MAKING VISIBLE THE INVISIBLE: DUAL LANGUAGE TEACHING PRACTICES IN MONOLINGUAL INSTRUCTIONAL SETTINGS

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation documents the work of two teacher collaborators who brought a focus on linguistic and cultural diversity into their literacy teaching even while teaching in English medium schools. The research was carried out during eighteen months utilizing collaborative case study methodology in conjunction with two teachers in highly multilingual and multicultural public elementary schools in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

This study explores the pedagogical possibilities that are made available by teaching for transfer and highlights the resource that students’ linguistic diversity can be even when the instructional setting is monolingual. The dual language literacy pedagogies of the two teachers provide the basis for an analysis of the paths for knowledge construction and identity development that were made available for students through this work. I examine the role that teacher identity and societal influences play in enabling or constraining a redefinition of literacy for the increasingly globalized context of schools. The image of the child, of literacy and of bilingualism projected by the work of the two participating teachers shape the analysis of their identity and role definition as
educators. By examining teaching practices that integrate students’ linguistic and cultural identities into the fabric of the literacy curriculum several themes are considered: (a) the role of teacher identity and choice in creating learning contexts that draw on students’ interests and prior knowledge, (b) the link between student engagement and a classroom ecology that values students’ identities and, (c) the different types of knowledge that are generated in the process of participating in the dual language literacy work.

Results suggest that students were able to utilize their first language skills in the service of learning English. They also experienced a renewed motivation to extend their first language skills into the sphere of literacy as a result of its affirmation within the classroom. In the case of both first and second language development, students’ ability to engage cognitively and affectively in their literacy work was heightened by virtue of the integration of their language and culture into the curriculum.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is in many ways about relationships...between language and identity, theory and practice, teachers and students, researchers and teachers. These relationships have also been what have sustained me during the process of graduate study and thesis writing.

The teachers and students who were my research partners in this study are the reason for this thesis and without them, their work, and their ideas this thesis would not exist. Lisa and Padma have given me so much to think about; their work and their friendships will continue to permeate my life and work. To the students and their families who shared their work, ideas and experiences with me: your stories and insights have and will continue to inspire.

My thesis supervisor Jim Cummins has nurtured, guided and supported me in numerous ways as I made my way in this new territory of research and academic writing. His life’s work and dedication to bilingualism and creating positive learning communities that build on diversity inspired me to follow my interests to graduate study in the first place. His teaching and mentorship allowed me to begin to develop my skills and voice in an academic arena. Being his student has been nothing less than transformative as I have developed new understandings, skills and been given opportunities to participate in work that challenged and encouraged my growth in a variety of areas that I had never before imagined for myself. Thank you Jim, for always having time to listen, share your ideas, and for your endless patience, encouragement and guidance as teacher, mentor, and friend throughout.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The title of this thesis, *Making Visible the Invisible*, comes from the words of Lisa Leoni\(^1\), one of the teachers with whom I worked in developing this study. Her intent in using this phrase was to describe her goal as a teacher to bring students’ often unrecognized linguistic processes in their first language to bear on their learning in the second language. By integrating their home language and culture into the classroom, she brings to light the strengths and knowledge of her students. By describing her work in this way, Lisa highlights the opportunity that she sees in her students’ prior knowledge. She draws attention to the fact that this knowledge encoded in children’s first languages often remains unseen to their teachers and the wider school community in their new country. Whether new immigrants assimilate into their host country or whether they maintain a bicultural identity is typically not a choice. In most countries with large immigrant populations, integration tends to be equated with leaving behind one’s cultural identity, at least in a visible manner. Thus, the fact that Lisa opts to make visible these elements of her students’ identity that are often hidden by necessity signifies a transformative shift in perspective and conveys a fundamentally different message about students’ identities.

I chose Lisa’s words to introduce this thesis because they highlight the major themes that run through this study. These themes relate to the under-utilized resource of students’ home languages in most classrooms and the importance of recognizing learners’ identities as an integral aspect of creating a successful and meaningful learning

\(^1\) Teacher participants are named in this study in order to highlight their collaborator status in this project. However, pseudonyms have been given to the school districts and schools as well as to the student participants in order to protect their privacy.
environment. This idea of visibility and invisibility also relates to the world of teaching in that much of what teachers do often goes unnoticed in the wider research and policy arena. The aim of this project was to learn from and with the teachers about innovative literacy teaching practices that address the interests, strengths and needs of students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds while building an expanded conceptual frame of literacy teaching. As such, the project as a whole adopted a collaborative research model that sought to learn from and with the teacher participants. The way in which this model was developed in this particular study will be articulated in Chapter 4.

This study contributes to the field of second language education by demonstrating that teachers of minority language speakers\(^2\) can support students’ engagement with their new language by building on the structures of literacy that they have already developed in their first languages. I develop several related but distinct themes by examining teaching practices that integrate students’ linguistic and cultural identity into the fabric of the literacy curriculum. One is the importance of teacher choice and role definition in creating learning contexts that draw on students’ interests and prior knowledge, another is the link between student engagement and a classroom ecology of valuing students’ identities, and third, I examine the ways in which linguistic knowledge is utilized and developed by the students in their creation of bilingual identity texts, oral and/or written. A current that runs through all of these themes is my interest in examining the types of

\(^2\) I will use a variety of terms in referring to the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the students who formed part of this study. Although the term minority language speakers can be considered pejorative, it also reflects the minority status that speakers of languages other than English (or French) occupy in Canada (and other countries) that I want to highlight. This minority status and the negative value placed on immigrants in North American society is especially true in the case of those from a Middle Eastern, Arabic background which was the background of many students in this study. In addition to the anti-Arab sentiment prevalent in recent years, skin color is seen to play a factor in general in how immigrant groups are viewed and received into the majority culture. See, for example Portés and Rumbaut’s description of this dynamic in relation to Cuban vs. Mexican immigrants in the United States (2001).
knowledge and identity options that are made available to students or created in the
process of participating in dual language literacy work in which their teachers involve
them.

This study examines the work and identities of two teachers, Lisa Leoni and
Padma Sastri, who work in public elementary schools in the Greater Toronto Area
(GTA). Both schools reflect the increasingly diverse and multilingual population that is
found in the Toronto area (http://www.toronto.ca/quality_of_life/diversity.htm). In this
study, I explore the opportunities that these two teachers were able to create for students
to utilize their first language in school literacy activities even though the teaching context
is not a bilingual program. The teachers’ aim to teach English literacy while activating
students’ linguistic and cultural knowledge as resources for their learning in this new
language was unique in their teaching contexts. The major goals of the study were (1) to
explore the relationship of teacher identity and role definition to the development of the
dual language practices; (2) to examine the ways in which bilingual students are able to
use their first language to mediate their learning of academic English; and (3) to
characterize the teaching practices that facilitated the students’ interactions around their
bilingual identities and their expression through literacy. In addition, I have attempted to
understand the identity and cognitive investments that the students manifested in the
context of their participation in what were essentially bilingual or dual language literacy
pedagogical practices. The choices made by the teachers and the ways in which they have
defined their role as educators of bilingual students is an essential aspect of this study. As
Morgan (2004) states: “…teacher’s identities…are always implicated in the types of
social futures imagined and produced through schooling” (p. 174).
An important element for exploration in this thesis is related to teaching context, preparation and collaboration. The importance of a learning context in which bilingual learners are encouraged to work collaboratively and to utilize their first language(s) and other linguistic tools as resources to mediate their learning of English is a main feature explored in this study. Equally important to consider is the policy context in which the teachers work. This study seeks to explore the intersections of teachers’ decision making in relation to their students’ cultural and linguistic identities and situate these decisions within the wider sociopolitical and policy context. It is suggested that there are multiple ways that teachers can create learning environments that are empowering to students while they cross the literal and figurative borders that inhabiting a new country, learning a new language and engaging in school literacy practices can entail.

A parallel theme running through this project is the dialogic nature of the research partnership and mode of inquiry that the teachers and myself were involved in as we carried out this study. This idea holds true in relation to the style of research and method in which it was carried out and is also at the heart of the theoretical framework that is used in this study. Hones (2002) characterizes dialogic research as drawing from ethnographic, participatory and narrative methodologies in a process that seeks “to engage researchers and participants in dialogues that shed light on economic, political, social, and cultural relationships” (p xiii). Cummins (2000) argues that “both insider and outsider perspectives are essential for understanding particular organizational situations and relationships. Dialogue that brings together what is seen from outside and what is felt from inside is necessary to articulate understandings….Theory expresses this ongoing search for understanding. As such theory itself is always dialogical” (p. 1). This
description of the way that dialogic research weaves theory and practice together reflects
the type of reciprocal learning and collaboration that was fundamental to this study.
Throughout this thesis I will elaborate on different aspects of this idea in relation to the
development of the research and the writing of the thesis, the work of the teachers and the
framing of teacher identity.

This dissertation draws on the theoretical perspective that respect for students’
language and identity is crucial to promoting participation in learning and encourages
teachers to build curriculum based on respect for the child’s language and identity
(Cummins, 1986; 2001; 2004; Moll et al., 1992). Furthermore, this position assumes that
effective pedagogy creates links between students’ lives and their school learning
(Cummins et al., 2006). Cummins (2000) elaborates on the ways in which teacher-student
relationships always entail negotiation of identities and asserts that these negotiations
either reflect or challenge power relations in the wider society. This idea is fundamental
to the analysis of the work of the two teachers documented here. At the heart of this
research is the premise that language and identity are intertwined and that by
orchestrating opportunities for cross language transfer to occur, teachers are involving
students’ identities in their classroom work. It is argued that this approach provides
students with positive affirmation of their status as capable, knowledgeable participants
in their academic work, in addition to strengthening their linguistic knowledge in both
languages.

These case studies aim to provide insight into what it means to redefine literacy
teaching for a multilingual student body and to thus shift the language of power from a
monolingual perspective that devalues minority languages and cultures (Blackledge,
Teaching and the choices that teachers make never occur in a vacuum (Cummins, 2001). Therefore, this study has sought to investigate the role that teacher identity, school or collaborative teaching-research partnerships, and societal influences play in enabling or constraining a redefinition of literacy based on the changing nature of student populations and socio-political realities.

Case study methodology was utilized to document the work of the two collaborating teachers who both teach in English-medium schools with multilingual student bodies. The research was of a collaborative nature because both teachers and myself as graduate student researcher were partners in a larger Canada-wide Social Sciences and Human Resources Council (SSHRC) funded research project that utilized teacher action research as a means to document and examine innovative literacy teaching practices that incorporated a multiliteracies lens. A theoretical framework that encompasses sociocultural and critical multiliteracies positions is taken in the analysis and discussion of the tasks that the teachers set for their students and the types of linguistic and identity interactions that were made possible by them.

The approach to teaching linguistic minority students that is described here contrasts to several common assumptions regarding second language learning and teaching. First, the dominant image of a bilingual person is of someone with two unique languages inhabiting one person rather than an image that conveys a sense of unity within the bi- or multi-lingual person (Cook, 2001). Zentella (2003) discusses the popularized image of bilingual speakers as “two monolinguals stuck at the neck….with one tongue in control of two inviolably separate systems” (p.53). This monolingual norm that she refers to dominates thinking about bilingualism and could be said to be the conceptual
underpinning of the impulse to maintain separation of languages that is so commonly found in English as a second language (ESL) teaching and even in bilingual programs where the first language is assumed to be valued. This idea is reflected in efforts to dissuade bilingual students from engaging in code switching and in frequently heard mandates against speaking the L1 in the classroom or on the playground. In this study the integral relationship between the two languages that bilingual or English language learner (ELL) students commonly use suggests the need to consider the pedagogical opportunities that could be developed around these linguistic connections.

Second, in the past many theories related to second language learning assumed a sequential model of language learning that often translated to valuing oral over written skills and an emphasis on discrete language skills preceding higher cognitive language work in classrooms. In this project, students who were beginner English language learners were able to participate in literacy activities that called on their creativity, imagination and expressive skills. In other words they were participating in higher order processing because they were allowed to work with students who were bilingual and/or they were allowed to begin in their first and stronger language. A third point that this study engages is the need to challenge the idea that it is considered the sole responsibility of the ESL teacher to teach the English language. While it has become more common to hear the dictate that “every teacher needs to be an ESL teacher” (Meyers, 2006), there has been no unifying policy debate regarding how teacher education programs, school board, or school policies might provide guidelines as to what this could look like (Cummins, 2006). This study attempts to contribute to this discussion by examining ways that

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3 A discussion of terminology in relation to students with more than one language follows in a subsequent section.
teachers can integrate language and culture into the curriculum to enrich school literacy teaching.

**Rationale**

This research takes place against the backdrop of rising levels of immigration throughout Canada and the United States. The demographic context in which participating teachers, Lisa and Padma teach is similar to what is found in most of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and in other major urban centers in Canada, the United States, and many European countries. In the GTA where this study has taken place, half the population was born outside of Canada. This makes it the city with the second highest number of foreign-born residents in the world (Mathien, 2004). The figure in Canada as a whole is slightly lower with 20% of the population having been born outside of the country. The projected increase of these numbers predicts that half the population of Toronto and Vancouver will be visible minorities by the year 2017 ("Canada at a glance: Diversity," 2006).

In this context of increasing multicultural and multilingual student population, many educators and policy makers struggle to find effective strategies to integrate the diverse student body into existing school systems and create successful educational programs for everyone. Data from the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) indicates that ELLs are most at risk to failing or dropping out of school. According to figures from 2000, students from socio-economically depressed neighborhoods were the most likely to drop out (Brown, 2006). The relationship between language development and literacy skills is in need of special attention in the case of students for whom English is not their dominant or first language (Ramírez, 2000).
English as a Second Language (ESL) programs have been cut by 15% since 1997/98 while there has been a simultaneous increase by 13.5% in the number of immigrants to urban Ontario (People For Education, 2006). Although provincial support has increased during the past year, this comes after years of declining funding and a lack of consensus with regards to how ESL monies are required to be spent from school board to school board (People for Education). These circumstances have contributed to a situation in which mainstream classroom teachers are expected to support ELLs even though the vast majority of teacher candidates do not receive ESL training (People For Education, 2005). Unlike funding for students with special needs, the supplementary funding allocated at the provincial level to support ESL services, comes with no requirement for accountability as to how the monies are used. That is, although school boards claim this money based on a funding formula related to the number of immigrant and non-English speaking students over a three-year period, they are under no obligation to use the money received for these same students in ways that would directly benefit their language development.

These fiscal and demographic realities underscore the relevance of research that explores alternative ways of conceiving literacy learning in schools with multilingual student populations. Cummins (2006) suggests that in the absence of attention to developing coherent strategies at both the provincial and the local level to address the roles that students’ first languages could play in teaching and learning, misconceptions related to linguistic diversity are allowed to remain unchecked. Many educators fail to recognize the learning resource inherent in the cultural and linguistic knowledge and
skills that students bring with them and instead regard linguistic diversity as a deficit to be fixed.

In addition to promoting the idea that attention to English language learning should not be the sole responsibility of the ESL teacher, this study also aims to call attention to the opportunities for engagement that are created for English language learners when teaching includes and draws on their linguistic and cultural identities. Finally, this study calls into question the deficit-laden image of the bilingual child that is projected by the way English language education is often framed through policy, discourse and practice. It also challenges the trend toward a restricted, one-size-fits-all understanding of literacy that has become more common policy especially in the education of linguistic and cultural minority students. Although this movement is stronger in the United States’ educational context than in Canada’s, both countries have seen an increasing focus on accountability and achievement.

This trend is significant to highlight for the impact that it has on teachers of students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds given that a constricted view of curriculum is often associated with accountability measures and in circumstances that stress outcomes, less weight is apt to be given to a process oriented model of school change. This makes it more difficult for teachers to break out of institutionalized conceptions of literacy and language learning and teaching and more difficult for leaders to encourage teacher choice and innovation. Most relevant to this study are the commonly held assumptions that the first language represents an impediment to learning rather than a resource, that the responsibility for language teaching lies solely with the ESL teacher, and that literacy refers only to English literacy. In addition, the way school leaders and
policy makers understand change to be most effectively modeled is called into question by this study. The data and findings presented here aim to provide a counter-discourse to the above-mentioned norms and present a variety of practical examples that serve as evidence of the many possibilities available to teachers for expanding literacy instruction to include a multilingual focus.

**Context of Study**

The study was conducted as part of a larger research project in which I participated as a graduate student research assistant. The SSHRC-funded Canada-wide research project: *From literacy to multiliteracy: Designing learning environments for knowledge generation in the new economy* (Early et al., 2002) began formal collaboration with teachers in the Toronto area in the spring of 2003. During the first several months (June through December of 2003), a number of meetings were conducted with teachers and administrators from schools in the school board that had expressed interest in participating in the project after being contacted by one of the co-investigators on the project who was one the superintendents in that district. In that role she was responsible for several major board initiatives including equity and diversity.

The meetings included interested teachers and administrators from area schools as well as the university research team. They had the purpose of clarifying the goals of the study, assisting all the participants to understand their role(s) in the study, generating conversation around possible topics that teachers might want to investigate in their practice and discussing the research process. It was during these meetings that I first met Lisa and heard her speak about the work she had done to integrate the curriculum with
her students’ lived experiences, culture and language. Lisa’s interest in basing her action research project around the idea of developing further projects that utilized students’ language and culture as a point of departure for developing curriculum was what initially drew me to work with her.

Several months later, in the fall of the next academic year I met Padma through my work at another school\(^5\) involved with the Multiliteracies Project in a different school board. Padma talked about the dual language approaches she was implementing in her role as teacher-librarian in her highly diverse school and invited me to visit the school. She spoke of her strong commitment to providing opportunities for her students to develop and/or maintain literacy in both of their languages. The decision was made to include the research partnership that developed with Padma as another case in this study in order to gain an added perspective on the issues that had already begun to be explored in my research with Lisa. Padma’s unique position as teacher librarian gave her access to a variety of different grade levels that provided an interesting contrast to Lisa’s classroom teaching situation. It also became clear that including a second teacher participant would enable a further level of analysis for understanding the issues that I planned to study.

*Policy Context*

In this section I briefly review sections of policy documents in Ontario that deal with issues related to second language learners. These are important because they form part of the policy landscape in which these teachers work and, as such, inform their practice. Furthermore, both teacher participants referred often to documents from either

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\(^5\) This school had a prior research collaboration with Jim Cummins of OISE/UT and Sandra Schecter of York University that formed the basis for some of the dual language project work under the Multiliteracies Project (for more information see: http://thornwood.peelschools.org/Dual/).
the Ministry of Education or their school board in order to legitimate their dual language work in conversations with me and in presentations made at conferences, or if questioned by other educators about their rationale for having students write in their L1.

The Ontario Ministry of Education has published curriculum documents for each area of instruction. One of these is titled: “English As a Second Language and English Literacy Development: A Resource Guide” (Ministry of Education, 2001). This document asserts the need for teachers to “incorporate appropriate ESL/ELD approaches and strategies into all areas of the curriculum” (p. 6). On page seven, one half page is devoted to the subheading of “Maintenance of the Student’s First Language”, including the suggestion that educators encourage students to maintain their L1. The benefits to students of maintaining a strong foundation in their L1 are detailed as serving to “develop mental flexibility, problem-solving skills, communicate with family members, experience a sense of cultural stability and continuity, understand cultural and family values, develop awareness of global issues, and expand their career opportunities” (Ministry of Education, p. 7).

Another recent addition to the Ontario Provincial Curriculum guides is entitled: “Many Roots, Many Voices: Supporting English Language Learners in Every Classroom A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators” (Ministry of Education, 2006). This document also provides a rationale for integrating students’ L1 into their instructional practices and acknowledges the rich foundation that students’ first languages can be in their learning of a new language. In addition it elaborates a variety of resources for teachers who are working with English language learners. This report brings all teachers closer to the possibilities that can be developed as part of working with a multilingual student
population drawing on a variety of examples from the work of teachers enacting these strategies.

**Terminology**

In this section I will briefly address the variety of terms that are used in this thesis in relation to students whose first language is not English. The terminology related to this student population has gone through a number of changes in Canada and the United States and continues to do so. As Garcia et al. (2008) state: “There is little agreement about what name best describes these students” furthermore, they explain, each term describes something different and each is problematic in its own right (p. 7).

In the Canadian context, the most common term in use until recently was ESL in most places. English as an Added Language (EAL) became common a few years ago in British Columbia and ELL is now favored in Ontario. In the United States, the term Limited English Speaker (LEP) dominated for many years and although it has largely been replaced in the professional literature by the term English Language Learner (ELL), it continues to be used in federal policy documents. While the term of ELL is seen as less driven by a deficit model than LEP, it is also criticized in some circles for appearing to focus attention solely on the learning of English that is being done by the student instead of also recognizing the other language(s) that the students come with. One alternative is found in the way that Coelho (2003) discusses English programs for English language learners as providing instruction in an “added language”. This terminology shifts from an assimilation mindset of acculturation and language learning that assumes that English should replace students’ first language to one that is more in line with the view of bilingualism as an asset. This is in line with the term utilized in Britain of English as an
Additional Language (EAL). The other commonly used term, English as a Second Language (ESL), which is sometimes still used to refer to students learning English, is limited because it fails to account for the fact that students may already have more than one language prior to learning English. In this thesis, I use the term ESL to refer to a program model and the term ELL to refer to the students in the program. These are the terms that are used in the teaching contexts in which this study took place. Another term that I would like to highlight and will use in some cases in my discussion of this study is one that has very recently surfaced in the literature is that of emergent bilinguals (García et al., 2008). This term highlights the bilingualism that is part of these learners’ identities and by so doing creates a sense of building proficiency in a new language while maintaining the first.

Research Sites and Participants

In this section I will briefly describe the context of the schools and teaching background of the two teacher participants including demographic information regarding the student populations and other data about the school itself. In Chapters 4 and 5, which focus on the two teachers respectively, I will go into greater depth regarding the teaching context and the particulars of each teacher’s classroom. I will also provide general descriptions of the student participants at each site.

Thornton Elementary School

Thornton Elementary School (E.S.) is a public Grades K-8 school in Urban District School Board A, located in a small community 30 kilometers outside of downtown Toronto, Canada. Currently, the city in which the school is found is listed as one of the fastest growing municipalities in Canada. It has more than doubled its
population in the last fifteen years (Di Biase, 2004). The population growth of the area is reflected in the recent expansion of the school board that has increased its student population by 4-5% over the past 20 years. This school board is also cited as being the third largest school board in Ontario at this time. This is exemplified by the 48 new schools that have been constructed since 2000 in order to accommodate the increase in student numbers (Hogarth, 2006).

The school is located in a small community, one of four in a larger city outside of Toronto. The city has historically been home to a large number of Italian immigrants. As of 2001, Italian was still the largest ethnic and language group after English. However in the village where the school is found, Urdu is the second most widely spoken language after English and Italian ("Community profile: Maple," N.D.). This can largely be attributed to the presence of the Islamic Mosque that is a five-minute drive from Thornton School E.S. and which serves as a central location for the community. The mosque and the surrounding land and houses form a subdivision called which is home to the students and their families who are part of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community.

Thornton School E.S. is a public school serving junior kindergarten through Grade 8 with a diverse student body of about 650 students. At the time of this writing, it is only in its eighth year, having been created largely in response to the need for a public school in the area due to the expanding population and high rates of immigration. Approximately 65% of Thornton School students originate from Pakistan and are part of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community. The majority of these students speak Urdu as their first or second language (a few may speak Punjabi in their family and Urdu with the rest of their community as was the case with Asima, one of the student participants in this
study, for example). All students who are newly arrived immigrants to Thornton School E.S., as to any school in Urban District School Board A, must first go to the Reception Centre where they are given an assessment in English proficiency and mathematics.

This Reception Centre opened six years ago in an effort to standardize the assessment process for newly arrived students. These assessments are used to make appropriate decisions regarding placement in English as a Second Language (ESL) or English Language Development (ELD) classes at the school level. There are four stages of second language acquisition and literacy development outlined in provincial curriculum documents on ESL; stage one referring to the beginning learner of English and four being the most advanced stage. Similarly there are four stages for second language acquisition and literacy development for ELD students (see Appendix A for elaboration of these stages).

Although many of the student participants reported having had some exposure to English in their schooling in Pakistan, all were designated ESL students for at least part of the study and had received ESL instruction for at least some of their years at school since their arrival to Canada. Most schools in Pakistan are reported to teach English as a core subject and some schools in Pakistan are considered English medium of instruction schools. Notably, even student participants in this study who had attended English medium schools still reported having had difficulty understanding and fully participating in the English instruction in their classes when they first came to Canada. This could have been due to a number of factors including differences in instructional style or other cross-cultural differences as well as specific language needs.
Lisa Leoni

Lisa has worked at Thornton School E.S. since its inception. She taught a Grade 7/8 class for four years and for the following two years she was an ESL teacher for Grades 3 to 8. During the time of this study, ESL was treated as a pull out class with students attending for one or two periods a day depending on their level of English. The ESL class would replace the language arts period for the students who were in need of more individualized English language and literacy instruction. The decision regarding whether students would attend ESL class for one or two periods is typically made by the ESL teacher based on her knowledge of the students’ progress along the continuum of English language learning and in consultation with the classroom teacher.

The proximal location of the Baitul Mosque to the school has contributed to the creation of a majority population of recently arrived students who are English language learners. Lisa’s interest in including a focus on her students’ language and culture in her teaching was likely one of the reasons that her principal suggested her as a representative from the school to participate in this research project. In addition, her leadership role in the development and institution of the Summer Institute Program since the school had opened may have been a reason that she was considered. The presence of such a diverse student population had been of great interest to Lisa and she had been active in building communication with the community from the time that she began working there. These projects and her work at the school and with the Ahmadi community will be described in more detail in Chapter 4 that deals specifically with her teaching practices.
Marshall Elementary School

Marshall Elementary School (E.S.) is situated in Urban District School Board B about 20 kilometers from downtown Toronto. The school is surrounded by high-rise apartment buildings that serve as affordable housing for newly arrived immigrants or those without established family networks in their new city. This region has documented a staggering rate of growth as a result of high rates of immigration to the area. With the immigrant population at 43% of the 100,000 residents in the area, the social services of the region have been stretched beyond capacity (Rusk, 2005).

Urban District School Board B is the second largest in Ontario after Toronto with an estimated number of 150,000 students. The board has made diversity a focus of their programs and resource allocation. Some examples of this are found in the “Welcome to School” kit developed by the Board and available in 26 languages, and a series of programs and documents entitled “Faith Forward” that reflect increased partnerships with faith communities and a recognition of the religious and cultural diversity of the student body. Another example of the emphasis that the board has put on bringing issues of diversity to bear on school practice is a document entitled “The Future We Want” (Peel District School Board, N.D.). It is a framework for integrating a positive and integrated approach to understanding diversity in the schools that was implemented in 2001. The aim of this initiative was to provide leadership in promoting diversity and equity across all schools in the board. Each school is required to have a teacher committee whose purpose is to ensure that the school is integrating this focus into its practice. At Marshall E.S. the articulation of these goals coincided with many of the initiatives already being taken by the principal and staff at the time. A more detailed description of what this looked like will be given in Chapter 5.
Marshall E.S. has a student population of over 700 students from Junior Kindergarten through Grade 6. The student population is highly diverse: 88 different countries are represented and 44 different languages spoken by students and their families. The location of the school and the fact that the school is largely comprised of recent immigrants to Canada results in a highly transient student body. To illustrate, one teacher remarked that last year in his classroom only five of the students originally in his class at the beginning of the school year remained at the end of the year.

Because of the predominance of students at Marshall E.S. for whom English is not their first language, the ESL services at the school focus primarily on students who are assessed to be at a level 1 or 2 on the four-point scale of English language development from the Ministry of Education (see Appendix A). It was explained that there are simply too many students who are categorized as in need of ESL services to be able to serve all of them with the resources that have been allocated in terms of ESL teachers. This means that students who are assessed at a level 3 or 4 in their English skills are not given individualized or small group support outside of the classroom setting. Rather their English language needs are attended to by the classroom teacher and within the framework of classroom goals and activities. Marshall E.S. then provides a clear example of what is meant by the proposition that ‘Every teacher needs to be an ESL teacher’ in the current context of increasing diversity in public schools throughout Canada and the United States.

Padma Sastri

At the time of the study Padma had been the school librarian at Marshall E.S. for seven years. Prior to teaching at Marshall E.S., she taught for five years in another
elementary school also as teacher librarian. Before immigrating to Canada from India 20 years ago, Padma had taught for three years there in junior and secondary schools. She herself is multilingual, speaking Tamil and Hindi as well as English. Padma’s focus on linguistic diversity in her library teaching provided an opportunity for other teachers in the school to observe a different way of conceiving of attention to language skill development and engagement with literacy. Padma had become involved with a prior research project that had involved Marshall E.S. and another elementary school in the same school board several years earlier and continued collaborative cross-school projects with the teacher who had been involved in that project (Chow & Cummins, 2003; Schecter & Cummins, 2003). Together, they had begun to give workshops for teachers in their school board as well as in other professional venues to demonstrate the type of dual language work that they had initiated with their students. Their school board had begun to recognize the value of their work and promote it by inviting them to speak at these board-sponsored workshops and by giving financial support and encouragement for the purchase of published dual language books by schools with highly diverse student populations.

I conclude this section with a brief description of the path that led me to this research.

**Personal Background**

Peters, Klein and Shadwick (1998) assert the relevance of providing a sense of the perspectives and motives that one brings to the research project. Bilingualism has been a large part of how I identify myself for most of my life. This began as a child enrolled in a dual language French school with my sister for the first four years of our schooling. It
continued with the study of French and Italian in high school and university and then as an adult living in Mexico and learning Spanish. It was extended to my family life when I made the decision to raise my son bilingually. My language learning experiences have been privileged in the sense that they were not begun out of necessity, as is the case for an immigrant; I had been born into a White middle class family and began learning other languages within the context of an English-speaking family environment.

I have had choices regarding learning languages and regarding the use of another language at home with my son. Whereas many immigrant parents are frowned upon for using their first language with their children or inappropriately counseled to abandon it “for the sake of the children’s English development”, the response that I typically receive for speaking Spanish to my son is one of praise, or at the worst, surprise. Generally this surprise is somewhat lessened upon learning that his father is Mexican. However, the fact remains that bilingualism or multilingualism is perceived as an aberration in the United States and is typically viewed as a problem to be dealt with rather than an asset to be nurtured.

In Canada, although there is a national discourse of bilingualism and multiculturalism, the former was based on the hard won political status of the French language as one of the national languages and this does not always translate to inclusion of the languages and cultures of immigrants (Cummins & Danesi, 1990). Appreciation for and development of languages other than the two national languages is not common and their relevance to improved educational strategies is rarely considered. Cummins (2006) explains:

While ‘multiculturalism’ is generally endorsed as a guiding principal for promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, very few ministries of
education or school systems have generated policies that articulate the intersections between ‘multiculturalism’ and linguistic diversity and explore what this might mean for pedagogy (p. 5).

This points to the continued hegemonic position of English (or English and French) in relation to schooling. While at the national policy level a multicultural policy exists and there is a policy attitude of welcoming immigrants into Canada at all levels of the government, there has not been a sustained effort to develop a dialogue around integration of the cultures and languages that those immigrants bring with them to the Canadian society. Therefore, without explicit emphasis on the relevance of heritage languages to immigrant students’ educational success, and to a strong Canadian economy, the languages that immigrant students and their families bring with them are typically dismissed from the educational landscape and the net effect of this lack of attention is that they are devalued.

Although my experience as a language learner and as part of a bilingual family has been one of adding languages to my native knowledge of the dominant language and therefore different from that of most immigrant families, it has afforded me an understanding of what it can be like to move between languages and cultures. My Spanish and identification with Spanish-speaking communities will always be that of an outsider or learner, much as I may have adopted many aspects of the Mexican culture along the way. In terms of language learning, I relied on my knowledge of French in my learning of Spanish and often found myself “understanding” words or phrases in English with more depth upon learning the corresponding word or phrase in French or Spanish. Therefore, the importance of first language use as a tool for second language learning made sense to me not just because of the connection to students’ identity that language clearly seems to hold, but also because of the linguistic and cognitive processes that are
enabled in giving students opportunities to make connections between their two (or more) languages.

Teaching for 12 years in the Chicago Public School system (CPS), eight of those in bilingual programs (Spanish/English) also gave me an appreciation for the ways that different bilingual programs were enacted and for the ways in these programs framed the students of minority language groups differently. In the transitional bilingual programs, students were segregated in separate bilingual classrooms from their English-speaking peers and English was typically taught as a separate subject matter. By contrast, in the dual language program, Spanish dominant students and English dominant students studied together, learning content area material through Spanish. Because Spanish was emphasized, especially in the primary grades, those students with proficiency were language experts to the English dominant students. This elevated the status of those students whose language occupies minority status in the wider society.

Although I did not speak Spanish when I began teaching in the CPS, I observed the pleasure that my fifth and sixth grade students (who had “transitioned” out of their bilingual classrooms) derived from teaching me their words or phrases in Spanish, from being given the opportunity to write their research papers on a topic of their choice (for one student this was the history of the Mexican rice drink Horchata, for another it was the history of comic books, etc.), or from bringing in their music and sharing with me their traditional dances when it was time for a holiday party. I also noticed that the students, who until that year had been in bilingual classrooms, continued to speak amongst themselves in Spanish when solving a math problem or discussing a writing assignment. After finishing my M.Ed., I decided to go to Mexico to learn Spanish so that
I could communicate more easily with the parents of the students I was teaching. I also hoped to gain an understanding about the place and culture that my students and their families came from. I remained in Mexico for the following year, during which time I taught Grades 1 and 2 in English at a private bilingual school.

When I taught in a second grade transitional bilingual classroom after returning from Mexico, I was instructed by the Board of Education in Chicago that students should receive 45 minutes of ESL instruction a day. However there was no set plan that specified how to implement this. It made sense to me to use a content area such as math since we were using a program with a lot of “hands-on” materials that I hoped would facilitate understanding of both the content and the language. In Mexico I had taught English through the content areas and it seemed appropriate that my Mexican students in Chicago should receive the same opportunities for language and cognitive development as their more wealthy peers in Mexico. Although I had not yet read theories of second language learning or bilingual education, I had been influenced by my reading in my master’s program of Lisa Delpit (1988) and Shirley Brice Heath (1983), whose work prompted me to reflect on the disjunction between the types of linguistic opportunities that are afforded students from diverse backgrounds and those that are required for success in school and mainstream society.

The following seven years I taught in a dual language school where teaching language through content areas and the integration of culture into the curriculum formed an integral part of the program. Furthermore, I was able to observe a different model of bilingual education, one in which the minority language students are considered the linguistic experts and where the goal is bilingualism and biliteracy for all students. As a
Grade 1 teacher I observed children developing literacy in both English and Spanish in a variety of ways. Whereas some students followed a seemingly sequential progression from one language to another, others began reading in Spanish and writing in English or other manifestations of simultaneous paths into literacy in both languages. This experience fueled my ideas about the importance of creating opportunities and structures in multilingual teaching contexts that enable students to find ways to utilize their linguistic knowledge for the learning and production in both their first language and the target language. It informed the questions and ideas that I brought to my work as a student of theory in my graduate classes and my work as a research collaborator in this project.
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

“Language to us is not neutral: it is a place, an identity, and a filter.”
-Gina Alhadeff (1997)

*Overview*

Looking closely at the possibilities that teachers can create for students by drawing on their prior linguistic and cultural knowledge assumes a perspective that places the teacher-student relationship at the heart of student engagement in academic work. The theoretical perspective that this study aligns itself with is also based on a view that understands the bilingual or multilingual person to be a whole, rather than a series of different parts; the intertwined nature of language and identity is an essential part of this framing. Linguistic knowledge is seen as one of the tools and resources that the student brings to her school experience as well as a fundamental means through which one’s identity is expressed.

The decisions that teachers make about whether and how to draw on and incorporate those resources or not is related to the conception of teaching and learning and the image of the child that underlies their pedagogy. Encompassed in the formulation of these relationships amongst teaching, literacy languages and identity is a socio-cultural understanding of learning, literacy and identity. This perspective views teaching and learning as social activities and the participants as agents in this endeavor. Likewise, literacy is considered to be context bound and based on meaning making that sees learning as constructed by the learner in interaction with materials and other learners and teachers. This contrasts with a model of learning that situates the learner outside of the material and that views what is to be learned as a set of isolated skills to be adopted or
acquired. In this latter formulation, literacy is understood to bear no relation to the purposes for which it is being used and the people using them.

Two related frameworks directly informed the design of this study; the multiliteracies framework (Cazden et al., 1996) and the development of academic expertise framework (Cummins, 2001). The multiliteracies framework elaborates a way of re-envisioning the taken for granted dominance of English and text-based literacy in the multicultural and multimodal world in which we live. Cummins’ framework explicitly develops the relationship between identity, language, teaching and the teacher-student relationship. These frameworks are elaborated in the following sections.

**Multiliteracies**

The multiliteracies framework was developed by a group of researchers who self-identified as “The New London Group” (Cazden et al., 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). These researchers propose to examine literacy and the teaching of literacy with an eye to the social realities in which students find themselves both as relates to their immediate life circumstances as well as with regards to what will be expected of them in their future working conditions.

The authors discuss teaching as being about building relationships and creating the conditions for students to participate fully and equitably in society. They suggest that although literacy teaching has always been recognized as playing a key role in this socialization process, it has traditionally been restricted to “formalized, monolingual, monocultural, and rule-governed forms of language” (p. 60). They argue that current conditions in society require that literacy now be recognized as being formed of a diversity of discourses. The two aspects of this multiplicity that they underscore as being
most salient are: (a) the linguistic diversity that is increasingly the norm in the student population of schools especially, but not exclusively, in large urban centres; and (b) the progressively more numerous forms of literacy and the range of modalities that are used to represent text that are encountered in use in public life.

The New London Group’s “pedagogy of multiliteracies” therefore aims to give greater importance to a variety of modes of representation rather than solely favoring a single, and apparently, stable system of literacy and language usage. Because the researchers define the modes of representation as being created by and within different contexts, the idea of literacy also shifts from one that is more top down and totalitarian to one that is dynamic and non-authoritarian. They relate this understanding of literacy to the idea that literacy educators and students should define themselves as being “active designers—makers—of social futures”. This last point is important as it relates to the manner in which this group of researchers understands the “what” of literacy pedagogy. They elaborate this with the concept of “Design” which they define by explaining that we are all “both inheritors of patterns and conventions of meaning and at the same time active designers of meaning. And as designers of meaning, we are designers of social futures” (p. 64). This last point suggests the possibility of a transformative vision of literacy and literacy teaching.

These researchers describe six elements that are conceptually key to any development of literacy pedagogy in this designing process: Linguistic Meaning, Visual Meaning, Audio Meaning, Gestural Meaning, Spatial Meaning and Multimodal (the use of the preceding five in combination with each other). These are then related to the modes of pedagogy that they describe as being Situated Practice, in which meaning-making is
taught through the public realm and workplaces; Overt Instruction, in which students are explicitly taught a meta-language of Design; Critical Framing, which is intended to help students develop an awareness of the social context(s) and purpose(s) of different Designs of meaning; and Transformed Practice, which focuses on students as meaning-makers and therefore Designers of social futures (p. 64).

The ideas that are developed in this framework about literacy and pedagogy in this framework explicitly tie the former to issues of work, the workplace and what active citizenship looks like in today’s society. The authors engage with the ideas of societal systems and networks of life, learning, and work rather than with analyzing concepts of culture and identity. A strong relationship is developed therefore, between shifts in language and literacy and the changing nature of work place. They make the argument that new workplace discourses required for workers to succeed also require being able to adapt quickly to changing needs, to be innovative and able to utilize a variety of resources to solve problems. These changes result in the need for teachers to promote students’ capacity to “speak up, to negotiate, and to be able to engage critically with the conditions of their working lives” (p. 66).

The theory proposed in the multiliteracies framework attempts to reconcile the divisions that have been found in the field of literacy by advocating both attention to form and an orientation to literacy teaching that grounds itself in the social realities and practices of students and their families. This critical orientation toward the nature of literacy parallels the increased attention to the socio-cultural nature of language learning in the field of second language education. An underlying assumption gained by this theoretical stance is the acceptance that there is a relationship between the broader socio-
political context in which students and teachers work and with the way literacy and languages are represented and taught. In addition, the multiliteracies framework advocates a pedagogy that critically examines the meanings and power structures that are represented in texts (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Unsworth, 2002). By focusing attention on the way meaning is structured in different texts, teachers can give students access to an understanding of the patterns of language in different contexts. In this framework, it is asserted that gaining this type of critical awareness of language results in increased skills and flexibility in utilizing and analyzing language, a necessary step in being able to “read the world” (Freire & Macedo, 1987). This, it is argued, will also lead to an increased sense of power over one’s circumstances, one’s learning, and an ability to move between different social contexts.

The Development of Academic Expertise Framework

In the academic expertise framework, the importance of a focus on use, language and meaning in language and literacy teaching is highlighted and the central role that language plays in being able to successfully negotiate one’s place in school and society is under-scored. Cummins’ theory provides a frame for understanding the potential inherent in the teacher-student relationship. Central to this is the idea of strengthening students’ cognitive engagement through the negotiation and investment of identities. This framework therefore situates the relationship between teacher and students as central to students’ academic investment. It posits identity negotiation as primary to strong knowledge generation. The interactional space that the framework sets forth as central to learning echoes Vygotsky’s (1978b) concept of the zone of proximal development in that it views these relationships as necessary conditions for strong learning to occur.
However, Cummins’ academic expertise framework further asserts that these interactions are reflective of power structures beyond the learning context and therefore never neutral; they either challenge or reinforce existing power relations within the larger society.

In addition, the importance of bringing a focus on use, meaning making and form in relation to language teaching is highlighted in this framework. These are representative of areas within language development that are important to emphasize in developing students’ knowledge and expertise with academic literacy. Positing these three elements around the central figure of interaction within the learning community reminds us that the ways in which language and literacy is taught, is constructed by the teacher. The particular elements of language and literacy mentioned in this framework underscore the importance of delving beneath the surface elements of language in order to develop a critical lens in relation to language use. It is argued that this critical stance in relation to language affords students a means by which to act in relation to their own life circumstances as well as to be better able to access multiple levels of understanding of words and texts. The parallel awareness of and critical analysis of language forms and their uses is especially salient in relation to teaching students from diverse language backgrounds where these skills can be appropriated in the form of translations, comparative examination of word meanings, forms and phrasings across and among languages. This framework posits that these activities would afford students the opportunity for increased cognitive and linguistic transfer.

This attention to different modes of language use and purposes in many ways parallels the multiliteracies framework. What is explicitly differentiated here between them is the primacy given to identity negotiation in Cummins’ work. The teacher-student
relationship is understood not as a static concept but rather as an ongoing identity
negotiation between teacher and students in the course of constructing and participating
in language and literacy work. In the academic expertise framework the opportunities for
engagement that are created by the teacher in relation to language and literacy are seen as
intimately linked to the image that the teacher holds of her students. This idea is further
developed below in relation to the concept of role definition.
Figure 1

The Development of Academic Expertise

(Cummins, 2001, p. 125)

Focus on Meaning

• Making input comprehensible
• Developing critical literacy

Teacher – Student Interactions

Focus on Language

• Awareness of language forms and uses
• Critical analysis of language forms and uses

Focus on Use

Using language to:

• Generate new knowledge
• Create literature and art

Maximum Cognitive Engagement

Maximum Identity Investment
**Role Definition and Teacher Identity**

Cummins’ (2001) empowerment framework provides the backdrop for the discussion of teacher role definition in this thesis. This framework articulates the interplay between power relations at the macro (i.e., socio-political) level and the micro (i.e., classroom) levels. This framework demonstrates the importance that educators have in either acquiescing to or challenging assumed norms regarding cultural and linguistic diversity and power relations that both derive from and are a driving force in the creation of these assumptions. The framework’s intention is to highlight the fundamental sociopolitical and socio-historical context of educational settings and therefore contextualize the work of teachers. Central to the theoretical frame I articulate for this study is the premise that the teacher brings certain attitudes about her students to her teaching and that these attitudes are often reflected in the choices she makes about what kind of activities in which she engages her students. This dynamic is expressed through the idea of role definition. The notion of a classroom ecology that is orchestrated by the teacher is developed as a way of conceiving the inter-relationship of the teachers’ enacting of their role definition in their practice and their students’ identity and academic investment. Hawkins’ (2004) discussion of the metaphor of classroom ecology is helpful in understanding this idea:

> Classrooms are complex ecosystems, where all of the participants, the practices, the beliefs, the forms of language, the forms of literacies, the social, historical and institutional context(s), the identity and positioning work, the politics and power relations, the mediational tools and resources, the activity tools and resources, the activity and task designs, and the influences of the multiple local and global communities within which they are situated come together in fluid, dynamic, and ever-changing constellation of interactions, each one impacting the other (p. 21).
I draw on Cummins’ (2001) explanation of role definition as that which “…refers to the mindset of expectations, assumptions and goals that educators bring to the task of educating culturally diverse students” (p. 19). Cummins (2000) explains that the positions
that educators take in relation to social and educational structures are manifested through their teaching. In this thesis, I use the theoretical construct of role definition to understand the image of the student and the image of bilingualism that is articulated by the work of the teacher. These ideas are constructed by the teacher—in response to and interaction with her students, and, in response to and interaction with the social, political and policy context of her teaching. The construct of role definition therefore indicates how teachers are defining their role in relation to students and how this aligns with or contrasts to the role definitions that are reflected by policies and practices in their schools, school systems and the wider society.

By focusing on the construct of role definition, I view the teacher as an agent in her development of a classroom ecology that situates students and learning activities in a certain light. The idea of role that is being advanced then regards teaching as a process rather than a series of techniques. Although this perspective underscores the premise that teachers have choices, it is likewise important to recognize that these choices are not made in a vacuum; teachers are often forced to choose to define their role in opposition to the prescribed role definitions constructed by educational policy (Cummins, 2001). Dominant societal attitudes regarding immigrants and bilingualism figure as important factors in contextualizing the decisions that these teachers strive to make in order to create a respectful learning dynamic for culturally diverse students.

**Identity**

The theoretical stance that is taken in this study regarding identity is rooted in a socio-cultural framework that views identity development as occurring in interaction with others in socially and culturally organized contexts (Norton, 2000). In this sense teacher
identity can be elaborated through the expectations and attitudes that are held by the
teacher in relation to her work with students (Morgan, 2004). In this view student and
teacher identity are negotiated rather than static. Teacher identity can also be closely
connected to the type of pedagogical stance taken in developing curriculum. Cummins
(2000) differentiates between "surface structure" and "deep structure" issues in classroom
orientation in order to highlight the importance of attending to how language and literacy
are taught, not simply to the question of in what language the teaching is occurring.
Kalantzis, Cope and Slade (1989) similarly argue that students' L1 should be fostered in
ways that go beyond simply developing linguistic capacity to enable access to and
participation in power structures.

Cultural studies theorists such as Hall (1990) argue that we all embody multiple
and changing identities. In the case of the students in this study, the range of experiences
that they have lived prior to or outside of their school life in Canada further argues for a
recognition of identity as multiple and runs counter to the assumptions of a typical or
“mainstream” student that most curriculum is aimed at. My discussion of teacher and
student identity revolves around two central points: one is that the image that teachers
hold of their students is reflected in the activities that they develop for their students, and
the other is that the way they describe their role as educators in relation to their students
likewise reflects the image they have of their students and the expectations that they hold
for them in relation to the wider society. In this way any discussion related to teacher or
student identity is characterized in the context of collaborative interactions⁶, with
language, texts and within the context of the school and society. By this I mean to

⁶ In my discussion of collaboration in the case of students, this term is meant to include peer work and
family networking. In the case of teachers, it includes collaboration with teacher colleagues, administrators,
and relationships developed out of university research partnerships.
highlight that identity is necessarily constructed in relation to others, not in a vacuum. Cummins (2004) has elaborated on his concept of identity negotiation between teacher and students by describing the work created through this interpersonal space as “identity texts”. He describes these as:

the products of students’ creative work or performances carried out within this pedagogical space…insofar as students invest their identities in these texts that may be written, spoken, visual, musical, dramatic or combinations in multimodal form that then hold a mirror up to students in which their identities are shared in a positive light. (p. 72)

In a similar vein, Pahl and Rowsell (2005) describe literacy as being infused with identity and state that identity “breathes life into literacy” (p. 98). Several studies (e.g., Norton, 2000; Peirce, 1995; Rutherford, 1990; Suárez-Orozco, 1989) have contributed to our understanding of the multiple ways that language, identity, and social and cultural situations can shape and be shaped by each other. The literature related to these ideas will be reviewed in Chapter 3.

**Pedagogical Approaches**

Principles of teaching and learning that identify the importance of actively generating meaning as central to acquiring skills and new understanding have been applied to theorizing about the teaching of reading and writing as well as second language learning (Cummins, 1983). Drawing these distinctions amongst pedagogical approaches assists in understanding the image of the child and her language/culture that are projected by the teacher. Cummins (2005) explains: “Instructional assumptions are concerned with the conceptions of language, knowledge, and learning that underlie various forms of teaching while social assumptions focus on the ways in which relations of culture and power are addressed in the curriculum” (p. 3).
Cummins (2005) discusses three major pedagogical approaches: *traditional* (or transmission), *social constructivist* and *transformative*, each of which brings with it a different way of thinking about instruction and social relationships. Traditional pedagogy is explained as teaching that is represented through the banking metaphor. In this model students are seen as places to deposit information, knowledge is seen as static and one-sided; delivered rather than constructed and social in nature. A social constructivist perspective on pedagogy by contrast, views learning as occurring in interaction with others. Therefore, the social experiences that people bring with them are equally as important as those in which learning takes place. This type of teaching often involves an activity-based curriculum design that encourages collaboration amongst peers and with materials. Students build their understandings of concepts through engagement with materials and problems. It is from this model that the idea of meaning making that I draw on in describing student and teacher work in this thesis is derived. This conception of teaching and learning is at the root of transformative teaching as well; however, in this model, an emphasis on social realities in the curriculum is considered fundamental to engaging students in the learning process. This model therefore aims to involve students’ lived realities in all aspects of the curriculum in ways that that relate to issues of importance to them and to the social circumstances in which they are living.

In the following Chapter, I review the literature that provides the basis for the theoretical frameworks described above.
CHAPTER 3: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this Chapter I present a range of research that informs theory and practice in relation to the education of second language learners. Specifically, I will explore studies that discuss bilingualism and education, the role of prior knowledge and cross language transfer, and language learning and identity. I will attempt to explain the research that is important to the theories that ground this study. Where relevant I will highlight where theories have either been in conflict with each other or where there has been more emphasis placed on certain ways of thinking about issues over others.

It is important to recognize that the sociopolitical context in which research and practice in this field takes place is one that is embedded in conflicting ideologies related to language policy, national identity, and power structures that privilege one language over others. These are necessarily related to the way in which bilingualism, linguistic diversity, and culture get played out in the field of education. This has meant that debates that have marked the fields of literacy have often been even more politically charged in relation to the teaching of English language learners. While the major division in the area of literacy for second language learners has focused on language of instruction, controversies in the larger field of literacy such as the form versus function dichotomy also effect decisions made regarding second language teaching.

In the sections below I address what has typically been seen as the need for a strict divide between languages of instruction in ESL or bilingual education. While the intent behind this idea is usually to strengthen the target language, what often results is a dismissal of the benefits that the first language can lend to the learning of the second language. Therefore, in the review of literature that follows, I will examine studies that bring a perspective that considers the potential for developing pedagogies that draw on
both languages a student brings to the classroom. In this way I hope to build an understanding of the implications of a narrow interpretation of this construct that results in a pitting of languages against each other rather than finding ways to utilize them both to benefit learners. Central to the idea of transference of learning between languages is the understanding that sees all learning as being built on prior knowledge. Thus, I will consider research that expands on this understanding of learning and its application to teaching. Finally, because of the importance of identity to this study, I will discuss the research literature related to the identity and language learning.

**Bilingualism in Education**

A wide body of research has established the positive effects of bilingualism on cognitive development as well revealing the benefits of developing students’ first language in order to facilitate literacy learning in their second language. However, this has not always translated to bilingualism playing a valued role in schooling. Nevertheless, a substantial amount of research has been conducted that looks at the role of the first language in developing the second, most of it in the area of literacy learning.

The different linguistic registers found in the context of school learning are an important feature of understanding learning in a second or added language. Cummins’ (1979b) seminal distinction between Basic Interpersonal Conversational Speech (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALPS) has been a key tool to conceptualize the distinct types of linguistic expectations made of students in different contexts. They have been vital in addressing the need to examine what types of linguistic knowledge and skills are expected of students in school. Furthermore they have elucidated the importance of looking beyond conversational fluency in evaluating
students’ ability to function in an academic setting that asks them to perform in their second language.

It has often asserted that the importance of schooling in general and literacy learning in particular is intensified for immigrant youth because schooling is the entry point into their new society, and literacy is the major tool for successfully navigating achievement in school and society (Pérez, 2004). Schleppegrell (2004) explains the consequences that a lack of explicit attention to academic language can present: “In the absence of an explicit focus on language, students from certain social class backgrounds continue to be privileged and others to be disadvantaged in learning, assessment, and promotion, perpetuating the obvious inequalities that exist today” (p. 3).

One way in which we can understand how to create an explicit focus on language and draw on the resources that students bring with them in the form of their language backgrounds is to explore what the studies can show us about how bilingualism can be a constructive force in learning. Research studies that have examined the relationship between bilingualism and the acquisition of academic skills in a new language have supported Cummins’ hypothesis of common underlying proficiency and have brought to light different ways in which it is possible to understand the transference of literacy skills from one language to another (August et al., 2000; August & Shanahan, 2006; Cummins, 1981a; Verhoeven, 1991b). According to these studies, the more a learner’s first language is developed, the greater is her or his capacity to transfer this knowledge to a second language. This transference holds true in relation to literacy in particular. For example, Ramirez (2000) demonstrated that the ability to understand two languages and being given the opportunity to compare and contrast them assists learners in the process of
developing strong literacy skills in the new language. In an effort to broaden the scope of
the research on cross language transfer, Proctor, Carlo, August, and Snow (2006)
examined the effect of language of literacy instruction in emergent readers on decoding
skills in both languages, oral proficiency, and reading comprehension for speakers of
Spanish as their L1 who were English language learners. A study of Spanish-English
bilingual students, compared students who had received L1 instruction prior to beginning
third grade and those who had not, found that students who had been taught to read in
Spanish transferred their reading skills and strategies to English (August, Calderon, &
Carlo, 2002). Freeman, Freeman, and Mercuri (2003) report on a study of three high
school students with different educational backgrounds in their L1. They provide us with
an in-depth picture of how prior schooling and literacy development in L1 interacts with
students’ L2 school achievements and suggest that pedagogy take into account the higher
success rates of those with L1 literacy.

In a case study of reading strategies employed by bilingual readers, García,
Jiménez, and Pearson (1995) found that the strong bilingual reader in their study
employed many strategies that drew on her knowledge of two languages in order to make
sense of texts. While this student used meta-linguistic tools such as knowledge of
cognates and keeping track of her understanding, the less successful bilingual reader did
not apply these strategies and discussed her knowledge of two languages as an
impediment. Further research in this area would be productive to enable more
understanding of what factors contribute to students' outlooks on their bilingualism and to
their abilities to utilize their bilingualism as a resource in their literacy work. Again, the
importance of instruction that points students toward developing or drawing on strategies such as these is underscored in these studies.

Although Durgunoglu’s (1998; Durgunoglu & Oney, 2000) studies have also substantiated cross language transfer, demonstrating that instruction in the L1 positively influences the development of L2 literacy skills, he asserts that more research is needed to understand the nature of cross language transfer in literacy and how it operates. This gap in the research is attributed to the fact that most studies in this area have focused on adults whose literacy is already well developed, specifically their word-recognition skills. In addition, Durgunoglu and Oney (2000) explain that most researchers studying second-language reading in school-age children have done so from a top-down perspective of literacy which tends to focus measures on reading achievement outcomes rather than on reading processes.

A further difficulty in studying the transference processes related to literacy in bilingual learners is that in order to fully understand and differentiate between issues related to reading skill and those related to linguistic knowledge, it is necessary to evaluate language proficiency in the first language. Recent research in the area of early literacy for multilingual learners has looked at the possibility of simultaneous literacy learning in children’s languages as another way of approaching the development of literacy for bilingual children (Brock et al., 1998; Moll et al., 2001; Reyes, 2001; Robertson, 2006). By studying children who are learning two or more languages at the same time, these studies depart from the typical monolingual and sequential focus of second language learning that has dominated theories of literacy development for bilingual children. Reyes (2001) describes two children in dual language Grade 1
classroom whose interactions around text facilitate their biliteracy development. Because the structure of the classroom in this Reyes’ study was one that encouraged literacy in both languages (Spanish and English), students felt comfortable forging alliances that were based around both social and linguistic connections to text in both or either languages. For one student, this meant learning to read in Spanish because her best friend was learning to read in Spanish. This suggests the importance of finding ways to forego a strict separation of languages in bilingual classrooms and a strict sequencing of developing competence in one and then another if it is possible to do so in ways that maintain a high degree of engagement in both. Manyak (2002) has done similar work in his research demonstrating the power that children writing or dictating their stories first in Spanish has on their English learning.

In her study, Robertson (2006) analyses the experiences of five children between the ages of five and seven who are experiencing several different literacy and language systems in different contexts. They learn to read Arabic for their Qu’ranic classes at the Mosque, attend heritage language Urdu classes in a community center, and learn to read English. Students were able to articulate their notions of literacy as having to do with different rule systems. The guiding question for Robertson in conducting this study was whether children who are emergent bilinguals and not fluent in either writing system yet “…transfer their accumulating skills of different writing systems when they learn to read for the first time and simultaneously in two or more languages?” (p. 47). These studies support the argument that students should not be restricted from engaging in writing and reading only after achieving a target level of oral proficiency.
Reyes, Laliberty and Orbaosky (1993) further argue that the impulse to separate students’ languages in order to facilitate L2 learning for bilingual students has often been based on an exclusive focus on oral language development instead of considering the potential for literacy development in both languages or for a broader conception of what is accomplished by including both languages in the learning context (e.g., a multicultural awareness). This suggests that the importance of including students’ L1 in the classroom context is about more than just utilizing and promoting students’ linguistic knowledge and indicates that even when the teaching context does not allow for high degrees of bilingual instruction, there are still strong social and cognitive benefits associated with drawing on students’ linguistic background (Lucas & Katz, 1994). Although it follows that if the language of instruction is not in the student’s dominant language his or her ability to interact with and comprehend texts will be limited the utility of bringing the first language into the school environment has often been interpreted as being possible solely in a bilingual instructional model.

**Building on Prior Knowledge**

The relevance of background knowledge to effective learning has been discussed within different disciplines and from a variety of perspectives. The two most prominent fields to contribute research in this area have been those working from an anthropological background (Au & Jordan, 1981; Lipka & McCarty, 1994; Moll et al., 1992) and those in the field of cognitive psychology (e.g., Bransford et al., 2000). The former area of research has seen the benefit in developing relationships between the community, schools, and the individual student in order to facilitate strong ties to learning while the latter has focused on the processes of learning that transpire for the individual describing
how prior knowledge and experiences are constantly being drawn on as new knowledge is constructed. I will first describe the work that has been done in the area of cognitive psychology that addresses the importance of prior knowledge for learning.

Cognitive psychology has emphasized the importance of prior knowledge to new learning. The cognitive perspective examines processes and structures (such as perception, memory, and knowledge) that occur at the individual level (Greeno, 1997). Although the focus of cognitive psychology has not primarily been on how these theories relate to and influence classroom instruction, over the last two decades greater attention has been paid to the potential for teachers to learn from cognitive theories and research (Foster, 1986). Foster (1986) developed a list of ten principles of learning that build on the work of cognitive psychologists that he considered useful for consideration in instructional settings. Two of the ten that are immediately relevant to the study under consideration here are numbers 5 and 7 on the list. They are: 5.) A person’s perceptions of self (including self-efficacy) and one’s surrounding world (in dynamic interaction) influence every learning experience, and, 7.) Transfer increases with task similarity and the degree to which new learning may be ‘anchored’ into existing cognitive structure’ (p. 237).

The learning theory of constructivism draws directly from cognitive psychology as the branch of psychology that most closely addresses teaching and learning. Constructivism is articulated as acknowledging “the learner’s active role in the personal creation of knowledge, the importance of experience (both individual and social) in this knowledge creation process” (Doolittle, 1999, p. 1).
Bransford, Cocking and Brown’s (2000) comprehensive book, *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School*, specifically seeks to address the connections that can be forged between what is known about learning in the cognitive sciences and how teachers and schools can orient their instruction based on this knowledge in order to build effective, engaging learning environments. Their work underscores the fundamental role that prior knowledge plays in learning. They explain this by elaborating learning as a process that involves relating new information to that which has already been learned. Another interesting and related point that they make has to do with the idea that knowledge is conditional, that is, one’s understanding of an idea is often dependent on the conditions in which it was learned and also in which it can be applied. Therefore, they argue that knowledge is assimilated more easily when connections are made with what is already known and when learners are able to draw parallels to other skills or knowledge. In the case of learning new languages, this is strongly suggestive of the importance of drawing out relationships between linguistic systems.

The authors of the above book also point to the importance of cultivating a sense of oneself as a learner and thinker. This suggests the power that recognizing patterns and understanding one’s place in a learning schema has for increasing cognitive engagement and growth. Interestingly, both of these ideas are intricately tied to identity. In the first point made, the connection is made to what people bring with them to the learning setting, in other words, when teachers make it clear that they want to know what their students know already they are communicating an important message about the worth of those students’ prior experiences. In the second point, the suggestion is that by cultivating
a sense of oneself as a learner, the student will feel a sense of agency and engagement around school and learning.

Although the above research and theory has a lot to offer in terms of understanding learning, there are certain elements that are not touched upon by these theoretical constructs. One of the areas in which cognitive theory has seen to be lacking is in the lack of attention to the cultural or community-based resources that students bring with them to their learning. This is where attention to what is commonly referred to as students’ “funds of knowledge” enters the discussion. Furthermore, this line of research has typically given attention to examining what processes teachers can put into place to engage students’ prior knowledge. On the other hand, the anthropological perspective that has been brought into research in the field of education has increasingly given importance to the role prior knowledge can play in the learning context.

Specifically, students' lived experiences and prior knowledge are often cited as crucial elements in developing effective pedagogy for minority students (Cummins, 1986; Moll & Gonzalez, 1994; Nieto, 1992). For example, González and Moll (2002) advocate drawing on students and their families' “funds of knowledge” in order to build bridges between students’ home lives and their school learning. Pérez (2004) asserts that structuring the curriculum around "community centered approaches capitalizes on the social-communicative nature of literacy" (p. 39). Likewise, Au (1998) has suggested the need to utilize a social constructivist perspective to argue for a re-conceptualization of the achievement gap between majority students and students from diverse backgrounds.

Similarly, Kelly, Gregory, and Williams (2001) suggest the need to shift the paradigm of parental involvement in early literacy that is typically constituted through
story-reading alone to one that considers the home and community literacy practices that new immigrants bring with them. They argue, for example, that this reorientation would provide validation to the extended family and community networks that might be more commonly found in immigrant families and differences in language and literacy practices would be made relevant to school learning rather than glossed over by the urge to orient parents to a single way of helping their children become engaged readers.

Another set of researchers (e.g., Cummins, 1996; Nieto, 1999b; Valadez, 1981) discuss similar ideas from the point of view of developing students’ identity investment in school by orienting classroom practice around students’ personal interests, language and culture. They suggest that this would increase linguistically and culturally diverse students’ investment in school culture and that this could positively impact on achievement. The wide body of research alluded to above has documented ways that pedagogy can be reconceived to address the context of students’ lives and build bridges between their experiences and school learning (Blackledge, 2000; Edwards, 1998).

The primary orientation of the studies reviewed here is one that advocates drawing on students’ first language and culture in curriculum development and instruction in order to build on students’ prior knowledge. Several recent studies (e.g., Chow & Cummins, 2003; Cummins et al., 2005; Masny & Ghahremani-Ghajar, 1999) have documented the work of teachers who have utilized students’ first language alongside the target language in order to build on students’ first language and culture in their new learning contexts. These examples demonstrate ways in which curriculum units can be tied to students’ lived experiences (e.g., during a unit on migration students can write their own migration stories and/or interview family members to document theirs).
In the Internet Age, these pedagogical methods for drawing connections between languages and cultures can also be extended to incorporate transnational connections with sister class partnerships or school-wide exchanges with schools elsewhere (Cummins & Sayers, 1995; Cummins et al., 2007). These connections make scholastic use of the extended border crossings that new immigrant (or second and third generation) students often make (Portés, 1999). They also make academic use of new technologies such as the Internet and email to create websites, to share with and comment on students' work, to write about topics being studied for extended audiences. Furthermore, these studies demonstrate that students can be instrumental in establishing and operating these technologies, making them the experts and giving their identity as skilled with electronic technology a place in the school context. The ideas presented in the research reviewed here demonstrate multiple ways that schools can respond to students' needs, and scaffold student learning based on their background knowledge and interests.

**Linguistic Interdependence**

Building on students’ prior knowledge is directly related to advancing an understanding of what is known about linguistic interdependence and its application to learning in a new language. Research discussed in the prior sections alert us to the important function of drawing on prior knowledge in general and students’ prior linguistic knowledge in particular. Studies have demonstrated that the cognitive processes of learning to read happen once which appears to be one of the clearest examples of the underlying interdependence of linguistic processing (Krashen, 1996). However, because language is not one unified skill, rather a multi-faceted relationship amongst skills, it is
essential to delve further into the ways in which languages and the skills associated with
them (e.g., listening, reading, writing, speaking) relate to and interact with each other.

Although common pedagogical practice has seen it inadvisable to promote
students’ use of their L1 in completing work in their L2 in ESL or foreign language
contexts, theory has suggested otherwise. Cummins’ (1979a) linguistic developmental
interdependence hypothesis proposes a relationship between the competence developed
in the L2 with the linguistic competence developed in the L1. This hypothesis has
provided the basis for much research in the area of bilingualism and cross-language
transfer of knowledge. This hypothesis suggests that the skills developed in one language
will benefit the other language if there is positive support for and acceptance of the other
language. Therefore, if there is linguistic support for the child’s L1 then the L2 will
develop without undermining the L1. This has a number of implications for practice
including a positive relationship between creating an environment that accepts and
promotes learners’ first language knowledge with development of the new language.

Edwards (1998) asserts that: “….students who are already literate in one language will be
able to transfer a whole range of skills when they start to read a second language” (p. 52).
MacWhinney (N.D.) similarly states that: “the fact that L2 learning is so heavily
influenced by transfer from L1 means that it would be impossible to construct a model of
L2 learning that did not take into account the structure of the first language” (p. 2). These
theories have been the basis for a number of studies looking at different aspects of the
interdependence between languages in a variety of learning contexts.

One area of research that is concerned with linguistic interdependence has
examined the nature of bilingual children’s language and literacy development and how
its course may differ from that of monolingual children. This is an important area of study because in order to understand how to best teach children who are bilingual, it is necessary to comprehend and appreciate the ways in which the two languages interact with each other and with literacy development. It has been shown for example, that unevenness in skill level in one or the other language that is often found in bilingual children is a factor of the changing nature of bilingualism and the changing nature of the dependence on or relationship between languages (Verhoeven, 2007). The different skills and knowledge demonstrated also may depend on the area in which students are being assessed or depending on the mode of evaluation being used. One of the most important things that has been brought to light from data in this area is what has been termed the “distributed characteristic” of knowledge in bilinguals (Oller & Pearson, 2002). This refers to the different ways in which vocabulary and linguistic knowledge develops in both languages. These patterns are furthermore understood to change over time depending on the context of schooling, social pressures and exposure and use (Oller et al., 2007). This line of research indicates both the profoundly embedded and complex nature of linguistic interdependence to the language and literacy development of bilinguals.

The potential that linguistic and literacy knowledge has to transfer from and between languages and the apparent use that this transference plays in the service of new learning, therefore argues for further research into learning how this transference operates under different conditions and in what ways it might be used as a tool for teaching and learning. Recent research studies in the area of French immersion schooling (e.g., Swain & Lapkin, 2000) describe interventions undertaken that explore the use students make of
their L1 while working on writing tasks in their L2. The researchers examined whether there was a correlation between how much students interacted in their L1 and the subsequent quality of the writing they produced. The authors utilized a socio-cultural theoretical model to analyze the data arguing that this lens is necessary to attend to the collaborative nature of the work that students engaged in during their dialogue about their writing.

In his study, Vandergrift (2006) explored the relationship between listening comprehension in L1 and L2 for Grade 8 English speaking students who were French learners. He was interested in investigating the role that students’ L1 listening ability and L2 proficiency play in listening comprehension in the L2. His data discerned a similar pattern to other studies that came at this question from a focus on reading comprehension. These results suggest that there is a relationship between the degree of proficiency in students’ L2 and a high level of listening comprehension in their L1 to the capacity for strong listening comprehension in the L2. For the purposes of this review of literature, what is significant about this study is the observation that there was a gap in the transference of inferencing skills from L1 to L2. The subsequent recommendation that derives from this finding is the need to teach strategies that would assist learners in making inferences in general and specifically in developing a meta-awareness of these skills in their L1 and an ability to relate this to the same function in their L2. The author also makes the recommendation that students be provided ample opportunities for this type of cross-linguistic comprehension practice in a non-threatening, non-evaluative context.
While there have been arguments made against bringing the L1 into the L2 learning context because of the possibility of interference between the languages, the opportunities for learning that making connections between languages appears to outweigh such concerns. In addition, Bialystok (2007) argues that the problem of selection between languages in production whether to comprehend written work or to produce oral or written language is a cognitively challenging task that bilinguals face and one that she associates with several benefits. These include the ability to gain earlier control over executive cognitive processing. This includes a more sophisticated ability in bilinguals over monolinguals in the realm of the following: control of attention, increased functioning in the area of executive control even at the adult level, and a delay in the deterioration of control over language systems in ageing (p. 18).

The heightened ability on the part of bilinguals to look at language as well as the advantages to be reaped from this cross-lingual attention suggests this as a beneficial skill to be built upon in instructional settings. August and Shanahan (2006) describe research that highlights the benefits for students when teachers find ways to make connections and comparisons between their two language systems. They argue that students are able to draw on their linguistic knowledge of the first language as well as content knowledge encoded in the first language, both of which are considered practices that benefit cognitive and scholastic growth.

Given the complex yet beneficial connections that are made by being able to learn with and from the linguistic knowledge that bilingual students have available to them, it seems apparent that it would be beneficial to give more attention to the ways that teachers can best foster this transfer. Conversely, it must be recognized that teachers, schools and
policy documents all play a role in determining whether the benefits of this process will be attended to, ignored, or actively rejected in the classroom and larger school context.

**Identity and Language Learning**

The identity of the learner, agency and the social context of the learner are playing a greater role in the research literature on second language learning (Norton, 2000; Vollmer, 2002). The field was previously dominated by experimental research that studied the processes of second language learning in isolation, viewing identity as either fixed or irrelevant to the processes under investigation. Increasingly, though the socio-cultural context of learning has become more of an interest in second language research (Kinginger, 2002; Lantolf, 2000). Second language researchers have looked toward other fields such as anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies in order to inform their thinking with respect to issues of identity and language learning (Norton & Toohey, 2002).

Increased attention to the socio-cultural aspects of teaching and learning has led to an inclusion of the agency of the learner as part of the dynamic considered in studies of learning, including those that examine second language learning. In this study, identity is related to agency in that the agency of the teacher and the student develops as part of one’s identity. Furthermore, developing a sense of agency is seen as central to foster a strong and in-depth engagement with literacy on the part of the student. Agency also serves as a way of conceiving of how students and teachers bring their interests and experiences to bear on the teaching-learning dynamic.

In the larger context of theorizing about identity, the discourse has broadened from viewing this concept as a fixed and static construct to understanding it as socially

Identity, like culture, is not a static concept; it is complex, contingent, and sensitive to social context. The language/identity nexus is constituted and mediated by multiple factors, including the ideologies encumbered by a language or variety, its social status and functions, and its historical legacies (p. 3).

Thus, not only is the importance of embedding discussions of language and literacy in the socio-political context in which the learning is occurring essential, the path that the individual has taken to arrive at that context must also be considered. In the case of immigrant students, identity is made all the more complex because of the multiple forces and contexts in which the child must assimilate. In addition, the way in which immigrant groups are represented in the wider society as well as in school policies bears on how immigrant students will see themselves (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

Increasingly globalization is providing the backdrop for the work of theorists and researchers from a variety of fields in their discussions of identity, literacy and language learning. Arnett (2002) asserts that in the current climate of trans-nationalism, the Information Age and widespread immigration patterns, developing a bicultural and multicultural identity is now the norm. However, sociologist Suárez-Orozco (2004) cautions that globalization represents both challenge and opportunity to nations and individuals.

Toohey, Day, and Manyak (2007) assert that certain identity positions are made available to students by school and classroom practices and that these in turn play a role in the investment that children make in their language learning. They state: “…classroom instruction represents a set of social practices in which children (and teachers) construct identities—identities that in turn mediate their experience with English” (p. 627). In the
work of Toohey (2000) we are offered an in-depth analysis of the opportunities for interactions that she observed for children of minority language backgrounds in an English instruction classroom. Her analysis suggests that students’ identities appeared to be constructed based on practices of the school and/or teacher. Further, Toohey found that access to participation in different learning activities was regulated based on teachers’ discourse patterns and established routines. Her research demonstrates the relationship between assignment of identities and access to linguistic resources in school settings and draws conclusions about the importance of looking closely at these patterns especially for students who are from a minority linguistic and cultural group.

One line of research that has received less attention in the area of identity and language learning is that which solicits children’s perspectives on their identities in relation to their language(s) and culture(s). Those that have been conducted have tended to focus on self-identification in relation to first or second language use; few studies examining identity have touched on language and literacy in the school context. Soto’s (2002) study described the outlook of 13 school children to their bilingualism and examined how schools and school policies regarding first language use had positioned students. In analyzing the ways in which students depicted the importance of being bilingual and biliterate their self-identification, she found that there were contradictions and dualisms that had to do in part with societal power relations and the educational constructs that resulted in artificial binaries (p. 606).

Another study that deals with learners’ perspectives on their identity and languages was conducted by Tong (1997) who examined the ways in which students define themselves in relation to their language specifically focusing on Chinese
immigrant adolescents. Her study revealed the importance of that the use of their L1 played in being able to maintain their ties to their culture while learning a new language and participating in new cultural norms. This points to the need to understand the dynamic relationship between language use and identity.

In his discussion of identity, Stuart Hall (1994) argues: “Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact……we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (p. 222). Identity is represented as a system that is always evolving. According to this understanding, although identity can be produced, it is never fixed. This corresponds to two elements that I seek to highlight in this study: the role that teacher identity plays in constructing a classroom site for the negotiation of identities and the ways that texts of different sorts can be seen as useful in creating sites of identity negotiation and reflection.

Although few studies have dealt specifically with the intersection of identity, language, and literacy for elementary students, significant attention has been paid to socio-cultural contexts for learning in studies. This focus can be seen as touching on the relationship of identity, culture and literacy. Gutierrez’ (1992) description of three different classroom setting’s orientations toward writing or Platt and Troudi’s (1997) close analysis of the language socialization of a third grade Liberian student in a mainstream classroom in the United States is a good example of this. Blackledge (2000) discusses the home literacy practices of children and their mothers focusing on the gap between these skills and the school’s literacy emphasis that fails to acknowledge or utilize these resources. These studies contribute to the discussion of the important
relationship between home and school literacy, teaching practices and their connection to the socio-cultural environment for literacy development in the classroom.

Cummins (2007) use of the term ‘identity texts’ to refer to the work that students produce in the context of the identity investment is an articulation of the work that can be produced through the teacher-student negotiations described by the academic expertise framework that is discussed in Chapter 2. He explains that investment is promoted by virtue of the sense of ownership that students feel toward their work having invested their identities in these artifacts. The role that audience plays in further developing the potential for these texts to serve as a tool for identity investment is also addressed. He explains: “Students invest their identities in these texts which then become ambassadors of students’ identities. When students share identity texts with multiple audiences (peers, teachers, parents, grandparents, sister classes, the media, etc.) they are likely to receive positive feedback and affirmation of self in interaction with these audiences” (p. 219).

Literacy learning like language learning lends itself to an analysis of textual representation being connected to a desire to be part of different communities. Similarly, the types of writing that students are asked to participate in can open up or close off personal connections to this aspect of literacy. Valdés (2004) indicates that what is often left out of the teaching of writing is the idea that “…writing is about ideas, that presentations are about ideas, and that when one engages in writing and speaking one also engages in a dialogue with others” (p. 122). In her work, Botelho (2004) discusses the ways that children’s literature can contribute to making different groups in society more or less visible by the ways that they are represented in specific texts or the way they are categorized.
The idea that there is a disconnection between school literacy expectations and home language use has been developed by a number of researchers (Brice-Heath, 1983; McCarty, 1993). Street (2003) develops a concept of literacy and literacy teaching that is grounded in the social and political context that the students and teachers find themselves. He says: “[literacy] is about knowledge: the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, and being.” Street continues this line of thought with the assertion that “literacy…is always contested, both its meanings and its practices” (p. 2). This instability in relation to the nature of literacy underscores the importance of developing pedagogical approaches that incorporate a critical and multiple perspectives.

Culture also becomes important to understanding the role of identity in learning because as Willinsky (2001) notes that the idea of culture has evolved into a way for schools to address issues of identity and difference. Florio-Ruane (2001) points out that culture is often represented in teacher education programs as a “static system of knowledge organizing the practices and interpretive frames of a group of people—their idealized ‘ways of life’” (p. 43). She asserts that by taking any discussion of culture out of the context of children’s lived experiences it fails to be seen as central to the processes of language and literacy learning. Her suggestion is that an alternative way of organizing and orienting culture within teaching, and learning about teaching needs to be developed that would engage people in a transformation of the “texts and contexts of teachers’ learning to include multiple voices and stories of culture, literacy, and education” (p. 44).

Teacher identity has also come to be addressed in the research literature and is related to the discussion of teacher role definition in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Agee (2004)
proposes the idea of negotiated teacher identity as “a discursive space where an imagined role is negotiated among possible roles” (p. 749). She asserts that teachers want to develop a “unique identity as a teacher and that in the various contexts of her work; she negotiates and renegotiates that identity” (p. 749). These theories serve as the backdrop for my examination of the literacy tasks developed by the teachers in this study as a medium through which to understand the identity negotiation that is made available through these practices. Nieto (2003) focuses her discussion of how identity development can be encouraged for teachers citing the importance of autobiography in any exploration of teacher identity. Citing Gibson (1998), Nieto asserts that, “…teaching is an encounter with the self” (p. 25).

In a similar vein, Florio-Ruane (2001) discusses the role that autobiography can take in enabling teachers to develop a heightened awareness of the issues of culture and identity in their students. The perspective articulated by these researchers is one of teachers as professionals whose practice should include a self-reflective stance. This orientation is in sharp contrast to the message inherent in much recent education policy in the United States and to a lesser degree in Canada. Policy initiatives that engender rigid curriculum guidelines and standardized measures of success or failure construct the teacher as the deliverer of curriculum rather than as a co-constructer of knowledge with her students. Gutiérrez (2000) asserts that policies of this sort often result in a reductive style of teaching and in a limited way of conceiving of content areas such as literacy.

Translation as a Learning Tool

Translation as a practice has begun to receive renewed attention in the field of second language education. While the grammar-translation approach to second language
instruction has been out of favor as a teaching method for the last couple of decades, the translation done by bilingual children has begun to be viewed by researchers of interest to explore as a sociolinguistic practice. However, while over the previous few years, some researchers have begun to inquire into the ways in which children participate in the activity of translation outside of school, this focus continues to be underrepresented in the research literature in this field in general. It has received even less attention in relation to educational settings and as a promising practice in the realm of possible pedagogical interventions to strengthen bilingual students’ language and literacy learning.

Valdés and Angelelli (2003) discuss the work that bilinguals do in interpreting or translating between their two languages arguing that research on these practices provide fertile ground for learning more about cognitive processing, the nature of transfer, and the effects of instruction on the development of minority languages (p. 59). They further suggest that the skills that bilingual children employ when they interpret for family members in social contexts ought to be valued as a type of giftedness. Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner, and Meza (2003) point out that this type of oral translation is only one way in which children are called upon to mediate linguistically in order to support family members with more limited language skills. The authors developed the term “paraphrasing” to capture what children do when they “phrase things for others, and in order to accomplish social goals.” (Orrellana et al., p. 15). They point to the way in which this term captures a similarity between translating and some school literacy practices that require students to retell stories or texts. In discussing the processing skills involved in second language learning MacWhinney (N.D.) explains, “By maintaining words and constructions in short-term sentence memory, learners can facilitate a wide range of
additional learning and processing mechanisms. Translation is perhaps the most remarkable of these processes” (p. 14).

These studies suggest the cognitive benefits involved in engaging students in literacy activities that involve translation. Similarly, Malakoff and Hakuta (1991) point out that translation is generally considered a skill of highly trained and linguistically proficient professionals with scant interest or attention paid to its natural occurrence in children or to its intentional development as a skill in school settings. They credit the persistent myth of a monolingual norm in language development as being responsible for deterring researchers and educators from pursuing translation as an area to explore and utilize. They explain that this monolingual image represents bilinguals as being composed of two independent monolingual languages, rather than as a whole unit where cross-linguistic activity is to be expected, utilized for strengthening knowledge of both languages, and commended.

In their report that sought to inquire into the nature of translation abilities among bilingual elementary age students, Malakoff and Hakuta (1991) argue that translation activities in the classroom are a valuable “psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic hook in to amplifying [emphasis added] the bilingual skills of students” (p. 163). Furthermore, they assert that, “Translation provides an easy avenue to enhance linguistic awareness and pride in bilingualism, particularly for minority bilingual children whose home language is not valued by the majority culture” (p.162). These ideas do not necessarily suggest a return to the concurrent translation model of second language instruction, but rather an invitation to re-conceive the possible uses of students’ abilities to move back and forth between languages both in written and oral work. They also argue for additional research
into both the nature of natural translation on the part of children and the applications of these practices to learning.

In the following Chapter I describe the methodology that was utilized in order to carry out this research study.
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

Rationale for Qualitative Methodology

Norton-Peirce (1995) asserts that all research is driven by an underlying theory that influences the type of inquiry one follows in defining one’s research study. Consequently, she argues, the ways in which one asks the questions as well as content of the questions asked will necessarily impact on the type and the content of the data gathered. This study falls within the tradition of qualitative research that views human experience as mediated by interpretation. This conceptual paradigm is based on the idea of symbolic interaction that is expressed by the idea that, “the meaning people give to their experience and their process of interpretation are essential and constitutive, not accidental or secondary” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 25). The focus of this study is the role definition of the two teachers as educators and how this is exemplified by the way they describe their work, the tasks they set for their students, the discourse they have with their students, and the image projected of their students by the discourse and tasks.

Johnston (2004) illustrates the power that teacher language has for shaping the way that students conceptualize reading and writing and how this ties to their image of themselves as readers and writers and social beings. In this study I broaden the discussion of this dynamic to include students’ image of themselves as bilingual and biliterate readers, writers and social beings. Given that the focus of the research represented here is on what meaning(s) are given to the language and literacy knowledge of students from diverse backgrounds, it followed that the mode of inquiry guiding this study be one that makes it possible to gain insight into the meaning that people give to their experience.
Qualitative research acknowledges the role that interpretation plays in interaction and provides tools in the methods of data collection and analysis that allow the meaning making of the participants to be spoken and visible. My intention in pursuing this research direction was to capture the work done by the two teacher participants that draws on their students’ linguistic and cultural diversity. My aim was to explore the possibilities that are opened up by an approach to literacy teaching that accounts for the resources that students bring to the classroom. By doing so I have attempted to understand and describe what is involved in the “making visible what is often invisible” (L. Leoni, TESL Ontario Conference November 17, 2005) of students’ linguistic and cultural resources and identity by these two teachers and the meaning this has for students in relation to their engagement with literacy and language.

Hawkins (2004) discusses the need for a research agenda that integrates teachers and researchers in developing studies that account for the world of the teacher and the world of the student as partners in a process of language socialization. Drawing on the work of sociocultural theorists (e.g., Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978b), she calls for theories of second language learning that,

...account not only for socialization into the language practices of the classroom, but also into the social practices, as language learning is intricately bound up with social identities that learners acquire in new social contexts and new language, practices, and identities are acquired through apprenticeships to new discourse communities. (p. 14)

**Focus of Study**

This study takes the view that language learning and social identities are indeed intertwined. It articulates teaching practices that deliberately call on these connections in order to scaffold student learning. Each teacher, including their students’ work and their interactions with student participants, is treated as a case. My primary interest has been to
look into the teachers’ role definitions as educators and understand how this intersects with the image of their students that is projected by the activities they have designed for their students. Therefore, the dual language literacy work that the teachers created with their students, form the unit of analysis. This work and the artifacts that developed out of them, in the form of student books are a way to view the image that is projected of the child, of literacy and of language. I also explore the spaces that these literacy activities created for the students to invest their identities and to develop a strong engagement with literacy and language in their first language(s) as well as in English.

The two cases discussed in this thesis are treated as separate and are not understood to be similar enough to enable direct comparisons. This is not to say that there are not lessons to be learned from some of the differences that emerged between the cases. It is hoped furthermore, that by providing more than one case a richer, more multi-dimensional perspective might be articulated; one that enables deeper questioning regarding the multiple ways that literacy can be a way taught in order to engage students’ identities and investment in a variety of contexts.

The questions that guided this research are as follows:

**Research Questions**

1. How do Lisa and Padma define their identities as educators?
   a). What have been the influences and resources that they have drawn upon in developing their work and role definition in relation to teaching multilingual students?
   b). What image of their students, literacy, and bilingualism is projected by their work?
c). How are family members and the wider community brought into the classroom as part of the bilingual literacy work?

2. What pedagogical practices have the teachers instituted that draw on students’ linguistic and cultural background and why?
   
   a). What reasons do the teachers give for having asked students to write in their L1 and what are the benefits that they articulate?

   b). What experiences do the teachers draw on in pursuing these pedagogical directions?

3. How is the inclusion of students’ linguistic and cultural knowledge in their first language reflected in students’ engagement with literacy?

   a). What types of affective engagement are made possible by students use of their L1 in their oral and written work?

   b). What types of linguistic and literacy engagement are made possible by students use of their L1 in oral and written work?

   c). How do the students imagine themselves in relation to their home country, Canada, and their future?


Research Design

The research method followed a descriptive case study model. The case study gives the researcher the opportunity to ground her observations and the concepts being investigated in the field (Orum et al., 1991). I focused on the teachers’ role definition as the primary vehicle for developing the case. To this end I used open-ended interviews and classroom observations as a means to develop my understanding of how the teachers define their role and enact it. In addition I conducted interviews with students and
collected student work samples in order to gain insight into the meaning that participating in these tasks has for the students. I utilized video documentation, classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and student work as the main methods of data collection to provide the basis for data analysis and to represent the work of these teachers. These methods of documentation allowed an analysis that takes into account different views on the activities being examined. A more detailed description of these data collection techniques follows below.

In developing and analyzing the data set I followed a grounded theory approach that builds the analysis based on the patterns that emerge from data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory is based in the symbolic interactionist movement that sees reality as socially and symbolically constructed (e.g., through text, discourse, etc.), always emerging, and always in need of being considered in the context of other aspects of social life (Hutchinson, 1988). My application of this model began with a set of research questions and hypotheses that evolved over time as I analyzed the data collected. Through this mode of analysis it has been possible to portray the work of these two teachers and develop a line of inquiry into how their role definition as educators influenced the nature of the literacy tasks they set for their students within the multilingual and multicultural context in which they are teaching.

This research has been fundamentally collaborative in nature with the teachers on whose work I have based this study. Therefore, I draw on literature related to teacher action research and collaborative research partnerships in order to contextualize my work and the role that the teachers have taken in its development. The research was conducted over the course of a year and a half, during which time I documented the ongoing work of
the teachers and their students. During the course of this time I developed in-depth relationships with the teachers and several of their students and I also engaged in close observation of the two teachers at work and maintained ongoing communication with them through email and phone conversations. The partnership that developed between Lisa and me first, and then between Padma and me reflects Hawkins’ (2004) call for a “…shift in our conceptualization of participant roles. Rather than a view of the classroom teacher as ‘practitioner’, and the university academic as ‘researcher’, both would be equally valued participants in this community and the labels applied equally to both” (p. 23).

This type of collaborative work and reflective practice was the case in joint planning and execution of work for the larger project as well as other events in our ongoing work. For example, when Lisa decided to apply to a M.Ed. program at OISE she wanted to brainstorm ideas for her goal statement together and when I began work on my research proposal it seemed like a natural extension of our collaboration to ask for her feedback on the questions I was developing. Although the research partnership with Padma was of a shorter time period, a similar relationship evolved. For instance, we discussed how to involve the students in giving feedback on their writing which I had uploaded to the project website. In order to share the electronic versions of their work with them and recognize their contribution to the website, she organized a special lunchtime viewing with the student participants. Padma also helped me figure out how to effectively select students who would meet my requirements of diverse backgrounds and varied forms of engagement in the work. She was also proactive in making sure that I was informed of board workshops and other events that she participated in that would
highlight her work and invited me to be there to see her engage with other educators around these ideas. These examples of different types of ongoing dialogue created a sense of cross-pollination of ideas and mutual investment in the work in which we were collaboratively engaged. They also speak to the depth of engagement in which I participated as researcher-collaborator-observer in the ongoing work of the teachers.

Although I am writing this thesis, the actual work of this study was co-constructed with the teachers and was based on their interests as well as mine in exploring the aspects of their teaching focused on here. In addition, as I will describe in more detail below, the actual writing process involved a great deal of collaboration. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 1, this study took place within the context of a larger research project which was collaborative on many levels and which established collaborative action research partnerships between teachers and university researchers as the basis for the entire project. It is impossible to write this thesis without acknowledging the role that the larger project played in setting the tone and context for this research both in its content and by the structures that were in place for carrying it out. In addition, the ongoing support (academic, technical, etc.) that was a facet of working within this larger project was instrumental in enabling the type of research that the teachers and I were able to enact.

**Collaborative Teacher Action Research**

Collaborative teacher research emphasizes the teacher as the expert and strives to create an integrated plan for the research study that draws on the local knowledge of the teacher while also bringing current academic research to bear on the development of the study (Bullough & Gitlin, 2001; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). McDonough (2006) argues that, by involving teachers in the research process, opportunities for reflective
practice are created. She also explains that the origins of teacher action research are found in the roots of the progressive education movement. She states: “The initial conception of action research emphasized its potential to empower and emancipate participants through cycles of reform based on reflection and action” (p. 34). Similarly, Goldstein (2002) discusses the notion of useful research as that which “…allows participants to meet their own educational, social and political agendas” (p. 56).

To this end I worked collaboratively with both of the teacher participants to develop the focus of our research and the particulars of how to carry it out. Lisa and Padma both had their own educational, social and political interests in participating in this research project. From the day I met her, Padma stated over and over in our conversations that she wanted to: “get the message out” and “take this message beyond these walls”. She said this in the context of inviting me to visit her school, in agreeing to be a partner in the research project and in discussing her presentations at school board workshops and other educational conferences. Lisa voiced her interest in making sure that all of her students experienced an education that valued the knowledge that they brought with them.

According to Crookes (1993), in his analysis of the history of action research in second language education, what has dominated this genre in the United States is one that attends to the individual classroom with little attention to the surrounding influences of school and society (p. 134). My interest in the topic of this study and Lisa and Padma’s deep interest in taking a critical pedagogical stance in their teaching interacted with this research process to effect a research partnership that is defined by Burns (2007) as critical action research. She explains: “Critical action research is embedded in notions of the
empowerment of practitioners as participants in the research enterprise, the struggle for more democratic forms of education, and the reform of education from the insider perspective” (p. 995).

This model was characterized by the depth of involvement that Lisa and Padma had in planning and carrying out this research. Their investment in the project was strong from the beginning of their involvement. In fact, because the framework of the larger project was invitational and directly focused on issues to do with second language learners, they would likely not have been part of it had they not already had an interest in themes of linguistic diversity, language and literacy development, and ways to expand the conception of literacy teaching in schools. The very nature of these themes situates this study both within the classroom walls and beyond to the broader societal values associated with the creation of and life within a diverse society. For example, Canada’s multicultural policy and its current expansion of immigration can appear to be in tension with school funding policies that limit support for students for whom English is not their first or only language, and a lack of attention to maintaining students’ first languages.

Both teachers frequently referenced the larger sociopolitical context of their work and their students’ lives in our interviews and discussions. One theme that was brought up by Lisa and Padma had to do with the school context that their students encountered beyond their classrooms. Padma had the explicit support of her principal to develop the dual language strategies that she implemented therefore she could frame her work within the context of a school-wide interest in promoting diversity. Nevertheless, she was clearly one of the most vocal and prominent in enacting practices related to these ideas. Lisa was also an active proponent of bridging the school and the community and participated in
several board-wide committees and initiatives relating to equity and diversity. For both teachers then, this project served as a vehicle to develop their questions and ideas regarding their dual language teaching practices. It also provided a collaborative context through which they could connect with other teachers involved in similar endeavors, gain theoretical understandings related to their practice and find expression of their ideas and work through dialogue, presentations and published articles.

Lindfors and Hudelson (1993) are explicit about the necessarily changing and non-static nature of the type of collaborative research described above as well as the relationship that is at the heart of it. They say it is important to see “…its continuing and evolving nature over time; its essential dialogic character; and above all, its life within and dependence upon a relationship among the partners, a relationship characterized by mutual trust and respect, a relationship simultaneously affiliative and autonomous” (p. 3). The close research partnerships that Lisa, Padma, and I developed reflected this description. Our conversations were not limited to the established meeting times for interviews or school visits, nor were they limited in content to the questions I had outlined upon beginning my research study. As I learned more about the work of the two teachers, new questions were generated and often they raised questions with me related to the research project or to theoretical issues related to the project and their work. I had a lot to learn (and still do) about the communities that both teachers work with and found not surprisingly that both Lisa and Padma were excellent resources since they had made learning about their students and their communities a major facet of their work.

While in our work my role has been that of university student/researcher and theirs that of teacher/researcher, the nature of the teachers’ participation in the larger
research project as well as the type of relationships that we have developed has meant that their investment in the research and their input in guiding its course have been very strong. It is also important to note the influence that my teaching background played in my level of comfort interacting with teachers and students and being in schools. This formed a part of how my role of collaborator with the teacher participants developed. On the one hand, when I first began to work on this research project the role of researcher was unfamiliar and somewhat uncomfortable to me. On the other hand my alliance to and identification with the work of teaching continued to be prominent in my orientation, a fact that conceivably played a role in positioning me on more of an equal footing with the teachers than is often typical in university/school research partnerships.

Ramanathan (2005) refers to the “….difficulties inherent in intermeshing our “research” voices with those about which we are writing or speaking” (p. 292). Later she explains that, “this complexity of how the “researcher” rhetorically positions himself or herself is also partly shaped by several intersecting dynamics in the researcher’s home culture…” (p. 296). It seemed clear that the nature of my relationship to the world of teaching played a role in the development of the collaboration that characterized the research. Coming to graduate school had entailed a huge shift in my self-identification after having spent the previous fifteen years as a teacher of young children. When I began to work on this research project I was apprehensive about the idea of observing in someone else’s classroom. In this respect being able to partner with Lisa and Padma in the research endeavor made sense in the context of my views about the importance of collaborative research. It also felt more compatible with my sense of self as part teacher and part researcher.
Prior to coming to graduate school I had spent all of my adult life in the role of public school classroom teacher, so it was a new experience to position myself as researcher and observer in a classroom that was not my own. As I developed more familiarity with the school settings and as my relationships with the teachers and their students grew, my initial discomfort with the role of researcher lessened. Gradually, too, I took on more of a participatory researcher role in the classroom and in interacting with students around their assignments from time to time. This was especially true in Lisa’s classroom partly due to the longer time period that I was in her classroom and partly due to her teaching context. When the research began, she was teaching a self-contained seventh grade class. The next year she had her own ESL classroom and saw the same group of students for one or two 40-minute periods on a daily basis. As a library teacher Padma was responsible for teaching all seven grades in 30-40 minute time slots. Although it was a situation that promoted less extended contact with individual students, she had the advantage of knowing the students well because of having taught them over the last seven years in the same role.

**Selection of Student Participants**

Student participants were selected utilizing a “purposive sampling” model (Merriam, 1998). This ensured that the students whom I selected to participate reflected a deliberately diverse cross-section of the teachers’ students. This type of selection is most closely aligned with the “maximum variation” sampling that (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) described as seeking to utilize as diverse a sample population as possible. Because my sample group was admittedly small with eleven students for each teacher, it was therefore
of even greater importance that I ensured diversity in order to secure as wide a range of responses possible.

The purpose of including a diverse set of students was to make it more feasible to draw comparisons amongst students and consider different perspectives on the data more fully. I used the following pre-defined criteria in order to increase the chances for varying outlooks and experiences amongst the students: length of time in Canada, level of English language development, grade level, and cultural background. In Lisa’s case I included two students who were not in her class during the entire study in order to attain their retrospective understandings of the dual language work they accomplished while they were with her. These two students who were in grade eight during the first year of the study and in their first year of high school during the second year of the study. They were asked to participate in order to elicit their perspective on what they gained from this type of literacy work and what if any impact it has had on their continued school career. Two other students who were in Lisa’s grade seven class the first year of the study also participated through their grade eight studies in the second year of the study even though they had transitioned out of ESL classes. The remaining seven students were new students at the school and in Canada during the second academic year of the study.

In Padma’s case I selected students who represented a variety of grade levels. I also wanted to select a cross-section of students who had participated in each of the dual language activities that Padma offered in her classes. I aimed to include students from primary grades and some from middle grades who had participated in the multilingual reader’s theatre and others from the same age group who had written dual language flip books. These students reflected the diversity of the school too in that they were from
different cultural backgrounds. They also varied in that some of them had been born in Canada to immigrant parents whereas others had recently immigrated. The charts that follow illustrate these variables for each school setting.
Table 1

Marshall Student Information Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Grade(s) levels during study</th>
<th>Grade/age at arrival in Canada</th>
<th>Languages other than English</th>
<th>Written literacy in L1 (self-described)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isaam</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Six</td>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>A lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Five</td>
<td>Born in Canada</td>
<td>Mandarin/Vietnamese</td>
<td>A little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vera</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Five</td>
<td>Born in Canada</td>
<td>Serbian</td>
<td>A lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>A lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jin Shik</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shishira</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>Malayalam</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohd</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>Malayalam</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeta</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Born in Canada</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avanish</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>5 years old</td>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>A little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alicia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>4 years old</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Beginning to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 Students were asked whether they were able to write in their first language and if so how comfortable or skilled they felt in regard to this ability. In some cases it was also possible to corroborate their L1 writing ability by virtue of dual language texts they produced for their teacher. None of these indicators are offered, however, as necessarily objective gauges of students’ L1 writing ability.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Grade levels during study</th>
<th>Grade/age at arrival in Canada</th>
<th>Languages other than English</th>
<th>Written literacy in L1 $^8$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Eight and nine</td>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saba</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Eight and nine</td>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asima</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Seven &amp; Eight</td>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>Punjabi and Urdu</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noreen</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Seven &amp; Eight</td>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sajida</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Seven &amp; Eight</td>
<td>Grade 7</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasrin</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>Grade 8</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rashid</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>Grade 7</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zerrin</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Six</td>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avi</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Six</td>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>Hebrew</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoya</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Six</td>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Five</td>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^8$ This information is based on a number of indicators, such as student work in their L1, length of time in country of origin, as well as apparent ease of writing ability. None of these are offered, however, as necessarily objective gauges of L1 writing ability.
Validity Within Qualitative Research

The construct of validity within the qualitative research paradigm differs from that within the quantitative research tradition. While the differences between the two types of research clearly indicate that there would be different ways of defining the terms related to the rigor with which a study has been conducted, researchers have disagreed regarding what terms and definitions should be applied to qualitative research. For example, some within the qualitative field have argued that the term “validity” should not even be applied to this type of research, whereas others have advocated a different set of terms and understandings that redefine the idea of validity and reliability to make them applicable to qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003). Johnson (1997) explains the three types of validity that are relevant to qualitative research as being descriptive validity, that is how accurate the account of the data is; interpretive validity which has to do with how accurate the representation of the participants’ views and intentions are described; and theoretical validity that reflects how closely the data and the theoretical explanation are aligned with each other (par. 1). In this section I will refer to the first two above categories for the purpose of addressing validity within this study. Theoretical validity will be discussed in the final chapter.

Both descriptive and interpretive validity were addressed in this study through the close collaboration with the teacher participants. As mentioned in relation to data collection and data analysis, there was constant back and forth in the form of reflection and inquiry about what we were focusing on and what we wanted to focus on in our research. In the data analysis phase there was also conversation and collaboration with the teachers that provided checks on the accuracy of both the description and the
interpretation of the data. Additional validity has been gained through the readings of initial drafts of relevant chapters that both of the teacher collaborators and the principal of Marshall Elementary School, have done. I have benefited from being able to draw on their first-hand knowledge of the information that I am dealing with in relation to their schools and the surrounding communities in order to ensure that my reporting of these data is accurate and that it is used correctly in substantiating ideas. One instance of this was when the principal of Marshall was able to flesh out the information I was presenting related to the nature of the community and the efforts that the school had put into place in terms of outreach under her leadership. Her insights as principal also provided a more in-depth perspective to my reporting about school-wide issues such as teacher hiring. Similarly, in the case of Lisa’s role, because of her close partnerships with the surrounding community, throughout my research she has been able to provide me with background information about the students and families that she teaches and she has carefully read what I have written to be sure that my integration of this information was accurate.

All of their readings of initial versions have also served to verify that I am accurately reporting their viewpoints and that my analyses of their statements ring true for them. One incidence that illustrates this occurred from Padma’s reading of her chapter. She corrected the way that I had characterized a statement she had made about the importance of seeing ESL teaching as a type of enrichment for students, not as a drawback. I had mistakenly understood her wording and was able to correct my wording and subsequent analysis based on her verification of what I had written. Similar changes were made based on Lisa’s reading and the reading by the principal of Marshall E.S. This
points to the importance of verifying participants’ comments especially when made in the form of oral interviews.

By virtue of being given the opportunity to read and comment upon drafts of the thesis, participants were able not only to correct, but also to amplify upon their ideas. One salient example of this was when Lisa built on the statements I was making about her ability to relate to her students’ bilingualism by virtue of her own experience growing up bilingual. She elaborated that this understanding had not only to do with language, but with having had first hand experience with the immigrant experience by virtue of having grown up with parents who were themselves immigrants. She observed and participated in her parents’ ways of living in Canadian society, hearing their interpretations of Canadian society, and dealing with their children’s schooling in Canada.

These are just a few of the many examples of verification, correction and elaboration that the participating teachers have provided thus making even the writing of this research a collaborative enterprise. Not only has this added to the validity of the research represented here, it has also contributed to making it a richer and more detailed accounting.

**Case Study Research**

Case studies fall into the wider scope of qualitative research that aims to seek out the nature of participants’ knowledge and/or activities related to an identified phenomenon (Gall et al., 2003). The case study approach has been described as unique for its in-depth focus on a setting, situation or individual. Case study research in education is typically used as a means to conduct an in-depth investigation into the particulars of an individual or an individual situation in context (MacDonald & Walker,
One of the strengths of case studies is the potential they create for linking research to practice and giving voice to the particulars of a situation whether they be people or events (Knobel, 1999). While case study research has proliferated in the field of education over the last several decades there has been, and continues to be, considerable ambiguity over how to define case study methodology. Sturman (1997) calls the case study a “generic term for the investigation of an individual, group or phenomenon” (p. 61). It is also argued that the case study is best suited for those studies that ask “why” or “how” questions (Yin, 1994).

In addition, debate persists in the diverse fields that utilize case studies over their qualities and efficacy and yet examples of case studies continue to proliferate (Gerring, 2004). It is difficult to separate the strengths from the weaknesses of cases studies. The notable qualities of case studies and those often cited as strengths of this method, are the same as those that are mentioned when discussing their weaknesses. In focusing on a single instance, individual, or case, a researcher can add to the natural history of phenomena, complicate the taken-for-granted, and create a more textured picture of a situation. At the same time, by focusing on a single event, individual or context, the researcher may not take account of the more general and broad perspective on an issue that might be found in a wider sampling of the issue under study. Furthermore, by focusing on a sole instance, a researchers' capacity to establish generalities is limited. However, Rudden (2006) argues that in analyzing case study data, the researcher should “try to generalize findings to ‘theory’” (p. 803). He cites Eckstein, as saying that, “comparative and case studies are alternative means to the end of testing theories…” (2000, p. 147) and explains that theory is used to represent “forecast and clarification” (p.
Similarly, Stake (2000) argues that it is the researcher’s responsibility to create a detailed and thick enough description of the case that the reader is enabled to consider how particular features and issues related to the case might transfer to other cases or situations.

When the decision was made to add a second site and participating teacher to this study, the intention was to bring another layer and to broaden the research lens by having more than a single example for analysis. It is not my intent, however to claim that by extending my study I will be able to generalize my findings; neither is this typically the goal of a case study. That is not to say that case studies cannot theorize generalizations or call into question generalizations made by others. In fact, it is argued by Cummins (1999) that the thick description of a case study contributes to theory by virtue of the fact that theoretical propositions must be consistent with the data. So if the case study describes phenomena that are not consistent with a theoretical proposition, this can refute or at very least, call into question the theory. As will become clear in the sections and chapters that follow, this thesis describes teaching practices that contest widely held assumptions about teaching students who are bilingual or learning English as an added language in an English instructional setting.

Although case studies are sometimes seen as limited by the bounded nature of the case study, it is argued here that it is not possible to truly understand a case without considering its social setting (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2006). In this dissertation, I attempt to take into account the politicized nature of language, culture and literacy in schools and society and how this relates to the work of these teachers. In fact, the teacher participants as well as some of the students themselves point to these issues with a critical eye, a fact
that further obliges me to bring the wider socio-political context into the discussion. In addition, because the work of the teachers counters what is typically considered standard practice for students who are English language learners it has been important to expand the scope of the case to include the broader sociopolitical context.

By providing a window into the teaching practices of these two teachers and exploring their role definition as educators, the case studies presented here further the recognition that teachers have choices in the work that they develop for their students and that this work reflects both the expectations they have of their students and the image held of them. These cases therefore aim to describe some possibilities that are available to teachers in relation to how literacy and language are constructed in the classroom, in particular for students who come with a home language other than English.

**Data Collection Methods**

The data collection process began in March 2004 and continued through June 2005 during which time I developed my database from a variety of first-hand sources. These included semi-structured interviews with the two teachers and selected students of theirs. I also conducted some video interviews in both school settings with the teachers. I videotaped some classes in one of the schools, and I videotaped some students sharing their dual language books in the other school. In addition, I kept field notes during my classroom observations, I collected student work related to the project and board documents that I have found or that the teachers have provided me with that they find relevant to the work being discussed here.

It has become more common in recent years for researchers to discuss interviews as an activity that engages participants in making meaning by virtue of being asked to
reflect on certain questions or issues (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). Woods (1996) argues that the interview is a “process of reality construction to which both parties contribute and by which both are affected” (p. 53). This formulation underscores the social nature of the interview as an active process. This notion of the research as a social endeavor resonated particularly when I was interviewing the two teachers because of the extended amount of time we were spending together and the investment that each of them had in the research that we were conducting. Although I did conduct three formal semi-structured interviews with each teacher, I also engaged in frequent conversations with them during my school visits as well as outside of those times through email and telephone conversations. In addition, while I had developed a list of questions for conducting semi-structured interviews, often during our meetings, the teachers’ responses would lead me to rethink a question or to articulate another one and in some cases, they would bring something up that had not originally been articulated as a question in my mind.

Similarly, my classroom observations or interviews with the students always expanded my understanding or raised new questions for me about classroom processes that would lead me to include new questions in my interviews with the teachers. One example of this is found in the question I posed to Lisa regarding the different roles that the three girls who co-authored the dual language identity text, “The New Country” took in carrying out that project. Lisa had discussed the fact that they each contributed in different ways and I had observed this when visiting the classroom. During one interview with Lisa when we were analyzing a video I had taken of the girls working on this project I asked Lisa “…you talked about how they seem to be inclined toward different
roles...what have you done that has promoted those different roles and how much of it is just natural in their interactions?” Lisa’s response proved instrumental in determining the types of categories that I focused on in future interviews and analysis of data. She said:

If I assign a role, if I ask for instance for Noreen or Asima to help Sajida in a specific area, it’s because I’ve identified their strengths. So even though I don’t understand what’s happening because they’re speaking another language, I can understand the kind of division of roles, and I can understand who’s leading and what the other roles each of them are playing. So I observe very carefully about who can lead in what areas and then I use that to transfer into another setting like this. (L. Leoni, Interview, August 19, 2004)

This quote clearly signals the fundamental role that observation plays in Lisa’s teaching and underscores the guiding principle of learning from her students that is central to her approach. Knowledge of this laid the foundation for further exploration of how this idea played out in her practice.

Another way that the interviews were influenced by the ongoing inquiry had to do with the fact that both teachers often had their own ideas or questions about issues related to the study that they wanted to address in our conversations. These added new and richer layers of information and inquiry to the discussions. In addition, because there were times when we were planning for presentations related to the research, this activity would often generate new levels of understanding. An example of this occurred when Lisa and I were discussing the data for the presentation that we would give in Hawaii. At one point she asked the question: “What if teachers say to me ‘I couldn’t do that kind of [collaborative

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dual language] work because I don’t have a student like Asima?” (L. Leoni, personal communication, May, 2004): in other words, a student who was highly verbal in both English and her L1, comfortable translating and being a go-between with the teacher and less English proficient students. When I thought about how I would answer that challenge to our work I was forced to look more closely at the particulars of what Lisa had done in her classroom to enable Asima to participate in the ways that she did. This reflection helped me not to take for granted that these practices would only be possible with a student like Asima or alternatively that Asima would have been disposed to participate in the same ways in any classroom. This reflection brought the particulars of how Lisa has made these types of interactions possible more clearly to light. In other words, it became clearer to me after this conversation with Lisa that it would be important to take a closer look at the classroom structures and processes that Lisa used that enabled students to work in the ways that they did. This would enable me to better understand how she created the environment and conveyed the opportunities for students to invest themselves in their work.

Analysis of Data

The data analysis for this study has relied on a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory attempts to discover emergent patterns in the data in order to substantiate, inform and possibly challenge the theoretical construct that is being probed. The initial stage of this process included observing the themes or patterns that emerged as I conducted interviews, observed in classrooms and began to transcribe and write up field notes. Although I state that the themes emerged from the evolving data set, it is also important to understand the role that I as researcher played in generating them.
The perspectives of teaching and multilingualism that I brought to the research clearly played a role in what I was interested in and what I paid attention to as I read through the data.

The goals that Lisa and I and then Padma and I had set out for our work together also framed the way in which I looked for themes in the data. During this time I was also discussing the interviews with Lisa and Padma as well as with other people in the project and looking at the transcripts closely. This input of data and the processing of it and the multiple levels of interpretation and analysis and engagement with the data (myself, myself with the teacher participants, and myself with other members of the larger research project) contributed to the articulation of the ideas that were developed in this study. Lisa and I have presented together at two conferences. The preparation for these presentations generated the impetus to collaboratively articulate themes based on the interview data and student work in preparation. While I did not present at any conferences with Padma, I did video-record her in two conference presentations and attended two other presentations that she made; these contributed to my data set and to my understanding of her work.

Glaser (1978) describes the ideas developed out of this type of informal readings of the data as serving as a guiding process in the ongoing inquiry and for further analysis once all the data is collected. After I had finished transcribing all of the interviews, I developed a list of categories for coding in an attempt to focus the themes that I had drawn out from the data collected. This strategy enabled me to maintain a close relationship between data collection and data analysis and to ensure that I could pursue
any other issues that arose or that needed further probing in my fieldwork. By doing so the descriptive validity of the data was further assured.

During this process I compared the themes and categories with the conceptual frameworks that I drew on at the beginning of the study in order to analyse the continued relevance of the frameworks and to ensure that they would be appropriate to use as an additional lens for analysis. I focused on examining the relationship between the emerging patterns and the conceptual framework that guides this study. Specifically I utilized the examples that I extracted from my data that relate to the categories of identity negotiation, teacher-student interaction, and cognitive engagement. My focus in doing this is three-fold: (1) To identify through descriptive means the ways in which these categories are brought to life in the classrooms I have been studying; (2) to critically analyze the ways in which these categories develop for teacher and students; and (3) to draw conclusions and implications about the kinds of identity negotiation and linguistic expertise teachers might make available to students from diverse backgrounds.

In conclusion, this study does not aim to generalize findings. However, the findings presented here are relevant beyond the context of these two teachers. First, the teaching situations that the two teachers are working in are increasingly the norm. In this I include a linguistically and culturally diverse student body, the limited support at the level of the school system and broader policy support up to this point for a diversified approach to teaching English language learners that includes classroom use of their L1, and, in some areas, an increasing focus on specific curriculum standards or expectations and associated testing. A framework that focuses on the teacher-student relationship as key to amplifying teacher choice and student identity in developing curriculum is
applicable to all teaching contexts (Cummins, Brown & Sayers, 2007). This is true because it locates the responsibility for student engagement within the teacher-student dynamic and encourages teachers to include student’s prior knowledge as an essential component of curriculum implementation. The goal of this collaborative case study therefore, is to present data sufficiently rich in description of the processes and practices of the teachers in their particular classroom contexts to enable practitioners, policy makers and researchers to draw on them as evidence for feasibility and as a resource for implementation in other settings.
CHAPTER 5: LISA

“My overarching goal as a teacher is to uncover all that is unknown to me about my students; linguistically, culturally and especially to understand the community they are a part of (their parents, their friends, and their faith).” L. Leoni, TESL Ontario Conference, 200).

Overview

In this chapter I bring the focus to the teaching practices of Lisa, describing in particular her use of students’ home languages as a component of her teaching of literacy in order to create what has been termed dual language identity texts.\textsuperscript{10} I present findings that describe the ways in which this practice has provided opportunities for newly arrived students to participate fully in the learning processes of the classroom and to attain curricular literacy expectations through collaborative work with other students. The incorporation of multilingual students’ home languages into the learning environment enables students to express themselves and to participate academically despite the fact that they were at the early stages of English proficiency. Furthermore, it provides the teacher with opportunities to observe, evaluate and build upon the literacy skills that students bring to the classroom. Because Lisa taught in two different types of classrooms (Grades 7 and 8 mainstream and ESL withdrawal) during the time of this study, her practice offers further support for the assertion that these ideas do not depend so much on teaching context as they do on teacher orientation.

I present vignettes of Lisa’s teaching that demonstrate how she includes students’ language and culture in the curriculum and brings to life the principles of teaching to the child. At one point, Lisa explained, “Basically I see everything I do revolving around

\textsuperscript{10} Identity texts is a term coined by Cummins (2004) to describe texts (written, visual, multimodal, spoken, signed) created by students that represent and reflect back their identity to them and to a wider audience in a positive light.
students’ identity” (L. Leoni, Personal communication, January 2005). In this case her students happen to be multilingual or new English language learners, recent immigrants to Canada and her classroom. Rather than following a one-size-fits all model of instruction that in many classrooms would have the effect of casting aside students’ first languages and culture, Lisa found a variety of ways to adapt her teaching to create a classroom environment that respects the knowledge, skills and interests that the students bring to school. Among other things this meant that students were allowed to speak in their first language while completing their work, that reading the Qu’ran or listening to oral stories was an accepted way to demonstrate reading in filling out their weekly literacy log, and that students were encouraged to write texts in both English and their first language.

Lisa’s choice to allow and encourage students to use their first language in classroom work made a strong statement about the importance she gave to her students’ cultural and linguistic identity. By including their first languages as part of the curriculum, Lisa went beyond what is typically thought of as a multicultural focus. Nieto (1992) points to the fact that most discussions of multicultural education neglect language as a viable or relevant element. Finding ways to incorporate the use of students’ L1 in the classroom, connecting the curriculum to their lived experiences, and developing avenues for families to contribute to the school work are all components of this outlook that I saw manifested in Lisa’s teaching practice.

**Claims**

The key claims that are made in this chapter based on the above mentioned findings are that (1) even in a monolingual instructional setting teachers can utilize
students’ first language even when they themselves do not speak the L1 of their students, (2) that students’ L1 knowledge represents a tool for learning and a foundation upon which English language learners can base their learning of another language (3) that students’ engagement with school literacy is increased when their identity is affirmed within the curriculum, (4) and that teacher agency is a key resource in developing innovations in practice that can be enhanced with school-community-university partnerships.

In the following sections I elaborate the ways in which I observed Lisa develop and implement these ideas in her practice over the course of our two-year research partnership. In some cases the focus of my analysis is on the processes that Lisa used in her teaching and in other cases I look at the content of her teaching. In both cases, I note that by implementing a student-focused literacy curriculum that also included the use of first languages, a variety of avenues were opened for students to participate and take ownership of their school literacy learning. I discuss the ways in which the choices Lisa made are representative of her role definition as educator. Cummins (2004) asserts that teacher role definition is constantly being constructed in ways that reflect the images we have of our students, of ourselves as educators, and of the image of the society we hope our students will help create. These three elements are related back to my research questions and contribute to the analysis of Lisa’s work described below. I have used sub-headings to help organize the data below into large categories that also relate back to the research questions.
School and School Board Context

During the initial few months of data collection, Lisa was teaching Geography and History and English to Grade 7 and 8 students as well as Math and Science to her Grade 7 class in a monolingual English instructional school setting. During the second year of our work together, Lisa took on the position of one of the two ESL teachers at the school having her own small classroom space where she taught Grades 3 through 8 in a pullout instructional model for either one or two periods of language arts time depending on the students’ English language level.

The elementary public school where she taught had been established in 2000, three and a half years prior to the onset of this study. It is located 28 kilometers outside of downtown Toronto. The school has grades Junior Kindergarten through Grade 8 with a faculty of 35 teachers. The area surrounding the school is largely residential situated in what historically was a farming community. As described in Chapter 1, development in the area has been on the rise during the last several years with many people moving out of Toronto proper to the surrounding suburbs and large numbers of immigrants moving into the area. This has increased diversity in general and has resulted in a change in the cultural, religious and ethnocultural make-up of the area.

The Urban School Board A has developed policies that focus explicitly on racial and ethnic diversity. The central policy document, “The Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity Policy” (York Region District School Board, N.D.-b) is accompanied by another document “Creating Schools and Classrooms for Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity: Questions and Answers” (York Region District School Board, N.D.-a). In the former document, several statements are developed that focus on respect for diversity including the following one about student languages: “The Board will recognize and affirm the
value of learning languages, recovering and/or maintaining ancestral language(s) and the opportunity to acquire proficiency in one of Canada’s official languages as key to a student’s success in school” (http://www.yrdsb.edu.on.ca/page.cfm?id=IRC000011).

In addition, the board has implemented several initiatives that focus on issues of diversity. Sustaining Equity Education and Diversity System-Wide (SEEDS) was a committee begun by a former Superintendent for Equity at the board in 2004. The purpose of this committee has been to provide equity training to all elementary and secondary administrators (principals and vice-principals), managers, and teachers. One such program called “Together We’re Better”, an annual conference that unites all elementary students from grades five through seven to take part in a series of workshops in which they develop skills and understandings related to issues of equity and diversity. This eight-week program culminates in multi-media presentations by the students to other students from their schools in order to share their learning. These selected students become leaders in their schools in relation to these issues and implement some of the ideas they learned.

While there was no articulated policy by the school administration regarding inclusion of students’ language and culture, the work that Lisa had done to build bridges with the Ahmadiyya community was recognized as an important resource. Lisa often expressed concern about the importance of promoting the role of first language and culture as a resource and vehicle for learning and she frequently brought this outlook to discussions on literacy in staff meetings. Lisa’s passion and expertise for these issues has earned her the recommendation to sit on several different committees sponsored by the Board that focus on advocacy issues related to equity and diversity and was also likely
one reason she was asked by her school principal to participate in The Multiliteracies Project.

**Student Participant Profiles**

Over sixty percent of the students at the school at large were Ahmaddiya immigrants to Canada from Pakistan or first generation. The remainder of the students came from a variety of other countries including Jamaica, Vietnam, Korea, Japan, and China. Six of the students were participants from the outset of the study beginning during the spring of the 2003/2004 school year. The remaining five became part of the study during the following school year when Lisa became one of the school’s ESL teachers. The chart that follows indicates the level of English at the time of the study, the year they arrived in Canada, their country of origin and their first language.


Table 3. Demographic Information of Student Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Year of arrival</th>
<th>ELL status</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>First language(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saba</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asima</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Punjabi, Urdu, Urdu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noreen</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sajida</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avi</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Hebrew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zerrin</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Turkish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasrin</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rashid</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoya</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Personal and Educational Background

Lisa draws from her own experiences growing up bilingual and biliterate in Italian to understand and interpret the educational needs and the immigrant experience of her students. Although Lisa does not share the linguistic or cultural background of most of the students she teaches, in the quote that follows, she expresses the connection that she feels to their experience of negotiating being in a different country and a different language. She also found that her own experience of having grown up observing her
Italian immigrant parents making sacrifices in their new country, learning a new
language, starting from the ground up, and living with multiple extended families, and
also not having first hand Canadian schooling experiences provided a connection for her
with her students. She expresses her familiarity with what it was like to go back and forth
between two languages. She described her experience negotiating her two linguistic
systems as a young person and how it influenced her teaching of bilingual students,

Growing up I was always surrounded by two languages, and my Mom still
only speaks Italian to me. I remember when I was seven and first began
visiting Italy, it was a foreign country….new land, new people, new ways
that people communicated with each other, and new social expectations.
So, the way that I learned to survive in this new environment and to
communicate with others in Italian was by thinking in English. When I
had to learn how to articulate in Italian I would think in English. So I said
to myself, this process must make sense to a kid coming from Pakistan
entering the classroom; they need to think the way that they know how.
(L. Leoni, Interview March 25, 2005)

Lisa’s intuitive understanding of the importance of students relying on already
established linguistic and conceptual structures is consistent with the way learning is
discussed in the research literature. For example, Bransford, Brown and Cocking (2000),
experts from the field of cognitive development, state: “All new learning involves
transfer based on previous learning…” (p. 41). They follow this statement with the
suggestion that transfer will be heightened if students are helped to become aware of their
processes of transfer. The idea is that the sensitivity developed by being made conscious
of the relationships between knowledge, in this case of their two languages will enable
students to draw on their capacity for transfer and monitor their use of old knowledge in
new arenas. This echoes Lisa’s account of what underlies her desire to have students use
their first language. She explains that it provides the teacher with opportunities to observe, evaluate and build upon the literacy skills that students bring to the classroom. She states:

Whether students are given the opportunity or not, it has been clear to me that students learning an additional language use their first language to help them make sense of not only grammatical tasks, but of the world around them since what is inside a language helps students understand what they see and draw connections between their old and new learning. So rather than keeping this a hidden process, my aim is to give it a space in the class. Opportunities like these bring out the inner voice of the students and makes what is invisible to the teacher visible. (L. Leoni, TESL Ontario Conference, November 17, 2005)

Lisa’s orientation toward linguistic diversity as a focus of her teaching was not initially based on educational preparation in this area so much as it was on her own ability to relate to growing up with and knowing two languages and her interest in learning about her students’ lives in general. She explained that she had not had any exposure to ESL theory or strategies in her pre-service education program. This lack of preparation in this area was brought home to her when Lisa began teaching and saw that the majority of the students in the school were beginning English language learners.

At the time that Thornton School E.S. was established, a number of other schools in the area were also being built or expanded to respond to the growing population. Lisa’s circumstance in this regard may have been similar to that of many other beginning teachers because of the lack of attention that diversity and issues of bilingualism or second language learning have traditionally been given in most teacher education programs unless that was explicitly the focus of study. While this situation has begun to change in recent years, her experience as a new teacher is indicative of the need to
include courses or material that address issues of language learning and diversity to any teacher education program given what we know about the diversity that is an integral part of most school settings currently.

When Lisa discusses her decision to allow students’ L1 in the classroom we see the importance of her own personal history as a bilingual person. She also further elaborated her ideas about the possibilities of L1 use in conjunction with the work of The Multiliteracies Project. She explained that the project “gave me more reason and theory to back up my ideas”. Therefore it is important to see a variety of experiences informing Lisa’s decision-making and articulation of ideas regarding her incorporation of students’ first language and culture.

**Pedagogical Orientation**

Lisa explains that getting to know her students is her primary goal because it enables her to assess their skills and plan her teaching. She continues:

> My overarching goal as a teacher is to uncover all that is unknown to me about my students – linguistically, culturally and especially to understand the community they are part of, parents, friends, faith, etc. So when a student enters my class, I want to discover all that I can about that student as a learner and as a person. (L. Leoni, TESL Ontario Conference, November 17, 2005).

In this quotation, Lisa describes her role as being fundamentally one of observer of her students and seeing her first priority as being about learning from her students in order to best teach them. As seen in the title of this thesis and as discussed in Chapter 1, making “what is invisible, visible” is a current that runs through Lisa’s representation of what is important to her in her teaching. Learning from children, giving them insight into their knowledge construction, and highlighting the knowledge that the students bring with
them are part of Lisa’s discourse of advocacy as educator. There is a practical side to this too. Lisa clearly articulates the ways in which she is able to utilize her observations of students as they read, write and interact in order to plan her teaching, even when these are occurring in a language that she does not understand. I will elaborate examples of how she carried this out in the sections below.

It became clear from my discussions with Lisa that engaging her students in dual language writing was integral to and reflective of the image of her students that she held. Lisa spoke passionately about issues of race and class that can be played out in both school and larger societal contexts. She also speaks to the conflict that many families in the community can feel because of their reduced status as immigrants in Canadian society when many were of middle and upper classes in their native country. Inclusion of students’ language and culture was part of Lisa’s role definition as advocate for her students’ needs. She explained her interest in including students’ languages during one interview in this way:

It’s about helping them believe that their parents are here for a specific reason and it’s to help kids believe that what they’re coming with, whether it’s their home, community, religious community or language is important and that they can take what they have and excel. (L. Leoni, Interview, March 3, 2005)

In this instance, Lisa articulates the connection of her teaching to the larger issues that are found in the society at large relating to minority and majority status. She indicates the marginalization that her students might experience at seeing their parents reduced status from the societal place they occupied in their home country. Lisa represents her inclusion of students’ languages not as simply a linguistic matter, but as a part of a broader desire
to communicate affirmative messages that challenge the messages they receive in the wider society (Toohey et al., 2007).

**Orientation Toward Writing**

In Lisa’s classroom students were always writing. There were many different forms of writing being taught in her classroom, students wrote for a variety of purposes, and utilized many different genres. For example, students maintained journals, they also each had a vocabulary section for new words in their notebooks that they were expected to write in ever time that they read a story or other type of text on their own or in the whole class. In addition, at different times of the year students wrote autobiographies, engaged in persuasive and procedural writing, developed reports, wrote and delivered speeches, and created their own stories to name just a few of the genres that their assignments fell under. Although students learned a variety of different genres of writing, the common thread was that there was always room for students to influence the topic by bringing their own interests and knowledge to bear. Lisa made it clear that their writing could be in both English and their first language. This allowed students to develop a sense of themselves as having ideas worth sharing while developing fluency (Dyson, 1989). Lisa also scaffolded her students’ literacy learning by engaging them in small group activities that featured drama and visual arts to the process, thus enabling students to draw on their capacities in those areas as part of the literacy activities.

**Differentiation of Instruction**

Another feature of Lisa’s teaching was that she engaged students in collaborative writing and other projects that they worked on over extended periods of time. This gave students the opportunity to work at their own pace; a particularly important adaptation for
students for whom English is not the dominant language. Lisa explained that the way she accomplished this was to determine several projects that she expected the students to complete at the beginning of each term. She established due dates for drafts to be completed and structured the conferences she held with students to review their work around these dates and their rate of completion. Students were given ongoing feedback but were allowed to hand in the final project at different times. Therefore, students who were able to finish a project quickly were given the chance to move on to the next one while others, such as three of the focal students in this project, who might need more time to complete it, were able to continue their work without penalty. Structuring the class around large projects without fixed deadlines for the final product allowed Lisa to accommodate students’ differing needs without singling them out. This orientation reflects her image of her students’ diversity as something to be acknowledged, not erased by a “cookie-cutter” mold of ways for students to meet curriculum expectations. As she said: “…somebody’s always doing something at different times and the students know that that’s okay.” While she instituted accommodations such as this one, by the same token, Lisa held out high expectations for all students.

Another example of this type of modification and accommodation was found when Lisa gave her Grades 7 and 8 classes the assignment toward the end of the year to write and deliver a speech around a self-selected topic. Some students chose to write a speech on their favourite hobby such as the genre of Animé comics or the history of baseball, for example. Lisa introduced the assignment first in the whole group and provided students with some examples of topics that students in other years had used and gave them a copy of a rubric and checklist that provided a framework that the students
used to formulate their work. Lisa coached students during the writing process as well as when they were preparing for their oral presentation. She did this by conducting individual conferences with students after they had completed a draft of their speech and then again once they were ready to begin practicing their presentation. Noreen wrote her speech about the importance of respecting and valuing ones’ parents. She integrated an example of her own interactions with her mother in order to illustrate the conflicts that sometimes arise but then discussed the need to recognize how privileged we are to have parents who love and care for us when many children in the world do not.

This topic reflected the strong bonds of family that are developed in her community and the concern for others less privileged around the world. Noreen was able to make use of the support Lisa gave her in conferencing to develop the content of her speech and as Lisa explained, she easily internalized the suggestions for how to bring her speech alive with various dramatic effects, use of voice, and body language. Lisa explained though that Asima was less sure of her self in this venue and did not want to do her speech in front of the class. Therefore Lisa allowed her to choose her audience. So although there had to be an audience, she was able to pick who would be there to listen and provide her with peer-editing feedback. This adaptation on Lisa’s part allowed Asima to remain accountable to the requirements of the class and still feel within her comfort zone in terms of her readiness to speak in front of a larger audience.

These examples display some of the structures that were established by Lisa in the classroom and that gave students multiple ways to invest in their learning (Norton, 2000). They contrast to the marginalization that often happens for English language learners when students are not allowed to negotiate processes or content in their L1 or to be given
adjustments in time limitations for writing tasks among other things (Kouritzin, 2006).

Furthermore, they indicate Lisa’s efforts to use literacy as a medium through which students can negotiate their identities. In this way the teaching of dominant literacies can be a tool for empowerment rather than simply being a conduit for the reproduction of existing power structures (Reder & Davila, 2005).

**Building Community Partnerships**

Early on in her teaching at this school, Lisa established connections with families of her students from the Ahmmadiya community as well as leaders from within the community. For Lisa, developing this communication was part and parcel of her interest in bridging home and school. Her role as liaison between the school and her students’ community meant that she was often the one sought out when other teachers and school board staff had questions or concerns related to students’ religion, culture or to contact key community members. This was not always an easy position to be in given the delicate task that is associated with carving out a space for difference in a societal context that at times prefers to sweep aside inequalities that are embedded in these relationships.

Lisa expressed a keen awareness of the misunderstandings or targeting that Muslim students in particular are vulnerable to in the wider society. She has worked to expand her own knowledge of her students and their community in order to develop her capacity to counteract what otherwise could be easily assumed widespread societal prejudices, a lack of cultural understanding, and/or a lack of interest in learning about and accepting differences. She explained that she found issues of equity as compelling as those dealing strictly with literacy achievement and often felt that the two should be considered in concert rather than divorced from each other in educational settings:
I wish people talked as much about equity as they do about literacy. It seems that certain things are non-negotiable in discussions around education, such as effective reading instruction, yet issues related to race sometimes appear to be taboo. In my mind, the two need to be discussed together. (L. Leoni, Personal communication, January 10, 2006)

Lisa’s main concern appeared to revolve around presenting an alternative perspective to the deficit view that is often associated with new immigrant students, especially when those students hail from non-Western countries and religions. Related to this perspective is Lisa’s opinion about the need to educate students without prejudice toward the goals or values of the families. For example, there are many ways in which the expectations on the part of the school for parent and student participation in different school events and activities might raise issues for families from different cultural backgrounds because they are not consistent with the values of the families. Additionally, Lisa points out that what we deem successful participation on the part of parents reflects a certain image of parental involvement that does not necessarily match the image of the teacher and the school on the part of the parents. She explained that this points to the need to make the school’s expectations transparent and perhaps shift the idea of what participation could entail. Lisa was also aware of the different long-term goals and expectations that sometimes exist in different cultures for their children, such as arranged marriages. This understanding does not reduce her expectations for her students.

Lisa has found ways outside of the classroom to create links between the school and the community. For the last five summers she has directed the Summer Institute, a board program offered to all students in the local municipalities. The purpose is to encourage healthy social development and offer continued learning over the summer months as well as access for students who could benefit from continued literacy support.
during the summer. Because of transportation difficulties faced by some students at her school, in addition to having a school-based program, there is also a concurrent program of offerings based in the community center of the Ahmaddiya community. As an extension of The Summer Institute Lisa established a junior boys’ literacy program (Grades 4 to 6) and a coed primary literacy program to the Ahmaddiya community. In these programs Lisa made it a priority to hire teachers from the Ahmmaddiya community together with parent volunteers. She also encouraged all of the staff to use and promote the use of students’ L1 amongst students in the program in order for them to have equal access and opportunities. These practices established trust within the community and as a result Lisa was given full access to two community houses that function as offices and support the smooth running of the after school literacy programs mentioned above.

Lisa and two other teachers implemented a literacy program that brought parents and older and younger students together in order to receive homework help and model school literacy strategies. This partnership included key members of the Ahmaddiya community, members of the region’s health services and volunteer staff. As a result of the partnership among community and educational agencies, a three-tiered early literacy program was developed and implemented at the Mosque during the school year. High school students from the community were recruited and trained to work as reading tutors to younger students and in the process earn mandatory community service hours required to graduate. Two of the student participants in this study also took part in this literacy program during their first year in high school that gave them training from the teachers in how to read effectively with pre-reading or emergent readers in order to help build interest and comprehension through shared reading of books.
Parents were invited to participate as a way to give them insight into the types of literacy strategies typically used in schools and also participated in parenting workshops. These workshops that brought in guest speakers were geared in particular to mothers. They were offered in response to a growing need in the community for the mothers to increase their contact with outside sources. Because these sessions were offered on their home turf and translators were provided their comfort level was more assured. In addition, to these two activities, homework help was offered to students in Grades 3 to 8, and Lisa and her colleagues provide academic support for young students who needed homework help after school. Lisa has also facilitated tours of the Mosque for interested teachers, administrators, and school community partners in order to develop a better understanding of students’ community and culture among educators. She describes the power that building the home-school connection in a variety of ways can have for students’ image of themselves in the school. Lisa maintains:

If parents are encouraged to be volunteers, if parents are seen as readers in the library, then the kids see their parents as valid members of the school community. So it’s not about only telling them that speaking Urdu is good--it’s a great language and you have a bigger brain because of being bilingual--it goes beyond that. (L. Leoni, Interview March 3, 2005)

Here again, Lisa indicates that although much of her work to include students’ background knowledge and identity revolves around their languages and promoting the advantages of being bilingual, it is about much more than language. Lisa’s discourse represents the view that language is nested within the larger issues of how to communicate to students that their community and culture is valued by the school and is a valuable asset to their future. It is about conveying a counter-discourse to the prevailing minority status that accompanies most of her students’ immigrant experiences to Canada.
Many of her students, whose parents had previously been professionals and members of the middle or upper middle class in their home country, were now seeing their parents working at menial labor or service jobs. Lisa’s statement recalls what research has shown to be a strong relationship between societal status, integration of language and culture in the school setting, and school achievement and further recalls the powerful role that individual educators can play in providing alternative views and messages to their students than the dominant societal messages (Cummins, 1986).

**Beliefs and Practices in Relation to Students’ L1 Use**

As discussed in Chapter 3, much research has demonstrated the importance of L1 development for L2 learning. However, this has not necessarily transferred to teachers in monolingual teaching situations feeling comfortable with allowing the inclusion of their students’ L1 in classroom work or speech. Lisa highlights that having students write in their first language contributes important information to her in the ongoing work of observation and evaluation that is a fundamental aspect of all teaching. She also asserts the essential connection between language, culture and identity and the role that teachers and schools play in creating the conditions that either dismiss these connections or encourage them to be maintained and to flourish. As Wong Fillmore (1991b) has documented, language loss is most closely correlated with the start of formal schooling. This affirms the importance of teachers developing explicit and implicit means to convey a message that students’ first language(s) are respected. Lisa’s placement of students’ first languages prominently on display in the classroom through their written work communicated that she valued both of their languages. This went a long way not only in promoting cognitive engagement through linguistic negotiation, but also in creating the
conditions for students to feel as though their whole person was accepted in the classroom. In the following quotation Lisa explains her purpose:

   My intention is always [to be] drawing out that first language and cultural or prior lived experience as a way to make the connections between curriculum and what the child brings with him to the class. (L. Leoni, TESL Ontario Conference, November 17, 2005)
   By establishing a place for her students’ cultural capital through curricular modifications, Lisa demonstrates acceptance of and esteem for their first languages. By having students write and talk amongst themselves about their work in their first languages, she helps make the connections between what they already know and what is being learned more visible to students. In the second year of this study, when Lisa was teaching ESL, the entire class became oriented around students’ bilingual identities. Therefore, the multilingual nature of the classroom fostered a sense of cultural capital even in the case of students in her class who were the only speakers of that language.

   Lisa draws on her own experience growing up and going back and forth between English and Italian at home in explaining her purpose in engaging students in these ways. She expresses her belief of the central role that the relationship between thought, language, and identity plays in expression, tying this to her commitment to creating spaces for her students’ to be able to use their L1 in school (Platt & Troudi, 1997). Lisa explains:

   [It’s important to allow students to use both languages] because it gives them options to access figurative and metaphoric language. For instance, in Italian I would say ‘un amore bestiale’, but in English “a beastly sort of love” sounds ridiculous. So if you are only allowed to use one language, the words that come from the heart are trapped and you feel reduced by
only being able to speak a certain way. (L. Leoni, Interview, March 24, 2005)

In this instance, Lisa refers to the figurative nature of language and the ease of accessing your thoughts and feelings in your first language. Below I describe the practices Lisa implemented in each year of the study and describe students’ responses to them. Sub-headings that describe themes drawn from Lisa’s teaching are used to extend the discussion beyond inclusion of first language to connections that she made by virtue of her curriculum to her students’ family and community.

School Year 2003/2004

During my first school visit Lisa shared several pieces of student work some of which had been written in English and their L1, Urdu. She showed me one writing assignment that had been done exclusively in Urdu. This piece of writing had been done by Sajida, a Grade 7 student from Pakistan, who had just arrived in Canada and began attending Thornton School E.S. in December of that school year. Lisa explained that she spoke very little English but that with the translation help of two other girls in her class who were fully bilingual, Sajida had been able to participate in many of the assignments. Lisa explained that she had been able to use these two other students in particular to help her communicate assignments, expectations and classroom processes to Sajida.

During that visit I noted that Lisa’s classroom walls were filled with student work as well as a world map with students’ countries of origin marked on it. I also noticed several parents from the Pakistani community working in the school on a volunteer basis. Lisa explained that their presence in the school in this capacity had given them a higher status and legitimacy in the school environment in the eyes of their children. It was clear from the way that she spoke about her students, their parents and the work that she was
doing with them that Lisa placed a high premium on integrating the identity of the
student into her teaching. It was apparent too that she considered family, religion,
community, and language all essential parts of her students’ identities. On many
occasions I observed Lisa make remarks to her students about her own use of Italian at
home and shared her experiences of having immigrant parents. Lisa mentioned to me that
once during recess, several students were working on writing projects in her classroom
and they overheard Lisa’s phone conversation with her aunt in Italian. This led to many
questions from the students about what that language was that she had been speaking,
why Lisa spoke it, and with whom. By exposing herself as bilingual and from a family
context in which a language other than English is spoken, Lisa further legitimized her
students’ own bilingualism and demonstrated the personal value that she attached to
maintaining one’s language as a way to communicate with family and in other venues.

When I asked Lisa if she had an explicit classroom policy regarding language use,
she told me that she does speak to the students about not using language to exclude other
students. For example she explained that when students from different language groups
worked together on a group assignment she encouraged them to use English as the
common language. At the same time, Lisa asserted the importance of allowing students to
work together in their first language, especially when there were students with limited
understanding of English who could be partnered with students who were bilingual. She
also strongly defended the students’ right to speak in their first language on the
playground and around the school without being reprimanded.

This stance is related to Lisa’s sense of herself as advocate for her students’ rights
and needs and frames her understanding of language and literacy as being “preceded by
and intertwined with knowledge of the world” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 29). Lisa’s commitment to involving students’ language and culture is at least partly tied to her interest in counteracting the perception of minority groups in the society at large. In her school setting, this is of particular importance because of the status of Muslims in the wider society. The Ahmadiyya Muslim population that forms a large part of her student population could easily be assumed to encounter racist stereotypes and images in the society especially following the events of September 11, 2001. Lisa mentioned that even amongst her Muslim students in her class she had overheard derogatory comments about Muslims in the year following the attacks. This adoption of racist sentiments is reflective of the impulse to adapt to the host country and speaks to the degree of non-acceptance that the students feel in their new society. It is also more broadly related to the effects of adaptation that often carries with it the idea that one’s first language and culture is best hidden in order to appear part of the mainstream.

Lisa’s acceptance of L1 or dual language writing that year extended to any student who expressed an interest in using both of their languages as well as to recently arrived students whose minimal English limited their class participation. Lisa elaborated on the powerful impression that being able to access your first language in order to express yourself makes especially when the target language is new or when you feel a greater affinity with one language over the other in relation to expressing certain feelings or ideas:

Sometimes when I’m going to say something in English I’m thinking about how it would be said in Italian because in Italian it might sound more poetic. Nasrin [a newly arrived student] has told me the same thing, she says, --“Ms. Leoni, Urdu is such a poetic beautiful language, there’s
no English words that can tell you how much you love your parents like I
would be able to say in Urdu. (L. Leoni, Interview, March 24, 2005)
Lisa’s recognition of the difficulty that saying something in one language can
present when one has learned to express certain thoughts or feelings first in another
language is key to her motivation to expand the writing her students did to include both
of their languages. Writing in both languages became a way to enable her students to
move back and forth between their ideas and feelings that were encoded in one or the
other language.

Dual Language Identity Texts
A powerful example of dual language written work in Lisa’s class was undertaken
by three of Lisa’s students in Grade 7 during the 2003/2004 school year. The three girls
worked together on a project that involved both of their languages: Urdu and English. At
the time that they began to write the story, one of them, Sajida, had been in Canada only
three months. My observations of the three girls at work on this project indicated
collaboration that included both linguistic and social dynamics at work in their
interactions. The oral translation that the other two girls, Noreen and Asima engaged in,
was often, but not exclusively, in order to help Sajida, the newcomer to Canada
understand Lisa’s expectations in the classroom.

Lisa did not discourage her students from speaking in a language other than
English in the classroom and this made it possible for this collaborative writing project
include Sajida whose English was in the very early stages. In addition to the English that
they used to speak with Lisa, amongst themselves, the girls predominantly spoke Urdu
most notably in the planning of the storyline. What is interesting and telling about the
project that involved the three girls was that although Lisa guided its initial structure and
conception, the girls brought the idea of writing the text in both languages to her attention. This too points to the nature of collaboration that Lisa was able to construct in her interactions with her students and the context of trust that she had established in her classroom. This is just one manifestation of the ways in which linguistic and identity engagement was negotiated in Lisa’s classroom.

The previous year two students in Lisa’s Grade 7 class had also written dual language texts. They created storybooks that integrated the geography unit on migration with their English language unit on narrative writing. When I began observing in her class I saw samples of these stories as well as the writing only in Urdu that Sajida had done as part of a class assignment soon after her arrival in December. The writing of the dual language book, “The New Country” by the three girls began during the spring of 2004 in her Grade 7 class when Lisa used the genre of storybook writing to integrate children’s literature with the theme of migration that the class was studying in geography. A feature of this assignment was that students aimed their text at a younger audience with the goal of sharing it with students in the early grades. Asima, Noreen and Sajida worked together on this project weaving their three experiences together to recount their story of immigration through the voice of one character, Sonia.

The three girls wrote the book, “The New Country” collaboratively in order to meet the curriculum expectations of narrative, process writing, and geography. Lisa also ensured that writing expectations for students receiving ESL services were being met (see Appendix B). While all students were expected to work in small groups to complete this assignment, Asima, Noreen and Sajida added another element to their collaboration when they expressed a desire to write their book based on their own immigration experience.
and to write it in both English and Urdu. They explained their idea to Lisa as being based on the fact that most of the students in the lower grades of the school spoke only Urdu at home. Urdu was the first spoken and written language of two of the girls, Sajida and Noreen and the second language of Asima who speaks Punjabi as her first language. Although Asima does not write in Urdu she is a fluent speaker of Urdu and was frequently called upon by Lisa to translate, especially when Sajida arrived in December with virtually no English skills. The writing proceeded based on the following steps: Lisa gave oral instructions for the assignment in English, Asima translated the assignment to Sajida, then the girls brainstormed their storyline in Urdu together. They wrote the initial draft in English and then made the translation into Urdu. When they thought of the Urdu words this sometimes led them to change an English word, so the translation process became a reciprocal exchange between the two languages.

**Collaborative roles**

During the course of interviews I conducted with them and through Lisa’s observations as their teacher and my own as participant observer, it was clear that each of the girls played a distinct role in the writing process. Noreen was the scribe during the translation process of the story from English to Urdu. This made sense to the students because of the fact that they had first written their story in English so when they made the translation, of the three, Noreen was the only one who had written literacy skills in both languages. She discussed in subsequent interviews that it was helpful to have access to Asima’s oral skills in both languages as well as Sajida’s advanced knowledge of Urdu vocabulary and grammar as she completed the writing in Urdu. She also mentioned that
she had sought out books in Urdu at home to practice and refresh her literacy skills in that language when she realized that they would be writing in both languages.

The collaboration amongst the three girls provided many opportunities for first and second language development (e.g., vocabulary exploration), metalinguistic conversations about language, and for the occasion to reflect on their immigrant experience. In one segment of a video taken during their collaboration, they are discussing the correct Urdu word to replace the word “sad” in English. Noreen asks what word she should use and Sajida supplies the word *naraz*. At a later point, they explained that there are different ways to say “sad” in Urdu, which was what had led to Noreen’s initial uncertainty.

During an interview with the three girls the following autumn, I asked them to talk about what kinds of things they were learning while they were engaged in this process. Sajida spoke in Urdu and Asima translated for her.

Asima: “She’s saying that like the story was talking about how we left our country and came to Canada and so she’s saying how we were telling there how we were leaving and telling how they were different from each other.”

Researcher: “So it helped you to understand…?”

Asima (translating): “the concept of between two countries.”

I verified with Asima and Sajida that those were Sajida’s words and not hers and they assured me that this was the case. Regardless of whether Sajida had expressed this idea in identical form to Asima’s translation, it remains a remarkable insight for both
girls to be making in relation to their experiences of living between cultures and of having developed a story based on their experiences of moving from one country to another. The concept of being “between two countries” is what so many people feel who have had to leave their country behind and start a life in a new one. As Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001) state: “Immigrants are by definition in the margins of two cultures. Paradoxically, they can never truly belong either ‘here’ nor ‘there’” (p. 93). For children this phenomenon is often heightened by the fact that they typically have no choice in the matter of their immigration. Working on this story appears to have offered Sajida as well as Asima and Noreen a place to process the feelings that accompanied their move to such a new and different country. By being able to make their experiences a visible part of their school learning, they did not have to leave this aspect of themselves behind and furthermore, it was made a legitimate part of their classroom learning. Therefore, both the use of their L1 and writing about their own experiences stand out as ways to make visible what is often left invisible and thereby to pair cognitive engagement and identity investment in literacy learning.

During this same interview the girls spoke about the kinds of linguistic knowledge that they became aware of during the writing process. Sajida mentioned that in Urdu there is no need to use capitals at the beginning of a sentence whereas she noticed during this writing project that in English this is necessary. Although Asima did not do the writing in Urdu, she understands enough of the script to have been able to observe these differences. She indicated that she had also asked Noreen when she was writing in Urdu why she was not starting with a capital letter. She explained:

’Cause I never wrote in Urdu before so when Noreen was writing I was like why aren’t you starting with a capital? And she said we don’t use
capitals so that was really different even though I know how to translate
really good now I didn’t know how to write it. So it seemed like even
though it was my language I didn’t know much about it so I learned a lot.
(Asima, Interview, March 24, 2005)

Working on this book with her peers also enabled Sajida to be introduced to the
expectations of process writing in a Canadian classroom, a situation that if done
exclusively in English is often considered too advanced for newly arrived students. Being
able to participate alongside her bilingual peers made the process and the content of the
work comprehensible to Sajida while taking away the potential stress of having to
function at a higher linguistic or conceptual level than she would otherwise have been
able to do on her own (Krashen, 2004).

Lisa explained that another benefit of having her students work in groups in their
first language was that it allowed her to observe the different roles that they took in
action, the strengths that each of them brought to the interaction, and their literacy skills
in their L1. For example, when the three girls were working on “The New Country”
together, Lisa noted how they were organizing and communicating their ideas amongst
themselves and on paper, and she learned more about the language and literacy skills of
each of them in their L1. She saw that although Asima did not have written literacy skills
in her L1, her oral skills were well developed and that by contrast, although Noreen wrote
well in both languages, she was a more hesitant speaker.

In Lisa’s eyes, both Asima and Noreen served as mentors, or in Vygotsky’s
(1978a) words, “expert others” for Sajida as the newcomer. Because they were
conducting their story planning in their L1, Sajida was given access to the narrative plan
and the elements that it needed to include (e.g., characters, plot, setting, problem,
beginning, middle and end) and yet Lisa was still able to see that the required fundamentals were being incorporated. Since Sajida’s voice was heard and she was able to participate in the expectations set for the whole class, her self-image as a student was more likely to be that of someone with a place and a purpose in the classroom. The fact that she could contribute to this work legitimated her knowledge and skills even though she was not an English speaker. As Lisa said:

This affected how her peers saw her as a learner and a student…not just as lacking in English or school culture but as someone with rich and valuable experiences. Many also saw in her the nostalgia of what they had left behind when they came to Canada two or more years ago. She became a resource for them to reconnect with Pakistan and all that represented for them--language, fashion, movies, food, etc. (L. Leoni, Personal communication, March 6, 2006)

Two years later, when Asima was in Grade 9 she discussed the linguistic and cognitive benefits that she saw transpiring in this process for Sajida and herself:

For Sajida, who was just learning English, she could see what we had written in Urdu and have a better idea how to do it in English. It’s important too because there’s a different format for writing sentences in Urdu than in English. So when some words are translated it might not sound accurate right away, you might have to add more words in English than in our language. So I think she learned a lot from that. It also helped me and Noreen in our language learning a lot too; it helped me improve my Urdu and I learned to translate better than before because it gave me some new words and it gave me practice going back and forth between the languages. (Asima, Interview, October 3, 2005)

In this quotation, Asima describes the pride she feels at improving her translation abilities; a skill that “requires the manipulating of language at two levels” (Malakoff & Hakuta, 1991). Her comments suggest that she experienced translation to act as a tool for
metalinguistic understanding and improved language skills (Catford, 1965). Instead of feeling reduced to only speaking a certain way by being limited to English, Asima expresses the high levels of learning and engagement that she experienced in being able to go back and forth between her two languages.

Sajida continued to be Lisa’s student when she was in Grade 8 the following year in her ESL class where she again took the opportunity given to her by Lisa to write several pieces in Urdu and English. A year after completing “The New Country”, Sajida discussed the benefits she saw to being given the space to work in her first language:

I think it helps my learning to be able to write in both languages because if I’m writing English and Ms. Leoni says you can write Urdu too it helps me think of what the word means because I always think in Urdu. That helps me write better in English. When I came here I didn’t know any English so I always spoke in Urdu. Other teachers always said to me “Speak English, speak English” but Ms. Leoni didn’t say anything when she heard me speak Urdu and I liked this because if I don’t know English, what can I do? It helps me a lot to be able to speak Urdu and English. (Sajida, Interview, March 24, 2005)

Here Sajida expresses the frustration that she felt when she was told by some of her teachers to speak only English. As she put it, “If I don’t know English, what can I do?” Instead of feeling disempowered because she had difficulty communicating in English, in Lisa’s class Sajida felt like she could participate by using Urdu, and at the same time improve her English writing by being able to access her more extensive vocabulary in Urdu first. She clearly points to the resource that her first language is for developing her thoughts and being able to express herself at a higher level in English. Although the other two students did not express the same need to use their first language as a tool for learning English and participating in class work at the time of this project,
they both expressed appreciation at the opportunity to produce work in both of their languages and pointed to the learning that they had experienced along the way.

The words of the students quoted above demonstrate their understanding of their “use of the native language as a mediator between the world of objects and the new language” (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 161). Their reflections offer insight into the ways that they understood this process to be occurring and what it meant to them to have their teacher validate this linguistic negotiation as useful for their learning. Because they were given the opportunity to use their first language as a learning tool, they were able to make greater use of this natural process. What becomes apparent from the contributions of the student participants to this research study is the extent to which the practices described here provided not just their teacher, but also them, with self-knowledge and tools that helped them advance their knowledge.

The creation of dual language books and incorporation of students’ L1 into the classroom impacted not only the ELL students but also their peers for whom English is their first language. At the end of the 2003/2004 school year when Lisa reflected on the implications for her Grade 7 class of having made dual language writing a part of the curriculum she noted:

For the first time this year I have seen the non-Urdu speaking students come to appreciate the natural process of learning for the non-English dominant students. Using both languages in the class has had the consequence that the students don’t only associate English language learning with the student that’s isolated or withdrawn to ESL from the class. It removes the stigma of the child being labelled an ESL student and instead English language learning and bilingualism become a normal part of the work of the class. (L. Leoni, Interview August 19, 2004)
**Involving Family**

One of the implications of the dual language writing was the conversation that was promoted between children and their parents about their writing and their first language. Involving parents also becomes a natural extension of schoolwork when the curriculum builds on students’ lived experiences. And because the work is tied to school literacy, the use of the first language may be afforded greater prestige. This was the case with the three girls who wrote the book, “The New Country” that will be described in more detail below. Because they were writing it in Urdu and English, they were more excited to go home and show their parents than if it had been written solely in English. Students also reported the delight that their parents expressed to them at seeing writing assignments from school that involved their first language. For example, Noreen explained that working on the translation of “The New Country” motivated her to ask her mother about unknown words she needed to use. Noreen was excited enough by the prospect of the work that even before beginning the translation, she tried to improve her first language literacy skills in preparation. She describes:

> It was my first experience translating English to Urdu and translating it into Urdu was a little bit difficult because I had forgotten many of the words, so my vocabulary improved a lot too. I had to ask my mom a lot of words when we were writing it in Urdu but also before that, when I realized that we were going to be doing it in both languages, I started reading more books in Urdu at home because I hadn’t been doing that so much so I had forgotten some words. (Noreen, Interview, March 24, 2005)

*ESL Class 2004/2005*

During the 2004/2005 school year Lisa began to teach ESL to Grades 3 to 8. One of Lisa’s first comments to me when she discovered that this would be her assignment the
The following year was that she hoped to integrate a dual language focus to all that she did in her ESL classroom. This showed that she was positioning herself as wanting to build a relationship to her students’ first languages throughout the curriculum. This way of conceiving of an ESL classroom pedagogy was novel especially in the context of a school that had no bilingual or heritage language program.

At the beginning of the year, one of the first assignments she gave to her students was to write their autobiographies. Lisa asked them to bring in pictures of whatever they wanted that related to themselves such as pictures of their family, friends, home country, hobbies or interests. They divided the writing into six sections; each paragraph that students wrote represented a different aspect of themselves, for example, their parents, their siblings, and their friends. Some wrote about a personal experience or memory such as a recent birthday celebration, some wrote about their home country. Lisa also gave them each a picture of themselves at their new school to include. Students transferred their paragraphs and pictures onto a large piece of poster board with an over-sized picture of themselves on the cover that opened up to each section. The text was in most cases written in both English and students’ first language.

In this ESL classroom context Lisa also introduced a similar storybook assignment to her students as she had the previous year, this time asking them to write a story that had a core moral or lesson. They were told to think of the moral first and then discuss it with her. Lisa then had them develop an outline of the story they wanted to write based on that moral. Many of her students chose to write their story in both English and their first language. All of the texts are reflective of students’ identity as they utilize themes that are central to their lives to illustrate the moral they chose to write about. Avi,
for whom horses have been a part of his life as long as he can remember, wrote the book “Tom Goes to Kentucky” about a rodeo rider who has to practice and practice in order to be good enough to win and go to the big rodeo in Kentucky. The book is written in both Hebrew and English. It is a story about perseverance, horses, and a boy named Tom, which is the name of Avi’s best friend back in Israel. Avi describes the power of being able to write about things that matter to you:

That is so important, especially when you are using a language that is not your first language. You already don’t understand perfectly so it’s important that you want to understand. If it’s boring then you won’t want to understand but if it’s interesting to you then you will want to try. When I wrote “Tom Goes to Kentucky” it was like that for me. I chose a person called Tom who would be a rodeo rider because it’s fun for me to write a story about horses and stuff like that. It makes more pressure to do it from the inside. (Avi, Interview, November 1, 2005)

Doing it from the inside is a key phrase in Avi’s characterization of the importance of writing about things that interest you. In his words, this inner connection and the motivation that is incurred when you feel a connection to what you are writing about is of even more importance when you are learning in a new language. Avi explains that the implicit disconnect that is involved in being surrounded by a language you don’t understand will only grow if you are only being asked to do work that has no bearing on your life.

Choosing a moral and then developing the story around this moral proved to be a compelling means for students to reflect on and develop the stories that they wanted to tell. Avi’s story conveys his idea that you can work hard to overcome your losses and reach your goals. By contrast, both Sajida and Nasrin, another student from Pakistan who
had just arrived in September of that school year, chose to retell stories with a religious moral that they had learned as part of their religious and cultural upbringing. Both Aminah and Nasrin wrote their stories in English and Urdu.

As mentioned above, Sajida wrote her story, “The Three Sons”, based on a folktale she had learned in her native Pakistan. Nasrin also based her story on her knowledge of a fable that is told in her home country. The moral of this story resonates with Nasrin’s religious and cultural life. In it she describes the importance of the ideas of unity and working together to being happy in this world. In the socio-political context of Canada and around the world in which people of the Muslim faith are often cast in a light of the “other”, it is striking to see the comfort that these students felt in making their religion and their language part of their written expression in school.

Guthrie (2004) highlights the central role of literacy engagement in promoting academic achievement. Although he focuses greater attention on reading than on writing, the model that he elaborates for developing engagement in literacy is closely aligned with the kinds of writing that Lisa asked her students to participate in. Choice is an essential component within his framework for establishing optimal conditions to encourage engaged readers. In this construct, choice is given within established curriculum units as a way to help students create a more meaningful and authentic connection to the literary works. Guthrie (2004) describes the different forms that this can take including choice related to collaborative work, choice over the questions used to investigate a given theme being studied, or which books to select in order to answer research questions, for example.
Creating Curriculum Around Diversity

Mercado (1992) discusses literacy as “…an important means of coming to understand while at the same time affirming and transforming personal, ethnic, and linguistic identities” (p. 1). In this section I explore what types of knowledge generation, exchanges and expressions of personal and linguistic identities were created because of this focus. Using examples from my field notes I address the types of linguistic and cultural explorations that were made possible for students and based on interviews with them I consider what their response to these explorations was.

From the beginning of the school year in her ESL classroom, Lisa had a world map on the wall with a teacher-created sign asking: “Where in the World Are You From?” On this map students would find their country of birth and use a mini pushpin flag to identify them with that country. While the majority of flags were placed on Pakistan, during the second year of the study in Lisa’s ESL class one student, Avi, had recently arrived from Israel and another, Zerrin had come from Turkey. During my time in the classroom I would routinely see students looking at the map during transition times or in between assignments.

One conversation that I observed between Avi and Zerrin occurred while they were waiting to show Lisa their work. Zerrin pointed to Turkey and showed Avi where the capital city was telling him that that was where she lived and that the biggest mosque was there. She then asked him if he had gone to a mosque to which he replied that no, he did not because he was Jewish. They continued this conversation discussing religions and worship in different countries. On other occasions Zerrin also noted the difference between her customs as a Muslim and those of her peers who were from the Ahmadiyya Muslim community such as style of dress. This free interchange between Zerrin and Avi
was encouraged in Lisa’s classroom in a variety of ways. She had several books that dealt with religions around the world, the world map and other artifacts that served as resources for comparing and learning about people and places around the world. Lisa also brought issues of diversity into the discussion of different topics that were studied. It was a new experience for these immigrant students to be in a diverse classroom and being able to learn about differences from. As teachers it is possible to make assumptions that students come into the classroom already knowing about each other and/or knowing how to interact with and learn from each other. Because Lisa made it a priority it allowed the students to self-reflect deeper into their own and each other’s lives.

During one class observation in November 2004, Lisa was reading a story with Zerrin and Avi called “The Crowded House” from a reader she was using with the class. She began by looking at each page with them. Although Avi had been in Canada just three months at that point, his excitement at seeing a story with elements that were familiar to him was evident by his animated participation. While not always silent, Avi this day was more than typically engaged and vocal.

Avi: Oh I know this. One family. It’s no good this house.

Lisa: Yes, a small house, and lots of people.

Avi (with much excitement in his voice and gesturing heavily): After, after this the man is waking the Rabbi. This too Hebrew Rabbi said very not good this house. Now to go outside the sheep.

(Lisa starts to say something but Avi continues excitedly)

Lisa: How about….

Avi: Now there’s no room to move now no animals it’s good it’s happy no animal.

Lisa: So we’re going to read the story together.
(She begins to read the story, when she gets to the name of the main character “Yitzak”, Avi corrects her pronunciation.)

Lisa asks: What does it mean to be a farmer?

Avi: Outside work—with cows outside.

Lisa writes on board: Yitzak—[name of] farmer
7 people—small house
1 bed for everybody

Zerrin doesn’t know what rabbi means. Lisa tries to explain by saying he is a religious leader. Avi gets up to get a book from the class called “What I Believe” to look for a picture to help Zerrin understand. When Zerrin indicates that she understands, Lisa asks what this person is called in Turkish. Zerrin says: Hoja.

They return to the story.

Lisa says: Okay, so Yitzak goes to the Rabbi and says I have a problem. What’s the problem?

Avi: (with much excitement, loudly and quickly) Big family, small house. Goes to Rabbi, still a problem.

At the end of this lesson, Lisa wrote a cloze passage (sentences with key vocabulary left blank for students to fill in) on the board based on the story for Zerrin and Avi to copy and complete. She explained that for homework she wanted them to pretend that they are telling the story to a friend who doesn’t know what happens and that they should write this retelling in their first language.

This lesson provides an example of the kind of cultural and linguistic interchange that I observed as part of the class work on countless occasions in Lisa’s classroom. The story she read this day provided several opportunities for Avi to share his expertise. Having grown up on a Moshav¹¹ he was intimately familiar with farm animals and farm work; being Jewish, he could relate to the religious model being represented in the book and share this understanding with his classmate, Zerrin, and he could also instruct his

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¹¹ A Moshav is a type of cooperative agricultural community made up of individual farms in Israel.
teacher on the correct pronunciation of a name from his language. Lisa made use of the context of this story to help Zerrin understand the connection between a Rabbi in the Hebrew faith with the Turkish name of the religious leader in her Muslim faith and Avi broadened this relationship to ask Lisa about the comparable person in the Catholic faith that she had grown up with. This vignette demonstrates Lisa’s acceptance and encouragement of her students taking on the role of teacher and her that of learner as well as her inclusion of her students’ cultural and linguistic lives and experiences.

Communities Around the World

Later in the year Lisa developed a curriculum unit that revolved around the theme of “Communities Around the World” based around a big book of that name. She was interested in pursuing this theme in part because of the kinds of questions that she saw being raised by her students about difference. It also followed a progression in her focus that had begun the year with the individual, through the writing of autobiographies, to learning about narrative writing where they could express themselves creatively through different stories with a moral of their own creation, to a more expansive view that encompassed difference and similarities across communities and cultures.

That fall Lisa had observed Zerrin for the first time seeing and interacting with Muslims who were not from Turkey. She saw the way that Zerrin noticed and remarked on the differences in how the Ahmadiyya Muslims dress and talk and celebrate important religious dates from what she was accustomed to in Turkey. This was eye opening for her in that it led her to understand that diversity exists within the Muslim community. She also realized for the first time that there were Muslim people in Israel and had the opportunity to ask Avi questions about his religion and how it differed from hers. This
led Lisa to develop a unit that would help students to think more about different countries, religions and communities around the world. When she started reading about other countries with her students, Lisa also realized that some of them had never heard of many of the countries that were being discussed but they were keen on learning about what was similar and what was different between those countries, and between Canada and their country of origin. Lisa developed two major projects as part of this unit. One was a big book that the whole class worked on by researching different countries. Each student contributed one page about the country they had chosen that discussed elements of that country such as the language spoken, religion, food, sports and any other information of their choice. The other was to have students write a narrative based on their own experiences for each of the following statements:

- A community is a place where people live and work together.
- All communities have homes and they all look different.
- Communities can be big or small.
- There are communities in all kinds of places.
- Communities celebrate together.
- Communities play together.
- Together we all make up the world community.

These headings were extracted from the big book that Lisa read with the class. Students used these categories in order to write about their home country, Canada, and any other communities they had learned about and could bring into the comparison. This forced students to reflect on what was the same and what was different about both of the places they had lived and this helped them make connections to the places they were reading
about. The categories gave them a schema for thinking about and describing their own experiences in both of their communities. Students’ experiences as members of a community were constructed as legitimate knowledge and as a tool for articulating and expanding upon definitions of community.

Having students create their own identity texts in relation to this curricular focus provides an alternative to publisher-created social studies texts (Cummins, 2004). Whereas published texts often contain representations of social studies concepts that offer a Eurocentric perspective (Banks & Banks, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995), these student-made texts become an interactive link between the topic of study and their particular interests and experiences. For example, in the section heading: “Communities Play Together”, Avi took the opportunity to write about his passions: horses and soccer describing the most important horse races in the world and “The Mundial” (see Appendix D). In response to the final heading, “Together We All Make Up the World Community” in her text, Nasrin described the different ways that she sees this exemplified in Canadian society. She writes: “In Canada you could see people from different cultures living in one community….In one there can be the same people like Peace Village and another community can have another group of people” (see Appendix D).

By asking students to compare their home country community with that of their community in Canada, Lisa communicates an appreciation for and interest in their lives prior to coming to Canada. Furthermore, because the material for drawing comparisons derives from students’ experiences, mastery of academic language about the topic of study could become more accessible to them. Language related to place (such as city, province, country, world), geography (such as desert, mountains, lakes, oceans), and
terms of comparison (such as bigger, smaller, near, far) were frequently found in students’ texts.

During this unit of study, students were also encouraged to write in their first language alongside English if they wanted to. The writing of this book took place later in the year and there were some students, such as Avi, who made the decision to write only in English for this assignment. Lisa understood this move on his part to be based on his increased comfort and confidence with English. Others, like Zoya, used this as another opportunity to write in both languages. Lisa viewed these changes and divergences in relation to first language use as a part of students’ coming to terms with the social and linguistic context of the rest of the school. She noticed Avi, in particular increasingly eager to fit in over the course of the year. Although, in interviews with me, Avi continued to express his approval of the way Lisa asked students to use their first languages, it was perhaps inevitable that without a wider school focus on dual language writing, he and others would be less interested in maintaining dual language writing over time.

Lisa’s students echoed her description of the ways linguistic difference became an integral part of the classroom ecology. Even those students in Lisa’s ESL class who had done very little or no bilingual writing still expressed an appreciation for the dual language writing of others in their class. Ali for example, explained that he doesn’t write in Urdu as well as English because it is “…hard and difficult for me to write in both languages.” Despite not wishing to engage in this work, he seemed to clearly understand why others would want to when he said, “[Using] English and Urdu helps us to learn English because when we translate the English we are doing Urdu so we get the meaning of the Urdu.” Similar to the comments of other students, Ali appears to be pointing to the
importance of the first language for making content meaningful. He also expressed the affirmative role that seeing the bilingual work in his classroom played in his sense of self, “When I see Urdu somewhere I get happy because it is my own language.” Thus, despite not feeling comfortable or motivated to write in both languages, Ali evidently appreciates the visible acceptance and valuing of students’ language in the classroom environment created by Lisa’s promotion of both languages in student work.

**Including Family**

Extended family members (even those who may still live in students’ home country) are also able to become members of the audience for written work produced in a dual language format. This is especially true if there is the possibility of posting this work on a school or research website as was the case in this project. Avi, for example was so excited by the fact that his relatives and friends in Israel and New York were able to see his book. He said:

> Everyone sees the book; my family in Israel see the book and I think it [looks like] a regular book and after you tell me it is in the website that is so good because to see my book you only need to go to the website and I like that. (Avi, Interview, March 3, 2005)

Nirit, Avi’s mother, spoke about the fact that including students’ first language in the curriculum provides a feeling of continuity in immigrant students’ lives. She maintains:

> When you use the first language and let the child use his first language, you give the child back the confidence that he had before. (Nirit, Interview, January 19, 2006)

The confidence Nirit speaks to is about confidence in one’s ability to perform in school and confidence in being recognized as capable in your new surroundings and the possibility maintaining ties to ones’ home language and culture. Attention to sustaining
these connections is important in light of the multitude of implicit and explicit messages that appeal to children to assimilate and blend in to the new culture. Portés and Rumbaut (2001) present findings that clearly indicate the positive benefits of selective acculturation. They explain that: “Children who learn the language and culture of their new country without losing those of the old have a much better understanding of their place in the world” (p. 274). Nirit explains her understanding of the relationship between a child’s language, family, and culture and in so doing implies the responsibility that teachers and schools bear in helping to ensure that these ties can be maintained:

If you say the first language is not important, you ignore that the language is more than the way you speak; it’s all your history, the way you describe things, it’s your culture, all your back knowledge, it’s everything really. If you ruin that, there’s nothing left. (Nirit, Interview, January 19, 2006)

Nirit’s statement describes how meaningful the work that Lisa did to include Avi’s prior knowledge by building on his first language was, not just to his ability to invest in school literacy, but also to his family’s sense that their child’s and their own identity is being respected and acknowledged in his school experience. In their research, Portés and Rumbaut (2001) report that the maintenance of bonds between young people and their extended family are associated with successful adaptation for immigrant children. Teachers play a central role in setting the tone for allowing students to view their parents and extended family as worthy of continued connections. As the examples of Lisa’s work described here suggest, many possibilities exist for ways to modify curriculum both in content and implementation of process to create a classroom ecology that values the language and culture that students and families bring with them.
Developing Identity Investment in Literacy

In Lisa’s classroom I observed many processes and practices that were directly in the service of strengthening students’ sense of their selves as capable members of the classroom. I have called particular attention to the ways in which Lisa privileged students’ home languages in the classroom and how this contributed to a larger focus on identity investment in literacy on the part of her students. By giving her students’ L1 a place to exist side-by-side with English and honoring their L1 writing as a valid representation of their literacy knowledge, Lisa conveyed that this was a valid means for students to express themselves in addition to and while learning English. The narratives that students produced and the interactions among students that were recorded provide insight into the comfort that was developed for them by being able to invest their identities into their writing.

Johnston (2004) asks the question: “…how do we arrange for children to tell many literacy stories in which they are the successful protagonists?” (p. 37). Part of being a successful protagonist is being able to see yourself in your writing and to be able to identify with the content of the writing task. This was not something that was taken for granted in my observations of students. On at least one occasion I observed a student struggle with how much of her self was acceptable to include. For example, in Lisa’s ESL class, when Sajida was deciding how to articulate the moral of her story, she expressed concern that it might not be appropriate to mention religion in school. When I pointed out to Sajida that it made sense because her story was about religious beliefs, Lisa concurred and Sajida then felt that it was alright to be explicit in her finished storybook. In her “Author’s Reflection” done after finishing the story, Sajida wrote: “I learn[ed] this story in my old school in Pakistan in Grade 3. I wanted to tell my friends
the same story in English. I like this story because I believe that ALLAH is always around everywhere” (see Appendix F). This heartfelt public expression of her beliefs reflects the message of inclusion that Sajida had absorbed in Lisa’s classroom.

The comments made by students in Lisa’s Grade 7 class, and in the following year her ESL class, reflect the increased engagement that was promoted by virtue of (a) having a choice regarding the theme of the story they would write, (b) whether they would write with peers or alone, and in particular (c) whether they would write in their first language as well as English. Students’ comments echo Cummins’ (2001) description of the type of identity negotiations between teacher and students and among students that create optimal conditions for students to invest in their academic work. Noreen for example, describes the pleasure she experienced in working collaboratively and writing a story in both of her languages:

When we were working on “The New Country” I felt really good and I wanted to write more stories afterward. When I was doing it I was really happy. It was fun to be able to write in both languages and to work on a project with my friends. (Noreen, Interview, October 10, 2005)

And Nasrin explained the linguistic advantages she experienced:

If we write only in English maybe I don’t understand some words but if we can write in both languages it helps me understand English because we can translate into Urdu. (Nasrin, Written reflection, Spring 2005)

Other students similarly reflected on the affective and academic impact of using both languages to create literature and art. Zerrin talked about the connection created for her to her family and her home country by being able to write in her first language:

I feel good writing in Turkish because it makes me feel good because I remember being in Turkey. My mom likes that I do it too because it’s our language. (Zerrin Interview, June 10, 2005)
The links to peers, family and community that students described as part of what they noticed about writing in both of their languages is significant. By incorporating students’ first languages, Lisa forged connections with students’ lives that go beyond what is part of what is usually sanctioned in the academic sphere. The perspective of Lisa’s students about their reliance on their L1 in reading and writing illustrates the linguistic negotiation that often goes unrecognized as a necessary process or untapped as a potential resource for learning (Kenner, 2000). For example, Zoya discussed the writing she did in both of her languages as a way to access the ideas and language that she needs to use in order to express herself in English. She explained what she liked about being able to use her native Urdu in school:

> When I am allowed to use Urdu in class it helps me because when I write in Urdu and then I look at Urdu words and English comes in my mind. So, it help[s] me a lot. When I write English, Urdu comes in my mind. When I read in English I say it in Urdu in my mind. When I read in Urdu I feel very comfortable because I can understand it. (Zoya, Written reflection Spring 2005)

While misconceptions about bilingualism and second language learning in the wider society may encourage people to view this type of reliance on first language as a hindrance to developing fluency in the target language, Zoya’s statement asserts that being able to use both languages helped her to make and strengthen her linguistic and conceptual connections. This provides insight into the simultaneous language and academic learning that is taking place as a child works to maintain and continue developing content knowledge while learning in a new language.
**Teacher Role and Image of the Student**

Lisa has elaborated on the role of the teacher in creating a classroom environment in which students come to see themselves in the curriculum. She explains the responsibility that teachers have to enable students’ voices to be expressed and heard: “The teacher has the power to destroy or validate [students’ identities].”

Thus, how a teacher defines her role and orchestrates classroom interactions creates a classroom ecology that provides the basis for students’ cognitive and affective engagement. When Sajida was asked to reflect on how she had felt when she wrote “The New Country”, she summed up the transformative effect having a teacher recognize who she is and where she comes from. Her statement highlights the power teachers have to create the conditions for students to feel excited about sharing who they are as they invest in the work of the classroom:

> I am proud of The New Country because it is our story. Nobody else has written that story. And when we showed it to Ms. Leoni she said it was really good. She said “It’s about your home country, and family, and Canada, it’s all attached, that’s so good.” I like that because it means she cares about our family and our country, not just Canada. Because she cares about us, that makes us want to do more work. (Sajida, Interview October 10, 2005)

Sajida eloquently describes the desire that students have to feel approval by their teachers. When this approval is communicated through an academic project that incorporates students’ lives outside of school, the possibility of meeting the twin goals of identity affirmation and academic investment are enhanced.
Avi also underscored the benefit of drawing on learners’ prior knowledge and demonstrated similar appreciation for teachers who utilize students’ L1 as a resource especially when, as was the case for him, knowledge of English is limited:

The first time I couldn’t understand what she [Lisa] was saying except the word Hebrew, but I think it’s very smart that she said for us to do it in our language because we can’t just sit on our hands doing nothing (Avi, Interview June 10, 2005).

The following section from my field notes illustrates how Lisa put the objective of learning from her students into practice with Avi and Zerrin who had both arrived in her class in September of 2004 with little English. Lisa had asked them to write a story based on three pictures that they chose. She told them to do this in their first language (Hebrew for Avi, Turkish for Zerrin). Avi had integrated them into a story line whereas Zerrin appeared to have written separate short descriptive paragraphs based on each picture. Lisa wanted to learn more about their thinking about their writing and asked them to read their writing to her in their L1. The passage that follows shows Lisa’s interaction with Zerrin and her writing.

Lisa asks: “Can I listen to it in Turkish, Zerrin? Read it nice and loud.”

When Zerrin finishes reading, Lisa turns to me and explains how much information she can get out of this even though she does not understand the content of what Zerrin says. She lists intonation, tone, and attention to punctuation as being evident and says that she will use this information in the tracking sheets of student progress that she keeps. Next Lisa asks Zerrin to repeat the process but this time in English.

Lisa: Now read it slowly sentence by sentence saying what you can in English. Zerrin explains in as much English as she can what she was writing about.

Lisa: Very nice, beautiful.
Lisa: Now the next story.
Zerrin: One hat inside and rabbit.
Lisa: So the rabbit is inside the hat?
Zerrin: And go outside.
Lisa: So it jumped outside the hat?
Zerrin: Yes, and rabbit is happy. This wand goes.
Lisa: The wand is turning?
Zerrin: Yes.
Lisa: And what’s the rabbit doing?
Zerrin: Out.
Lisa: Oh, it’s coming outside when the wand is turning?
Zerrin: Yes, this her stars go.
Lisa: The stars go around?

Lisa turns to me and explains: “This is helping me understand how she’s organizing ideas. We’ll take each idea and work to make complete sentences. I can see that she has set the stage for each of her paragraphs. Here she’s begun with ‘One dark evening’, so I can see she has the elements of writing.”

Lisa then listened to Zerrin doing her best to translate from Turkish to English the paragraph she had written based on the birthday picture.

Zerrin: One birthday party, cake chocolate strawberries. On the table there are hats, plates, five candles.

Lisa explained her analysis to me: This is very descriptive but what’s missing? Whose birthday party is it? I’m going to ask her to elaborate in her L1.
Lisa turned to Zerrin: I want you to say more… whose birthday party is it? I want you to write more about why. Why are they outside?

Zerrin says: It’s summer. Inside [it is] too hot.

This interaction alongside Lisa’s commentary excerpted here illustrates the procedures that Lisa undertook to understand her students’ level of written expression in their L1. It is clear that in addition to giving students a means to engage in cognitively
interesting and demanding tasks, this work also provided her a window into the knowledge, skills and needs that her students bring with them and gave her tools to tailor her future interactions around literacy skills to meet Zerrin’s needs.

High expectations are another element of this work; students with less English are not relegated to worksheet drills or a watered-down curriculum. Avi communicated the high degree of attention that he put into his work for “Tom Goes to Kentucky”, crediting the fact that it was based on his best friend in Israel that gave him motivation to do his best. He said:

I never do pictures that good [as in this book]…it’s not the hardest work I have done, it is the hardest I have ever worked on anything…I think that is because it’s about Tom. That’s why I worked on it so hard. (Avi, Video interview, March 3, 2005)

Avi here distinguished between how hard a project was to do and how hard he worked on a project. He explained that in the case of this writing project, he worked harder than he could ever remember working on any other project. His investment in the completion of this book was evident in the amount of time and attention to detail that I observed him giving to it during my visits.

Guthrie (2004) discusses the notion of engagement with texts as encompassing attention (including time-on-task and derivation of meaning), affect, and cognitive qualities such as depth of processing. When Asima described how meaningful it was to be given the opportunity to utilize and showcase her linguistic abilities, her thoughts also resonated with the idea of engaged literacy learners that Guthrie describes. Furthermore, she explains the enthusiasm she had for this writing project as being related to her desire to “show the world” that she is someone and she contrasts this work with the lack of
recognition of her academic skill or interest in developing it by the teachers she had when she first arrived in Canada. The importance of integrating an audience as part of the writing process (as in reading written stories to younger children or sharing stories over the Internet) for encouraging students to produce written work is discussed as helpful to develop students’ motivation and their voice as writers.

Asima’s interest in showing the world that she is somebody is another aspect of having a voice as a writer. She clearly benefited from seeing and knowing that others would see her dual language book exhibited on the Internet. In this case, the response from her teacher and the wider audience that she received for her first language skills and story development was in stark contrast to the response that she had initially felt as a new student in the schools. In the context of writing this book, she was an expert, she was able to assume a leadership role in the creation of the text and was encouraged to develop her work based on her experiences and those of her co-authors. Thus, the expectation that Asima felt from her teacher was one in which she was an expert and had something to offer. This expectation on Lisa’s part toward her students encouraged students to feel affirmed as being capable of academically challenging work. Asima’s words communicate her experience of this relationship:

It helped me because when I came here in Grade 4, the teachers didn’t know what I was capable of. I was given a pack of crayons and a coloring book and told to color in it and after that I felt so bad like I’m capable of doing much more than just that--I have my own inner skills to show the world, so when we started writing this book I could show the world that I am something more than just coloring so that's how it helped me and it made me so proud of myself that I am actually capable of doing something
and not just coloring and I am so proud of myself that I am something.

(Asima, TESL Ontario Conference, November 17, 2005)

Being given the opportunity to showcase her skills in her first language while also working in English clearly resulted in a sense of pride for Asima. What is notable about her statement however, is that she connects this feeling to being encouraged to work at a higher level than was asked of her in her first classroom experiences. Zoya reflected a similar viewpoint when she expressed frustration that her [other] teachers might not know how smart she is because she can not always express herself as easily in English as in her native Urdu:

When I am allowed to write stories in Urdu, I feel very comfortable because when I write English it is difficult for me. If I write in Urdu I feel very comfortable….teacher gives me a little work to do but I want to be smart and I want to do a lot of work. Teacher gives me little work because I can’t speak in English. I want to be smart to tell teacher I know English very much. (Zoya, Written reflection, Spring, 2005)

In her statement Zoya expresses her desire to receive more challenging academic tasks. Lisa explained that Zoya was an A-student back home and she cried for the first two months that she was in school in Canada after arriving mid-year. Not only did she have to deal with a transition into a new life, a new country, and a new school, she also felt as though her academic identity was in crisis because she wanted to be able to perform at the highest level and be recognized as being an A-student just as she had in her home country.

**Summary**

The examples described in this chapter illustrate the fact that teachers have choices regarding language use in their classrooms. Even in a monolingual instructional
setting, it is possible to provide opportunities for students to utilize their first language skills. I argue that doing so enables deeper cognitive understanding for students of content, classroom processes, and linguistic knowledge in their new language. In addition it highlights the strong connections that students develop to their schoolwork when their lived experiences and interests are integrated into the curriculum.

There are several layers to the evidence described in this chapter including cognitive engagement, identity investment, meta-linguistic awareness, and cross-linguistic transfer. In addition, Lisa’s teaching provides us with insight into the power that a teacher’s role definition can have to exert an impact on students’ learning in the classroom and on their image of themselves as learners and people with value in the larger society. Lisa stresses that her primary goal is to know her students and she explains that this goal infuses all of the decisions she makes as a teacher. Thus, her students’ language and culture provide a window through which she can gain access to the skills and knowledge that they bring with them to the classroom. Furthermore, Lisa explains that seeing her students put these skills to use serves as evidence to her of their engagement. When I asked Lisa how she reflected on the impact of orienting her teaching in this way for her students she responded:

> Their initial response has always been that they have to leave it [their language and culture] at the door, so when you go against that it allows the kids to express themselves. It’s like their skills lie dormant. Part of my evidence about how this is working is seeing those skills being revived. (L. Leoni, Personal communication, March 3, 2006)

Another outcome that can be noted through the utilization of students’ L1 in the multilingual classroom is that the dynamic of the entire class can shift to accommodate this practice to become part of the expected and ordinary. These adaptations build on
difference and utilize diversity as a feature for curriculum development. By doing so bilingual students can be viewed by their peers as bringing resources to the classroom rather than being viewed as deficient in English. Both academic investment and identity affirmation are made possible by virtue of orienting academic work to include students’ language and culture. The classroom ecology that Lisa created gave students the space to take the initiative to bring their first language skills into their literacy learning; this fostered respect for what each student brought to the classroom and made learning more meaningful.

The partnership in the research project also became a meaningful and important vehicle for Lisa’s teaching and for her students to have an audience for their work. The project website with students’ identity texts uploaded was visible to anyone in the world and this was of great excitement to the students. Being given a place for their work to be on display beyond the classroom walls gave students a venue to see their dual language work appreciated and legitimized further enhancing the sense of empowerment they gained from their participation in this work.
CHAPTER 6: PADMA

“I’m hoping for that magic day when these places [multilingual schools] are looked upon as the most literate place with so much to contribute to Canada.” Padma Sastri, interview March 3, 2005

Overview

This chapter explores the ways that Padma’s teaching has brought students’ first languages into a monolingual instructional classroom context; that is, the teaching practices being studied take place in an English instructional setting rather than within any type of dual language or bilingual program. Padma’s school is like the rest of the public schools in Ontario in that unless they have a French immersion program, the instruction is entirely in English. In this regard, the data presented here serve to challenge commonly held beliefs about what is possible in multilingual classrooms such as that it is assumed that dual language literacy cannot be promoted if the teacher does not speak the language of her students, or if there is more than one L1 in the classroom, or if there is no programmatic support for integrating students’ L1 into the curriculum. As was the case in the previous chapter focusing on Lisa’s teaching practices, the findings presented in this chapter serve as evidence to the contrary.

Padma has found ways to encourage students to use their first language skills as a resource and further develop them. She has also invited parents to become partners in the development of students’ school literacy through dual language literacy activities. She advanced these practices (a) by creating a dual language book collection in the library that fosters home literacy in both English and the L1 of the students, (b) by implementing dual language “flip book” authoring that students wrote based on books that they had read, and (c) by creating a forum for multilingual oral literacy in her library curriculum.
**Claims**

The following claims are made in this chapter: (1) teachers can increase parental participation in school literacy by bringing a multilingual focus to the literacy curriculum, (2) students are able to develop a heightened awareness and acceptance of linguistic diversity as part of school life when a multilingual focus underlies literacy teaching, (3) it is possible to increase student and parent investment in school literacy by creating a school environment in which students' linguistic and cultural background is valued as part of the curriculum, and (4) that teacher agency is a key resource in developing innovations in practice that can be enhanced with school-community-university partnerships. In this chapter I elaborate on these claims and present data that indicate students' engagement with school literacy is strengthened when their linguistic differences are perceived as strengths and utilized to scaffold new learning rather than being looked at as deficits in need of remediation.

Through the use of several vignettes of her teaching, I represent the ways that literacy and language and diversity are developed as part of Padma’s teaching. These are taken from the field notes and recordings I made during my classroom observations. I also use data from interviews with her to discuss the ways that Padma’s sense of her students’ linguistic and cultural selves informed her teaching. I focus too on Padma’s discourse that illuminates her role definition with respect to teaching linguistically and culturally diverse students. I bring in the perspectives of student participants in order to layer the analysis of the teaching activities under discussion and to facilitate an understanding of the significance and the meaning that these activities have had for her students. I have also had the opportunity to draw on the work of the principal of Marshall Elementary School at the time of this study. Because she was also interviewed as part of
the larger research project in relation to issues of leadership in diverse schools, I was able
to include details regarding her initiatives and she was also able to contribute to my
understanding of the context of the school and of Padma’s teaching within the larger
picture.

The following sections describe the elements of Padma’s teaching that bring
students’ languages into the curriculum and allow them to invest their identities in
learning. The case study is divided into sub-headings that organize the data in an effort to
present a cohesive picture of the work that was the focus of this case study and of
Padma’s teacher identity. The headings though not identical in wording, are related in
content to my research questions and will contribute to the analysis of Padma’s work
described below. I will draw more overt connections between the research questions and
the data presented here in the Findings and Discussion chapter that follows this case
study.

School and School Board Context

As described in Chapter 1, Marshall Elementary School (E.S.) is a public school
with a highly diverse student population. The high level of recent immigrants represented
in the student population at Marshall E.S. creates an environment in which it is common
to hear children talking amongst themselves in their first languages. The number of ESL
teachers at one per grade cycle is higher than at many schools. Even so, because of the
high number of new arrivals to Canada at Marshall, unlike in other schools with a smaller
number of English language learners, the students who are pulled out of class for lessons
with the ESL teachers are only those who are considered to be at a Level 1 or 2 in the
ESL rubric used in Ontario (see Appendix A). This means that the majority of the
students in classrooms who are not pulled out for special services are still classified as English language learners, thus giving life to the idea that all teachers need to be ESL teachers.

At the time of this study Padma was teacher librarian to Kindergarten through Grade 6 in a public elementary school in Urban School District B located 30 minutes from downtown Toronto. The principal at the time had established a school community characterized by a focus on the diversity of its student body. This was reflected in a number of initiatives. A high premium was placed on welcoming parents into the life of the school and including them as a valued part of their child’s education. She created a climate that stressed collaborative teaching and supported innovative practices including the dual language initiatives of Padma as teacher librarian. Promoting this ethic of teachers learning from each other resulted in greater uptake of ideas such as those that Padma developed regarding multilingual literacy.

When you walk into the school building you are greeted by a large display of multi-ethnic children’s faces. This message conveyed acceptance of difference from the first moment any newcomer entered the building. Another visible example of the principal’s interest in highlighting the diversity of students was the graphic display on the bulletin board in the main office that she created and updated throughout the school year. The world map with pins dotting a variety of countries is a visual representation of all the places in the world that the students hail from. The charts and tables that surround the map show in detail the number of languages spoken and the number of countries students and their families have come from. These charts and tables are updated on a regular basis to indicate ongoing changes in the school population. This display is one example that
illustrates the leadership role that the principal has taken in highlighting and affirming the multilingual and multicultural diversity of the school. She also established a number of student committees that involve them in a variety of leadership initiatives. Vera, who was in Grade 5 at the time of the study, recounted one of the multilingual responsibilities that went along with being on one of these committees:

The principal asked us to speak another language if we can when we are helping out in the office because sometimes we answer the phones during recess in the office and she told us to either use our own language or say, “Excuse me, I don’t speak that language, maybe I can get someone else”.

(Vera, Interview, June 10, 2005)

The principal’s respect for families’ languages is conveyed to the children by her having taught them to acknowledge the language of the person calling. Furthermore, by instructing them to use their own first language whenever appropriate in answering the phones, she communicated that their own first language is a valuable asset in a school and an office setting.

At Marshall E.S. as in the rest of the school board “The Future We Want” (Peel District School Board, N.D.) is a board document that forms a central part of teacher development related to issues of diversity. This document was developed five years ago and it has been promoted as a way to create a focus on equity issues in the schools. Each school in the district is meant to have a teacher committee whose role is to work with the rest of the faculty on a regular basis to discuss the themes described in this document. The focus of the committee of teachers at Marshall E.S. was to find ways to embed the ideas into the curriculum so that they are not add-ons for one day or one lesson. In the following quotation Padma refers to the collaborative environment of the school in
relation to this document and a general focus on diversity. However, she points to the larger questions of implementation that are not so easily resolved.

It’s because of my colleagues, my colleagues are just fabulous they don’t brag about it but they do it--it’s also because of ‘The Future We Want’. This is one of the Board directions and we have a welcome sign in all the languages and now we have another one saying welcome to our school. But we have to look at how are you promoting and how are you facilitating the language learning? (P. Sastri, Interview, March 3, 2005)

Bringing about a multilingual focus on diversity does not always follow an even path. As I describe in the following section, even in a school with an articulated multilingual focus, there are challenges and pitfalls to attempts to enact this practice in a substantial manner. Some of these challenges are related to ideologies and some to practical barriers such as economic or time related issues.

**Challenges to Multilingual Practice**

Teachers at Marshall E.S. report that some parents come to them with the mindset of wanting their child to speak and write only in English. For many parents or children there is a feeling that being part of an ESL class is a stigma. The assimilationist view of first language use subscribes to an either/or mentality in which the desire on the part of parents and/or children to fit into Canadian society becomes equated with an exclusive use of English. One teacher described the perspective of some parents that:

You’ve spent so much time and money on the process of immigration, you come to Canada and you want your child to become Canadian the very next day. You just don’t want them to be in the ESL class. (ESL teacher focus group interview, January 28, 2005)

Although the dimensions of this response are somewhat mitigated at Marshall E.S. by the overwhelming number of students who are English language learners and the
affirmative value ascribed to diversity in many visible displays in the school, there are still those children or parents who express mixed feelings about being put into that category or about using their first language. These feelings of ambivalence around ESL and the concurrent lack of knowledge about how to effect change in the system could be contributing factors in the described lack of advocacy for ESL services on the part of parents. Some of the practical challenges are seen in the overcrowding at Marshall E.S. where five classrooms need to be housed in mobile units, the costly nature of the dual language published books, and the highly transient nature of the student population.

The principal also spoke of the difficulties surrounding funding and attention at the Board level for immigrant children and their families. Those with a sense of entitlement and knowledge of how to make their voice heard especially in situations of advocacy in the educational context beyond the local school are not often found in the ranks of recently arrived immigrants to Canada. Furthermore, the image of the school-family relationship is often different for people coming from other cultures where the authority of the teacher and the school are considered foremost. Therefore, the typical middle-class image of parental participation that is represented by parents speaking up at meetings, demanding services for their children, expecting and holding teachers or administrators accountable is not necessarily the type of involvement that would be comfortable or familiar practice for parents from other countries.

Another set of related issues have to do with the circumstances in which the families at Marshall E.S. are living; the majority of students at the school reside with their families in rental accommodations nearby and, as mentioned above, are highly transient. Furthermore, because of the varied cultural backgrounds of the families,
communication amongst them was not always easy. The principal explained that the majority of the families were consumed with learning English, trying to find work (which was typically low-paying shift work that did not reflect the skills and education that they brought with them), and often faced prejudice in these encounters. She created a number of outreach programs that aimed to bring parents into the school and involve them in a variety of ways. It was also hoped that these efforts could alleviate the isolation that was an effect of these circumstances. The principal explained that the isolation that can come with immigration was of special concern for the mothers. One example of this type of outreach came in the form of her solicitation of diverse ethnic group representation on the school council. Another feature of parent involvement that the school implemented was the development of student-led conferences where students shared their portfolios with their parents for half an hour twice a year. For these conferences the attendance was over 97%, often with both parents attending.

Among the issues related to creating a school with a multilingual and multicultural focus is that of creating a diverse teaching faculty by hiring teachers who themselves are speakers of other languages and who come from other countries. The principal of Marshall E.S. had made this one of her priorities in finding highly qualified teachers. They had to be exceptional teachers first and foremost, and within that framework she strove to keep a balance regarding the talents that the teachers were able to bring to their work and she included bilingualism and ethnic diversity as a benefit for the teaching environment. In her statements, the principal also conveyed that in her experience working and interacting with parents, there was typically a visible sigh of relief in finding that there were teachers in the school who could speak their own
However, diversity at the faculty level is not without its own issues. Despite the orientation that values diversity at the school and school board, one teacher described feeling worried that some parents might have a negative reaction upon seeing that their child will be taught by a teacher who herself is an immigrant. She explained, “[They might think] ‘Oh the teacher is from India or Pakistan, Oh so we took this whole journey for nothing’” (Marshall Teacher Focus Group, January 28, 2005). This comment was made by a teacher who herself is an immigrant and may also reflect her own experiences struggling with racism in the larger society. A monochromatic image of who is considered an acceptable representative of English is present in this response. This attitude derives in part from a societal image of who are considered legitimate speakers of English and resonates with Corson’s (1993) statement that “education has the power to enforce its linguistic demands by sanctioning the ‘legitimate’” (p. 7).

In the case of this school, the principal endorsed these teachers who were themselves immigrants as legitimate speakers and educators of English by hiring them to teach in the school. She also stood by all her teachers on the two occasions she reported that parents had taken issue with their children being taught by someone from a different ethnic or religious group. She explained that in both instances, the bias could be traced back to ethnic tensions amongst different groups in their countries of origins. While she took the time to listen closely and empathize with the parents, she also stood firm on her position that no child should be taken out of any classroom because of these issues (Interview with principal, June 15, 2005).
Related to this idea of legitimacy is how the image of the child and the image of curriculum are constructed. Both play a role in whether and how first languages are brought into the school and classroom and the perspective from which these issues are considered is crucial to the way they are acted upon. It is common to hear people in different contexts say, “They come with no language” when what is meant is that the child comes to school knowing no English. This deficit framing of children from other linguistic backgrounds than English immediately sets up a dichotomous view regarding English and dominance in other languages. Whether intentional or not this construct can undermine of the linguistic resources that children do come with. This was not the case at Marshall E.S.; by contrast the principal and teachers worked hard to convey a message that having two (or more) languages was something to be celebrated and welcomed.

Similarly, people might say that children have no background knowledge when it comes to certain units of study or books. This ignores the fact that immigrant students come with a wealth of experience. Failure to acknowledge this experience reflects a hegemonic view of what is considered acceptable background knowledge. Furthermore it signals a closed model of what is meant by curriculum. The image of the curriculum is also an issue that is related to how willing or able teachers are in bringing a focus on diversity into the classroom. If the curriculum is considered fixed and immutable then teachers will tend to teach to provincial standard in ways that are unlikely to be inclusive of the perspectives and experiences of immigrant students.

In the section that follows I briefly introduce the students who were participants from this school context and then move on to descriptions of Padma’s role definition and multilingual teaching practices.
**Student Participants**

The student participant information detailed in the following chart reflects their grade level, ESL status, and country or culture of origin as well as the work they carried out that was relevant to their participation in the study. As explained in Chapter 3, students were chosen with Padma’s help in order to achieve a representative sampling across grade levels, language backgrounds and participation in each of her dual language literacy activities.
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<th>ESL status if applicable</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Personal and Educational Background**

Padma had been at this school for seven years at the time of the study. She had immigrated to Canada from India as a young adult and is multilingual, speaking Tamil and Hindi as well as English. Padma credits her cultural background for her inclination to implement a dual language focus in her literacy teaching, tying it to the goal of inclusion that she holds for her students and their families (Morgan, 2004). She says:

This dual language book thing was my ‘Ah hah’ because I had come from that background and in India the babel of voices is a very common thing. So I thought how do you reach across to these parents who are waiting outside and not coming into the building and how do you use their
strength? They already have their literacy but many school environments do not facilitate their involvement or invite them to share that strength and view it as a [type of] literacy. (P. Sastri, Interview, January 28, 2005)

Padma explains her interest in bringing students’ language and culture into the classroom by referring to her cultural and linguistic identity. This indicates the strong connection to her own cultural identity that she has maintained (Trueba, 1999). Later Padma refers also to the associations she developed with other educators, teachers and university researchers involved in research projects and explained that these relationships encouraged her to continue and expand upon what she was doing. Padma thus brings both the personal and professional to bear on her role development related to linguistic diversity in the classroom. She positions herself in relation to the culturally diversity of her students and their families by describing her desire to reach out and help parents’ strength be realized within the school community (Cummins, 1996). In one discussion I had with her, Padma recalled the progression of her orientation to a dual language approach.

[I was]…groping in the dark and going about it from my own instincts when I was working in another town and I was looking at all these parents standing out[side]. When I came to Marshall I met Patricia12 and they asked me if I wanted to be part of this project. Ever since then it’s just been upward growth for the last six years because whatever I instinctively felt, there was the validation [with the research and the other teachers doing it], and there was the clout saying yes you could do this but six years back you were isolated sort of hanging back trying to forge ahead. (P. Sastri, Interview, January 28, 2005)

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12 Patricia Chow, a teacher at Thornwood Elementary School also in Peel Region was working at the time on an action research project with Sandra Schecter and Jim Cummins that resulted in the development of the dual language website: http://thornwood.peelschools.org/Dual/.
In this instance Padma highlights the divide that can often be found between schools and families by citing the image of parents being relegated to a place outside of the school. Inclusion of parents was a major goal in her drive to work on a multilingual instructional approach. She also explains that the connections she made with other teachers and researchers provided essential reinforcement and encouragement for her ideas and strategies. She points to the isolation that is often felt among teachers and indicates the power that teacher collectives or teacher-researcher partnerships can offer to counter the lack of a professional community built into the teaching day. Clearly then, her identity definition in relation to the development of culturally and linguistically inclusive teaching practices is described as tied to these collaborative projects and the partnerships that were developed with other teachers within and beyond her own school as well as with university researchers.

**Pedagogical Orientation in Relation to L1 Usage**

When Padma talks about her students and their parents she illustrates the high value that she attaches to her students’ and their parents’ bilingualism that underlies her teaching and the school environment:

It’s a huge treasure we’re sitting on top of like a mountain of the most expensive thing you can ever find in the world. All our parents come with that background too and they’re willing to share. This is in a highly ESL school and the dual language is seen as an enrichment and the student diversity is seen as a resource. If I can just use that cliché again it is viewed as a resource it’s not [a remedy], it’s a type of enrichment. (P. Sastri, Interview, March 3, 2005)

Here Padma incorporates issues related to the language of schooling, language privilege, and the devalued image of English language learners. When Padma explains that she is
doing this multilingual work with her students as a type of “enrichment” she addresses the way in which dual language initiatives are often perceived by the wider public. Padma worries that her work and the use of students’ first languages will not be taken only as a way to remedy a deficit and not as a resource and an opportunity. In other moments Padma does express that her use of dual language literacy techniques is also a way to “level the playing field”. Yet Padma’s adamant assertion that students’ linguistic diversity be considered a resource rather than a deficit serves as a powerful re-imagining of the image of diverse student populations. In Padma’s discourse, leveling the playing field combines with enhancement of all students’ knowledge of dual language literacy whatever their language status or level of first language literacy.

This “huge treasure” as Padma refers to her students’ linguistic knowledge is reflected in Padma’s teaching practice. In my observations of her classes I noted that Padma always brought attention of some sort to students’ languages in particular as well as to multilingualism in general. However her treatment was not of this as a separate topic, but as an integral feature of her discussion with students so much so that I noted in my observations that it had become a taken-for-granted element of conversation around books and literacy. Because Padma gives her students’ multilingual voices a place to exist side by side the English instruction, students’ language and culture is “legitimized” (Freeman, 1998). Padma frames the use of children’s languages in the school in contrast to the remedial model that is often found in discourse and policy related to English language learners in the wider society. She explained the importance of seeing the inclusion of students’ L1 not as a “frill” but as something that “we owe to them” and she goes on to assert: “[access to their first languages] is their right”.
By constructing the inclusion of L1 in this manner, Padma underscores the high premium that she places on students’ prior knowledge and indicates the relationship that she sees between a person’s language and their identity. Instead of seeing the use of students’ first languages in the curriculum as a remedial strategy, Padma asserts that it is not just for ESL students but rather an enrichment strategy for all students as well as a way to “bridge the gap” for those students who are English language learners. This reinforces Padma’s idea that bilingualism or multilingualism is something that should be promoted for all students. This contrasts to the ideology that situates bilingualism as an asset for the non-immigrant and a liability for the ESL student (Ward, 1999). Padma’s words carry the view that bilingual teaching practices should not be seen either as solely a luxury for those already fluent in English, nor just as a way to remedy those who come with another first language than English (Kouritzin, 2006).

Padma explains the urgency she feels around promoting students’ first language literacy:

I think it’s that opportunity to showcase that yes I’m literate but I’m looking at how is it weaving into their daily life at school and where is it manifesting and where else can I provide opportunities [to write in their own language]. They may ask, ‘May I write in my language?’—They should just write it, but they’re still looking for that affirmation and validation (P. Sastri, Interview, March 3, 2005)

Two interesting issues that Padma touches on in this quote are the importance of finding ways to integrate the literacies that children bring from home into the everyday practices of school and the fact that children many times still feel the need to ask permission to write in their language. This relates back to the comments made by Padma and other teachers at her school about the constant pull of English and of what is often an accepted
subordination of other languages. Children can sense the minority status of their language and by asking permission are requesting that their teachers acknowledge its potential to carry capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) within the school context.

As noted above, Padma saw the dual language literacy activities as a way to “even the playing field”. She elaborated on this by stating that “One [reason for the dual language books] is to bridge the gap, how to bring them to the regular or what you would say the median, so they’re all enabled to read”. Her perspective is clearly that the inclusion of a dual language literacy focus is a way to increase students’ ability to engage successfully in academic literacy. Thus, hers is not just a “feel good” remedy. Although the affective is an integral and powerful element of seeing oneself and one’s language and culture reflected in the curriculum, Padma’s intentions are equally driven by the importance of academic achievement. She points to the inherent injustice of cutting students off from the knowledge that they bring with them.

Padma further explains her rationale for developing these practices:

I want to help build a climate that will help [children] contribute their strengths right away and have fewer negative experiences. I think children need it if they are going to be global citizens. I see the children as future community builders and we need to invest in them. It's these initiatives: learning the languages, bringing the stories, bringing the values, and their beliefs in a common, shared area [that will help bring this about.]. (P. Sastri, Interview, March 3, 2005)

Here Padma ties her dual language literacy initiatives to the globalization reflected through widespread travel, immigration, and increased communication made possible through technology and the need to reflect these realities in our pedagogical outlook. Several years ago, Ward (1999) questioned the monolingual standard in North
America saying, “As we move toward globalization, is it reasonable to assume that speaking and writing one language will be enough?” (p. 1). This trend has only intensified in the intervening years. Interestingly, many of the children who were interviewed as part of this study echoed this perspective. For example, Mohed, in Grade 3 at the time of the study, explained that when he imagined where he would live in the future he saw himself “staying one year in India and come back to Canada, go to India, come back in Canada.” Mohed’s reference to what he imagines will be the transnational feature of his life in his future was echoed by other students in my discussions with them explaining the movement between countries and languages as an accepted part of their future as well as their current lives. For example, when Isaam discussed his plans for the future he said: “I imagine [being a lawyer] in both countries, my country [and here] and I also think my language would be [of] use in that because if I’m doing it in this country so English would be of use and in my country Hindi would be” (Isaam, Interview, June 10, 2005).

**Multilingual Literacy Practices**

Visiting Padma’s library class evokes images of a public garden in a foreign land: there is always something new going on, children’s voices are constantly heard in song, verse or prose, many languages are spoken or discussed and much pleasure is taken in exploring the books and literary traditions associated with them. It is more than a library

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13 By using the term North America I deliberately include Mexico as well as Canada and the United States in this reference. Although the linguistic diversity found in Mexico is derived more from the Indigenous population than from a population of new immigrants to the country, the need to examine a multiliteracies model in order to break free from a monolingual and mono-textual model of literacy is also applicable to this country (see, Lopez-Gopar, 2007 for a more thorough discussion).
class where students learn about different genres of literacy, how to access information through texts and check out books, although these are, of course, features of her classes.

In Padma’s teaching she integrates students’ own home literacy skills into the curriculum and weaves her own dramatic and multilingual resources into her teaching of academic literacy. The understanding of literacy that is being conveyed to her students is that of a living activity; one that is at once embedded in history and tied to diverse cultures as well as being part of more traditional school learning through the acquisition of different skills, concepts and genres. Students’ first languages and home cultures are made part of the skill learning. By exploring different literacies, students are given a variety of ways to engage with literacy.

The three core elements of Padma’s teaching that this study focuses on are (a) her creation and use of a published dual language book collection in the library, (b) student made dual language flip books that often require parental collaboration in publishing them in students’ first language alongside English, and (c) multilingual readers’ theatre in which students retell with dramatic expression in their first languages stories that they have first read aloud in English. In addition, I will discuss some of the ways that Padma has utilized parents as a resource in her teaching. In the sections that follow I describe how Padma brought each of the above-mentioned practices to life in her library curriculum. I also bring student responses into the discussion of these practices. It is through the elaboration of these literacy activities and the opportunities for cultural and linguistic expression, and cognitive engagement that were made possible by them that I hope to provide insight into the intersection amongst students’ identity negotiation, linguistic expression and teacher role definition.
**Dual Language Book Collection**

Padma had the support of the school’s principal to use school or district funds allocated for books to purchase dual language literature. In explaining the need for developing this book collection, Padma stressed the importance of providing quality literature in students’ home languages insisting that students need to be exposed to “different text forms whether it be features of print, narrative writing, persuasive writing or a grade level non-fiction book.” By presenting students with published texts in their home language she is sending the message that their languages are prestigious. In addition, she cited the resource that these books provide to students and their families on a number of levels. For example, parents who do not speak or read in English can use them as a way to share books with their children. It is common practice especially in the primary grades in many schools to send books home with students on a daily basis in order to encourage reading in the home and with the extended family. In contrast when those books are exclusively in English, many parents will be excluded from the opportunity to engage in this home literacy experience.

With dual language books, many parents enjoy the chance to learn English as they read the text to their children in their home language. Students gain valuable literacy practice in both their new language and their home language. Because they can compare the two languages side by side they can learn new vocabulary and phrases in English. Students who can read in their first language can also use the dual language books as an opportunity to practice, and therefore maintain, their first language while they learn English. Furthermore, students who have oral literacy in their first language are enabled to gain written literacy skills in that language in addition to being able to practice their English reading with these dual language texts. This enables the possibility of language
transfer and encourages the development of balanced bilingualism (Cummins, 1984).

Vera who was in Grade 5 discussed her use of the books when she was younger:

I used to bring the dual language books from the library here home when I was little, like there’s this book “Floppy” that I liked a lot and my mom would read it to me [in Serbian] and then I would try to sound it out in Serbian. (Vera, Interview, June 10, 2005)

Finally, as a result of having access to books in their languages, students are given the chance to see their parents as having valuable knowledge and literacy skills that are recognized and afforded prestige by the school. Children learning to read in English at school often see their parents in a diminished light if they are unable to help them with their emergent literacy in English. Thus, in addition to providing linguistic and literacy support the use of dual language books also serve to counter the minority status of heritage languages and their speakers in the wider society. Padma has had many parents request that she send home dual language books with their child. Some have explicitly described to her the benefit for them in being able to improve their English with the books while also being able to engage in reading to their children in their first language.

This facet of the library curriculum has also become an important resource for classroom teachers. Teachers have commented that dual language books are particularly useful when students have recently arrived from another country and they and/or their parents have little English literacy to draw on. For example, a Grade 1 teacher at Marshall described the impact of having dual language books in Albanian available to her when she received a new student from Albania whose mother didn't read or speak English. The student had not yet begun reading in his first language or in English but
because the teacher was able to send books home with the child in his language, his mother was able to contribute to his literacy development in Albanian.

Furthermore, by using these books the child and his mother were able to share in the home-school literacy partnership. Beyond providing a means for supporting students in their acquisition of English literacy, the dual language books also serve to create a shared engagement with school literacy at home. This is an especially valuable tool in addition when it is common for children to feel ashamed of their parents’ lack of strong English skills or even accented English. These books enable children to see their parents in an affirmative light by seeing them excel at literacy in their first language. This point was highlighted by a Grade 5 teacher when he described a recently arrived Palestinian parent’s enthusiasm about the opportunity to read dual language books at home not only to support her son’s biliteracy development in Arabic and English but also to further her own acquisition of English literacy. This teacher recalled that he had been specifically asked by this parent to send the Arabic dual language books home with her child. This resource gave the parent an opportunity to be included in the school literacy activities.

Teachers of primary grades in the school have also recounted that their students are often overheard comparing the language of their books and telling their teacher with excitement: “I have *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* in Urdu and Henry has it in Chinese, and Mahmud has it in Arabic!” Padma has kept records of the number of books being checked out by students and has seen the number of dual language books being circulated grow in the last couple of years. In interviews with Padma she also asserted the importance of being able to provide children with writing in their first language that is
high quality and published rather than having to rely exclusively on homemade bilingual products.

**Flipbooks**

Padma introduced the dual language flipbooks as a way to incorporate the teaching of reading comprehension strategies into a manageable format for students and to integrate writing and reading. The activity took the following steps: students read a book or had one read to them in the library. Primary grade students did a simple retell of the book that could be represented through simple words and/or pictures to demonstrate their understanding of sequence in the book they had read (e.g., beginning, middle and end). This skill was reconfigured as a “retell” for the junior grades (4, 5, and 6) and to focus on the three elements that require them to retell, reflect, and relate to the book that they read. It was also adapted for ESL students by asking them to write using pictures and to add new vocabulary they had learned from the book. In other words, the book layout follows a template that has different components for different grade levels but there are always three sections. Padma explained that she deliberately uses the number three because she wants students to have a way to remember the three literary elements that she wants them to include in their work.

Padma takes three strips of blank paper that she folds over and staples together to create a small three-page book. Padma explains that this pattern assists the students to remember the sections and parallels many stories that follow the pattern of having a beginning, middle and an end. For example, when she asks the junior grade students to include three items in each section under *reflect*, they should include I learned, I wonder, I thought and in the section *relate* students should make statements that include book to
book, book to self or book to world connections. Graphic organizers are a central component of the books that the students create, especially in the junior grades. Typically, the graphic organizer will be a Venn diagram or a T-chart that the student uses to draw connections between the book that they have read and are writing about and other texts or to their own life and mirror board expectations for students to be able to make connections to the text (Appendix F).

Padma begins by modeling the process of “retell and relate” in the classroom on chart paper. For the middle grade students she also modeled and asked students to include schema connections in the form of graphic organizers. She encouraged students to write their flipbooks in both English and their first language in order to promote deeper conceptual understanding for those students who were bilingual or dominant in another language and also as a way to involve parents in student work. When students who had oral literacy in their home language but needed help writing in their L1, they were encouraged by Padma to ask their parents or another family member for help with this aspect of the flipbook. Those books that were done with the help of a family member indicate this on the front page. This recognition establishes the relevance and worth of the connection from school to home and acknowledge that parents have important skills to share. Padma related the urgency she feels to find ways to involve parents in this work: “It’s the family helping that creates the modeling and the suggestion [that] you have something to contribute….these are some of the things the school is trying and then the parents see ‘yes, I can do it’” (P. Sastri, Interview, March 3, 2003).

Padma added the dual language component to the flipbook activity as a way to involve parents in school literacy practices and also as a way to encourage students to
utilize their first language literacy skills or develop them if they already had oral but not written language skills in their first language. The flipbooks quickly caught on and gained additional currency among students as a result of recognition given for this work at the school assemblies that are held each Friday. Padma frequently enlisted parent volunteers to assist younger or newly arrived students to read a book in their first language and to learn the format of the flipbooks when, as often happens, students arrive mid-year.

Padma stored the hundreds of flipbooks that students have written in large three ring binders in the library. In interviews I conducted with students about their writing of the flipbooks, several of them mentioned that they like the opportunity to write in their first language. This aspect of the books is given special recognition at the Friday assemblies, thus helping to elevate the multilingual skills of the students to a higher status within the school community. When asked how they felt about doing this dual language writing activity students responded with enthusiasm. Avanish in Grade 4 said, “It’s good because you can remember your language.” Jackie in Grade 5 said she was glad for the opportunity to work with her father to learn the Vietnamese necessary to complete her flip books in both Vietnamese and English. On the front cover of her book, the label “Done With Dad” is prominently displayed.

Padma has added a variety of different layers of difficulty to the flipbook activity over time including asking students to challenge themselves by adding new features such as including synonyms or antonyms when they write words they have learned from the story. The range of features that students are encouraged to include offers them the opportunity to experiment with different skills within the comfort of a constant format. Padma routinely chose junior grade students to be expert writers of the week who would
be in charge of presenting the displays of selected flipbooks in a multimedia format at the weekly assembly.

The flipbook activity illustrates one way in which Padma was able to transform the teaching of literary genres, vocabulary skills and comprehension strategies into an activity that was accessible to students in a variety of grade levels and learners with diverse backgrounds, strengths and needs. By including a focus on writing in two languages, she provided a concrete way for parents to participate in their children’s literacy learning and for children to value their parents’ knowledge. This also kept parents in touch with what their children were expected to learn at school while demonstrating respect for their linguistic resources and their ability to contribute valuable knowledge to their child’s schoolwork.

**Multilingual Oral Literacy**

In this section I describe another way that Padma activated students’ first language knowledge, this time with an orientation toward oral literacy both as a genre and as a means for students to participate in retellings and dramatic readings of stories. Padma regularly organized dramatic readings using an activity often referred to as “Readers Theatre”, with students visiting the library in class groups. On these occasions, she wove a variety of literacy skills through her lesson including listening, retelling, comprehension, and a discussion of different genres of literacy. This in itself was impressive as I saw her lead the students through reading with expression and using gesture to convey the actions of the story. However, she went dramatic reading by incorporating the students’ own multilingual skills into the experience. Students were invited to retell the story in their first language after hearing it read aloud in English by
other members of the class. Many students volunteered and I observed this repeated on several occasions with different classes in Grades 2 through 6. I include below a narrative of one such class lesson that I constructed from my field notes.

Padma assembles her sari around her as she sits in her chair at the front of the rug in the library. Roughly twenty-seven fourth grade students assemble cross-legged in front of her as she launches into the day’s lesson.

“Now I need eight people to help with reading the story. Loud and clear” Padma emphasizes as she calls two children to sit next to her. Each of them chooses somebody else and so on until there are four on either side of her.

“And who would like to tell the story in their language after we’ve heard it read?” Several students raise their hands.

“Now today’s story is about a trickster. Do you know who is a trickster? Can you give me an example of a trickster and what they do?” she asks

“You people are learning about folktales, fairy tales, legends, myths. Who can you think of that is a trickster?”

A couple of students offer up ideas until someone says Anansi. Padma says, “Yes, now you call it American but he’s really Jamaican. You know the spider who was in Africa, not just West Africa, all over Africa, when he was living in the jungles and they gave him all kinds of scientific names long, long, long ago and there were many stories being told in Africa. They didn’t have printing they didn’t have paper it wasn’t invented then but people were doing something then, there were no books in fact. What is that tradition called? We’re talking about South Asian tradition or Asian tradition or when we say Black History month we also mention this type of story. What kind of tradition did
they have? This is a very important thing to know. You know people are trying to go back and find the stories from back then because these are important stories to know--what is this tradition called when things are said and not written down?"

One student calls out “spoken”

Padma says, “That’s close but it starts with ‘o’

Another student raises his hand: “oral”

“That’s right”, says Padma “It’s an oral tradition but it’s not just in Africa they had an oral tradition, they had it all across Asia. They had it _____?” She asks as she constructs her own oral tradition in the Floradale school library.

“All across Asia” repeat the children in chorus.

Padma continues with the lesson, “Let’s go onto the story. In this story there is another trickster, Anansi is a trickster and he started in Africa but you know what the spider did? The spiders wanted to be educated; they didn’t want to just stay in the jungles when modern technology came especially airplanes and boats, they jumped on the boats and the ships and the airplanes and they came away to other countries like Jamaica and America and you know what they didn’t want to keep their names. They didn’t want to keep their ____?”

“Names” chorus the children.

Padma continues, “their original African name was something else but when they came to Jamaica they called themselves Anansi. What did they call themselves?

“Anansi”

“And of course the same spider got on the ship and came to Canada and guess what he called himself?”
“What?” the children ask.

“The eensy weensy spider.” Padma replies.

“So he’s got all kinds of names but you know what there was a trickster already in Canada. The native people had him. Who can tell us?” No one answers.

“Raven was the First Nation’s people’s trickster before they had written stories.” Padma explains.

“Now there’s one more trickster in this story. I need people to tell the story and I need people to say it in another language. Those of you who have another language and want to tell us the story in your language can take a chair and sit at the other side of the rug.”

About 12 students bring chairs to sit on the opposite side of the rug from Padma and the eight readers.

“Seenah, I’m going to give you the invitation again, would you like to say it in your language? You want to try? Yes? It’s always good to try; I like that attitude. As long as you say ‘Yes, I’ll try’; it’s worth it.”

The students arrange themselves on the chairs and Padma distributes sheets with the story script to the children sitting next to her. She assigns roles and instructs them to read the script over in their mind to make sure there are no hard words. Next she instructs those few students left on the rug in front of her on their role as chorus.

“If you go ‘Ooooh’ then we know you can’t hear, but if you say ‘Ah haah’ then you know they are saying it well.”

To the readers she says, “Don’t say the things in the brackets but do the actions. Do the ______?”
“Actions.” repeat the children.

“Are we ready?” she asks. “Do we all have our listening ears? Do we have our translating tongues? Let’s go. Big voices.”

The story telling begins….Padma leads the chorus in their calls of “Oooh” when the voices go too low to be heard and “Ah haah” when the voices are strong and loud. I feel as though I am in a theatre.

When the story finishes Padma jumps in: “Great job. Now—who’s going to tell the story from beginning to end in English?” One of the students sitting on the rug volunteers and proceeds to lead us through a retelling of the story in English.

“Now”, says Padma as she gestures toward the row of students seated in the chairs opposite her, “These people are going to tell us the story in another language.”

I listen amazed as one by one I hear and see the story repeated first in Urdu, then Turkish, Vietnamese, Russian, Chinese, Gujerati, Tamil, and Korean once each and Arabic three times. The other students in the class appear to be equally as entranced as I am, though neither I, nor they understand all of the languages being used. It is captivating to see and hear the same story repeated with new or sometimes the same gestures while the words to express the action change. When the last in this sequence of performances has come to a close, Padma directs the students to check out the library books they will take home and invites the next class that has just arrived to replace this one on the rug.

In this vignette it is possible to glimpse a world being opened up to students. A world of literate traditions, oral and written from different cultures, a world of drama that brings the storytelling to life, and a world of linguistic riches embodied in the children’s
own voices. By integrating oral literacy with textual literacy, Padma is disrupting what is often considered a strict divide between the two; the latter typically receiving more attention in school settings and the former being frequently relegated to out of school moments. In telling the above story I want to focus in particular on the linguistic transference that is being brought into the curriculum as a skill to be respected and developed. The students whom I observed participating in this activity were as young as Grade 2 and as old as Grade 6. They translated the English text into their first language, some with more ease or difficulty than others, but all performing a skill that is seldom brought into the academic sphere: that of oral translation (Hakuta, 1988). Some teachers bring translation into the classroom when they allow students to help each other by translating amongst themselves when students have differing language abilities and needs. However, what is unusual in this case is that the translation was an academic literacy activity in and of itself. Expanding the practices of school literacy to include dramatic readings and oral translations and interpretations of texts serves to allow a wider range of literate identities into the academic sphere (Pahl, 2002).

Interestingly, Padma did not limit participation to students with a certain level of fluency in their home language; she encouraged students to use their first language to the extent of their ability and to fill in words with English where necessary. She would say: “Use a lot of your language and a little bit of English, or if you need to use a lot of English and a little bit of your language that is okay too.” This legitimizes the notion that there are continua of biliteracy (Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000) and made it possible for almost all students in a school setting where only five percent are monolingual English speakers, to feel included in this activity. Creating a situation where
the multilingualism of her students was the main feature of performance elevated the status of students as minority language speakers to one that was given prominence in the academic context.

Although little attention has been given to the potential that utilizing translation of different sorts could have for cognitive and linguistic development in bilingual students, it is clear from the observations of the students in Padma’s classes, that this is a largely untapped yet richly layered resource for literacy and language learning and that it also serves to showcase students’ strengths. Teachers observing while their students were in library class frequently commented to me how impressed they were by what their students were doing. Likewise, students articulated a sense of pride and enjoyment from their participation. Meeta, who was in Grade 2 at the time said:

I like it because I get to know what language other kids speak and some words they speak it in because we might know some of the words. So I think it’s pretty fun—you get to know other people, you get to know what languages they speak and you get to learn more about their languages.

(Meeta, Interview, June 10, 2005)

Meeta expresses the pleasure she derived from being exposed to her peers’ linguistic knowledge. She also states that she sees this as a way to learn more about her classmates. This indicates the essential role that Meeta ascribes to her linguistic self and the fact that for Meeta, part of her identity and that of her friends is defined by what other languages besides English they speak. She went on to also describe how participating in the dual language storytelling enabled her to increase her facility with and knowledge of her first language. “When I come across words I don’t know I add in the English word, but when I get home I ask my parents what the word is in Urdu so then they tell me and I get to know my language better” (Meeta, Interview, June 10, 2005).
Isaam, who was in Grade 6 at the time of this study, was another student who participated in the multilingual storytelling on a regular basis. He described how he feels when he is telling a story in his native Hindi saying: “It feels great, I feel perfect, I feel like I’m back in India” (Isaam, Interview, June 10, 2005). His response underscores the complexity of interactions both academic and affective that might be developed for students as a result of this activity. Isaam, who had been living in Canada for two years at the time of this study, clearly indicates strong associations that are brought up for him with the use of his L1 and the nostalgia evoked for him of being back in India. Giving students opportunities to engage their imaginations and to capture and represent parts of themselves that may not typically find expression or resonance in their new country and school setting is a powerful aspect of this type of activity.

For other students, those who have lived all their lives in Canada, using their L1 creates a different kind of connection; one that is perhaps more about constructing and creating an identity wherein finding ways to develop a sense of belonging to a particular culture is the focus rather than one of remembering and maintaining it. Vera, a student of Padma’s, was born in Canada to parents who have lived 25 years in Canada but have maintained strong ties to the language and culture through connections with extended family overseas and in their communication at home.

When I interviewed Vera I asked her how she felt about participating in dual language activities at school. Her response was revealing of the strength of her ethno-linguistic identity. She said: “I feel very proud to represent my country and I think it’s really important to express yourself in a different language.” The fact that she referred to representing her country in relation to Serbia signifies that her cultural background is not
divorced from her life and her identity. When I pursued this statement with her she explained “I always identify myself as Canadian but I always say my background is Serbian” (Vera, Interview, June 10, 2005). This indicates a unified sense of this dual aspect of her cultural and linguistic self. I asked Vera and Jackie (who was present during this interview) how relevant these ideas were to their friendships. Vera responded:

We talk about religion and what languages we speak I think it’s pretty common among other kids I think it’s really nice to see like, where you’ve been and what languages you speak and where your family’s from and I think it’s pretty interesting. (Vera, Interview, June 10, 2005)

Vera described the pride she feels about her fluency because in addition to the family connections she has been able to maintain, it has also opened other doors for her. Not only is she able to talk with her grandparents and cousins who live outside of Canada with ease when she visits or talks on the phone, Vera also related that she plays tennis competitively and at one of the tournaments she attended in Florida she was able to meet a girl who was from Serbia competing and the other kids were jealous because they couldn’t make any new friends.

Shishira, who was in Grade 3 at the time, addressed the issue of how it feels to listen to other students tell stories even when you don’t understand their language. Like Meeta, she explained that this was an enjoyable experience for her:

[When I hear other children say stories in their languages] I feel great about them because they are different from me because they know many words in their language and if you speak another language, you can learn something about this one. (Shishira, Interview, June 10, 2005)

Shishira’s statement that she likes hearing the other students speak in their languages because they are different from her contrasts to what is often assumed to be a
desire on the part of children to be the same as everyone else. In fact, all of the children that I interviewed were enthusiastic about either saying stories in their own language and/or listening to other children tell them even when they did not understand the language being spoken. It is interesting that the pleasure in experiencing this aspect of their peers, that is, their fluency in another language, seemed to be so strong in the children. I speculate that because this activity took place within the context of Padma’s teaching that had always included some element of oral literacy and dramatic expression, the addition of the multilingual element may have been seen by the children as simply one more feature of expression on the continuum of what Padma calls “reading challenges” to her students. Furthermore, because of this current of linguistic diversity that runs through Padma’s teaching as well as the variety of ways in which this diversity is brought out in the rest of the school, there appeared to be a level of comfort already established about speaking other languages in front of their peers.

The on-the-spot translation that students enacted through these multilingual retelling of stories provided a venue for literacy and first language skills to be showcased in a cognitively challenging activity. Oral literacy and dramatic expression also took centre stage by virtue of this work. Vera commented on this aspect of the activity and the cognitive challenges it implies by explaining that: “The retelling is a really great way to see what you remember and because you do the dramatic stuff too you can kind of see what they’re talking about.”

Isaam also described the cognitive advantages that the multilingual story telling can offer when he said:

I think it’s helping my brain grow because first I’m hearing it in English when Mrs. Sastri is reading the story and I divide my brain in two parts:
Isaam’s portrayal creates the image of an activity that is stretching the mind while engaging his two languages to relate to each other and work in concert. This account is an insightful representation that is suggestive of the process of transference involved in direct translation.

This vignette serves as an example of a literacy practice that addresses the whole child in that it engages learners in cognitively challenging work while also encompassing their identities as multilingual and multicultural people with diverse backgrounds. Furthermore it is evocative of the multiple ways that literacy can be extended into realms beyond pen and paper. The foregrounding of these identities through the practice of innovative literacy activities such as those described here contrasts to the typical classroom situation in which literate expression in students’ L1 is either ignored or actively discouraged. Manaan also reflects the power that teachers have to influence students’ attitudes toward their first language when he recounted: “When I say a story in Hindi my teacher says, ‘You were very good and your pace was good.’ That makes me feel good.” Isaam’s comments echo Cummins’ (2001) emphasis on the power that the teacher-student relationship has to be a supportive influence in developing children’s identity and academic investment.

**Language as a Focus of Conversation in the Curriculum**

Students in Padma’s classes displayed a heightened linguistic awareness, an awareness that I relate to her frequent use of dual language books with her students, as well as other features of Padma’s curriculum that integrated a multilingual perspective.
For example, on several occasions I witnessed students focusing their discussion on the dual language nature of the book Padma was reading aloud to them. On one occasion that I was observing, before reading the book *Handa’s Hens* to a Kindergarten class, Padma conducted a picture walk looking at each page of the book with the students. She asked them to name things that they saw two of while she turned the pages. After several students offered responses ranging from two eyes, two hens, two eggs, two girls, one student called out: “Two languages!” In other observations, I noted that students would ask Padma to read aloud the book she had selected in the other language, not just English. If the book had a language that she was able to read, Padma responded by reading some of it in that language, if not she would ask a child who might be able to read the script to read a few words or she would tell them that she would ask one of the parents or grandparents who shared that language to come in soon to read it in that language.

Furthermore, language itself was frequently a topic of conversation in Padma’s classes. The following interaction was observed during one of Padma’s Grade 1 lessons in the library. Padma began the lesson by discussing the book she was going to read with her students.

“What did we say this vegetable was called?” She points to the picture and some students call out “watermelon”.

“Watermelon is what you call it. But in the story children, they call it ‘marrow’. If you are in a different part of the world, they call it ‘marrow’

“Can you all say ‘marrow’? --and it almost looks like writing, not printing, it almost looks like [cursive] writing. This book is in two languages, Albanian and English. Who speaks Albanian here? Anybody? No, but you know who speaks Albanian in the school is Miss Baser. So when you see her you can ask her to read the story in Albanian.”
While framing her discussion of the book around the new vocabulary that is featured in it, Padma uses her explanation to advance students’ linguistic and global awareness. She does this by explaining to the children how familiar things are referred to in more than one way around the world. This helps students to gain a sense of multiple perspectives and to recognize that naming is something done all over the world in many different ways. By making language a topic of conversation, Padma creates a connection between the students’ experience of speaking different languages and a scholastic discussion of the meanings of words. This kind of discussion legitimizes multilingualism as a school topic and also instructs the students as to the contextualized nature of language and literacy (Street, 2003).

Another way that Padma brought the dual language features of the book into the conversation was by linking the other language to a teacher in the school who is known to the students. In this way, Padma broadens the dynamic of linguistic inclusion beyond herself and her classroom, to the wider school community. Being able to bring other teachers into this conversation is a benefit of teaching amidst a diverse faculty. This could only happen by virtue of working with a principal who values the diversity that the students and their families bring and also aspires to see that same diversity reflected in the teachers she hires. It is also indicative of the extent to which the teaching faculty shares an interest in promoting students’ first languages.

When Padma went on to read the story, she elicited a dramatic element from the students by asking them to make movements to represent action and to use sounds to
characterize different characters in the story, in this excerpt, the dogs. She began to read the story:

Once upon a time there was an old woman who lived with her two dogs.

“When I say the word dog you do this: ‘woof, woof’

“What did she say (altogether)? ‘…Stay here!’ In my language I would say________.

Does anyone know how can you say it in Urdu or Tamil?

Okay, you don’t know Urdu so what language do you know? You know Punjabi, so how do you say it in Punjabi? A child says the phrase in Punjabi. Padma repeats it. Then she asks another child:

How do you say it in Hindi?

The child says it in Hindi, Padma repeats it and says for all the children to say it after her.

Another child says he knows a Czech language

“Can you teach us how to say it in the Czech language?” Padma asks.

Padma asserts: “In Grade1 we learn [about] all the languages.” She explains, “Next month is Asian Heritage Month so we will learn [about] all the languages, or as many as we can.”

Padma then returns to the story:

So what did the old lady say to the dogs? “Stay here!” recite the children in chorus with her.

(Classroom observation, March 13, 2005)

This vignette demonstrates that Padma places herself as a learner of languages along with her students and thus elevates an exploration of languages in general and of her students’ home languages in particular, to a higher status. When Padma explains that in Grade 1 they learn about all the languages, she legitimizes the diversity of languages spoken by her students and their families as a valuable feature of curricular conversation.
Parental and Community Involvement

Padma’s recollected image of seeing parents standing outside of schools in her previous teaching assignments, contrasts with the collective participation of parents working with her in the library that she was able to create in her position as teacher librarian. On every occasion that I visited, there were at least two parents involved in shelving books, helping children check out books, or working with individual children. Below, Padma describes her motivation to bring parents into the school in as many ways as possible. Parent involvement became both literal and figurative in the sense that in addition to being invited to participate in the workings of her library class, their languages became a part of Padma’s teaching.

Knowing Punjabi and being able to reach out to that group of parents [meant that] many of the grandparents would come and see me and they would just gravitate towards me and say and I would start talking in Punjabi and of course I would greet them….and they’d come into the library and they’d start feeling comfortable about being part of the library and we would have tea and then they’d start shelving books for me and they’d ask me questions--how can I help my grandson or how can I help my child you know they’re not reading, and you know I want them to read and succeed so that’s when this dual language started. (P. Sastri, Interview, January 31, 2005)

Padma began the above quotation by explaining her ability to position herself as an insider in the community of some of her students’ families. She explained that she shares the same religion as some of the families, speaks or understands some of the languages of her students, shops at local ethnic stores that are in the vicinity of the school and for the last several years has also worn traditional dress from her region of India. To a certain extent it seems like she credits these connections with her outreach to parents
and the ways in which she has been able to involve them in the life of the library
classroom. Yet, later she reported that her first “success” (in bringing a parent or
grandparent in to participate in dual language literacy activities) was with a grandfather
from China who spoke little English and of course shared none of her ethnic or linguistic
background.

We started a core group of parents and there was a Chinese grandfather
who would say that he wanted to help read to my students. He would talk
to me in gestures saying this or that so I remember I used to talk to him
and he became our guest in the library so that was my first success--- he
would come, he would sit beside me with the students. I would say I’ll
read in English why don’t you read in Chinese and we would sit right next
to each other and do just that. (P. Sastri, Interview, January 31, 2005)

Padma’s strategy of engaging this grandfather demonstrates the truly multilingual
nature of her perspective: they sat side by side, taking turns reading the book page by
page; she reading aloud in English and he translating the text into his native Chinese. In
this instance, Padma suggests that the parents or grandparents that came to her with
concerns about their children’s reading were the impetus for her development of a dual
language approach. She sees her initiatives as being driven by the concerns of the
families whom she is serving. She also signals the connection that she makes between
students’ ability to read successfully and the inclusion of their first language.

In Padma’s discussions of the importance of parent involvement and of the power
of dual language books she refers to the ways that they both increase access to literacy for
parents and children and that they create multiple ways for students and parents to
participate in school literacy and to improve. She said:
This group that was always falling between the cracks—it was my instinctive feeling that they need to bond with their family too and bringing the family into it and take the message to them that research shows that you keep your L1 your child will succeed. (P. Sastri, January, 31, 2005)

Padma created multiple access for students and parents in a variety of ways including the use of dual language published books that children could take home to read with their parents and the flip books that students were encouraged to write in both of their languages with the help of their family if necessary. Another technique that Padma used to encourage parental involvement in school literacy was to enlist their help in translating board documents that had been written for parents to indicate the variety of strategies that they could use to support reading comprehension with their children. Padma described how she first explained the strategies to the parents, sometimes more through gestures and modeling depending on whether there was a shared language between them. Then she asked them to write it in their own language. Padma has made a set of at least ten of these binders that are in the different languages of the children as well as English, all translated by parents. This was an explicit strategy to bring parents on board to school literacy expectations and practices while at the same time using their first language for an authentic purpose in the school context. In this way Padma recognized and validated the strengths that the parents came with and gave them an explicit role in extending access to the board literacy documents that then became a resource for all parents. This has the potential to encourage parental involvement with their children’s literacy development since it gives parents access to strategies for interaction around text and builds a sense of confidence in their own capacity.
Being able to bring their languages and literacies into the school served as a way to help parents and children to feel pride in these aspects of their own identities. Padma viewed this as especially important since “it is often perceived as your secret or not cool” to have another language. She said: “this is a very normal thing among a certain percentage, that you hide your identity. ... In this fear to integrate, to acquire English, they let go of what’s already with them not realizing that is their strength.” The interactions with parents that Padma has developed expand their opportunities to be a part of the literate practices in the school and by so doing open up new ways for them to interact with their children around literacy. Her aim is to help parents and children realize their potential and help them see that their linguistic and cultural identity is a valuable asset to be developed and built on, not abandoned (Stritikus, 2006).

**Summary**

The claims made in this case study based on the work of Padma center on the premise that making students’ prior linguistic knowledge a main feature of the literacy work in a classroom increases opportunities for engagement with literacy. By engagement I include both cognitive and affective features that are part of developing a relationship with texts both oral and written. The literacy practices described above that Padma has orchestrated in her teaching draw on and develop students’ and parents’ multilingualism, include a range of genres of literacy, and utilize both student made and commercially published materials.

The particular practices described above have been: the creation and dissemination of a dual language book collection within the school library, the practice of multilingual dramatic readings, and the use of dual language flipbooks as a tool for
weaving comprehension strategies and higher level thinking skills together by including graphic organizers. The first and the last practices are also notable for the way in which they provide a means for students and parents to work together in creating or reading a written work.

In addition, I draw attention to the power that school leadership has to extend and deepen a school-wide engagement with practices that in this case have been initiated largely by one teacher. In her role as administrator, the principal promoted a school-wide multilingual and multicultural focus. Some of the ways she enacted this included her support for the use of funds to purchase dual language books for the school library, devoting time for recognition of student made dual language flipbooks at weekly school assemblies, and encouraging teacher involvement in university-school partnerships that aim to foster connections between home and school and technology and literacy. This study indicates that when school administrators support initiatives such as those described here, their impact on and uptake by the rest of the school is increased.

Strong leadership is of importance in all areas of school life; however because of the minority status of immigrant families’ languages and cultures in Canadian society, a leadership stance that advocates inclusion of diversity sends a powerful message to the school community. This message is one that acknowledges social difference and encourages families to feel pride in their language and culture. This diverges from what families often encounter in schools and the wider society. In most cases linguistic and cultural diversity is simply not a feature of attention in schools except in the process of giving students ESL support in their first year or two in Canada. This lack of attention can contribute to a felt need on the part of students to leave behind their language and
culture. Padma describes the sense that many families have that they must assimilate in their dress and speech in order to succeed in Canadian society: “Even now we see some children and parents who are ashamed to wear their traditional dress or speak their language.” This point of view echoes the prevailing hegemonic status of English and Anglo customs in Canadian society.

Although the majority of the work done in Floradale was in English, the dual language work that Padma encouraged from her students was also supported by the principal’s focus on creating a school environment that respected and reflected the diversity of the families. This seemed to engage children in using their first languages in the school context and encourage parental participation in school activities. Padma spoke of “the ripple effect” as a way of describing how children took on the dual language writing after seeing their peers begin to write in both of their languages. This was also reflected by parents who upon seeing other parents volunteering in the library or writing in their home language with their child would see the possibilities of doing the same. These practices expanded the opportunities for students and families to interact with school literacy.

By providing insight into how one teacher has integrated a dual language focus into her literacy teaching we are able to view a range of possibilities for expanding pedagogy in multilingual classrooms. The learning environment in this case became one where students’ linguistic resources were seen as a way to advance collaborative meaning making and develop a range of literate practices. This created a classroom ecology that stressed learning from difference whether these differences were encountered in the pages of the books being read or whether they were culled from the children’s own lives.
Language and culture formed the basis for developing new and shared knowledge.

Opportunities for students were created that included cross-language transfer and a multi-faceted and deep engagement with literacy, including respect for families’ linguistic knowledge.
CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Overview

In this dissertation I investigated the work of two teachers and their introduction of dual language literacy practices to their classrooms in English instructional school settings. Their work was of particular interest because of the highly diverse nature of their student population combined with the relative isolation in which they were carrying out these practices. In most schools in Ontario the diversity in student populations has not translated to a reformulation of the curriculum to be inclusive of linguistic and cultural difference. Both districts that were part of this project possess stated initiatives at the board level that aim to address issues of diversity and equity, however weaving the policies into practice is not always an easy feat. Furthermore, these issues have made only limited appearances in the national policy arena.

The purpose of this study has been to bring to light possibilities that are available to teachers and schools and contribute to a dialogue that considers the relevance of engaging the whole child in successful literacy teaching and learning. A further objective is to develop insights and implications about teaching in multilingual contexts that can be applied to the areas of leadership and the development of school policy in education and teacher education. Although this study focuses largely on teacher role and identity in relation to multilingual learners, I have attempted to situate the work of these teachers in the larger societal context and within the more local policy context that surrounds their work. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 1, the context in which this study took place was one that actively sought to engage teachers and school leaders in the development of innovative literacy practices and support them in those efforts that they had already begun.
The network that was created through this project cast a large net Canada-wide and, as previously discussed, in some cases also built on prior established teacher-researcher partnerships. Both of these realities in addition to the creation of the project website meant that there was an audience not commonly found in kind or quantity for students and teachers’ work. Equally rare was the venue created for teachers to share their work and learn from others in the field. These factors are necessary to highlight in relation to the findings discussed here because of what can be understood therefore about how projects that are inclusive of multiple perspectives and that encourage teacher initiative can contribute to teacher development, enacting teacher agency and impact on school change on a larger scale.

Another important element of working as part of the larger project while conducting this research with the teachers is the issue of identity negotiation. As discussed in Chapter 3, identity is not a stand-alone or fixed idea but rather something that is ever-changing, context bound and developed in relation to others (Ricento & Wiley, 2002). Thus my discussion of teacher identity in relation to the dual language pedagogies these teachers implemented should be understood within the context of the research community in which the action research projects were carried out and as interconnected with the network of ideas and collaboration that was developed in this project.

Additionally, as mentioned in the Introduction, my own identity and interests in relation to bilingualism and teaching have played a part in my orientation to these questions and a desire to learn more about the work of Lisa and Padma to value their students’ bilingualism and biliteracy. Behar (1996) uses the phrase “vulnerable observer” to refer to this identification with the subject one is studying. This term articulates a
tension between the importance of acknowledging one’s own place in the research and the role this has played while not diverting from the true focus of the study.

**Summary of Findings**

This thesis has sought to investigate the identity negotiations between teachers and students in the context of linguistic and cultural diversity. As Cummins (2001) states: “The process of identity negotiation in schools is a reciprocal one between educators and students” (p. 10). I have used the development of academic expertise framework (Cummins, 2001) that articulates two lenses, that of identity negotiation and of teacher-student interactions as the prime determinants in student success or failure in school (p. 150). This framework details the academic and linguistic elements through which this negotiation can effectively be engaged in order to promote literacy and language development. I have also drawn on the framework for Collaborative Empowerment (Cummins, 1996) that highlights the importance of educator role definition as central to creating challenge of unequal power relations that exist at a societal level in the school and classroom. Finally, the multiliteracies framework provides a lens through which to view the pedagogies of these two teachers who are working within highly multilingual communities and in an increasingly globalized societal context. Each of these frameworks have been useful in examining the ways in which the work of Lisa and Padma has served to challenge societal and educational norms while encouraging strong relationships with language and literacy for students from diverse backgrounds.

One of the most striking pedagogical decisions the collaborating teachers have made has been to view the bilingualism of their students as a resource regardless of the fact that their teaching context does not contain any explicit school structure or policy
that requires the use of students’ L1 in the classroom. The practices they have developed that include students’ languages in the curriculum therefore not only fly in the face of the monolingual assumptions of the teaching contexts that form the backdrop to their teaching, but also contrast to a devaluing of minority culture and language in the wider society. By examining these practices, this study attempts to explore the image of the child, the image of literacy and the image of bilingualism that are projected by these two teachers.

The findings of this study contribute to understanding the roles that teacher identity and societal influences play in enabling or constraining a re-conceptualization of literacy that takes account of the increasingly globalized context of schools. In addition they help expand our understanding of what a re-orientation of literacy that aims to reflect diversity looks like. Findings indicate several components to this re-conceptualization including a depth of identity investment in academic work, cross-language transfer, and meta-linguistic understandings. In interviews with Lisa and Padma, both discussed their desire to have their students’ linguistic and cultural background accepted and valued by the wider classroom, school and societal context. This was a viewpoint that while central to their own teaching was not always reflected in students’ experiences outside the classrooms of these two teachers.

A multiliteracies approach to literacy teaching is oriented toward displacing the traditional power relations that an English-only and text-based conception of literacy upholds. Lisa and Padma gave their students’ languages a place in the classroom even when that meant that they did not understand all of what was being said by their students. Difference became a strength that was accepted and encouraged in these teachers’
classrooms even when doing so could be interpreted as positioning the teacher outside of the traditional teacher-student power dynamic. In this respect the focus of literacy became one of literacy as a meaning-making activity that assumed multiple ways in to and representations of literacy, rather than being solely about reproducing established patterns of literacy (Jimenez, 2003). Furthermore, the data from this study suggest that students’ L2 can be strengthened by the use of the L1 in academic work, and that students who do not have literacy skills in their L1 can develop them by participating in classroom-based bilingual literacy activities. It is also argued based on these data that meta-linguistic cognition is promoted by literacy activities that encourage students to use both languages side by side.

In the sections that follow I articulate the major findings that have emerged dealing with the overarching themes of teacher and student identity in relation to dual language literacy pedagogies. The sub-headings that are used to discuss these findings are developed in relation to the research questions that I asked in pursuing this study and the analysis of the data that was carried out within each case study. Therefore they represent an attempt to highlight where there has been resonance with the research questions within each case.

**Defining Practice Through Teacher Identity**

As discussed in Chapter 2 in relation to the theoretical framework of this study, a focus on teacher role and identity are central to this study. Taking the academic expertise framework (Cummins, 2001) as the conceptual frame for this study provides a means to articulate the negotiation of identities between teacher and students. In this section I consider the influences and resources that the two teacher participants drew on in
discussing and enacting dual language pedagogies. The ways in which the teachers in this study constructed the learning opportunities for their students and the strength with which they discussed their students’ language and lived experiences in relation to their teaching fueled my understanding of the role of teacher identity in constructing the space for students to likewise explore and embed their identities in their literacy learning. These teachers in many ways defied the conventional wisdom of separating languages in instruction, immersion in the target language and a sequential progression of involvement in language and literacy activities as necessary. While some of the actual dual language activities were developed during the course of our work together on the project, both teachers came to the study having already begun to explore bringing bilingualism and biliteracy into their teaching.

Both Lisa and Padma referred to their bilingual and bicultural identity in their discussions of the origins of their dual language practices. Both teachers themselves grew up with more than one language—Lisa as the child of immigrant parents, Padma in India. Both teachers viewed this background as a strong influence in bringing a dual language focus to their teaching—more than any formal education regarding teaching linguistically diverse students. In fact, neither Lisa nor Padma had had specific course work for ELL students during their teacher education program. However at the time that this project began, Lisa was in the process of completing her ESL additional qualifications course.

In explaining her practice, Lisa called on her own bilingual identity mentioning her own experience of learning Italian and English at home by hearing both languages often in tandem. While the data have revealed the strong ties that both teachers make to their bilingual identity in describing their pedagogical decisions related to dual language,
it is also apparent that by making visible the connections to the curriculum standards and goals they go far beyond simply saying having two languages is good. By describing the use of L1 literacy tasks as an effective means of assessing students’ literacy skills and knowledge and by articulating the academic rewards to be reaped in allowing students to code switch, write in two languages, and translate stories, the use of the L1 becomes elevated to a higher status. One of the most powerful themes to emerge is the relationship that has been constructed by these two teachers between identity investment and academic work.

Although the strength of identification with bilingualism was strong for both teachers, what seems important to highlight is how their understanding of bi- or multilingualism was a filter for them to process what they were seeing in their students’ work and other examples from resources shared during the research project. Lisa went so far as to say that she has found that: “People who speak only English often don’t ‘get it’ because they don’t understand that negotiation, that relationship going on in your head….” Padma referred to the “babel of voices” that is such a taken-for-granted feature of life in India in order to explain her level of comfort with the multilingual nature of her school and why it made sense to her to allow this to flourish. By referring to their personal experiences, Lisa and Padma point toward the importance of being able to identify with the students they teach. Although both teachers share certain features in common with their students, the more powerful component of this appears to be how they were able to process their experiences to foster an atmosphere that encouraged students to express themselves in their classrooms. The identification that the teachers made with
their students came in the form of being able to listen to and learn from their students rather than from having come from identical circumstances (Schultz, 2003).

**Articulating Role Definition**

Listening to Padma and Lisa discuss their teaching with such strength of purpose and vision underscored the importance of looking closely at the teacher’s role as a way to gain insight into the classroom ecology that they constructed with their students. In this section I discuss the findings related to the two teachers’ identity and role definition in relation to their development of dual language literacies in their classrooms. I relate the teachers’ role definition to the image of their students projected in the teachers’ pedagogies.

It became apparent in my work with both teachers that they held high expectations in relation to their students’ work. They conveyed a sense of holding out a vision of success for their students in general and specific terms. I also saw this attitude of high expectations projected to their students frequently during lessons I observed and in the creation of the classroom space that reflected students’ work back to them. Positing students as capable members of a learning community is a way of defining their potential to be successful students and to contribute to the school and the larger society. This contrasts to what has consistently been a deficit stance in relation to linguistic minority students in the wider society (Cummins, 2001, p. 4). Students in this study appeared to recognize and respond in positive ways to the opportunities that were extended to them to utilize their first languages. Interview data will be discussed below to elaborate on students’ perspectives in relation to their dual language work.
In this thesis I have understood role definition as expressed through the choices made by the teachers with regards to how children, learning and curriculum are framed in the literacy tasks set for the students and in their discourse regarding their teaching. Creating these choices within the curriculum involved a certain amount of risk-taking, especially in the absence of a defined agenda for addressing linguistic and cultural diversity at the school level, as was the case for Lisa. For both teachers, their passion to make students’ languages visible within the domain of the classroom made it possible for them to see where these practices fit within the Ontario Ministry curriculum.

With regard to the need to follow provincial and/or board standards, it was impressive that both Lisa and Padma articulated a strong relationship between their dual language practices and provincial standards. They had closely read the board and provincial documents and pointed repeatedly to the sections in these documents that refer to the importance of validating students’ L1. These relationships were often made clear in the description of the tasks being discussed such as Padma’s design of the flipbooks in which each page was the expression of a specific literacy strategy (e.g., retell, reflect, relate) or in her account of working with parents to translate board documents related to literacy strategies. Lisa also initiated conversations with me regarding the ways that the L1 writing and reading of her students assisted her to develop the appropriate strategies for meeting curriculum goals and moving students along the ESL continuum. In this way, both teachers were also negotiating the policy context of their teaching and taking positions that resisted assumptions that would define a single way of responding to policy for teaching English language learners (Cummins, 2000).
Lisa captures the power that a teacher holds when she says: “The teacher has the power to destroy or validate”. This is a significant statement for all teachers but it holds particular resonance when considering the work of teachers of culturally diverse students (Cummins, 1986). These are the students who are typically not expected to succeed, often those whose schools have fewer resources, and who are framed as deficient by the larger society for lacking English or other cultural knowledge, skills, or resources. Upon first meeting Lisa and then Padma, I heard several themes represented when they talked about their teaching that contrasted to these commonly found societal assumptions. Both teachers talked often and passionately about issues of equity in relation to the opportunities and barriers faced by their students. This current of equity in relation to their teaching ran through discussions related to their use of dual language books, the integration of parents in school and classroom life, in relation to encouraging students to write in both languages, and in creating a classroom climate that “normalized” difference, as Lisa has put it in many of our discussions.

**Linguistic Transfer, Bilingualism and Literacy**

I went into this study with a personal interest in bilingualism and biliteracy; however, the majority of my experience as an educator in this area differed in school contexts from those of Lisa and Padma. I had never taught in a school context so diverse as Padma’s, nor had I ever taught second language learners as Lisa did without being part of school-established bilingual education program. The type of teaching for transfer that I encountered in these teachers’ classrooms made it clear that although it helps to have a structure in place and programmatic support for this type of teaching, it is clearly possible to implement a multitude of strategies that draw on students’ language skills and
encourage their development even when the schools’ instructional model is monolingual.

In this section I look at the image of bilingualism and literacy that was projected by the teachers participating in this study and discuss the types of linguistic and literacy engagements that were made possible by the dual language work.

These two teachers created an environment in their classrooms in which building an awareness of language on a number of levels was a fundamental feature of their pedagogical practice. It became apparent to me as I observed in their classrooms and analyzed the data that the students made use of and interpreted the opportunities to use their first language(s) on a number of levels. Just as Lisa and Padma draw on their linguistic and cultural backgrounds in discussing their stance toward their students’ linguistic resources, the student participants related their cultural and linguistic selves to their dual language work in a variety of ways. The students in this study came from a variety of backgrounds encompassing immigrant experiences, linguistic knowledge, religious beliefs, and country of birth among other things. This diversity was embodied in their writing and their discussion of their work with me.

When Cummins (2000) argues that, “...the possibilities for linguistic enrichment as a result of encouraging students to compare and contrast their languages and develop a critical language awareness can be pursued only if both languages are acknowledged in the program” (p. 23), he places the emphasis on creating an environment in which both languages (or potentially multiple languages) are acknowledged and utilized in order to learn about and develop a critical awareness of language systems and structures. Students responded to the opportunities provided by Lisa and Padma to use their first language in a variety of ways. The diversity of responses related to first and second language learning
is indicative of the multiple possibilities for cognitive engagement made possible by drawing on students’ linguistic resources. It also confirms the essential relationship between language and identity.

Padma and Lisa made choices to diversify their literacy teaching in ways that built on the knowledge that their students brought with them which was encoded in their first language. They accomplished this in a variety of ways. These included activities that oriented students toward reading in more than one language such as providing dual language published books as texts to read aloud within the class, for individual reading, home literacy experiences, and multilingual dramatic retellings of texts in the classroom. In the area of writing, students created dual language identity texts. In some cases the English came first and then the translation to the L1 and in some cases the L1 was the vehicle for creating the text and then an English translation was developed with the help of the teacher and/or other students. When students were asked to include their first language in completing reading response activities such as the flipbooks that Padma initiated, parents were often involved in the translation activity especially when students had uneven literacy in their L1. This is one example of the way that parental involvement was encouraged by the integration of students’ first languages in the curriculum.

Padma made it clear to students that bilingualism is a continuum by virtue of the way she framed participation in dual language activities. For example, when asking them to participate in retelling stories in their first language she told the students, “Say it a lot in your first language and a little bit in English if you need to, or a lot in English and a little bit in your first language.” This way of conceiving of utilizing both languages in a variety of flexible configurations contrasts to frequently heard dictums of language
teaching such as those that say that the two languages should not be mixed and that students should only speak in the target language. By allowing for students’ to use both languages, code-switching during their multilingual retellings of the stories, Padma created a pedagogical space that accepted the bilingual identities of her students and furthermore reinforced that there is no one way to be bilingual. When Padma said: “I’m hoping for that magic day when these places [multilingual schools] are looked upon as the most literate place with so much to contribute to Canada…”, she articulated the vision of her students that she held and her commitment to work to make that vision a reality that she hoped would also be reflected in the larger society.

Similarly, Lisa considered herself an advocate for her students. This was demonstrated by her interest as a teacher in learning about the whole child and by the numerous ways that she illustrated this orientation in her work. A prime example was the close professional relationship that she had developed with the religious community that was the centre of the majority of the students’ lives. It was reflective of her commitment to her students that she made it her job to learn as much as she could about their lives outside of the school walls and to share that knowledge with other members of the school faculty and administration in the annual tours of the mosque that she organized and workshops that she led among other activities.

Lisa created a space for students to build on their first language as they began to learn English. She did this by giving students opportunities to use their first language while working on group writing activities and to write in both languages. She also showed the students that she valued their knowledge in their first language by using their writing and reading in their L1 as a tool for evaluation when they first came to her
classroom. These examples illustrate the ways that these teachers framed their teaching to include students’ linguistic knowledge and understood that knowledge to be of significance to their learning.

When Lisa involved Sajida, a new immigrant and beginning English language learner in a process writing activity with two “expert other” (Vygotsky, 1978b) students, she placed a higher premium on participation than on orderly progression of skills. In addition, she did this in a way that gave Sajida a secure support system in the form of her bilingual peer collaborators and also positioned her as an expert because the topic of immigration was one that she brought recent first hand experience to. Also, because of the dual language nature of the writing, Sajida’s advanced knowledge of Urdu was put to immediate use in her new classroom.

Lisa also noted the ways that she saw collaborative work amongst her students contributed to their progression through the ESL curriculum strands. She articulated the difference that it made for Sajida for example, to have the linguistic variations between English and Urdu made visible to her through the collaborative writing project that was undertaken by her and her peers who were more experienced with English. She cites the code switching that is common amongst bilingual children in particular as being beneficial because of the opportunity this gave Sajida to hear the same ideas expressed in both languages. She explained: “Sometimes you’ll hear Noreen and Asima speaking in Urdu but also telling her in English. So it’s actually working to her benefit because she’s hearing it in both languages.” These ideas resonate strongly with the work of language socialization theorists who view the development of language and literacy as a process of socialization into communities of learning (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2001). Lisa’s acceptance
of students working together in groups with the same language contrasts with the way connections between languages are often construed as an obstacle to learning and practicing a new language. On the contrary, in Lisa’s classroom students were able to draw on their social relationships as a tool for learning. At the same time they developed a meta-linguistic knowledge of their two languages through comparing and contrasting the writing in each.

The examples of student work, as in the students in Padma’s classes who participated in the multilingual oral translations as a part of reader’s theatre resonate with the model presented by Cummins’ (1981a) of common underlying proficiency between languages. Students were able to access linguistic and expressive knowledge in either language in which they were presenting the dramatic text being performed.

**Translation and Second Language Learning**

In both case studies presented in this thesis, the teachers have utilized different aspects of students’ bilingualism for oral and written translations in the completion of written or oral assignments. In contrast to the kind of translating by children for family members that is described in the studies reviewed in Chapter 3, the translation that took place in this study was in the context of participating in schoolwork. The children who translated work in this study either did so in collaboration with each other, drawing on each others’ differing levels of linguistic skill in L1 and L2, or they sought help from their parents at home to ensure correct usage, amplify their vocabulary, or teach them how to write in their first language.

In Chapter 3, I refer to the work of Malakoff and Hakuta (1991) who have studied the potential of translation for increasing cognitive flexibility, engagement with language
systems, and vocabulary understanding. Based on the evidence from the research studies cited, as well as the data from this study, I suggest that there are a variety of creative and ways in which teachers can engage students in translation activities that will be cognitively challenging and affirming of their linguistic identities. It seems clear that these would prove beneficial to skill development in students’ language and literacy learning because of the high cognitive requirements of these activities and because they provide another means to building on students’ prior knowledge. As Sajida shows us with her bilingual and multi-modal word chart (see Appendix G), many students are performing this type of translation between linguistic and conceptual systems on their own. Making this work an accepted part of engagement with content area literacy and language learning could strengthen what might be a natural process for some and give other students the tools and the permission to build on the knowledge that they bring with them. Furthermore, by utilizing students’ knowledge of their L1 and their translation skills that many are engaged in informally outside of school within family-social interactions, these activities validate and extend students’ out of school literacy activities. This leads me to the next section that deals with how issues of identity in relation to self, family and community were addressed in the dual language literacy work of these students and teachers.

Identity Validation Through Multilingual Literacies

The importance of theorizing a relationship between language and identity was made clear by the ways that the student participants articulated their responses to the dual language literacy work and by the way they talked about themselves in light of their language learning and use. Students’ comments lend insight into their view of the
pedagogical approaches of their teachers and have fortified the theoretical stance that posits teacher-student identity negotiation as central to creating a classroom context where students’ identity investment and academic engagement are strengthened.

This study furthermore finds that by being invited to utilize their first language and draw on their own interests in their writing, students were afforded a sense of agency and investment in their work that went beyond routine literacy assignments. In addition to the feeling of pride that came from being able to participate more fully in the literacy tasks that all students were taking part in made possible by being allowed to use their stronger first language, students were also afforded the opportunity to widen the audience for their work by virtue of the bilingual nature of their finished books. This finding addresses the research question regarding how family members and the wider community were brought into the classroom. However, it is also shown that identity investment on the part of students was encouraged by the creation of a classroom ecology that respected and actively cultivated students’ cultural background and individual interests as part of the literacy work. Student participant Avi articulates a perspective of literacy and language learning that places meaning and identity at the heart of a students’ engagement with literacy when he says:

Getting to write about things that matter to you is so important, especially when you are using a language that is not your first language. The student already doesn't understand perfectly, so it’s important that the student wants to understand. (Avi, Interview, November, 1, 2005)

By encouraging students to write about their interests and to draw on their cultural knowledge, Lisa and Padma generated a strong “relational engagement” that is clearly
associated with feelings of being supported in school (Suárez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2003, p. 8) This study suggests that practices such as the inclusion of students’ first language, giving them choices in relation to the topics about which they write, and tying their experiences to the curriculum increase the opportunities that students have to engage with and connect to school literacy practices.

**Family Involvement**

Children and families’ affiliation with bilingualism appeared to be encouraged by virtue of the strategies of the teachers that encouraged first language use. Padma, for example, reported that more parents are asking her to send books home in their language and that: “students themselves are going to their classroom teachers and there’s no stigma attached to it; it’s almost like a prestigious thing now to ask: ‘Can I have a two language book?’” This finding suggests the powerful relationship that exists between the options that are made available to students for using and drawing on their linguistic knowledge and children’s willingness to associate themselves with their languages. It also suggests the power of dual language literacy strategies as a tool for building bridges between students’ home and school lives and drawing on families’ funds of knowledge (Gonzalez & Moll, 2002).

The reinforcement of family relationships as a medium for learning was also a major outcome of this work. Students were able to involve their parents in order to make sure that they were using correct language in writing the first language text to accompany their English writing such as in the case of Noreen in the writing of “The New Country” in Lisa’s class or Jackie’s dual language flipbook in Padma’s class. They were motivated to ask their parents at home when they did not remember a word in their first language
during an oral retelling of a story they had done, as was the case for Meeta in Padma’s class. Students were also excited to know that their parents as well as relatives and friends who remained in their home country would be able to read their writing even if they did not read English well. When he explained that all of his family was able to read his book Avi was effusive, expressing the power of this wider audience that was made possible not only by the multilingual nature of the writing but also by the publication of the students’ work on the Internet. Noreen similarly reported the joy and pride that her grandmother expressed at her granddaughter’s fame when she heard about the publication of her dual language book on the project website. These examples demonstrate the power of bringing a more expansive conception of involving families in the literacy activities and standards addressed by the school. They further attest to the potential of enacting what Kelly, Gregory, and Williams (2001) argue is the need for schools to shift their orientation of parental involvement in school literacy toward a model that builds on and validates the literacy knowledge that immigrant families bring with them.

Global and Multilingual Identities

The premise of this thesis is that teachers can draw on the multilingual and multimodal realities that are being lived by students in this age of increased immigration and digital technologies (Cope, 2000). This idea is especially relevant to what is asked under the heading of the third research question: How is the inclusion of students’ linguistic and cultural knowledge in their first language reflected in students’ engagements with literacy? The teachers in this study expanded the image of literacy that was practiced in the classroom and at the same time valued their students’ identities as
worthy of expression and a base from which to engage future learning within the academic sphere (Cummins, 2001).

In this study students articulated an image of themselves as belonging to more than one place. Some did this by indicating the longing for friends and family that they had left behind in their home country, some by contrast, referred to an attachment to the future they imagined for themselves as being lived not primarily in one or another country but in both. Others, such as Nada asserted their identity as firmly belonging to their cultural background regardless of having been born and having grown up in Canada. They demonstrated this multidimensional sense of self and home in many cases with no apparent sense of conflict. As described in Chapter 5, Padma’s integration of multilingualism and multiliteracies was not an add-on to the curriculum because of the consistent attention that she gave these issues in classroom discussions and within the literacy curriculum.

The inclusion of students’ L1 in their classroom literacy events can serve as a means to maintain a connection to what and whom they left behind in their native country and therefore enable a continuity in their sense of self. The description of student engagement through multilingual storytelling found in Chapter 6 suggests a relationship to what is termed “communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in that students were more willing to take on the challenges of translation and dramatic retellings of stories in the context of watching other students and wanting to be part of these communal activities. Norton’s (2001) discussion of “imagined communities” that is based on Wenger’s (1998) concept of imagination and engagement serves as a way to understand learners’ motivation and sense of belonging in classrooms. For the student
participants in Padma’s case, the activity of translation and work in two languages in which they participated and were exposed appeared to encourage their ability to imagine themselves as part of more than a single cultural community. In other words, the students interviewed did not feel that they had to leave their home culture behind in order to be part of the school culture.

Norton (2001) explains engagement as being related to “active involvement in mutual processes of negotiation and meaning.” and imagination refers to “the extent to which we create images of the world and see connections through time and space by extrapolating from our experience” (p. 163). The dual language literacy work in which Lisa engaged her students encouraged them to invest their identities in learning. The identity texts that they produced represented an informative window into students’ expression of their identities. As Lisa describes in her case study, this information serves as valuable knowledge for her in developing her curriculum and individualizing her instruction. Students were also quite articulate about the linguistic and academic growth that was enhanced by an inclusion of their L1 in their classes. Avi’s statement that his teacher, Lisa was smart when she told him to write in his native Hebrew when he was a new English language learner indicated the appreciation he felt for her recognition of his strengths. Rather than contributing to his feelings of disempowerment at being thrust into a new linguistic environment, she set tasks that allowed students to both feel a sense of capacity and that encouraged them to invest themselves in the content.

In some cases the themes students wrote about directly reflected the cultural identities of the students such as in Nasrin and Sajida’s inclusion of religious themes in their stories. For these students it seemed clear that the personal was tightly bound with
the cultural, as reflected in their strong identification with the religious messages of their community. However, in other instances such as with the stories of Avi and Zerrin, the identity texts manifested interests that were more uniquely personal. The multiple ways in which students expressed their identities through their literacy work resonates with Cummins’ academic expertise framework that stresses the negotiation of identities as central to the work of teaching and learning.

The work documented in this study demonstrates practices that help students gain linguistic resources in English while still being enabled to draw on their knowledge and skills in their first language. However, in addition, I argue that the dual language identity texts, both oral and written that the students in this study authored, provided an opportunity for them to draw on and mediate between what Pavlenko and Norton (2007) term, “imagined communities”. They describe language learners as either belonging or wishing to belong to these and argue that membership or desire for membership provides “…a way to better understand the relationship between second language learning and identity” (p. 669). The points that these researchers make about literacy teaching coincide with Pavlenko and Norton’s (2007) explanation of how social constructions of languages and linguistic groups that are played out in the wider society impact on students’ sense of where they fit or imagine they would like to fit within them.

In this study, students found themselves in an uncommon situation: while going to English medium schools in an English majority societal context, they were being asked or encouraged by their teachers to use their home language for literacy work. While their home languages still did not occupy a status equal to English in their school contexts, in some very important ways the message was conveyed to them that their languages were
of value. By exploring the ways in which this was accomplished and the meanings
developed by the students around this, we are given a view into the students’ imagined
communities. That is, we see where and how they see themselves in regard to their
languages and their literacies and what these linguistic identities mean to them in the
context of school and society.

It seems possible to theorize that because Lisa and Padma capitalized on their
students’ linguistic and cultural background as an integral part of the curriculum and as
an assumed part of the natural order of the classroom, students gained a greater comfort
expressing different aspects of their identities. Certainly the fact that the teachers
communicated that these aspects of students’ identities were a valued asset in their
classroom conveyed an acceptance for and a welcoming of the multiple and changing
facets of their identities and created an avenue for them to interact with literacy in varied
and meaningful ways.
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

This study has utilized the theoretical construct of the development of academic expertise and the multiliteracies framework as lenses through which to understand and examine literacy teaching in multilingual contexts. This thesis contributes to the research base of studies that look at language of instruction for English language learners and options for literacy teaching. It attempts to expand the options that are available to teachers in multilingual school settings. It attempts to unpack the layers that are at play in creating contexts for teachers to develop their identity in relation to issues of diversity and argues for a model of inquiry that supports teachers in an ongoing dialogic process of learning and reflection that involves university research partnerships. This process also requires rethinking the way in which change occurs and what the optimal conditions are for it to occur. This study has implications for all teachers of bilingual students and learners of additional languages in a variety of educational contexts. Additionally, it has ramifications for researchers and policy makers to take into account the investment in schoolwork that is promoted for students when their identities are made central to the literacy curriculum. Therefore my discussion in this final chapter will address issues related to theory, policy, and teacher practice and the relationship amongst these three areas based on the findings of this study.

This thesis documents a re-organization of literacy on the part of the two teacher participants that revolved around a multilingual and multimodal approach. The data indicate that building on students’ linguistic knowledge and identity does not need to signify a lack of attention to form focused instruction or a disregard for provincial
standards and guidelines. This is consistent with the hypotheses built into the academic expertise framework that situates the teacher-student relationship at the heart of teaching while arguing that these interactions be developed within a focus on use, meaning and language forms. The findings also mirror the principles found in the multiliteracies framework that integrate several layers of instructional strategies including overt instruction, critical framing, situated learning and design (Cazden et al., 1996).

**Policy Implications**

The pedagogy of the two teachers in this study challenged and resisted assumed practices in the education of English language learner students. Whereas the dominant paradigm of second language teaching relegates attention to English language learners solely to the realm of the ESL teacher, this study displays opportunities for promoting language learning across the curriculum and in different teaching contexts. In addition, this study contests the idea that without knowledge of students’ first languages, teachers cannot implement dual language pedagogies. This mindset persists even among educators committed to bilingual or dual language education. The data presented in this study therefore, assists us in conceptualizing the range of practices that can be implemented with the resources at hand. The diversity of languages represented in many classrooms in Canada as well as other countries across North America and Europe, can also be heard as a rationale for not developing literacy and language learning in two languages. While it is true that the teaching contexts presented in this study may not be ideal for the implementation of an entire dual language program, the work of these teachers demonstrates that dual language literacies can be integrated as a component of literacy teaching in multilingual contexts. As Cummins (2000) argues, “…we should adopt a
both/and rather than an either/or orientations to L1 and L2. When promoted together, the
two languages enrich each other rather than subtracting from each other” (p. 28).

As mentioned in Chapter 1, it has become commonplace in the current
educational climate to hear that every teacher needs to be an ESL teacher, yet it is not so
common in practice to see this actively encouraged by school administrators or
accomplished by individual teachers. Bringing a focus on language learning to classroom
teaching is no easy feat in any situation. Wong-Fillmore and Snow (2000) identify ten
issues related to linguistics and literacy of importance for anyone teaching second
language learners to understand academic English. These range from understanding the
unique features of academic language and how it differs from conversational language to
the principles of word formation and an understanding of what is meant by vernacular
English among other important aspects of language and language development among
others. Finding effective ways to address the linguistic needs of students who are English
language learners becomes even more complex when the teaching context includes more
than one language group and/or when the teacher does not speak or understand the
language of the students whom she is teaching.

In the case of the two teacher participants in this study, education regarding the
needs of English language learners happened after their initial teacher education
programs. In Lisa’s case, her B.Ed. program did not include any focus on issues of
second language learning and it was out of her own initiative that she decided to pursue
Additional Qualification courses in ESL once she had begun teaching and realized that
her position would require more understanding in the area of English language learners.
Padma had undertaken her initial teacher education in India and having grown up in a
multilingual school environment, she also reported having observed her teachers assessing students in their own first languages. During the time that she became involved in the first collaborative research partnership with teachers from the other board school and researchers from OISE/University of Toronto and York University, Padma began to study for her Additional Qualifications in ESL. This again fuels the rationale for promoting such collaborative partnerships and supports the argument that they can be a powerful vehicle for encouraging reflective practice and teacher growth in addition to generating new learning for researchers and teacher educators.

While not all pre-service teachers want to specialize in the area of ESL, it appears to be a failing of many teacher education programs not to require at least an introductory foundation in this area of study given the rapidly changing demographics of Canada and the United States. Whether one is going to teach in an ESL classroom or not, the chances are high that any new teacher will have English language learners in their class. Both frameworks employed in this study argue against a monolingual, mono-cultural, white middle-class norm in the ways schools, curriculum and assessment are organized. Given the preponderance of mistaken categorization of linguistic differences as developmental delay, Wong Fillmore and Snow (2000) argue that an investment in educational linguistics would be a wise use of teacher preparation resources. It is beholden upon teacher educators and policy makers at the provincial and/or national level to make a focus on diversity a requirement in teacher preparation programs (Cummins, 2002).

The widely diverse student population that is common to most urban centers in Canada and the United States (and increasingly rural and suburban settings too), the lack of fully funded ESL or bilingual programs in all school districts, and the length of time
that learners often take to catch up with the challenges of academic language are realities that all teachers must grapple with and make decisions about concerning how to best address these issues for the success of their students. However, what continues to be lacking is a dialogue at the policy levels involving boards of education, teacher education programs, and teachers and researchers (Cummins, 2006; Meyers, 2006).

In this thesis, it is argued that a pedagogical perspective that brings the cultural and linguistic identities of students into the curriculum is an important feature of this dialogue for change. However, there are still few examples of what this might look like in practice. The two teachers who participated in this study have both found creative ways to approach these challenges. It is hoped that the examples of their work presented here will contribute to a continuing exchange about the options, possibilities, and challenges that teachers and schools encounter as they strive to make diversity a feature of teaching and learning. Below I outline implications drawn from this study for teaching practice and also discuss questions that are raised regarding school leadership and policy directions. I also discuss limitations of this study and suggest possibilities for future research.

**Pedagogical Implications**

Whatever the intervention model type (ESL or different models of bilingual education), instructional strategies should not be assumed to remain static in response to growing linguistic and cultural diversity. A support system such as ESL or bilingual education is a structural intervention that does little to describe how teachers and students can work together to create a learning situation that is empowering to second language learners by utilizing their prior linguistic and literate knowledge. Cummins (2004)
discusses the importance of going beyond surface structures in educational contexts to look at the deep structures of the teaching/learning dynamic. Looking at the deep structures that underlie our teaching practices enables us to focus on what image of students is created by different teaching strategies. By examining how the teacher-student relationship is reflected through teaching practices, we can make visible the ways in which students’ identities are represented in the classroom or school context and what relationship this might have with their engagement with school learning. In this sense, the theoretical stance taken in Cummins work is mirrored in the words of Lisa’s description of practice: “making visible the invisible”. This echoes the dialogic nature of engagement between theory and practice that characterizes this study (Cummins, 2002).

Suggestions can be drawn from the work of the two teacher participants in this study that demonstrate a variety of concrete and meaningful options available to integrate students’ first languages and identities into literacy instruction. The engagement of the students who participated in this study in their literacy work suggests the positive impact on students’ interest and engagement with literacy that is made possible by the emphasis given to the knowledge and strengths that they brought with them. Both teachers found ways to integrate students’ lived experiences and extend literacy to include families in a multilingual and multimodal approach. The high expectations that the two teacher participants held for their students contrast to what has been demonstrated to be a diminished sense of responsibility for student learning in schools whose students are predominantly of racially diverse or low-income backgrounds (Diamond et al., 2004).

The findings of this study make clear that options for teaching to diversity are not solely defined by the program model in which teachers find themselves teaching. The
ways that schools configure themselves in relation to language of instruction and the leadership taken by administrators regarding cultural and linguistic diversity and the policy stance of boards of education does impact on how teachers are able to position themselves in relation to issues of linguistic diversity. However the work of the teachers presented in this study suggests that the agency of teachers is equally instrumental in that regardless of differences in articulated school-wide goals related to linguistic and cultural diversity, both teachers in this study were still able to provide students with opportunities in the classroom to be engaged in work that draws on and integrates their first language knowledge with second language learning.

The participation of the two teachers in The Multiliteracies Project in some cases may have circumvented the resources that would otherwise be sought out by or presented to teachers at the local school level with respect to collegial support, reading materials and presentations. The activities that these teachers developed created openings in the curriculum that led students to feel more accepted by their teacher and school than when all of the work is only in English. One of the strategies that seemed to be fundamental in promoting a high level of linguistic, cognitive and identity engagement was the collaborative dialogue that was allowed to flourish in students’ L1 and L2 alike. This practice among other things allowed students to be teachers and enabled students at all levels of English learning access to curriculum expectations. This expanded the ways in which socialization into the language and learning processes could occur for newly arrived students. When learners hear and see other students using their first language and see this work being appreciated by the teacher and the school community, they feel recognized for who they are. This goes well beyond a simple welcome mat for different
languages and cultures. In the dual language literacy activities described in these case studies, students’ linguistic and cultural identity is expressed through academically creative and challenging work.

The findings of this study distinguish several layers of meaning for students who participated in this work and suggest ways of considering a re-orienting of literacy pedagogy to take these into account. Several suggestions for pedagogical practice can be derived from these findings including building in a more explicit focus on meta-linguistic and meta-cognitive awareness to language and literacy teaching. In the examples drawn from these case studies, the value attached to students’ bilingualism was demonstrated through the establishment of curricular modifications that make use of students’ two languages. These adaptations resulted in a variety of positive academic, cognitive and affective experiences for the students in this study including:

- an intense engagement with reading and writing;
- the development of a metalinguistic awareness of differences between their two languages;
- an awareness of their identity as belonging in different ways to both cultures; and
- a sense of pride in being able to express themselves in both of their languages.

**Research Implications**

This study highlights the potential of collaborative partnerships between teachers and researchers to result in a deep level of investment in research. Both teachers were intimately involved in the construction of the project creating a “shift in
conceptualization of participant roles” wherein both are “equally valued participants and the labels of ‘researcher’ and ‘practitioner’ apply equally to both” (Hawkins, 2004, p. 23). When strict divides between researchers and practitioners are broken down, working relationships of a more dynamic nature can be forged that rely on the local expertise of each collaborator to jointly plan and implement the research tasks. In large part the nature of the larger research project created the conditions for this type of collaboration to be established. The fact that the school boards in which the teachers work and the university researchers from OISE were both defined as equal partners within the overall research project put us on equal footing from the outset of our work together. However, although the potential for collaboration was established by these structures, its embodiment took shape from the way these teachers embraced the idea of embarking on a study of the work they were doing with their ELL students. Similarly, because the type of engagement that the project encouraged was one of active participation on the part of the teachers in generating their research agenda, the resources and materials provided through the project served as catalysts rather than mandates for teacher initiatives. This harks back to the idea of a dialogic orientation in this research project and suggests this as a model for how school leaders can create the space in their work with the members of the school faculty and community to become agents for change.

**Limitations of the Study**

There are several limitations to this study. The main limitations are related to what is possible in undertaking a qualitative study such as this one. First and foremost, this study is limited to the work of two teachers and several of their students. One issue that results from a qualitative study is that of a tension between depth of involvement and
breadth of the research. By taking an in-depth look at the work of only two teachers and a relatively small number of their students, it is not possible to include a wider perspective on the issues that their work addresses. Moreover, the highly contextualized nature of this study could be considered a limitation in the ability to make larger claims. Furthermore, both of the teacher participants were themselves interested and invested in this work as it pertained to the dual language possibilities of literacy teaching and in relation to the development of a research study. It could be argued that the willingness and enthusiasm on the part of these teachers and the other members of the larger research project for collaborative multiliteracies research created conditions that would be difficult to replicate.

A further consideration in evaluating the nature of this type of research (i.e., collaborative action research) is that it is necessarily messy and non-linear (Burns, 2007). This comes in addition to any pitfalls that might be associated with qualitative research generally that is already considered more fluid and open to interpretation than quantitative research, (Bailey et al., 1999). Because this research followed the agendas and perspectives of the teachers and required close networking with them, the research required negotiation of interests and needs. This was a positive aspect of the project as discussed in Chapter 3 because both teachers contributed substantially to the development of the study in practical and theoretical ways. However, it also meant that the research was being crafted to a certain degree “on the ground”, in conversation and collaboration with Lisa and Padma individually. This style of research can result in richly layered data but requires flexible implementation. Another factor relating to the collaborative aspect of this study involves the relationships that are formed between
research partners. These are, of course, an essential feature of a project that involves such close collaboration amongst teachers and researchers. However the very nature of forming such close relationships can also create an even greater subjectivity on the part of the researcher (Burns, 2007).

A second but related limitation relates to the largely one-sided nature of the data. Because both teachers share similar positive outlooks toward their students’ bilingualism, this study lacks contrasting perspective(s) that could provide insight into why some teachers do not address the linguistic diversity of their students in their classrooms. Similarly, there were no student perspectives that were unfavorable to dual language work in the data. This could be problematic were it to create the impression that all students always respond positively to initiatives to bring their linguistic identity to the work of the classroom. Although in this study the student participants were overwhelmingly positive with regard to a dual language focus to the literacy tasks, not all students participated at the same level. I would have liked to be able to spend more time uncovering what issues were at play in the dynamic around participation and non-participation in different dual language activities.

A third aspect of this research that I identify as a limitation has to do with the monolingual nature of this study. It seems like a failing not to have been able to conduct any of the student interviews in their native languages. Even though the interview data was substantial and highly revealing of students’ ideas, feelings and thoughts in relation to their work, there may have been a whole other layer of understanding made possible by being able to conduct the interviews in students’ first languages. In addition, related to the issue of students’ first languages, is the limitation that arises from the fact that there
was no systematic evaluation of students’ language levels either in their first language or in English. This was largely due to the fact that this study was less concerned with tracking students’ performance than it was with describing the work of their teachers and the way in which this work was taken up by a sample group of their students. However, student work, and their perspectives on the work of their teachers and their own work, does form a major part of the basis through which claims were developed in this study. It is possible though that more detailed information related to students’ linguistic skills could have provided a tool for analyzing the data on the level of achievement as well as affect that may have been of interest and value for readers of this research.

Another issue that needs to be addressed further is the relationship between teacher identity and role definition regarding linguistic and cultural diversity. In this study the teacher participants both drew on their experiences related to their own bilingualism; however this does not mean that monolingual or non-immigrant teachers are not able to create a teacher identity that reflects a listening stance and articulates a position of advocacy and inclusion of difference. The principal of Marshall E.S. who was such as a strong advocate for this type of work, was herself a White monolingual speaker of English suggesting that an immigrant or bilingual background is not in any way a necessary factor in order to orient one’s teaching toward diversity. However, because neither she nor other White monolingual teachers or administrators were a focal point of this thesis, it remains open to question what experiences would be drawn upon in order to explain the adoption of certain role definitions if one’s own background were not itself one of a visible minority or of belonging to an immigrant group. This could be a point for further research in the future.
An additional point is that this study does not set out to generalize from the data to other contexts; rather, it is my intention to suggest that the data can be taken to support theories that can be conceptually applicable to other situations. Therefore, the fact that the teachers did make these connections to their identity does not preclude other teachers from a more “mainstream” background having a role definition that similarly takes a critical stance toward an English-only outlook in relation to literacy teaching. What does seem crucial to take away from the data is the critical need to learn about and from one’s students and to find ways to make connections to and with their lives in the development of curriculum and instruction. As Cummins (2001) states: “If teachers are not learning much from their students, it is probable that their students are not learning much from them” (p. 4).

A further concern is that, while there did appear to be a strong relationship between the two teachers’ role definition, identity, and their orientation to their students’ bilingualism, this leaves open the question of how one might influence teachers whose views are not so favorable to linguistic diversity as a focus in the classroom. This will ultimately require new policy directives, increased teacher-researcher collaborations, and leadership initiatives to promote a more unified approach that sets the stage for discussions related to diversity and aims to develop a set of expectations for literacy practices that are inclusive of the diverse languages and cultures of the students we teach. These discussions will be critical to increase pedagogical and school-wide practices that provide multiple access points to enable students to engage with literacy.

Finally, another criticism of this study could be that too much attention is given to the individual without sufficient consideration for the societal circumstances surrounding
the work of teaching. By focusing so closely on the work of individual teachers, the material circumstances and social circumstances of teaching and learning that contribute to or limit teachers’ abilities to positively impact students’ engagement with literacy is left out of the discussion (Au, 1998). In response to this potential criticism I would argue that the focus on how two teachers challenged societal assumptions and expectations in regard to students’ language and culture does acknowledge the complex interactions between societal power structures and individual choice. Furthermore, looking closely at individual cases provides a window into the larger societal context and enables others to gain insight into new possibilities for interpreting societal and school expectations and responding to language, literacy, and diversity in a multilingual society.

**Directions for Future Research**

As mentioned above, the scope of this study did not allow for a detailed investigation into the nature of student collaboration and its relation to the elaboration of multilingual literacy work. The findings of the study suggest that these social networks and engagement with peers play a significant role in students’ interest in and engagement with the inclusion of first language literacy. It would be valuable to explore this further in future studies with an eye to specific ways that the teacher can foster these relationships. The topic of participation in classroom communities with a multilingual focus would be of potential interest for future research. As Wenger (1998) points out, a consideration of participation necessitates that we examine the structures necessary to support and understand learning. In order to contribute further to the literature that supports a re-conceptualization of teaching toward diversity, it would be valuable to gain greater
insight into the varying perspectives of student participants regarding their learning and
the structures of schooling.

It would be of great interest to gather more detailed data dealing with student
interactions and teaching processes in relation to multilingualism and to follow students
in their social and linguistic collaborations over time. An aspect of this research that I
identified above as a limitation has to do with the monolingual nature of this study. Were
there the possibility of a follow-up study, it would seem critical for at least some of the
data collection to be conducted in students’ L1 since that was not possible within this
study. In addition, including parents in the discussion of this work would provide another
valuable layer of meaning to understand perspectives on literacy and language in relation
to the integration of identity in school literacy learning.

The research reviewed in this thesis and the data from this study suggests that
language transfer is not an unproblematic concept and argues for further attention to the
ways that teachers can harvest students’ prior knowledge in relation to literacy and
language and make this transfer productive. This suggests that further inquiry into the
ways that students are able to make use of their prior knowledge and what affect
pedagogical interventions that aim to engage students’ linguistic knowledge have for
their engagement with literacy and emergent bilingualism is an area that is in need of
further exploration and that would be very interesting to pursue.

It would also be valuable to conduct a follow-up study that looked at the role
school leadership plays in establishing the conditions in which teachers can openly
explore the relationship between their teacher identity and role definition related to
linguistic diversity. A study that gives more depth attention to how leadership and board
or national policies related to diversity could be integrated with practices that encourage teachers to bring their students’ identities into the centre of curriculum would be informative. This type of investigation could provide constructive information for future directions around the issues of literacy and language learning and teaching in diverse contexts.

**Final Thoughts**

It is important to remember that as educators we have choices—faced with aspects of teaching that might be new to us such as working with diverse communities, teaching students whose language or cultural background is unfamiliar or unknown to us, or integrating language learning into content areas, what do we do? How we respond as educators to the challenges and opportunities in our teaching context reflects our orientation to teaching and our role definition as educators. Furthermore, how we frame our self in response to the students and families we teach reflects ideological and pedagogical orientations. More importantly, strong messages regarding their self-worth, identity, and intellectual capacities are communicated to students based on how we address issues of language and culture in the curriculum.

The findings of this study highlight the critical role that identity formation plays in learning and teaching. The findings also show that students’ two languages supply a significant pedagogical resource for teachers by furnishing them with valuable information about students’ learning background and skill level, thereby providing resources around which to develop curriculum. Many additional doors are opened to teachers, students and their family members by allowing students’ home languages to become part of the learning environment. Although the structures are not always in place
to support teachers’ efforts to orient instruction to a multilingual student population, this work demonstrates that even a single teacher can make a difference to a child’s image of him or herself in relation to school literacy practices by endowing their linguistic and cultural background with capital in the school setting.
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Appendices

Appendix A

Stages of Second-Language Acquisition and Literacy Development


Stages of Second-Language Acquisition for ESL Students

ESL learners move through a series of predictable stages as they progress towards native-like-proficiency in English. These stages are part of a continuum of language acquisition and are not tied to one particular grade or subject.

Stage 1: Using English for Survival Purposes
Students at Stage 1 are becoming familiar with the sounds, rhythms, and patterns of English. They try to make sense out of messages, and they show some limited comprehension of “chunks” of language. Their understanding depends on visual aids. They often respond non-verbally or with single words or short phrases.

Stage 2: Using English in Supported and Familiar Activities and Contexts
Students at Stage 2 listen with greater understanding and use everyday expressions independently. They demonstrate growing confidence and use personally relevant language appropriately.

Stage 3: Using English Independently in Most Contexts
Students at Stage 3 speak with less hesitation and demonstrate increasing understanding. They produce longer phrases and sentences. They participate more fully in activities related to academic content areas. They are able to use newly acquired vocabulary to retell, describe, explain, and compare. They read independently and use writing for a variety of purposes.

Stage 4: Using English With a Proficiency Approaching That of First-Language Speakers
Stage 4 is often the longest in the language-acquisition process. There may be significant differences between the abilities of students at the beginning of the stage and the abilities of students at the end of the stage. Students use a more extensive vocabulary with greater accuracy and correctness. They are able to use reading and writing skills to explore concepts in greater depth, even though their proficiency in language specific to academic program areas is still developing.
Appendix B: ESL stages of writing development:

Grades Seven and Eight

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students begin to write using simple English structures. They:</td>
<td>Students write in a variety of contexts using simple English structures. They:</td>
<td>Students write English in a variety of contexts with increasing independence and accuracy. They:</td>
<td>Students write English for a variety of purposes using appropriate conventions. They:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- produce the English alphabet in legible cursive and printed form using left-to-right progression and writing on the line</td>
<td>- begin to make notes, with assistance</td>
<td>- organize and sequence ideas effectively</td>
<td>- use grade-appropriate vocabulary (e.g., demonstrate knowledge of derivations and word families; formulate definitions; spell, understand, and use vocabulary from all subject areas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- copy blackboard notes and text accurately</td>
<td>- begin to use common tenses, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation, with some accuracy</td>
<td>- make notes in some detail on familiar topics</td>
<td>- produce reports, editorials, paragraphs, summaries, and notes on a variety of topics, with few grammatical or spelling errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- begin to apply knowledge of basic writing conventions (e.g., punctuation, spelling, capitalization)</td>
<td>- use conventional spelling for common and personally relevant words</td>
<td>- produce prose using appropriate verb tenses, connectors, subject-verb agreement, noun, adjective, and adverb phrases and clauses, and conventional spelling, with some accuracy</td>
<td>- use the stages of the writing process (e.g., prewriting activities, revising, editing, conferencing, and publishing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- begin to use simple verb tenses, questions, plurals, and common prepositions of location, direction, and time</td>
<td>- write appropriate responses (using short sentences, phrases, or graphic organizers) to written questions based on familiar academic content</td>
<td>- begin to use a variety of forms of writing (e.g., short journal entries, notes, dialogues, poems, narratives, reports)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- write short, coherent, patterned compositions (e.g., short journal entries, lists) on personally relevant topics</td>
<td>- begin to use a variety of forms of writing (e.g., short journal entries, notes, dialogues, poems, narratives, reports)</td>
<td>- use the writing process, with assistance, producing a final edited copy that is changed from the first draft</td>
<td>- write short, original compositions, summaries, and reports on topics of personal and academic interest or knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- begin to use acceptable notebook formats appropriate to subject areas, using titles, dates, charts, and graphs</td>
<td>- use computers to begin to develop word-processing skills</td>
<td>- use computers to begin to develop word-processing skills</td>
<td>- write letters, following the appropriate conventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- use the stages of the writing process, with assistance</td>
<td>- use the stages of the writing process, with assistance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Every year the Breeder's Cup for horse racing is in North America (USA and Canada) one day in year on Saturday. The Breeder's Cup is a race for all the world come to see. All the world comes to see the breeder's cup. All the world comes to see soccer. All the world comes to see the Montreal. The Olympics people play games and have people come to compete all over the world. The Summer Olympics is every 4 years. The Winter Olympics is every 2 years. The Kentucky Derby, the Preakness and the Belmont together they make the Triple Crown. In the Triple Crown horses compete from all over the world.
Appendix D

“Together we all make up the world community” By Nasrin

Together, we all make up the world community.

For cities and the countries and some forest villages they all make a big community of the world. All small and big communities make up communities. Different kinds of people, different communities, different cultures, and communities from different parts of the world. Canada is a multicultural country. In Canada, you can see people from different culture living in one community. In some cities or countries people live in different parts of a city. In one there can be the same people like peace village and another community can have another group of people.
I read this story in my old school in Pakistan in grade three. I wanted to tell my friend the same story in English. I like this story because I believe that ALLAH is always around everywhere.
Appendix F

Jackie’s Dual language flip book

In the summer in the Arctic, the sun never sets down.
In the winter, the sun never rises up.
"Igloo" means "house"
People learn from animals

Facts!!
Yes/No

Yes/No
Appendix G

Sajida’s Dual Language Reflection

1. When I am allowed to write story in class using Urdu I feel very confident and very spashall and very important. I Feel Good that people see my Urdu and English story. I Feel very confident because I no how to write in urdu and I no why we write urdu because we leam more English. I Feel spashall because I don't want to For get My language.

2. I like reading story in urdu because I like my language and I like reding into My Language because It's relly esay for me I like to red urdu stories because I understand my language I like Urdu Stories because some story is true.

3. When I am allowed to use urdu in class it helps me to read and write English. When I have to leam new English words I rember them faster if I study the words in urdu. Like this

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New words</th>
<th>Urdu</th>
<th>Picture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lungs</td>
<td>ڞؤ</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Lungs" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidneys</td>
<td>ڪڞؤ</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Kidneys" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heart</td>
<td>ڻ</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Heart" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>