent-child bond and the positive emotion of the child (Barnard, 1997). As de Villiers and de Villiers (1979) note, parents adept at interpreting in shared reading can use vivid rhythms, melodies, rhymes, and exaggerated tones to create an emotional bond between parent and child.

In a series of studies conducted by Merga and colleagues, the association between children's reading motivation and parent-child shared reading has been clearly illustrated (Merga, 2017; Merga & Mat Roni, 2018). In Merga (2017), a participant describes how her mother, a woman struggling with dyslexia, had done her best to read aloud for her as a child. These activities instilled a lifelong motivation and love of reading. As she mentioned:

When respondents were exposed to a love of reading, whether through observation of a beloved or respected figure, a social influencer's taking the time to actively provide access or support choice, or through social interaction and shared enjoyment, a lifelong reader could be fostered. (p. 16)

Then, Merga and Mat Roni (2018) point out that although some natural barriers limit parents' competence to guide parent-child shared reading, children still cherish the reading experience and appreciate their parents' efforts. At the same time, there is a powerful message about the value of reading in family literacy activities, which motivates and inspires children to read. Lawson (2012) points out that the more fun children get from shared reading, the more complete the memories they retain. Only when they have integrated the memories associated with the story narrative do they experience decreased pleasure due to over-familiarity. They may keep pleasant memories, increasing their concentration on future experiences exploring.

Due to various reasons, such as globalization and increased competition between countries and diverse perspectives of childhood literacy development, early literacy education has always been one of the focuses of education policy-making and practice in

various countries. As a core area of early literacy development, family literacy (including family literacy programs organized at the national/regional levels) has been closely related to issues such as consolidating national competitiveness (Sticht, 1993), reducing poverty (Phillips, 1993), and enhancing social equity and equality (Reyes & Torres, 2007). For example, in National Strategy for Early Literacy (2009), reported by The Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network, firstly, Jamieson stresses the importance of literacy skills at the national level:

Improving the literacy skills of Canadians is thus fundamental to numerous elements of public policy: 1. Literacy skills drive economic growth, labour market outcomes, productivity growth and innovation in firms. 2. Literacy increases the return on public investments in education and health. 3. Literacy is essential for participation in the democratic process and social engagement. (p. 3)

Subsequently, the importance of the family is repeatedly mentioned with specific initiatives, and it is suggested that the development and advance of community-based family literacy programs could help parents be “aware of relevant developmental milestones and inquiring about the individual child’s language progress” (p. 11). Since the 1980s, family literacy programs and related acts (such as The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of the United States) have been established in many countries, from North America to Europe and beyond.

In 2010, China officially became the world's second-largest economy (Morrison, 2014). In addition to the change in international economic status, China and other countries have close information exchanges in education, science, culture, health, and other areas that reflect people's quality of life at the national level and among individual citizens. The theories and practical experience of early childhood education and family literacy also expanded to China from other countries, especially developed ones (Xin, 2017).

At the government policy level, in May 2001, the State Council issued *The Outline of Chinese Children’s Development (2001-2010)*. The critical role of early reading for children was emphasized for the first time. It proposes that children develop their literacy skills through drawing and reading in their daily living environment (The State Council,

2001). Then, in March 2003, The General Office of the State Council forwarded *The Guiding Opinions on the Reform and Development of Early Childhood Education* issued by the Ministry of Education of China, All-China Women's Federation and other departments, emphasizing the vital role of early childhood education and integrating it into the national education system. In 2010, the State Council issued *Several Opinions on the Current Development of Preschool Education*, which mentioned that kindergarten should be carefully combined with family literacy to create a suitable environment for children's growth and development (The State Council, 2010).

Since then, the Chinese governmental documents related to family education have been released one after another. In October 2015, the Ministry of Education issued *The Guidelines on Strengthening Family Education*, which further emphasized the importance of family education and clarified the primary responsibilities of parents in it. The guideline puts forward several aspects that need improvement in current family literacy in China, such as insufficient understanding, parents' insufficient education level, and the lack of supporting social resources. It also provides some guidance as to the solution, such as establishing a family education work pattern led by the government, coordinated by education departments, participated by parents, organized by schools and supported by the society (The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2015). In November 2016, *The Five-year Plan for Guiding and Promoting Family Education (2016-2020)* was jointly issued by nine national departments, including the All-China Women Federation, the China Civilization Office, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, the National Health and Family Planning Commission, the State General Administration of Press and Publication, Radio and Television, China Association for Science and Technology, China National Committee for The Wellbeing of The Youth. The plan further provides approaches to effectively improving the professional level of family literacy in the digital era and, for the first time, proposes the suggestion of constructing family education legislation and promoting the legislation process.

The significance of early childhood literacy and parent-child shared reading, as one of the family literacy activities, influences children's growth (Hirsh-Pasek & Burchinal, 2006).

Western education authorities have widely accepted this view and have gradually drawn the attention of developing countries represented by China. By analyzing the political context of this specific family education behaviour in various countries and the efforts made for early year childhood education and family education by the Chinese government in these years, I see the trend in Chinese educational policy that encourages parents to provide high-quality family literacy activities for their children within their home environment, such as sharing more high-quality books and cultivating reading habits for all family members. In this context, the rapid development and expansion of parent-child shared reading activities in Chinese families have become a matter of course.

### 1.3 Rationale

Research has widely reported a well-established connection between family literacy and early-year literacy development for native English-speaking families (Baker, 2000; Cohen & Cowen, 2011; Epstein, 1995; Hood et al., 2008; Manolitsis et al., 2011). Therefore, family Literacy Programs (FLPs) are provided in many English-speaking countries to assist parents in enhancing their English literacy and constructing home-based literacy events to support their children's literacy development (O'Brien et al., 2014). However, literature is limited about the impacts of family literacy on children's English literacy skills among English-as-foreign-language families, let alone these parents' experiences of participating in the FLPs and home-shared learning for English literacy.

In China, influenced by globalization and Western culture, an increasing number of Chinese researchers, educators, and parents focus on children's English literacy development (Ruan & Leung, 2012). As the significance of early year childhood literacy and family education are well accepted among several academic and practical topics in the field, "parent-child shared book reading" (亲子阅读) has become attractive for Chinese parents in the new millennium (Gai, 2006). Therefore, to help children develop their English literacy, Chinese parents are encouraged by schools and mass media to read as early as possible to their children (Li, 2004). Also, referring to the reading material, it is English picture books instead of English textbooks (traditionally the critical medium

for Chinese students to learn English) that scholars and experts recommend Chinese parents select to help their children acquire early English literacy (Wang, 2014; Zhang, 2016).

According to the data from Amazon China, the sales of English picture books increased by 45 times in 2013, showing a rapid growth trend. (Chen, 2015). In the subsequent *Report of Children's Reading Tendency* (2016), Amazon China points out that there is an overall forward shift in the age of young Chinese readers, and the proportion of English reading among children aged 0-6 has increased (Amazon China, 2016). Therefore, when analyzing the current situation of English reading for Chinese children, Xin (2017) show that growing Chinese families with children aged 0-6 select English children's books as family-shared reading material. First, she indicates that this phenomenon is influenced by society's overall positive reading atmosphere, and parents' recognition of parent-child reading relying on English picture books is also greatly improved. Secondly, it is related to the educational level of these parents. Most of these parents were born in China in the 1980s and 1990s, received a good education, and understood modern educational philosophies (Xin, 2017). As Zhang (2016) says, Chinese parents desire to improve their children's English language acquisition.

However, studies are still being conducted regarding the benefits of family literacy in China (Chen et al., 2010). Several studies show that when parents perform a home-shared reading, most of them need some help to acquire the knowledge of the reading methods, interaction skills, and atmosphere building, and thus to provide better practical strategies to support their children's reading development (Steiner, 2014; Swain et al., 2014; Timmons & Pelletier, 2015), and especially, for those low-income families (Jarrett et al., 2015), and families in less developed regions (Ngorosho, 2010; Parry et al., 2014). Chinese parents, similarly, are reported to have many challenges when they read English picture books to their children. They are unsure of how to interact with their children in a productive literacy development process during reading and where to go for help (Wang, 2018; Zhang, 2016). Besides, as the value of English learning is a strong motivator, most parents' understanding of the educational functions of reading EPBs is limited (Huang, 2013), which tends to impact their children's English literacy development.

Many studies in the West have attempted to identify and verify the factors affecting family literacy (such as Chow et al., 2017). However, in this case, relying on the existing Western studies to provide Chinese parents with family literacy suggestions may lead to ineffective or even misleading results, as there are many differences in social, cultural, economic and educational backgrounds between China and Western countries. Therefore, this study does not seek to replicate family literacy studies from the literature of the West to examine the Chinese families' shared reading of EPBs. Instead, it starts with Chinese parents' real-world reading experiences with their children.

Due to the particular objective of this research, a narrative inquiry was used as a methodology to guide the study. According to Connelly and Clandinin (2000), the methodology is a way of thinking, and narrative researchers should think narratively. Therefore, the narrative inquirer should do research in a practical, intuitive, and critical way. In addition, Xu and Connelly (2010) emphasize that “A researcher imagines a situation of interest as a living space where life’s activities, in all their complexity, are carried forward” (p. 357). This shows that a practically oriented narrative inquiry does not have to start with a research problem, but “thinking narratively is first and foremost an imaginative act of mind” (Xu and Connelly, 2010, p. 357). This exploratory approach greatly inspired me to make learning from the experiences of participating Chinese families the central purpose of this study. I probed the stories of Chinese families' parent-child shared reading EPBs, reflected on the participants' literacy beliefs, investigated the construction of their home literacy environments, and experienced the dilemmas, confusions, gains and joys they faced in the provision of reading activities. And I expected this exploratory study to provide data and findings to support future research and practice of parent-child shared reading on EPBs with Chinese families.

## 1.4 Research Questions

Each narrative inquiry emerges from a specific wonder rather than a precisely defined and described question with a specifically designed research scheme. Narrative inquirers tend to carry around a puzzle, a state of “re-search”, which frames “a sense of continual reformulation” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 124).

Kim (2016) believes that when establishing research questions for narrative inquiry, they can be succinct but open enough to trigger discoveries, explorations, surprises, and more questions. So, the first thing that narrative inquirers need to consider is “Whose stories about what events in which particular context am I going to research” (p. 94)?

Therefore, I started my research puzzle with the following questions with my wonder. There were exploratory yet open enough to invite investigation, discussion, reflection, and further inquiries.

- A. What experiences lead Chinese parents to practice home-shared reading of EPBs?
- B. What are Chinese parents’ expressed beliefs about implementing parent-child shared reading on EPBs at home?
- C. What are Chinese parents’ experiences engaging in parent-child shared reading of EPBs at home?
- D. What can we learn from the experiences of parent-child shared reading of EPBs in China?

## 1.5 Definition of Terms

### 1.5.1 Family Literacy

Since the term “family literacy” was coined by Denny Taylor (1983), it has been profusely applied based on various perspectives, standpoints, and functions.

#### **Two approaches**

Gadsden (2002) believes that at least two views dominate the practice and application of family literacy.

The first view is based on the logic that only teachers can be considered professionals to provide and share knowledge with students. Therefore, researchers assume that family literacy provides parents with school-valued literacy training and practices to help children overcome academic difficulties that cannot be accomplished in school



(Compton-Lilly, 2010). This approach suggests that parents need more formal literacy knowledge to assist children in coping with school learning. They must be taught skills to ensure children's cognitive development (Gadsden, 2002).

The second view is based on sociocultural theory, emphasizing the social and cultural environment that children are immersed in and the influence of parents and community members on children's literacy learning (Rodriguez-Brown, 2003). From this perspective, studies have explored people's literary practices in their home environment, especially in different cultural or linguistic contexts from the mainstream (Carger, 1996; Purcell-Gates, 1995). Studies from a sociocultural perspective seek information from family practice and parent-child interaction to understand better family literacy's function, use, and goal setting (Gadsden, 2002).

The starting point of the research design of this research came from the second path.

### **Project design or family activities**

The first understanding of “family literacy” is specific programs involving families. One of the earliest examples recorded by Nash (1987) was the English literacy project at the University of Massachusetts. Nutbrown et al. (2005) define family literacy programs as “programs to teach literacy that acknowledge and make use of learners' family relationships and engagement in family literacy practices.” (p. 19)

At the government policy level, there are several definitions of this term. The United States Congress defines it as: “those that involve the three separated but highly connected constituencies of family, school, and community.” (Crawford & Zygouris-Coe, 2006, p. 262)

Similarly, the National Literacy Trust defines a family literacy program as:

*Any program or initiative that aims to work through parents to improve the reading and writing of their children and those that have the improvement of the parent's literacy as an aim. Family literacy is a powerful way to support parents with few skills and show them how to help their children become confident and*

*effective communicators. It also has knock-on benefits for other family members - parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters.* (Cole, 2011, p. 17)

Secondly, family literacy, proposed by Taylor (1983), refers to the paths that parents influence and help their children's learning literacy. This definition should be separated from family literacy programs which teach "literacy that acknowledges and make use of learner's family relationships and engagement in family literacy practices" (Hannon, 2003, p. 10) (e.g., Allen et al., 2007; Wasik & Herrmann, 2004; Wing-Yin Chow & McBride-Chang, 2003).

As Taylor (1983) proposed, family literacy refers to interactive literacy practices in the family. Her description of family literacy as a phenomenon of family life is developed along sociocultural theoretical lines. They emphasize the significance of adults in structuring activities for children's engagement and thus expand children's knowledge beyond what they are currently functioning (van Tonder, Arrow, & Nicholson, 2019). Young children's learning is primarily rooted in the home environment and family activities (Leichter, 1975), but support for young children varies widely across cultures (Rodriguez-Brown, 2003; Rogoff, 2003). Along with the development of multiliteracies and new literacy in the past 20 years, the understanding and application of family literacy have entered a plural state, referred to as "family literacies" (Taylor et al., 2008, p. 273). However, these updates also acknowledge parents as the first educators for their children and admit that parents influence children's literacy growth.

Although the first concept of family literacy in specific training or supporting programs has become a default one in this field, the recognition of the second one, represented by several studies from a sociocultural perspective, as Hannon (2000) said, is meaningful and valuable. It recognizes the significance of family literacy as literacy interactivity within families and the effectiveness of parental participation as family members in family literacy activities. This study investigated interactions and activities between parents and children regarding family literacy in everyday situations. Therefore, I selected the definition of family literacy from the sociocultural perspective, defined as family activities.

## 1.5.2 Emergent Literacy

Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) contend that the term “emergent literacy” (p. 848) is applied to signify the notion that the learning of literacy is best conceptualized as a developmental continuum originating in the early life of a child rather than as an all-or-none event that occurs when children start school.

### **Critical consciousness and paradigm shift**

Marie Clay (1966) first coins the concept of emergent literacy and states that children acquire language, reading, and writing skills before formal schooling. Therefore, children's literacy learning starts early in life and continues to develop. Since it was proposed, this viewpoint has represented a critical consciousness and paradigm shift in reading readiness (Erickson, 2000).

By the 1980s, the study of emergent literacy was considered “a new perspective which stresses that legitimate, conceptual, developmental literacy learning occurs during the first years of a child's life” (Teale & Sulzby, 1986, p. 28). Moreover, emergent literacy evolved as researchers began to think carefully about literacy acquisition from children’s perspectives. (Teale & Sulzby, 1989). In Teale (1982), emergent literacy is recognized as children participating in reading activities assisted by literate adults. According to Teale and Sulzby (1986), emergent literacy can describe a developmental experience for young children related to reading and writing before conventional literacy training.

In contrast to first-grade instruction (Denny & Weintraub, 1966), and relying on her insistence on emergent literacy theory, as Teale (1987) emphasizes:

By looking not merely at conventional manifestations of reading or writing but also considering such manifestations as children’s rereading of familiar books before they are fully literate, 3-year-olds’ uses of environmental print, or writing with scribbles or random-appearing letters. By examining literacy from adult and children’s perspectives, we can see that emergent literacy learning occurs in virtually every young child in a literate society like ours. (p. 46)

Teale believes that every child has a certain amount of spontaneous awareness and interest in literacy before they are officially enrolled in school.

### **Specific skills or a social process**

To set some prescriptive learning goals for literacy education, when exploring the concept of emergent literacy, some researchers tend to break it down into specific skills, such as oral language, print knowledge, phonological sensitivity, and rhyme awareness (e.g., Cunningham et al., 2009; Dodd et al., 2000; Lonigan et al., 2000; Reese & Cox, 1999). However, there is still some debate about the specific skills that should be included in EL (Sénéchal et al., 2001).

Meanwhile, most studies accept that EL is a process that continuously promotes the development of children's literacy (e.g., Lanter et al., 2012; Morrow, 1989; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001). From the sociocultural perspective, this process is situated in a specific context involving immediate social situations, families, and communities (McLachlan, 2007). Emergent literacy, from this perspective, highlights the significance of social interaction for meaning construction in early childhood and regards children's cultural practices as products of socialized events (Zhang, 2017).

As Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) state, “reading, writing, and oral language develop concurrently and interdependently from an early age from children's exposure to interactions in the social contexts in which literacy is a component, and in the absence of formal instruction” (p. 849). Similarly, I explored the parent-child interaction practices in the family literacy environment to reflect the cultivating approaches to children's emergent literacy. Furthermore, this study focused on children's emergent literacy under social interaction based on the sociocultural theory. By listening and observing the interaction of shared reading activities in the family setting, I explored the role of supportive environmental factors in the Chinese family context, such as parents' literacy beliefs and family literacy environment, in children's developing emergent literacy. By accepting the underlying philosophy of emergent literacy represented by Clay (1966) and Teale and Sulzby (1986), my study traced the family influence on children's literacy development and applied the term as an interpersonal approach to guiding children's

early literacy learning.

### 1.5.3 Home Literacy Environment (HLE)

Although there is broad agreement on the importance of HLE, a generally accepted definition still needs to be improved (Niklas & Schneider, 2013). Initially, the understanding of HLE was mixed with the families' SES since children's individual reading development and interest were found to be related to it (Dickinson & Snow, 1987). Since then, with the in-depth study of early childhood literacy, HLE has been conceptualized as a complex concept transcending SES or simple literacy activities, including multidimensional actions and motivation (Yeo et al., 2014).

#### **Two modes or a multifaceted construction**

In 2002, Sénéchal and LeFevre proposed two types of literacy experience in the home environment: formal and informal literacy interactions. The former focuses on the interaction of code-based literacy skills through activities, such as direct instructions of letters and words, to enhance children's print-related skills, such as teaching notes in daily life and writing children's names or other comments. On the other hand, the latter emphasizes the meaning-focused reading experience, showing children prints in their living environment through everyday activities, such as parent-child shared reading and recognition of the advertisement or signs. Deng et al. (2016) later confirmed that the two kinds of literacy experiences have no strong correlation but work together in children's early literacy learning. The two literacy experiences affect a child's speaking and comprehension skills and code-related skills such as letter knowledge, phonological awareness, and word recognition (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014). Correspondingly, everyday literacy experience can affect children's reading comprehension during school years (Manolitsis et al., 2013), while formal literacy experience affects children's decoding skills after formal learning (Hamilton, 2016). Burgess et al. (2002) also proposed a similar classification model, identifying that HLE includes both passive influences, in which parents act as role models for their children's literacy learning, and sturdy effect, in which parents guide their children to participate in family literacy activities.

However, the model of family literacy experience in Sénéchal and LeFevre (2002) is soon seen as too simplistic, as HLE is supposed to be multi-faceted (Boerma, Mol, & Jolles, 2018). For example, in parent-child shared reading activities, once a child begins to learn alphabet rules, shared reading can assist in building code-related literacy experiences (Mol et al., 2009).

In Burgess, et al.'s study (2002), the description of HLE has presented a more multidimensional perspective. "The HLE can be characterized by the variety of resources and opportunities provided to children as well as by the parental skills, abilities, dispositions, and resources that determine the provision of these opportunities for children" (p. 413). Roberge (2005) sums up the three "climates" Leichter (1982) proposed, which provide home contexts for children's literacy learning:

(1) the "physical climate" would see the presence of print materials and written language in the home; (2) the "interpersonal climate" which provides for interaction between the child and liberate others in the household; and (3) "emotional and motivational climates" which entails the hopes, fears and expectations that various family members possess regarding literacy. (p. 19)

At this point, the understanding of HLE is no longer limited to a single conceptual dimension. Weigel et al. (2006) also believe that HLE has broad implications and may represent several different practices when studying children's language and literacy skills. Boerma et al. (2018) attribute HLE as a multifaceted construct that includes three aspects: (a) a variety of parent-child family literacy activities; (b) multiple literacy resources and opportunities provided by parents for their children; (c) parents' reading beliefs, attitudes, and reading habits.

This study explored Chinese parents' experience of their home-shared reading from multiple perspectives. The multifaceted decomposition of HLE equips me with a comprehensive perspective to investigate their experience and stories. Then, it helped me construct a multi-dimensional view to observe the parents' home-shared reading activities, perceive their literacy beliefs for themselves and their children, and investigate the factors that led them to the potential challenges in shared reading or enabled them to

provide a supportive environment for their children. Therefore, I built upon the direction set by Boerma et al. (2018) and accepted HLE as a multi-faceted construct.

## 1.6 Theoretical Framework

This study was situated within children's family literacy which involves different educational dimensions, e.g., cognitive, social, and emotional development. The theoretical framework of this paper consisted of two interwoven parts. First, I drew on the sociocultural theory (Vygotsky's 1978) of children's learning and literacy acquisition. I considered how it supported my understanding and analysis of parent-child interaction and relationships in parent-child shared reading. In addition, the multiliteracies theory (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) expanded my perspective through "Learning by Design" to view the whole process of knowledge construction of Chinese families on EPBs shared reading. The position derived from this theory is the basic stance for this study to investigate the relevant pedagogical practices in family literacy activities. Finally, nested pedagogical orientations (Cummins, 2006) provided a structure to logically construct the relationship between the two theories in this study.

### 16.1 Sociocultural Theory Related to Literacy

As cognitive and psycholinguistic perspectives have long influenced the field of literacy studies, literacy policymakers tend to focus more on specific language skills, such as phonological awareness, fluency, and comprehension (Perry, 2012) and less on sociocultural aspects of literacy. Until Vygotsky's (1978) proposition of integrating sociocultural effects into the psychological perspective of cognition, a significant paradigm shift occurred in literacy education. Focusing on the higher mental functioning of human beings, the sociocultural theory is a sound framework that has informed social studies in specific cultural, historical, and institutional environments (Wertsch et al., 1995).

Within the framework of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, this study draws on three main points: a) the cultural development paths of children; b) the concept of scaffolding; c) the concept of the "zone of proximal development" (ZDP)

As a theory grounded in psychology, sociocultural theory reveals social interaction's significance and contributions to individual development (Vygotsky, 1962). While Piaget's theory of cognitive development focused on the child's interactions and exploration, Vygotsky's theory suggested that learning is embedded within social interaction and occurs when a child interacts with other people:

Every child's cultural development function appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, logical memory, and the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals. (Vygotsky, 1978, p.57)

This view describes children's development as a process in but not limited to the relationships between people and related social interactions (Johnson, 2009).

Vygotsky (1981) reiterates the importance of social interaction in child development, which derives from social, cultural, and historical life forms. As Crawford (1996) confirms, Vygotsky's theory focuses on the connections between people and sociocultural contexts and emphasizes the influence of the social environment on literacy learning and development.

In Lee and Smagorinsky's research (2000), they contend that Vygotsky's sociocultural theory has had an impressive impact on education and provided a specific perspective to understand literacy development. Street (1984) shows that this theory redefines literacy as a complex practice intertwined with social and cultural contexts rather than an autonomous skill. Guzetti and Gamboa (2004) further explain, "Sociocultural perspectives perceive literacy as more than reading and writing technical skills. Learning and practicing are shaped by the social and cultural beliefs students hold about the value and purposes of literacy" (p. 143).

Correspondingly, literacy scholars and educators began to reconceptualize literacy from the inter-psychological perspective and rethink curriculum design for literacy instruction (e.g., Freire, 2001; Wang et al., 2011). From a sociocultural perspective, literacy learning



is seen as a “socially mediated process” that “cannot be understood apart from its development context, the forms of mediation available, and the nature of participation across various cultural practices” (Razfar & Gutiérrez 2003, p. 35). In addition, the sociocultural perspective can be a valuable lens for examining children’s literacy development (Gee, 2001). And under this perspective, understanding children's literacy development cannot be separated from the cultural, social, and historical background in which they grew up (Davidson, 2010).

Human learning is mediated by various sociocultural factors, such as history, family, social environment, cultural experiences, previous knowledge, and skills (Gibbons, 2002). As Labbas (2016) argues, “Learning is no longer isolated from the context where it occurs. The sociocultural theory has emerged as a theory focused on the way people learn in groups and the way culture shapes their practices” (p. 69). Similarly, Pérez (1998) suggests that to understand children's literacy learning better, it is necessary to consider how the thinking of particular groups of people guides children's thinking, how children understand their relationships with others, and how they interpret the world.

Nicolopoulou and Cole (1997) argue that the sociocultural theory challenges the role of formal school instruction in children's literacy development, as it sparks the public discussion about children's learning outside of school. In recent decades, more literacy studies have supported literacy learning and language development in a home environment. Home is where children preliminarily develop their literacy and language (Baker & Scher, 2002).

Children develop inner speech through social interactions, such as with their parents. In addition, the activities directing the development are mediated by language and other symbol systems (John-Stenier & Mahn, 1996). Consequently, in most cases, parents would be key players at home. Children’s language and cognition development occur simultaneously and intertwiningly by interacting with their parents, who can assist them in verifying hypotheses and providing feedback to their questions (McGee & Richgels, 1996).

In short, as Rodriguez-Brown (2003) indicates, although sociocultural researchers “do not

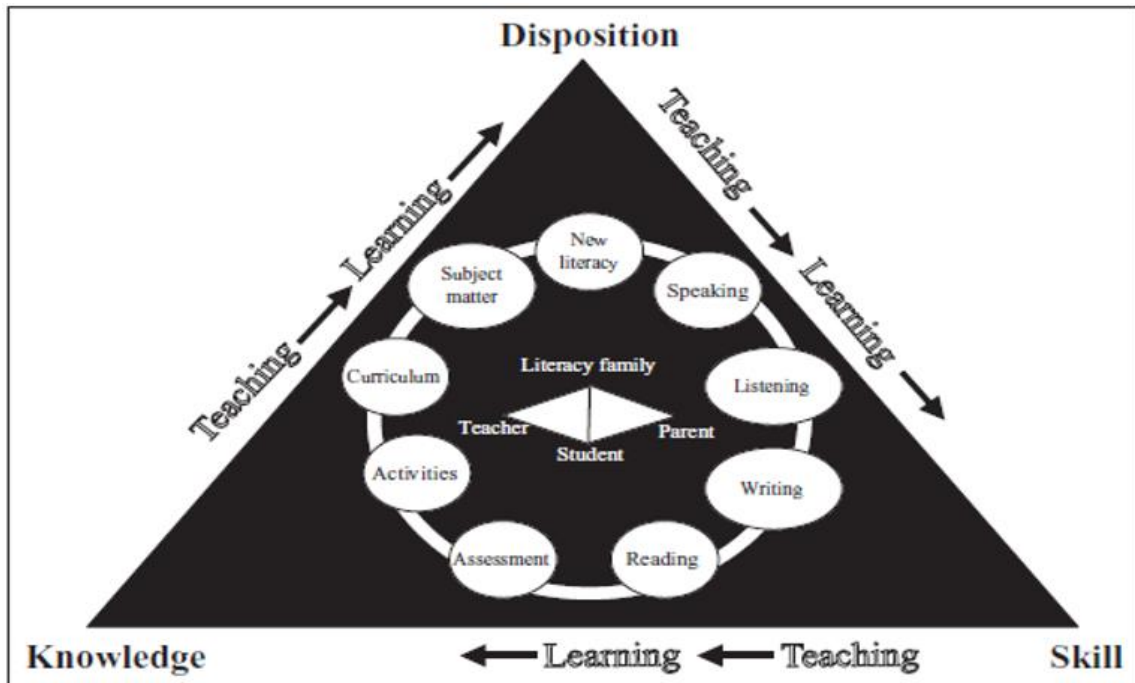
always produce implications for everyday practice” (p.147), their perspective can guide educators and parents to understand the approaches to preschoolers’ literacy and language skills development, especially those children with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

As for specific help parents can provide, Vygotsky (1978) finds that the parents’ assistance, which helps children dig out ideas and figure out problems, is like a scaffolding for children’s learning and development. Therefore, scaffolding emphasizes the significance of assisting children’s education through efficient teaching strategies and activities and helping parents provide sufficient support (Vygotsky, 1978).

In addition to Vygotsky (1978), Rogoff (1990) posits the theory of guided participation, which is about children gaining competence through interaction with more knowledgeable others. As a more experienced person, a parent can scaffold a less experienced child, clarifying concepts and supporting the accumulation of knowledge (Gee, 2000). Besides, to help children make progress gradually, parents are encouraged to create diverse opportunities and optimal activities corresponding to the cognitive level of their children (Gambrell & Morrow, 1996). Huang (2013) illustrates this idea in a parental involvement and engagement model in the literacy domain (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Parental Involvement and Engagement in the Literacy Domain*



*Note.* Parental involvement in literacy learning and development. Reprinted from “The use of literacy bags promotes parental involvement in Chinese children’s literacy learning in the English language”, by Huang, 2013, *Language Teaching Research*, 17(2), 251-268.

The model describes three essential bases of children’s literacy development, the teaching-learning relationship and the three core members of the literacy family. The core element of a literacy family is the cooperation of teachers and parents, which serves students' literacy development. This core mechanism builds the teaching-learning connection between knowledge, skills, and dispositions, starting with the nine dimensions of literacy. In this model, parents have a dual responsibility in the triangle to support students and their learning. This dual responsibility provides this study with a notable point to perceive parents’ reading experiences with their young children.

The last core concept of Vygotsky (1978) that this study draws on is the “zone of proximal development” (ZDP). In ZDP, there is a distance between “the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving” and “the potential development level as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance”

(Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). As Thompson (2013) explains, with cultural practices, group members with more knowledge or skills often participate in social interactions to help the learners keep up with others. The exchange in a family can provide an ideal setting for children to receive appropriate support for cultural practices (Perez, 1997). Therefore, this assumption is one of the core premises for my study that the sociocultural interaction in a home-shared reading is useful for helping children progress in literacy step by step.

In this paper, as a specific field, family context is used to explore Chinese parents' experience helping their preschoolers acquire English literacy by reading EPBs for/ with them. The sociocultural theory of literacy provides me with a perspective to see the connections between children's literacy development and parents' cultural influences and beliefs on home-shared reading. Rather than only focusing on the result of children's reading and writing, this study is more about investigating home-shared reading activities, children's meaning-making of their family literacy practice, parents' perception of their relationship with children, the connection between children's literacy learning and the environment in which their literacy activities exist, and the co-constructing experience these families have in the real-world context.

### 1.6.2 From literacy to multiliteracies

At the end of the last century, a new wave of technological and economic innovations affected people's lives, including education. The emerging network world, defined by global connectedness, the proliferation of digital media, and fast capitalism in the international economic order, provided education scholars great inspiration to rethink what kind of literacy pedagogy can meet the needs of the new century (Penuel & O'Connor, 2018).

The term multiliteracies was introduced by the New London Group (1996) as a framework for action, given a theoretical overview of multiliteracies as the response to the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity and multiple modes and media for meaning-making in the globalized world (New London Group, 1996). There are two major topics in the multiliteracies domain, "multiplicity of communications channels and media" and "increasing salience of cultural, linguistic diversity" (Cope & Kalantzis,

2000, p. 5). In their “programmatic manifesto” (New London Group, 1996, p. 63), they elaborate on a series of global economic, technological, and cultural innovations that were emerging at that time, imagine the collision of cultural diversity and the technology-oriented globalization that might occur in the future society, and argue that there will be no clearly defined gaps between public and private spaces in the literacy education. As a framework for action, multiliteracies focus on “the big picture; the changing world and the new demands being placed upon people as makers of meaning in changing workplaces, as citizens in changing public spaces and in the changing dimensions of our community live – our lifeworlds” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 4).

According to Schechter and Cummins (2003), teachers focus narrowly on monolingual and monocultural printed-based literacies in school education without being aware of students’ great cultural and linguistic capital forms. However, The New London Group (1996) argues that the literacy practice should be placed in the social contexts to expand the understanding of literacy to an abstract communication theory rather than associate it with the specific rules, traditions, and material practices related to reading and writing. In addition, Luke and Elkins (2002) believe multiliteracies must allow students, schools, and communities to face unprecedented cultural, social, economic, and political changes. Cope and Kalantzis (2000) also propose that “there was no singular canonical English that either could or should be taught anymore” (p. 5).

The perception of literacy is extended to the social aspects of meaning-making, the multimodal approaches to communication (Rowse & Walsh, 2011). In 2016, Kalantzis et al. stressed the significance of such an extension again,

The multiliteracies theory of meaning-making expands on more static frameworks for understanding representation and communication, such as ‘traditional grammar’ and ‘the literary canon,’ suggesting a more dynamic conception of meaning-making as a design process. (pp. 220–221)

It means the multiliteracies framework, as a literacy theory rooted in and differentiated from theories of literacy as social practice, is prone to redress the simplification. Moreover, in this understanding of meaning-making, “design” is used as a metaphor,

incorporating the elements of the communicative process, the acts of appropriate design, and multimodal approaches to transforming the design (Willett, 2020). Then, in Cope and Kalantzis (2009), three components are defined in “Designs of Meaning” (p. 176), namely the available design, designing, and the redesigned, which shift learners’ identity from the simple knowledge consumer to the critical and creative producer.

Cloonan (2010) indicates that, although literacy is still identified as meaning-making in the social context, based on the innovations of communication technology, multiliteracies theory emphasizes multimodality in pedagogy. It implies that meaning-making can exist in various communicative approaches involving pluralistic modes of visual, gestural, spatial, and other forms of expression (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). As Kumpulainen and Sefton-Green (2020) indicate, while the concept of multiliteracies derives from contemporary critiques about what it considers restrictive and traditional literacy definitions and literacy pedagogies, this word “has a less threatening, more conservative, appeal, particularly in situating transformations in modern communication - beyond print and especially including multimedia, the digital, and the embedding of film into everyday platforms - as part of common sense in the modern world” (p. 8). Consequently, the public can apply multiliteracies to describe all devices, media, and digital practices (Cooper et al., 2013). Moreover, in this range of modes, students gradually develop their capacity to construct meaning proficiently and thus become multiliterate (Baker, 2010).

Kress (2000) applies a theory of semiosis to express critiques on the narrow conceptualization of literacy that only focuses on writing and reading in the format of printed or written texts. It emphasizes an action that “socially located, culturally and historically formed individuals, as the remakers, the transformers, and the reshapers of the representational resources available to them” (Kress, 2000, p. 155). Thus, it is evident that the instructional implications of multiliteracies are significant for learners, as the model constructed by four components collectively provides an innovative learning environment (Taylor et al., 2008),

The pedagogical design creates opportunities for engaging students in meaningful experiences and practices within a learning community (Situated

Practice), supported in their developing understanding and conceptual repertoires by explicit instruction at teachable moments (Overt Instruction). After students critically examine their new literacies regarding social and cultural relevance and power relations (Critical Reframing), teachers design opportunities to apply their new knowledge and forms of expression to impact their lived realities (Transformed Practice). (p. 274)

These four components do not exist independently but are interrelated without order and work together to integrate the teaching and learning of literacy (Angay-Crowder et al., 2013). As Cope and Kalantzi (2015) recall, this pedagogical framework underwent a series of stages of evolution, with the focal point occurring in their 2000 project, *Learning by Design*. And later, *Learning by Design* is used to express a classification of activity types, “the different kinds of things that learner can do to know” (p. 17). Then, after applying the multiliteracies pedagogy into teaching practice for many years, Cope and Kalantzis (2009) reframe the components into the more recognizable pedagogical acts, known as “knowledge processes” of “Experiencing”, “Conceptualising”, “Analysing” and “Applying” (p. 17). The pedagogy of multiliteracies, which aims at students’ transformation, is based on the rise of situational practice theory but puts more emphasis on those students continually transform their practices at least partially as they participate and, correspondingly, make critiques and transformation as the core of their learning mode (Penuel & O’Connor, 2018).

The scholars inspired by multiliteracies take a critical stance on instructional practices, as they admit the dynamic and cultural nature of literacy and emphasize the varying nature of the world, the potential power relationship, and the corresponding adaptation and change of literacy (Perry, 2012). From the perspective of multiliteracies, these critical stances are expanding in the potential contexts in which literacy learning might happen.

In the field of early childhood literacy, research on children’s learning experience of engaging with multiliteracies in the family context is increasing, but as Kumpulainen and Sefton-Green (2020) describe, “ambivalent” (p. 9). Taylor et al. (2008) argue that practices of family literacy are further “divorced from the curriculum, pathologized by

the cultural and linguistic deficit models underpinning pedagogies focused overwhelmingly on monolingual English academic print literacy” (p. 273). It means that scholars have realized the importance of the enlightening multiliteracies perspective within the family literacy environment. But when it comes to pedagogical practices, the multiliteracies pedagogy has been criticized as “eclecticism by those favouring purer approaches” (Newman, 2001, p. 283). Auerbach (2001) expresses similar concerns about whether these four components, which derive from different pedagogical traditions, can coexist peacefully in the family literacy movement and argues that “an explicit ideological stance and a discussion of their implications for pedagogy” is necessary (p. 107).

As Cope and Kalantzi (2015) show, three components in the multiliteracies argument are framed as the what, why, and how of multiliteracies. This study focuses more on the third part of the argument: the ‘how’ of the pedagogy of multiliteracies. From the perspective of multiliteracies pedagogy, this study explores the opportunities and environment for children to access and engage in multiliteracies learning hidden in the family shared reading. My exploration of parents’ literacy beliefs reflects the possibilities of multiliteracies pedagogy in families of Chinese preschoolers. Besides, investigating their home-shared reading experiences reveals the specific forms and manifestations of the pedagogy in their families. Above all, this study also accompanies participants to explore their home-shared reading through the stories of their own and others under the framework of the multiliteracies pedagogy.

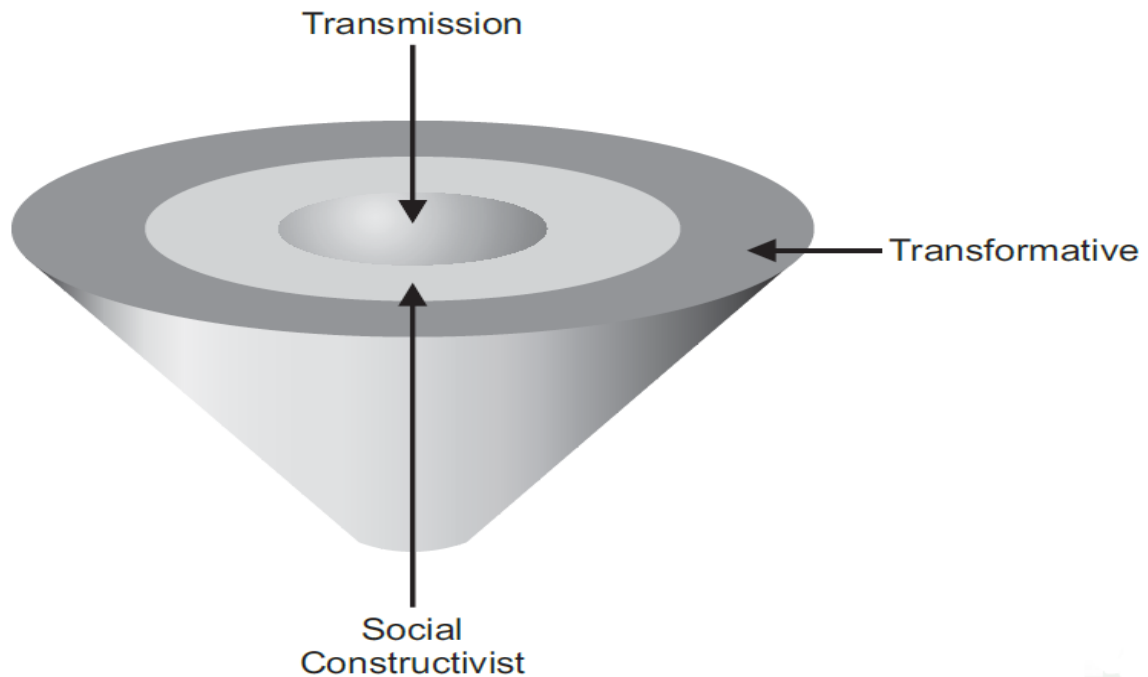
### 1.6.3 Co-constructing the stories through two pillars

Cummins (2006) interprets the multiliteracies pedagogical framework into a nested structure of three pedagogical orientations: transmission, social constructivist, and transformative (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.**

*Nested pedagogical orientations*



*Note.* Nested pedagogical orientations. Reprinted from “Identity texts: The imaginative construction of self through Multiliteracies pedagogy”, by Cummins, 2006, In O. Garcia, T. Skutnabb-Kangas & M. E. Torres-Guzman (Eds.), *Imagining multilingual schools: Languages in education and glocalization* (pp. 51-68). Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Multilingual Matters LTD.

Cummins (2001) sees all three orientations as “...points on a continuum that merge into one another” (p. 218). This view has dramatically inspired my theoretical framework design to incorporate the two theories. Standing in the transformation orientation, my research needs to respect the knowledge co-construction in a home-shared reading and avoid focusing narrowly on the teaching-learning relationship between parents and children.

This study exists in a specific context: the families in mainland China. Miller et al. (1997) show that parents with different cultural backgrounds take different attitudes and beliefs on parent-child shared reading, and children’s ways of thinking and behaving may vary. Besides, people’s literacy practice is culturally and linguistically different from the

mainstream environment in the family environment (Rodriguez-Brown, 2003). Families are different - not only from each other but also within the family; mom may have grown up with a different literacy experience than dad (Campano, 2007). Thus, the sociocultural factors in this study are worthy of attention and are different from those in the West and non-home contexts. As Puteh-Behak et al. (2015) suggest, considering and understanding specific sociocultural contexts can explore different learning patterns and other approaches to interpreting human learning activities. Otherwise, learners' learning experiences from diverse sociocultural backgrounds can be misinterpreted and misunderstood.

In addition, as Street (2005) argues, to build upon the richness and complexity of learners' prior knowledge, "we need to treat 'home background' not as a deficit but as affecting deep levels of identity and epistemology, and thereby the stance learners take concerning the 'new' literacy practices of the educational setting" (p. 4). This gave me more impetus to set my research context in China, exploring the concepts, stories, and beliefs of family literacy for Chinese families. This perspective also reminded me to reflect on parents' literacy practices, which differ from schooling and their West counterparts.

Third, the sociocultural theory provides a valuable perspective to emphasize the parent-child relationship in family literacy and parental roles in children's literacy acquisition (Weigel et al., 2006). It supports the importance of social interaction in parent-child shared reading activities. As Guzzetti and Gamboa (2004) indicate, "Learning and practicing are shaped by the social and cultural beliefs students hold about the value and purposes of literacy" (p. 143). A sociocultural perspective tends to identify all literacy learners as having a cultural identity, and through social interaction, learners acquire knowledge following the cultural asset of their society (Woolfolk, 2000).

Unlike specific literacy events, based on sociocultural theory, family literacy practices cannot be directly observed because they have unobservable beliefs, values, attitudes, and power structures (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). Therefore, the original intention of this study was significant because, under the particular contexts of China, there were many

hidden connotations and stories that outsiders could not easily understand and observe.

However, as mentioned above, if I limited this study to the scope of social interaction, it would be easy to ignore my transformative stance on this study. As Cummins (2006) mentions, in multiliteracies, transformative approaches to pedagogy “broaden the focus still further by emphasizing the relevance not only of transmitting the curriculum and constructing knowledge but also of enabling students to gain insight into how knowledge intersects with power” (p. 55).

Standing in the transformative position, each participating family's capital/ funds of knowledge will be respected and drawn on. This study explored and investigated their experience, interests, habits, multiple literacy strengths, and multimodal ways of learning and playing. The transformative position also helped me treat parents and children in family literacy interactions as constructors of meaning and as designers of activities and provides a precise observing and reflecting framework to explore how parents and children become creative and transformative learners in China's context of family literacy. In addition, the pedagogical move of *Learning by Design* gave me the vision to pay attention to “the subject domain” and “orientation of the learner”, meanwhile, when I investigated their interactions in the shared reading, the “range of activity types” is noticed as well (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, p. 17). Thus, the pedagogy of multiliteracies expanded my vision from monolingual and monocultural literacy practices to the values of mainland China's cultural, history, language, and social capitals and helped me reveal multiple worlds communicated in various ways.

## 1.7 Summary

This field has a large body of literature on English native-speaker families. Some research has been conducted on the families of English language learners (ELL), such as Chinese parents with their children who live in English-speaking countries (e.g., Xu, 1999; Yeung & King, 2016). However, studies on family English literacy are minimal for families living in mainland China who speak English as a foreign language.

Although some studies have attempted to explore the factors that influence English

language learning in Chinese families (e.g., Chow et al., 2010), the most authentic voices from Chinese parents still need to be heard. In China, as suggestions from Chinese English teachers are widely circulated on the Internet, it has been gradually accepted that parent-child shared reading and some other parental interventions, such as interactive family games, can promote the development of children's English reading (Zhang, 2016). However, such widely available information is primarily the individual experience of Chinese teachers and focuses more on English language skills learning without considering the conceptual evolution of children's literacy (Xin, 2017). Thus, these methods often ignore the particular context of Chinese families and the differences in parents' individual English language abilities, which sometimes fail to assist Chinese families and bring considerable confusion (Zhang, 2017).

Therefore, this study intended to address the gap by listening to the stories of Chinese parents who conduct parent-child shared reading on EPBs. By understanding and navigating the roles and interactions between myself as the researcher and the participant, this study explored the experience of parents as they shared reading of EPBs with their children, learned about the ways that parents and children co-construct their knowledge, worked on their stories over time, and reflected upon the changing relationships in their home reading activities. Also, learning from the text of stories, this study explored the implications of the experience and how parents' literacy beliefs inform their understanding of multiliteracies pedagogy.

Reflecting on my practical knowledge, this research looked at the possibilities and approaches parents would expose their children to multiliteracies learning. According to Nutbrown et al. (2005), parents should also be seen as learners and different learners from children in family literacy. Therefore, this study observes and recognizes parents' and children's transformative learning experiences. Especially those transformative learning during the research process are based on the collective expertise of co-construction and stories exchange of the participants.

## Chapter 2

### 2 Literature Review

Given the importance of early childhood in children's language and cognitive development (Hebert-Myers et al., 2006), educators and researchers are engaged in ongoing research about the significance of early-year literacy development and shared book reading in a home literacy environment. Several scholars have argued the role of early literacy skill acquisition in children's language and cognitive development (e.g., Christian et al., 1998; Dickinson et al., 2003; Lonigan et al., 2000; Mol & Bus, 2011). Along with the in-depth study of emergent early literacy, it has been widely accepted that children's literacy, language, and cognition development begin at preschool age and is positively correlated with school performance (Christian et al., 1998; Cline & Edwards, 2013; Crawford & Zygouris-Coe, 2006; Farrant & Zubrick, 2013; McGee & Richgels, 1996).

Therefore, the family has become a significant research field in early childhood literacy. Talyor (1983) coins the term family literacy to recognize interactive literacy activities within families. Subsequently, more qualitative studies (such as Cairney & Ruge, 1998; Gregory, 1996; Hannon & James, 1990) have emerged, focusing on children's early literacy development as determined by the beliefs, attitudes, skills and other factors of parents and other family members. Those earlier studies on family literacy are mostly descriptive-analytic studies that attempt to understand existing family literacy practices rather than assessing them and influencing and guiding parents' family literacy practices (Nutbrown et al., 2005).

Since then, researchers have begun to pay attention to studying interference factors, correlation, and suggestions for improvement. Parents' attitudes and beliefs regarding family literacy are perceived as intimately entwined with children's early literacy development and home literacy environment construction, as confirmed by subsequent studies (DeBaryshe et al., 2000; Johnson et al., 2008; Newland et al., 2011; Weigel et al., 2006). Furthermore, interactions and literacy learning activities between parents and children are deemed helpful in enriching children's learning at home and improving their

early literacy development (Christian et al., 1998; Evans et al., 2000; Haney & Hill, 2004; Sonnenschein & Munsterman, 2002). As the core activity of family literacy, parent-child shared reading, in which parents are engaged in all activities related to shared reading, is amply documented as an essential factor for children's early acquisition of language and literacy (Bus et al., 1995; Farrant, 2012; Farrant & Zubrick, 2013; Kalb & van Ours, 2014; Mol et al., 2008). In parent-child shared reading, it has also been noticed that issues and barriers, such as family SES differences and differences in community and school support, continuously crop up in various shapes (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Brown, 2007; Li, 2010; Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016).

This study was designed to explore the experience of Chinese parents in mainland China who used EPBs to guide their children in home-shared reading. I expected to hear and learn from their stories, reveal these Chinese parents' spoken and unspoken voices and investigate the challenges in these home-shared reading activities. Moreover, my future research will ultimately seek the appropriate approaches to help them enhance their experience in their family literacy practices.

Based on reading and reflecting on the relevant research in this area, I presented the literature related to multiple facets of family literacy and parent-child shared reading as the backdrop for my study. However, most prior research findings in this field are based on studies in Western countries referring to English native or immigrant families, and research on Chinese EFL families is minimal. Thus, in this section, the literature review was mainly based on Western studies to see if the studies may assist me in understanding and exploring my participant's stories. And then, I looked beyond it to see how research related to the topic is done outside of the West. Writing the literature review provides an opportunity to understand the research on family literacy, and parent-child shared reading to date. Generally, the outline was as follows:

I started by exploring family literacy as natural learning. Later, I looked at the environment in which this attribute exists, the home literacy environment (HLE). Then, I further reviewed parent-child shared reading as the standard and important family literacy activity in the HLE. After that, I checked the factors influencing family literacy,

including parental literacy beliefs, family socioeconomic status, and possibly related factors. Finally, based on the specific context of this study, I also explored stories and studies beyond the Western world. Therefore, it provided a helpful literature review for this paper's research setting and data analysis and helped me position my research and explain the need to conduct this research.

## 2.1 Natural Learning in Family Literacy

Traditionally, literacy has been defined as the ability to read and write. Literacy acquisition has also been identified as developing specific skills, such as encoding and decoding text in a formal educational setting (Stone et al., 2014). Although researchers do not have a unified and precise definition of current literacy, there is some consensus that literacy is dynamic and reflects changes in modern society (Lonsdale & McCurry, 2004). From the perspective of individuals, literacy can be seen as “a set of complexes, multidimensional skills that begin at birth and develop over a person’s life from childhood to adulthood” (Wasik & Herrmann, 2004, p. 3). Work in young children (Lightfoot et al., 2009) and their families (Bissex, 1980; Dombey & Spencer, 1994) demonstrates that the emergence and development of literacy is a continuum that starts at a very young age and involves the growth of many skills of cognition and socio-cultural competence (Leichter, 1975).

Over the past 30 years, the relationship between emergent literacy, early literacy, and home/family literacy has been found in many fields and studies, and a large body of research identifies the positive association between family literacy and literacy growth for children (Baker et al., 1999; Baker, 2000; Cline & Edwards, 2017; DeBruin-Parecki, 2009; Lonigan et al., 2000). However, by the mid-1980, literacy researchers’ view of the family’s role is murky. Little consideration has been given to the importance of families in fostering children's literacy development before their school age (Crawford & Zygoris-Coe, 2006). Literacy was once considered a field that only experts could practice and teach systematically and scientifically (Mathews, 1996; Smith, 2002). This view was influenced mainly by the dominant educational philosophy, reading readiness. It is rooted in maturational and development theories, which assert that children should be ready to read and that natural maturity is a precursor to literacy acquisition (Durkin,

1966). To read, children must master a range of skills, such as letter recognition and letter-sound identification (Morphett & Washburne, 1931). The grasp of these skills is primarily for decoding text, not for understanding and expressing meaning. It ignores that the nature of literacy is not just the decoding and encoding techniques. Consequently, it ignores the literacy environment that children are immersed in, which is naturally constructed by family and community members (Morrow, 1997).

The belief of reading readiness was dominant until emergent literacy was implemented. In Marie Clay's 1966 doctoral dissertation, *Emergent Reading Behavior*, the boundary between "readers" and "pre-readers" is broken (Lonigan, 2006, p. 94). Children are in a new continuum of literacy acquisition. They have learned much about literacy in their family environment, prepared with reading and writing experience before formal school instruction (Gibson & Moss, 2016). The battle of ideas continued for nearly two decades until emergent literacy became widely used and accepted (Sulzby & Teale, 1991). Meanwhile, along with the development of constructivism (Kamii et al., 1991), sociolinguistics (Stubbs, 1980) and sociocultural theory (Forman et al., 1993) in the field of education, more researchers made contributions to children's early literacy. Some also influence family literacy (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1983; Goodman, 1986; Halliday, 1975, 2007).

As Caimey (2003) concludes, in the 1980s, the role of the family in early literacy gradually caught researchers' attention, as the research of emergent literacy focused more on the influence of early literacy on children's school literacy and as the educational perspectives of constructivist, sociolinguistic, and sociocultural got prominent. Then, the family as an essential base for children's language learning and literacy development has been recognized by many scholars (Bissex, 1980; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Goodman & Goodman, 1979; Leichter, 1979). However, in the research field, the term Family Literacy is attributed to Taylor's ethnographic research in 1983 (Taylor, 1983). In this three-year study of six families, Taylor (1983) tracks the children's literacy learning about their everyday activities and asserts the positive impact of family literacy activities on children's reading and writing in their childhood. Children's literacy acquisition naturally progresses in their daily activities. This finding also confirms many previous



views that the home is the real and natural environment for children's language (Bissex, 1980; Halliday, 1975; Wells, 1983; Wells & Bridges, 1981) and literacy (Crago & Crago, 1983; Hart & Gray, 1977; Taylor, 1981) growth.

As Leichter (1975) indicates, "virtually every child in our society learns a language before entering school" (p. 31). No child waits until school age to learn (Morphett & Washburne, 1931), and children are immersed in the family literacy environment since birth (Martens, 1998). Consequently, extensive studies have confirmed that families provide children with an early literacy and language learning basis before they accept formal school instruction (Halliday, 2007; Haney & Hill, 2004; Heath et al., 2014; Jay et al., 2003).

Researchers prefer to describe family literacy as a series of daily learning practices accompanied by social and cultural influences. As Martens (1998) says, "I began to appreciate that children begin learning literacy at birth through the countless authentic literacy events they observe and participate in daily within the context of their families and communities" (p. 53). Through these activities, children gradually realize that print is meaningful and valuable. They can match sounds to words, distinguish between pictures and texts, and start reading spontaneously (Gonzalez-Mena, 1993). Based on the profound studies of the families in their everyday situations, Leichter (1982) also found that literacy learning was embedded in the daily activities of families, and it comes at any time. Children are thus seen as active participants in early literacy and language development. Halliday (1977, 1993, 2007) recognized children as communicators, not "acquiring" language but actively "learning how to mean." Goodman (1986, 1996) also indicates that "reading and writing are both dynamic, constructive processes" (1996, p. 2), and children are actively engaged in constructing and reconstructing meaning in the setting of family daily life.

Family is the most natural field and environment for children to start learning, and children acquire literacy when they are born (Goodman et al., 2005). Therefore, parents are recognized as the children's first teachers (Vygotsky, 1986), giving them the necessary skills to survive, providing them with the initial experience of learning spoken

and written language (Sloat et al., 2015), and building them emergent literacy knowledge and skills (Cline & Edwards). Supposing parents can prepare children for appropriate literacy environments and activities, literacy learning will integrate into other activities in daily life and become a natural and meaningful part of their daily growth (Schickedanz & Collins, 2013). Most researchers generally accept this view, which is also a keynote of this study.

## 2.2 HLE, Where Family Literacy Begins

Families provide a virtual environment for children's cognitive, social, and emotional development (Jones & Harcourt, 2013). They are the first place children can access language and literacy acquisition (Weigel et al., 2006). Children receive support from family, even when they are infants. Including grandparents and siblings, family members may shape children's interests in printed words and assist their reading practice in daily family activities (Whitmore et al., 2004). Children are gradually familiar with reading and writing before formal learning, and this familiarity will naturally sprout in the context of families and communities (Hood et al., 2008). When people realized this, the study of the home literacy environment (HLE) was widely concerned.

A substantial body of studies has confirmed that HLE is an essential indicator of children's language and literacy acquisition, such as oral language, print knowledge, comprehension, and phonological awareness (Burgess et al., 2002; Christian et al., 1998; Niklas & Schneider, 2013). Parents' different construction patterns of HLE, whether directly participating in children's literacy activities or exposing them to books, cause differences in children's early literacy development (Mol & Bus, 2011). Furthermore, children in affluent HLE have better-related skills (Bus et al., 1995). The effect of HLE on children's learning of coding-related skills has been demonstrated in the studies of the low-SES family (Bracken & Fischel, 2008; Burris et al., 2019), which confirms previous findings in the works about middle-SES families (Bus et al., 1995; Frijters et al., 2000; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002).

Besides, associations between HLE and children's attitudes toward literacy, such as the motivation to actively participate in home/ school reading activities, have been reported

in studies (Carroll et al., 2019; Dobbs-Oates et al., 2015; Hume et al., 2015; Weigel et al., 2006). By assessing the literacy development of 5-year-old children in the United States, Sonnenschein and Munsterman (2002) find that home-shared reading interactions strongly influence the frequency and motivation of children to read. In the reading activities related to HLE, the frequency and quality of actions will affect children's reading interests. For example, Bracken and Fischel (2008) believe that the frequency with which parents read with children in their HLE affects children's reading interests, including their request, enjoyment and motivation for reading. Deckner et al. (2006) also prove that the way and quality of family literacy practices, such as the rate of mothers' metalingual utterances, strongly predict children's literacy interests. Moreover, the effect is on preschoolers and older elementary school children (Boerma et al., 2018).

As with the conceptual evolution of HLE that I analyzed in the definitions section, the understanding of HLE has shifted from two models to a multidimensional construct. This shift is also evidenced in observations of parenting practices. For example, parents do not construct HLE in a standardized form but aim to assist their children's literacy development and adjust it randomly (Auerbach, 1989). They vary the quantity and quality of their family literacy activities for their children based on the changes in children's literacy development (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014) and their family's literacy needs (Whitmore et al., 2004).

On the one hand, HLE is of great importance in the research field of early childhood literacy, and on the other hand, the concept of HLE has yet to be uniformly defined. Therefore, when researchers examine the relationship between HLE and children's literacy acquisition, many research designs and operationalizations assess HLE (Niklas & Schneider, 2013). For example, Umek et al. (2005) developed a questionnaire containing 33 HLE-related items in five categories. It includes specific literacy activities, such as reading to children, interactive shared reading, and visiting libraries and puppet theatres. It also contains reading beliefs and attitudes, such as encouraging children to use language and stimulating children to expand their zone of proximal development. To verify the influence of HLE on Latino children's school readiness, the characteristics of HLE that Farver et al. (2006) related to include three domains: the resources and

opportunities that parents provide for their children, the family literacy activities that parents actively promote, and parental pressure and attitudes. It has also been a frequent feature in recent studies asking parents and children to provide self-defined HLE as a testing (such as Baroody & Diamond, 2012; Brown et al., 2012; Carroll et al., 2019).

In the research examining the correlation between HLE and children's literacy interest, scholars mostly choose the following factors: (1) Parents' motivation and attitudes, such as parents' reading interest, parents' reading ability or education level, and parents' cognition of children's reading interest; (2) Parents' cognition of HLE, such as their knowledge of children's books, parents' self-description and analysis of family literacy activities; (3) The resources and opportunities that families provide, such as the number of books and picture books that a family owns, the length of time parents read to their children, and whether the family has a library card; And (4) specific family literacy activities, such as frequency of parent-child shared reading and frequency of parents' self-reading (Boerma et al., 2018; Baker, 2003; Saracho, 2002; Sonnenschein & Munsterman, 2002; Weigel et al., 2006; Yeo et al., 2014). In addition, some scholars still use Burgess et al.'s (2002) classification of literacy experience, applying the active and passive HLE as assessing factors (such as Baroody & Diamond, 2012). However, as the characteristics involved in HLE are very complex, different scholars may come to contradictory conclusions when they select various factors to test. For example, although numerous studies have found a positive correlation between HLE and children's interest in reading (such as Baker, 2003; Saracho, 2002; Sonnenschein & Munsterman, 2002), when Carroll et al. (2019) add children's self-identified literacy interest into the factor assessing, the study finds "child literacy interest is not closely related to home literacy environment (HLE)" (p. 158).

When we study the influence of HLE on early childhood literacy, we should not identify HLE as a relatively independent factor but as an "umbrella term" (van Tonder et al., 2019, p. 87). As a concept of a multifaceted construct, it needs to be combined with various other possible factors to consider their collective impact on children's language and literacy development.

## 2.3 Parent-child Shared Book Reading

Among the HLE factors, parent-child shared reading is the one that attracts extensive attention in the field of early childhood literacy and is considered to have a significant influence on children's language/ literacy acquisition (Hood et al., 2008). Even though HLE considers children as “active agents who shape their experiences and environments in many ways” (Carroll et al., 2019, p. 158), it does not mean guidance and assistance can be ignored. Rogoff (1995) believes that children are active, merely taking on the role of novice and relying on others to guide them with their studies and growth. Therefore, scholars seek more productive activities, practices, and interventions with a broader acceptance of family literacy.

In their meta-analytic review of family literacy intervention studies, referring to home-based involvement, Sénéchal and Young (2008) list four interventions that may have a positive effect on children’s reading acquisition: parent-child activities of joint book reading, parents listening to their children reading, parents tutoring their children with specific techniques during their reading, and parents reading along with the child providing corrective feedback and encouragement.

Hannon (1995) identifies four types of family process that contribute to the development of child literacy learning: firstly, children need opportunities to access resources; Then, a literate person, such as a parent or old sibling, need to explain the active intervention; thirdly, children's efforts in learning literacy need to be recognized and encouraged; fourth, parents and family members need to demonstrate to children how to use the literacy and prove that they are also learners of literacy.

In recent years, as a specific family activity, parent-child shared reading has attracted more scholarly attention than any other field of children's literacy experience. As “the hallmark of family literacy” (Roskos & Twardosz, 2004, p. 288), parent-child shared book reading is defined as a crucial family literacy activity between an adult and a preschool-aged child (Manolitsis et al., 2011). In a home environment, it manifests as how adults read for and interact with children around the particular content of specific books (Hammett Price et al., 2009). It is “a social practice often embedded in contingent

interactions and rich conversations” (Rose et al., 2018, p. 344). It provides parents with natural and spontaneous opportunities to involve children in literacy development by acquiring knowledge and literacy skills (Adams, 1990; Sonnenschein & Munsterman, 2002). Correspondingly, it gains much attention for its connection to children’s academic performance in school (Lonigan, 2004).

Neuman (1999) notices that shared book reading is significant for children’s cognitive and literacy development. Firstly, students’ emergent literacy outcomes, which are related to outside-in skills, have an internal correlativity with the frequency of parent-child shared reading (Bus et al., 1995; Iruka et al., 2014; Jacobs, 2004; Mol & Bus, 2011; Valencia & Sulzby, 1991). Furthermore, According to Cottone (2012), preschoolers with emergent solid literacy skills mainly cultivated in parent-child shared reading tend to exhibit better literacy performance in their future school years. Shared book reading, in turn, allows parents to observe and perceive preschoolers’ capacity for emergent literacy skills and continuously adjust scaffolding strategies (Vygotsky, 1978) to improve further children’s literacy development (Landry & Smith, 2006). Third, during the process of shared book reading, children can acquire and practice speaking vocabulary, reading comprehension, and topical concepts beyond their limited living environment (Baker, 2000; Bus et al., 1995; Hood et al., 2008; Neuman, 1999, Mol & Bus, 2011; Yeo et al., 2014). Fourth, as Cline (2010) indicates, the role of parents in shared book reading is not only the movers of cognitively stimulating experiences but the delivery of emotional cultivation. Children’s motivation and courage to explore the uncertainty in reading can be inspired by an encouraging and supportive parent-child relationship (Bus et al., 1997; Parker et al., 1999). Moreover, children’s interest and initiative for independent reading may be inspired by the positive atmosphere created during the share book reading (Baker et al., 1997; Baker & Scher, 2002; Morrow, 1990). Finally, besides gaining literacy skills, reading activities, such as talking and discussing in shared reading, significantly enhance children’s social cognition and emotional development (Margalit et al., 2013).

Referring to the paths of parent-child shared reading, Kaderavek and Sulzby (1998) indicate that the success of early childhood literacy may depend on how adults adjust the reading experience according to children's interests, personal experiences, and ideas. Fox

(2008) points out that reading aloud to children gives them the necessary background and experience to learn reading and literacy. Besides, in the process of parent-child reading, Calkins (1997) proposes that strong language interaction between children and parents positively affects children's intellectual development. Hart and Risley also demonstrate that children whose parents provide an enriched literacy environment during shared reading gain more intellectual and linguistic growth. To build children's capacity to reconstruct meaning, Morrow (1997) persuades parents to "prompt children to respond, scaffold responses for children to model when they are unable to respond themselves, relate responses to real-life experiences, answer questions, and offer positive reinforcement for children's responses" (p. 136).

Studies on the significance of parent-child shared reading and causal analysis of related factors have continued in recent decades. Research often focuses on the quality of parent-child shared reading and home literacy environment (Boerma et al., 2018; Marjanovič-Umek et al., 2019; Saracho, 2017; Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2015; Yeo et al., 2014), the relationship between home-shared reading and children literacy/ language development (Dexter & Stacks, 2014; Sheridan et al., 2011; van Bergen et al., 2017), and the effects of early childhood home-shared reading on children's further academic performance in school (Boonk et al., 2018; Mayo & Siraj, 2015; McDowall et al., 2017).

In short, the early research on parent-child shared reading mainly focused on awakening consciousness and advocating its positive role on children's cognitive and literacy/ language development. Recent studies have refined and focused on the influencing factors, their interrelationships, and the improvements researchers can make on parent-child shared reading (Gilman, 2021). And as a result, educators are becoming aware that parent-child shared reading has many advantages worth parents conducting at home. Shared reading activities do not necessarily lead to children acquiring literacy skills (DeBruin-Parecki, 2009; Puglisi, Hulme, Hamilton, & Snowling, 2017; Sénéchal, 2011). The consequence of parent-child shared reading also depends on parents' educational level and literacy beliefs (Curenton & Justice, 2008; Johnson, Martin, Brooks-Gunn, & Petrill, 2008; Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2006), as well as the reading strategies applied in instructing the activities (Newland et al., 2011; Sénéchal, 2012). Therefore, reviewing

parents' literacy beliefs and other potential factors impacting parent-child shared reading offers me essential information to make sense of my inquiry.

## 2.4 Parents' Literacy Beliefs and Something Else

### 2.4.1 Parents' literacy beliefs

Several studies have discussed the influence of parents' beliefs on children's intellectual/academic performances (e.g., Davis-Kean, 2005; Elliott & Bachman, 2018; Goodnow, 1988; Goodnow & Collins, 1990; Sigel, 1985; Sy & Schulenberg, 2005) and that on family educational practices (e.g., Hunt & Paraskevopoulos, 1980; Miller, 1986; Miller & Davis, 1992; Sy & Schulenberg, 2005) and home literacy environment (DeBaryshe & Binder, 1994, Katranci et al., 2018; Weigel et al., 2006). In particular, parents' beliefs about guiding children to acquire early literacy skills at home have proved critical for children's literacy development (Johnson et al., 2008; Weigel et al., 2006).

However, constructing HLE and parent-child shared reading is behaviour-oriented family literacy activities. Parents' practice and activity implementation largely determine the outcome of their children's literacy acquisition (DeBaryshe, 1995). So, what guides and influences parents' decisions and practices?

The importance of parents' educational beliefs has been confirmed by several studies in which parents' beliefs were thought to predict their parenting practices and interaction with their children (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Rescorla et al., 1990; Stipek et al., 1992). As Goodnow (1988, 1990) shows, belief is the best parameter to indicate people's decision-making behaviour. Then in the family context, parents' upbringing may be a statement of their educational beliefs. In Sigel and McGillicuddy-DeLisis's study (2002), parental beliefs are defined as the beginning of all kinds of experiences children and parents share, which means parents' literacy beliefs are highly connected to parents' practices and interactions when engaged in family literacy activities with their children. As DeBaryshe and Binder (1994) demonstrate, parents run shared reading to provide their children with opportunities to learn literacy skills, and parents' beliefs may



influence these activities on children's literacy development. Therefore, parental beliefs regarding shared book reading are considered a significant factor influencing their specific practices of the reading activity, which affects children's early literacy development. Similar conclusions can be found in Newland et al. (2011). In this research, a model is developed to figure out the connection between mothers' beliefs and children's literacy development, and the result shows, based on family literacy activities, the mother's efficacy, the motivation of reading (for pleasure), and self-attribution have a direct influence on children's literacy development.

Research also demonstrates the correlation between parents' literacy beliefs and home literacy activities. Debaryshe (1994) shows that parents' beliefs about the importance of reading aloud to preschoolers are strongly correlated with the frequency they read to their children, the age at which they form reading habits, and how often they give verbal interaction and feedback to their children's questions. Later, Denaryshe (1995), the author finds that if mothers followed beliefs of emergent literacy, they might provide their children with more extensive, frequent parent-child shared reading and ask more questions when they read aloud with their children. Then, DeBaryshe et al. (2000) indicate that parents with different literacy beliefs tend to apply other instructional skills in home teaching, resulting in children's various reading performances in the first school year. Weigel et al. (2006) also confirm the consistency between parents' beliefs about literacy development and how they and their children engage in family literacy activities. As the authors indicate, compared with mothers who feel they cannot help their children develop literacy and reading skills, mothers with facilitative literacy beliefs are more likely to spend time on their children's reading and writing activities to provide them with stimulation in their HLE, and to do shared book reading and other family literacy activities with younger children.

Accordingly, scholars believe parents' beliefs are directly related to children's literacy development. Stipek et al. (1992) find that parents' family literacy practices are consistent with their beliefs about the optimal path for preschoolers' literacy skills acquisition. Parents who believe in teaching-directed methods are likelier to use flashcards and exercise books instead of providing a shared reading. Anderson (1995) confirms the

relationship between parents' beliefs in their children's literacy development at home and children's emergent literacy acquisition. Baker et al. (1999) further indicate that children's successful acquisition of early literacy skills in grade one is related to the parents' literacy beliefs and their approach to instructing letters and words in shared reading interactions. In 2007, Bingham conducted a study to investigate further the combined influence of parents' literacy beliefs and family literacy activities on children's emergent literacy acquisition, and the result shows that there is a positive relationship between children's early literacy performance and the mother's literacy beliefs and the quality of shared book reading.

According to Miller (1988), parents have different views about children's literacy motivation, leading to different family literacy expectations and practices, affecting children's literacy acquisition and skills development. Krapp (2002) demonstrates that parent-child shared reading is one of the critical family activities for parents to investigate their children's literacy motivation. As for parents' observations, some of their children enjoyed literacy activities, such as reading and writing, and other parents thought their children did not like this type of activity (Kaderavek & Sulzby 1998). Besides, the level of children's literacy skills is one of the criteria parents use to evaluate the child's literacy motivation (Saçkes et al., 2016). Children whose parents believe they have higher literacy motivation may be given higher expectations in family literacy activities, such as putting in more effort and perseverance and getting a higher cognitive development. Accordingly, parents will invest more time, energy, and material resources in such children to meet their literacy development needs. (Whitehurst & Lonigan 1998).

Many studies confirm that parents' literacy beliefs are associated with their personal experiences and it is highly correlated with their schooling background and the cultural context in which they were raised (Krijnen et al., 2021). Sigel and McGillicuddy-De Lisi (2002) demonstrate that parents' literacy beliefs are framed by their histories, cultural norms and standards, and distinctive parenthood interactions. For example, several studies of Chinese parents have shown that influenced by their upbringing and experiences, they place a high value on education and prefer traditional, skills-based approaches to teaching and learning about reading and writing, and they also tend to

endorse readiness, such as seeing word recognition as a prerequisite for reading. (Chao, 1996; Li, 2002, 2005; Zhang et al., 1998). Reese et al. (2012) state that parents' literacy beliefs stem from their own literacy practices and childhood experiences of literacy acquisition. In addition, examples related to the shifts in literacy belief can be found in such studies. Li (2006) finds that middle-class Chinese American parents' literacy beliefs no longer align with what was documented in the past. For example, they do not prefer copying books and independent reading as essential to improving their children's reading and writing skills. They engage in parent-child shared reading within the family setting, providing their children with books and activities geared toward informal reading. Such shifts in literacy beliefs also showed up in the studies of Reese et al. (2012) and Reese and Gallimore (2000). Gonzalez et al. (2021) attempt to explain this shift through the Acculturation theory, arguing that Chinese parents emphasize the significance of language development for bilingual and trilingual children while maintaining their beliefs about traditional family language. Their family literacy practices also incorporate a variety of approaches and models, including conventional word learning and linguistic activities represented by informal reading aimed at promoting children's language skills and literacy development.

Recent studies in this area also involve the comparative exploration of socioeconomic, linguistic, and ethnic diversity on parental literacy beliefs. Tsirmpa, Stellakis, and Lavidas (2021) believe that parents with higher levels of education, especially when they reach the postgraduate level, uphold more facilitative beliefs about literacy than conventional ones. By engaging in more informal, top-down activities, such as reading books and discussions, these parents provide their children with an active home literacy environment and take a more holistic view of literacy development. Krijnen, Van Steensel, Meeuwisse, and Severien (2021) suggest that a stronger preference for facilitative activities exists in monolingual Dutch-speaking families compared to those who do not speak Dutch at home. They suggest that this may be related to the constructivist philosophy of education promoted by the Dutch education system, as this philosophy is likely to be incompatible with the beliefs of non-Dutch-speaking parents in guiding their children's literacy development. Meanwhile, they also emphasized that parents' literacy beliefs are not static, as external factors such as home and school

communities may influence parents' literacy beliefs. Brinkley, Caughy and Owen (2022) also compared differences in literacy beliefs held by mothers from ethnic minority families and concluded that African-American and Latina's mothers have distinct views of school readiness skills. African-American mothers were more likely to emphasize general preschool knowledge, while Latina mothers were more likely to emphasize social-centred readiness skills.

However, some studies suggest that such correlations lack sufficient basis. As Elliott and Bachman (2018) indicate, there is no significant variation in the association between parents' beliefs and their family education practices for families with different SES. Instead, parents with lower levels of education believe in school readiness more than their counterparts with higher levels of education. Sawyer et al. (2018) confirm this view. This study found that low-income African-American and Puerto-Rican parents highly value the significance of HLE and recognize the importance of emergent literacy for their preschoolers. These findings are consistent with some of the past studies that have concluded that there is no deterministic relationship between parental beliefs and family literacy practice (Davis-Kean P. E., 2000). Perhaps, as Bradley and Corwyn (2002) indicate, the specific practices of parents and their impact on their children's educational development are diverse and influenced by many other external factors, not just their beliefs.

#### 2.4.2 Parents' socio-economic status

Referring to parents' literacy/educational practices as a distal factor, parents' socio-economic status (SES) is the most discussed point among scholars. Most of these studies are consistent with the cognitive stimulation model proposed by Haveman and Wolfe in 1994 (such as Hemmereichs, Agirdag, Agirdag, & Kavadias, 2017; Hurst & Kearney, 2008; Inoue, Georgiou, Muroya, Maekawa, & Parrila, 2018; Wolf & McCoy, 2019). This model argues that lower income makes it harder for families to have financial (e.g., book purchasing) and time (e.g., shared book reading) investment to motivate and guide family learning both internally and externally, which leads to children's poor cognitive development and academic performance. Halle, Kurtz-Costes, and Mahoney (1997) and

Ramey and Ramey (1998) also confirm that parents of lower SES may not provide children with more resources to stimulate the family learning environment, which results in a higher chance of children achieving a lower academic performance. Using a multilevel analysis of a survey of 43,870 students (mean age ten years) in 10 Western European regions, Hemmerechts, Agirdag, and Kavadias (2017) find a positive association between early parental involvement in literacy activities prior to elementary school and higher levels of reading literacy and parental education. Students from lower social status families also had lower levels of reading literacy and attitudes toward reading and would experience more delayed parental involvement in literacy activities than students from higher social status families.

Park (2008) shows that parents' SES is positively correlated with parents' constructing the home literacy environment and working together on children's literacy/language acquisition. In higher SES families, parents are more active in their children's early literacy activities and willing to transfer their reading values (Mullis, Martin, Kennedy, Trong, & Sainsbury, 2009). Research findings from outside developed countries, such as Fernald et al. (2017) and Wolf and McCoy (2019), also attest to the cognitive stimulation model. In Mexico and Ghana, there is a significant correlation between parents' SES and children's preschool preparation, including "cognitively stimulating activities in the home, their provision of children's books, and their participation in children's early childhood schooling" (Wolf & McCoy, 2019, p. 272). A recent study from China shows that Chinese parents with SES and lower education levels exhibit higher literacy anxiety and allocate less time, financial resources, and awareness to their children's literacy development (Chen, Chen, & Wen, 2022). They tend to focus more on formal literacy skills and Chinese literacy development than on informal family literacy activities and literacy development targets for English as a second language.

According to Hartas (2011), parents' SES significantly impacts children's language/literacy acquisition more than social-emotional development. In particular, the maternal SES and education level substantially affect children's language/literacy in preschool. Consistent with Raikes et al. (2006), Hartas (2011) shows that mothers with lower SES read less to their young children, reducing the frequency and effect of verbal

communication in their families. In contrast, parents with a higher level of education and income spend more time with their children and thus have the opportunity to transmit to children more human capital (Guryan, Hurst, & Kearney, 2008). Inoue et al. (2018) prove that parents with higher SES and education levels are more sensitive to children's literacy performance and may adjust children's involvement based on their literacy skills.

### 2.4.3 Other factors

As Conger and Donnellan (2007) indicate, the other factors that influence parents' behaviours and children's development/achievement within the family are complicated. Little is known about these factors and their intricate patterns of action. Later, with the growing diversity of participants and sample size of children of different races/ethnicities, increasing studies have been conducted on the relationship between children's achievement and various factors within families (such as Froyen et al., 2013; Guryan, Davis-Kean, 2000; Hartas, 2011).

Some proximal factors, such as parental literacy skills, marital satisfaction, and family emotional expressiveness, appear in the related studies.

In the relevant studies, the assessment of parents' literacy skills generally involves reading comprehension, decoding, fluency, speaking/ writing vocabulary, and word identification (such as in Taylor et al., 2016). Parents with higher literacy skills are more active in family literacy activities, which affect their children's emergent literacy skills, such as alphabet knowledge and receptive vocabulary (Taylor et al., 2016). Taylor (2011) noted a positive relationship between parents' literacy skills and their family literacy practices, but adult readers with dyslexia should be excluded when examining the relationship. With this exclusion, parents with higher literacy skills read more with their children and accompanied them to the library more often.

Parents' marital satisfaction has a significant association with parent-child interaction (Davies, Sturge-Apple, Woitach, & Cummings, 2009), which is mainly responsible for children's early emergent literacy development (Skibbe et al., 2010). As Belsky and Fearon (2004) indicate, the quality of parents' marriage can affect their family education

practices and greatly influence children's literacy skills, mathematics ability, and cognitive development when they are in grade one. Kolak and Volling (2007) show that parents with higher marital satisfaction are more likely to provide positive emotional expression. Froyen et al. (2013) also confirm this point and find an indirect relationship between parents' marital satisfaction and children's emergent literacy skills. They demonstrate that

(a) marriages high in maternal marital satisfaction generally have higher levels of positive emotional expressiveness; (b) higher levels of positive emotional expressiveness are associated with increases in the number of HLE activities mothers provide; (c) an increase in the number of HLE practices has positive implications for children's emergent literacy skill. (p. 50)

So far, based on my research objectives for this paper, I have reviewed some Western literature related to parent-child shared reading in the context of family literacy. It was easy to see that although it was a widespread family activity, parent-child shared reading was a relatively complex research topic involving multiple directions and multidimensional factors. Western scholars have realized this because pertaining research has spanned many fields, such as language, literacy, educational psychology, curriculum studies, and education policy. With its close relationship with emergent and childhood literacy, studies on parent-child shared reading has been fully developed and expanded in the West, especially for English native-speaker families. However, the scenario set in this study was China, an eastern developing country, but the media involved in parent-child shared reading were English picture books originating from Western countries. Therefore, it was not enough to review and reflect on Western literature for English native speakers, and I needed to look beyond the conversation addressing countries outside the West for other types of learner families.

## 2.5 The Universality and Particularity of the West<sup>1</sup> Stories?

As mentioned above, many studies have confirmed the role of family literacy, HLE, and parent-child reading in developing children's cognition, language and literacy in the context of English as the first language. Most of the current literature related to this research is for the family of native English speakers, especially in developed countries (Gilman, 2021). Although it has been recognized in low- and middle-income countries that the importance of the family environment to children's development identified in the studies of high-income countries, there are still practical barriers for them that high-income countries do not have in specific circumstances where literacy resources are scarce (Nag et al., 2019).

As scholars all over the world have realized the significance of family literacy in early childhood education. However, in recent years, studies on the effects of HLE, family literacy, and parent-child shared reading have increasingly emerged in non-English-speaking countries, such as Arabic-speaking countries (Hosseinpour et al., 2015; Korat et al., 2013), Mexico (Gonzalez et al., 2019; Pratt et al., 2015), China (Chow et al., 2010; Chow et al., 2017; McBride-Chang et al., 2012), the Philippines (Cheung et al. 2018; Dulay et al., 2019), South Korea, Singapore (Li & Tan, 2016), Chile (Coddington et al., 2014; Lohndorf et al., 2018; Strasser & Lissi, 2009), Tanzania (Ngorosho, 2010), Myanmar (Quadros & Sarroub, 2016).

In these studies, almost all the authors have acknowledged the role of family literacy in children's language and literacy acquisition, as demonstrated in earlier Western studies. At the same time, however, most of them argue that such research is scant outside the West. As Park (2008) argues, previous research is still insufficient to understand the importance of family resources for children's education. So far, most of the study is limited to single-country in the West, primarily to developed ones. It is still unknown whether the country's influence is a factor in the diversity of family cultural resources

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<sup>1</sup> This paper cites western countries, or the West, as Europe, the United States and Canada in North America, and Australia and New Zealand in Oceania, which are mainly white developed countries.



and explains such influence. When studying maternal practices as predictors of early literacy development, Mendive et al. (2017) also point out that most previous studies are based on English speakers. Still, there were many differences in literacy practices between families in countries where the literature came from and those where other languages were spoken. Therefore, to further understand the effect of family literacy and parent-child shared reading on children's language and literacy development, it is of considerable significance to initiate related studies on other language speakers, as well as families learning English as a foreign language (EFL) or as a second language (ESL).

Firstly, some studies have explored the role of family literacy and parental involvement in children's first language and literacy acquisition. In Li and Rao (2000), of the 160 Chinese parents, 70% of them report teaching their preschoolers to read Chinese at home, and 50% also say writing training. Lin et al. (2009) review the different strategies of Chinese mothers in Hong Kong to write novel Chinese words with their children. The mother's mediation strategy in writing can adequately explain Chinese children's literacy development, especially independent reading. McBride-Chang et al. (2012) state that the scaffolding provided by Chinese mothers for their children's early learning of pinyin (a coding system assisting students in reading) is conducive to their acquisition of word reading and the development of their writing skills. Chen, Chen and Wen (2022) also highlight the tendency of Chinese parents to favour instruction-oriented formal literacy development, which is more pronounced in families with lower SES, and the government's desire to adjust and influence this preference through launching new education policies. In addition, Li and Rao (2000) and Lin et al. show that their Chinese parent participants tended to adopt a rigid approach to teaching Chinese literacy to their children, which means they prefer rote memorization rather than the instruction of visualization and other family activities.

For Mexican families, few studies have explored the relationship between the shared values of Latinos and the individual construction of family literacy (McWayne & Melzi, 2014). Moreover, literature remains limited regarding the role of Mexican parents, such as their educational beliefs and home practices, in their children's language and literacy development (McWayne et al., 2013). Bridges et al. (2015) show that little is known

about the construction of family literacy activities in Latino families, including the involvement of children. Fuller and García-Coll (2010) have found that Mexican parents are less likely to be involved in their children's early education than other groups in the United States. However, like most other ethnic groups, Mexican parents promote children's early literacy through traditional family activities in their home environment, such as singing, storytelling, and reciting folk songs. Such family activities also exist in other sociocultural environments, spreading into children's communities (Bridges et al., 2015). Besides, when Mexican parents are convinced that their actions are helpful for their children's education, they try to improve children's learning and become more involved in school-related activities (Saracho, 2007). Smith (2016) points out that in response to school readiness, parents at the three new Mexico schools he surveyed read with their children at least once a week and some daily.

In studying the effects of HLE on children's language and literacy in low- and middle-income Filipino families, Dulay et al. (2018) point out that most HLE factors, such as family SES and parents' self-efficacy, correlate positively with children's language and literacy development. This result is consistent with several studies in developed countries. In the Philippines, however, Shared reading between parents and children is not closely related to children's literacy acquisition, and Tabbada-Rungduin et al. (2014) confirm this point. For this reason, Dulay et al. (2018) hypothesize that a lack of training in reading strategies and tutoring in specific literacy skills for Filipino parents account for it. This conclusion supported Pado's (2006) view that parents are willing to help their children improve literacy skills in the Philippines. Still, they lack the means to carry out family literacy activities, such as telling stories and teaching children to read. Since then, Dulay et al. (2019) indicate that after 12 weeks of intervention (parent coaching programs) with middle - and low-income Filipino parents, children aged 3 to 5 in 578 families who participated in the following test improved their literacy skills effectively. Besides, in studies of Philippine parents, scholars have also found that HLE is highly correlated with parents' academic expectations of their children. Once in school, the link between HLE and children's literacy skills strengthens.

For Chilean families, on the one hand, scholars put forward that the current studies on

family literacy are scarce; on the other hand, in terms of existing literature, they find that parents' attitudes towards family literacy and practices of emergent literacy in Chile are pretty different from those in developed countries. Bradley and Corwyn (2005) argue that Chilean parents are less responsible for their children's cognitive and learning skills development than their American counterparts. Susperreguy et al. (2007) confirm that compared with American families, Chilean families spend less time reading together for entertainment, parents read to their children at a low frequency, and children have less access to children's literature. Strasser (2009) indicates that parents did not spend much time reading with their children in the study's sample of Chilean families. There were few children's books in the family, and parents did not feel that reading with their children was worthwhile. Scholars attribute the results to the different cultural values and child-rearing arrangements of Chilean parents and the country's overall low level of education (Contreras & González, 2015; Strasser, 2009). Later, some studies examined children's language development from the perspective of SES and HLE and concluded similarly to previous Western studies that SES and HLE are positively correlated with children's language ability (Coddington et al., 2014) and vocabulary development (Lohndorf et al., 2018). On this basis, scholars concerned with family literacy in Chile have come up with similar suggestions, namely, to provide more support for family literacy education for Chilean parents, influence their cultural and educational views, and improve the quality of preschool education (Coddington et al., 2014; Contreras & González, 2015; Lohndorf et al., 2018; Strasser, 2009).

In addition to studies on the impact of family literacy on children's first language ability, a few studies have focused on the role of family literacy activities on children's second/foreign language and literacy development (such as Chow et al., 2010; Chow et al., 2017; Collins, 2005; Hammer et al., 2003; Kalia, 2007). These studies have explored the relationship between family literacy experiences and early literacy outcomes in bilingual/foreign-language learning children. For example, by distinguishing between synchronous learners and sequential learners, Hammer et al. (2003) explore the impact of the home literacy environment on children's emergent English literacy and finds synchronous learners' mothers have greater motivation to perform family literacy activities and such increasing exposure to preschool children to literacy materials and

actions contribute to the bilingual children's English literacy development. By evaluating parent-child book reading practices, Kalia (2007) examines the development of English language and literacy in 24 bilingual Indian children and extends the findings of Sénéchal et al. (1996) to bilingual children. By exploring the influence of dialogic parent-child English reading on 51 Hong Kong kindergarten children, Chow et al. (2010) show the effect of parent-child shared reading in English as a second language on reading skills of English words and the role of dialogic reading on the improvement of children's phonological awareness of both Chinese and English. On the one hand, these conclusions prove the effect of parent-child reading on second language learning; on the other hand, they point out the possibility of literacy transfer from learning the second language to the first language.

In addition to focusing on the proximal HLE factors, such as parent-child reading activities, for studies outside the Western countries, there are also a few working on the effect of distal HLE factors, such as SES and ethnicity, on children's development of language and literacy (e.g. Coddington et al., 2014; Korat et al., 2013; Lohndorf et al., 2019; Mendive et al., 2017; Ngorosho, 2010). Most of these studies follow the clues of relevant western studies to find the role of remote HLE factors, and their results are similar to those of western studies. For example, Korat et al. (2013) indicate that the SES of Arabic-speaking families is correlated with children's oral and written literacy abilities. Moreover, Coddington et al. (2014) show that a Chilean mother's education level and income can predict a child's vocabulary score. Besides, most of these studies expect to advise national educational, social and political decisions and help early childhood educators and parents make actionable decisions.

## 2.6 Summary

Studies related to family literacy have been abundant in the context of the West. From the initial critical discussion on the paradigm of educational philosophy to the observation and understanding of specific family literacy practices and then to the analysis and evaluation of relevant impact factors, this field has been going on a journey of nearly 80 years in the West.

In past studies, the influence of various factors that HLE may be involved in has been widely recognized, such as the quality and frequency of parent-child reading activities, parents' literacy abilities and educational levels, and SES, on early childhood development. In recent years, western studies on this topic have still focused on finding and verifying factors related to family literacy. After confirming the generally positive correlation between HLE and parent-child reading practice on children's language and literacy development, Western scholars attempt to find more specific and conditional factors to explain the role of family literacy in children's development and provide suggestions for Western education policies and family decisions.

Outside the Western paradigm, however, stories that have been found about family literacy are pretty different. In countries other than the West, family literacy, whether in the mother tongue or the second/foreign language, has its characteristics under different social, cultural and educational systems. Meanwhile, these differences enable the study of this topic to have unique academic and social significance.

As mentioned above, within families, although there have been stories in China about parents helping their children acquire their mother tongue or English as a foreign language, the educational beliefs behind this phenomenon and the specific implementation methods are pretty different from those in the West. This paper explored an emerging phenomenon of family literacy in the Chinese context: parent-child shared reading. The selected reading medium is English picture books born in the Western world.

These Chinese parents have faced many problems, but for such a particular family literacy activity in this specific context, the existing literature was insufficient to support us in providing direct advice to them needing help. Therefore, instead of hypothesizing factors and exploring causality, this study conducted a narrative inquiry in qualitative research and took the participants' experience as the object of learning and exploration. As Noddings (1991) states, "Stories have the power to direct and change our lives" (p. 157).

I experienced the unique stories of Chinese families, explored their expectations and

ways of behaving, and found out what confusion and difficulties they were facing. In this way, new perspectives and issues were provided for future research in this field and directions and suggestions for future problem-solving.

## Chapter 3

### 3 Methodology

Human beings narrate their stories, while the narratives support and shape the meaning of their lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). According to Xu and Connelly (2010), narrative inquiry is a methodology that allows researchers to explore and document experiences.

In the current idiom, the story is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is made personally meaningful.

Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as a story, then, is, first and foremost, a way of thinking about the experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as a phenomenon under study. (p. 477)

Since Connelly and Clandinin (1990) constituted the significance of narrative inquiry as an educational research methodology, they regarded narrative inquiry as a narrative view of the phenomenon and a methodology for studying experience. It shows that, on the one hand, narrative inquiry works on experience and stories as a phenomenon, which is the “what” of a study. On the other hand, it is a way of thinking about experience adopting the particular view of the phenomenon under study (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006).

Therefore, narrative inquiry draws the researcher’s attention to the experience inspired by individuals' living and telling stories from the methodological purpose rather than a set of research methods (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007), “The interweaving of narrative views of phenomena and narrative inquiry marks the emerging field and draws attention to the need for careful use and distinctions of terms”. (p. 36)

The story is individual and unique for each person, but a broad narrative of culture, society, family, and institutions simultaneously contributes to shaping each individual's experience. Clandinin and Connelly (1998) put forward key terms of narrative inquiry, namely living stories, telling stories, retelling stories, and reliving stories. As Clandinin et al. (2015) explain, this structure makes narrative inquirers work within a three-

dimensional narrative inquiry space:

Narrative inquirers understand that people live out stories and tell stories of that living. Narrative inquirers come alongside participants and engage in narrative inquiry into participants' lived and told stories. Part of the process of narrative inquiry involves retelling stories, that is, inquiring into the stories lived and told. Of necessity, researchers also engage in narrative inquiry into their own lived and told stories as they come alongside participants. Retelling stories may eventually result in reliving stories in changed actions. (p. 243)

Thus, the view of experience associated with narrative inquiry is understood as relational, continuous, spatial, personal, and social (Clandinin et al., 2016). It is practical, reflexive, and critical.

Narrative Inquiry is an approach that fits best with my research objectives, and it is also a way of reflecting, requiring me to think narratively as a researcher (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000). This chapter described the methodology's rationality, my role and standpoint as an inquirer, the dilemma I was in, and the approaches I used to avoid interest conflicts. Then, I introduced the study design, including data collection and the process of data analysis.

## 3.1 Why narrative inquiry?

### 3.1.1 "I can't dance alone."

Let us dance a dance

Take my hand

I don't ever let go

If you know me, you know that

I can't dance alone.

"I can't dance alone" by Giovanni feat. Ross Antony

Narrative inquiry is not a solo dance for researchers. It is an invitation to participants to participate in "the research process as people with a perspective and wisdom that are worthy of hearing" (Dutton, 2003, p.8). When I communicated with my subscribers, I



used to think of myself as the “one who knows more”, but their stories gradually made me realize that there were many different situations, challenges, and schemas beyond my personal experience. Just like Rosiek and Pratt (2013) reminded us, “knowledge is ultimately grounded in and must return for its validation to the course of personal experience” and “that the form this knowledge takes most readily or appropriately takes in our lives is that of narrative” (p. 586). This convinced me that learning from parents’ stories is the prerequisite step in helping them improve their experience.

As Shin and Park (2016) state, communicatively, people integrate their differentiated selves, involving different roles, time/ space dimensions, and environmental and emotional conditions, into a narrative process. Taking the position of a parent, a teacher, and a researcher, I was sure it was meaningful to accept multiple selves as “me” to hear and learn from my participants’ voices and see the implications for my reflection and other readers.

In addition, in the field of early childhood, the narrative inquiry seems new and highly correlated with the institutional context of studies (Swanson et al., 2016). It is easy to understand that children's development is positively associated with institutions represented by schools. Still, if we perceive education as an understanding of experience based on Dewey's (1938) theory, the family should not be identified as deficit and “in need of being fixed” (Steeves, 2006, p.108). Narrative Inquirers should respect children's experiences in different environments and contexts and explore the relationships and influences among people in everyday lives, not just related to teachers, doctors, nurses, social workers, and classmates, but also parents in families (Swanson et al., 2016). Thankfully, this trend is already underway (Barrett, 2009; Clandinin, 2013).

### 3.1.2 Be a storyteller and listener

As a mother, a teacher, a performer, and an advocate of home-shared reading, my life is filled with non-institutional stories of children growing up. In my eyes, parental involvement and experience are highly relevant to children's development. I applied narrative inquiry as the methodology to perceive parents’ experiences and interpret their stories. I identified my positioning in this study as both an insider (mainly a parent myself

and an assistant co-constructing the background) and an outsider (a researcher negotiating my insights and challenging elements of the stories). I used narratives to encourage parents' thinking and self-reflection on their previous experiences, as one purpose of the narrative inquiry is to create space for critical thinking and self-reflection (Chen, 2012). Also, as Pillion (2005) indicates, reflection leads to understanding, and "both reflection and understanding can be transformed into renewed and revitalized practice" (p. 6). Therefore, parents in my research could construct new knowledge for and improve the experience of their family literacy (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). For this work to go "beyond the specific stories to perceive the assumptions inherent in the shaping of the stories" (Pavlenko, 2002, p. 213), I worked relationally with my participants. Instead of collecting, categorizing, and analyzing data for measurable targets, a narrative inquiry approach provides me with a space to respect the dynamic nature and individual uniqueness of participants' experiences.

The research also intended to expand understanding of family literacy activities by making previously invisible components of the process visible. As Chan (2012) says,

These [narrative] activities focus on understanding experience and reflecting on the experience to create an in-depth understanding of self and others. These activities create space for self-inquiry that enables participants to become active learners who construct or reconstruct what is to be learned. (p. 117)

In addition, Baddeley and Singer (2007) indicate that one of the significant reasons to apply narrative as a methodology to investigate participants' identities over the lifespan is to find the clue of "autobiographical reasoning" (p. 178) for participants to generate narrative on their stories. In the activities, participants can chronologically review and reflect on their stories and critical events in their life and understand the meaning of their lived experiences. Then, they would become active in learning and transform "what is to be learned through the screen of their experience" (Chen, 2012. p. 123).

Last, Caine et al. (2019) emphasize that participants and researchers should focus on attention in narrative inquiry. "While in research it is often assumed that a researcher's

experience can be withheld by a pre-inquiry or withheld by measures which reduce bias, this is not possible in narrative inquiry studies” (p. 5). Narrative inquiry allowed me to understand my participants’ experiences rather than explain or predict their world. I engaged myself in a continuous autobiographical investigation. As Swanson et al. (2016) state, “Narrative inquirers enter into research relationships with participants amid their ongoing personal and professional lives” (p. 246). Thus, it helped me constantly coordinate and participate in research by studying how my own experiences became visible. As the inquirer, I practiced various interactions with the narrators in a given period. The stories influence specific or series of places and all of us in the research. Therefore, in the narrative inquiry, on one side, my background and worldview unavoidably affect our relationship, identifications, and exchanges with my participants (Luttrell, 2000). Similarly, their stories, in turn, influenced and nourished my research aims, approaches, and voice (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As Orr and Olson (2007) describe in their work:

As we tell and retell such stories and come to a deeper awareness of how we shape and shape these moments and our multiple understandings of them, we realize the transformative possibilities they provoke. Further, we gain insight into our identities and students by noticing and reflecting upon the mirrors and windows provided by others’ stories. (p. 820)

When I interacted with the participants as a storyteller and listener, the transformative power of narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) pushed me into a matrix containing a circle of living, telling, reliving, and retelling (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The interaction process gave me more strength and confidence to understand and reflect on who we are and why we are rather than who they are and why they are. It was shifting and transforming, gave me more temporal and spatial possibilities to put my philosophy into action, and assisted me in realizing the significance of writing, reflecting, and rewriting for my narrative inquiry. From stories to field texts to interim and final research texts, it was not just a transcript to record the stories and the process of progress. Still, it was a kind of approach for my participants to dialogue, discuss, negotiate, and debate with me. Then, we improved our parent-child shared reading experience in telling,

consulting, thinking, retelling, rediscussing and rethinking.

### 3.1.3 Two Paradoxes

#### **Rapport, good or bad?**

By positioning myself as a narrative inquirer, I faced the open and unpredictable relationship between the researcher and the researched. As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) describe, narrative inquiry is relationship-based work:

We found that merely listening, recording, and fostering participant storytelling was both impossible (we are, all of us, continually telling stories of our experiences, whether or not we speak and write them) and unsatisfying. We learned that, we, too, needed to tell our stories. Scribes we were not; storytellers and story lovers we were. And in our storytelling, the stories of our participants merged with our own to create new stories, ones that we have labelled collaborative stories. The thing finally written on paper (or, perhaps on film, tape, or canvas), the research paper or book, is a collaborative document, a mutually constructed story created out of the lives of both researcher and participant. (p. 12, italics in original)

Kvale (1996) hypothesizes that an interview is a way to create knowledge based on the different viewpoints of the interviewer and the interviewee. This is a way of generating knowledge that develops through human interaction. It primarily relies on the interviewee's openness, trust, and generosity to share what they know with the interviewer. Therefore, the behavioural effect of the researchers' story collection highly depends on the degree of trust and harmony between the researched and themselves. In the process of inquiry, thus, I should try to establish and feel the relationship brought about by narrative inquiry, which would also promote the development of research.

However, some scholars kept reminding narrative inquirers to reflect on the true meaning of rapport in the research process. Goudy and Potter (1975) point out that a more significant bias may come with a high degree of rapport. The goal of rapport building,

they argue, should not be the relationship itself but rather the narrative data collected.

From the moment I decided to apply narrative inquiry to my methodology, it was clear to me that in this research, storytellers (participants) and storylisteners (researchers) would promote each other's growth and learning in a dynamic relationship (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Thus, I worked hard to avoid my blog subscribers when I recruited study participants. I was concerned that for those who already knew me, especially those assuming I as the person who knew more, their assumptions about me may lead to the bias of discourse power in our research relationship. I also wanted to avoid the influence of the bias that came with a high degree of rapport in this study. Therefore, I gave up my blog and chose a forum related to children's EPBs to post my participant recruiting advertisement. However, after identifying participants based on regional distribution, children's age, and the number of children, I found that all six participants were my blog subscribers. This made me realize that since EPBs-related resources in China are limited at the moment, I could not avoid encountering my subscribers among the participants. So, at that stage, I felt like I was at an impasse until I came across this quote from Pinnegar and Daynes (2007):

In this turn toward narrative inquiry, the researcher not only understands that there is a relationship between the humans involved in the inquiry but also who the researcher is and what is researched emerges in the interaction. In this view, the researched and the researcher exist in time and in a particular context. They bring with them a history and worldview. They are not static but dynamic, and growth and learning are part of the research process. Both researcher and researched will learn. (p. 14)

I suddenly realized that I didn't have to avoid good relationships. I only needed to clarify that I was in this dynamic relationship of time and space while establishing a new research relationship of narrative inquiry with my participants. Meanwhile, I could also help my participants know that this would not be the end of a previous rapport but the beginning of a new journey and a new relationship.

At the same time, to avoid the research bias produced by rapport and previous

interactions, I borrowed the following advice from Mahoney (2007) for narrative inquirers:

- Create a self-reflexive fieldwork journal at the preliminary stages of the project to document methodological practices at crucial stages of the research process.
- Keep both substantive and methodological field note entries of the research process.
- Represent researchers' voices in narratives while simultaneously keeping participants' voices alive and vibrant.
- Accept the role boundaries that actors set for themselves and pay attention to the participants' short-lived and context-specific fieldwork interaction. (pp. 586-592)

These suggestions for my reflexive and participatory practice helped me step out of my dilemma and pursue what Mahoney calls the “balancing act,” which is “blurring the lines between our friendship and our research collaboration” (p. 589).

### **To answer or not to answer.**

At the initial data collection stage, I had already clarified our research relationship with all the participants. I hope they can see me as a mom who needs to learn with them, sharing stories and discussing our puzzles. However, they still unconsciously asked me questions about family education in our communication process, some of which were not directly related to parent-child shared reading. As Clandinin and Murphy (2009) indicate, “Ontological commitment to relational locates ethical relationships at the heart of the narrative inquiry. The ethical stance of narrative relationships is characterized by a relational ethics” (pp. 599-600). I was well aware of the importance of maintaining relational ethics in data collection, and I did not want my actions to cause unnecessary conflicts of interest. This was what I was concerned about the most before I went into participant recruitment.

Furthermore, as Ellis and Bochner (2000) argue, “If you are a storyteller rather than a story analyst, then your goal becomes therapeutic rather than analytic” (p.745). This pushed me further into the ethical dilemma about whether I should provide feedback on their questions, whether I was overstepping my research boundaries, and made this research a therapy-oriented study. Kim (2016) gave me great help when I was baffled and timid. In the book, a researcher named Jodie encountered a similar problem. When two participants came to her for teaching advice, Jodie was unsure if it raised ethical research issues. Professor Kim responded to Jodie's puzzlement by quoting Aristotle's *phronesis*:

My sense is why not. Why not help them out if they ask you to help? You're not just “using” them for your research. Your help, offered per their request, would benefit them as well, so that the research relationship becomes reciprocal and relational. Also, you're not there to evaluate the teachers, so your help would not “skew” your research findings. That's my thought. But, you have to use your *phronesis* to judge your action. (p. 105)

Kim (2016) further explained, “*Phronesis* is the moral, ethical judgment to act wisely and prudently, which is more than the possession of *episteme* (general content knowledge) or *techne* (skills or techniques)” (p. 106). As a Narrative Inquirer, I need to understand the specific details of a particular time and place, focus on approaches to act wisely in a specific condition, and find a valuable means of action based on heightened awareness (Aristotle, 1985).

In this case, the “paradox” was not the issue but harmonized my original intent to apply narrative inquiry. As an online consultant of English family literacy, I expected to assist my participants in jumping out of the confusion and problems through my personal stories and professional/ academic skills, which meant providing them with some “therapeutic narratives” (Archer et al., 2015, p. 22) as references. Thus, both therapeutic and analytic narratives were presented in the research. In addition, I accepted the advice of Kim (2016) and adopted reflexivity as an essential guide for my data collection and reduction. In exploring the context and nature of the participants' stories, I connected *phronesis* to my role in the study. When I read and re-read the field text, once I found any

content involving a conflict of interest, I would mark it and adjust/ delete it after consultation with relevant participants.

## 3.2 Research Design

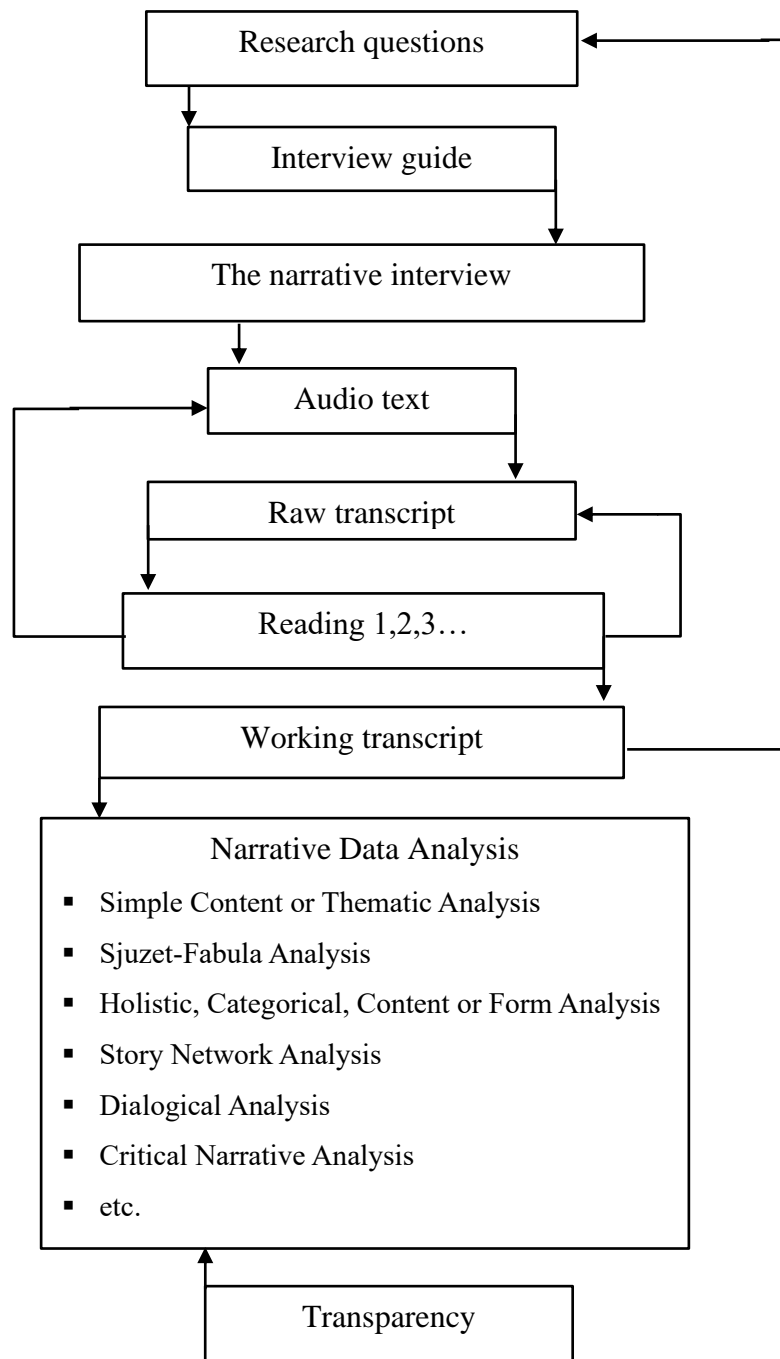
As Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) say, narrative inquirers are aware of the exploratory and variable nature of knowledge, and as a result, they accept and value narrative inquiry as an approach that embraces “wondering, tentativeness, and alternative views to exist” (p. 25). Discussing the paradigm of narrative inquiry, Spector-Mersel (2010) says that narrative inquiry tightly links the “how” and “what” of research, forming a mature *Weltanschauung* of research that “presupposes the nature of reality and our relationship to it” (p. 204). Clandinin (2013) supports this view, stating, “We begin in the midst, and end in the midst of experience” (p. 43).

When discussing research design for narrative inquiry, David Hiles and Ivo Čermák (2007) argue, it is better for narrative inquirers to carefully design a dynamic framework and then consider the appropriate way to collect data and make choices for research questions when analysing data, rather than trying to follow a basic set of steps or rules simply. They named this dynamic framework Narrative-Oriented Inquiry (NOI).



**Figure 3**

*A Generalized Model of Narrative Inquiry*



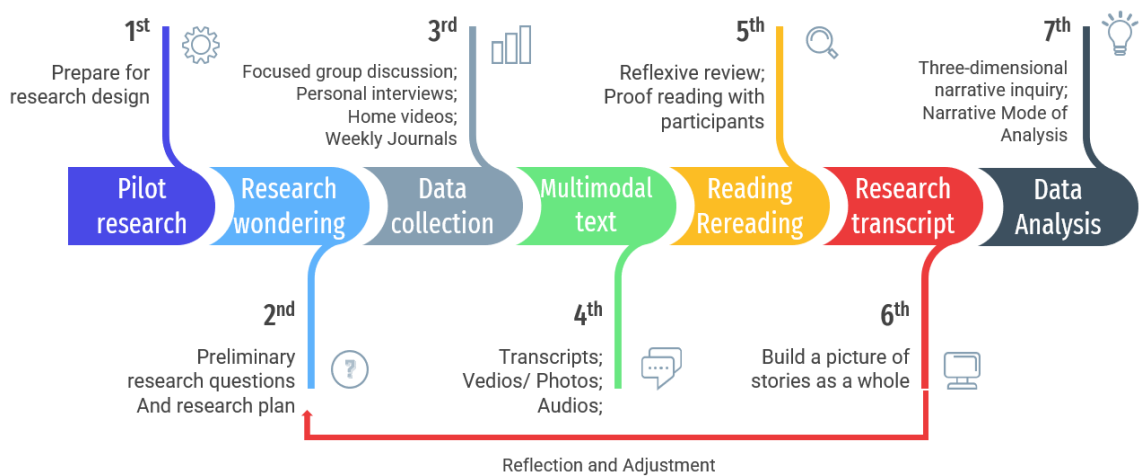
*Note.* A Generalized Model of Narrative Inquiry. Adapted from Narrative psychology, by Hiles, D. R., & Čermák, I., 2007. In C. Willig & W. Stainton-Rogers (Eds.), *SAGE handbook of qualitative research in psychology* (pp. 147–164). London, England: Sage.

NOI emphasizes the significance of reflecting on research questions during the research process. It follows the structured data collection and analysis procedure as other interpretative research. Still, reading and re-reading reinforce the field’s relationship and the field text. In addition, it clarifies the transparency of the whole data analysis process, which reflects the participants’ co-constructive identity while establishing and analyzing the research text.

This dynamic framework greatly inspired my research design. To explore Chinese parents’ experiences and reveal the possible unspoken voice, I participated in the research as an organizer of the online family literacy program, a mom who reads with her child and a researcher. The study began with my wondering about their stories and my expectation to improve our experience.

**Figure 4**

*Flowchart of Research Design*



Before arranging the formal recruitment of study participants, I organized a pilot study to propose initial questions, determine the optimal participant size, and consider the model of research data and the corresponding research plan, such as writing recruitment advertisements and submitting interview questions. I invited three Chinese friends with experience of parent-child shared reading on EPBs, one father and two mothers. I clarified the purpose of this pilot study and emphasized that none of the content they

provided would be recorded or adopted as research data. We talked about our home-shared reading practices and exchanged our experiences, puzzles, and solutions. In addition, we discussed the current situation of parent-child shared reading in China and shared our views on the values and beliefs of home-shared reading in person. After in-depth communication with them, I proposed the leading questions of this research. I made the overall research plan, including the multi-modal data collection approach, the possible topics of focused group discussion, and semi-structured questions for personal interviews. Based on a rough estimate of the amount of information and time spent, I also determined the size of the participants and the selection plan related to the demographic distribution.

After establishing my research plan, I posted a recruitment advertisement on an online forum related to parent-child shared reading. I received 29 applications, and six Chinese parents were invited to the research, considering both the volume and diversity. They were interviewed in-depth about their views and practices related to the home-shared reading of EPBs. Semi-structured interview questions were designed to explore their practices and opinions related to past, present, and future home-shared reading experiences on EPBs. I encouraged the participants to record their parent-child reading practices in journal entries or family videos as they wished. Then, an online private chat room was created to provide the space for online group discussions. I documented the transcripts of the conversations, participants' journal entries, and field notes of the online chats between participants and me. All the documents were read and re-read to compose interim research texts. In addition, the provisional research texts were shared with the participants and be refined into the collaborative document. More importantly, every time I read and re-read the field text, I would reflect on my research standpoints and the original research questions once I got new inspiration. Then, I would make corresponding modifications and adjustments to them. These questions have been presented in the first chapter of this paper. The whole process of data collection and preliminary analysis played a decisive role in clarifying them and making them highly consistent with my research belief and paradigm.

### 3.3 Participants

Participants included 6 Chinese parents living in China, with one or more children between 3 to 6 years old, who speak Chinese as their family language and read English picture books regularly at home together.

**Table 1.**

*Participant's gender, location, and number, gender and age of their children*

Participants	Gender	Location	Number of children	Gender and age of children
1. Carefree	F	Tianjin	1	Boy, 5
2. Jiojio	F	Beijing	2	Boy, 5 Girl, 2
3. Meier	F	Chengdu	2	Girl, 3 Boy, 1
4. Vivi	F	Hangzhou	2	Girl, 8 Girl, 4
5. Ming	F	Jinhua	2	Boy, 20 Girl, 3.5
6. Mr. Goat	F	Guangzhou	1	Boy, 3.5

*Note.* all participants use pseudonyms in the study

Besides, all participants were able to access the Internet, use Skype (a Voice over Internet Protocol technology, providing people with the ability to interview research participants using voice and video across the internet via a synchronous connection.<sup>2</sup>) as a communication tool, and are willing to be audio-taped during interviews and focus-group discussions.

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<sup>2</sup> Definition of Skype is quoted from Lo Iacono, Symonds, & Brown (2016)

## 3.4 Research Methods and Data Collection

According to Clandinin and Connelly (1990), the narrative is both the phenomenon studied in inquiry and a way of thinking about the experience, as “it is equally correct to say, ‘inquiry into narrative’ as it is ‘narrative inquiry’” (p. 2). This state triggered scholars' thinking on narrative inquiry as a methodology (e.g., Clandinin, 2006) and discussion of the narrative paradigm (e.g., Spector-Mersel, 2010). Similarly, this research identified the participants' experiences as narratively constructed as research texts. I engaged participants over ten weeks, and we were involved in the data collection in the following ways.

### 3.4.1 Interviews

I conducted multiple interviews to obtain self-reported data provided by all the participants in ten weeks. Each week, I organized a 30-minute online interview with the participants individually at a convenient time. According to Scott and Morrison (2006), the semi-structured interview is appropriate for expanding, developing, and clarifying participants' responses. Therefore, it was conducted in the research, and the interview protocol was pilot tested by three parents who are acquainted with the investigator.

Interviews were conducted online. Skype was used, and interviews were recorded as digital audio. As soon as possible, following each interview, audio recordings were transcribed.

### 3.4.2 Weekly Journal and Self-recorded Video

The participants voluntarily kept a weekly reflective journal or a self-recorded video on their home-shared reading activities. For the weekly reflective journal and the self-recorded video, I collected the data related to their home-shared reading. For example, parent-child reading activities, the way of communication, the register of parents' language and tone, family reading habits/preferences, and the interaction between parents and children. There were guidelines to help them start a weekly journal in the introduction to Easyclass. Participants were expected to document the journal entry every

week, including written reflections and uploaded video clips of their family reading. The researcher collected the data and moved it from the secure, password-protected 'Easyclass' classroom to her secure, password-protected storage device in the locked office.

### 3.4.3 Online Focus-group Discussion

In addition to self-reported data, I conducted online focus-group discussions in the first week, then every three weeks on Webinar OnAir. Webinar OnAir (<https://www.webinarsonair.com/>) is an online group meeting tool that provides its clients online group meeting service. The organizer can establish a series of password-protected online group meetings and invite participants by a private link through their registered email. Only people who have the invitation link can periodically access the online group meeting. It is a web version of the software, so participants do not need to download any application to participate in the group meeting. When all participants entered the meeting room, they set their screen names and got ready for the subsequent discussions. Participants contributed by typing or speaking in this online meeting space, either using audio-only or video (their choice). Webinar OnAir has a group communication function like Skype, but the researcher can manage group meetings privately and confidentially using password settings and private invitations. As well, Webinar OnAir can accommodate up to ten speakers simultaneously. Six parents were selected and participated in monthly online group discussions in my research. This private and password-protected online group meeting platform fitted my research for group size, privacy/confidentiality, and convenience.

In the first focused group discussion, we briefly introduced ourselves and collected our confusion or concerns about parent-child shared reading. We decided on the potential topics for the second group discussion. Ensuing topics were agreed at the end of each session, the periodic focus group discussions were held for participants' convenience. I recorded each online focus group using my offline digital camera to ensure the private storage of data. In addition, the website did not retain any information without the organizer's permission. After the online focus groups, the researcher permanently deleted

the site created for the focus groups, and no online information remained on Webinar OnAir.

### 3.5 Data analysis procedures

As a milestone in my doctoral study, this research was my first attempt to listen to the voices, especially the unspoken ones, of Chinese parents on home-shared EPBs reading in the way of an academic inquiry. In addition, it was one of the few studies in the existing literature that took the perspective and standpoint of Chinese parents as the research stance. Given this study's purpose and initial status, I adopted the Narrative Mode of Analysis proposed by Polkinghorne (1995).

Based on Bruner (1985)'s narrative designation, Polkinghorne (1995) divides narrative inquiry into two distinct groups: paradigmatic-type cognition and narrative-type cognition.

Paradigmatic-type narrative inquiry gathers stories for its data and uses paradigmatic analytic procedures to produce taxonomies and categories out of the common elements across the database. Narrative-type narrative inquiry gathers events and happenings as its data and uses narrative analytical procedures to produce explanatory stories. (p. 5)

Although both types of narrative inquiry generate valuable and meaningful cognition, for this study, I did not expect to categorize participants or conceptualize their features or attributes but explore their experiences and actions as a living and telling continuum.

The narrative analysis mode is based on narrative cognition, explicitly focusing on the particularity of human action in a specific setting, and it effectively served my research aims. As Polkinghorne (1995) states, narrative reasoning takes note of the differences and diversity of people's actions, focuses on the temporal context and complex interactions between elements to make each situation compelling, and it also allocates the different elements of a particular activity into a unity to make each element associated with the central purpose of the action. Therefore, the narrative analysis mode is "to help the reader understand why and how things happened in the way they did, and why and how our

participants acted in the way they did” (Kim, 2006, p. 196). This analytical stance highly fulfils the point of narrative research put forward by Miller (2005), which is to reveal participants' subjective experience in interpreting events and conditions in their daily lives. And it also fitted the core purpose of this study, which was to explore the participants' stories in the three-dimensional context, learn and reflect, and expect to improve their experience.

My field notes/diaries were qualitative, focusing on interesting/meaningful events and actions of participants' monologue stories or discussions. (e.g., their complaints about the problems of parent-child shared reading; the funny moments they had in the reading activities; events that surprised or frustrated them). All narratives, interviews, and researcher dairies were recorded as field notes. The analysis of these raw data started with three intensive steps of coding. Firstly, I selected, identified, and highlighted the interim research texts with the significant events and patterns related to the research questions. Then, the repeated events and patterns for each participant were transferred into potential themes. Next, I gave my preliminary description and analysis back to the participants for member-checking by adding their interpretation, ideas, comments, and reflections. It effectively assisted me in achieving the meaning of co-construction in this study through the feedback on comprehensiveness and accuracy from all participants. Such reciprocity between researchers and participants effectively ensures the credibility of the data collected when conducting narrative inquiry (Creswell, 2007). Third, after the member-checking, themes related to research questions were highlighted and re-read in-depth for identifying the common themes and several individual, but important themes. This coding approach can help me closely focus on the research questions, explore the common narrative themes from the initial data, and achieve the meaning of co-construction with the participants. Both the exploration of common themes and the findings of personalized themes are conducive to realizing the core aim of this study, that is, to learn from all participants and investigate those significant or neglected experiences and stories in the family shared reading.

I set up an online password-protected forum (Easyclass) and added participants via their email addresses to share any transcriptions of audio from interviews and the focus groups



for member-checking. Only participants from each interview and focus group had access to the relevant transcribed documents. Data analysis began when each field note was token and continued as new data was collected, and both open-coding and focused-coding processes were applied.

### 3.5.1 Recruitment Procedure and Consent Process

After receiving approval from the Western ethics board, the recruitment advertisement was uploaded to some online forums, such as [www.baobaobooks.com/](http://www.baobaobooks.com/)<sup>3</sup>. These forums belong to the website providing information for parents interested in parent-child shared reading on English picture books.

Participants came from different districts of mainland China. Therefore, Easyclass, a private, password-protected online discussion forum, was established to register the participants. Easyclass is a social writing platform frequently used in education (see <https://www.easyclass.com/>). I used Easyclass as an Internet tool to facilitate participants' registration and weekly journal entry. The researcher created a link to a password-protected "Easyclass classroom" and the link was included on the Implied Informed Consent Form. Participants who agreed to take part in the research clicked on the link to enter the "Easyclass classroom" using the password provided on the Implied Informed Consent Form. In this "Easyclass classroom", a welcome message was posted, and information to guide the participants on how to create a piece of share information privately through Easyclass with the researcher. For example, they were asked to provide a pseudonym and necessary personal information, including their age, the age and gender of their child, the general district in China where they live, and the number of years they have been reading with their child. These private, password-protected messages were transferred to the researcher's password-protected storage device.

### 3.5.2 Language of Communication

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<sup>3</sup> A platform focusing on parent-children shared reading of EPBs and emergent English readers.

Participants consented to Chinese using the translated Chinese documents, and the interviews were conducted in Chinese. The researcher was fluent in Chinese, so communication was not a challenge. All the data were collected and transcribed in Chinese and then translated into English.

To confirm the accuracy of the translation, a Chinese student at Western University was invited to do the certification of the translation. The student was a native Chinese speaker and fluent in English. The person certifying the accuracy of the translation was independent of the study and properly instructed to be aware of ethics in dealing with identifiable data. All the translated document was stored on an encrypted USB stick to certify before being moved to the researchers' password-protected, secure storage in the locked office. The certifier signed a confidentiality agreement providing for the REB review.

### 3.5.3 Risks, Benefits, and Safety

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study. Participants may benefit from gaining more information, knowledge, and skills about conducting parent-child shared reading on English picture books at home. They may also gain new perspectives on their parent-child shared reading activities in terms of rethinking their current family literacy activities. In the focus-group discussions, participants chose how they felt comfortable presenting their data, video, or audio. Participants could refuse to provide any data they felt uncomfortable with or did not have time to provide, such as self-recorded videos and weekly journals. Participants could modify, adjust, and withdraw the first draft of data transcripts provided by the researcher.

## 3.6 Summary

This chapter discussed the use of narrative inquiry as a methodology for exploring and documenting experiences. Narrative inquiry allows researchers to adopt a particular view of experience as a phenomenon under study. It focuses on the interweaving of narrative views of phenomena and narrative inquiry, drawing attention to the need for careful use and distinctions of terms. Narrative inquiry works within a three-dimensional narrative

inquiry space, including living stories, telling stories, retelling stories, and reliving stories. The view of experience associated with narrative inquiry is understood as relational, continuous, spatial, personal, and social. The chapter also described the methodology's rationality, the role and standpoint of the inquirer, the study design, data collection, and the process of data analysis. The chapter emphasized the significance of reflecting on research questions during the research process and clarifying the transparency of the whole data analysis process. Finally, the chapter described the author's use of narrative inquiry in exploring Chinese parents' experiences and the research plan that was implemented.

## Chapter 4

### 4 Analysis and Findings

This chapter detailed the analysis and findings collected through a narrative inquiry into family literacy involving the participation of six Chinese parents who perform parent-child shared reading on EPBs in the family setting. It began with an overview of the six participants. Next, I highlighted the common narrative themes found in this study and covered a few personal but noteworthy themes.

The data analysis in this study was compatible with narrative description and analysis. As Kim (2016) states, the purpose of analyzing narrative data is to develop an understanding of “the meanings our participants give to themselves, to their surroundings, to their lives, and their lived experiences through storytelling” (p. 190). Inspired by Polkinghorne (1988), Kim (2016) believes that narrative inquiry can understand human experiences to better understand human phenomena and human existence through stories. Thus, despite having different implications, being objective and subjective, narrative analysis and interpretation work together in the narrative data as an act of finding narrative meaning (Kim 2016). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also show that analyzing narrative data in this way avoids possible ambiguations and helps researchers look for “patterns, narrative threads, tensions and themes” (p. 132).

This research focuses on investigating the participants' stories and learning from their experiences about the current situation, confusion, and development of family literacy in China. Therefore, I applied three-dimensional space narrative structure, which is “experience-oriented, wholistic, personal and social” (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2016, p. 344), as the data analysis approach. Based on Dewey’s philosophy of experience, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state that experience as a narrative phenomenon is temporal, social, and situated, and they indicate three aspects of their narrative approach, interaction, continuity, and situation.

**Table 2***The Three-Dimensional Space Narrative Structure*

<i>Interaction</i>		<i>Continuity</i>			
<i>Personal</i>	<i>Social</i>	<i>Past</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Future</i>	<i>Situation/Place</i>
Look inward to internal conditions, feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions.	Look outward to existential conditions in the environment with other people and their intentions, purposes, assumptions and points of view	Look backward to remembered experiences, feelings, and stories from earlier times	Look at current experiences, feelings, and stories relating to actions of an event	Look forward to implied and possible experiences and plot lines	Look at context, time, and place situated in a physical landscape or setting with topological and spatial boundaries with characters' intentions, purposes, and different points of view

*Note.* Reprinted from “Narrative Research: A Comparison of Two Restorying Data Analysis Approaches”, by J. Ollerenshaw and J. Creswell, 2016, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(3), pp. 329–347. Copyright 2016 by J. Ollerenshaw and J. Creswell.

Based on this framework, first, this study's dimension of “continuity” focused on exploring participants’ stories about home-shared reading in their childhood, their present engagement of practices, and future plans related to family literacy. Second, the dimension of “interaction” was incorporated to investigate the collision and compromise between their individual experiences and expectations and their literacy beliefs and practices in the social context. Finally, the “Situation/Place” dimension was reflected, in the family context, the particularity of their practices and their feeling, thinking, confusion, and growth.

## 4.1 Overview of Participants

After posting the recruitment announcement, I received a total of 29 applications. I then selected six families to maximizing the distribution of the children's ages, the geographical area they lived in, and the number of children in the family. All six participants provided parent-child shared reading to their children in the home context. They all spoke primarily Chinese in their home environment, but provided shared reading in English on EPBs. Four of them had two children, and two had one. They are located in different districts of China. Still, it is worth noting that, of the nearly 30 participating applications I received, almost all of the candidates came from developed or relatively developed regions of China, such as first-tier cities, Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen, as well as the developed coastal and eastern regions.

In the recruiting letter, participants were only asked to provide some basic demographics, including home location, number of children in the family, and age of their children. Applicants were not required to provide additional personal information; however, as the study progressed, in our group meeting and personal interviews, all participants volunteered to present several extra demographic statements consistent with existing studies on the Chinese home-shared reading practitioners.

Song (2017) points out parents with different educational backgrounds differ significantly in their initiative to provide shared reading for their children. Parents with a bachelor's degree and above are more likely to carry out parent-child shared reading activities in a

home environment. All the six parents in the study had a bachelor's degree, and three had a master's degree.

Lv (2019) indicates parents' occupations are closely related to the home-shared reading activities, and parents with stable jobs and incomes, such as civil servants, doctors, researchers and teachers, are more likely to engage in shared reading with their children. In this study, all the six participants had stable jobs, of which three were teachers, one was an engineer, one was an accountant, and one was a civil servant. In addition, all six participants were mothers, although one of them went by the screen name Mr. Goat. Participant gender corresponded with Shi's (2019) findings that fathers were not the leading providers of parent-child shared reading in their family, which is reflected in the low frequency of fathers' participation and the short duration of reading activities.

## 4.2 The Individuals

In the first focus group, the seven participants, including me got to know each other and simply exchanged our parent-child shared reading of EPBs. Before the discussion, I reintroduced the privacy policy and data collection methods, and ensured them that participation in the study was completely voluntary and independent. On this basis, all participants still shared some specific personal information, including their educational background, family composition, personal job.

After this discussion, all participants further clarified the significance of this study. They thoroughly understood the reason I had made "learning from them" the core goal of this research. They realized that this study was not just a chance to ask me for advice or simply solve the difficulties and issues faced by their families. Still, a project needed everyone to participate in, talk about, reflect on, discuss and improve. Therefore, before the end of the first group discussion, we jointly decided on the first week's personal interview theme. We all agreed that they needed to have a further one-on-one talk with me about the overall situation of their families' shared reading experience to help me better perceive their status, goals and confusion.

So, at this point in the study, I singly introduced all the participants, their overall situation since the launch of home reading activities, and specifically, their core purpose of parent-child shared reading of EPBs.

#### 4.2.1 Carefree

Carefree, the mother of a 5-year-old boy, has been conducting parent-child shared reading at home for three years. As a mother with an engineering background and good academic performance from childhood to university, Carefree's initial idea of taking her child to read together was to help him learn English earlier.

“From two and a half, I introduced my son to literacy cards, both in English and Chinese. At the age of four, I looked forward to providing him with systematic English language learning, so I signed him up for an English tutoring class. Meanwhile, I kept home-shared reading of EPBs to strengthen his English learning.”

Carefree said that her goal and motivation were apparent when she first decided to take her children to read EPBs. She thought English learning was significant in China, and she expected to improve her children's English reading and speaking through learning from EPBs. Therefore, to some extent, she agreed that parent-child shared reading of EPBs was an excellent way to learn English, and EPBs are effective teaching materials for children's English learning.

In the beginning, Carefree did not know how to conduct the reading activities and adjust the pace of her home-shared reading of EPBs. However, based on her own learning experience, she believed that achieving a certain amount of reading time is very important. Carefree said that in the first six months of conducting a shared reading, she kept a clear record of the amount of time they spent on English learning every day, such as their time on EPBs reading or watching English cartoons. She tried to ensure that her son spent at least seven hours a week in English.



After the age of four and a half, Carefree said, her child started to have independent reading skills, and by the age of five, he could read thoroughly on his own.

“My son likes to read by himself when he gets up in the morning. Usually, I’m in the kitchen making breakfast for him or something. He would come up to me and ask me questions, such as what a word means or how to understand a sentence. Sometimes he would laugh and come up to me to say what was going on in the book. He could read for up to two hours on a weekend morning without stopping.”

Although her son has been able to read on his own since the age of five, they still keep the habit of reading together. Especially when her son encountered books that were beyond his cognitive capacity and needed help with the content, he would take the initiative to ask his mother to participate in shared reading. Carefree said her child would ask her things that he could not understand, and he was also happy to share, for example, talking about or retelling, what he found interesting.

It is worth noting that when we shared the reasons for choosing English picture books and carrying out parent-child reading, Carefree repeatedly stressed that her original purpose was simple, which was to help her son learn English. Moreover, she chose to read picture books because her child did not want to read boring materials, such as English literacy cards.

“Initially, the reading material I chose was English flashcards, but when I read them with my son, he was hard to engage with and reluctant to give me feedback. So, I took the advice of some English teachers and started reading English picture books to him. Then, I found that interesting stories would increase the frequency of his feedback, and he was also willing to repeat some words and sentences after me.”

Carefree expected that her child could acquire sufficient English skills quickly and then learn other subjects, such as science and social sciences, in English. Therefore, when her son was just two and a half, she signed him up for weekly English lessons with teachers

that were native speakers of English. She found, however, that only depending on tutoring classes was not going to achieve her goals. Then she tried many other things, such as reading English flashcards, singing nursery rhymes and reading picture books. Carefree said she eventually found the most effective approach was reading EPBs at home with her son and having the teacher talk to him in English classes about their weekly reading.

In general, Carefree had an explicit goal when it came to reading EPBs with her son. She had made lots of efforts and attempts to find the methods and strategies that match her goals.

#### 4.2.2 Jiojio

Jiojio has two children, a 5-year-old son and a 2-year-old daughter. She had read picture books to her son since he was one, and only in Chinese. When her son was more than two years old, she introduced EPBs to him.

“I started reading English picture books to my son when he was a little over two years old. At first, I just read Chinese picture books to him, but as you know, most Chinese ones are translated from the original English. Even if Chinese authors create some Chinese picture books, most of them are about traditional Chinese histories, which are difficult for two-year-old kids to understand. So, I began to read English picture books for my son.”

Jiojio said she was fluent in English and wanted to guide her children to access the origins of different cultures through EPBs, so she started reading EPBs for her son. She found that her son liked English picture books very much and quickly read all the books she bought. This situation also made her encounter a considerable issue that she did not have enough English picture books for her son to read.

“As you know, five years ago, not many EPBs for a young baby were introduced into China. Books from lists provided by some famous English teachers could be found in the market. Gradually, I realized that these books

were not suitable for my children because the language was too difficult, and the content was not suitable for babies. Most importantly, I took my children to read English picture books to help them enjoy reading and be exposed to different ideas, not just to learn English.”

Instead of blindly following popular book lists, Jiojio began to purchase EPBs from online bookstores, especially some overseas shopping platforms, and all books are chosen according to their preferences. In addition, she tried to find curriculum designs of EPBs from educational websites in Europe and North America. She played various games with her son while reading, such as role-playing, and made masks for many characters of EPBs.

“Therefore, as you can see, during the years that I accompanied my children to read EPBs, I experienced many problems, such as choosing books and carrying out reading activities. I used to be so anxious that I would not do the best for my children. However, gradually, I realized that my child was my 'teacher', guiding me to read to and play with him. We all enjoy reading together, but I still expect to have a deeper understanding of EPBs and parent-child shared reading.”

As mentioned above, Jiojio had a relatively straightforward goal when she started home-shared reading on EPBs, but still had difficulty carrying out specific reading activities. She worked hard to obtain information and find solutions to her questions. Moreover, in the process, she also clarified her position and goals of conducting a parent-child shared reading of EPBs.

#### 4.2.3 Meier

Meier's oldest daughter was three years old, and her youngest son had just turned one. She began reading Chinese picture books to her daughter as she was born and added English picture books when she was one and seven months old.

“I read Chinese picture books for my daughter as soon as she was born, but

honestly, I did not have any specific purpose. I just followed the suggestion from my friends and colleagues who told me that it was good for my daughter's language development to read to her as early as possible.”

As Meier stated, without any planning or preparation, it was serendipity that she and her daughter came across EPBs. When her daughter turned one year and a half, at the community library, where she often borrowed picture books, a teacher was invited to read EPBs to the children in the evening of every Tuesday and Thursday.

“The teacher liked to start by singing English nursery rhymes with the children. Then she would read some interesting EPBs and sometimes act out the stories with hand puppets. My daughter showed great interest from the first time she took part in the shared reading activities. I knew she did not understand English, but she always stared at the teacher with a big smile on her face.”

Music, picture books, games -- this multimodal approach appeals to children and Meier. She felt that reading with her daughter in this way was a pleasant thing, and from then on, she added EPBs to her home-shared reading. Every week, she borrowed two picture books in Chinese and two in English from the library. Furthermore, all the books she got were the ones her daughter liked and could play reading games with.

Meier said her daughter went to daycare six months ago. Her teacher also advised parents to read one or two picture books with their children every day, either in Chinese or English. Therefore, Meier and her children have kept this reading habit. As her child was just three years old, she did not have a solid practical goal in parent-child shared reading but only expected that the little one could enjoy and love reading.

#### 4.2.4 Vivi

Vivi is the mother of two girls, the elder one aged eight and the young girl aged four. Vivi is a teacher and has an Intermediate English interpretation certificate, so she has pretty good listening and speaking skills in English. However, it was not until her elder

daughter was four years old that she read EPBs for her. Before that, she only read Chinese materials to her elder daughter, such as fairy tales and picture books.

She also focused on reading Chinese picture books for the little one, and she would only choose English ones when her daughter asked to read them.

“I paid attention to parent-child shared reading before my elder daughter was born, as I knew it was important to read to children and help them master languages earlier. However, as a teacher and a fluent speaker of English, I had many doubts about including English materials in parent-child shared reading. I was unsure if introducing children to a second language too early would affect their mother tongue acquisition. I didn't even know if early bilingual learning would affect a child's language development.”

Vivi tried to find theoretical support for parent-child reading in English while keeping shared reading in Chinese. However, to her great disappointment, the books and papers she was able to retrieve at the time (in Chinese) could not help her answer all the questions.

“I didn't devote myself to learning English until I was in university, even though I think I am good at English. Therefore, I don't think a second language should be developed early. On the contrary, I think children's native language is fundamental, and I expected my kids to have sufficient native language capacity. I have been looking for theories to test my ideas, but there is little support from Chinese journals and books.”

After that, Vivi stuck to her idea of using EPBs to supplement her family shared reading. She expected that her daughters could develop sufficient skills in their native language. Meanwhile, by reading some EPBs, they could expand their knowledge and understanding of different cultures. Moreover, at last, Vivi wanted to gradually introduce her daughters to learning English as a second language naturally.

#### 4.2.5 Ming

When we had our first group discussion, Ming joked that she was the oldest participant and everyone should call her big sister. Then she turned serious and said, “but I need to learn from each of you. I know so little about today's childhood education.” Indeed, Ming is about ten years older than the other six mothers, including myself. Her elder child was in college, the little one turned three, and the age difference between her two daughters was 16 years.

“When my eldest daughter was young, I was very busy at work, so I don't remember how she grew up, and it is like I didn't get involved in her studies. However, 16 years have passed, you know the changes in Chinese education these years, and everyone is desperately trying to create opportunities for children to learn when they are young.

Ming said she suffered from tremendous anxiety due to some young parents' influence, making her feel the need to teach her little daughter knowledge, including English, from birth. She constantly searched for teachers and materials to teach her child and even started learning English again. She even changed her full-time job to part-time to have more time to do this.

“When my little girl was born, I didn't know how to raise her, so I joined many online mom communities, and I found that these young moms were very aggressive when teaching their kids. They influenced me, and I kept learning everything I was introduced to and tried to read to my daughter. I looked forward to teaching her math, Chinese and English as soon as possible.”

On the advice of these community members, Ming bought many learning materials, including several sets of levelled books and math textbooks suitable for primary school students. By the time her daughter was one year old, she felt under increasing pressure and reflected that this should not be the way to raise a child.

“Later, I left the online communities that made me anxious. As it happens, many teachers with overseas study experience appeared on online forums.

From their speeches, I got to know things like picture books and gradually began to understand that what children need when they are young is to grow up happily in the company of their parents.”

Then, Ming thought seriously about her educational goals and beliefs for her young daughter, and she said she kept on learning, for example, the skills to read EPBs, sing English nursery rhymes, do handicrafts, and play games with her little child. Nevertheless, she turned her attention to enjoying the time with her little child rather than what she had learned.

#### 4.2.6 Mr. Goat

When I reviewed the participants’ applications, the name Mr. Goat immediately caught my eye. I thought this would be a dad interested in this research topic, and I wanted dads to be involved in my research. However, when I checked the detailed information, it turned out that Mr. Goat was a mother like all the other applicants. She was the youngest of all the participants, and her son was three-and-a-half years old.

During our first group discussion, Mr. Goat was very shy. She said she started reading picture books for her child when he was one and a half years old, mainly in Chinese. It was not until he was two years and seven months old that they gradually had the parent-child shared reading of EPBs. Moreover, due to the limited stock of EPBs at home, they only read one book one or two times a week.

“I started later than everyone here in reading EBPBs with my child, and I read fewer books. On the one hand, I didn’t know which EPBs were suitable for my son, and on the other hand, I didn’t know the skills to read EPBs for him. I felt I had so much to learn and so little help to get.”

Regarding the purpose of reading English picture books, Mr. Goat said what she longed for the most was to show her children the wonderfulness of reading and the diversity of cultures. In addition, she also wanted to help her child develop an enlightened understanding of the English language and let him know that there were other languages

besides Chinese. In this way, he could have an excellent foundation to learn English in-depth in the future.

“When I started reading EPBs with my son, I just picked the ones I liked best. I read them to him, without making a clear plan, without carefully preparing, without designing related extension activities, and without making any requirements for her. Of course, I wanted him to feel the wonder of the picture books, so I gradually became more emotionally involved, sometimes changing the tone and accent, adding actions, and occasionally role-playing so that my children could enjoy reading with me. I became increasingly fond of the lively reading style and kept on exploring it little by little I would also watch some English cartoons with him, and I didn't care whether he could understand the content or not. In general, regardless of the approach, it was so wonderful that I could share reading time with my children. I hoped he could develop some interest in reading, especially the initial feeling of the English language. I also believed that in doing so, he would naturally build a good sense of the English language, and I expected that these reading activities would provide him with a certain foundation for his future English language learning, guide his interest in learning English and using English to learn.”

In general, Mr. Goat's goal in a parent-child shared reading of EPBs was evident and straightforward. When she carried out co-reading activities at home, she was relaxed and casual, not task-oriented. In addition, her child also enjoyed the current shared reading activities under such circumstances. However, according to the overall situation of her family's shared reading, she clearly emphasized that she needed further help in choosing books and reading skills to guide future parent-child shared reading activities.

From the storytelling of the six participants, I found that their parent-child shared reading experience had an obvious timeline and their respective initial reasons. They led all the activities, which meant that their shared reading began with clear purposes rather than a series of unplanned actions. Therefore, there were specific reasons behind these practices,



which are attributed to their experience and unique feelings and cognition over a certain period.

After that, we jointly decided to set ‘Memories’ as the second week’s interview theme. In a series of semi-structured topics, they shared with me stories of their childhood reading experiences, some involving their parents, and other stories were all about their independent reading. The subsequent interviews and group discussions were more noteworthy because they casually mentioned their childhood stories and recalled their childhood experiences and feelings when discussing decision-making issues, such as book selection, reading methods, literacy beliefs, and practical challenges.

### 4.3 When I was a little girl

“When I was a little girl,” those words seemed to be the magic key unlocking every participant’s memory box. Although our individual stories in the memory box were unique, we all had a box full of childhood memories dedicated to us. In addition, we also found that even though there were many differences in our age, place of residence, and socioeconomic background of the original family, there are some common elements in our memories, which were attributed to the era in which we were born and the characteristics of the Chinese social environment.

#### 4.3.1 My parents were busy

Under the theme of ‘Memories’, I prepared 10 semi-structured questions, but right after these two questions were asked, the conversation was completely opened up.

“Did you read with your parents when you were young? Do you remember how that felt?” When I prepared the questions, I had no idea that it would have such a magical power to take each participant back to their childhood and slowly recount their childhood memories related to reading. Not surprisingly, the first words I got from them were similar. “My parents were so busy with their work that they didn’t have time to read with me.” Or “I read all by myself. My parents have no spare time to read for me.” None of all the participants in this study, myself included, had experienced regular parent-child shared reading activities in our childhood.

The seven of us came from families of different SES. Three participants, including me, came from working-class families, one from a teacher family, one from a civil servant family, one from a professor family and one from a farmer family. However, there was a significant commonality in our experience of parent-child shared reading: none of us experienced shared reading with our parents in our childhood.

“Both of my parents were workers, and they were busy when I was young. They had to go to work during the day and sometimes worked overtime at night. They also had to take care of the housework when they got home, and they hardly had time to accompany me. In my childhood memory, after school hours, I just stayed at home by myself to finish my homework or played with the neighbourhood kids”, Vivi said. Except for Ming and Carefree, the stories narrated by the other three participants were very similar. As Meier said, “My parents always seemed to be at work, and only on Sundays would they take me to visit my grandparents or, they very rarely, accompanies me to the theme park. Moreover, I have no memory of them reading to me.”

Actually, my childhood memory was the same. My parents were workers as well, and I would go home with the other children in the same community after school, did my homework by myself, and then asked my friends to go out and play together in the community. After dinner, my parents would be busy with the housework, such as doing laundry and cleaning up the house. In my memory, my mother especially liked knitting, and when she was free, she was always knitting different styles of sweaters for the whole family. And as the only child, I could only read children’s books by myself or play with toys.

Ming and Carefree came from families with very different socioeconomic statuses, but their memories of reading as children were similar to others. “My parents were farmers, and I lived with my grandparents until primary school. Not to mention parent-child shared reading, I hardly ever read books before I went to school,” Ming said, her tone was full of frustration. Carefree's father was a professor, but her story of home-shared reading was similar to that of other participants. “My father had

more spare time, but he had never read with me. When I was a little girl, he was always in the lab, and even when he was at home, he would just read and write in his home office. And I, uh, studied in my bedroom or read and played by myself.”

We all agree that it was a sign of the specific era of China. In the 1970s and 1980s, China was in the early stage of reform and opening up. The whole country focused on the rapid development of the economy and the manufacturing of industrial products. People across the entire society, including the adults in every family, no matter what kind of occupation and position they had, all gave priority to their work.

“Although my parents didn't read the book for me, I would not blame them. The conditions and environment provided by the specific ages determined my parents' decisions and their stories. My parents were very hard-working. They only had Sunday as a rest day, but they would like to accompany me to the park or watch TV at home. They didn't read with me just because people in those days didn't have the awareness and experience of reading with their children. They also didn't have experience of parent-child shared reading when they were young, and they weren't told they needed to read to their children.” The expression of Mr. Goat represented our common point of view.

#### 4.3.2 I had support from my family

Although all participants said they had no experience of parent-child shared reading in their childhood, they all agreed that they received support or even requests from their parents when it came to reading. Except for Ming, who grew up in her grandparents' home, the other participants, including me, all confirmed having a variety of books at home since our childhood, such as historical novels, fiction, foreign classics, fairy tales, and a certain number of picture-story books”.

In addition, except for Mr. Goat, all five other participants mentioned that their parents were fond of reading. Although their parents' reading preferences and habits differed, their family environment had a particular reading atmosphere. Meier said, “My father hardly ever read books for me, but he had a daily reading routine. He

liked to read history books and novels, and our family also subscribed to many local newspapers. My dad would sit on the sofa reading a book or the evening newspaper by himself, as it's a comfortable way for him to relax after a busy day. So, when he read a book, I would like to sit by him reading my books.”

### Figure 5

*Examples of Chinese picture-story books*



*Note.* Meier provided this photography when she introduced the books she read as a child.

Carefree made a similar point. Influenced by her father, she also enjoyed reading books alone at a young age. Ming and Jiojio both mentioned that their fathers loved to read martial arts novels. “I didn't start reading until I was in elementary school, but by grade 3, I was able to read books from my dad's bookshelf. He was a big fan of martial arts stories, such as Yusheng Liang's ‘Seven Swords’. We also had many martial arts novels written by Jin Yong and Gu Long, and they all were my father's favourite books,” Ming said. Unlike the others, Mr. Goat said neither of her parents read daily. “We had a shelf full of books at home, but I couldn't recall memories of my parents reading them.” Besides, Mr. Goat said, it was only after entering primary school when she gradually developed the awareness and habit of reading books.

Besides, from their story narration, we could see slight differences in their starting

point of independent reading, the reason/the motivation for reading, and the influence of their parents. However, the feedback was very consistent regarding their parents' support. They all assured me that their parents had done their best to encourage and support them in reading and learning.

Meier said, "My father liked reading, so he also bought many books for me, such as fairy tales and world classics. Sometimes, when he read books at night, he would ask me to read beside him". "I don't remember my parents buying me children's books when I was a kid," Vivi said, "All the books I read were borrowed from bookstalls or my cousins. However, my parents were very supportive of my reading, and they often gave me guidance on establishing my reading beliefs. My father told me that I should be free to read and think. He wanted me to free my mind by reading diverse books, instead of being restricted by rigid learning."

In addition, the other participants all talked about similar experiences: their parents encouraged, reminded, and even urged them to read in their spare time from kindergarten or elementary school, regardless of whether there were special children's books at home. As Ming said, "Although my parents were farmers, they believed reading was essential and could change my life."

#### 4.3.3 Textbooks and classics (accessibility to reading materials)

During the discussion about their childhood HLE, all the participants confirmed that their parents had many books for them. However, when talking about the type of books, only Meier and Carefree mentioned that their parents prepared the children's books when they were preschoolers, such as picture-story books, children's magazines, or fairy tales. The other participants, including me, all stated that we did not read children's books before entering primary school. Mr. Goat said,

“It wasn't until I was in primary school when I had access to comic books and children's storybooks. In our school, there was a public reading room where there were many children's books, and my Chinese teacher encouraged all of us to go there to read these books. I never read the books on the shelves at home when I was a child. Some of the books were very thick, and until I was in grade three or four in primary school, I knew that those books were all classic literature and some classical novels, such as the Four Chinese Great Classical Novels.”

**Figure 6**

*Four Chinese Great Classical Novels*



*Note.* Mr. Goat provided this photography when she introduced the books.

Then, Mr. Goat continued,

“In addition, my parents did not support me to read children's books during that time. Instead, they hoped that I could read these classic books earlier and more. They thought these books were not helpful for my study and expected me to read more textbooks and the classics.”

Vivi also commented that she did not have children's books at home when she was a child. It was only after she attended elementary school that she had the chance to access magazines and novels specifically designed for children.

“All the books I read before grade four were the textbooks I got from school. Then, I had the opportunity to access some children's magazines, such as *Young Literature and Art*, *The Great Storyteller*, and some children's books, such as fairy tales written by Yuanjie Zheng. I found all these magazines and books at the small bookstall right beside my school gate, and sometimes when I visit my cousins, I could also see some of these children's books. My parents did not stop me from borrowing these books, but at that time, they repeatedly told me that they wanted me to pay more attention to the school textbooks and read the children's books after finishing my homework.”

**Figure 7.**

*Children's Fairy Tales Written by Yuanjie Zheng*



*Note.* Vivi provided this photo when she introduced the books she had read as a girl.

If the stories of Vivi and Mr. Goat were under my expectations, the narration of Ming was totally beyond my imagination.

“I didn't read children's books throughout my childhood. My primary school was in a rural area. It was an impoverished place, and students had to prepare their own benches for school. All students from grades one to three were in one classroom, and we did not have enough textbooks, let alone children's books.”

It was easy to tell that Ming was upset when she told these stories.

“When I got a little older, maybe grade three, I started flipping through books at home. Some of them were Russian books that I couldn't understand, and some of them were classic martial arts novels that my parents loved. My parents did not prevent me from reading these books that seemed irrelevant to my study. So, in general, my childhood reading list was either school textbooks or martial arts novels.”

Meier and Carefree were the only two participants who confirmed having children's books at home as preschoolers. However, they also said they didn't seem to have much access to children's books. Meier said, “I did have children's books at home, like comic books. I remember my parents just gave me a subscription to China Children's Pictorial, a monthly magazine. I loved reading them when I was in kindergarten.” Then, when we talk about her consuming of these books, Meier added,

“Since my parents didn't read with me, I couldn't understand the sentences in the books, but browse the pictures by myself. Later, I went to primary school and had the opportunities to access comic books and anime books. I loved them very much, but my parents didn't support me to read these books and asked me to control my time on them. They thought that I must read useful books, I mean, books that were full of words and helpful for my study and exams.”

Carefree expressed a similar feeling,

“I see myself as a failed example of teaching to the test. There were many



different types of books in my home when I was a child, including children's books and magazines. However, from the time I could read independently, the books I read were mostly related to my schoolwork. I thought my time was limited, and I did not even have enough time to work on the textbooks and prepare for the exams. Until now, I wouldn't say I like reading books outside my field of studies, such as novels, tales, and poems.”

On the topic of the reading list, the participants' stories showed the consistency. In their childhood, they had been told habitually about the importance of learning and the need to read “useful books”, so textbooks and some of the classics were their primary reading materials during that time.

#### 4.3.4 Not perfect but good enough

The last open-ended question we discussed on ‘memory’ was, “How could you comment on your childhood reading experiences and how you think your childhood experiences have influenced your parenting.”

After hearing the question, all participants paused briefly and gave similar responses. “The experiences weren't perfect, but good enough,” Ming said. As the oldest and the person who had the worst self-evaluated HLE in her childhood, Ming did not complain about her parents or childhood reading experiences.

“Although I started reading later than others, I also experienced the joy of reading in my childhood. I loved reading so much that I still do, and I have fond memories of reading books by the fire on winter evenings when I was a poor child.”

Ming said this in a relaxed tone with a natural smile on her face. Then she added,

“I think my childhood reading experience was precious. First, it made me realize that reading is essential and enjoyable. Therefore, I got the initial motivation to read with my children. In addition, my reading experience enabled me to establish certain reading beliefs and skills, which could be

passed on to my children when I accompanied them to read.”

Having the best self-evaluated childhood HLE, Carefree expressed a similar point to Ming.

“As I said, I've always felt that my reading experiences as a child weren't successful ones, but I didn't regret that. When I was young, I was a very slow reader because I tried to find the critical points and remember them quickly. Even when I read a detective novel, I preferred to check the story's synopsis rather than investigate the book's details. However, this reading experience has also helped me become who I am now. My work requires me to read many professional books and quickly find the core content to summarize. The reading habit developed in my childhood reading experience enables me to complete my work more efficiently and excellently than my colleagues. Therefore, I don't regret what I lost when I was a child. I also have been trying to find my deficiency in reading and make up for it.”

Later, as we talked about the influence on her son, she spoke noticeably slower and expressed her confusion.

“I am grateful for my reading experiences as a child because they allowed me to build the awareness to read with my son. Moreover, the parent-child shared reading experience that I did not have from my parents prompted me with a great motivation to make up for my regret with my child. But there is no denying that my childhood experience also negatively affected our parent-child shared reading, especially on EPBs. For example, I have realized that many of my practices related to the reading habits that I had built up since my childhood needed to be reconsidered and adjusted. However, when I read with my son, I still unconsciously brought these habits into our reading activities. I would emphasize the significance of non-fiction books rather than encourage my son to read tales. I would also translate EPBs literally for my son and hope that he could remember the Chinese meanings of these English words. Over the years, I've noticed the effects of these habits on children, and

some of them were negative. On the whole, though, I still cherish my childhood experiences as a starting point for my reading and passing it on to my children.”

JioJio's response presented a more optimistic reading attitude.

“The reading experience in my childhood was an asset in my life. It opened my inner world and made me yearn for the future and the unknown. I wanted to find the truth and get out of my room to go far. Most importantly, it taught me that my life has many possibilities. My childhood experience has highly influenced my belief in reading, which has kept me in the habit of reading until now.”

Referring to the influence of his childhood reading experiences on her children, “I think my children are so lucky,” Jiojio exclaimed.

“First of all, they now have so many exceptional children's books to read, in Chinese, English, Japanese, French, etc. Secondly, they have me accompany them to read, and we would have the role-play, create songs or nursery rhymes by adapting the content, and do kids' crafts about the books. We enjoy our family reading time and feel so happy.”

**Figure 8.**

*Finger Game Adapted from the Picture Book “Birthday Cake”*



*Note.* Jiojio showcased these finger games in a home video and expressed her enthusiasm for sharing with me the joy she and her child experienced during the process of reading and playing.

“My reading experience as a child was very precious for me, as it helped me see that reading should be a regular part of my life. I think there are no good or bad experiences because all experiences offer us opportunities to reflect and explore the limits of our ability to meet challenges.”

After listening to the question, Vivi gently spoke these words.

“I had long forgotten the specific content of the books I read as a child, but I can still clearly remember the little me reading in front of my bedroom, on the bench of the small bookstall, and in the classroom between classes. These subtle memories had always influenced my reading practice when I grew up, and then, the way I read naturally had a subtle influence on my children.”

Referring to the specific influence on her children, Vivi added,

“My two children have very different personalities, but they have both developed their attitudes towards reading with my help. Therefore, I believe that my attitude and belief about reading could be passed on to them. In addition, I also found that my habits, skills, and tools I used to assist reading also influenced them.”

Responses from Meier and Mr. Goat showed even more remarkable similarities. Both said their childhood reading experiences were meaningful for their personal development. After they became mothers, the previous experiences also prompted them to think about the meaning of reading with their children. “Although my childhood reading experience was not perfect by today's standards, I still think it was significant to my life and my decision making of reading with my children,” Meier said. Mr. Goat presented a similar idea,

“To be honest, my childhood reading experience did leave me with some regrets about not having my parents involved. However, I am still very grateful to them for providing me with the opportunity to read and encouraging me to read freely. In addition, it was precious because of the past regret that I was equipped with consciousness to think about the significance and necessity of accompanying my children to read after becoming a mother.”

Overall, it was easy to see that all participants experienced several internal fluctuations when talking about their “memories”, even just from the pace of their speech. Perhaps because they were well aware that our research topic was about parent-child shared reading, when they talked about their childhood reading experiences, they all expressed a certain degree of regret and sadness. More interestingly, when it came to the influence on their children, their mood fluctuated again, but this time it was much more positive, and I could feel their expectations and hope for the future. Therefore, imperfect memories of their past experiences, in turn, served as a starting point and impetus for thinking about the future, even if they had regrets for diverse reasons.

When I found that they all got ready to talk about the stories related to their parent-child shared reading, I suggested that our next stage discussion could be an overview of their family's joys and worries about shared reading on EPBs. They unanimously agreed upon this suggestion, and each of them showed more enthusiasm for participation.

#### 4.4 Mixed feelings: Pleasure, confidence vs. doubts and uncertainties

Consistent with their enthusiasm in setting the theme, participants were better prepared for this theme. It is indicated from their methodical narration of stories and the serious manner of raising questions. In addition, they actively spoke for much longer on this topic than on previous ones. On the front page of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, he says, "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way" (Tolstoy, 1877, p.3). However, when we shared the joys and sorrows of our parent-child shared reading, we found that everyone's happiness has something in common and has its uniqueness, and so did everyone's issues and confusion on their stories. Moreover, feelings of joy and confusion were highly intertwined for all participants. So, in this section, I review these bittersweet stories.

##### 4.4.1 Reading for fun, is fun, but is it enough?

When discussing the happiness of shared reading, all the participants and I made it clear that reading with our children was relaxing and enjoyable, especially when we read for fun without utilitarian goals. Both Ming and Vivi mentioned that when their children were less than one year old, they read picture books to them without any pressure. In addition, no matter whether the text was Chinese or English, they enjoyed reading without worries. Ming said,

"Most of the time, my daughter was in my arms, I knew she couldn't understand the content, but I loved reading to her, like an actress. Sometimes the content in the book was so funny that I couldn't help laughing. Those were excellent times."

Carefree stated that her goal was clear from the beginning when she accompanied her child to read picture books, and that was helping him learn the language, especially EPBs, which she used to develop her child's English language skills. However, there were some exceptions. For example, when she was tired, she would drop the study goals for the day and just read some picture books with her son that he found interesting. Carefree said,

“I must admit that I was very relaxed, just aimlessly flicking through the pages with my son, talking about what was in the book. I would read the word where he was pointing. I would hardly think much about the study task, read something fun with him and talk to him through reading.”

Both Meier and Mr. Goat said they kept it easy and they felt relaxed to read picture books with their children, including those in English. They all stressed that their children were very young, all under four, so their reading activities were more like playing games and companionship. Meier said,

“I feel like I've never been stressed, and every night when I was reading with my kids, I felt like I was having fun. Especially when reading some humorous picture books, such as Toot written by Leslie Patricelli, my daughter and I would laugh loudly together.”

Mr. Goat answered my question with a rhetorical question. “Shouldn't reading be a happy thing? I think reading with my son is really a good pleasure.” She was the most relaxed of the six participants discussing the topic and the only one who did not show anxiety. “Since my son was very young, I had never set any specific goals for our shared reading, like learning vocabulary or grammar. Instead, our reading activities were a form of play.” “Did you mean reading just for fun?” I followed up with this question. “Yes, reading for fun, for pleasure,” she answered.

As mentioned above, only Mr. Goat did not express any doubts about ‘Reading for Fun’, and all the other participants showed their confusion to varying degrees. In addition, their

doubts were similar about whether fun reading was enough to meet children's development and learning needs.

“Although I had pleasant experiences of reading freely when I was young, due to the influence of schooling, in my view, the most vital voice always emphasized that reading serves for learning. The purpose of reading is to learn words and obtain knowledge. Therefore, when I read for my little one, even when she was less than a year old, I always had an uneasy feeling in my heart that I was not doing enough to help her learn knowledge and develop cognition.”

As Ming said these words, her face turned red again. “I would think about our shared reading with the aim of evaluation,” Meier said. “I totally agreed that fun reading was essential, but I was not sure it was enough or not to satisfy all learning needs of my kids.” Vivi and Jiojio stated the same worries as well. “It would be wonderful if fun reading were the only thing that I needed to care about in parent-child shared reading. Unfortunately, I didn't think it was enough. There were many other requirements that I needed to meet,” Jiojio said it seriously.

Compared to other's questioning and confusing attitude, Carefree's opinions seemed clear and definitive. “My purpose of reading EPBs to my son was to learn English, so I knew that fun reading was only a part of our shared reading on EPBs.” “Don't you ever get confused about this?” I added. “No, never. I was pretty sure from the beginning that fun reading wasn't what I expected for our shared reading,” her tone was substantial.

This was the topic having most consensus under this theme. Four participants expressed doubts and confusion related to fun reading, except Mr. Goat, who said that her parent-child reading was just for fun, and Carefree, who explicitly emphasized that fun Reading wasn't enough.

#### 4.4.2 To read freely, or purposefully?



Aside from Mr. Goat and Carefree, the other four participants all took the initiative to address goal-setting issues of shared reading and their feelings, including confusion, related to the topic. And, consistent with their question on whether fun reading is enough, they all expressed their expectation for children to keep reading freely and their confusion about the necessity of setting specific goals and evaluating results in parent-child shared reading on EPBs. Regarding their personal confusion, the general difference was that Ming and Vivi thought they needed to set additional learning goals but didn't know the way to put them, while Meier and Jiojio were fundamentally unsure of the need for developing specific plans.

“I indeed felt conflicted on this topic. On the one hand, I longed for my child to enjoy the pleasure of reading and read free without any worries. On the other hand, I constantly hoped that reading can provide her specific learning results, such as blurting out some words or understanding the content in English,” Ming said. Then, she added,

“Personally, I love to read freely as I did when I was a child, but I would also try to learn words and imitate writing techniques as a young reader.

Therefore, whenever I accompanied my daughter to read, I always wanted to add some learning content, such as asking her to repeat some words, and when we saw the words again, I would test her on them. However, I was unsure if this was right because my child didn't like it when I pushed her on learning words or sentences. Recently, for example, once she found out that I was quizzing her on vocabulary, she immediately showed resistance and even refused to continue reading with me.”

Vivi stated similar thoughts,

“As a teacher, based on my professional habits and cognition, I thought it was necessary to set some specific tasks when reading with children. When I accompanied my child to read EPBs, in general, I respected her idea of book selection. Meanwhile, I would emphasize some words, the book's main idea, and the story's details.”

Then she described her troubles.

“Because of my young daughter’s age, I didn’t focus too much on the extra learning tasks, yet the problem remained clear. She enjoyed talking to me about the plots and characters rather than learning a particular word or sentence. In addition, I found myself deeply confused because I couldn’t be sure of my effectiveness or the approach to evaluating my daughter’s learning.”

Obviously, Vivi and Ming thought it was necessary to add some extra study plans when they accompanied their children to read freely. Their issues lay in how to set these additional tasks and how to evaluate their educational practice. Meier and Jiojio, for their part, were still hesitant to assign tasks related to language skills to their shared reading activities. They preferred to read freely, which they called “play to read”, and were cautious about setting the purpose of learning language skills for their parent-child shared reading.

“So far, I have been reading freely with my children. My elder daughter might pick the books she liked, and then I read for them literally or talked to them about the pictures. I can say that this way of reading is very relaxing and enjoyable, and my children love it,” Meier said. “Have you ever thought of adding other tasks to your home-shared reading?” I asked. “No, not yet.” Meier quickly gave me her answer and continued,

“Indeed, I know a lot of moms who read EPBs with their kids by emphasizing words and grammar, but I’m not sure if I should do it. I am afraid that my children will get tired of reading with me. In other words, I have not found enough reasons and appropriate ways to change our current reading activities. But I must admit, it’s a question I’ve been thinking about a lot, and I’m eager to find a definitive answer.”

Jiojio’s confusion on this issue was more prominent. “I did think about adding some learning plans to our parent-child shared reading, and I used to read EPBs for my kids with a test-oriented attitude,” she said with a smile.

“However, since I started doing this, I found that my children were very resistant to reading EPBs. He refused EPBs and only chose Chinese picture books to read. Once it happened, I would walk in a terrible mood. So, in the end, I gave up the plan. I began to respect my son's wishes, such as reading the books he loved and reading in the way he liked. For example, I found that he was fond of acting, and then I would add role-play games or drama playing in our parent-child shared reading activities.”

Jiojio said these light-heartedly, so I thought she had already been over the issue, and then casually asked, “You don't worry about it anymore, right?” However, the answer I got was “No”. Jiojio explained,

“To be honest, I still haven't thought it through. My workaround so far is just stalling tactics. I didn't want my son to give up reading EPBs entirely because I knew that EPBs did more than help my son learn English. In addition, I have been working hard to learn and understand reading EPBs in a home environment, and I hope to solve my puzzles, such as whether EPBs should be read for educational purposes and at what age is appropriate for formal learning of English language skills,”

The confusion of the four participants on this topic was apparent. For the most part, they enjoyed free reading with their children. However, they were also inevitably thinking about questions related to goal-oriented learning, influenced by their own learning experiences and perceptions. They feared the disconnect between reading for pleasure and what children were expected to do when they arrived at school, "reading" became more task- and assessment-oriented.

#### 4.4.3 Be a mom, or a teacher

When we further discussed the pleasure that parent-child shared reading provided for their families, besides free reading and fun reading, all participants mentioned the happiness that their identity, being a mother, gave them. In addition, despite the different stories, they all talked about the parent-child relationship in their HLE. Their views

generally involved two aspects. First, they all emphasized that it was a delightful and meaningful thing for them to read with their children as a mother, and they enjoyed the experience that this identity offered them. Secondly, most of them indicated that shared reading activities further improved their emotional relationship and parent-child communication with their children.

Among them, Vivi's narration impressed me the most.

“I would say that regardless of the outcome of shared reading and the content of the books, it was such a beautiful thing that being with my daughter every night and flipping through a book. Especially when she was less than three years old, every night, she snuggled in my arms and listened to me reading her a picture book. Sometimes she fell asleep while I was reading, and you know, she looked so cute. At that moment, I felt nothing could be happier than being a mother that can accompany a child to grow up like this.”

Then, in the personal interviews, the other five participants expressed similar feelings to me in various ways. “From the first time I read a picture book to my daughter as a mom, I thought it was so funny and happy. And I felt like I had made up for my childhood regret by reading to my children as if I were reading to myself as a child,” Ming smiled and stated. “As a working mom, the pressure on me was enormous. Especially when I got home from work, so many chores were waiting for me,” Meier looked more serene in her telling, and she added,

“So, I can say that my daily life seemed to be full of tasks and noise. But the strange thing was, no matter how tired I was, if I picked up a book with my children, I would feel peaceful inside. And at that time, I would also have a stronger sense of being a mother, and I was learning about the world with my children.”

Of all the participants, Carefree expressed her feeling on this topic in the most concise way. “I think it is my duty and happiness to read EPBs to my son, as I am his mother.” At

the same time, she was the one who clearly demonstrated the positive impact of home-shared reading on the parent-child relationship development. She said,

“Shared reading provided me with an environment and an opportunity to accompany my son at a specific time every day, for example, we would read an EPB together and then talked about it. I think such daily moments were very precious for us, and on the other side, without shared reading, I was not sure if any other forms of activity could allow us to have a daily talk together.”

Mr. Goat made the similar point with specific stories,

“I noticed that when my son got bored, he would bring me an EPB he liked and asked me to read it for him. And sometimes when he made me angry, he would also come to me with an EPB. This made me feel that shared reading was not only a family activity of us but also a way of communication between my son and me.”

In addition, Ming and Meier also mentioned that parent-child reading actively promoted the communication between them and their children and played a particular role in cultivating a good parent-child relationship.

As I mentioned above, Vivi’s story of being a mom resonated with me strongly as it immediately took me back to the years when my daughter was a little girl. However, she also raised the confusion about whether we should take on the role of a teacher.

“Perhaps because I am a college teacher, after my daughter entered the kindergarten, I wondered whether I should offer her help as a teacher when we read EPBs together. Whenever I thought of providing her with the assistance as a teacher, I started to consider about how to design teaching plans for her and how to give her assessment. However, as I was not familiar with early year childhood English, I met a lot of problems to do it. I mean, the challenges stopped me from becoming a home teacher for my daughter on reading EPBs.”

Ming, a teacher worked for a vocational school, posed the same questions.

“Honestly speaking, when I read EPBs with my daughter, I reminded myself many times that it was good to enjoy the moment and follow her interests and preferences in reading. However, it wasn't easy to overcome my professional habit of treating our parent-child shared reading with a teacher's standards.”

When Ming said these words, she acted very helpless.

“So, I would think about how to arrange the study plan and how to set learning goals. I would also try to use reading skills, such as teaching her to analyze details and summarize general ideas. However, as I said, when I did this, my daughter would reject reading with me. She even told me she didn't want me to be her teacher.”

As we have seen, Vivi and Ming were teachers. I was not surprised that they raised such confusion. However, Carefree and Jiojio also indicated that they had thoughts of being a teacher for their children on EPBs shared reading.

Carefree was one of the two participants who provided me with weekly journals as the supplementary data. Many of the stories she wrote were about her understanding of children's English language learning and her home-shared reading activities. As she emphasized, “My aim of reading EPBs with my son was to provide him with a more effective way to learn English.” So, all her parent-child shared reading activities on EPBs were working around this learning goal. She identified herself in the HLE as “the person who designed English language learning plans for her child.” she argued, “The assistance provided by the school or English learning institutions for my son was inadequate.” Therefore, in each weekly journal, she would reflect on her educational planning and teaching practice and tell me about her son's progress in English learning. “Every week, I would investigate my son's learning needs and then communicate with the English tutor I hired to customize the learning plans,” Carefree wrote. Thus, Carefree clearly indicated her role as her son's learning mentor and did not feel conflict with her identity as a mom.

Jiojio's approach bears a certain resemblance to Carefree's. "In my neighbourhood, I couldn't find the EPBs teachers I wanted and places with a comfortable reading environment," Jiojio said. "I was looking for an EPB teacher who could help children enjoy reading and lead them into a different cultural perspective, rather than just teaching English. However, I could find a good one," she added.

"In addition, I quit my job after my son was born and had been thinking about better career plans. At that time, I found myself really loving English picture books and the feeling of reading them to my son. So, I thought, why couldn't I become the EPB teacher I wanted? Then, when my son was three years old, I opened a community picture book reading center, which was like a small library. I offered a picture book rental service for my clients and some EPBs reading lessons. Therefore, reading for children became my career."

Jiojio's story moved me deeply. Although she and Carefree had both become learning mentors for their children, it was clear that they were very different in terms of motivation.

The four participants mentioned the topic of identity as a mother or/and a teacher. However, from the stories they described, it could be seen that some of them were still confused about their role positioning, while others had already defined their roles. Therefore, in subsequent interviews, the questions related to the role and task mentioned by participants became more specific. And what they cared most about was the reading level and book selection.

#### 4.4.4 To read the levelled books, or the non-levelled books

As we went into more detail, the reading level became the topic of the most significant concern for all participants. As they said, this was the major problem they encountered when conducting parent-child shared reading on English picture books. Most of them said that when their children were less than two years old, they were not particularly confused by deciding the reading level. On most occasions, children were the listeners following their arrangement of shared reading. However, after two, they found that their

children were willing to read their preferred books, and their preferences varied. For example, some children would only choose books they were familiar with and had no language difficulty with, while others expected to read new books constantly, so the EPBs purchased at home could not keep up with their reading needs.

“Since she was two, my daughter enjoyed choosing her books and letting me read to her. But for a long time, her choices were fixed, with a few specific books. She would make me read these books repeatedly, which made me worried about whether the repeated reading would expand her knowledge and help her learn new language skills,”

Ming said. Then, when I asked her if she tried reading different EPBs for her daughter, she replied, “Sure, I had been trying to do this, especially the books the met her reading level, but whenever I suggested reading a book I liked, she became very reluctant and, sometimes, yelled. Sometimes I even wonder if I spoiled her.”

Mr. Goats said she had met such situation earlier.

“My child showed his reading preference when he was one and a half years old by asking to read books he liked. And it became more pronounced when he was two. Once I selected a reading list for him, he didn’t resist strongly but may lose his concentration and reduce his interaction with me.”

“When you choose different books, do you mean different reading levels?” I asked. “I didn’t overthink about reading levels,” Mr. Goat answered without hesitation, “I just expected him to read more different books, maybe at different levels, because I expect him to be exposed to more interesting things and stories from books.”

Vivi's narration on this topic focuses on the differences between her two daughters. “When reading EPBs with my little daughter, I indeed encountered some interesting issues of book selection, and the main reason was that her preferences were so different from her sister's,” Vivi laughed as she talked.

“My little one is four now, but I noticed the difference when she was two. My



older daughter had a quieter personality and was more willing to let me select EPBs and read to her. However, the little one had a strong desire to decide on reading items by herself. In addition, she might interrupt my reading by talking about her thoughts and asking unrelated questions. And even when I read with her sister, she would stand by and interject by asking us some strange questions.”

At this point, we both laughed, but Vivi soon raised her doubts,

“It’s funny, right? But I did have some confusion about it. I was unsure whether such unplanned reading met her cognitive development needs and whether I should test her reading level and guide her to find some books that meet her reading level.”

Meier's situation was very similar to Vivi's. She said her daughter was a curious child with endless questions. And about the book selection, she said, “My daughter entered kindergarten this year, so I was thinking about whether to find some books suitable for her reading level so that she can better adapt to school requirements of reading.”

Jiojio's story on this topic showed me another exciting phenomenon.

“When my son was less than two years old, he basically relied on me to choose EPBs, and he always had fun reading with me. However, as he grew older, he preferred to find EPBs for me to read, and he especially loved to listen to new stories. Honestly, this was one of the reasons why I wanted to run a community picture book reading center. Then, after my son had more books to choose from, I found that his criteria for selecting books were only related to his interests. And these books were diverse in content and difficulty. Referring to the book level, some were picture books with no or few words for babies, while others were early chapter picture books for primary school students.”

When I thought Jiojio was wondering about this situation, I asked, “Did you try to change his reading list? For example, by book level.” Jiojio replied,

“Although I was unsure that it was correct to set reading list regardless of book level, I didn't try to change his choice. I think, at least for now, my goal for guiding him to read is to enjoy reading, and I don't care if the books he reads necessarily reflect his reading level.”

As for the attitude and approach to deciding on the book level for her child, Carefree had a different story than the other five participants. “I chose EPBs strictly according to their level from the very beginning. The books were selected as the learning material for my son's English lessons, so our reading list was closely related to his class content every week,” she said clearly. But soon, Carefree showed that she had encountered some troubles in selecting the right levelled EPBs for her son.

“First of all, it was not easy to determine my child's reading level. I regularly communicated with his teacher to assess his reading level and choose appropriate books for him. In addition, I encountered difficulty in selecting books. I took the advice of many experts and followed the suggested list of books. However, I found that these books were unsuitable for my son, as most were levelled books that were boring for young reader. So, the things I could do were buy a lot of EPBs, follow some framework to check the book's level, such as Lexile Framework, to determine the ones were right for him, and then help my son choose the EPBs he liked from the appropriate level.”

Although all participants spoke about the children's reading levels, it was clear that there were differences in their ideas and practices. Two of them didn't care about the level of the books, three of them were wondering whether to choose a book that matched the reading level of their children, and one of them had already decided and had been providing the reading list for her child according to his reading level.

#### 4.4.5 Fiction and non-fiction, be preferred or be balanced

On the theme of ‘pleasure and confusion of parent-child shared reading on EPBs’, the last topic that got more attention still revolved around the text being read: whether the fiction and the non-fiction books should be consumed in a balanced way. They found that their

children had clear preferences, the fiction, or the non-fiction, in what they read and explicitly rejected books that didn't fit their content preferences. As a result, participants who discovered this phenomenon expressed their doubts about whether this preference influenced the establishment of their children's reading habits or whether it negatively affected their learning development. Further, they wondered if they needed to take intervention to redress the imbalance.

Vivi was the participant who spent the most time discussing this topic. And I could feel her anxiety very clearly as she expressed her doubts about this phenomenon.

“My younger daughter had a strong desire to decide what books we read together each night. I thought this was very helpful in building her positive attitude toward reading, so I always respected her choices and decisions. There was no denying that we enjoyed reading books she preferred. We had a lot of interaction, and she frequently showed many fantastic ideas. However, although we had abundant EPBs at home, her selection only covered a very limited range. For an instance, she could read some EPBs a hundred times without getting tired of them. What worried me even more was that most of these books were fiction, and the language level of these books was very shallow to her reading level. Plus, she preferred to read through pictures, so she was highly resistant to the books with many words.”

When I got a clear sense of Vivi's anxiety, I asked her a question, hoping she would adjust her emotional state. “Do you expect your child to read more non-fiction books? If so, can you give me some specific examples?” After listening to my question, Vivi stopped for several seconds and replied,

“Yes, I hoped she could try to read some non-fiction books, such as those about the natural environment, history, or society. I had this idea mainly because I was a teacher, and I clearly knew that the imbalance in reading would likely lead to being biased in subjects when children go to school. It's just like what picky eating does to our bodies.”

Another participant who posed similar questions and expressed similar anxiety was Ming. She also said that her daughter loved to read fiction EPBs, especially those with straightforward content and exciting plots.

“My little girl liked to read the fiction EPBs much more than the non-fiction ones. Especially those EPBs with funny but straightforward schemes, she would ask me to read them with her many times. Recently, for example, she became obsessed with a series of books written by Molly Coxe. This was a set of rhythm picture books, the masters of which were all cute little animals, and the stories in the books were funny and lovely. When reading such books, she would interact with me positively, such as actively answering my questions or doing something related to the book’s content, for example,

**Figure 9**

*Ming’s Daughter Shows Her Hugs When Reading the Picture Book “Bear Hug.”*



*Note.* In the family video, Ming showcased her interactions with her daughter through these activities and expressed her belief that reading can enhance their interaction and emotional expression.

giving me a hug.”

Ming's face was full of joy and happiness as she said these things. “However, when we read a non-fiction book, such as an EPB about pieces of furniture, she would be very passive and even refuse to read it with me,” Ming added<sup>4</sup>.

Jiojio, Meier, and Mr. Goat had all touched on this topic, and all mentioned that their children preferred fiction EPBs. However, they described the situation with less anxiety and just presented it as a simple fact about their children’s favorite books in their parent-child shared reading. For example, Mr. Goat stated in this tone, “My son loved to read fairy tale EPBs with small animals. I also found these EPBs very interesting and readable.” When they stated that their children preferred books in fiction, they did not express a strong expectation that their children should read non-fiction books in a balanced way, nor did they assume that the imbalance would be harmful or bring any negative results to their children’s learning development.

At last, Carefree also expressed concerns about the imbalance in children's reading, but the situation she described was very different from that of Vivi and Ming. All other five participants noted that their children preferred fiction EPBs, whereas Carefree explicitly stated that her son liked non-fiction EPBs and was very resistant to reading storybooks.

“Maybe it was because I didn't want to spend time on fiction books, and I seldom read stories or tales to my son since he was very young. Besides, the EPBs I chose for him were also primarily non-fiction ones. So, until now, he has tended to read non-fiction books, especially those related to natural science.”

I couldn't help laughing when I heard this and said, “Your confusion seems to be what many parents expect.” Then, Carefree said with a weak smile,

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<sup>4</sup> Participants in this study opted to use Internet pseudonyms to engage in discussions but gave permission for their photos and screenshots from videos they provided.

“Yeah? I was not saying that my son's preference for non-fiction EPBs was bad, but I wished he could read some fiction ones. I knew that fiction books might help expand his imagination and increase his reading enjoyment. Or at least, I hoped he would not be as bored as I was about reading.”

In general, about ‘fiction and non-fiction’, three participants expressed further confusion, and they were uneasy at the ‘picky eating’ of books presented by their children. Thus, they hoped there would be a way to help them adjust their children's reading preferences. The other three participants did not show intense anxiety but viewed the children's reading preferences as a common fact about reading.

After we finished the discussion about ‘Pleasure and Confusion’, all participants expressed a desire to continue the research. So, we discussed together and decided on the following theme that had the most impact on them, which was about ‘the help I expected’.

## 4.5 I was desperate to get help, but...

The discussion on the subject was not so pleasant. Each of them, to varying degrees, recalled and expressed the difficulties they encountered in the family activity of shared reading on EPBs, and the various frustrations they met on the way to seeking help. As mentioned in the previous theme, the difficulties encountered by participants in parent-child shared reading had common points as well as their uniqueness. However, there was a remarkable degree of consistency in their paths of seeking help and the issues they encountered.

### 4.5.1 I knew I was a novice

All six participants identified themselves as new to performing the parent-child shared reading on EPBs. Even though they had at least college or higher education, specific English reading and speaking abilities and could handle English language skills at an early age, they thought they lacked enough confidence and skills to carry out the parent-child shared reading on EPBs.

Meier and Mr. Goat put their feeling most bluntly: “I am a new learner,” it was a line they both mentioned. However, Meier described a shift in her understanding.

“When I first came into EPBs, I felt that it looked just taking my children to learn English, but after a while, I found that it seemed different from how I learned English as a young child. So, at that point, I realized that reading EPBs with my kids was not that easy. I was completely new to it.”

And Mr. Goat told a more straightforward story.

“In fact, I am not particularly good at communicating with others, so from the first time I picked up a picture book, which was in Chinese, I found there were so many things beyond my knowledge, such as how to choose books and how to read it for my son. Then, when I read EPBs for my son under the recommendation of my friends, this problem still existed, followed by a new barrier, the English language. In a word, I knew I was a newbie, and I needed to learn many things.”

It was clear that Meier and Mr. Goat were aware of their needs at the beginning of implementing their parent-child shared reading on EPBs and could identify the areas they needed to improve. However, the other participants did not realize their confusion at the initial stage, and only after a period of practice and frustration did they perceive their needs.

Jiojio was one of the few participants who did not set English language learning goals for her children, yet her story was still full of tossing and turning experiences.

“Reading EPBs with my children was my own decision, and it was not influenced by anyone else. I was looking forward to stepping into a wider world by taking my son beyond our regional boundaries and bringing him along to appreciate more cultures and history and introducing him to more different views of the world from an early age. Thus, at the very beginning, when I picked EPBs, I didn't think that much about it. I chose many books with different styles, different language levels, and different cognitive depths.

Most of them were related to humanities and history, and I greatly want my son to love reading these books.”

When Jiojio talked about this, I did not think she would have much difficulty because I felt her reading goals were reasonable. However, it was not what I thought it would be.

“Although I didn't have a specific goal regarding English language learning, I hope my children would gain something from reading through these books with me. Therefore, I explicitly set some assessment criteria for him, such as asking him to recall and retell a historical story or asking him to talk about his understanding of an event. I kept this up for a long time, even when my son appeared resistant, and I struggled to convince him and, in fact, myself. However, my persistence did not bring me the desired result. His resistance grew stronger and stronger, and he would refuse to read English picture books, and if I continued to insist, he would get so angry that I would eventually lose control of myself. So, for a while, I questioned my decision and realized that although my English was good, I was a complete novice when it came to reading English picture books with my children, and there was still so much to learn.”

Jiojio's narration made me realize that even without a utilitarian goal, such as learning English as a language, participants still experienced dilemmas that made them doubt themselves. So, professional guidance was something that almost everyone needed.

For Vivi and Ming, realizing they were ‘new’ was even more convoluted. Since they are both teachers, they didn't feel they needed much help in their initial parent-child shared reading on EPBs except for their knowledge of the English language. However, after a period of experimentation, they both expressed the feeling that they were new to it.

“At first, I actually didn't consider reading EPBs to my children as a difficult



task. My friends recommended many books to me. I knew I was not good at English, so I would look up the dictionary and mark the pronunciation of the words before reading. Sometimes when I encountered grammatical problems, I would consult the English teacher in our school. So, I used to think that I should be able to do this easily. However, as time passed, I felt that things were not as simple as I thought. I encountered a lot of questions, such as the way to pick books for my children, to read intensively or extensively, and how I teach my daughter to use reading skills. These questions plagued me constantly, and I gradually realized that solving these problems was much more challenging than learning English. I even thought I wasn't ready to read English picture books to my child, and I needed to start from scratch.”

Vivi's story was very similar to Ming's. After reading EPBs with her daughter, she found no way to assess her child's learning and was unsure of the effectiveness of her teaching, and she had no means to motivate her child when her child resisted the books she had decided to read. So, she also discovered her lack of knowledge in the matter of parent-child shared reading on EPBs. “I was just like a freshman in first grade,” she said.

The story of Carefree presented a special picture. If the other five participants were simply aware of their own shortcomings and had made clear that they needed help, Carefree could be considered very conscious of the specific kind of support that would be required.

“When I determined that I wanted to use EPBs to help my son learn English, I knew it wouldn't be easy. I needed to pick the right books for him to read, and I needed to know how to assess his vocabulary level and pronunciation accuracy. Since I am not a professional English teacher, I basically learned from the ground up, spending a lot of time looking for learning sources as well as picking up EFL-related knowledge.”

The narratives of the six participants on this topic revealed a basic internal consistency, i.e., they all emphasize their role as novices and their desire for help.

#### 4.5.2 As a mother, no one could replace me

Another common confusion among the participants was related to their identity. In their personal HLE, as mothers, they had responsibilities and pressures that no one else could share. They all indicated support from their families, such as purchasing books and setting up reading spaces for their children. However, they received very limited help in implementing parent-child shared reading activities within the home environment. Some of them said they had tried to assign the work of reading to their children to librarians at the community reading center, but this was not a substitute for parent-child shared reading.

The issues raised by Ming were very representative and she presented the division of tasks within her own family concerning parent-child shared reading on EPBs with clarity.

“My husband had strong expectations that our daughter would have the opportunity to study abroad in the future, so he was very supportive of what I was doing now. He also occasionally paid attention to her English learning, such as buying some learning materials or sometimes reading EPBs with her. However, he worked very hard and could not find enough time to read with our daughter every day. So, I felt a heavy burden in the matter of daily parent-child shared reading on EPBs because there was no one at home to share it with me.”

In addition, three other participants mentioned their family relationships and family environment for reading, Vivi, Mr. Goat, and Meier. They all said they had a relatively harmonious couple relationship and, like Ming, shared their husbands' supportive attitude toward conducting parent-child shared reading on EPBs. Furthermore, they did not address any differences in literacy values between themselves and their husbands, nor did they mention their husbands' suggestions for setting goals of parent-child shared reading on EPBs. However, they also all noted that they did not receive additional assistance from their families other than the provision of financial and environmental support. Reading with their children

seemed to be a specific task for their role as mothers. Their husbands were not very motivated to find solutions or to provide constructive advice when they encountered difficulties and setbacks.

Jiojio talked about support from her family in a more specific way. In addition, she was one of the participants who highly emphasized the significance of her motherhood in parent-child shared reading on EPBs.

“I had been hoping to find a reliable EPBs reading tutor for my son, but unfortunately, it didn't prove easy to meet such a tutor in my neighborhoods. Moreover, throughout accompanying my child in reading EPBs, I gradually realized that as a mother, I had a significant role that a tutor could not replace. For this reason, I decided to start my own community reading center. In fact, I got great support from my family, especially my husband, to do this finally. He strongly supported me in doing such a thing and thought it was very valuable. In addition, he agreed with my attitude of reading EPBs with my son. We established a different division of tasks to support our son's daily activities. I basically did all the parent-child shared reading, and he occasionally read a few books with him, but he mainly took the lead in outdoor sports and other games.”

Carefree's story still seemed a little different. She was very clear that she could not rely on any teacher to provide instruction that was attuned to her children's needs, and that her role as mother and instructional designer could not be replaced. She also noted that her husband was supportive of her educational practices and sometimes participated in their family reading activities.

“When I was occupied with work, my husband would read to the children instead of me, and he was always happy to accept this. And our son also loved to read with him, probably because he thought his father was funnier and more humorous. But beyond that, I designed the learning plan for our son on my own, and he was not involved too much.”

Although the participants' perspectives differed when exploring this issue, their irreplaceable role as mothers was the focus of their discussions and consensus. In addition, they all expressed gratitude for their family's support. They did not reveal conflicts within their families over literacy values, thus reflecting the possibility that all participants' families possessed a HLE in which their respective literacy beliefs were consistent within their families.

#### 4.5.3 I was eager to learn

The desire to learn became a common past and emotional expression for all of them as we discussed their experiences of seeking professional assistance. The desire to learn was not only a state of life when they were doing their EPB parent-child reading, but also an outward expression of a long-standing emotion in their hearts, as it was closely tied to their past experiences and the socio-cultural environment in which they were currently living.

Ming showed the most apparent struggle on this issue.

“When I was a child, I didn't have any opportunity to be taught about reflecting on my reading beliefs, and, most of our reading was in the service of standardized tests. So, at the beginning of conducting my home-shared reading, there was no way for me to get out of that mindset. But I could feel that this was misconception because it caused me to suffer a lot, it put me at odds with my child in reading, and it made my child resist reading with me. After struggling with it over and over again, I realized I had to learn, and I had to find professionals to give me help.”

Carefree had the most precise goals and most vital position of all the participants, yet she also showed a certain amount of emotion when the topic came up.

“I wasn't sure why, and I simply felt as though the approach I used to learn as a child didn't seem to work with my son. Probably, it was because I didn't have a one-on-one English teacher when I was a kid or because my English

studies as a student were only used for written tests. I did encounter many realities that conflicted with my own inherent thoughts. I do feel that I need to learn more about what is required of children in this day and age, and I look forward to helping my son through my own learning.”

The 'desire to learn' expressed by Vivi and Jiojio had a relatively clear orientation. In addition to the selection of books, which was a common concern, they both emphasized reading strategies and instructional assessment. “I didn't think the reading skills I established as a child were sufficient to guide my daughter in our shared reading as I knew they were both aiming for different things.” Vivi said seriously. “So, I was looking for information to guide me in learning reading strategies,” Vivi added.

Jiojio also expressed a strong desire to learn more, “I am most eager to learn how to guide my child's reading more effectively, such as by conveying reading strategies and skills to him and testing my guidance's effectiveness. Of course, these things also help me tremendously in my work.”

Although Vivi and Jiojio were stating their learning needs, there was an equal amount of anxiety and uncertainty lurking in their tone. I found that this expression of emotion was directly related to their specific behaviors when performing the home-shared reading, that is, when we talked about ‘how’ and ‘what’ they were doing, they would express a sense of tension about the performance and the outcome.

The emotions expressed by Meier and Mr. Goat were less strong. Meier, for example, viewed parent-child shared reading as one of the family activities, while Mr. Goat wanted his children to be exposed to different cultures through EPBs. Therefore, when discussing their passion for learning, they were relatively relaxed and showed an active emotion of seeking knowledge rather than passively learning to solve current confusions. In addition, in their sharing, they all mentioned that they had sufficient time and opportunities to learn because their children were young, less than four years old. Mr. Goat said,

“I would love to learn how to read EPBs for kids because I thought they were so interesting. These picture books differed from the picture-story books and fairy tales I read as a child, but I couldn't tell you exactly what was different. I looked forward to using these EPBs to open up a new world with my son, so I knew I couldn't read them with my old concepts and habits. I had also been looking for relevant learning materials, such as reading some of the best-selling books. Although I still didn't have clear answers, I would continue to learn. Since my son just started kindergarten, I think I still have plenty of time to accumulate my knowledge for reading with him.”

It is clear that all six participants clearly expressed their feelings when referring to their desire to learn. Some of them had more pronounced emotional characteristics, especially those because they were experiencing confusion. For participants who had clear reading goals, their drive to learn was more explicit and their emotional expression was substantially weaker. Finally, participants whose children were younger and who did not set utilitarian goals for reading showed more positive emotions.

#### 4.5.4 The system of assistance was not sound

If there was one word that could be used to describe our discussion on the topic of ‘The Help We Found’, it would be 'helpless', and the conclusion of all the participants, was remarkably consistent. More interestingly, the resources they mentioned, such as the books they had read, the lectures they had audited, and the platforms they used to access information, were very similar.

Ming provided me with a list of references related to parent-child shared reading on EPBs, and she said, “I bought all the relevant bestsellers that I could get in the bookstore.”

**Figure 10.**

*Example of Best-selling Books Related to Parent-child shared reading on EPBs in China*



*Note.* Ming provided me with this photo and indicated that this was part of the best-seller books she had read.

“Those are the best-selling books related to parent-child shared reading in English that I have at home now. I’ve actually read many more, but they weren’t beneficial to keep. These books were written by English reading experts, most of whom were English teachers and some of whom also had experience living in Europe and North America. The content of these books is very similar. Basically, they are about approaches to teaching English to Chinese children, some of them are about the author’s own stories, and some are similar to a teaching plan. And they all have recommended reading lists

for young readers, such as English picture books in different language levels or English levelled books.”

Then, Ming introduced me to these books very clearly and asked me if I had read them. I replied, “I didn't pay much attention to Chinese bestsellers over the years, and I basically only read academic books and papers”. After hearing that, she questioned, “Is there any difference between them? Aren't they all written by experts?” I answered as succinctly as possible,

“Academic articles need to follow certain academic standards and writing requirements, such as clarity of information. They must draw on previous literature or need data to support a specific arguments. A best-selling book, however, can be just a story about the writer's own stories and feelings and does not need to follow strict academic standards.”

After listening to my response, Ming looked thoughtful and said, “Maybe what I've read in these books isn't correct”. I was slightly embarrassed that I could only say, “I haven't read these books, so I can't draw any conclusions.”

Ming's narrative thereafter left me with more of her helplessness, and although the other five participants shared similar emotions in their expressions, Ming touched me most deeply.

“In fact, more than just reading these books, all the on-site teaching offered by the authors, such as workshops, I would try my best to attend whenever I could, even if they were not held in my city. However, I feel like I've been in a constant rush to 'run' for over two years now. I was working very hard, but I didn't think I was making much progress for some reason. I was getting more and more nervous and confused. The teachers gave those teaching methods that didn't seem to be accepted by my daughter. For example, one teacher said children must listen to plenty of English stories with audio, because to learn English well, they must listen to the native English teachers reading aloud. However, my daughter wasn't fond of listening to those audio



recordings by the native English teachers, and she liked to read with me. Another example was an author who said that we should read to our children in whole English, but my English was not that good, and I could not communicate with my daughter without the connection of Chinese. There were too many examples, but in short, they taught me ways that were hard for me to do, or even if I did, my daughter didn't like them and would refuse to accept them.”

In my conversations with the other five participants, I found a lot of common confusion with Ming, and the books they provided me with for reference were also very similar.

**Figure 11.**

*Example of Best-selling Books Related to Parent-child shared reading on EPBs in China*



*Note.* These photos were provided by Jiojio, Vivi, and Meier (from left to right).

To sum up, their self-reported real-life dilemmas can be summarized as follows: the parent-child reading methods taught in the guidebooks were challenging to implement; the recommended reading lists were not suitable for their children; their own English language level could not support shared reading in whole English; the recommended reading schedule based on age was too ideal and unworkable; their children basically could not achieve the learning outcomes proposed in the guidebooks. In short, the assistance that guidebooks provided for them did not meet their learning needs and even created more new confusion.

Then, when we discussed why they relied solely on these best-selling books and the guidance of these experts, they gave a surprisingly consistent response. Just as Vivi said, “because these best-selling books were recommended by various homeschooling-related platforms, such as the family channels of well-known online forums”. Moreover, these channels were the only ones where they could access relevant information.

When I asked them about the support available from their children's schools/ kindergarten and communities, the response was repeatedly the same, such as what Ming stated,

“My child's schools highly encouraged parents to provide shared reading for kids, but there was no corresponding support to assist us with this family literacy activity. There was even less help in the community.”

As a self-employed instructor who assisted other families in her community, Jiojio's view was,

“If I could locate the availability of appropriate support in my community, perhaps I wouldn't be running the reading center myself. Currently there is very limited support from the national education system, such as from school or community library programs. My understanding is that parent-child shared reading is still a very fresh concept in China. Compared to China's population base, the percentage of families who recognize and implement home-shared reading activities is meagre. At the level of social promotion, there are indeed teachers and experts advocating for such family activities. Still, at the level of the implementation, there are few constructive support programs available to parents.”

Vivi, Meier, and Mr. Goat all indicated that the assistance they currently received was provided by commercial organizations. For example, expertise provided by publishers in collaboration with portals for book sales, or training provided by commercial educational institutions. Carefree also addressed this topic and

concluded,

“Current home learning programs in China are commercially driven, based on the value Chinese parents place on their children's education, which has resulted in the emergence of extremely high demand for home learning. The public education system does not provide enough support for this demand, so capital-driven services such as one-on-one private instruction, lending of EPBs, and, of course, educational guidance for parents are also included in these commercial campaigns on a large scale.”

It appeared that the six participants were experiencing very similar social realities. They were capable of realizing and articulating their own difficulties. Most of them also possessed a relatively explicit understanding of the underlying causes behind their real-life dilemmas.

#### 4.4.5 Anxiety wrapped around me

To wrap up the discussion on this theme, I tried to summarize with them their past experiences in finding assistance and advised them to share a brief overview of their impressions and feelings with me. To avoid confusing them, I did not mention any emotional words such as anxiety, tension, happiness, or pleasure. However, feelings related to anxiety were mentioned by all six participants.

Ming's words remained very straightforward, intertwined with her strong emotional feelings, while she clearly described the reasons why she was deeply exhausted and torn.

“In contrast to parenting my oldest son, I feel exhausted and helpless in raising my youngest daughter now. Fifteen years ago, when my son was 4 or 5, no one would tell me what I needed to do and what I should do, or else my child would grow up to be unsuccessful, making an underdog. But today, all over the Internet, especially on social media, people are passing me messages and telling me that so-and-so expert said what must be done to raise children, what books must be read to them, what games they must play, how many

Chinese characters they must learn, how many words they must know. Otherwise, they will be outclassed by others.”

After listening to Ming's description, I expressed my empathy and asked, “Did you feel stressed because you were worried that you weren't doing well enough?” Ming immediately replied,

“To be precise, I had no idea if my direction was correct, let alone good. The 'voices' I was exposed to were overwhelming, with conflicting views among the teachers. I wasn't afraid to take my children to learn, but I felt that at the moment, it was too difficult and beyond my capacity to rely on myself to accomplish what the experts were asking without the premise of having explicit professional guidance, so I felt exhausted and stressed.”

Jiojio voiced a very similar view to Ming's about the impact of online educational information.

“My social media was heavily flooded with those messages, and most of them were web articles written by educational bloggers. From what I have observed, all the moms around me, such as my classmates and peer friends, were influenced by these media messages. Such online information, by and large, was spreading anxiety about education and made it very easy for young parents to empathize with. They reinforced the idea that parents would be failing in their duty by not doing what the so-called experts were saying and that it would hurt their children's development.”

Regarding the impact of such online information on herself, Jiojio added that,

“These widely disseminated advisories were driven by commercial interests, often bundled with the sale of books and educational products. Before founding my reading center, I was one of the moms who was severely influenced by this information. After involving in these commercial activities, I understood the business orientation of these online information and was rarely impacted by them. However, it was clear that the realities I faced in

family education, such as parent-child shared reading on EPBs, were not being addressed. My confusion still existed, but professionals who could help me face my problems and solve them were still very scarce.”

Vivi and Carefree also talked about the impact of the cluttered internet information and the lack of professional support on them. Although they highlighted that this general social environment had caused them a degree of concern and self-doubt, they were both more relaxed and less emotional.

Vivi mentioned that the widely circulated online articles did influence her decision to read EPBs with her two daughters. And the issues that came up in parent-child shared reading indeed caused her a fair amount of anxiety, but as a teacher, she said she understood that 'it's a journey' and that the process from putting forward ideas to building a social help system would actually be a long road. So, she said she would continue to explore and reflect, turning her anxiety into motivation to promote her own learning.

“I didn’t feel much emotional anxiety, but I was also stressed.” Carefree thought of her experience and knowledge base in teaching English as insufficient, so the learning plans and goals she had set for her son were often beyond her reach. In addition, as her son grew older, various issues related to learning emerged, not just English language learning, but also using English to learn other subjects, such as science and social science curriculum. Regarding the lack of a social support system, Carefree stated, “I would not suffer for that.” She argued that one of the realities of education in China was the diversity of needs, as the population base was so large that different social classes would have very different requirements for education. Therefore, it is only natural that the public education and tutoring system is incomplete, which is why she has been searching for teaching resources from private commercial education institutions. And what impressed me the most was that she would occasionally say, without thinking, “I’m still struggling,” with a shallow smile on her face.

The participants who showed the lowest level of anxiety were Mr. Goat and Meier. Mr. Goat noted that the help she needed focused on picking the right EPBs for her child and

the appropriate way to read. Although the information from the Internet stressed the significance of English language learning, it did not seriously affect her.

“I thought my son was still very young and wasn't in a hurry to learn English through EPBs. I was satisfied with taking him through two or three EPBs a week to build up his enjoyment of English. Thus, all the help I was expecting was some recommendations for outstanding EPBs and skills to read for a three-year-old. I'm still trying the recommended reading lists and methods from the guidebooks, and although it's not working very well, I'm continuing to learn and test them out. However, I'm not sure if I'll get more anxious as my child gets older each day, such as about the effectiveness of my son's English learning, which is, after all, being emphasized in the educational environment that we live in now.”

Meier similarly conveyed her frustration with the existing supporting resources available to her as well as stated that her confusion did not diminish, but rather grew as she sought solutions to her problems. Since reading EPBs with her child was a daily family activity to be performed, her anxiety was consistently present when she encountered problems, even though it was not so intense as to affect her emotions seriously. However, at the end she said, “I think it is a reasonable state of affairs and believe it will improve over time with increased professional involvement.”

In general, all participants presented their own dilemmas and personal views regarding the current situation. Some were able to actively seek further ways out in their anxiety, while others felt deeply worried and helpless about it.

#### **4.6 Reinvestigate our stories in multiliteracies framework**

In five consecutive weeks of personal interviews, we reminisced about reading-related events from our childhoods. And, I sought to assist them in making the connection between their past experiences and their current home-shared reading of EPBs. We recalled and sorted through the various events, enjoyable, troublesome, enlightening, and tangled that they encountered in implementing their parent-child shared reading

activities. Collectively, we also reviewed the experiences and regrets we had gained during the problem-solving journey. By sharing these stories, I hoped to companion them in reflecting on their own beliefs about literacy that they developed/revised during the home-shared reading, perceiving the unfolding of their feelings and emotional shifts, realizing the meaning of their exploratory practices, and revisiting the constructive outcomes of their experiences and the issues that called for improvement.

Then, we unanimously decided to have our second focused-group discussion, and the main topic of the session was ‘Reflection and Re-exploration’. First, we shared our personal reflections and changes after the five-week interviews. Four of the participants, Ming, Vivi, Jiojio, and Meier, indicated that their anxiety significantly reduced, mainly because they were no longer obsessed with their children's English learning short-term outcomes. In addition, all six participants mentioned that they had thought about and adjusted their long-term and short-term goals for their parent-child shared reading activities on EPBs. Among them, Vivi and Carefree announced that they had given up some of their attachment to specific instructional practices and started reflecting on their beliefs about literacy.

Finally, I suggested that over the next five weeks, we focus on the specific activities involved in implementing our parent-child shared reading activities and reflect on the core values of these activities by applying the framework of multiliteracies pedagogy. Participants all consented to this lens of discussion and looked forward to gaining a deeper appreciation of their parent-child shared reading activities and enhancing their own experiences.

#### 4.6.1 Had I pondered my literacy beliefs?

After identifying the theme to explore, we did not rush into discussions around the framework of multiliteracies pedagogy, but rather engaged in a further reflection and clarification of our respective beliefs about literacy. In the second focused-group discussion, all participants talked about how their practices and home-shared reading activities were influenced in large part by their own literacy values and literacy beliefs. In particular, when they shared their anxiety-relieving experiences, they all emphasized the

significance of re-examining their own literacy beliefs and adjusting their children's English literacy development strategies and targets. Therefore, they had a consensus that it was necessary to share their beliefs about literacy with me again before analyzing their specific shared reading activities at home.

Both Vivi and Carefree raised their reflections on their literacy beliefs during the focused-group discussion. They all commented that after five weeks in personal interviews and self-reflection, they began to ease their focus on their children's English language learning outcomes by turning to the things behind their practice, such as their motivation, core values, the reasonableness of their goal setting, and the potential impact they were having on their children. Carefree said,

“Previously, I truly had never thought deeply about my stance and values in taking my children through EPBs reading. The goal of pursuing language learning as an outcome-oriented approach seemed to come naturally into our lives, and I never thought about the rationality of that goal. Whenever my child expressed resistance or showed thoughts of giving up, the first thing I questioned was the error in teaching methods and reading materials, rarely thinking about the deeper reasons, such as my beliefs about literacy. For example, my child didn't like to read fiction books. Now I wonder, was it because he didn't like fiction books himself? Or because I didn't think fiction books were good for his learning development, therefore, I hardly accompanied him to read them?”

I was stunned at hearing these words as, in my opinion, of the six participants, Carefree had the most clarity and certainty of the purpose. And all the stories and insights she brought to me showed that she had an outstanding ability to analyze and control her own practice. So, when I found out that she had such a strong desire to re-examine her beliefs about literacy, I reflexively said, “I think you are the one with the most certainty about your stance.” Carefree laughed at this and said, “Who says that people with certainty about their stance will not reflect on their values?” We then both laughed aloud, and I followed up by asking, “So can I say that this study is giving you the courage to make a



value shift about parent-child shared reading on EPBs.” Carefree thought and replied, “I don't know if I can count it as a value shift, but at least I am getting to think about it. Well, maybe it will be, and I'll let you know then, to say thanks.”

This talk with Carefree was the most relaxed I had felt in six weeks. She spoke with a much lighter tone and pace, and along with that, she seemed less tense and serious in general. Vivi similarly expressed the thought that,

“I would say that my anxiety wasn't entirely caused by the external environment, as instability and the lack of systemic resources are ever-present. As a teacher at the college, I am well aware of this. The interviews and group discussions over the past weeks offered me sufficient opportunities to reflect on where my confusion lay. It became clear to me that, to a large extent, I didn't fully establish my goals earlier, as my literacy values and beliefs of home-shared reading on EPBs were volatile. I feel grateful, however, that my children are still young enough that I have plenty of time to slowly recognize and reflect on my position and goals for reading EPBs with them. I can anticipate what this reflection will mean for our family, and it will determine the direction our family will walk in education in the future.”

Jiojio showed more confidence when discussing this topic. She believed she had done in-depth thinking on her literacy beliefs, and the family literacy activities she was implementing were based on her deliberations. In addition, to my surprise, she highly appreciated my advice for the participants to rethink their literacy beliefs.

“Before I offered tutoring services to my community, I hadn't realized that I should be reflecting on my literacy beliefs. It certainly didn't mean that I was missing the reasons for reading EPBs with my children, but I simply never went deep enough to examine and confirm the core values of what I was doing. But as I began to assist more families, I noticed that most parents hadn't thought through this issue well either. And along with that came the issues they encountered, such as lack of clear goals, or children's reading performance not matching their expectations, and so on. So, I think it's a great

thing that you suggested that we revisit our literacy beliefs and core values.”

I was pleasantly surprised by Jiojio's response, as she directly demonstrated to me the positive implications of this study for her, and, possibly, for others involved.

“I truly had not reflected on my literacy beliefs and values in depth.” It was the first sentence of Meier's response to this topic.

“My practice of reading picture books with my children was, to a large extent, driven by external influences. My friends and my children's teachers all suggested that I read with my children, so I did. In addition, there was advice from experts on the internet about the various benefits of taking children to read early, such as developing good study habits and improving future academic performance. Of course, from my own experience of growing up, I also knew that reading was essential, but my perception stayed merely at the level of being beneficial to learning. Previously, I hadn't seemed to consider how my attitudes and values toward reading affected my children, especially in our shared reading activities that might have subconsciously influenced them. However, I realize that it is essential to think seriously about my beliefs about literacy.”

Ming conveyed a view similar to Meier's, saying that her attitude toward reading was also highly affected by others and that many of them were contradictory. Then, she added,

“After the discussions in the last few weeks, I seemed to be getting a sense of where my troubles reside. The more reference books I had read and the more workshops I had attended, the more confused my thinking became. I used to blame myself for not doing enough, but after thinking it over, I realized that perhaps it was because I hadn't identified clearly for myself what I should be pursuing in this matter of parent-child shared reading. I expected my daughter to learn English well. I desired to develop good reading habits for her. I hoped to introduce her to different cultures, and I looked forward to building

a harmonious parent-child relationship with her through our shared reading. I wanted many things, so I needed to reflect on how to balance these desires and how to achieve them step by step.”

Ming's reflection touched me a lot because she was the oldest and most anxious one among the six participants. In the second focused-group discussion she showed that she had released a lot of her anxiety, and this conversation helped me to further clarify what made her change that is, the awareness and reflection of her deep-seated desires.

Finally, Mr. Goat's description matched what she had been saying all along. She said she had always believed that the purpose of reading EPBs with her children should not focus on learning the English language but on getting them to be passionate about reading and broadening their horizons.

“I'm not sure if this is my belief in literacy, I just think it made us all happy to read books this way. But I do have concerns that as my son gets older and as the day goes on, especially once he reaches elementary school, I might also be influenced by the social environment and start emphasizing knowledge-based learning. I haven't figured out what to do when the day comes, so maybe I'll be anxious.”

As it could be seen, in the second discussion with the participants about the values, positions and goal setting of parent-child shared reading, they all already had the awareness to reflect deeply on these topics. And most of them got relaxed from their reflections as well as found things to focus on and directions to walk in the future.

#### 4.6.2 Were we readers of situated practice?

In the later part of the second focused-group discussion, I communicated with all participants about the implications of exploring their specific family activities. And with the consent of all participants, after rethinking our literacy beliefs, we would move on to analyze and investigate their specific parent-child shared reading

activities on EPBs. I expected to work with them on a co-constructive exploration of their own experiences in performing their home-shared reading through the framework of the multiliteracies pedagogy. In doing so, I briefly outlined for them the origins and pedagogical goals for the multiliteracies pedagogy, as well as the four dimensions of constructing meaning that we would be applying.

As the participants shared their experiences with me related to situated learning, I could clearly feel their joyful emotions. In particular, when they recalled the funny little stories from their shared reading activities, a relaxed and happy atmosphere kept lingering in our conversations. After entering the discussion on this topic, Mr. Goat volunteered to be the first person to have the interview. She presented me with a fascinating story in which some phenomena surprised her and confused her.

“My son had horrible interest in ghost-related picture books. The first book he read related to ghosts was *Operation Ghost*, which had a scene about a ghost doctor giving intramuscular injections to a ghost patient's hip. After reading this book, for a while, he practically wanted to play the injection game with me every day. Later, he showed a keen interest in all picture books related to ghosts. For this reason, I made an effort to find all the picture books

**Figure 12.**

*Ghostly Picture Books Written by Jacques Duquennoy*



*Note.* Mr. Goat provided the photos during the personal interview.

in this set, some in Chinese and some in English.”

“Then, I found an exciting thing. Since he loved the little ghosts, he wanted to figure out everything related to them. In this set of books, there is a book related to the basement called *The Ghosts in the Cellar*. However, we were living in a high-rise building, and our house did not have a basement. So, every time he read the book, he would keep asking me what a cellar was. I tried to explain it to him, but he couldn't understand it. So, one time when we went to a shopping mall, I took him to the underground garage. There, I found a stairwell where items were stacked, and I told him that a cellar was very similar to this stairwell, a room underground, without windows, requiring lighting to be installed, and could be used for stacking items. This worked really well, by finding or creating certain situations and establishing the connection between ‘the known’ and ‘the new’, he was soon able to understand a lot of things he was curious about.”

As Mr. Goat told the story, her voice was full of vividness, with a smile on her face and a glint in her eyes. Fascinated by her story, I followed along with a smile on my face and listened without interrupting her at all until she stopped. So, I asked her, “This story was wonderful, and so lovely! Look, you've found the meaning of situated learning. Well, you just said you had something else in trouble, what was that?” Hearing my question, Mr. Goat instantly replied,

“Here also rests my confusion. Since my son is so fond of little ghosts, he has great interest in delving into things related to ghosts but avoids picture books with other topics. So, if my son prefers to read particular picture books, does it affect his overall reading proficiency? How can we respect his interests while appropriately expanding his reading?”

In response to Mr. Goat's question, I pondered for a moment, and instead of answering directly, I shared a story about my daughter when she was a child. I told Mr. Goat,

“When my daughter was little, she would also pay exceptional attention to certain types of stories or a particular protagonist for some time. For example, when she was four years old, she had a particular fondness for *Peppa Pig* for a while, and when she turned five, she was obsessed with *My little Pony*. I didn't worry too much about this or interfere with her reading preferences. I would accompany her to delve into her favourite picture books and occasionally suggest that we should read some of my favours together. As a mom, I have my reading preferences and need her to be here with me.”

Mr. Goat was delighted with my answer, smiled, and said she would try it out that way, telling her son that she was his mom but also needed his company to read her favourite books.

During the discussion on this topic, Ming showed the same positive emotional state. She mentioned three books that she had read with her daughter, which were all about numbers: *Insects*, *It Is Time for Dinner*, and *Easter Eggs*.

“These were three books we read last night, all with their own themes, but related to number-counting. We had a great time reading these three books as my daughter was familiar with all their themes. For example, she had a keen interest in insects, so we read the first book with great enthusiasm. When she was a little girl, she liked to look for insects in the park, and for that reason, we had read a lot of picture books related to insects previously. So, while reading the insect book, her attention was completely drawn to the different insects in the pictures, and she finished the book with me without realizing it. Again, we read the second book in the same way. The book described a dinner scene that incorporated numbers. She already had a lot of life experiences and feelings associated with the story scenes, so she felt attached and motivated to read it. When we read the third book, although she had no experience in making Easter eggs, the numbers that repeatedly appeared in the first two books also showed up, so she finished the book quickly by counting the Easter eggs with various patterns on the pictures. I think such a

feeling was beautiful, and it was delightful to help the child construct a connection between her own experience and the book she was reading, so that she could read with a sense of familiarity and enjoyment.”

When discussing this topic, Ming was in a completely different mood from the previous ones, with a much lighter pace of speech and a brightening expression on her face. The same change as Ming occurred with Vivi, whose story also reflected her unique experiences.

“Not to mention the implications for my youngest daughter, simply for me, I have learned the meaning of situated learning. See, the process of reading with my older daughter actually gave me an immersive experience and insights to read EPBs with my younger daughter. Actually, I was the first person in my family to experience situated learning.”

After Vivi said this, we both laughed aloud, and the conversation instantly turned into a very relaxed setting.

“After you introduced us to the four dimensions of the multiliteracies Approach last week, I’ve been reminiscing about how these four dimensions might correspond to my experiences with children reading together. The one I could make the most connections to be the dimension we are talking now, and the first thing I thought of was that I was actually a learner too.”

I immediately affirmed Vivi’s idea, stating that I also believed that everything I experienced with my child was situated learning that would influence my practice and decisions in the future. Regarding her perceptions of how situated learning manifests in her daughter, Vivi continued.

“To summarize, I have these three impressions. First, my most intuitive feeling was that things that children experienced and could understand were very easy for them to find resonance in later reading. For example, after watching the Frozen movie, my daughter showed a strong affinity for all Frozen-related picture books. Even if the English language in some picture

books was challenging, she would not refuse them. She asked me to read them out and then explain in Chinese for her. On top of that, I had my second perception that reading in Chinese could be the situational basis for me to read EPBs with her. This derived from my third point, that reading picture books is a form of situated learning, because the combination of images and stories in picture books is creating an environment that children can interact with. Therefore, I believed that reading with the medium of the mother tongue could also be understood as a form of situated learning.”

After hearing Vivi's words, I jumped right into clapping for her and asked, “How did you think so comprehensively?” Vivi replied, “Maybe because I'm a teacher, I always analyze an issue from more perspectives. Of course, the most important thing is that this research has inspired me in a way that I haven't experienced before.”

Carefree noted that before reading picture books with her son, she did not realize that children's previous experiences could considerably influence their learning.

However, as her parent-child shared reading progressed, she became increasingly impressed with the extent of this influence. After realizing the effects of experience, she paid more attention to her son's lived experiences and might intentionally create some situated learning opportunities and possibilities in her home literacy environment.

“When my son was about three years old, he had experienced a car breakdown and the rescue that followed. I wasn't the one traveling with him at the time, and it made such a deep impression on him that he talked to me about the breakdown many times for a long time afterwards. And one day, when we accidentally read the picture book of car rescue, he was extremely excited, and would compare scenes in the book with the rescue story he had experienced. Frankly, this was the first time I felt the influence of the living environment on his reading and learning. After that, I became conscious of guiding him to perceive things in his daily life. For example, I would ask him to observe his surroundings, buildings, vehicles, residents, plants, and



animals in different areas while traveling. Sometimes, I would also give him small tasks of observation to help him build up the habit of investigation and exploration.”

When I noticed that Carefree would deliberately engage in certain context-building, or context-enhancing behaviors, I immediately asked, “Would your son show resistance? For example, when you assigned him an observation task, would he say no?” Carefree replied,

“So far, he hasn't shown any resistance to these activities. I think he enjoyed completing these small tasks, like playing the games. And, to motivate him to enjoy his experience, I often read him EPBs that might resonate with him. And I would suggest his English tutor talk to him about relevant topics. For example, when I saw that he liked rescue-type stories, I bought a lot of rescue-related EPBs for him those days. And then, I found that by reading these EPBs, he would build up many new experiences, including rescue teams, rescue tools, some animals that could participate in the rescue. Around these new experiences, he would build new reading interests. For example, around rescue vehicles, he got curious about rescue trains and paid extra attention to rescue trains in real life. As soon as he heard a siren, he would ask me if it was a rescue train. And when he found out that some other vehicles, such as ambulances and police cars, also make siren sounds, he then became curious to explore these new things. Thus, I think that children's learning and exploration are like circles connected one after another. My task was to follow his curiosity to explore these circles along with him.”

After hearing Carefree's words, I couldn't help but applaud her. She went on to say, “I had only a hazy awareness of these ideas before, and after you introduced us the multiliteracies pedagogy, it reinforced my thoughts and gave me the conviction to keep going with it.”

Jiojio and Meier shared some similar stories and feelings as the four participants above. Meier, for example, also highlighted that picture books could be a medium for

situated learning. She stated, “things that existed in real life, such as plants, animals, and community environments, could be experienced through physical life by children. However, for something like dinosaurs and deserts that couldn't be found in our daily life, I would apply illustrations from picture books, cartoons, and documentaries to help my daughter build a sense of them.” In addition, Jiojio said she believed that both fictional and non-fictional picture books required teachers and parents to help children build their own situational experiences and to make connections between their past experiences with the content they were going to learn.

In short, all six participants shared their families' experiences about situated reading and endorsed the implications and significance of situated learning.

#### 4.6.3 Did our “conceptualizing” process go well?

In contrast to the consistency shown in discussions on the topic of situated learning, the participants' sharing on overt instruction showed a multi-perspective implementation strategy.

Vivi said that even in the conceptualizing reading, she still kept herself in the role as a ‘helper’.

“First, I would have my daughter choose the daily readings on her own, whatever she liked and whatever topics she was interested in. We had a large wall of books in our house, with books for our older daughter on the high side and picture books for our younger one on the lower place. Every night before bed, she would pick out the book by herself. As long as I thought they were basically appropriate for her age to read, I would support the idea and read them with her. Most of the time, she picked EPBs that were at her language level, and sometimes she would select books that were clearly beyond her English language level. However, I would satisfy her requests by reading to her whenever I felt that she should be able to understand the contents.”

Vivi showed me the book wall in her apartment, and continued,

“In addition, I would have my daughter take the lead during our reading, and I would always be ready to offer her assistance. For example, while reading to her, she would interrupt me and ask questions about details, sometimes even unrelated to the books. In such cases, I would patiently answer her questions. For those without instant answers, I would also tell her to look up the information online together after we finished reading the book.”

**Figure 13**

*The Book Wall in Vivi's Living Room*



*Note.* Vivi provided the photo during the personal interview.

Regarding the specific content being conceptualized in their shared reading, Vivi said,

“At this point, I don't see English language learning as our primary goal in reading EPBs. More, I'm still using picture books to expand her cognition and help her build a more contextualized understanding of things. So, you could say that our overt instruction around EPBs focuses on my daughter's comprehension and thinking skills. But, as I mentioned before, I am already preparing for English language learning and will probably establish it as part of our learning soon.”

Among all the participants who shared Vivi's points were Meier and Mr. Goat. Meier expressed directly that she did not have particular teaching practices around EPBs at home and that all their reading activities were parent-child interactions within her family. She would discuss with her children what they were interested in and answer their questions, and she would also help them explore the books through games and acting. However, she did not do this with the attitude that she was teaching them.

In describing how she helped her children conceptualize the content of the books, Mr. Goat said,

“In our shared reading, I would always randomly pick up a picture book and read. We read mostly story-based picture books, such as *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, *The Meg the Witch series*, *The Little Ghost Department*, *The Runaway Bunny*, *I Am a Bunny*, *Goodnight Gorilla*, *Midnight Kitchen*, *The Last Puppy*, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, books from Leo Lionni, books written by Mo Willems, etc. We seldom read science or intellectual books. Stories were interesting, and I would try to make them as funny as possible by combining tones, expressions, and actions to make our reading experience better. Verbal interaction, including talking and physical activity, were ways for me and my son to engage with the text. For example, when we first started reading *Rosie's Walk*, about six months ago, I used my fingers to imitate a bee ‘buzz buzzing’ around and occasionally ‘stinging’ the child. We put our hands together and then unfolded them to mimic the blossoming of a flower. I imitated the bee flying around, my son imitated the flower opening with his

little hands, and then the ‘bee’ flew into the ‘flower’ to suck the nectar. My son loved these interactions and would remember them. Recently we were reading *Goodnight Owl*, which has little bees in it, and when I read ‘buzz buzz’, my son would use his hands to mimic the flower blooms and say, ‘Bee, sip the nectar’. We liked to enjoy reading in simple ways.”

Then, when I asked if they had designed any specific teaching content, Meier said,

“I didn't view reading as a teaching tool. I rarely think about how to teach the content in picture books before I read them, and I wouldn't intentionally design interactive questions or activities around the books for teaching purposes, but simply treat reading picture books as a daily parent-child activity. I don't focus on whether my son actually understands the story or how many words he learns at this stage.”

From goal setting to specific behaviors, Jiojio, Carefree, and Ming all differed from the above three participants in the process of overt instruction.

“In most cases, I took my son to read EPBs with a clear teaching content,” Jiojio said.

“I had to prepare lessons for my students, most of whom were about the same age and learning level as my son. Sometimes I would provide my prepared teaching content to him, and sometimes the process of reading EPBs with him could in turn offer me the inspiration for teaching preparation. That's why children are our teachers, right? I was unaware of these instructional approaches, such as multimodal teaching, before I came upon the pedagogy of multiliteracies. But through shared reading with my child, I noticed that he enjoyed playful ways of reading, such as role-play and hand puppet drama. Therefore, I would apply such teaching techniques to my curriculum design and adopt them in my parent-child shared reading.”

Jiojio then provided me with a sample of her teaching, including lesson plans and teaching records.

“This week I chose *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* for my kids, I previously had read the Chinese version of this book to my son, and he enjoyed it. Also, he had a basic understanding of the content, so this time we picked the English version to learn. I designed two objectives for this lesson: 1. To teach two songs, *Hello, How Are You*, and *Tiger*. 2. To perform a book-related craft and a mini-drama. I played *Hello, How Are You* as the opening music, repeated it three times, and brought the children along with me to make the gestures related to the song while singing.”

Jiojio followed up by describing the whole teaching process to me in detail.

“Then, moving to the lesson's theme, I asked the children four questions: Which animal do they think is the most powerful? Which animal do they like the most? Who is the king of the forest? What does a tiger look like? The children answered these four questions, and one little girl even acted out various animals that she thought were very powerful, such as dinosaurs, tigers, and lions. Afterward, I gave them craft worksheets to prepare for the game later. We then sang *Tiger* together to the tune of *Bingo*, and I introduced them to the book cover, the author, and the context in which it was written. After that, we moved on to storytelling and played a game. I asked the children to put the tiger tail in their hands on the picture paper and encouraged them to act out the *Tiger* song. Finally, the children and I finished drawing the tiger masks together with the music in the background. They put on their masks and then had fun playing the tiger and singing the song they had just learned.”

Jiojio showed great confidence when describing her teaching design, and her happiness was perceptible in her tone and expression.

**Figure 14**

*Jiojio's Teaching Records for The Tiger Who Came to Tea*



*Note.* Jiojio provided the photos in her weekly journals.

Both Carefree and Ming indicated that they choose books for their children to read and prepare for shared reading by previewing them. However, their feelings about the conceptualization process were quite different.

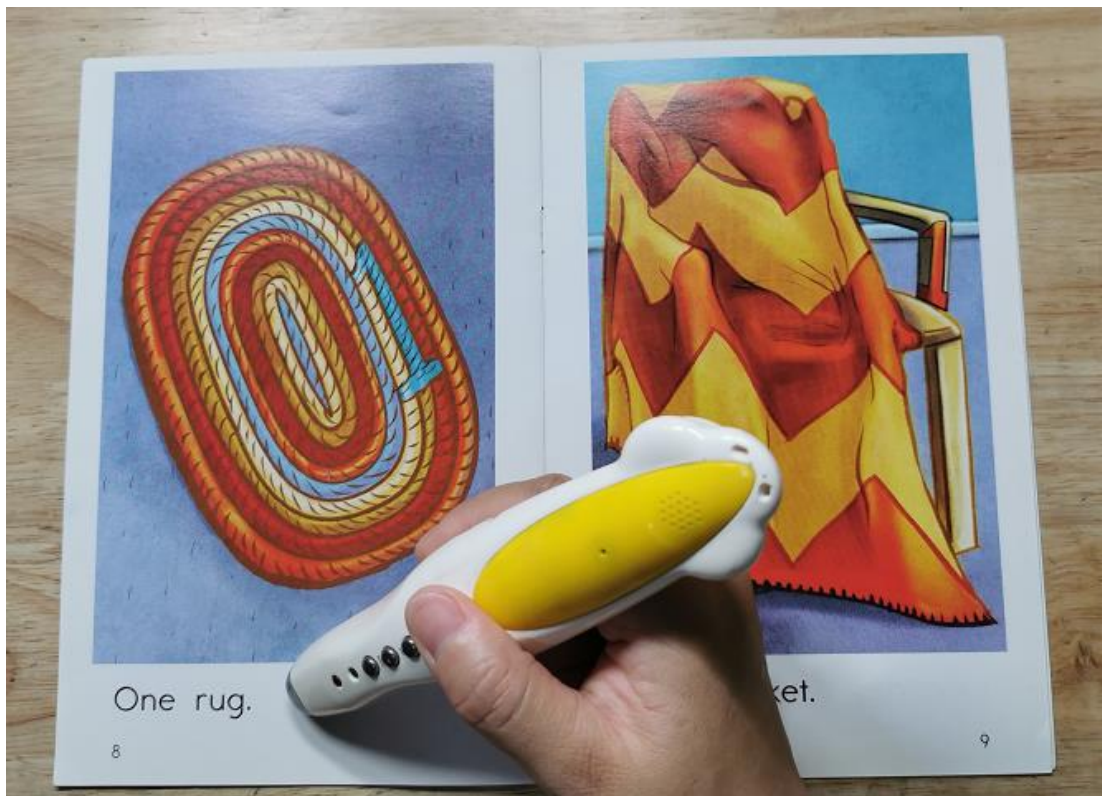
Overall, Ming noted that the attributes of her profession made her treat every shared



reading with her daughter as an opportunity to provide a learning guide for her. Therefore, she would think carefully about how to pick the appropriate books by previewing them. She would look up every unfamiliar word in advance and check the grammatical knowledge that she wanted to explain to her daughter. She would also prepare videos or nursery rhymes related to the EPBs in advance, with the help of some e-learning tools. “I know my English language skills were limited so that I would make use of some digital teaching tools, such as the point-and-reading pen,” Ming said.

**Figure 15**

*Reading with The Assistance of a Point-and-Reading Pen*



*Note.* Ming provided the photo during the personal interview.

“As long as I prepared adequately, especially if games or role plays were arranged, my daughter would be more engaged. But as we discussed before,



if some of the books were not of interest to her, or if the language level was challenging, my daughter would be resistant or disengaged,” Ming added.

Carefree felt that she could not and had difficulty carrying out the overt instruction in her parent-child shared reading.

“I didn't feel I could achieve overt instruction in my home-shared reading, and it was because I realized my constraints in teaching English language that I gave the job to my son's private tutor. I would confirm the topics with the tutor each week and pick the corresponding EPBs for my son. He would not necessarily read all the books but work on the ones that interested him the most with me. All I could offer my son in home-shared reading was to help him become familiar with each week's theme and complete an initial contextualized understanding. Of course, we learned some new vocabulary and pronunciation together, but I didn't think this shared learning would achieve my expected goals. Therefore, I did not believe that the shared parent-child reading I provided for my child would accomplish the goals of theorizing and conceptualization.”

After listening to Carefree's narrative, I wondered if she might have misunderstood the conceptualization process in her home setting. She probably believed that it needed to be fully aligned with the teaching practices and processes of traditional schooling. I then invited her to describe precisely how she read an EPB with her child. She gave me an example with an EPB on recycling that she had shared with her child that week.

“I prepared this book, *10 Things I Can Do to Help My World*, which addresses the topic that my son and his teacher will be discussing this week. I read the book in advance and checked some information, partly about vocabulary pronunciation and the scientific content. Before I started reading with him, I asked a few questions related to the book's topics to connect his past experiences. In addition, I showed him some animations, all to help him understand the theme of the book. During the formal reading, we read the

book's text together and discussed the content of each page. We would talk more about the topics he was interested in and did an exciting experiment. For example, a page in the book says if you turn off the tap while brushing your teeth, you can save eight glasses of water each time. He was very curious, and we went to try and see if it would save eight cups of water. So, in general, I think the reading I did with him was just to let him feel the book's primary content and to guide his interest in the subject.”

I thought the discussion on this mini topic would be mildly dull, but what the participants shared completely overturned my assumption. Although most of their self-reported confusions were related to this part, their conceptualizing reading experiences were full of exciting and thought-provoking topics and strategies for me to reflect on.

#### 4.6.4 Maybe that was critical framing

This was probably the most indecisive topic for the participants in this study. Due to some variability in the educational paradigm of the participants' background, they seemed less familiar with the core values of critical pedagogy. As a result, they occasionally asked me questions as we exchanged ideas on this topic and provided the least amount of data for this discussion compared to other ones.

Ming commented that this topic touched upon her deeply.

“Suppose I hadn't participated in this study... In that case, I might not have even considered that when children were asking questions and expressing doubts, they were interpreting and analyzing the content of the books we had read together.”

When she said this, Ming's expression was very touching, so I asked her, “Was it because you were focusing on learning outcomes like pronunciation and vocabulary so that you were neglecting your daughter's thinking and understanding processes.”

Ming replied that it was only part of the reason. “I think the key factor was that in my

educational experience, no one emphasized that asking questions and querying was also a meaningful way to learn. Or instead, no teachers showed me how to analyze and think about materials I had read.” Following this, she excitedly added that,

“Through this study, I have explored the framework of a multiliteracies pedagogy with the other participants. By observing and reflecting on my daughter's behaviours while reading, I have become aware of the shortcomings in my perceptions and experiences and have started to improve. For example, this week, when we were reading *Moo, Baa, La La La!*, my daughter took the initiative to ask me why the sounds of the animals in the book were different from the Chinese ones. When she asked me this question, I immediately realized that she was analyzing the animal sounds by comparing the pronunciation in other languages. So, I carefully looked up the information online with her and answered her question. As another example, in the Raz aa level, there are many books about numbers, some of which hide these written numbers in the pictures, and other books do not. My daughter would carefully look for these hidden numbers when reading these books. She would even draw the numbers if they were not written in that book. In the past, I just thought she was playing with such phenomena, but now that I realize that she is analyzing and using numbers, I would greatly encourage her and even do such games with her.”

Meier, Mr. Goat, and Vivi expressed very similar views to Ming's. They all indicated that they had not focused on their children's questions in previous home-shared reading sessions. In addition, they all gave examples of describing the analytical and reflective behaviours that their children demonstrated when they had shared reading with them. Vivi also described a type of ‘nagging questioning’ that she defined.

“My daughter especially liked to dwell on details that didn't seem important to me. For example, when we read the book *That's Not My Frog*, she kept nagging about why the frog's tongue was so long. Every time we read the book, she would ask this question and never give up. Previously, I really

didn't think about this situation that much.”

Mr. Goat also highlighted that her son would repeatedly ask strange questions about the details of the books as they read.

“This week's interview topic - how children critically understand and analyze the content of books while reading - was something that I hadn't paid much attention to. When my son read EPBs, he sometimes asked questions that I found inexplicable, such as in the Goodnight book, where various birds gather in a tree to squeak and squeak so that the owlets were unable to sleep. My son kept asking why they had to stay in this tree and not go to another one. I gave several answers, but he kept asking ‘why’. I grew a little impatient and wondered the answer he wanted. But in retrospect, I realized that when my son repeatedly asked ‘why’, he was thinking about the problem and trying to understand the event. He just couldn't organize the language to express his thoughts yet.”

Reflecting on his previous practice, Mr. Goat stated this summary to me, expressing her thoughts and feelings about her child's unique behaviour in understanding the world.

“There are differences between children's thinking and adults' minds, and instead of just looking at children from an adult's point of view, I need to squat down and try to understand what they see from a different perspective, explore with them, and provide them with support as far as I can.”

Similarly, Meier presented me with a story about her understanding and reflection on this topic, about how her daughter connected reading EPBs to her doodling.

“My daughter started doodling with crayons and watercolours when she just turned two years old. For example, for a while, she loved drawing trees and would only draw them with me, day after day, and would always ask me to read EPBs about trees with her. Then she became interested in cats and started reading related EPBs and drawing them day after day. More recently,

she got interested in streetlights and asked me to find EPBs about streetlights and draw them with her. She would observe the streetlights on different roads on her way out, and then draw them when she got home. Although I thought they were all similar, she would keep emphasizing to me that they were all different, for example, she would say ‘this streetlight is from Lights Out (an EPB), and this streetlight is from GuangMing Road (a street near our home).’ She made me appreciate how cute children can be, but sometimes, also left me feeling overwhelmed. But now, when I look closely at these doodles she has been drawing all the time, I see that her perceptions of trees, cats, and streetlights, have been getting increasingly detailed and clear.”

In telling this story, Meier was pleased and gave me a great sense of visualization. We had a nice conversation and laughed several times, but in the end, Meier suddenly lost her mood and said, “Actually, I feel a bit regretful now. As I lacked attention and reflection on these phenomena, I probably missed many beautiful moments in developing my daughter's imagination and creativity.”

In contrast to the perceptions of the four participants above, both Jiojio and Carefree said that they could keenly capture their children's critical thinking, such as paying attention to their questions and personalized analysis of what they read. Especially, they both said they were highly attentive to the questions their children asked because they knew that the process of querying was the process by which their children understood and analyzed the reading material. Jiojio said,

“My son did ask a lot of strange questions, some of them not even related to the content of the books. For example, when we were reading the book *Green* by Laura Vaccaro Seeger, he asked me whether the author had written any other books in different colours. I was stunned and promised to search for him after reading the book. When we found out that the author had also written *Red* and *Blue*, he then asked why this author didn't write about all the colours of the rainbow.”

After Jiojio said this, we laughed out loud because the question was also beyond my

anticipation. I immediately asked Jiojio how she answered him. Jiojio said,

“I was dumbfounded and didn't know how to answer, but I knew he must have associated it with the seven colours of the rainbow. So, I asked him why he wanted Laura to write all seven rainbow colours. He then replied that the seven rainbow colours should be the best friends. Then I suggested he write an email to Laura himself and tell her what he thought. My son then said that he must learn English first, otherwise, Laura wouldn't be able to read the letter he wrote.”

After hearing this, I couldn't help but applaud Jiojio by telling her that her response was perfect. Such a response not only preserved the child's curiosity and sense of critical thinking but also inspired him to actively search for answers and helped him build awareness and skills to obtain results.

Carefree also provided a few short stories about her son's questions, but she particularly highlighted an analogous reflection her son had made.

“My son's reading last week was centred on environmental protection, and recycling was one of them, so we read *The Adventures of a Plastic Bottle*, a book with great graphics that introduced the whole process of recycling plastic bottles in an obvious way. After the first viewing, my son suddenly said that the story told in this book was very similar to the human digestive cycle. He immediately found the book he had read, *From Chewing to Pooing: Food's Journey Through Your Body to the Potty*. He pointed to some of the illustrations and said, 'You see, human digestion is also about leaving what you can use and throwing out the garbage.' Although I didn't think the comparison was adequate then, I listened to him talk through the pages, especially the ones he found very interesting.”

Since this story Carefree described focused more on the development of informal literacy skills than on the formal ones she had emphasized, I asked, “Was your son using Chinese when he made this comparison? Didn't you feel that his behaviour

might have deviated from your emphasis on English language learning?”

Carefree thought for a moment and replied, “I don't think it would be a deviation because I believe that understanding and analyzing the content of books help him learn a second language, with the assistance of our mother tongue.”

As presented by the participants in the interviews, parents who were aware of their children's critical analysis practice were not in the majority, but this did not hinder the critical awareness and self-initiated analysis of the reading content displayed by the children in their home reading.

#### 4.6.5 Transformed practice was wonderful

In contrast to the restraint of discussing the previous topic, all the participants were cheerful and excited to share their stories on this one. The consensus was that children often presented creative practices in their lives naturally, and in most cases, they captured them and were delightfully surprised by them. However, when we talked about specific forms of these creative applications, four participants indicated that previously they had focused more on the children's expressive output in terms of English language, such as their ability to blurt out a word or use an English phrase. They did not pay much attention to the children's cognitive development of certain content and individualized creative practices. Ming was one of the most representative participants.

“I cared so much and paid great attention to my daughter's daily language output that whenever she said a word or two in English or a short sentence, I would get very excited and record it. For example, yesterday, when we were about to cross the road and there was no crosswalk in front of us, she suddenly said that, ‘妈妈，我们过马路需要走 crosswalk (Mom, we have to cross the street by the crosswalk).’ She was saying the words 斑马线 (crosswalk) in English. I was very excited at the time because it was the word we had encountered in the EPBs reading last week.”

Since this story involved something more than the child's verbal expression, I asked, "Were you happy that your child could say the English word correctly? Or excited that she thoroughly understood the social significance of the crosswalk?"

Hearing this question, Ming laughed out loud and said,

"I had a feeling you would ask me this question. Indeed, it was not until recently that I realized that my child's spoken English output was not just the result of language learning. For example, it was clear to me that she said 'crosswalk' yesterday not only because we read the EPBs related to it but also because I explained to her several times the function of a crosswalk and the consequences of crossing the street without following it. As we walked along outside, I would also point to the crosswalk and emphasize to her what we had read in the book. This time when there was no crosswalk in front of us, she did surprise me by emphasizing its importance to me. But now I can see that it was because she truly understood the purpose and meaning of the crosswalk and could use it creatively. In the past, I would be excited that she spoke the English word out. However, after being involved in this study, I gradually turned my attention to my child's ability to understand, analyze, and be critical. I would still be happy when she expresses herself in English, but I would not be upset or anxious that she could not say a word quickly and accurately after learning it."

Ming then cited many similar examples, such as her daughter actively using the vocabulary, she learned in EPBs reading to describe the appearance of people around her, asking questions involuntarily with the phrases she learned in Raz, and actively practicing new words using the initial sound skills in phonics. In saying these examples, Ming was very relaxed and cheerful, having lost all the anxiety and depression she showed during the first few personal interviews. In summarizing her feelings, she highlighted again the changes she had made these days, especially her literacy expectations for her daughter and her literacy belief about reading EPBs.

Vivi, Jiojio, and Meier, also expressed the same feelings as Ming. For example,



Meier said that when reading Chinese picture books with her daughter, she tended to focus on her child's understanding of the meaning and feelings about the book content. But, when sharing EPBs with her daughter, she paid more attention to her child's English expressions of words and sentences.

“But now I've been able to adjust my focus, and I'm looking more closely at how she expresses her feelings after reading the EPBs, such as which characters she likes most and which scenes she remembers best. This week, we just finished reading Leslie Patricelli's Tickle book, and she would actively say the sentences in it, I am a tickle monster, I am a tickle monster, while playing with her brother and tickling him while saying it. Watching them having so much fun, I could tell that my daughter was creatively applying what she read in the book to her own life.”

Mr. Goat's perception was very similar to Meier's.

“When observing my child's output and practice, previously, I was more interested in his linguistic expression in English. I was more concerned about whether he knew the pronunciation of a word and could understand what I meant when I said the word. Fortunately, as I learned about knowledge processing in the multiliteracies framework, I began to pay attention to my child's creative practices beyond language development. For example, I found that he would think and analyze some concepts in the context of reading and life experiences and express them in his preferred way. For instance, with bridges, initially, I would consciously tell him that it was a bridge when he passed some bridges in his life. Later, I read *City and Truck* (by Donald Crews) to him. I found that he loved bridges and highways, so I bought him some train track blocks and bridge piers for him to play with on his own. At first, he used the matching piers to put the highways and bridges together. Then one day, he used regular square blocks as bridge piers, which caught my eye and cleared my understanding that he was already creatively expressing his understanding of bridges.”

**Figure 16.**

*Mr. Goat's son is building a toy bridge*



*Note.* Mr. Goat provided the photos during the personal interview.

Vivi's sharing focused more on comparing the highlights of her observations. She believed that her observations of her daughter's output expression have changed significantly after participating in this study. Therefore, her feelings about her daughter's transformative practice also changed considerably.

“This week, we read the book *Cat the Cat Who Is That?* This was a book that she had read before and one that she enjoyed. In the past, when we shared reading this book, I would care about her pronunciation and the completeness of her reading. But this time, when we read together, I paid more attention to her feelings. For example, when she asked me if she could bring her name

into the story, I immediately played the game with her. This whole week, she would greet us with the dialogue from the book in her life, sometimes saying it and laughing simultaneously. We all had a lot of fun.”

Vivi then shared her daughter's story about the transformative practices of the books *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and *Frozen*. She mentioned again that her daughter enjoyed personifying stories from the books, such as imagining herself as the caterpillar in the book. Then, she would pretend to be the caterpillar every time she ate an apple. In addition, Vivi highlighted her daughter's transformative practice of textual analysis between two languages.

“We had *Frozen* books in both Chinese and English at home. In the past, when I read with her, I would be cautious to separate the languages. For example, I would read Chinese without involving English and try not to use Chinese when reading the English version. But lately, I stopped doing that, and I read with my daughter in the language she preferred, whether Chinese or English. And then something interesting happened. She was able to analyze the differences between the two books for me, and while I was reading her a bedtime story with one of them, she could interject and point out the differences from the other book. She really enjoyed talking about it. I didn't care about this before, but when I realized that these expressions were transformative practices that she was doing, I gave her very positive feedback and encouragement. She became more relaxed and happier with it.”

Jiojio and Carefree did not fully focus their observations of the children's transformative practice on English language development, yet their perceptions differed significantly.

Related to her profession at the time, Jiojio's discussion was rooted more in the creative application and transformative practice of multimodal representations presented by her child within the content of the EPBs.

“Although each lesson is designed with my pre-determined goals and

objectives, almost every time, the children, including my son, surprised me with the work they presented. For example, we made a picture book called *From the Zoo* last week. In this book, different animals would be in different zoo areas, shown on different pages. Each animal was covered with a small page, like a lid, with one of its characteristics written on it. The children were free to fill in the column. At that time, I was already amazed by their creative performance. Some children filled in the animal's sounds, some put in the animal's appearance, and some even wrote in the place of the animal's origin. However, what surprised me, even more, was that this week, my son made a similar flip book at home, and the theme was the equipment on the school playground. Not only did he acquire knowledge from our English literacy activities, but more importantly, he also mastered the multimodal approach for learning.

In addition, Jiojio gave some specific examples, such as her son would learn English words using Chinese as a bridge through his understanding. It was notable that when Jiojio shared stories about her son and students, she would always express what she could do as a guided reading instructor of EPBs by combining her feelings and reflections on her teaching.

Carefree put all her focus on her child's transformative practice of specific knowledge. She gave me seven detailed examples of her son's acquisition of a particular point of knowledge. These included creative applications of English language skills, such as the use of the present tense, as well as other disciplinary knowledge, especially in science, such as understanding units, the weight of air, the design of a circuit box, and the freezing point of water. She was very relaxed but confident as she went through her narrative, only occasionally looking at her notes and barely making any pauses.

Since I could understand that Carefree's description was entirely consistent with her literacy beliefs and her goal of conducting home-shared reading on EPBs, I did not interrupt her statement. I asked her if she was happy and satisfied with her child's

transformative practice. At this point, she compared her present feelings with her past experiences.

“If I had been asked before this study, I might have answered that I was not satisfied and that I still had to keep working on it. But now, I would say that I am satisfied because I can appreciate that my son's mastery of knowledge is a long process that should be as comprehensive as possible, moving from comprehension to critical analyzing to creative applications. If I set the satisfactory outcome to memorization and recitation, I would expect my child to remember more. Actually, I didn't quite agree with this in the past, but now I feel I can see more clearly how I should view my child's acquisition of knowledge and my role and function in accompanying him in his learning, such as reading EPBs.”

The discussion on this topic was the most relaxing and enjoyable for all six participants. Although there were differences in their perspectives, all of them could understand the meaning of transformative practice and be aware of paying attention to and reflecting on their children's practice in this area. In addition, it was clear that their statements were still highly related to their established beliefs about literacy, and of course, the belief shifts brought about by this study were also at play.

This chapter presented the results of a study on family literacy using a narrative inquiry approach, which involved 6 Chinese parents who engaged in parent-child shared reading using English picture books (EPBs). The chapter set a discussion of the key themes that emerged from their narratives. The most common themes were presented, along with some personal but noteworthy ones. The data was analyzed using narrative description and analysis to understand the meanings that the participants give to their experiences and the stories they tell. The participants were introduced, and the first personal interview theme was set as an overview of their shared reading experience. The second theme was set as 'Memories', where they shared stories of their childhood reading experiences. The next discussion focused on the joys and worries of parent-child shared reading on EPBs, and participants

expressed mixed feelings of pleasure, confidence, doubts, and uncertainties. They also shared their dilemmas and personal views on the current situation and discussed the challenges they faced in selecting books, reading methods, literacy beliefs, and practical challenges.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion and Conclusion

In the discussion, I address the main themes of the study. I compared the findings with the previous research literature in the field and interpreted the findings through my theoretical framework to answer the research questions of this study. In addition, I discuss the implications and possible limitations of this study, as well as future research goals for related topics. I conclude the chapter with potential research contributions stemming from this study.

By exploring six Chinese parents' stories related to parent-child shared reading on EPBs at the home context, this study explored their past background experiences, their socio-educational environments, their beliefs and attitudes toward English family literacy, and their experiences of implementing specific family literacy activities on EPBs.

Sociocultural theory and multiliteracies theory were adopted as the theoretical framework to guide the interpretation and reflection on the participants' experiences in designing and conducting family literacy activities. This study adopted the narrative inquiry and set the goal to learn from participants' experiences in anticipation of improving their experiences and feelings. My research wonders also served as a direction to establish the research puzzle with four questions. Therefore, the discussion of findings unfolded from the research questions and continued with my deliberations on implications and limitations.

### 5.1 Discussion of Findings

#### 5.1.1 Reflections on our childhood reading experience

The narrative exploration of the participants' childhood reading experiences was one of the distinguishing features of this study. By exploring the participants' shared reading experiences with their own parents and their previous independent reading practices, this study uncovered the literacy beliefs they developed as they grew up and their attitudes and values toward literacy and family literacy. In addition, we could learn about their individual experiences that initiated and structured their implementation of parent-child shared reading practices on EPBs.

All six participants in this study reported having no childhood shared reading experiences with their parents, but this does not mean they denied the existence of a literacy environment in their families where they were raised. Five of them indicated their parents' fondness for reading and emphasized the positive influence of their parents' interest in reading on them. Although the participants came from families of different socioeconomic backgrounds, they all recognized the support of their parents in reading, especially independent reading activities, such as verbal and mental encouragement and the provision of books. This reinforced what was argued in the literature that the fact of children having a reader model and access to books at home was fundamental to their literacy development (Carroll et al., 2019; Dobbs-Oates et al., 2015; Hume et al., 2015; Martens, 1998; Weigel et al., 2006). And these findings also affirmed the significance of a comprehensive study on the definition of HLE (Baroody & Diamond, 2012; Brown et al., 2012; Carroll et al., 2019). Among them, parents' motivation, attitude toward reading and perceptions of HLE should be recognized as elements of the home literacy construction. This was in line with the thought of exploring HLE as an umbrella term introduced by van Tonder et al. (2019).

Extra emphasis should be placed here on the effect of parental literacy beliefs on all participants. When participants discussed parental support for their reading activities, they all expressed positive attitudes of their parents toward education and reading, as well as their parents' value orientation in decision-making related to reading practices for them. They identified their parents' attitudes toward reading as having greatly motivated their interest in reading and, to some extent, guided the construction of their initial beliefs about literacy. Therefore, firstly, these findings confirmed the influence of parents' literacy beliefs on HLE construction (DeBaryshe & Binder, 1994, Katranci et al., 2018; Weigel et al., 2006), children's engagement in family literacy activities (Bingham, 2007; Weigel et al., 2006) and parent-child interaction behaviours (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Rescorla et al., 1990; Stipek et al., 1992) that could promote children's literacy development. Second, parents' literacy beliefs also positively correlated with children's literacy motivations and attitudes (Krapp, 2002; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Third, the participants' literacy beliefs were highly associated with their personal



experiences and the sociocultural environment in which they were raised (Krijnen et al., 2021; Sigel & McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 2002).

In contrast to the widely validated results in the western literature (Hartas, 2011; Maekawa & Parrila, 2018; Mullis et.al., 2009; Park, 2008; Wolf & McCoy, 2019), the findings regarding the participants' childhood reading experiences did not conclude that parental SES was highly correlated with children's literacy development and language acquisition. Although there was some variation in the SES of the participants' parents, they did not show significant differentiation in their literacy development during childhood. Most participants had similar family book collections, and none had experienced parent-child shared reading. The literacy beliefs conveyed by their parents were also similar. They had similar educational experiences, which resulted in no significant differences in their Chinese and English literacy skills and competencies when they participated in the study. This corroborates with the literature from some developing countries that parents' literacy beliefs are not influenced by their SES and that even parents with low SES have stronger literacy beliefs to provide teaching-oriented literacy instruction for their children.

#### 5.1.2 As we think about literacy beliefs

Since parental beliefs are defined as the beginnings of various experiences shared by children and parents (Sigel & McGillicuddy-DeLisis, 2002), the current study conducted two rounds of data collection for the participant literacy belief inquiry, setting at the first personal interview and the fifth one. In the first interview, we had no preconceived discussions but simply sought their views about literacy beliefs and the motivation to accompany their children in reading EPBs. Then, to stimulate the participants to think about and reflect on their literacy beliefs, I introduced them to the paradigms, beliefs, and domains of knowledge processing within the framework of the multiliteracies pedagogy. Before our discussion, I confirmed with all participants that the multiliteracies pedagogy is only one specific example of many other pedagogies. By presenting it, I expected to provide them with some pedagogical references and help them become aware of the existence of diverse literacy beliefs and practices.

In the second group discussion of this study, we explored the theoretical aspects of multiliteracies pedagogies. Following this discussion, participants re-shared their reflections on their literacy beliefs and values. And in personal interviews later that week, they revisited with me in more detail their thoughts about their beliefs on literacy at that point in time. Five of them emphasized the impact of the discussions about their literacy beliefs. One of the most significant implications was that these discussions stimulated their thinking about the meaning of literacy beliefs. Through this in-depth communication, they were supported to step outside their own experiences and cultural surroundings, giving themselves the opportunity and space to reflect on and consider their literacy beliefs.

- What kind of literacy beliefs did we have?

When we first explored our literacy beliefs, there was a high degree of similarity in the views of the participants, most of whom tended to set their literacy beliefs associated with traditional education, namely, a preference for providing children with the development of formal literacy skills that were driven by reading readiness. And the majority of them also set the development of formal literacy skills as the primary goal of parent-child shared reading. In addition, they believed that parent-child shared reading on EPBs was an excellent approach to help strengthen their children's English language skills and stimulate the development of their children's formal English literacy skills. Accordingly, it was with this purpose that most of them started reading English picture books with their children. And the construction of their English HLE, such as the preparation of books and other reading materials, were built around this specific goal.

Most of them firmly or instinctively believed that the acquisition of English language skills, such as the mastery of words and sentences, and the training of pronunciation, should be one of the significant goals of parent-child shared reading on EPBs. This was consistent with previous literature noting that Chinese parents place more emphasis on skill-focused acquisition of language learning and prefer to provide formal literacy training for their children (Chen et al., 2022; Chow et al., 2010; Chow et al., 2017; Li & Rao, 2000; Lin et al., 2009; McBride-Chang et al., 2012). Since the participants in this

study did not differ significantly in SES, it was not possible to determine whether this preference was related to the participants' SES.

- Where did our literacy beliefs come from and how were they adjusted?

The qualitative data from this study can confirm that such choices are heavily influenced by their personal experiences, which stem from childhood literacy experiences, their schooling contexts, and the cultural norms and standards they grew up with. These findings were highly consistent with the extant literature (Bonvillain, 2010; Krijnen et al., 2021; Reese et al., 2012; Sigel & McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 2002). The participants' questioning of traditional literacy beliefs was also clearly presented in the narrative data during our discussion. This was relevant to the stage of social and cultural development they were in, and the existence of questioning based on such sociocultural circumstances has been confirmed by Meeuwisse and Severien (2021).

Thus, influenced by the dissemination of information on the Internet and the transmission of diverse ideas related to literacy among Chinese parents, even though most of the participants were not sure of their literacy values for the English language learning, they developed a natural sense of critique and self-reflection regarding their literacy beliefs that originated in the context of their education and upbringing. This finding demonstrated the reflective and critical consciousness of most participants regarding their literacy beliefs and the hesitations and struggles they exhibited with the impact of their past experiences. Most of current studies on such entanglements and conflicts are situated within a multicultural or cross-cultural framework for immigrant populations (Gonzalez et al., 2021; Li, 2006; Reese et al., 2012; Reese & Gallimore, 2000). For those within a country or cultural circle, parents' paradigm shifts regarding literacy beliefs have been barely addressed by current research.

- The relationship between our literacy beliefs and our family literacy activities

When we first discussed their literacy beliefs, most of the participants expressed a preference for reading readiness and formal literacy development. They also indicated their own efforts in family literacy activities for such intentions. Most of them identified

the need to set specific learning goals for their parent-child shared reading on EPBs, especially for specific language skills such as spelling words and acquiring grammar. In addition, they see themselves as assuming the role of teachers in shared family reading, that is, the transfer of specific language skills guided by goal-oriented learning. When choosing reading materials, they would consider their children's preferences but would still choose levelled books that were designed for language acquisition and language level progression. These findings were also consistent with the descriptions of Chinese family literacy activities in previous studies (Chen et al., 2022; Chow et al., 2010; Chow et al., 2017; Li & Rao, 2000; Lin et al., 2009; McBride-Chang et al., 2012).

However, due to participants' questioning of their literacy beliefs influenced by their upbringing and the conflicts they encounter in their real-life activities, the qualitative data on parent-child shared reading activities in this study showed some complexity and inconsistency with previous research findings. More than half of the participants reported that when implementing family literacy activities, they would adjust or change their guided reading plans from skill-oriented reading to supportive reading that caters to their children's interests. All participants reported that the study had varying degrees of influence on them as they rethought and adjusted their beliefs about literacy. The factors that contributed to their deliberation and action included communication with me, listening to other participants' stories, and, equally, analysis of and reflection on their own experiences. Accordingly, some participants made immediate adjustments and changes, while others remained in a state of reflection. Their shared reading plans also oscillated between formal and informal literacy activities, just as their literacy beliefs could not remain static.

In addition, although skill-based learning of the English language was the starting point for their implementation of parent-child shared reading on EPBs, they also highly valued the children's spirit of having fun in specific family literacy activities. They all showed me their appreciation of the expanded thinking skills and communication awareness that facilitative reading provided to their children and the joy they enjoyed as mothers in the family activities. These findings were rare in previous studies but further inspired us to

consider the shift in Chinese parents' literacy beliefs and to explore the underlying reasons for it.

### 5.1.3 The paradigm shifts about literacy that we experienced

In the second personal interview on literacy beliefs, more than half of the participants expressed their own rethinking of literacy beliefs and conveyed the possibility of making belief shifts on literacy. These findings mirrored their questioning and confusion about their existing literacy beliefs and their uncertainty in family literacy activities, as demonstrated in previous interviews. And they also supported the argument in the current literature that parental literacy beliefs are not static and are influenced by their community and school (Meeuwisse & Severien, 2021), as well as the cultural environment in which they live (Gonzalez et al., 2021). From the qualitative data in this section, it was clear that the main focus of participants' reflections remained on their goal-setting for their parent-child shared reading on EPBs and other factors related to reading readiness, such as reading strategies and book selection. In addition, participants were more explicit in expressing their expectations for informal reading as well as facilitative activities in their home-shared reading.

Through a period of intra-study communication and discussion, most participants expressed their further understanding and recognition of the implications of informal reading and facilitative activities in their parent-child shared reading on EPBs, and all participants recognized the role and significance of home-shared reading beyond formal literacy skills, such as developing children's interest in reading, and promoting parent-child rapport. Since all participants in this study had undergraduate education backgrounds, it confirmed the findings of extant studies on the literacy beliefs of parents with higher levels of education (Chen et al., 2022; Lavidas, 2021).

Generally, these findings reaffirmed the significance of parents' literacy beliefs in HLE. They highlighted the importance of understanding and perceiving parents' literacy beliefs and the social context in which these beliefs arise before we attempt to provide family literacy programs to promote children's literacy development. In addition, the qualitative data from this study also revealed the willingness of Chinese parents to step out of their

experiential context and learn about new educational thoughts and paradigms. Their desire for new perceptions related to education was consistent regardless of shifts in their literacy beliefs.

#### 5.1.4 Something we did and something we needed

Regarding the development of literacy, it is now widely accepted that it can be viewed as a complex, multidimensional set of skills that begins at birth and continues to develop throughout a person's life from childhood to adulthood (Wasik & Herrmann, 2004). And for young children, the emergence and development of literacy skills is a continuum that begins at an early age and involves the growth of many cognitive and sociocultural abilities (Leichter, 1975), of which the family assumes a considerable role (Bissex, 1980; Dombey & Spencer, 1994). Similarly, there is no substitute for the role of parents in HLE (Jones & Harcourt, 2013; Mol & Bus, 2011; Weigel et al., 2006). Therefore, in this study, the parents' feelings, the myths and confusions they encountered, and their needs served as a significant direction of inquiry.

- How did the sociocultural environment affect us?

In this research, I found that in addition to the socio-cultural environment in which the participants grew up, the present context in which they lived after they became parents also had a significant effect on them. More than half of the participants indicated that their motivation to read EPBs with their children was influenced by their surroundings, such as advice from friends or recommendation from online educational platforms. In addition, their reading plans, strategies, and approaches to implementing parent-child shared reading were equally influenced by the sociocultural environment. Indeed, they actively sought some of this influence, such as the materials they inquired about and the training they participated in. However, there were also some that they passively received, such as suggestions from their community or friends around them. These influences greatly affect their belief establishment in conducting parent-child shared reading on EPBs, as well as their decision implementation. These findings were fully consistent with the effect of social interaction to individual development as described by sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1962). It also demonstrated that in family literacy, parents are not only

supporters of their children's literacy development but also their personal learning and development (Huang, 2013).

From the perspective of children's literacy development, the qualitative data in this paper were also entirely consistent with previous literature findings, that children's literacy and language development can be highly influenced by their home literacy environment and parent-led literacy activities (Baker et al., 2001; Wang & Liu, 2021; Yarosz & Barnett, 2001). In this study, children's reading preferences, reading habits, reading styles, and presentation of literacy skills in all participant families were influenced by parental literacy beliefs, family literacy goals, and specific family literacy activities.

Although this result did not generate new challenges or adjustments to previous literature, it did prompt me to reflect on a research phenomenon: in the literature on children's literacy development within the framework of sociocultural theory, we have focused more on the influence of the sociocultural environment in which children live, with particular emphasis on the influence of parents, grandparents, and siblings in the family context (Baker & Scher, 2002; Gee, 2001; Labbas, 2016; McGee & Richgels, 1996; Nicolopoulou & Cole 1997; Pérez, 1998;). Parents and other elders in the family are viewed as more experienced individuals who can scaffold less experienced children, clarify concepts, and support the accumulation of knowledge (Gee, 2000). Therefore, to help children make gradual progress, parents are encouraged to create different opportunities and optimal literacy activities based on their child's cognitive level (Gambrell & Morrow, 1996; Huang, 2013). The application of Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZDP) to literacy practices also emphasizes that parents, as family members with more knowledge or skills, should frequently organize and participate in interpersonal interactions in the home environment to help children keep pace with others. Interactions in the family can provide an ideal environment for children to receive appropriate support for cultural practices (Perez, 1997).

However, the qualitative data from the current study revealed an exciting finding. At a time when we over-focused on parental influence on children, children's naturally presented literacy behaviours, reading preferences, growth outcomes, and even

confrontation and rebellion against their parents during parent-child shared reading activities could counteract their parents' actions and decisions, and even trigger them to reflect on their literacy values and their own literacy beliefs. Research on this situation is currently scarce in the literature. However, if we identify parents in family literacy as dual role-holders who also need to develop their own literacy beliefs and skills and are influenced by their surroundings, then this phenomenon should be a very meaningful direction for exploring the home literacy environment.

- The stories happened during the HLE construction

All participants described themselves as having a range of initiatives related to HLE construction. It includes preparing books, designing family reading activities, preparing materials for the activities, previewing shared reading content, strengthening their own English literacy skills, and learning methods and strategies related to shared parent-child reading. These self-reported actions of HLE construction by the participants were also important factors in achieving their family reading and learning goals, such as enhancing their children's interest in reading, and promoting their children's literacy development, as they perceived. This finding was in line with the description of previous studies for HLE. Such as the resources and opportunities parents provide for their children's literacy development, family literacy activities actively promoted by parents, and parents' beliefs and attitudes toward literacy (Baker, 2003; Baroody & Diamond, 2012; Boerma et al., 2018; Brown et al., 2012; Carroll et al., 2019; Saracho, 2002; Sonnenschein & Munsterman, 2002; Weigel et al., 2006; Yeo et al., 2014). In addition, this finding confirmed the revision of the description of HLE. It should be a multifaceted concept of umbrella term, which includes both objective elements and conditions as well as subjective elements and conditions of family members.

Regarding the influence of HLE construction on children, this study did not focus on developing children's literacy skills within the time dimension but on the participants' self-reported concerns. In the qualitative data of this study, we found that the participants focused on the following areas: children's interest in reading EPBs, children's participation in the shared reading of EPBs, children's feelings about the shared reading



of EPBs, and children's development of literacy skills. This finding indicated that when building the HLE, participants do not construct the HLE in a standardized form but rather aim to help the child's literacy development and adapt it randomly. They adjust their programs to children's psychological needs and feelings, as well as other informal literacy needs, and change the quantity and quality of their family literacy activities for children in response to changes in children's literacy development and families' literacy needs. Although most of them started with traditional educational values when planning their parent-child shared reading on EPBs and expected their children's acquisition of English language skills would be the primary outcome of their parent-child shared reading. This finding was also consistent with the observations of previous studies on HLE construction (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014; Whitmore et al., 2004).

Consistent with previous research findings (such as Baker, 2003; Boerma et al., 2018; Sonnenschein & Munsterman, 2002; Saracho, 2002; Weigel et al., 2006; Yeo et al., 2014), it was clear from the current qualitative data that parental motivational attitudes, parental perceptions of HLE, family-provided resources and opportunities, and specific family literacy activities, such as parent-child reading, were indeed the most relevant topics for the study participants. Therefore, they were the factors that left them deeply confused, torn, and filled with feelings of uncertainty. The participants all showed varying degrees of pleasure, confidence, as well as doubt and uncertainty regarding these core elements of HLE construction. They knew that rambling and undemanding reading was full of freedom and happiness while fearing that simple joy would bring academic failure and keep children from achieving the language skills required by school and socialization standards. They sought to explore the boundaries of free reading and the contexts in which it was possible to achieve the development of formal literacy skills needed for children at their age without compromising their interest and emotions in reading. They looked for their roles and want to clarify their responsibilities between facilitated reading, where the mother was involved, and skill-based reading, where the teacher was engaged, or to gain the ability to adjust their roles as needed. They expected to find a balance between non-fiction and fiction readings so that their children could broadly expand their reading horizons to support their cognitive developmental needs while satisfying their reading preferences. They tried to use levelled books to find the

right books for their children's language development needs yet anticipated that their children would be free to pursue their passions in reading regardless of their language level. After a period of struggle and uncertainty, they did not find a clear way out and agreed that as they lacked professional background knowledge, they were novices in the parent-child shared reading on EPBs and required further study. Phenomenological descriptions or explanatory studies of this set of issues in the context of mainland China are scarce in the past literature. This precisely was the uniqueness and significance of this study.

- About support and assistance

In the qualitative data in this study, a shared expectation expressed with strong emotion by the participants was that of 'getting assistance'. They knew that they had irreplaceable responsibilities and roles as mothers of children, but they were equally vulnerable in the face of confusion and uncertainty. They were looking for assistance from experts in the field and even more so from the community and the children's schools. These needs were consistent with the original purpose of conducting the family literacy programs as expressed in previous literature (Cole, 2011; Crawford & Zygouris-Coe, 2006; Nutbrown et al., 2005). Parents are identified as a group that equally needs help in literacy activities, as they are responsible for helping children build their beliefs and skills in literacy but have a shortage of knowledge and skills of their own. They, therefore, need assistance from outside sources, such as building a highly interconnected system of family, school, and community. The Family Literacy Program is involved in assisting and guiding parents in the practice of family literacy by using the learners' family relationships as a bridge. It also helps their children to become literate learners and confident, and effective communicators.

And then, it was clear from the self-reported data that they had limited access to ancillary resources. Although some of this came in the form of expert guidance, acquisition of these resources was based entirely on book purchases and paid training they had acquired through their initiative in finding it. And the only thing that could assist the participants in gaining access to these resources was actually their own pre-existing literacy beliefs,

cognitive proficiency, and their literacy competencies and skills, such as the capacity to retrieve and analyze information. Thus, this finding was consistent with previous research that affirmed the positive influences of parents' own literacy skills, such as reading comprehension, decoding, fluency, speaking/writing vocabulary, and word identification, on the development of family literacy activities and their children's literacy development (Benjamin, 1993; Taylor, 2011; Taylor et al., 2016). However, it also expanded the scope of discussion to consider additional dimensions of the influence of parental literacy skills and competencies, for example, on the construction of HLE, such as the selection and acquisition of reading resources, and on the development of family literacy activities, such as how parents acquire effective strategies and skills for organizing activities.

In addition, the study found that although all participants were mothers and were the primary initiators and implementers of literacy activities in their families, most of them reported receiving contribution from their families, such as support from their husbands. Although they were unanimous in expressing their husbands' absence from specific activities, such as being busy with their work and unable to participate in the daily parent-child shared reading on EPBs or being barely involved in any planning related to their children's literacy development, most of them expressed it as a result of their self-established division of family responsibilities. Moreover, they all felt their husbands were supportive as they shared the same literacy beliefs and values. More than half of the participants volunteered to say that they had a good relationship with their husbands and that they received encouragement from their husbands in the implementation of family literacy activities, such as distributing family funds to purchase English picture books or volunteering to take on other household duties. This finding was also consistent with previous literature findings (Belsky & Fearon, 2004; Davies et al., 2009; Froyen et al., 2013; Kolak & Volling, 2007; Skibbe et al., 2010).

Beyond the assistance from their own capacity and family members, however, the data in this study also indicated that the support received by the participants from the community, school, and society as a whole was very limited. That is, the social system did not provide appropriate services and assistance for their needs in family literacy activities related to EPBs to their satisfaction. Most of the assistance they received

existed in the form of commercial events, which required them to pay a considerable amount of money to obtain the services. In addition, the best-selling instructional books also caused them a lot of confusion because, as their self-reported data stated, such books were available in the market with a single genre, and most of them were summaries of the authors' personal experiences, so there were conflicts and contradictions in teaching methods and shared reading strategies between them. Thus, these instructional books did not provide guidelines of a theoretical nature for their unique family situations and even left them in more profound confusion and uncertainty.

#### 5.1.5 Was there a pedagogical framework that could influence us?

As I planned to introduce a pedagogical framework to the participants to reflect on their respective parent-child shared reading practices, admittedly, the multiliteracies framework was selected based on my personal passion and love for this pedagogy. However, as I discussed with my participants, I made it clear to them, and more importantly to myself, in this study that the pedagogy of multiliteracies was being introduced to give them a direction and inspiration to think about their own family literacy practices on EPBs within a pedagogical framework. I also explicitly stated that they could continue to access more about other pedagogical theories in the future and guide their family literacy activities according to their own needs.

##### - Participants' openness to literacy beliefs

By reinvestigating the participants' experiences through the multiliteracies pedagogy, we could find that all participants did not have previous experiences and knowledge about it when they started their parent-child shared reading on EPBs. However, this did not prevent them from identifying inspiration and resonance in the educational paradigm and the specific four dimensions of multiliteracies pedagogy. To some extent we could suggest that the use of the EPBs as parent-child shared reading materials in the Chinese context already demonstrated the applicability of multiculturalism and multilingualism in non-English speaking environments. However, influenced by the individual experiences of the participants, most of them were not able to clearly understand the vision established by the New London Group (1996) for multiliteracies without guidance.

Designs of Meaning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009) were also not the pursued goals of the participants in implementing parent-child shared reading. Therefore, the transformation of the learner identity from the learner of knowledge to the creator of information desired in the multiliteracies framework was not the starting direction for the participants in choosing to read EPBs with their children.

However, when conducting the study, I found that once the participants were given a specific theoretical introduction, they could naturally build their perceptions and resonances with the multiliteracies framework, especially in terms of their literacy beliefs. Most of them were able to spontaneously begin to reconstruct their own literacy beliefs by invoking the vision of the New London School (1996). This reflection on literacy beliefs, although unlikely to lead to a fundamental shift in a short time, opened a channel for the participants to discuss the possible origins of the confusion and uncertainty they faced, as well as to encourage them to build a new orientation, trying to reconstruct their own literacy beliefs and to test the corresponding construction of their HLE and family literacy activities EPBs.

- The application of multiliteracies pedagogy in the HLE

Based on the role of the technological context in China and their own level of education, they were able to spontaneously build up their applications of multimodal teaching and learning. They expected and were able to use multimodal tools to help their children learn the English language and construct meaning, which confirms Cloonan's (2010) view that multiliteracies theory emphasizes multimodality in pedagogy based on innovations in communication technology. In addition, along with our discussion and reflection, they could successfully build up the ability to use different technological tools and smoothly shift between different targets of multimodal tool use. For example, they could freely choose between video materials, point-and-talking pens, and traditional worksheets, and the establishment of instructional objectives could be easily shifted from entirely developing the children's standard pronunciation to partially constructing their own meaning of reading content and partially enhancing their language skills. This endorsed

Baker's (2010) emphasis that learners would gradually become competent to be multiliterate in a multimodal environment.

In addition, by analyzing the participants' stories about multiliteracies pedagogy, I found that although their perceptions of particular dimensions were insufficient, it did not affect the co-existence of the experiences related to the four dimensions in their parent-child shared reading. In their self-reported data, almost every story of parent-child shared reading based on a particular EPBs was a high-quality example demonstrating the interconnectedness of different dimensions in knowledge processing. These findings are consistent with previous literature on the perception of the four dimensions in practical teaching and learning. The four components do not exist independently but are interrelated and not sequential. Learners experience the "knowledge processes" of "experience," "conceptualization," "analysis," and "application" by engaging in different instructional activities and allowing them to work together in the teaching and learning of literacy (Angay-Crowder et al., 2013; Cope & Kalanzi, 2015). At the same time, our findings revisited the assumptions that the four dimensions of the multiliteracies pedagogy generate ambivalence within the context of family literacy (Auerbach, 2001; Sefton-Green, 2020). Participants felt that with some theoretical support and their own reflection, they could better identify the different dimensions of the multiliteracies pedagogy for their children and actively enhance their practice of these four dimensions in shared reading on EPBs at home. Moreover, the participants in this study demonstrated a solid critical spirit in reflecting on the impact of different ideological stances in building their own literacy beliefs. They also showed great interest in exploring the role and collaboration of multiple educational philosophies within the multiliteracies framework.

## 5.2 Implications

- Family SES and EPBs as home-shared reading materials in China

When conducting participant recruitment for this study, I set the inclusive requirement for all residents of mainland China who performed parent-child shared reading on EPBs at home. No requests were made in the recruitment advertisement for other identity information of participants, such as employment status and educational background.

However, after I selected the participants according to the diversity of the regions, it was evident from their voluntary self-reported SES that all of them had received a college education and above and had a stable income and a sound family economic status. Although the methodology used in this study was narrative inquiry and the number of participants was correspondingly influenced, it was still noticeable that parents performing shared reading on EPBs in a family setting, in the current Chinese context, mostly came from families of higher SES levels in developed and relatively developed regions.

What this finding would imply was that currently, in the Chinese context, only parents with higher SES and education levels would pay attention to, or invest more time, energy, and family funds in, parent-child shared reading in EPBs, and that the percentage of such population was unknown in current mainland China. In addition, it may also be apparent from another perspective that the information and materials currently available in the social settings, such as English language children's picture books and instruction related to shared parent-child reading in English, are designed for this group of people. Since, in the current Chinese context, most services and assistance related to HLE construction would require a significant investment of financial resources, time, and energy, and would need that the parents involved already have some positive value constructs for shared reading in English.

This scenario was quite different from the era in which our parents lived. It is evident from the qualitative data of this study that few families would have started shared parent-child reading when the participants were young. Thus, this family activity would not have shown a direct and significant correlation with parents' SES and educational attainment in that era.

- Open-mindedness and inclusiveness of Chinese parents

Based on the specific groups reflected in this study, such as parents with higher SES and education levels, they showed open-mindedness and inclusiveness on a range of topics related to parent-child shared reading on EPBs, including literacy belief reconstruction, values reflection, selection of reading materials, ways to develop family literacy

activities, specific reading strategies, and so on. Although all participants relied heavily on their own educational experiences, especially their literacy beliefs and educational philosophies established in their previous experiences, when performing parent-child shared reading of EPBs, their critical awareness and capacity to retrieve, analyze, and evaluate information allowed them not to cling to their previous perspectives and decision-making patterns.

This finding, on the one hand, manifested the information processing and logical thinking abilities of the group represented by the participants. On the other hand, it broadly indicated that parents actively organizing parent-child reading EPBs in the Chinese context remained in the ‘initial stage’ and therefore did not develop a relatively stable ideology and implementation strategy. This initial stage did not give my participants a hindrance to taking the initiative and motivation of carrying out shared parent-child reading in English and, based on their basic knowledge and thinking skills, they maintained a high degree of openness to relevant information from different media and cultural backgrounds. However, it was undeniable that in the process of information comprehension, analysis, and evaluation, they suffered from conflicts and contradictions brought about by various paradigms, ideologies, or cultural differences. For the issues they were facing, they still expected to change the situation through further study, reflection, and practice.

- Chinese parents' learning awareness and motivation

The qualitative data in this paper presented a solid learning awareness and motivation of the participants, which was also highly correlated with their educational backgrounds and might be linked to their educational values and literacy beliefs. They easily interpreted the problems and difficulties they encountered in implementing family literacy activities on EPBs as a deficiency in their knowledge base and related problem-solving skills. This led to a spontaneous and powerful desire to change their dilemmas and uncertainties by learning new knowledge and skills.

Similarly, this was part of their own values about learning and, guided by this awareness, they mobilized as many resources as possible, including material, financial and



interpersonal resources. As mentioned earlier, this awareness and motivation to learn brings them not only a constantly updated knowledge and methodology but also colliding philosophical and conceptual views. In the learning process, they constantly gained satisfaction and self-confidence by acquiring valid information while feeling anxiety and uncertainty about the presence of redundant and contradictory information.

- The deficiencies of the socialized family literacy support system

One of the significant mismatches revealed by the qualitative data of the current study came from the relationship between the need of Chinese parents, represented by the participants, for information access and skills training related to family literacy in English and the assistance they received. Although the educational philosophies and literacy beliefs held by the participants were not aligned in specific details, their demands for professional advice and instructional support of family literacy on EPBs shared reading were highly consistent. Since this study focused on the experiences, feelings, and stories of Chinese parents in parent-child shared reading on EPBs, it was unknown whether they had the same needs for other specific content related to family literacy and family education. The theoretical and skill-related support available to them within the social context in which they live was limited and influenced by their own literacy competencies.

As discussed above, parents, as the primary organizers and participants in family literacy activities, are located within the interrelated family literacy framework involving school, students, and families, assuming the dual role of learners and helpers. If this framework is lacking in the assistance and support that professionals proactively provide to parents, then growing concerns and confusion will accumulate for parents who arrange family literacy activities in the home environment, especially in a foreign language or a second language, and may finally escalate into their anxiety and worry. The confusion and uncertainty that emerged from the qualitative data of this study, as actively expressed by the participants, were almost entirely related to theoretical topics related to family literacy. These involved the construction of HLE, such as the selection of reading items, reading strategies and skills, such as parent-child shared reading approaches on EPBs, and the acquisition of language skills, such as the home-based learning and teaching of

English skills. However, it was evident from the qualitative data in this study that the information and training received by the participants did not come from the support system represented by schools and communities but rather from the business-driven services that they retrieved or were referred to.

In addition, the parents who participated in this study already had some knowledge and belief constructs about English family literacy, i.e., they were aware of the value of family literacy, and therefore, most of the help they needed was assistance with specific activity skills and guidance in reflecting on literacy beliefs. However, for parents in the Chinese context who do not have higher socioeconomic status and education levels, especially those who do not have the awareness and ability to initiate English family literacy activities, the guidance and help they need cannot be investigated in this study.

Based on a half-century of academic research on the significance of family literacy, or second-language family literacy, it is apparent that literacy activities within the family context play a decisive role in developing children's literacy and language skills. However, the current state of English-language family literacy in China is still highly imperfect and inadequate regarding social support systems and therefore requires government attention and funding support.

Finally, we should not exclude the fact that parents had the same fear of their children falling behind and, as a result, question their efforts' adequacy based on their social and cultural environment and overall educational beliefs. This finding was not evident in our study data, and this was because only one participant mentioned that teachers at English education institutions had brought her anxiety on this issue. However, many of their practices, such as their emphasis on reading readiness, concern for English language skills, and assessment of children's English proficiency, all responded to the influence of the universal marketing strategy known as “fear of falling behind” (Gibbs, 2020, p. 229). Therefore, this theme may be one of the research directions for future studies involving the origins of Chinese parents' educational beliefs/literacy beliefs constructs.

### 5.3 Limitations

Derived from a research wonder, the focus of this study was to initially explore the experiences and perceptions of Chinese parents when they implemented English family literacy activities. Through this preliminary inquiry, I expected to perceive the successes, confusions, and myths gained by my participants and the group they represented in their home-shared reading on EPBs, and to reflect on the help they did/might need under specific socio-cultural circumstances. Narrative inquiry has significant strengths in revealing unspoken stories and emphasizing the reflective nature of my research. However, this study still had limitations in the time dimension, participant prevalence, and data interpretation.

To make the research design more rigorous and target-oriented, as well as to meet the time and resources allowed for an independent PhD study, I completed a four-week pilot research before the formal data collection. It not only helped me determine the initial questions, the optimal participant size, the model of research data and the research plan, but also contributed to my decision to set the time span of data collection. Beginning in late June and ending in early September, I set the data collection period for the study at ten weeks, covering the entire summer holiday. This would be the most extended period of time that most participants could participate as fully as possible, and fortunately, all the participants indeed provided their data within this time frame. However, even though this period was as optimal as this study could achieve within the limited time and resources available, a longer time frame for this narrative study, such as the entire period (2-3 years) before children enter elementary school, with multiple participation and comparisons, might have provided a more comprehensive insight into their experiences and perceptions regarding their English family literacy activities.

In addition, this study involved six participants who varied in age, upbringing and educational background, socio-economic status, and geographic location. Moreover, the availability of resources for English language literacy programs also differed across the cities where the participants resided. While the sample of participants met the requirements of a narrative inquiry, the limited sample size of only six parents involved in the study cannot avoid the lack of diversity in the sample. Specifically, in recruiting

participants, efforts were made to include a diverse range of individuals, such as those with no restrictions on educational or occupational backgrounds, and participants were selected based on geographic diversity. However, self-reported data from all six participants showed that they all had at least a college-level education and stable middle-class household income. Therefore, in terms of the characteristics of the participants and the groups they represent, this must be considered a limitation of the study with regard to the lack of diversity and breadth of participants.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) address the necessity of being mindful of the authenticity of the participants in narrative inquiry, relating their stories from the most authentic perspectives they remember. Although I tried hard to do a detailed and comprehensive investigation of my research questions, this study relied heavily on data from self-reported sources such as interviews, group discussions, and weekly reflective journals, which inevitably affected the comprehensiveness or thickness of my description and analysis of the research questions. I did not have the opportunity to walk into and participate in real-life scenarios to instantly collect and interact with participants' personal feelings in specific settings and contexts; furthermore, the weekly journals and shared reading videos were only available at times and in locations that participants voluntarily shared. This inevitably led to certain limitations in the integrity and authenticity of the data and its interpretation.

In addition, the findings of this study relied heavily on the trust between the researcher and the participants. It was a relationship continuously developed based on voluntariness and the ongoing depth of the study. During the research, I kept reminding myself that the stories provided by these participants were narrated by people who had experienced them and that, on an individual basis, it might only be possible for each narrative to cover part of the events as they occurred. Thus, the development of trust existed not only between each participant and me, but I concentrated more on the meaning constructions based on the experiences and data of the entire participant group provided for this study. As Barone (2007) states, focusing on multiple participants and stories in a narrative inquiry enables different voices to validate each other. Despite the limited number of participants in this study, my investigation focused on establishing spaces suitable for trust

development and obtaining rich data from each participant so that I could analyze their individual and collective experiences in depth. At the same time, I acknowledged my researcher orientation to reduce researcher bias to a minimal level and to make my interactions and analysis in the study transparent. This practice, in turn, facilitated the development of trust between the participants and me, individually and collectively. In the data analysis process, with the same goal in mind, upon identifying all participants who had submitted their data, I interpreted and analyzed the data and worked with participants to complete the member checks. All of these considerations made the self-report data could achieve logical correspondence with the interview data and fit with my extensive experience in English family literacy instructional practices. However, I believe surprising findings might emerge if more offline immersion data were available over extended periods.

Last but not the least, as the researcher of this study, I recognized my dual role as an insider, as a mother, and an outsider, as a researcher. However, it must be acknowledged that I have been living outside of mainland China for the past decade, which could limit my understanding of the social and cultural environment that the other participants faced and the impact of these factors on their experiences. As an outsider, I provided a unique perspective and benefit from objectivity, but my understanding of the cultural context might be limited, and my interpretation of the data might be influenced by my personal experience.

This limitation could have influenced the interpretation of the data and the conclusions drawn from this study. For instance, my familiarity with the Chinese educational system and cultural practices might not be as comprehensive as someone who has lived in China for an extended period. This lack of familiarity with the cultural environment could also affected the data collection process, as cultural differences may influence participants' willingness to share their experiences and opinions with me. Therefore, this limitation must be considered one of the shortcomings of this study. To address this limitation, future research could consider employing a research team with diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences to provide a more comprehensive and culturally sensitive analysis of the topic. Additionally, it is essential to acknowledge this limitation and its

potential impact on the findings of this study. This acknowledgment could inform future researchers' decisions on how to mitigate the impact of personal biases and cultural limitations in their studies.

## 5.4 Contributions and future research

As discussed in the literature review, research on English family literacy was reasonably affluent. From the initial critical discussion of educational paradigms to the observation and exploration of specific family literacy practices to the analysis and evaluation of related elements and influences, the field has come a long way in the West for nearly 80 years.

However, most previous research has remained under the Western context of English literacy development, exploring and validating the field through the positions and perspectives of educators or policymakers. And it mainly addressed cultural and social contexts in which English is the native or second language. However, the stories about family literacy outside the Western paradigm differed in countries. Family literacy, whether native or second/foreign language, was characterized by various social, cultural, and educational systems. At the same time, these differences made the study of this topic unique in its academic and social significance. This study did not choose research models related to developing English literacy for English native speakers, such as HLE elements or family literacy programs, for validation and modification, but based on the research paradigm of narrative inquiry, taking learning from participants' experiences as the starting point of the study and establishing the research wonder by deeply investigating and reflecting on participants' experiences. As a narrative-based research journey with reflection and co-constructive learning at its core, this study ascertained and emphasized the context in which Chinese families engaged in English family literacy activities. It also highlighted the era-specific, culturally, and socially relevant educational phenomena, logic and beliefs associated with this context.

From this research position, I investigated the unique stories of the participants' families as both the researcher and the researched, listened to the expectations and behaviours held by these Chinese parents within the framework of English family literacy, explored

in depth the educational values and literacy beliefs they persisted, as well as perceived the myths, confusions, and difficulties they were facing. The findings of the study found that all the above-mentioned topics had their uniqueness in the particular context of China. Thus, this study not only complemented the context, scope, and perspective of family literacy research but also provided a basis and direction for future theoretical and practical research in this field, especially in the Chinese context.

As this research was merely a milestone in my academic and practical journey, I expect to continue to reflect, explore, and contribute to the field.

In the future, at least three research lines are worth exploring. First, research on the elements that influence English family literacy activities in the Chinese context, such as HLE research for Chinese families and the factors that affect English family literacy in different urban settings. Second, studies of English family literacy programs for Chinese families, such as program design, especially pedagogical approaches to serve parents. Finally, suggestions for policymakers related to family literacy include comprehensive literature studies related to family literacy or extensive sample studies of parental needs in specific cities.

Future research on this topic could also include additional categories of participants (e.g., English reading teachers, parent-child shared reading promoters, and educational policymakers to provide a more detailed and multidimensional description and reflection on the research questions and to include additional data sources (e.g., how English reading teachers convey English reading strategies and beliefs to Chinese parents in their professional capacity, and policies and other documents implemented by educational policymakers in family literacy outreach programs) to improve the overall generalizability and comprehensiveness of the study.

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## Appendices

### **Appendix A: Advertisement for Recruiting Participants (English Version)**

Uncovering the myth of shared reading English picture books for Chinese families: A narrative inquiry

Dr. Kathy Hibbert, PI

Yijuan Ge

Western University, Faculty of Education

If you are a Chinese parent with a young child between 3 and 6 years of age and read English picture books (EPBs) with your child at home regularly, you are invited to participate in a research study.

This research will explore Chinese parents' experiences engaging in the parent-child shared reading of EPBs with their children in the Chinese context. Findings will help improve the experience with shared reading activities by making them unique, relevant, and meaningful.

Participants will be invited to participate in a 10-week research project. You will be interviewed online once per week for about 30 minutes and participate in two online focused-group discussions on the topic related to your home-shared reading experience. In total, it is anticipated that participants over the 10 weeks would involve 15-18 hours of your time. Interviews and focus-group discussions will be audio-taped for data collection purposes.

If you want more information and are interested in participating, please contact Yijuan Ge.

## Appendix B: Advertisement for Recruiting Participants (Chinese Version)

为中国家庭揭开英文绘本的迷思：一个叙述研究

Kathy Hibbert 博士，主研究人

戈毅娟

西安大略大学，教育学院

如果你是一位有着 3-6 岁孩子的中国家长，并且经常在家里和孩子一起阅读英文图画书（EPBs），我们邀请你参加一项研究。

这项研究将探讨中国父母在中国环境下与孩子共同阅读英文绘本的经验。研究结果将有助于改善共享阅读活动的经验，使其独特、相关和意义。

参与者将被邀请参加一个为期 10 周的研究项目。您将每周接受一次约 30 分钟的在线访谈，并参加两次与您的家庭共享阅读经验有关的在线焦点小组讨论。总的来说，预计 10 周内的参与者将涉及你 15-18 小时的时间。访谈和焦点小组讨论将被录音以收集数据。

如果你需要更多的信息，并且对参与感兴趣，请联系戈毅娟。

## Appendix C: Implied Informed Consent Form (English Version)



**Project Title:** Uncovering the myth of shared reading English picture books for Chinese families: A narrative inquiry

**Principal Investigator:**

*Dr. Kathryn Hibbert, Professor, Faculty of Education*

**Co-Investigators**

*Yijuan Ge, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education*

### Implied Informed Consent Form

**1. Invitation to Participate**

You are being invited to participate in this study to explore Chinese parents' experiences of reading English picture books with their child/children.

**2. Purpose of the Letter**

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information required for you to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research.

**3. Purpose of this Study**

The main purpose of this research is to explore Chinese parents' experiences of reading English picture books with their young children in a Chinese context. Findings will contribute to improving experiences with shared reading activities by making them unique, relevant, and meaningful.

**4. Length of the Study**

I would like to engage participants over a twelve-week period.

Participants will be involved in the following ways:

- 1) Engaging in online interviews of one half-an-hour in length every week;
- 2) Participating in two online focus-group discussions over the 10 weeks lasting up to 2 hours each.

- 3) Keeping a reflective journal and a self-recorded video of your home-shared reading activities each week.

It is anticipated that participation in the study will involve 15-18 hours in total over a 10-week period.

## 5. Inclusion Criteria

Chinese parents living in China with one or more children between 3 to 6 years old who speak Chinese as their family language and read English picture books regularly at home together. Participants who are able to access the internet, use Skype as a communication tool, willing to be video/audio taped during interviews and focus-group discussions are eligible to participate in this study.

## 6. Exclusion Criteria

Individuals who are not Chinese parents, whose children are outside of the ages of 3 to 6, who do not read English picture books together in China, who cannot access the internet, who cannot use Skype as a communication tool, or who do not wish to be video-taped, are not eligible to participate in this study.

## 7. Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in the following research activities:

- |  |
|--|
| 1) Every week, you will take one 30-minute online interview at the times of your choosing. Skype will be applied for the interviews, and interviews will be recorded as digital video.   |
| 2) In the first and fifth weeks, you will also participate in online focus-group discussions, and the exact date will be decided by all participants. All the focus-group discussions will be conducted on the online webinar (Webinars OnAir <a href="https://www.webinarsonair.com/">https://www.webinarsonair.com/</a> ). It is an online group meeting tool and provides clients with an online group meeting service. The researcher will establish a series of password-protected online group meetings and invite you by a private link through your personal registered email. Only people who have the invitation link can access the online group meeting periodically. It is a web version of software, so you do not need to download any application to participate in the group meeting. Once you enter the meeting room, you can set your screen name and prepare for the coming discussion. In this online meeting space, you will contribute by typing or speaking, using audio or video (your choice). At the beginning of the research, we will collect our confusion or concerns about parent-child shared reading and decide the topics for the first |

<p>online group discussion. Ensuring topics will be decided at the end of each session. The periodic focus groups will also be held for participants' convenience. For data collection, the researcher will record each online focus group using her personal offline digital camera to ensure the private storage of data. In addition, the website does not retain any information without the organizer's permission.</p>
<p>3) Each week, you will keep a reflective journal on your home-shared reading activities. In the reflective journal, you are asked to identify critical or specific events that have happened in your parent-child shared reading. These events could be the ones that make you feel happy or frustrated or the ones that provoke your reflection or curiosity. For data collection, your will upload your weekly journals to the secure, password-protected 'Easyclass' classroom. Then the researcher will collect the data and move them to her secure, password-protected storage device in her locked office.</p>
<p>4) Each week, you will take a self-recorded video. For the video, the researcher is interested in your natural home-shared reading of English picture books, including parent-child reading activities, family reading habits/preferences, and the interaction between parents and children. For data collection, you will upload your weekly self-recorded video to the secure, password-protected 'Easyclass' classroom. Then the researcher will collect the data and move them to her secure, password-protected storage device in her locked office.</p>
<p>Notice: The researcher will select, identify, and highlight the interim research texts with the significant events related to the research texts. Then, the researcher will give back to you for member-checking the accuracy of the description and interpretation and add your own interpretation, ideas, comments, and reflections. The researcher will set up an OWL site and add you via their email address to share any transcriptions of audio from interviews and the focus groups for member-checking. Only participants from each interview and focus group will have access to the relevant transcribed documents.</p>

## 8. Possible Risks and Harms

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.

## 9. Possible Benefits

You may benefit from gaining more information, knowledge, and skills about conducting parent-child shared reading on English picture books at



home. You may gain new perspectives on your parent-child shared reading activities regarding rethinking your current family literacy activities.

#### **10. Compensation**

You will not be compensated for your participation in this research.

#### **11. 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 with no effect.

If you decide to withdraw from the study and you wish to have your data removed, please let the researcher know, and all data will be wiped from our databases; otherwise, the information that was collected before you left the study will be used. No new information will be collected without your permission. It will not be possible to remove data from the flow of the conversations gathered in focus groups conducted prior to your decision to withdraw because of the interconnected nature of this type of group discussion.

#### **12. Confidentiality**

The goal of the study is to maintain confidentiality as much as possible. For example, all data collected will be securely stored and accessible only to the investigators of this study. As the data will be collected on a third-party server, there are potential limitations to the confidentiality guarantee in the procedure of data collection. However, data will be transferred from the online spaces used in its collection to the researcher's secure, password-protected storage device. All information will then be permanently deleted by the researcher from the online space.

As an OWL site will be created for member-checking, your email address will be applied for the site invitation. Besides, your email address will also be used for accepting the invitation of a focus group on Webinar Onair. Your email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of registration invitation of the OWL site and focus group.

You will communicate with the researcher through Easyclass where you will choose your pseudonym. You can create a screen name from the start, and the researcher may never know your real identity.

Please be advised that although the researchers will take every precaution to maintain the confidentiality of the data, once your data is collected, it will be directly quoted with pseudonyms and the audio/video clip might be shared in the presentation.

However, while we do our best to protect your information, there is no guarantee that we will be able to do so. For example, when the study results are published or shared in presentations, your name will not be used. However, including video clips and direct quotations from you in the focus groups, future publications, or presentations may allow someone to identify you.

Similarly, the nature of focus groups prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality. The researchers would like to remind participants to respect the privacy of their fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others.

While we do our best to protect your information, there is no guarantee that we will be able to do so. Your date of birth will be shared with the translation certifier. The person certifying the accuracy of the translation will be independent of the study and properly instructed to be aware of ethics in dealing with identifiable data. A confidentiality agreement has been signed by the certifier.

The researcher will keep all personal information about you in a secure and confidential location for a minimum of 7 years. A list linking your study number with your name will be kept by the researcher in a secure place, separate from your study file.

Please be advised that although the researchers will take every precaution to maintain the confidentiality of the data, the nature of focus groups prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality. The researchers would like to remind participants to respect the privacy of their fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others.

While we do our best to protect your information, there is no guarantee that we will be able to do so. If data is collected during the project, which may be required to report by law, we have a duty to report.

Representatives of The University of Western Ontario's Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

### **13. Rights of the Participants**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to be in this study. Even if you consent to participate, you have the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time. We will provide you with any new information that is learned during the study that might affect your decision to stay in the study.

You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

### **14. Contacts for Further Information**

If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study, you may contact Kathryn Hibbert or Yijuan Ge.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics.

### **15. Publication**

If the study results are published, your name will not be used. If you would like to receive an executive copy of the results or to receive a copy of any study results, please contact Yijuan Ge.

### **16. Implied Consent**

Only those willing to take all four research activities will be qualified to participate in the research.

For your consent procedure,

Easyclass, a social writing platform frequently used in education (see <https://www.Easyclass.com/>), will be used to facilitate your registration. A link to a password-protected 'Easyclass classroom' is created by the researcher, and the link is as follows:

Address: <https://easyclass.com/join/MQNJ3J>

If you agree to take part in the research, please click on the link to enter the 'Easyclass classroom' using the password provided:

Access code: MQNJ3J

“Consent” will be assumed if you voluntarily access the online private 'Easyclass classroom'. It means you are indicating your consent to participate in the study and that participation includes an agreement to all that is laid out in the letter of information.

*This letter is yours to keep for future reference.*

## Appendix D: Implied Informed Consent Form (Chinese Version)



**项目名称：**为中国家庭揭开英文绘本的迷思：一个叙述研究

**主研究人：**Kathy Hibbert 博士，教授，西安大略大学，教育学院

**共同研究人：**戈毅娟，博士研究生，西安大略大学，教育学院

### 信息函

#### 1. 邀请参加

您正在被邀请参加这项研究，探讨中国家长对英文绘本识读价值的感知，并从参与者那里了解他们的经验。

#### 2. 邀请函目的

本邀请函的目的是为您提供所需的信息，让您做出明智的决策参与本研究。

#### 3. 本研究的目的

这项研究的主要目的是探求中国父母进行英文绘本亲子阅读的家长期望，探索这些家长在中国语境下进行亲子阅读的经验，并从中学习。调查结果将有助于更好地了解中国父母如何理性化英文绘本亲子阅读的期望，从而促进他们的英文绘本亲子阅读经历，使得这些经历独特，相关，并且有意义。

#### 4. 研究时长

参与者愿意参加为期十周的研究。

参与者将参与以下研究路径：

1) 每周，您将在您选择的时间进行一次 30 分钟的在线采访。Skype 将被应用于采访，采访将被记录为数字视频。

2) 第一周和第五周，您还将各参加一个在线焦点小组讨论，具体日期将由所有参与者决定。所有焦点小组讨论将在网上研讨会上进行（网络研讨会 OnAir <https://www.webinarsonair.com/>）。这是一个在线小组会议工具，并为他们的客户提供在线小组会议服务。研究人员将建立一系列密码保护的在线小组会议，并通过您的个人注册电子邮件通过专用链接邀请您。只有具有邀请链接的人才能定期访问在线小组会议。这是一个网络版软件，所以您不需要下载任何应用程序参加小组会议。一旦您进入会议室，您可以设置您的屏幕名称，并为即将到来的讨论做好准备。在这个在线会议空间中，您将通过打字或发言，无论是使用音频还是视频（您的选择）。在研究之初，我们将收集关于亲子共享阅读的困惑或疑虑，并决定第一次在线小组讨论的主题。随后的主题将在每届会议结束时决定。定期的焦点小组也将为参加者的方便而举行。为了收集数据，研究人员将使用其个人离线数码相机记录每个在线焦点小组，以确保数据的私密存储。此外，未经主办方许可，网站不保留任何信息。

3) 每个星期，你都会在你的家庭共享阅读活动上留下反思日记。在反思性日记中，您被要求识别发生在您的亲子共读上的重要事件或特定事件。这些事情可能是让您感到高兴或沮丧的事情，或者那些引起您的反思或好奇的事情。对于数据收集，您会将您的每周反思日记上传到受密码保护的安全“Easyclass”教室。然后研究人员将收集数据并将其移动到她的锁定办公室中的安全，密码保护存储设备。

4) 每个星期，你都会拍一个自己录制的视频。对于视频而言，研究人员对自然的家庭阅读英语图画书感兴趣，包括亲子阅读活动，家庭阅读习惯/偏好以及父母与子女之间的互动。对于数据收集，您将把每周自我录制的视频上传到受密码保护的安全“Easyclass”教室。然后研究人员将收集数据并将其移动到她的锁定办公室中的安全，密码保护存储设备。

注意：

研究人员将选择，确定和突出中期研究文本与研究文本相关的重大事件。然后，研究人员会给予回复，让成员检查描述和解释的准确性，并添加自己的解释，想法，意见和思考。研究人员将建立一个 OWL 网站，并通过他们的电子邮件地址添加你，以分享任何来自采访的音频副本和焦点小组成员检查。只有来自每个访问和焦点组的参与者才能访问相关的转录文件。

#### 5. 参与标准

居住在中国的中国籍父母，孩子年龄介于 3 至 6 岁，以中文为母语，并在家里常规性展开英文绘本亲子共读。可以访问互联网，并使用 Skype 作为沟通工具，并愿意通过录音进行访谈和焦点小组讨论，即有资格参与此项研究。

#### 6. 排除标准

不是中国籍父母，孩子年龄不在 3 至 6 岁之间，不在家庭组织任何英文绘本的亲子阅读，无法访问互联网，无法使用 Skype 作为沟通工具，或者不愿意接受录音，则不符合参加本研究的资格。

#### 7. 学习程序

如果您同意参与，您将被要求参加 12 次在线采访。Skype 将被用于采访。您还将参加 4 个在线焦点小组讨论。所有焦点小组的讨论将在网络研讨会（网络研讨会 OnAir）上进行。您需要在家庭共享阅读活动中保留反思性日记和自拍录像。预计整个任务将需要 15-18 个小时。

#### 8. 可能的风险和危害

参与本研究没有任何已知或预期的风险或不适。

#### 9. 可能的好处

您可以获得更多的信息，知识和技能，以便在家中进行英文绘本的亲子阅读。您将具备新的视角重新考虑您当前阅读活动和家庭识读的期望。您对家庭共享阅读的动态需求将得到有效和合理的协助。

#### 10. 补偿

您不会因为参与本研究而获得补偿。

## 11. 自愿参与

参与这项研究是自愿的。您可以拒绝参加，拒绝回答任何问题或在任何时候退出研究没有效果。

如果您决定退出研究，并希望删除您的数据，请让研究人员知道，并将所有数据从我们的数据库中删除；否则，将使用在您离开研究之前收集的信息。未经您的许可，不会收集新的信息。由于这种类型的小组讨论的相互关联的性质，在您决定退出之前进行的焦点小组中收集的对话流程中将不可能删除数据。

## 12. 保密

本研究的目标是尽可能保密。例如，收集的所有数据将被安全地存储并且只能由本研究的调查人员访问。

由于数据将在第三方服务器上收集，数据收集过程中的保密性有一定的局限性。但是，数据将从收集中使用的在线空间转移到研究人员的安全密码保护存储设备。所有信息将被研究人员从网上空间永久删除。

由于会员检查将会创建一个 OWL 网站，您的电子邮件地址将被应用于网站邀请。您的电子邮件及其随附的任何文件都是保密的，仅用于使用 OWL 网站的注册邀请。

您将通过 Easyclass 与研究人员进行交流，您将选择您的笔名。您可以从头开始创建一个屏幕名称，研究人员可能永远不会知道您的真实身份。

请注意，虽然研究人员会采取一切措施来保持数据的机密性，但一旦您的数据被收集后，将直接用假名引用，音频/视频芯片可能会在演示中共享。

但是，尽管我们尽力保护您的信息，但我们不能保证我们能够这样做。例如，当研究结果发表或分享时，您的名字将不会被使用。但是，在您的焦点小组，未来的出版物或演示文稿中包含视频剪辑和直接引用可能会使某人识别您。

同样，焦点小组的性质也阻碍了研究人员保证机密性。研究人员希望提醒参与者尊重你的参与者的隐私，而不要重复焦点组对其他人的评论。



虽然我们尽最大努力保护您的信息，但不能保证我们能够这样做。由于您的出生年份将作为参与者信息被收集，它有可能被翻译成最终的数据并于与翻译验证人共享。证明翻译准确性的人将独立于研究，并正确指示在处理可识别数据时注意道德问题。验证者签署了保密协议。

研究人员将把您的所有个人信息保存在一个安全，保密的地方至少 7 年。研究人员将你的研究号码与你的姓名联系起来，保存在一个安全的地方，与你的学习档案分开。

请注意，虽然研究人员将采取一切预防措施来保持数据的机密性，但焦点小组的性质使得研究人员无法保证机密性。研究人员希望提醒参与者尊重你的参与者的隐私，而不要重复焦点组对其他人的评论。

虽然我们尽最大努力保护您的信息，但不能保证我们能够这样做。如果项目期间收集的数据可能需要依法报告，我们有义务进行举报。

西安大略大学非医学研究伦理委员会的代表可能需要访问您的研究相关记录，以监测研究的进行。

### **13. 参与者的权利**

你参加这项研究是自愿的。你可能决定不参加这项研究。即使您同意参加，您也有权在任何时候不回答个别问题或退出研究。我们将向您提供在研究期间学到的任何新信息，这些信息可能会影响您决定留在研究中。

您签署本同意书，不会放弃任何法定权利

### **14. 了解更多信息及联系方式**

如果您需要有关本研究项目的进一步信息或您愿意参与研究，您可以联系 Kathryn Hibbert 或戈毅娟。

如果您对您作为研究参与者的权利或本研究的行为有任何疑问，可以联系人类研究伦理办公室。

#### 15. 公开

如果研究结果发布，您的姓名将不被使用。如果您想收到结果的执行副本，请与 Yijuan Ge 联系。如果您想收到任何潜在学习成果的副本，请在与同意表单分开的一张纸上提供您的姓名和联系电话。

#### 16. 同意

只有愿意参加全部四项研究活动的人才有资格参与研究。

为了您的同意程序，

Easyclass 是一个经常用于教育的社交写作平台（请参阅 [https://www.](https://www.Easyclass.com/)

[Easyclass.com/](https://www.Easyclass.com/)），将用于帮助您进行注册。研究人员创建一个密码保护的

“Easyclass” 的链接，链接如下：

地址：[https:// Easyclass.com/join/MQNJ3J](https://Easyclass.com/join/MQNJ3J)

如果您同意参与研究，请点击链接进入“Easyclass 教室”，使用提供的密码。

访问密码：MQNJ3J

如果您自愿访问在线私人讨论组“Easyclass 教室”，则将假定您“同意”。这意味着你表示你同意参加研究，并且参与包括同意信中的所有内容。

这封是你的信件，以备将来参考。

**Appendix E: Welcome Message on Applicant Registration Page (English Version)**

Dear all,

Welcome to participate in the research “Uncovering the myth of shared reading English picture books for Chinese families: A narrative inquiry” guided by Dr. Kathryn Hibbert and Dr. Yijuan Ge.

Firstly, please reconfirm that you have read the Implied Informed Consent and been clearly understand it.

In addition, “consent” has been assumed when you voluntarily accessed this online private ‘Easyclass’ classroom. It means you are indicating your consent to participate in the study and that participation includes an agreement to all that is laid out in the letter of information.

Now, please send the following information to the researcher, ‘Easyclass’ ID: Yijuan Ge, by a private short message.

*Your screen name:*

*Your city of residence:*

*Your year of birth:*

*The number of your children:*

*The year of your child’s birth:*

The information above will help the researcher to select the final participant and organize our future research.

Thanks!

Yijuan Ge

## Appendix F: Welcome Message on Applicant Registration Page (Chinese Version)

大家好，

欢迎参加“解开中国家庭英文绘本阅读的迷思：一个叙述探究”，由 Kathryn Hibbert 博士和 Yijuan Ge 博士指导。

首先，请再次确认您已经阅读了暗示知情同意书，并能清楚的理解它。

另外，当您自愿访问这个在线私人'Easyclass'教室时，已经假定“同意”。这意味着你表明你同意参加这项研究，并且参与包括同意信中的所有内容。

现在，请将下列信息通过私人短信的方式发送给研究人员，Easyclass 名称: Yijuan Ge。

你的网名：

你的居住城市：

您的出生年份：

你的孩子的数量：

您孩子的出生年份：

以上信息将有助于研究人员选择最终的参与者并组织我们的未来研究。

谢谢！

戈毅娟

## Appendix G: Guide for Writing a Reflective Journal (English Version)

In the reflective journal, participants are asked to reflect upon specific events that have happened during your parent-child shared reading. These events could be the ones that make you feel happy or frustrated or the ones that provoke your reflection or curiosity.

Think about the previous week and all the things that you have done together with your child in a home-shared reading. Reflect upon what you learn from these experiences together and what you notice about your child's learning.

The following prompts may help guide you:

1. Situation: What happened?
2. Affect: What was its impact on you and your child?
3. Interpretation: What did you think about the experience? For example,
  - Was it funny?
  - Could you connect what you were reading with other things happening in your life? (for example, a book about farm animals with a visit to a farm)
  - Did it make you upset?
  - Did you have any problems?
4. Decision: What did you decide to do to continue your parent-child shared reading? For example,
  - Maintain the existing methods of effective reading.
  - Vary the active way of communication during home-shared reading.
  - Check the causes of problems.
  - Change something about your family's reading habits or the way you select reading materials

When you finish your weekly journal, please upload it to the password-protected "Easyclass" classroom. Please use the following protocol to label your reflection:

2018\_01\_12\_Reflection1

## Appendix H: Guide for Writing a Reflective Journal (Chinese Version)

在反思日记中，要求参与者反思在你的亲子阅读过程中发生的具体事件。这些事情可能是让你感到高兴或沮丧的事情，或者那些引起你的反思或好奇的事情。

想想上个星期，以及你在家共同阅读的所有事情。反思你从这些经验中学到的东西，以及你对孩子学习的看法。

以下提示可能有助于指导您：

1. 情况：发生了什么？
2. 影响：对你和你的孩子有什么影响？
3. 解读：你对这个经历有什么看法？例如，

- 有趣吗？

- 你能把你正在阅读的东西与你生活中发生的其他事情联系起来吗？（例如，一本关于农场动物的书，访问一个农场）

- 是不是让你不高兴？

- 你有什么问题吗？

4. 决定：你决定如何继续你的父母与孩子的共同阅读？例如，

- 保持现有的有效阅读方法；

- 改变家庭共享阅读的主动方式；

- 检查问题的原因；

- 改变你的家庭阅读习惯或选择阅读材料的方式

当您完成每周日志时，请将其上传到密码保护的“Easyclass”教室。请使用以下协议来标记您的反射：

2018\_01\_12\_Reflection1

## **Appendix I: Guide for Filming a Video on Participants' Parent-Child Shared Reading (English Version)**

For the self-recorded video, the research expects to see the real scene about your home-shared reading on English picture books, including parent-child reading activities, the way of communication, the register of parents' language and tone, family reading habits/ preference, and the interaction between parents and children.

Below you will find some guidelines to help you through the process.

1. Prepare your parent-child shared reading as usual.
2. Get your camera ready. You can use any digital camera that can capture both sound and images, or any smart phone having a video camera.
3. Make sure the device has enough memory space for your video recording.
4. Make sure the light of the room is appropriate for both video clarity and the comfort of you child.
5. Tell your child you will film today's reading, help him/ her understand it is nothing special, and encourage him/ her read picture books with you as usual.
6. When you all get ready, you can press the record button and start your parent-child shared reading.

After the recording, please upload the video to the password protected "Easyclass classroom. Please use the following protocol to label your video:

2018\_01\_12\_Reflection1

## **Appendix J: Guide for Filming a Video on Participants' Parent-Child Shared Reading (Chinese Version)**

对于自我录制的视频，研究期望看到你家的英语图画书共享阅读的真实场景，包括亲子阅读活动，交流方式，家长的语调，家庭阅读习惯/偏好以及父母与孩子之间的互动。

下面你会找到一些指导方针来帮助你完成整个过程。

1. 像往常一样准备亲子共享阅读。
2. 准备好相机。您可以使用任何可以捕捉声音和图像的数码相机，或任何具有摄像机的智能手机。
3. 确保设备有足够的存储空间用于录像。
4. 确保房间的灯光适合视频清晰度和孩子的舒适度。
5. 告诉你的孩子你会拍摄今天的阅读，帮助他/她理解它没有什么特别的，鼓励他/她像往常一样阅读图画书。
6. 一切准备就绪后，您可以按录像按钮开始亲子共享阅读。

录制完毕后，请将视频上传到受密码保护的“Easyclass”教室。请使用以下记号标记您的视频：

2018\_01\_12\_Reflection1



## Appendix K: First Focus Group Discussion Guide (English Version)

### Consent Process

Research Consent forms for focus group participants are completed in advance by all those agreeing to participate. Below is a summary of the information from the consent form that researcher will use to ensure participants understand the information in the consent form.

*Thank you for agreeing to participate. We are very interested to learn about your experiences reading English picture books with your children.*

- *The purpose of this study is to explore Chinese parents' experiences reading EPBs with their children. We wish to learn from parents' experience of reading EPBs in Chinese context. Findings will help improve experience with shared reading activities by making them unique, relevant, and meaningful*
- *The information you give us is completely confidential, and we will not associate your name with anything you say in the focus group.*
- *We would like to tape the focus groups so that we can make sure to capture the thoughts, opinions, and ideas we hear from the group. No names will be attached to the focus groups and the tapes will be destroyed as soon as they are transcribed.*
- *You may refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at anytime. If you want to withdraw, you will not participate in any further activities. It will not be possible to remove data from the flow of the conversation's gathered in focus groups conducted prior to your decision to withdraw because of the interconnected nature of this type of group discussion.*
- *We understand how important it is that this information is kept private and confidential. We will ask participants to respect each other's confidentiality.*
- *If you have any questions at any time, you can always contact Yijuan Ge, or Kathy Hibbert using the contact information provided on the Letter of Information.*

### Introduction:

#### 1. Welcome

Introduce myself and some questions related to this research:

- Who I am and what I am trying to do?
- What will be done with this information

- Why I asked you to participate
2. Explanation of the process  
Ask the group if anyone has participated in a focus group before. Explain that focus groups are being used more and more often in education research.

*About focus groups*

- We learn from you (positive and negative)
- Not trying to achieve consensus, we're gathering information
- No virtue in long lists: we're looking for priorities
- In this project, we are doing both interview and focus group discussions. The reason for using both of these tools is that we can get more in-depth information from a smaller group of people in focus groups. This allows us to understand the context behind the answers given in the interviews and helps me explore topics in more detail than I can do in multiple one-on-one interviews.

*Logistics*

- Focus group will last about one hour
  - Feel free to take a break as needed
3. Ask the group if there are any questions before we get started and address those questions.
4. Personal Statement
- Ask participants to introduce themselves and share some information regarding their home-shared reading:
    - i. When did you start your parent-child shared reading?
    - ii. How do you like such home reading activities?

*Discussion begins, make sure to give people time to think before answering the questions and don't move too quickly. Use the probes to make sure that all issues are addressed but move on when you feel you are starting to hear repetitive information.*

**Questions:**

*Tell me about your experiences reading English picture books with your child/children at home.*

*(Follow up or probing questions)*

- i. *Why do you read to and with your child/ children?*
- ii. *Why have you selected English picture books?*

*iii. What other types of books do you read together?*

*The video-recorder will be turned on after introductions have been made.*

**Preparation:**

1. Invite participants to share their stories that make them feel excited or confused when their conduct parent-child shared reading on English picture books at home.
2. Invite each participant to draft a plan for next ten weeks of home-shared reading on English picture books with their child/ children.
3. Invite all participants to share the questions they want to address in next focus-group discussions and list the potential topics for future discussion.

## Appendix L: First Focus Group Discussion Guide (Chinese Version)

### 同意程序

焦点小组参与者的研究同意书是由所有同意参与的人事先填写的。下面是同意书中的信息摘要，研究人员将用它来确保参与者理解同意书中的信息。

谢谢你同意参加。我们非常有兴趣了解你与你的孩子阅读英文图画书的经验。

- 本研究的目的是探讨中国父母与孩子阅读 EPB 的经验。我们希望了解父母在中国环境下阅读英文绘本的经验。研究结果将有助于改善共同阅读活动的经验，使其独特、相关和有意义。
- 你给我们的信息是完全保密的，我们不会把你的名字和你在焦点小组中说的任何话联系起来。
- 我们希望对焦点小组进行录音，这样我们就能确保捕捉到我们从小组中听到的想法、意见和观念。焦点小组不会有任何姓名，录音带在转录完毕后会立即销毁。
- 你可以在任何时候拒绝回答任何问题或退出研究。如果你想退出，你将不会参加任何进一步的活动。由于这种类型的小组讨论具有相互联系的性质，因此不可能从你决定退出之前进行的焦点小组中收集的对话的流程中删除数据。
- 我们理解对这些信息进行保密是多么重要。我们会要求参与者尊重彼此的保密性。
- 如果你在任何时候有任何问题，你可以随时使用信息函上提供的联系信息与戈毅娟，或 Kathy Hibbert 联系。

### 开场介绍

#### 1. 欢迎

介绍我自己和与这项研究有关的一些问题。

- *我是谁，我想做什么？*
- *将用这些信息做什么？*
- *为什么我要求你参与*

#### 2. 解释一下这个过程

询问小组成员是否有人曾经参加过焦点小组。解释说焦点小组在教育研究中被越来越多地使用。

#### 关于焦点小组

- *我们彼此学习（积极的和消极的）*
- *不是为了达成共识，我们在收集信息*
- *没有长长的清单的美德：我们在寻找优先事项*
- *在这个项目中，我们同时进行采访和焦点小组讨论。使用这两种工具的原因是，在焦点小组中，我们可以从较小的人群中获得更深入的信息。这使我们能够了解采访中所给出的答案背后的背景，并帮助我更详细地探讨比在多个一对一的采访中所能做到的主题。*

#### 组织安排

- *焦点小组将持续约一个小时*
  - *必要时可自由休息*
3. 在我们开始之前，询问小组成员是否有任何问题，并解决这些问题。
  4. 个人陈述
    - 请参与者介绍自己，并分享一些关于他们家庭分享阅读的信息。
      - i. 你是什么时候开始亲子共读的？
      - ii. 你如何喜欢这样的家庭阅读活动？

讨论开始，确保在回答问题前给大家时间思考，不要进展太快。使用探针来确保所有的问题都得到解决，但当你觉得开始听到重复的信息时，就继续讨论。

#### 提问

告诉大家你和你的孩子在家里阅读英文图画书的经历。

(后续或探测性问题)

- i. *你为什么和你的孩子一起阅读？*
- ii. *你为什么选择英文图画书？*
- iii. *你们还一起读什么类型的书？*

介绍完毕后，录像机将被打开。

**准备：**

1. 请参与者分享他们在家中如何进行亲子共读英文绘本时，让他们感到兴奋或困惑的故事。
2. 请每位参与者起草一份未来三个月与孩子进行英文绘本家庭共读的计划。
3. 邀请所有参与者分享他们希望在未来三次焦点小组讨论中解决的问题，并列出来未来可能讨论的主题。

## Appendix M: Weekly Interview Questions (English Version)

### Part I: Description of Participant

Participant ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Duration of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_ Child/Children's Age: \_\_\_\_\_

### Part II: Interview Questions

#### Week 1

1. Would you like to introduce yourself more?
2. Have you ever read to or with your own children at home? If yes, how long have you been practicing this? And how old was/were your child/ children when you started?
3. What kind of books do you choose for your home reading?
4. Why did you decide to read at home with your child/children on EPBs?
5. How often did you read books to your child/ children?

#### Week 2

1. Do you like to read in your childhood?
2. When you were a child, did you have books at home for you to read?
3. If not, where was the main source of the books you read?
4. What were your experiences as a child being read to at home?
5. What books were your favourite and most frequently read as a child?
6. Did you read with your parents when you were young?
7. Do you remember how that felt?
8. Did your parents take the initiative to read with you? In what interactive way?
9. Did your parents have a reading habit?
10. Did your parents prepare age-appropriate reading books for you?

#### Week 3

1. Tell me about what it looks like in your home when you read together. Pretend I am a young mother who wants to do exactly the same thing in my house that you are doing in yours. What would I need to do?  
(Probing as needed: You read for your child/ Children solely.  
You and your child/ children read the content alternatively.  
You read together, combined with discussion and talk.)
2. Describe a shared reading experience that stands out to you.
3. How does reading together make you feel?

4. Compare reading English Picture Books and Chinese picture books. How are they the same? How are they different?
5. Would you read English picture books to your children again? If so, would you change anything? If not, why?
6. What advice would you give to someone reading English Picture books for the first time?
7. What part of shared reading do you find most rewarding? Interesting?
8. What part of shared reading is most challenging? What would you like to improve?
9. Based on your reading experience, what issues did you encounter during your parent-child shared reading on EPBs

#### Week 4

1. Did anybody recommend that you read to your child/ children at home?  
Who?  
  
When?  
  
Why?
2. As you embark on a parent-child reading of English picture books and encounter confusion and difficulty, do you want to work through it?
3. If so, how did you try to solve it?
4. Have you ever asked someone for help and who was she/he?
5. If yes, how did she/he help you?
6. Have you participated in training related to English parent-child shared reading?
7. Why did you choose to participate in such an event?

#### Week 5

1. Overall, how did you feel when you tried to solve the problems?
2. If you asked for help, was it helpful? For example, did it solve your actual problem? Eased your anxiety? Or something else.
3. What problems were solved, what were not, and what were getting worse?
4. What might be the probable cause of these results?
5. And then, could you clearly analyze the assistance you really need?

#### Week 6

1. Is there anything else you would like to add to the second focused-group discussion?
2. Would you now like to analyze your own reading beliefs again, such as why you want to accompany your child in reading English picture books?
3. What is your understanding of multiliteracies pedagogy?

#### Week 7

1. Stories related to “situated learning”.



Week 8

1. Stories related to “overt instruction”.

Week 9

1. Stories related to “critical practice”.

Week 10

1. Stories related to “Creative application”

*Interview questions would be changed during the interviews, as the interviewee would add new ideas/ information useful for this research.*

## Appendix N: Weekly Interview Questions (Chinese Version)

### 第一部分：参与者的描述

参与者 ID。\_\_\_\_\_ 采访日期。\_\_\_\_\_

访谈的时间。\_\_\_\_\_ 孩子/孩子的年龄。\_\_\_\_\_

### 第二部分：面试问题

#### 第一周

1. 你想更多地介绍自己吗？
2. 你是否曾在家里给自己的孩子读书或与他们一起读书？如果有，你实行这种做法有多久了？开始时你的孩子多大了？
3. 你选择什么样的书作为你的家庭阅读？
4. 你为什么决定在家里和你的孩子一起阅读 EPB？
5. 你多长时间给你的孩子/子女读一次书？

#### 第二周

1. 你在童年时喜欢读书吗？
2. 当你还是个孩子的时候，家里有书供你阅读吗？
3. 如果没有，你所读的书的主要来源是哪里？
4. 你小时候在家里被阅读的经历是什么？
5. 你小时候最喜欢和最常读的书是什么？
6. 你小时候和父母一起读书吗？
7. 你还记得那是什么感觉吗？
8. 你的父母是否主动与你一起阅读？以何种互动方式？
9. 你的父母有阅读的习惯吗？
10. 你的父母是否为你准备了适合你年龄的阅读书籍？

### 第三周

1. 告诉我，当你们一起阅读时，在你们家里是什么样子的。假设我是一个年轻的母亲，想在我的家里做和你一样的事情。我需要做什么？

(根据需要进行探究：你只为你的孩子/子女读书。

你和你的孩子/子女交替阅读内容。

你们一起阅读，并结合讨论和交谈。)

2. 描述你印象深刻的共同阅读经历。

3. 一起阅读让你有什么感觉？

4. 比较阅读英文图画书和中文图画书。它们有什么相同之处？它们有什么不同？

5. 你会再给你的孩子读英文图画书吗？如果是的话，你会改变什么吗？如果不会，为什么？

6. 你会给第一次阅读英文图画书的人什么建议？

7. 你觉得共同阅读的哪一部分最有价值？有意思吗？

8. 共同阅读的哪部分最具挑战性？你想改进什么？

9. 根据你的阅读经验，你在 EPB 的亲子共读中遇到了什么问题？

### 第四周

1. 有没有人建议你在家里给你的孩子/子女读书？

谁？

什么时候？

为什么？

2. 当你开始进行英语图画书的亲子阅读时，遇到了困惑和困难，你想通过努力解决吗？

3. 如果是的话，你是如何尝试解决的？

4. 你是否曾向别人求助，她/他是谁？

5. 如果有，她/他是如何帮助你的？

6. 你是否参加过与英语亲子共读有关的培训？

7. 你为什么选择参加这样的活动？

### 第五周

1. 总的来说，当你试图解决这些问题时，你的感觉如何？
2. 如果你请求帮助，它是否有帮助？例如，它是否解决了你的实际问题？缓解了你的焦虑？或者其他什么。
3. 哪些问题得到了解决，哪些没有得到解决，哪些问题越来越严重？
4. 这些结果的可能原因是什么？
5. 然后，你能清楚地分析出你真正需要的援助吗？

### 第六周

1. 在第二次焦点小组讨论中，你还有什么要补充的吗？
2. 你现在想不想再分析一下你自己的阅读信念，比如你为什么要陪孩子读英文绘本？
3. 你对多语言教学法的理解是什么？

### 第七周

1. 与 "情境学习 "有关的故事。

### 第八周

1. 与 "公开教学 "有关的故事。

### 第九周

1. 与 "批评性实践 "有关的故事。

### 第十周

1. 与 "创造性应用 "有关的故事

访谈问题在访谈过程中会有所改变，因为受访者会补充对本研究有用的新想法/信息。

## **Appendix O: Second Focus Group Discussion Guide (English Version)**

### **Warm-up**

A brief review of experiences over the past five weeks, such as reflections on personal interviews and highlights of your home-shared reading on EPBs.

### **Introduction to the Topic**

The researcher presents an introduction to the pedagogy of multiliteracies and informs the study participants of the reasons and purposes for introducing the pedagogical framework in this study.

The study seeks to develop a model and perspective for analysis and discussion using this pedagogical framework and to help participants collectively understand and appreciate the role of pedagogy in English family literacy settings. For example, how to reflect on their own literacy beliefs through the pedagogical framework and construct their own home English literacy activities within the pedagogical framework. Also, this study expects participants to consciously explore and apply pedagogies that meet their needs to assist them in building their family literacy environments and organizing their family literacy activities.

### **Semi-structured discussion questions**

1. What would it look like if you were invited to re-reflect on your English literacy beliefs?
2. Did you know anything about the pedagogy of multiliteracies in the past and how do you feel about it after listening to the researcher's presentation?
3. Would you like to revisit your family literacy activities in multiliteracies pedagogy, and if so, what are your expectations?
4. Do you have suggestions and ideas for the personal interviews and other forms of data collection that will follow in this study, and if so, what is it?

The discussion sessions and topics can be flexibly adjusted or modified according to the joint resolution of the group.

## Appendix P: Second Focus Group Discussion Guide (Chinese Version)

### 热身

简要回顾过去五周的经验，例如对个人访谈的反思，以及你在家分享的关于 EPB 的阅读要点。

### 主题介绍

研究者介绍多语言教学法，并告知研究参与者在本研究引入教学法框架的原因和目的。

本研究试图利用这个教学法框架建立一个分析和讨论的模式和视角，并帮助参与者集体理解和体会教学法在英语家庭识字环境中的作用。例如，如何通过教学法框架反思自己的识字信念，并在教学法框架内构建自己的家庭英语识字活动。同时，本研究希望参与者有意识地探索和应用符合他们需求的教学法，以帮助他们构建家庭识字环境和组织家庭识字活动。

### 半结构化的讨论问题

1. 如果邀请你重新反思你的英语识字信念，会是什么样子？
2. 你过去对多语言教学法有了解吗？听了研究者的介绍后，你有什么感受？
3. 你是否愿意在多语言教学法中重新审视你的家庭识字活动，如果愿意，你有什么期望？
4. 对于本研究后续的个人访谈和其他形式的数据收集，你是否有建议和想法，如果有，是什么？

讨论环节和议题可以根据小组的共同决议灵活调整或修改。

**Appendix Q: Affidavit of Translation****Affidavit of Translation**

I, Yue Cai, am fluent in English and Chinese. I hereby certify that I have verified the following document(s) which is/are attached to this Affidavit:

Advertisement for Recruiting Participants

For research titled

Uncovering the myth of shared reading English picture books for Chinese families:

A narrative inquiry

Investigated by

Kathryn Hibbert & Yijuan Ge

I further certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the attached document(s) in English is/are true and accurate translation of the attached document(s) in Chinese.

## Curriculum Vitae

<b>Name:</b>	Yijuan Ge
<b>Post-secondary Education and Degrees:</b>	<p>Anhui University of Finance and Economics Bengbu, Anhui, China 2000-2004 B.A. of Law</p> <p>Anhui University of Finance and Economics Bengbu, Anhui, China 2005-2008 M.A. of Law</p> <p>Chinese Academy of Social Science Beijing, China 2010-2013 Ph.D. in Communication and Journalism</p>
<b>Honours and Awards:</b>	<p>Doctoral Fellowship of CASS 2010-2013</p> <p>Province of Ontario Graduate Scholarship 2015-2016</p>
<b>Related Work Experience</b>	<p>Research Assistant The University of Western Ontario 2014-2016</p> <p>Lecturer The University of Western Ontario 2016-2018</p>