

Teachers' Enactment of Multiliteracies in  
the English Language Arts

by

Megan Haut

B.A., University of Victoria, 1997

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**ABSTRACT**

A pedagogy of multiliteracies, which has been advocated by numerous literacy specialists working in the field of literacy education, attributes literacy as multiple, dynamic and socially situated. Further, a pedagogy of multiliteracies stresses the multimodal features of communication, and students instructed from this pedagogical perspective explore the visual, gestural, spatial and auditory modes, as well as the linguistic ones of speech and writing. Finally, a pedagogy of multiliteracies was developed with the goal of creating a more equitable education system, in which learner diversity can be represented in the literacies of the English Language Arts classroom. In consideration of this goal, a multiliteracies pedagogy prompts teachers to include those literacy practices that students engage with outside of school in the English Language Arts classroom.

The purpose of this research was, firstly, to learn about the literacies which secondary teachers are exploring with their students in the English Language Arts, teachers' motivation for doing so, and how these literacies are being instructed. Secondly, factors that influence the enactment of this pedagogy in the English Language Arts as seen in the literature on the topic were explored. These factors were standardized tests, teacher education, access to resources and finally, teacher culture.

The design of case study was used to answer the research questions, and qualitative research methods were employed to collect and analyze data provided by participants, all practicing English Language Arts teachers at the secondary level. The types of data collected included interviews, observations, field notes taken during the interviews and observations and finally, teaching artifacts such as assignment sheets.

The findings of my study suggested that although many teachers are incorporating a range of literacies in their classes, the features of these literacies and the literacy skills needed to interpret multiple modes were not often addressed in the classroom. Participants noted the inclusion of a variety of literacies in their programs as a means to engage students in the skills and materials traditionally featured in the English Language Arts, or to expand on themes apparent in literature and connect these themes to contemporary culture. In addition, few participants considered the ideological elements inherent in literacy education in their integration of multiliteracies in their classes, nor did many of these teachers describe the need for students to develop critical literacy skills. The impediments that appeared to limit the enactment of this pedagogy were entrenched teachers' views about literacy learning, lack of education in the foundational theory of this pedagogy, and lack of time for professional development, collegial sharing, and amassing resources that could support teachers towards incorporating a range of literacies in their programs. Despite the identification in much of the literature of standardized tests as a major impediment to the realization of this pedagogical approach in the classroom, such tests did not appear to significantly influence the participants' implementation of multiple literacies in their classes. The findings of this study suggest that the teachers were incorporating a range of literacies in their English Language Arts programs, yet the

teachers making these inclusions were not motivated by a desire to achieve the aims of increased equity in literacy education or to develop students' understanding of the multimodal features of communication. Consequently, many of the goals of this pedagogy were not being realized in the English Language Arts classrooms of the research participants.

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I dedicate this work to my parents, Michael and Patricia Wagg, to my husband, Derek Haut, and to my sons, Connor and Oliver Haut.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Canadian youth are accustomed to a world that is filled with information. With the press of a button, they can access infinite amounts of data. They are not limited by location; they carry hand held devices like mobile phones that allow for instantaneous connection. Social networking sites such as Facebook afford them immediate links to friends and family. The landscape that these youth inhabit is one that teachers may look upon with bewilderment. We watch our students maneuver these technologies, seemingly undaunted by their capacity to do what would have been unimaginable to previous generations. Prensky (2005) uses the term “digital native” to refer to today’s students. They are “native speakers of technology, fluent in the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet...those who were not born into the digital world [are] digital immigrants” (p. 8). Clearly, the literacy needs of these students are very different from those of youth even a decade ago, and the momentum of change appears to show no signs of abating. How can we, as English Language Arts teachers possibly help students build the skills needed to navigate this landscape when they are natives and we are too often confused immigrants?

The New London Group (1996), a congregation of literacy specialists (Cadzen, Cope, Fairclough, Gee, Kalantzis, Kress, A. Luke, C. Luke, Michaels & Nakata) from England, Australia and the United States, developed a pedagogical approach in response to changes that were identified and needed to be addressed in literacy education.

We agreed that in each of the English-speaking countries we came from, what students needed to learn was changing, and that the main element of this change

was that there was not a singular canonical English that could or should be taught anymore. Cultural differences and rapidly shifting communications media meant that the very nature of the subject -literacy pedagogy- was changing radically. (p. 63)

This concept of literacy as multiple, dynamic and socially situated, moves beyond the construction of literacy as being an individual act of decoding and encoding print.

Considering the literacy practices of contemporary students, much of which is technology based (Black & Steinkuehler, 2009; Rhodes & Robnolt, 2009; Shultz, 2002; Stone, 2007), views of literacy as enacted only through reading and writing are inadequate.

These 'new' literacies intertwine linguistic, audio and visual modes, and they do not operate in the linear manner of print based texts (Kress, 2003; Luke, 2000; Moss, 2003; Unsworth, 2008). Theories of multimodality, as described in the work of Kress (2003), considered the nature of communication as occurring, simultaneously, through numerous modes, not simply the linguistic. Jewitt (2008) explained this approach in relation to classroom learning:

No one mode stands alone in the process of meaning making; rather each part plays a discreet role in the whole. This has significant implications in terms of epistemology and research methodology: Multimodal understandings of literacy require the investigation of the full multimodal ensemble used in any communicative event. The imperative is, then, to incorporate the nonlinguistic representation into understandings of literacy in the contemporary classroom. (pp. 247-248).

From this standpoint, literacy in our schools, still conceived as print based and literature focused (Cummins, 2006), does not support the literacy experiences or needs of today's adolescents. Rather, according to multimodality approach, meaning is created "across image, gesture, gaze, body posture, sound, writing, speech and so on" (Jewitt, 2008, p. 246) and to consider only speech and writing is to ignore much of how we communicate.

Further, demands that theorists note will be placed on youth in their future work lives, where they will need to "think across disciplines and creatively solve problems to maintain economic viability" (Rhodes & Robnolt, 2009, p. 160), are not being attended to either. Consequently, this pedagogical stance urges teachers to consider the present life experiences of students as well as the types of knowledge and skills that they will need to exhibit in their futures. Burroughs and Smagorinsky (2009) pointed to the five-paragraph essay as an example of an ingrained feature in the English Language Arts that is not reflected in writing practices outside of secondary schools. Similarly, Kalantzis, Cope, and Harvey (2003) noted the persistence of assessment practices in secondary schools that are individualized and focused on skills like memorization. These skills were juxtaposed to those that are becoming increasingly valued in work life, such as cooperation, creative problem solving and interdisciplinary knowledge. Not only is there a disconnection between the curriculum and types of assessment in the English Language Arts from the needs of students in both their present and future lives, but, also, sustaining these practices represents a considerable drain on educational resources.

Researchers have long stressed the need for connection between the out-of-school literacy practices of students and those literacies that are valued within the classroom. Heath's seminal study (1982) informed educators about the disenfranchisement of

students whose home literacy practices were absent in the classroom. Further, Gee's writings on d/Discourses (1989) described the subtle nature of d/Discourse in which participants' values, perceptions, behaviors and language practices are shaped. He pointed to the cultural capital that is tied to these d/Discourses and noted that those whose primary d/Discourses are compatible with the secondary d/Discourse of school are advantaged. The New London Group's (1996, 2000) quest to re-conceptualize literacy pedagogy in schools targeted issues of equity in which some groups, and consequently the literacy practices of these d/Discourse groups, are privileged above others. A pedagogy of multiliteracies calls educators to address the nature of d/Discourses, to peel back the inherent subtleties, in order to develop meta-knowledge about how d/Discourses function and understanding of the multitude of perspectives and stances that can be taken. Therefore, this pedagogy is one that is designed to address deeply ingrained issues of equity in schools and the unequal distribution of power and cultural capital in society. Jewitt (2008) writes,

The transformative agenda of multiple literacies sets out to redesign the social futures of young people across boundaries of difference. With this explicit agenda for social change, the pedagogic aim of multiliteracies is to attend to the multiple and multimodal texts and wide range of literacy practices that students are engaged with. (p. 245)

Therefore, the New London Group's pedagogical design of multiliteracies was intended to connect school literacy to adolescents' literacy practices outside of school, creating a more equitable system through this process. Consequently, this pedagogy recognizes the multiplicity of texts and modes that are features of adolescents' present

lives, and will also be essential in their future work lives. Further, a pedagogy of multiliteracies is intended to reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of students in the classroom, and helps students to consider the multiple perspectives that are apparent both in youth culture and in society at large. Educators who embrace this pedagogical approach stress the development of critical literacy practices in order to empower students, rather than perpetuating inequalities through the maintenance of the status quo by positioning particular types of knowledge and certain kinds of texts as central.

The adoption of a pedagogical stance of multiliteracies challenges teachers in numerous ways. Teachers are called to re-conceptualize their understanding of literacy, as well as to reconsider the skills and knowledge necessary for their position. Further, secondary school and disciplinary cultures are by their very nature unsupportive of the interdisciplinary perspective and holism required in this approach to literacy education (Burroughs & Smagorinsky, 2009; Moje, O'Brien & Stewart, 2001). Knowledge and skills are separated into different subject areas rather than viewed as interdependent and fluid. In this sense, literacy teachers may conceive of their role as instructing only the perceived skills that they attribute to their particular field. Also, features like standardized tests reinforce the individualistic, subject specific and traditional approaches to literacy learning (Luke, 2004; Marshall, 2009). In addition, the work involved in the adoption of this pedagogy, in terms of amassing resources and learning new skills, is considerable. The extent to which teachers are able and willing to embrace this pedagogy is contingent on numerous factors. One of the purposes of my research was to gain an understanding of these challenges and teachers' responses to them.

## My Inquiry

As a graduate student, I was presented with ideas that challenged my own practices as an English Language Arts teacher, which I imagine is not unusual. The theory of multiliteracies clashed with many of the principles that I was taught and with ideals that shaped my pedagogical approach with students. I did not envision myself as part of a d/Discourse group, and had not considered that many of the values I attributed to literacy and literacy education were dependent on this positioning, and reinforced by others in my d/Discourse group. The process of learning more about this pedagogical approach has facilitated my consideration of other perspectives that at first glance appeared antithetical to the realities of my experience as a teacher in the English Language Arts at the secondary level. Aspects such as the segmentation of knowledge and skills into disciplines seemed natural and rational to me given my previous experience as a student, and later as an English major at university. Yet, the need to connect my students' worlds to my classroom motivated me towards adopting this pedagogical approach. This process is difficult, and one that I continue to work towards. I also looked to colleagues for advice in the attempt to overcome some of the impediments that I experienced. These interactions encouraged me to research the incorporation of multiple literacies into English Language Arts by teachers in my school district.

### *Research Questions*

I recruited two participants from four secondary schools in a school district in British Columbia. I interviewed each participant, collected artifacts such as assignment sheets, and compiled field notes in which I described teachers' classrooms, examples that they showed me and my own thoughts and perceptions during each interview. In

addition, I observed three English Language Arts classes taught by three different participants in three different school sites. The first goal of this inquiry was to learn about the range of literacies that were being taught, the motives of teacher participants to include multiple literacies and how students were being instructed in these literacies.

The second goal of this research was to learn about the factors that supported or impeded teachers in the development of a multiliteracies approach in their English Language Arts' classes within the context of the site of the school district, and at the individual sites of the secondary schools. These factors were identified in the literature on multiple literacies. Teachers were asked to consider the impact of the following factors on their ability to provide a range of literacies in their classrooms; firstly, provincial exams; secondly, education and experience; thirdly, access to resources like technology; and finally, teacher culture. Specifically, my research questions were:

1. What literacies are being taught in secondary English Language Arts classrooms?
2. What motivates teachers to integrate multiple literacies into their classes?
3. How are teachers enacting these literacies in their classes?
4. What factors are impeding or supporting teachers in their integration of multiple literacies?

The value of this research is threefold. Firstly, this study adds to a growing body of localized case studies (Bruce, 2009; Jewitt, 2008; Whitin, 2005) conducted on the incorporation of multiple literacies in the English Language Arts. Many writers on the topic of multiliteracies have noted the need for studies that portray the shift of this pedagogy from theory into the practical sphere of the classroom (Bruce, 2009; Callow, 2008; Jewitt, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Mills, 2007; Siegel, 2006; Unsworth, 2008; Zoss,

2009). Further, few studies depict this theoretical implementation in Canadian classrooms. Much of the research on multiple literacies features Australian, British or American classrooms. The site of this study also presents unique features, particularly in regards to the rural, Canadian location, that render the study distinctive from others conducted on the enactment of multiliteracies in the English Language Arts classroom. Secondly, practitioner research, as discussed at length in Chapter 3 of this thesis, creates a link between theory and practice, potentially providing insight to both teachers and researchers. Teachers who engage in practitioner research are able to familiarize themselves with current theory, and apply it in the classroom. Further, other researchers are able to learn from the insider's perspective that a practitioner researcher's study can offer. Finally, the process of engaging in practitioner research, in which I familiarized myself with the literature and engaged in a systematic approach to study the teaching practices of my colleagues, greatly impacted my own teaching.

#### Overview of Thesis

In Chapter 1, I presented a brief overview of the impetus for the development of a pedagogy of multiliteracies by literacy specialists, as well as the principle features of this pedagogy. A pedagogy of multiliteracies presents teachers with an approach to literacy education that emphasizes connection between the classroom and the lives of students outside of school. Such connection is achieved through the incorporation of students' out-of-school literacy practices into the English Language Arts classroom, and with consideration of the cultural and linguistic diversity represented by our students. Proponents of this pedagogical perspective also stress the need for literacy education to reflect the multimodal features of the texts that students engage with outside of school. In

addition, this pedagogy was developed as a means towards achieving a more equitable educational system. Also in Chapter 1, I presented both my motivations for my study and the research questions on which my study was based. Further, I demonstrated the need for classroom-based research on the topic of multiliteracies.

In Chapter 2, I review the literature on the topic of multiliteracies. First, I consider the privileged positioning of Standard English in schools. Secondly, I present my conceptual framework for this study by examining the social constructivist basis for this theory, Gee's writings on d/Discourse, and critical literacy. Thirdly, I consider the gap between students' out of school literacy practices and those apparent in the English Language Arts, and the issue of technology and multiliteracies. Further, I outline curriculum theory and the British Columbia curricular documents to demonstrate how they may influence this pedagogy in the classroom. Finally, I portray factors that, according to the literature, may influence a teacher's assumption of this pedagogy such as standardized testing, training, and teacher discipline and secondary school cultures. The literature on these factors provided me with insight to structure my interview questions and some of these factors were relevant to the experiences of participants in this study.

In Chapter 3, I discuss my role as a practitioner researcher, the use of qualitative research methods and the design of case study for my research. Further, I discuss the forms of data I used, as well as the methods that I employed to collect and analyze the data on which my results are founded. I present the within case themes that emerged during the analysis of the data from each participant in Chapter 4, as well as an analysis using the framework of a pedagogy of multiliteracies as described by The New London Group (1996) of two classroom observations that featured instruction on visual literacies.

Across case themes that I identified are portrayed in Chapter 5, followed by Chapter 6 in which I discuss the findings of my study and connect these findings to my initial inquiry questions. In addition, I offer recommendations based on these findings to teachers and policy makers, as well as suggestions for future research in Chapter 6.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

Some scholars writing and researching in the field of literacy education have commented on a gap between theory and practice (Marshall, 2009; Smagorinsky, 2008). Although current research supports a curriculum that focuses on the use of a variety of media and connects to the literacy practices of students' out-of-school lives, the experience of students in the English Language Arts classroom may not reflect this evolution (Burroughs & Smagorinsky, 2009). In this chapter, I first present writings that consider the dominance of standard or academic English in educational institutions despite social, economic and technological changes. Secondly, I explore theory that provides the foundation of a pedagogy of multiliteracies in order to demonstrate the logic of a rethinking of literacy and language as a social act, in contrast to long held notions of reading and writing as individually situated, that is, the psychological act of decoding and encoding linear print. Thirdly, I discuss the impetus for creating a connection between in-school and out-of-school literacies, as well as the drive for inclusion of literacies facilitated by evolving technologies, the so called 'new literacies.' Fourthly, I consider this pedagogy in the classroom, particularly in terms of a broadening of our understanding of the modes of literacy. Finally, factors, such as standardized testing, teacher and school culture, and teacher education, that may influence a teacher's enactment of a pedagogy of multiliteracies in the classroom are explored.

#### New Times: Old Literacy

It is clear to many who are involved in education, whether they are teachers, academics or administrators, that schooling needs to reflect and evolve with changes that

we observe in our society. The demands of a changing economy and modifications in the work force are provided as the impetus for such reconfigurations (Gee, 2000, 2003; Luke, 2004). Developments in technology are commonly indicated as a major reason for change, as is the increasingly complex and prolific imagery that is portrayed to us through the electronic media (Luke & Elkins, 1998). The speed, reach and ease of using modern tools of communication, such as the internet, urge us to reconsider the act of communicating itself and the types of interactions that students will have in their futures.

### *The Literacy Myth*

‘The Literacy Myth’ is a strongly held belief for many of us that suggests the ability to read and write is fundamental in ensuring our students’ ability to successfully fill the roles that they will play in their adult lives. Yet, as suggested by several writers on issues of literacy, this may not be true (Carrington, 2001; Freebody, 2001; Graff, 1995; Weinstein, 2002). ‘The Literacy Myth’ is a phrase that describes the grandiose expectations that are attributed to literacy:

Literacy has been credited, in various places and at various times, with the power to push economies, to raise production levels, to eradicate poverty and crime, to consolidate democratic processes, to improve health, to stimulate logical and scientific thinking, to preserve endangered cultures and, generally, to redeem and ensure the peace and prosperity of global culture. (Freebody, 2001, p. 105)

It is this cultural myth that raises the stakes for adherence to Standard English in institutions such as schools, and ensures that these stake-holders (parents, teachers, students, and administrators) maintain the boundaries that demarcate acceptable forms of literacy (Luke, 2003). Standard English is the communication form practiced in the

d/Discourse communities of schools and incorporates not only “rules of grammar, spelling and so on” but also “the habitual attitudes of Standard English users toward this preferred form [and] the linguistic features that strongly mark group identity” (Bizzell, 2003, p. 396). Parents are understandably anxious that their children will have access to the cultural capital, such as that provided by a post-secondary education, to access career opportunities that they identify with proficiency in Standard English: “Schools partly recreate the social and economic hierarchies of the larger society through what is seemingly a neutral process of selection and instruction. They take the cultural capital, the *habitus*, of the middle class, as natural and employ it as if all children have had equal access to it” (Apple, 2004, p. 31). Teachers and administrators are responsible, it seems, to students and their parents, as well as the community as a whole, to ensure that their pupils adhere to these standards, as monitored through standardized testing and other methods of accountability. Yet, as argued by Weinstein (2002), the achievement of academic English and success in out-of-school contexts is perhaps not as straightforward as those who perpetuate the literacy myth would have us believe. Even if students master these skills in school, they do not necessarily transfer to the world outside-of school. The characteristic of academic d/Discourse as a sorting mechanism to *maintain* existing social hierarchies and as a means to allocate resources (Gee, 1989) is an alternative perspective to the meritocracy achieved through literacy that is often ascribed to literacy education in Western cultures. The entrenchment of inequity through education systems is one feature that can be explained through sociocultural theories of language.

## The Individual to the Social

A pedagogy of multiliteracies is founded on a shift in thinking about language and literacy. Many contemporary researchers have turned from studying the individual to the social world in which literacy takes place:

If we see literacy as “simply reading and writing” –whether in the sense of encoding and decoding print, as a tool, a set of skills, or a technology, or as some kind of psychological process- we cannot make sense of our literacy experiences. Reading (or writing) is always reading something in particular with understanding. Different kinds of text require “somewhat different backgrounds and somewhat different skills” if they are to be read. (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007, p. 2)

The foundation of this perspective is attributed by some to Vygotsky’s theory that language is fundamental in our development of higher level mental functions; in essence, that language is the fundamental tool for thought (Berk & Winsler, 1995, p. 21). Language becomes laden with both psychological and social implications that are beyond what is often associated with the functional element of communication. How we think and what we think are linked to the communicative modes that we practice. How we communicate is more than our ability to conjugate verbs or decode words: it rather frames our understanding of the world and demonstrates our belonging to a particular group.

### *Implications for Pedagogy*

The view proposed by scholars that literacy is not learned by the individual through the psychological skills of reading and writing, but is, instead, repositioned

amidst a social framework (Stone, 2004; Street, 1995) that forces us to reconsider our conceptions of literacy. Bizzell (2003) noted this shift from inner-directed theories of literacy instruction to outer-directed approaches, reasoning that our understanding of literacy as socially situated should shift the focus of literacy instruction from teaching universal conventions to an approach that features a variety of discourses. Consequently, the view of literacy as socially constructed urges us to shape our English Language Arts pedagogy in a much different fashion than we have in the past when we believed that language was conceived within the individual and that it followed universal patterns. Over a decade ago, Street (1995) argued that those who develop curriculum and programs “need to have an understanding not only of educational theory, but of linguistic theory, of literacy theory and of social theory,” (p. 136) describing the breadth of information that has become required in contemporary times. Even if we shift our perspective or understanding of how language and literacy are formulated and enacted, how this shift to a social constructivist view becomes apparent in our classrooms and how taking this theoretical perspective shapes firstly, our pedagogy and secondly, our students’ experiences in our classrooms needs careful consideration.

#### Discourses: You are Either in or You are Not

A sociocultural definition of literacy, and a foundation for a pedagogy of multiliteracies, is seen in Gee’s theory of d/Discourses (1989) in which a Discourse is “an ‘identity kit’ which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a role that others will recognize” (p. 7). Language is identified as discourse with a lower case ‘d’, whereas a Discourse signals ways of behaving and believing of which a discourse is part. The nuances of a Discourse

are subtle and our ability to infiltrate those beyond what Gee describes as our ‘primary’ Discourse, that into which we are initially socialized, depend largely on the compatibility of such d/Discourses with this ‘primary’ Discourse. Hence, one’s ability to become fluent in a secondary d/Discourse, such as those which are commonly practiced in schooling, depends on the primary Discourse with which we come equipped. The access to cultural capital is, according to Gee, dependent on one’s ability to demonstrate fluency in a particular Discourse. He contends that the elements that demonstrate membership to a Discourse group are “impervious to overt instruction and only fully mastered when everything else in the Discourse is mastered. Since these Discourses are used as ‘gates’ to ensure that the ‘right’ people get to the ‘right’ places in our society, such superficial features are ideal” (p. 11). Standard English is positioned as valued within institutions such as schooling because, in keeping with this theory, it is compatible with and accessible to those who belong to middle-class Discourse groups.

Gee’s theoretical perspective on d/Discourses is congruent with the findings of several researchers who have studied the transition of children from different backgrounds into the secondary d/Discourses of schooling. Heath’s seminal ethnographic study (1982), in which she observed children from different backgrounds transition into school, demonstrated the varying compatibility of middle-class youngsters’ home environment with that of school. Despite the rich and sophisticated linguistic elements apparent in the non middle-class settings she observed, such youth were described as experiencing difficulty in acquiring the d/Discourse of schooling because of its incongruity with their primary Discourse. Gee (2002) contends that our construction of meaning is shaped by the community in which we are initially apprenticed, “This

assemblage [of situated meaning] is always relative to your socioculturally defined experiences in the world, and more or less, routinized ('normed') by the sociocultural groups to which you belong and with whom you share practices" (p. 123). Our understanding of the world around us, and our development of specific tools and devices with which to communicate within this world, is socially constructed. It is not simply a set of skills (such as reading and writing), but rather ways of thinking and perceiving, that formulate a Discourse and consequently render it difficult to fully infiltrate a new community. In keeping with this theory, the youngsters in Heath's study who originated from homes that were not white and middle-class would have little chance of succeeding in the d/Discourses of the schools that they attended without special intervention.

Van Kleeck (2004) also describes the influence of family on the development of literacy, an example of which is how "highly literate parents begin socializing their children into a literate mode of thought long before children begin their formal education and become print literate themselves" (p. 180). This tendency for youths to be acculturated into literate individuals before formal schooling begins supports Gee's concept of Discourse acting as an identity kit, thus providing students with the tools, and even thought processes, to develop into a standard view of a literate individual.

The shifting perspective of literacy, from an individual, psychological skill to a practice that is always a social construction should certainly act as a catalyst to curricular and pedagogic reforms in literacy education. The acknowledgement that certain literacies are more accessible to students affiliated to particular Discourse groups should similarly urge educators towards such radical shifts. The gap between those who can be part of a participatory culture and those who cannot needs to be rectified.

### *New Definition of Literacy*

As previously indicated, our definitions for and understandings of literacy continue to evolve. Christenbury, Bomer, and Smagorinsky (2009) provide a historical overview of constructions of literacy, demonstrating how being 'literate' has constituted mastery of different skills and has been determined in different ways throughout the ages. Contemporary debates concerning what determines 'literacy' demonstrates that, in addition to being a dynamic construct, literacy is also one that continues to be re-negotiated. In contrast to views that position 'letters' as the foundation of literacy, The New London Group advocates for a definition of literacy that challenges those which focus primarily on written print. As described by Jewitt (2008):

Multiliteracies sets out to stretch literacy beyond the constraints of official standard forms of written and spoken language to connect with the culturally and linguistically diverse landscapes and the multimodal texts that are mobilized and circulate across these landscapes. Therefore, multiliteracies can be seen as a response to the remaking of the boundaries of literacy through current conditions of globalization and as a political and social theory for the redesign of the curriculum agenda. (p. 245)

This stretching of our definition of literacy encompasses the out-of-school literacy practices of our students which are viewed as peripheral by those who maintain a pedagogy that focuses on the standard print forms that have been the mainstay of the English Language Arts curriculum. Ryan (2008) portrays the range of literacies (which is not exhaustive by any means) that a pedagogy of multiliteracies may entail:

[A] complex set of communication media involving many different kinds of text, including video, CD, truncated language forms used in computer speak, SMS/MMS communication (short text or visual messaging on mobile phones or computers), alternative verbal communication with hybrid words or sentences (for example, making new words or phrases by merging existing ones), gestural communication, audio literacies and more. (p. 192)

This landscape inhabited by many of the youth that we teach, seemingly shifting from moment to moment at break neck speeds, presents educators, educated with conceptions of literacy as governed by static rules and grounded in standard print text, with a number of challenges. These challenges involve not only a rethinking of definitions of literacy in contemporary times, but also developing these literacies ourselves as we see our classrooms reflect the landscapes that were previously considered outside and peripheral to those that we explored inside. In this classroom for New Times, the assumption of teachers as the experts and students as the novices no longer holds true as most teachers scramble to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to be multiliterate themselves.

#### Towards a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies

In response to evolution of technology, understanding of literacy, and changes in communication, researchers set out to provide a pedagogy with which educators could attempt to meet the challenges of teaching literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The New London Group, composed of academics concerned with literacy education from Australia, the United States and Europe, coined the term ‘multiliteracies’ in the mid-1990’s (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003; Cummins, 2006; Hagood, 2000). These academics put forth recommendations for the development of curricula that took into consideration the

multiple forms that literacy takes in regards to the social contexts in which they are enacted. The terms multiliteracies and multiple literacies are interchangeable in the literature. For example, Jewitt (2008) describes The New London Group's work as a pedagogy of multiple literacies. The dominance of Standard English is described as privileged within school settings, and consequently those students whose primary d/Discourse is not one associated to those who are white and middle-class are perhaps disadvantaged as their literacy practices are not recognized or valued within the educational setting. Further, all students need to become fluent in numerous discourses in order to function in a fast paced, information laden world: "The quickly and repeatedly changing reading, writing, and communication activities in modern society require students to critically evaluate information in increasingly social contexts" (Rhodes & Robnolt, 2009, p. 158). Students need to be multiliterate as they move continuously between different d/Discourses using various modes of communication. In order to access information, from for example a website, learners must be skilled in various modes in tandem.

The New London Group used the terms modes, meanings, designs and design elements synonymously (Mills, 2009; The New London Group, 1996, 2000). The linguistic modes are those, speech and written text, that communicate meaning through clauses and sentences. The nonlinguistic modes refer to the other modes of meaning that were identified by The New London Group: visual, gestural, audio, spatial, and multimodal. Yet, meaning is always conveyed through multiple modes; "All meaning making is multimodal. All written text is also visually designed...Spoken language is a matter of audio design as much as it is a matter of linguistic design understood as

grammatical relationships” (The New London Group, 1996, p. 81). Consequently, although the terms linguistic modes and nonlinguistic modes are used in the literature on multiliteracies to distinguish between meanings conveyed through language in contrast to other communicative modes, theories of semiotics (Jewitt, 2008; Kress, 2003; Kress & Jewitt, 2003) stress the multimodal nature of communication.

The two pillars of a pedagogical approach of multiliteracies that were explored in this study were first, the inclusion of a broad range of literacies in the English Language Arts program, some of which connect to students’ out of school literacy experiences, and second, the need to address the literacies emerging as a result of technological developments in the classroom. Underpinning both the inclusion of a variety of literacies and consideration of changes in literacy practices due to technology in the English Language Arts is the view that language is socially constructed, and as such, value laden. Consequently, the need for teachers and students to develop meta-knowledge and critical literacy in order to navigate these literacies in a meaningful way is paramount in the construction of this pedagogy.

#### Connections to Students’ Lives

In response to concerns about a lack of equity in school because of the positioning of certain literacies (such as print literacy) above others, and in consideration of the relevance of traditional practices in a world that is becoming increasingly global and dependent upon emerging forms of technology, a pedagogy of multiliteracies has been advocated by some scholars: “A pedagogy of multiliteracies should include the expanse of cultures, diversity of language, and the variety of texts that people encounter in their daily lives” (Hagood, 2000, p. 312). One of the purposes of creating a literacy curriculum

which includes a variety of media and forms of expression is certainly the aim of achieving a more equitable educational system.

According to many writing on literacy education (e.g., Alvermann, 2009; Black & Steinkuehler, 2009; Bruce, 2009; Mills, 2009; Ryan, 2008), bringing students' personal literacies into the classroom is essential to connecting school and home literacies, and consequently improving students' success. In addition, the need to decentralize certain types of knowledge, texts and d/Discourses from a position of privilege is argued by Larson and Marsh (2005) who stated, "If literacy is represented as a context-neutral skill, then it fulfills the political purposes of those in power to maintain a position of superiority by marginalizing other forms of literate knowledge, specifically the rich and varied practices students bring to the classroom" (p. 20). Although it is unrealistic to assume that students will engage in an act of literacy in a similar manner inside school as they might outside, the need to present students with materials that can connect to d/Discourses other than those associated with middle-class culture is important. If students' own cultures, practices, and strengths are acknowledged and attended to in the classroom, they will be more likely to engage in a meaningful manner. The inclusion of literacies with which students are familiar is instrumental in ensuring their ability to succeed in the English Language Arts (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Kadjer, 2007; Langer, 2009).

### *Transforming Literacies*

The inclusion of students' personal literacies in the English Language Arts classroom is an issue that garners both criticism and support from teachers. Yet perhaps surprisingly to teachers, students also experience tension in the incorporation of

untraditional materials in school, as discussed by Bruce (2009): “The studies indicate a paradox between the function and role of in-school and out-of-school literacies. This dilemma is most prominent when students’ personal media influences and tastes coincide with an academic context” (p. 298). Part of the appeal of some of these literacies to youth is in that they are not part of dominant culture, and when subsumed by schools, these literacies lose this appeal.

This tension can also be seen in Myers’ (1992) study of adolescent literacy ‘clubs’ that explored the nature of adolescent literacy practices in the context of the classroom. His concern with the ascription of certain events, such as video games or graphic novels, as ‘authentic’ versus ‘unauthentic’ in the curricular drive to include non-traditional literacies in the classroom is the hierarchal nature that is perpetuated through such valuing, as well as the complexities inherent in such literary practices in that they are constantly renegotiated and altered due to their social nature.

Similarly, Moss (2001), described the differences between informal and formal literacy practices. She noted that informal literacy practices would be transformed if they were adapted into school-based literacy practices. Those literacies that students pursue because they view them as being counter culture, such as certain comic books, video games or genres of music, would be altered when they are subsumed into the mainstream classroom and may not hold the same appeal. In addition, the MacArthur Foundation (2006) also described the contrast between in-school literacies and digital literacies, like blogs or social networking and gaming sites, that students pursue out of school. Their research portrayed these digital literacies as holding allure for students because they are participatory in nature, localized and consequently quick to respond to cultural shifts and

youths' changing interests. In contrast, the MacArthur Foundation characterized features of school literacies as stable, institutionalized and centralized and therefore both less appealing to adolescents and less responsive to students' changing literacy needs.

The practices inherent in schooling, particularly in that knowledge and skills are developed sequentially in consideration of future goals rather than immediate gratification, create a very specific context in which literacy is enacted. The presence of evaluation tools in the assessment of the development of such skills and procurement of knowledge assures that students cannot approach these activities with the same motivations as they do their personal literacy activities. What was once pursued for personal satisfaction evolves into something else once it is standardized, assigned and critiqued. Though this evolutionary process from personal literacy to school literacy should not dissuade teachers from incorporating students' personal literacies in the classroom, it is naïve to assume that students will approach and experience them as they did outside the classroom. In attempting to bridge home and school literacies, teachers may encounter tensions in that students' experiences with home literacies will be transformed when they are incorporated into the classroom. Again, the social nature of language is fundamental as a literacy act in one context will alter when it is enacted in another context.

#### Social Inequities: Are Curricular Reforms Dismantling or Perpetuating?

An English Language Arts program that features a variety of discourses may be considered optimal for students, yet which literacies to include in our literacy programs is still debatable. Some academics such as Delpit (1988, 1992) have argued that in pursuing a curriculum that does not stress the privileges obtainable with fluency in Standard

English, educators are in fact perpetuating social and economic inequities. In the attempt to decentralize Standard English, educators may perhaps foster a naïve notion of the opportunities that are lost to those who are not able to navigate within dominant Discourses. Although such educators may view this pedagogical stance as a means to alter existing social structures, their students are faced with the reality of survival within these established confines. Further, Delpit (1992) maintained that it is presumptuous of educators and academics, many of whom enjoy the cultural capital of belonging to a dominant Discourse, to deny those students who do not come from white, middle class homes, the opportunity to develop these skills and gain access to this cultural capital associated with proficiency in dominant Discourses.

Delpit (1992) also asserted that many minority students are desirous of and capable of learning the elements of Discourse that Gee (1989) contended could only be acquired through enculturation:

Individuals *can* learn the ‘superficial features’ of dominant Discourses, as well as the more subtle aspects, and if placed in proper context, acquiring those linguistic forms and literate styles need not be ‘bowing before the master.’ Rather, the acquisition can provide a way both to turn the sorting system on its head and to make available one more voice for resisting and reshaping an oppressive system. (p. 302)

Delpit provided a convincing argument for a curriculum that includes explicit and direct instruction of Standard English; its foundation being the consideration of minority voices and their intimate understanding of the inequities apparent in society and how these forces can be overcome. As she noted, common conceptions of education as a means to

gain access and overcome barriers and numerous examples of individuals who have achieved these goals support this view. Writing in a Canadian context, Veeman, Ward and Walker (2006) similarly portrayed the need for teachers to address the features of Standard English, especially to those students whose backgrounds are not associated with dominant d/Discourses. These authors, like Delpit, emphasized the need for explicit instruction in order to highlight the practices and rules of the d/Discourses associated with schooling. Again, students need to develop the skills to navigate an array of d/Discourses in order to be literate (Langer, 2009) and develop an awareness of the ideological elements that are inherent to Discourses, including those associated with Standard English.

How to create a more equitable and representative educational system is not easily decided, especially when one begins to delve into the numerous facets that are presented in the debate to achieve these ends. It does appear to be clear, however, that educators need to be sensitive to the individual needs, desires and insights of the individuals when they teach and the communities in which their students live. Certainly educators and those who study educational issues must consider society as a whole (as best we can), rather than just the classroom setting, in the goal of creating greater equity for our students.

### *Meta-Knowledge and Critical Literacy*

The adoption of different literacies, outside of linear print based ones that have traditionally held a place in the school curriculum, is less meaningful if students are not taught the skills to recognize the different features inherent in various d/Discourses, as discussed earlier. In so doing, they can develop meta-knowledge about the language and

literacies that they are using or with which they are coming into contact. Moje (2000) emphasized the absence of students' development of meta-knowledge despite their willingness to engage with numerous types of literacies. The students portrayed in her study reflected very little understanding of the features of the d/Discourses in which they were communicating. Though teachers may incorporate different types of texts, modes of language, and d/Discourses into their programs, it is essential for teachers to give explicit instruction detailing the inherent conventions to facilitate students' abilities to move between d/Discourses and become both aware and critical of the inherent features that are portrayed. This facet of literacy learning relates to Delpit's (1992, 1998) thoughts about access to d/Discourses and cultural capital in that those students whose primary d/Discourse is not dominant need explicit language instruction in the conventions of this dominant d/Discourse. If we strive to achieve equity in education, competency with a variety of literacies and the ability to move beyond one's primary d/Discourse, are essential. The development of what Gee (1989) describes as "meta-knowledge" (p. 12) is beneficial for all students. Gee's (1997) description of meta-knowledge coincides with his definition of critical literacy as "the ability to juxtapose Discourses, to watch how competing Discourses frame and re-frame various elements. And this is an act that always gives rise immediately to questions about the interests, goals, and power relationships among and within Discourses" (p. xviii).

Critical literacy is a term that is nebulous in that it has been used for various purposes by various users: "Representatives of quite different and often incompatible views claim for their respective values, purposes and practices the status attaching to 'being critical', and there is no settled way of saying that some views are *bona fide* and

other are not” (Lankshear, 1997, p. 42). One perspective of critical literacy urges students to view language as part of Discourse, and consequently ideological. McLaughlin and DeVoggd (2004) described critical literacy as taking a questioning stance in reaction to texts, which involves the consideration of multiple perspectives. Morgan (1997) pointed to identifying issues of conflict and power as fundamental to critical literacy. Critical literacy from this stance involves the recognition of a struggle for power, and consequently engaging in critical literacy practices demands questioning the power relations at work. The valuing of some forms of knowledge over others and the purpose of authors in the construction of knowledge are examples of the issues of power that students must identify. The acknowledgement that language is constructed and consequently never neutral is also a feature in the development of critical literacy, as Lankshear and Knobel (2003) stated, arguing that texts always involve a process of selection in which certain knowledge is presented for a purpose. These features of critical literacy are conducive with a pedagogy of multiliteracies as described by The New London Group (1996), who stated the need for students to be able to assume multiple perspectives, recognize intentions of authors, juxtapose a multitude of d/Discourses and develop an awareness of the power that is inherent to literacy acts. Critical literacy is integral to this pedagogical approach in urging teachers not only towards the inclusion of literacies beyond those canonical works commonly presented in English Language Arts classes, but also challenges us towards considering the nature of literacy and the intentions and power relations at work through such literacies with our students.

## New Technologies: New Literacies

The ability for students to take a critical stance, to develop meta-knowledge of d/Discourse is crucial in our information laden age. We are bombarded with information, not simply from media with which we have grown accustomed such as television, but from new sources (like the internet) as well. The dynamic nature of communication in conjunction with technology has been described by several theorists as they note shifts in our current age (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007; Luke, 2003). Kress (2003) described such changes:

It is no longer possible to think about literacy in isolation from a vast array of social, technological and economic factors. Two distinct yet related factors deserve to be particularly highlighted. These are, on one hand, the broad move from the now centuries-long dominance of writing to the new dominance of the image and, on the other hand, the move from the dominance of the medium of the book to the dominance of the medium of the screen. (p. 1)

For English Language Arts teachers, these changes provide a dynamic and rich landscape in which to work. Yet, the extent to which this shift in communication is reflected in the curriculum and consequently the classroom needs attention.

### *From Paper to Screen*

According to sociocultural theories of literacy there are no universal rules that apply to all language users and learners all of the time. Rather, language is socially situated and dynamic; we do what we need, as far as we can identify, with the tools that we have available to us. Compounding the perception of literacy and language as evolving and dynamic is the changing natures of literacy activities and texts themselves

as a result of emerging technologies. Not only has technology drastically altered the way we communicate with others in terms of our use of various media, but the forms of language that we use to communicate with have dramatically evolved as well (Luke, 2000, 2003; Rhodes & Robnolt, 2009).

Kress (2003) considered the changes that accompany a more democratic approach to authorship in which there exist alternatives (such as the internet) to traditional pathways to publishing. Kress also described the “flow of communication” which was traditionally in “one direction” (p. 6). Contemporary forms of communication, like email, wikis, or blogs, may allow this flow to move into “bidirectionality” where not only might a receiver reply to the original text, they may also alter it. The ways we engage with communicative tools such as electronic texts, the tools that we have to design and redesign texts, as well as the media available for the purpose of communication have changed and are changing.

Citing the work of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), Moss (2003) described how advances that allow text and visuals to be integrated onto a page change how we read: “The technological means that increasingly facilitate these new ways of combining the verbal and the visual in effect make possible the production of texts that operate with new rules. In place of the strict linearity employed by print dense texts, such texts develop a non-linear logic of their own” (p. 80). The importance of visuals in these media demand different skills and tools to extract meaning beyond encoding print. Unsworth (2008) also noted the intertwining of text and imagery in contemporary narratives, stating, “Both the information in images and their effects on readers are far from redundant or peripheral embellishments to the print” (p. 67). In such cases, the ability to ‘read’ visual images is

an essential skill to make meaning of these media, equal to that of deciphering linear text. Students need the skills to understand these various modes, and how they work in conjunction with one another. Practices in the English Language Arts classroom need to accommodate the multimodal character of these electronic texts.

Some writing on literacy education describes such shifts in literacy practices as mostly ignored in the classroom (Alvermann, 2009; Luke, 2003; The MacArthur Foundation, 2006; Moss, 2006). The reasons that literacy education may be out of step with such advances in technology is likely multi-faceted, and despite a central curriculum such as that in British Columbia, the reality of individual approaches by teachers and the consequent exposure of students to these literacies depends upon a number of factors. Access to technologies in public schools is one factor that certainly impacts the pedagogical choices of an English Language Arts teacher.

*Access to Technology: Issues of Equity*

Although not all of the literacies one would include in an English Language Arts program would be dependent on technology, such access is integral to building literacy skills that students will certainly need. Lack of access to technology is unfortunately an issue for many educators, as is insufficient time to develop the skills and competency with these new technologies before they are initiated into the classroom. Bruce (2009) noted in regards to several studies on media literacy, “Because technical knowledge and skill, particularly with expensive equipment, is not evenly or fairly distributed across society, students and teachers encountered some difficulty in implementing its use” (p. 299).

The availability of technologies in some homes and the absence in others further compounds the lack of equity for students in developing these literacy skills. In his work on learning through video games, Gee (2003) considered not only the skills that video game users acquire in the process of playing games, but also the development of certain types of thinking, “Video games incorporate a powerful learning principle that fits well with inquiry based classrooms and with workplaces that encourage workers to think proactively and critically to build new knowledge in practice for the business” (p. 194). According to Gee, these skills are highly desirable (it is easy to identify why problem solving skills would be) to employers and afford those who are able to exhibit these qualities with greater and better opportunities in the world of work. The MacArthur Foundation (2006) and Rhodes and Robnolt (2009) also described the need for students to develop these types of creative problem solving skills, in conjunction with technology skills, as these attributes become increasingly important for employment. Consequently, if schools are furthering this divide between those who have access to the cultural capital of technology skills and those who do not then social inequities will only become even more entrenched in the future. Therefore, all students need training with and access to technology that will allow them to develop the literacy skills that we know will be essential in their future work lives.

Despite disparities in access to technologies among students, many of the literacy activities that students pursue in their out of school lives are achieved through technologies (Black & Steinkuehler, 2009; The MacArthur Foundation, 2006; Rhodes & Robnolt, 2009; Schultz, 2002; Stone, 2007) such as social networking sites like Facebook. Adolescents are engaging in extremely complex acts of literacy outside of the

classroom, often exceeding the imaginations of their literacy teachers. Stone (2007), studying student engagement with popular websites in their after school hours, asserted:

While these sites do support many aspects of school based literacy practices, such as particular genres, complex syntax, and high level vocabulary, they also include aspects that exceed what is currently being emphasized in school, such as multimodality and intertextuality. We need to begin seriously addressing these issues both with young people and in teacher education contexts. (p. 60)

It is ironic that as literacy teachers we often focus on the skills that our students will need to navigate their futures successfully; yet, it is questionable whether our students are even adequately prepared for the literacy demands of their present lives. The MacArthur Foundation's (2006) research on youths' digital literacies also noted the incongruity between the skills that students are developing through their out of school literacy practices and the literacy skills that are addressed in school. Although these youth are acquiring literacy skills through participation in digital communities, they are not developing meta-knowledge, an understanding of these literacy acts, nor are they sharpening those critical literacy skills that will afford them the ability to assess contemporary media.

Clearly educators need to consider the literacies that students bring with them to school, as well as the technological means to such activities, in order to provide relevant instruction in English Language Arts classes. Issues of equity persist as some literacies are privileged above others, and consequently students from middle class backgrounds may be advantaged over others in this representation. Similarly, the lack of access to

certain technologies in schools ensures that some students will not develop the necessary literacy skills to enter into higher status jobs in the evolving economy.

### Curriculum Implementation

Although many debates concerning the materials that should be explored or the approaches that should be taken have been enacted by stakeholders from staffrooms to research journals, the reality of most English Language Arts programs persists in the same manner. According to Burroughs and Smagorinsky (2009), the curriculum has remained surprisingly stagnant:

The secondary English curriculum in fact has remained remarkably stable over time. Rather than serving as some radical, left-wing vehicle for altering young people's consciousness and aligning youth against America, the extant curriculum generally reinforces values that have been part of the furniture of schooling for as long as curriculum studies have been conducted. (p. 180)

Before considering the implementation of a pedagogy of multiliteracies and how this pedagogical approach is reflected in curricular documents for the site of this study, attention must be given to the levels of a curriculum in order to portray the complexity of bridging theory to practice. The planned or extant curriculum is portrayed through such items as curricular documents, as well as unit and lesson plans. The enacted curriculum involves how teachers are able to present this planned curriculum to students, the instruction part of the cycle. Finally, the received curriculum involves what students actually learn and the skills that they develop through instruction (Applebee, Burroughs & Stevens, 2000; Burroughs & Smagorinsky, 2009; Marsh & Willis, 1999; Wood, 1998). Although a curriculum may be designed with the intention of including a variety of

literacies, it may not be enacted as such in the classroom. Similarly, although a teacher may design and instruct lessons with the intention of students' development of meta-knowledge of d/Discourses, the reality of the received curriculum may not reflect this intention. In order to understand the educational experience of students, it does not suffice to look at the curriculum at just one level. At each successive level, numerous factors may contribute to the ultimate outcome of student learning.

*A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: The New London Group*

The nature of this pedagogy (the what and the how) advocated by contemporary literacy scholars needs detailed description. According to The New London Group (1996), a pedagogy of multiliteracies is based on “the concept of Design” involving “available Designs, Designing, and the Redesigned. Together these three elements emphasize the fact that meaning-making is an active and dynamic process, and not something governed by static rules” (p. 73). Available Designs are the existing discourse conventions; Designing uses these existing Designs, but does not merely reproduce them, and the Redesigned is the product of this Designing (p. 76). In order for students and teachers to develop an understanding of and the ability to communicate this understanding of the process of Designing, The New London Group advocates for the development of a metalanguage, the primary purpose of which is to connect texts to culture. The New London Group identified six major areas that they describe as Design Elements and consequently a metalanguage for the classroom would need to address these: Linguistic Design, Visual Design, Audio Design, Gestural Design, Spatial Design, and finally, Multimodal Design, which refers to the interconnection between the other modes.

In regards to the development of a pedagogy of multiliteracies (described as the how rather than the what), The New London Group (1996) identified four integral parts to literacy instruction: Situated Practice (experience of available discourses, including those from students' own background); Overt Instruction (developing understanding of conventions of discourses through the use of metalanguages); Critical Framing (urging students to take a critical perspective); and Transformed Practice (putting what students have learned into different contexts) (pp. 85-87). Therefore, the integral aspects of a literacy curriculum of multiliteracies was designed around providing students with access to and experience with a multitude and wide assortment of texts that encompass the six Design Elements identified, the development of the ability to use a metalanguage that demonstrates one's understanding of how d/Discourses operate, facilitating a critical perspective, and finally, the ability to take what one has learned and apply it to other d/Discourses or literacy activities.

*Beyond a Literary d/Discourse*

Teachers commonly supplement and support a curriculum based on literature with media such as film. Yet, how these materials are enacted in the classroom does not often involve consideration of the communicative form of the medium used. Citing the work of Suhor (1992), Siegel (2006) explained:

Media-specific analysis meant using the language and constructs to whatever media was being employed. Rather than using literary concepts to analyze a film, students would learn how to talk about a film in terms of camera angles, dissolves, panning and shot composition. (p. 69)

The implementation of the discourses of a multitude of media allows students to gain an understanding of and facility with these different sign systems. Zoss (2009), in regards to visual arts and traditional print based literacy, pointed to the need for literacy instructors to consider the discourse appropriate to the medium addressed in order to achieve a full understanding of the content expressed through the medium. Again, the development of facility with numerous discourses, not just the literary analysis which has become ingrained in the English Language Arts, is crucial. Further, theorists of semiotics (Jewitt, 2008; Kress, 2003) described communicative acts as occurring through numerous modes in tandem, and to look to only the linguistic modes for meaning does not allow for a full understanding of such acts. Therefore, a multiliteracies approach would not only involve the integration of a variety of media, but would also consider the skills specific to these media in order to facilitate students' abilities to understand the multimodal features of communications.

A multiliteracies approach in the English Language Arts highlights the need for connection between out-of school and in-school literacy practices. Such connection is necessary not only to provide relevancy to those literacies explored in school but also to render these literacies more accessible to students. Students come to school with experience in a variety of modes beyond the linguistic ones that are attended to in schools. Siegel noted that students who had been labeled as struggling in standard school literacy achieved success when their "semiotic toolkits" were broadened beyond traditional school literacy (p. 73). Dyson (2004) commented that when children are "asked to engage in new kinds of activities with newly emphasized symbolic tools, like written language, children inevitably draw on their experiences and skills from the larger

society” (p. 211). In focusing strictly on print, or in pursuing a back to basics pedagogy, students are not able to use the rich resources that they bring with them into the classroom. Therefore, attention to the multimodal features of communication allows students a larger repertoire with which to make meaning and increases the probability of students’ success in the classroom.

### *Assessment of Multiliteracies*

The issue of assessment also presents challenges to the integration of a multiliteracies approach into the classroom. Firstly, teachers need to have the knowledge base to not only teach specific skills for a variety of modes, they must also be able to assess students’ development of these skills. Jewitt (2003) describes the need for assessment practices that consider multimodality because “if learning is multimodal and assessment is restricted to the modes of speech and writing the assessment will ignore (and in the process negate) much of what is learnt” (p. 84). Secondly, teachers need to reconsider the relevancy of some of their current assessment practices to literacy acts which occur outside of schools. Jewitt portrays the persistent assessment of traditional skills in schooling, like spelling and handwriting, which are less applicable to students’ learning when using technology. He notes that technologies demand new skills such as “finding, selecting, and processing information” (p. 85). Kalantzis, Cope and Harvey (2003) also describe the incompatibility of traditional forms of assessment with a multiliteracies pedagogy, relating this incongruity to such features as individualized assessment and the evaluation of skills that are not pertinent to real world situations. Instead, they depict the need for assessment practices that consider the cooperative nature

of many contemporary workplaces in which people share knowledge in order to complete tasks.

Therefore, it is not enough for a curriculum to include a range of literacies in our English Language Arts programs without consideration of the development of communicative skills inherent to individual media or modes, as well as the ability to shift between these modes. If we continue to use the same tools of analysis that we have used in literature-based programs, our students are not developing these tools and are consequently losing out on becoming truly “literate” (Langer, 2009, p. 51). Assessment of students’ skills with a variety of modes needs to be addressed, and these assessment strategies should be relevant to the literacy practices of students outside of school. Further, the development of meta-knowledge or critical literacy is connected. To attain this capacity with language, we need to have a deep understanding of how it functions. If we are not able to understand, manipulate and move between these media, we will not be able to achieve this state of literacy.

*The English Language Arts Curriculum in British Columbia*

*The English Language Arts 8-12; Integrated Resource Package* (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2007) does outline multiple literacies in the chapter called “Consideration for Program Delivery:” “While traditional linear print-based texts remain centrally important within educational systems, multiple forms of literacy are becoming increasingly relevant to all aspects of our global societies, including education” (p. 20). The acknowledgement of literacies beyond the reading and writing of linear-print based texts in the curriculum is apparent also in the curriculum organizers, “designed to summarize the fundamental concepts of English Language Arts for each grade” (p. 5) of

Oral Language (speaking and listening), Reading and Viewing, and finally, Writing and Representing. The suggested time allocation for each curriculum organizer, as well as the suggested weighting scheme for assessment, at the Grades 10 to 12 levels is 15-25 % for Oral Language, 35-45% for Reading and Viewing and 40-50% for Writing and Representing (p. 10). Critical literacy, in terms of deconstruction, consideration of multiple perspectives, and awareness of the inherent ideological property of texts is also discussed: “Researchers are increasingly sensitive to how literacy experiences are not only dynamic, but are also shaped by historical, social and cultural factors. Critical literacy promotes the view that texts are not neutral in intention or effect” (p. 20). In addition, the development of metacognitive skills (p. 19), which are certainly essential for the implementation of a pedagogy of multiliteracies, are advocated in this curriculum document. Yet, as explained by Marsh and Willis (1999), “how a planned curriculum is implemented as the enacted curriculum in any school is a complex process that can vary enormously from school to school” (p. 256).

Although the curriculum for English Language Arts in British Columbia is compatible with and supportive of a pedagogy of multiliteracies as advocated by many literacy specialists, numerous factors may impede or encourage an English Language Arts teacher towards this pedagogical approach. Cummins (2006), writing on multiliteracies in Canadian schools, particularly noted that “literacy as it is taught and tested in our schools is still conceived as linear, text-based reading and writing skills. These are the skills tested in high school graduation examinations and literacy tests” (p. 5). Although many educators may agree with the need to address multiliteracies in the

classroom, there are challenges for those teachers who incorporate this pedagogy in their English Language Arts classes.

#### From Theory to Practice

Unfortunately, innovations to literacy programs require more than a magic wand waved by those who develop the English Language Arts curriculum. Teachers need to be able to identify these features themselves, develop instructional strategies, amass materials, familiarize themselves with and become competent in using various technologies, as well as develop assessment strategies to measure student learning of these outcomes. Implementing a pedagogy of multiliteracies in the classroom is no small feat, as described by Callow (2008):

The call for educators to teach these multiliteracies and associated metalanguage to students assumes that teachers know *why* these concepts and skills are so crucial as well as *what* aspects and features of multimodal texts to teach and assess and *how* to assess students' understanding and skills. To date, very little specific research has been done on the *what* of assessment with even less on the *how* of assessment within multimodal contexts. (p. 616)

As is often evident in education, the need for time (which in the case of teacher time, is perhaps one of the most costly and sparse resources) and teacher education in this pedagogical approach is essential to the successful integration of multiliteracies in the classroom.

Advocating a curriculum of multiliteracies presents both researchers and educators with numerous challenges. On one hand, we can identify the firmly entrenched and strongly held cultural values associated with literacy. On the other, we can perceive

inequities that have been perpetuated, institutionalized and intertwined through these constructions of literacy and traditional practices of literacy instruction within educational settings. Yet, much research, debate, and professional development opportunities for English Language Arts teachers in the field need to occur in order to propel this understanding beyond discussions of theory into the realm of practice. Educators need a clearer picture as to how such a pedagogical approach can be enacted in their classrooms. Attention to the transforming nature of literacies, in that those literacies that are included in the curriculum will change, needs to be recognized and considered. Further, both academics and educators need to be cognizant of the literacy needs of students within the context of a larger heterogeneous society, rather than the narrow and limited view of literacy that is reflected within schools (New London Group, 1996, 2000).

*Examinations: Control Measures or Accountability?*

Carrington (2005) considers the tensions that arise when new technologies are adopted by adolescents. In response to media attention in the United Kingdom and Australia to the issue of alternate literacies practiced by adolescents, Carrington noted issues of power and privilege in her analysis of the discourses that were evident in this debate. Standard English became associated with the existing structures and traditional values that were institutionalized through education in these societies. Particularly in an era of increased accountability in the form of large scale standardized testing (Marshall, 2009), fears of literacy achievement surface. Examinations act not only as a measure of academic proficiency and attainment, but also as a means of sorting individuals because students' future ambitions for further education are limited or advanced by their

achievement on such tests. Expanded use of standardized testing as a means of accountability is noted by Luke (2004) in Australia, Great Britain, Canada, the United States, and New Zealand (p. 1426). Therefore, this practice of assessment presents a challenge to those who protest a diet of the basics in English Language Arts in favour of a program that connects to students' lives.

Examinations hold both educational institutions and individual educators accountable for the performance of their students, ensuring that they too have a stake in upholding norms or existing standards of literacy achievement. Yet, the tendency to view educational systems as a means of maintaining the status quo moves beyond the implementation and practice of such testing. There is a tension when a curriculum that advocates an approach to literacy education in which teachers and students are encouraged to use a variety of texts and modes of literacies, as well as demonstrate their literacy in numerous ways, is assessed by standardized tests that for the most part evaluate a narrow set of skills (Alvermann, 2009; McClay, 2002; Siegel, 2006; Zoss, 2009). Given the high stakes of these exams and their ability to possibly limit post-secondary educational opportunities for students at the Grade 12 level, teachers are often placed in a position where they may choose to focus on those parts of the curriculum that are represented in the exam.

Marshall (2009) comments on the tension between theory and the practice that ensues, "our research in new literacy studies will continue to grow, of course, but we have to ask how such research will be relevant and useful to teachers working in environments where test-driven priorities are increasingly dominant" (p. 122). The testing of certain parts of the curriculum compounds a narrow focus, not just in regards to

instruction but also in terms of the assessment in that the entire curriculum may not be represented as intended in the measurement of students' overall skills. Therefore, in consideration of curriculum design of the English Language Arts, it is worth looking at how literacy learning is being assessed and the types of wide scale assessments that are being used in order to better understand why the curriculum may not be fully enacted in classrooms.

### *Standardized Tests in British Columbia*

As mentioned earlier in regards to Provincial Examinations in the English Language Arts, there may be a tendency to stress those learning outcomes that are represented on these examinations at the English 10 and English 12 levels. The British Columbia Ministry of Education, which oversees the province wide exams, describes the English 10 examination as “a provincial large-scale assessment which is based on the English Language Arts curriculum....While the curriculum addresses many aspects of English Language Arts, the Grade 10 English examination addresses only reading and writing. The other aspects of the curriculum are better served through classroom assessment” (Description of the Provincial Exam, 2008/2009, English 10, p. 3). The Grade 12 Provincial Examination also focuses on reading and writing of print based texts, although at least one graphic is used in tandem with the informational, poetry or prose texts, and at least one question is directed towards this graphic (Description of the Provincial Exam, 2008/2009, English 12, p. 2). It seems that the portions of the curriculum that pertain to oracy, viewing and representing are to be largely assessed by individual teachers although these examinations do weigh heavily (20% at the Grade 10 level and 40% at the Grade 12 level) on students' final grade.

The curriculum for English Language Arts (8-12) in British Columbia (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2007) demonstrates both attention to contemporary research on literacy learning and consideration for the autonomy of teachers as professionals. This sense of autonomy is achieved by allowing teachers a space to be both responsive to their individual students' needs, backgrounds, and interests, as well as meet curricular objectives. This professional autonomy does not exist for some English Language Arts educators practicing in other locales such as in the United States (Marshall, 2009; Luke & Woods, 2009). Yet, professional autonomy could be viewed as undercut by the use of wide scale assessment tools such as provincial examinations. Although many teachers will persevere through the challenges that exist in providing students with a diverse, informed and relevant English Language Arts program, some may fall to 'teaching to the exam' in the hopes that teaching mainly those literacies apparent on the exam will boost student performance, and in doing so, will not integrate multiple literacies into their programs.

#### *Teacher and Discipline Subcultures*

To what extent teachers facilitate student experience with and understanding of a variety of literacies is dependent on numerous elements beyond the existence of large scale examinations. Such factors may include the culture of a school or particular department within that school in which a specific approach or philosophy is advocated. Hilferty (2008) argued that subject subcultures are especially potent at the secondary level:

Subject subcultures are a primary influence on the professional life of secondary school teachers. They affect not only what and how they teach, the language they

use and the way they reach decisions, but also how they respond to policy initiatives and reform proposals....This culture incorporates core values for the group and gives them a shared occupational identity. The sense of community that binds executive members together therefore lies not in their common identity as teachers, but in their common identity of teachers of a particular subject. (p.168)

Given that subject specialists at the secondary level are likely to boast a specialized knowledge and expertise of their subject that in many ways differs from a more generalized knowledge as is more likely seen at the elementary or middle school levels, it can be argued that specialist secondary teachers may have more autonomy or professional discretion than generalists. Further, the segmentation of knowledge into departments may impede the ability or desire of teachers to develop facility with modes that they view as outside of their subject area. Burroughs and Smagorinsky (2009) identified the role that disciplines play in maintaining norms, “disciplines (especially at the secondary level), often emphasize the relative stability of content, forms, processes and conditions. Rather than dealing with multiple discourses (and multiple literacies), school disciplines in general are concerned with *a* discourse” (p. 174). Certainly, the willingness of teachers to incorporate educational strategies or particular materials into their classrooms may be influenced or regulated by this sense of community, but also the decision to allocate departmental funds towards specific resources would be an important factor in the delivery of a curriculum within a particular school. As mentioned earlier in regards to the Literacy Myth and the pervasive view that positions certain conceptions of literacy (linear print based texts for example) above others, it is not unlikely that some English Language

Arts Specialists would also hold this viewpoint. Moje, O'Brien, and Stewart (2001) also wrote about the d/Discourse of secondary school life in which

decisions made within subject subcultures about what constitutes knowledge, instruction, and learning, whether explicated in curriculum guides or implicitly understood within a subject area discourse community – are as socially and politically driven as they are intellectually driven. Since content knowledge is the primary academic and social grounding shared by persons in a department, traditional ways of framing content and representing knowledge may be deeply ingrained through shared beliefs and traditions. (p. 33)

Considering that many English Language Arts Specialists hold their primary degrees in English Literature, an inclination towards literary works over other texts like those from contemporary popular culture may be identified. The culture of a department or subject subculture would likely be a serious component in the integration of a curriculum or pedagogical approach into a particular school. Yet, the influence of subject subcultures is not limited to the department of a particular secondary school, but specialist organizations that exist at both the provincial and district levels (for example Local Specialist Associations) likely also contribute to the formation of members' identities as teachers of specific subjects as well as the development of particular values and ideological perspectives.

The issue of school or subject culture is certainly important in the consideration of teacher agreement that is necessary for the metamorphosis of a planned curriculum into one that is enacted. This agreement is dependent not only on the culture a teacher is situated within, but also the proliferation of ideas and theory from the realm of academia,

into that of practice. Some educators describe a lack of practical application in the writings and theories produced by educational researchers and the value of experience over theory (Allen, 2009; Smagorinsky, Lakly & Johnson, 2002). Given the multiple roles that teachers must play and the variety of demands that are placed on them in their attempts to meet students' needs, teachers are often left with very little professional time to familiarize themselves with current educational research.

### *Teacher Education*

Another potential bridge between theory and practice is the contact that educators have with researchers through their own graduate work or the influence of those new teachers who are just entering the profession and who, consequently, are perhaps more familiar with contemporary theory. These points of contact are dependent on the willingness of educators at the university or college level to include multiliteracies in both graduate classes and teacher training. As discussed by Begoray (2003) in regards to the willingness of professors to address multiliteracies at the university level:

University professors, like classroom teachers, must be supported by a positive climate, and have adequate time to learn and implement new ideas. While Canadian teacher educators have fewer political pressures placed on their practice than their American and British counterparts, they still encounter institutional and personal issues that may make changing their current curriculum- and implementing visual literacy- a challenge. (p. 136)

Much like the experience of secondary school teachers, instructors at the post-secondary levels face challenges and impediments to these curricular changes and need similar

support to ensure that teachers are bringing adequate knowledge and skills into the classroom.

Regardless of the instruction received by beginning teachers at the pre-service level, the willingness of mature teachers to accept contemporary approaches to literacy education may be limited in some cases. Marsh (2006) portrayed the reluctance of those pre-service teachers in her study to diverge from the practices espoused by senior teachers. She stated that the practicum placement of pre-service teachers is “a period when students are subjugated to a number of discursive practices which serve to ensure that they are located in specific ways as apprentices in these particular communities of practices” (p. 196). Given the challenges that exist for pre-service and new teachers in adapting to secondary school life in the role of teacher, the individual departmental or subject culture, not to mention the resistance of some veteran teachers to new strategies or pedagogical innovations, it is perhaps unrealistic to expect them to play a significant role in reshaping culture or practice (Allen, 2009; Rosewell, Kosnik & Beck, 2008; Smagorinsky, Gibson, Bickmore, Moore & Cook, 2004).

### *Secondary School Culture*

The cultures of secondary schools are diverse, although researchers and theorists have noted certain commonalities; the division of knowledge into components, or subjects, being one element that demonstrates the inherent rationality of such institutions. Given the large number of students who are educated and staff who work in these facilities, numerous organizational features have become ingrained components to this culture. Other features that are associated with this rationality include modes of assessment, the curriculum, and the timetable (Moje, O'Brien & Stewart, 2001). Some

argue that students are subsequently left in a position of compliance as “curriculum, school rules, schedules, texts, and on and on are set long before students arrive inside the school house door. There are usually no free spaces within which students can practice and thus develop skills needed for public participation in decision making” (Wood, 1998, p. 191). An assumption that teachers experience a similar lack of autonomy, or at least some form of it, in response to the controlling measures of these institutions is not unlikely. The culture inhabited within each school must be recognized as unique: secondary schools are different from other levels of schooling such as elementary schools (although certain commonalities exist) not only in the segmentation of time and the knowledge, but also in regards to the number of individuals who are located within them. As discussed by Moje (2000), “High student-to-teacher ratios in secondary school classrooms (many teachers see as many as 180 different students each day) lend an impersonal air to secondary schools. And the competitive nature of both academic and extracurricular activities is heightened as the stakes become higher than they were at the elementary school level” (p. 26). The teachers in my study taught no more than 130 students in a day, still a large number. The lack of contact time with individual students, often over the course of a five month semester rather than an entire year, could affect a teacher’s ability to know the individual needs of students. Developing an understanding of student diversity in terms of background and culture is challenging given the large number of students and the lack of time apparent in these settings and consequently, these elements must impede the development of a literacy program that connects to existing student literacies.

Schools are complex institutions. The dynamics at play, such as organization of time and space, combined with the traditions inherent in a school or department, may influence the pedagogical choices of teachers. Although at first glance many of these factors appear unrelated to literacy pedagogy, teachers may be limited by practical aspects like timetabling or availability of resources. The more impervious factors of institutionalization that mold identity, and consequently ensure that certain views are perpetuated, need to be considered as well. Outside factors, like high stakes testing, are perhaps easier for teachers to identify as affecting these pedagogical choices, whereas a critique of teacher, school or disciplinary cultures forces teachers to analyze their own d/Discourse group and consider their identity within these cultures.

*Teacher/Research: A Possible Link*

Proponents of a curriculum that presents students with numerous forms of literacy cite compelling reasons for a pedagogical approach based on multiple literacies. Yet, exactly how such a shift in literacy education would transpire in the classroom setting is not obvious. Siegel (2006) noted, “Studies that document what happens when multiliteracies meet school literacy are needed” (p. 74) as did Bruce (2009), Callow (2008) and Unsworth (2008). Mills (2007) explains the need for classroom based research because “there is a need to evaluate the potential of the multiliteracies pedagogy to provide equitable access to powerful literacies for a wide representation of ethnic groups and social classes” (p. 223). In addition, Marshall (2009) and Zoss (2009) described the need for research that considers the effects of high stakes testing on literacy education. As mentioned earlier, pedagogical choices are dependent on a vast array of

factors that need to be examined to achieve an understanding of how to facilitate the best literacy instruction for students.

As mentioned earlier, this pedagogy does not simply involve the inclusion of a variety of literacies, but also the skills that teachers are addressing with these media. Consideration must be given to the development of students' and teachers' understanding of d/Discourses and how this understanding is applied to the literacies that are being explored in the classroom. The development of meta-knowledge, in which students are aware of a variety of d/Discourse groups, is fundamental to understanding language as socially constructed and value laden. Developing students' abilities to move between such d/Discourses consciously and critically is integral to implementing a pedagogy of multiliteracies. Aspects such as standardized testing, discipline subcultures and access to resources that impede or encourage this pedagogy to be enacted in the English Language Arts are also central to this inquiry. The purpose of this study was to research the implementation of a pedagogy of multiliteracies in the English Language Arts classroom at the secondary level, and address the gap in the literature regarding the practical application of this pedagogy in the classroom. Specifically, my research questions were:

1. What literacies are being taught in secondary English Language Arts classrooms?
2. What motivates teachers to integrate multiple literacies into their classes?
3. How are teachers enacting these literacies in their classes?
4. What factors are impeding or supporting teachers in their integration of multiple literacies?

As teachers, we are particularly adept at providing this practical vantage point to researchers and policy makers in the attempt to close the theory/practice gap. The

numerous factors that inform and shape our practice need to be identified and explained to ensure that researchers are able to generate relevant theory with which to inform and guide our practice. Further, the voices of teachers need to be included in the research, as both participants and practitioner/researchers, in efforts to close this gap and provide our students with the tools that they need to navigate their current and future literacies.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the theoretical foundations for a multiliteracies pedagogy in the English Language Arts which characterize literacy learning as socially situated, dynamic and was created by The New London Group to address issues of equity in literacy education. In addition, I discussed the imperatives to bridge school and out-of-school literacies, including the digital literacies that many adolescents pursue in their personal time, as well as attend to the multimodal nature of communication that has emerged through theories of semiotics. The New London Group's instructional framework was presented as a means to facilitate the enactment of a pedagogy of multiliteracies in the classroom, and consideration was given to the curricular documents of the site of this study in relation to this pedagogy. Further, I discussed the factors of standardized tests, teacher, school and discipline subcultures, as well as teacher education that were identified in the literature as potential influences on the enactment of a multiliteracies pedagogy in the English Language Arts. The following chapter outlines the research methods employed to address these research questions and attend to the gaps identified in the literature.

## Chapter 3

### Methods

In this chapter, I consider first my position as a teacher researcher with exploration of both the benefits of assuming this role, and the limitations of an insider perspective. Secondly, I describe the use of qualitative methods as a means to provide a detailed analysis of the incorporation of a range of literacies in the English Language Arts classrooms of teachers, followed by an explanation for the choice of case study as the design for this research study. Fourthly, I recount the provisions that I took to ensure that my research methods were ethical. Fifthly, I provide a summation of the forms of data used in the study, as well as the methods employed for data collection and data analysis. Finally, I portray the site and participants.

#### Teacher Researcher: My Position as Researcher

To what extent does educational theory impact teaching? How are researchers able to identify the issues and needs of practitioners in classrooms to guide their research? Certainly the multiple roles that teachers must play and the variety of demands that are placed on them in their attempts to meet students' learning needs create challenges for those researchers who attempt to capture this reality and provide guidance for the improvement of teaching practices. On the other hand, teachers need to assert their voices and provide input regarding research that would be relevant to their practice.

#### *Connecting Theory and Practice*

One means of connecting theory generated by researchers and the practice of teachers in the classroom is through teacher research. The importance of such research is lauded by Baumann and Duffy-Hester (2002):

We believe that good teachers of literacy are theoretical as they utilize extant literacy research that informs their practice and produce new theories of teaching and learning through their teacher-research endeavors. We see teacher researchers as linking research and practice, the embodiment of reflective practitioners. We know from our own teacher-research that engaging in classroom inquiry can transform an educator's views on teaching and learning. (pp. 3-4)

The research process, which involves both inquiry and reflection, is pivotal to the improvement and understanding of one's own teaching practice, and these authors note the transformative role that such research has played for those teachers who undertake it.

The benefits of teacher research are not limited to the improvement of the practice of the teacher researcher but rather provide a link between practice and educational research. Teachers working in the classroom have an understanding of the issues that researchers need to address, and their voices need to be heard. As described by Santa and Santa (1995):

The final arguments for teacher research have to do with building a knowledge base about teaching and education. Many have argued that teachers need to be involved in educational research so that theories can be developed that will ultimately be related to practice. The basic argument is that teachers need to make observations and provide preliminary experiments and case studies accessible to academics in order that theory does not become irrelevant to practice. (p. 447)

Teaching is not solely theoretical; in order for theory to be meaningful, it must impact practice and have a positive effect on the education of our students. The involvement of teachers in research allows communication to flow from teachers to researchers, but, as

cited earlier, also facilitates the theoretical impact on teachers by researchers as teachers engage in the process of familiarizing themselves with existing research in order to conduct their own.

### *Influencing Policy*

Finally, a third motivation for teacher research is the possibility of enacting positive change in the actual site of the study. Lincoln (2002) described the need for research to be useful to the community in which it originates. Given the goal of teacher research is often to address an issue that teachers identify in their classrooms, schools, or school districts, such research can provide motivation for stakeholders to address these issues, as well as pertinent information to guide change. As discussed by McMillan and Wergin (2002), “As action/practitioner research is intended to facilitate change, researchers cannot afford simply to write up their results and move on. They also need to consider the implications of their data for the policy or practice context” (p. 174). This research can be a benefit, in that one’s efforts may have a positive outcome in one’s immediate environment, but it also presents a large responsibility to the teacher researcher in the consideration of potential effects of their study. The impact of the research process and subsequent findings on the site of the study should not be dismissed regardless of the researcher’s relationship with those participating in the study. Yet, if one plans to continue work at the site after the study, it is likely that the individual will be especially mindful of effects. In discussing the purpose of educational research, Bassey (1999) asserted the need for such research as being “the kind of value-laden research that should have immediate relevance to teachers and policy-makers, and in itself [is] educational because of its stated intention to ‘inform.’ It is the kind of research in

education which is carried out by educationists” (p. 39). Clearly those involved in educational research bear a large responsibility to ensure that the outcomes are informative.

### *Studying One's Backyard*

Although conducting research from the stance of a practitioner offers many benefits in that one has an insider's perspective and consequently knowledge of the issues that are of concern, as well as immediate access to the site and perhaps the trust of participants, writers on research methodology offer a cautionary note about the use of one's own backyard as a research site, despite the immediate benefits. Aspects such as researcher bias, slanted responses from participants, and 'dangerous' revelations or knowledge are some of the issues that a practitioner-researcher may encounter during the process, providing questionable results for the study and precarious positions for the researcher as she/he continues work at the site. As noted by Creswell (2007), "Studying such people or sites establishes expectations for data collection that may severely compromise the value of the data" (p. 119). Therefore, both practical and ethical questions arise from taking this position which can be, in my mind, only partially addressed through means such as offering participants anonymity and using multiple sources and types of data. The reality that the inevitable outcome of the study will be different from that which would be obtained from a researcher coming from the outside will remain, as will questions of 'neutrality' and 'objectivity.'

Yet, such questions have been posed by numerous researchers and those writing about qualitative research methods beyond the issue of practitioner research. Whether the

objectivity sought by some can be achieved is debatable. Some insist that good research demands involvement.

The naturalistic researcher is not a detached 'scientist' but a participant observer who acknowledges (and looks out for) their role in what they discover. A research investigation is not neutral; it has its own dynamic and there will be effects (on individuals, on institutions) precisely because there is someone there asking questions, clarifying procedures, collecting data. Recognizing this is part of doing good research. Ignoring it is bad 'science.' (Gillham, 2000, p. 7)

Lincoln (2002) ascribed to a similar view on the issue of objectivity, when she stated that "detachment and author objectivity are barriers to quality, not insurance of having achieved it" (p. 334). Consequently, although there are certainly challenges presented to the teacher who engages in the study of her/his own workplace and some justifiable concerns regarding the outcomes of such studies, there are also voices that encourage taking on this perspective.

My position as a practitioner researcher provided me with the opportunity to consider my own practice as a secondary English Language Arts teacher. The process of familiarizing myself with the research on the topic of multiliteracies, as well as the investigation of the approaches and practices of other teachers in my district was an informative process for my own practice. My experience reinforces Baumann and Duffy-Hester's (2002) findings that such research is a transformative process for those who engage in it. Further, the enthusiasm of participants in my study and their desire to engage in discussion about their pedagogical choices regarding multiliteracies leads me to believe that this process was also beneficial for them. They described the opportunity to

consider and articulate as a positive endeavor, as was the chance to share their opinions about how to improve instruction of multiliteracies in our district.

On the other hand, the limitations of gathering data from those who are my colleagues, especially in terms of probing for information during interviews when conflicting information was presented, was at times uncomfortable and I was certainly cognizant of Creswell's (2007) warning regarding backyard research. In addition, the necessity of requesting time for interviews and the acquisition of other types of data from participants was also perhaps more difficult given my position as a teacher in the district. Allwright (2005) considered the "potentially parasitical" (p. 355) nature of practitioner research given the demands that teachers develop research skills whilst maintaining their teaching duties. While I certainly experienced this particular burden of attempting to balance numerous roles as I was engaging in practitioner research, I was also sensitive to the imposition of taking too much time from my participants who I knew were similarly stretched. In my desire to maintain collegial relationships (and avoid being seen as a parasite), I perhaps did not push hard enough for access and information in order to avoid making a participant feel uncomfortable. I found my need or desire to maintain relationships and to respect perceived boundaries was perhaps the greatest impediment for me in taking on this type of research.

Another facet of my assumption of the role of researcher that presented a challenge, and should be considered in regards to the results, was that I am a member of the d/Discourse group that I was studying. As my participants may have experienced difficulties in analyzing and critiquing the school and professional cultures in which they work, I too am unable to provide the degree of insight of one who is outside of this

d/Discourse community. Considering that my primary source of data was the words of other literacy teachers, I may have been unable to identify traits of a d/Discourse group of which I am part.

### Research Design

As mentioned in the previous chapter, much of the research on the adoption of a pedagogical approach of multiliteracies in the classroom was conducted using designs such as case studies in which qualitative methods of inquiry were employed. These methods facilitated both a descriptive and detailed look at the topic, as well as a flexibility that is advantageous when studying the complexities of teaching and learning. Further, as one of my research goals was to consider means to bridging theory and practice, I believed that including the voices of teachers as data for the study in the form of interviews would play a part to achieving these ends.

#### *Why Qualitative Methods?*

Creswell (2007) suggests that one may be motivated to conduct a qualitative study “because of the need to present a *detailed view* of the topic. A wide-angle lens or the distant panoramic shot will not suffice to present answers to the problem” (p. 17). Qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to incorporate the necessary detail and description when attempting to describe a social situation where a multitude of factors are operating simultaneously. Investigation into the practices of teachers, and their motivations for the pedagogical choices that they make, demands a perspective that is able to capture the complexity that is inherent both in the classroom setting and in the role of a teacher.

Lincoln (2010), considering the achievements of researchers using qualitative methods in the last 25 years, pointed to the insights gained about numerous different social practices and situations through qualitative research methods, in some cases uncovering entrenched inequities that had previously gone unstudied. Further, Lincoln contemplated the shifts to our previous notions of community due to changes in technology, and consequently she looked to the tools of qualitative inquiry to facilitate researchers in understanding these evolving social landscapes. Like others writing on qualitative research methods (Creswell, 2007), Lincoln pointed to the complexity and at times, conflicting, characteristics of human beings that necessitates the detailed view that these research methods can help achieve. She wrote, “Interpretivist theories are fat with the juice of human endeavor, human decision making, *zafiq* with human contradiction, human emotion, human frailty... they are derived from pure lived experience” (p. 6). In essence, researchers using qualitative methods are searching for answers to questions that are complex and require tools that can relate this complexity to readers. Yet, while researchers may need the flexibility and adaptive characteristics of qualitative research methods, Lincoln also describes the need to attend to methodological issues to ensure that findings are credible. Therefore, although qualitative research methods may allow a researcher some flexibility, methodological rigor in terms of credibility and validity of results should still be addressed (Anfara, Brown & Mangione, 2002).

Qualitative research methods provided a good fit for this study because of the inherent flexibility and responsiveness that were particularly crucial (Merriam, 2001). Given the individuality of each of the sites and each of the participants, the data obtained were unique. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) described the role of the qualitative researcher

and the methods employed in a manner that is responsive to the needs of the study as it progresses:

The qualitative researcher-as-bricoleur uses the tools of his or her methodological trade, deploying whatever strategies, methods, or empirical materials as are at hand. If new tools have to be invented, or pieced together, then the researcher will do this. The choice of what tools to use, which research practices to employ, is not set in advance. (p. 3)

Throughout the process of data collection, data analysis and writing of results, I called upon these features of responsiveness and flexibility that are characteristics of qualitative research in the attempt to answer my initial research questions.

#### *Case Study Design*

Case study is one of five traditions of qualitative research as described by Creswell (2007), as is biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, and ethnography. Stake (2005) distinguished between intrinsic case studies in which the researcher's goal is to learn about a particular case, and instrumental case studies in which the focus is to learn about a particular issue and consequently, the case itself plays a supportive role. As the intent of my study was to learn firstly about the enactment of multiple literacies in the English Language Arts through multiple cases, it was therefore an instrumental case study. The use of multiple cases in the design of my study allowed for a greater understanding of this topic across the cases of the participants.

As discussed earlier in regards to the flexibility and responsiveness that characterize qualitative research methods, case studies in particular are viewed as

requiring adaptation and flexibility in regards to the methods employed as described by Yin (1984):

Very few case studies will end up exactly as planned. Inevitably, minor if not major changes will have to be made, ranging from the need to identify a new “case” for study to the need to pursue an unexpected lead. The skilled investigator must remember the original purpose of the investigation, but then must be willing to change procedures or plans if unanticipated events occur. (p. 58)

The forms of data obtained from each of the participants in my study, from the responses in interviews to the documents provided, were unique in each case. An example of the individual nature of the data can be seen in the documents I asked each of the participants to provide as a means to the what and how of multiliteracies in the secondary English Language Arts classroom.

The need for both variety in the types of data and proliferation of data are key to case study research, as described by Gillham (2000), who stressed the need for multiple sources of data to achieve sufficient validity. My initial plan was to include interviews, field notes, and documents which participants chose to demonstrate their approach to multiliteracies in the classroom as the principle sources and types of data. As discussed previously, my position as a practitioner researcher allowed me access as I was able to call on particular teachers to participate and had established a sense of trust and collegiality prior to the study that may have encouraged this participation. In addition, I was familiar with the culture of the sites and, in regards to the district as a whole, was aware of references the participants made to initiatives or professional development opportunities that had taken place.

Yet, my dual roles as teacher and researcher were also an obstacle in that I was limited in my own availability to collect data at times during the study, as well as feeling conscious of boundaries of participants and a hesitation to take more time from them than absolutely necessary. Consequently, I chose to use three types of data from two sources at each school in my initial data collection and analysis, keeping in mind that other techniques such as observation, focus groups, and responses in the forms of blogs could be used at a later date if I felt the need for more data. I was able to conduct several observation sessions of participants teaching English Language Arts classes after the initial phase of data collection because of the flexibility afforded by taking a leave from teaching because of the birth of my younger son. Again, the flexibility and responsiveness inherent to case study were integral to including valuable sources of data that had not been initially planned (Bassey, 1999). The ultimate goals sought through the data collected were to answer my initial research questions, and to procure a depth and richness in my results.

The design of case study was chosen for this study because of the need for both depth and flexibility in the attempt to understand not only the types of literacies that teachers are exploring in their English Language Arts classes, but also why they make the decision to include certain literacies and how they approach and explore these literacies with their students. Clearly individual teachers will bring unique experiences, qualifications, and motivations to their pedagogical approaches in their English Language Arts classes, and the methods used in this study were chosen in order to describe the possibly different approaches and perspectives of these teachers. Yin (1984) describes case study as “the preferred strategy when ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are being posed,

when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (p. 13). Consequently, this approach was compatible with the central questions that propelled my study, and allowed for the diversity represented by the participants and observed at each of the school sites. The over-reaching questions of this study explored what literacies secondary teachers are exploring in their English Language Arts classes in the school district and why they are making these choices, thus the principle case in the study is the district as a whole. Yet, embedded within the larger context, are the cases within the individual secondary schools (A, B, C and D) which have their own particular cultures and were consequently looked at as individual cases. From each of these schools, I engaged two English Language Arts teachers who provided information about the schools, the district and their own teaching practices.

### Ethical Considerations

Before I began collecting data, I submitted and received approval of my study from the Human Research Ethics Board at the University of Victoria (see Appendix A). I also submitted letters to the Superintendent (Appendix B) and the Principal of the school (Appendix C) at which I was employed during the study and again, received approval. I asked participants personally if they would participate in this study, giving them a detailed account of my purpose, rationale, methods and what would be required of them as participants in the study. As I am a practicing teacher in the same school district, the participants are of equal status to me and I have no power over relationships with these participants. Yet, the existence of a collegial relationship with participants of this study was a factor that could have influenced participation, and in an effort to avoid potential

pressure, I explained to participants that their choice to participate would not affect our collegial relationship and this explanation was noted in the participant consent letter (Appendix D). The only potential risks to participants of this study were the inconvenience of loss of time, and perhaps an inability to protect their identity. Despite the use of pseudonyms in the final thesis, readers may be able to infer the identity of participants as the pool of potential recruits for the study was fairly small. Descriptions of such aspects as teaching experience and education could lead to inference of the identity of the individual. Given that there are only four secondary schools in the school district (although Secondary School D's status as a secondary school changed during the study), complete confidentiality could not be ensured. I noted this possible breach of confidentiality in the consent letter participants signed before interviews were conducted. I also opted to give the sites of the study pseudonyms in the final thesis to further protect anonymity, although I had not originally planned to do so.

As discussed later in this chapter, I had not foreseen observations as a data source for this study but elected to do so when the opportunity presented itself. Before conducting these observations, I received permission from the Superintendent of the district in the form of an email, and later, permission from the Human Research Ethics Board at the University of Victoria (Appendix E). I also amended participant consent forms to reflect this change which each of the three teachers I observed signed (Appendix D).

#### Forms of Data, Data Collection and Data Analysis

Case studies traditionally involve data such as interviews, field notes, observations, documents and artifacts (Creswell, 2007). In keeping with this tradition, I

collected these forms of data while simultaneously engaging in a process of analysis that informed later data collection such as interviews. In order to understand the ‘how’ and the ‘why’ of teachers’ exploration of multiliteracies in the classroom, I wanted my data and consequent findings to reflect the teachers’ individual rationales in the development of pedagogical choices. I wanted to understand the context of these choices, the limitations that they perceived, as well as the factors that encouraged the instruction that occurs in their classrooms.

### *Interviews*

As a result of the guiding principles listed above, I chose to use interviews as my primary source of data in order to get at the thinking underlying the act of teaching. I also chose to use guiding questions (Appendix F), with the intent of asking individualized questions in response to the information provided by participants. This semi-structured or open-ended approach was used to reflect the individual experiences and knowledge of participants (Bogden & Knopp Bilken, 2007). Given the variety of experiences described by participants, I found that my questioning needed to be individualized in order to capture their particular perspective as best I could. I also found, especially as I conducted more interviews, that there were conflicting views and experiences described by participants. In order to better understand these differing perspectives, I needed to dig a little deeper. An example of such contradiction was seen in areas such as administrative support for technology and training at both a school site and in the district as a whole. Consequently, I needed to gauge what support was offered, what was expected and perhaps why some participants were facilitated in ways that others were not. Lee and Fielding (2004) noted that in “unstructured (or ‘non-standardized’) interviews it is

acceptable to adjust the interview guide to the specifics of the respondents' knowledge, comprehension, experience, and interests. Provided restraint is shown in claiming generalizability, on similar grounds to those operating in respect of sample selection, the variation in questions can be countenanced" (p. 537). Therefore, despite parameters that were established before the interviews, individual interview questions were tailored to the individual participant. Table 1 shows the relation between the research questions and the interview questions (Appendix F).

Table 1

*Research Questions in Relation to Interview Questions*

Research Questions	Interview Questions
1) What range of literacies are being taught in secondary English Language Arts classes?	8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20
2) What motivates teachers to integrate multiple literacies in their classes?	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 19, 20, 21
3) How are teachers enacting these literacies in their classes?	8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22
4) What factors are impeding or supporting teachers in their integration of multiple literacies?	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18

The art of conducting an interview certainly evolves with practice. As a novice researcher, my experience in conducting interviews before this study was limited. Although I practiced interviewing before my initial appointment, I found that my technique improved as I continued to conduct interviews. In addition, the more information I had on the topic of multiliteracies from participants, the more I referred back to other responses in an attempt to clarify certain aspects about teaching English

Language Arts in the district and at particular secondary school sites. Also, my own position as a secondary English Language Arts teacher in the district ensured that I held a particular position on the topic that could not be neutral or objective. Knowing how much of my opinions and my experiences to reveal or inject into the interview was at times problematic as I did not want to shade the responses of my participants. The concept of neutrality in the interview process is one which some writing on the subject such as Fontana and Fey (2005) deemed 'mythical' noting, "If we proceed from the belief that neutrality is not possible (even assuming that it would be desirable), then taking a stance becomes unavoidable. An increasing number of social scientists have realized that they need to interact as persons with the interviewees and acknowledge that they are doing so" (p. 696). Keeping such attitudes in mind, I tried to establish a dialogue with my participants that reflected my role as a practitioner rather than attempting to construct the barriers needed to achieve objectivity as I felt that such objectivity was impossible. Further, in some cases I found that I needed to provide examples of my own practice in an attempt to cut through the jargon of theory and illustrate what I was asking. Interviews allowed participants to describe the literacies they explore, how they incorporate these literacies into their instruction and why they make these choices.

One limitation of the interview is the disconnection between what people describe as their practice and their actual practice. Although participants were given pseudonyms in an attempt to protect their anonymity and hopefully encourage their honesty, the potential lapse between belief and practice remains. It is not that participants are choosing to be dishonest, rather they perhaps lack objectivity. As discussed by Gillham (2000):

A common discrepancy is between what people *say* about themselves and what they actually *do*. In an interview people can be very convincing, because they are sincere...They're not lying: they're just not accurate. In a sense they don't know themselves...What you are dealing with here are two things that are quite different: what people *believe* (and it is a fact that they believe what they are saying) and what they actually *do*. To expect them to be the same is to misunderstand how people function. And it means that *theory* has to cope with this complexity. (pp. 13-14)

Although one of my guiding questions for this study was to explore the rationale behind pedagogical choices, and as a result what participants 'believe' is essential, I felt that I needed to address this ambiguity in my study in order to gain a full understanding of each of my sites and the district as a whole. Through interviewing two participants at each school site, and consequently using two sources of data, I was able to identify areas where conflicting views were held, particularly in regards to areas such as policy, administrative support, attitudes of students and parents. The use of multiple sources at each school was compounded in regards to the district as a whole, as I then had eight sources to consider. Further, the use of observations, field notes and documents obtained from participants, as well as documents pertaining to literacy initiatives at the district level available to the public, provided other types of data to be considered in tandem with the interviews.

### *Field Notes*

The various sites at which I conducted the interviews were also sources of data. By writing field notes during most interviews, I was able to observe the classroom and

consider any important aspects to jot down for further consideration. The importance of the setting is described by Bogdan and Knopp Bilken (2007), “Qualitative researchers go to the particular setting under study because they are concerned with *context*. They feel that action can best be understood when it is observed in the setting in which it occurs. These settings have to be understood in the historical life of the institutions of which they are part” (p. 4). Classrooms are certainly rich sources of data as the posters on the walls, books on the shelves, and even arrangement of the space tells a story about what ensues during instruction. I attempted to describe the physical space each of the participants inhabited and had created when possible. Another aspect noted in field notes was access to technology that would facilitate a variety of literacies in the classroom, and the space afforded me the opportunity to observe the technology apparent in the teacher’s classroom. For the most part, with the exception of three participants, two of whom I later observed teaching in their classrooms, I was able to conduct the interviews in the classroom of the participant and record my observations of this space in my field notes. I also found that conducting interviews in the classroom space allowed participants to pull out exemplars more readily in response to my questions and thus provide more depth to their answers.

The use of field notes taken during the interview itself provided another source of data for me to comment on the responses of the participants, noting further questions their responses elicited, connections to other interviews, or other communicative modes such as body postures or pitch of voice that may be important. Fontana and Fey (2005) described the importance of considering nonverbal modes of communication, “The researcher should carefully note and record respondents’ use of these modes because

interview data are more than verbal records and should include, as much as possible, nonverbal features of the interaction” (p. 713). There were times during the interview process where participants responded to questions and their body language, in voice pitch, or the time lapse between the question and their answer indicated a certain emotional response beyond what was communicated with language. I tried to note such inferences in the field notes because without considering other aspects of the face to face interaction that occurred, like body language, the data would be limited. Further, Stake (1995) explains, “Getting the exact words of the respondent is usually not very important, it is what they mean that is important” (p. 66). In consideration of extracting the meaning of participants’ responses, I added notes throughout the interviews that I believed could supplement the spoken words of participants in an attempt to be sure I captured their meaning.

### *Observations*

As mentioned previously, I conducted observations in the final part of the data collection process. These sessions provided opportunities for me to sit in on three English Language Arts classes (at the Grade 10, 11 and 12 levels), one in each of the secondary schools in the district. By this point in the study, it had become clear that Secondary School D would revert to a middle school. Secondary School D had been in the process of shifting into a secondary school, but this plan was abandoned by the School District. Therefore, although I decided to keep the data from those teachers who had participated from Secondary School D (one of whom had moved back to Secondary School C) while it was still considered a secondary school, I decided to focus my attention on the three Secondary Schools in the district as sites in which to conduct observations.

I contacted one of the participants from each of the three sites to set up an appointment with the plan to contact the other if I could not arrange an observation with the first. I choose first those participants whose classrooms I had not been able to observe during the interview process. I took field notes during the observation, noting points of interest in regards to my topic as the lesson progressed, as well as features in the classroom such as art on the walls, or notes on the chalkboard. Participants chose the class that I observed, and this choice was largely dependent on the courses that they were teaching, and my availability. Again, as mentioned earlier in regards to discrepancies between what a participant may say and what a participant may do, observations provide a useful tool in terms of verifying information obtained during the interview. These observations also allowed me to witness the interaction between students and teacher, as well as note student response. Finally, it is always fascinating to watch other teachers teach, particularly because we rarely get the opportunity to observe others when we are teaching ourselves. Although I didn't ask these participants to plan a lesson incorporating a multiliteracies pedagogy, I did witness lessons that related to my topic.

#### *Documents and Artifacts*

The use of documents supplied by the teachers (the 'what' and 'how') helped construct a more detailed picture of their instruction of multiliteracies. Although I provided teachers with a brief synopsis of multiliteracies and d/Discourse, with quotations (Appendix G) from literacy specialists on the topic and asked them to read the relevant portion of the British Columbia Ministry of Education Integrated Resource Package (2008, p. 20) describing multiple literacies to ensure that they were familiar with some of the theoretical basis for the study, the participants came with very different types of

education and experience and consequently varying degrees of familiarity with the theoretical writings on multiliteracies in the English Language Arts. Therefore, teaching artifacts like assignment sheets and unit plans helped provide a depth to the case study that could not be obtained using only the participants' articulation of the kinds of literacies they were exploring in their classrooms and how they were using these literacies in their instruction.

The artifacts included assignment sheets, worksheets, and rubrics that were given to me by participants, and my field notes describing projects that teachers had shown me, such as a film and a soundtrack. I also took field notes describing art work and assignments that were posted on classroom walls. In addition, I printed out copies of emails where I had corresponded with participants about the study. I had also been sent links to web based projects as well as a power point presentation created by one participant depicting a series of photographs which I also included as data in the study.

As mentioned previously, interviews were the central form of data collected for this study. Participants scheduled an appointed time in which I met them, preferably in their classroom, or in the space where they taught. They were supplied with a synopsis on multiliteracies (Appendix G), page references to pertinent portions of the IRPs (2008, p. 20) and a list of the guiding questions (Appendix F) before the scheduled appointment so that they would have some time to think about these issues. The interviews were audio taped and I took notes during the interview, using my own list of questions with space for written comments. I also took notes at some point before or after the interview, jotting down any points of interest that caught my attention and seemed pertinent in the classroom as well. The interviews were stored on the hard drive of my personal computer

and transcribed by me at a later date. The notes that I took during each interview, the observation notes, and a copy of the printed interview, were filed in a separate file for each participant with other documents that they had supplied to me, as well as their signed participatory form.

### *Data Analysis*

#### *Within Case Analysis*

The importance of analyzing data on an ongoing basis, as described by Merriam (2001), allows for a high level of responsiveness as the study ensues:

At the onset of a qualitative study, the investigator knows what the problem is and has selected a sample to collect data in order to address the problem. But the researcher does not know what will be discovered, what or whom to concentrate on, or what the final analysis will be like. The final product is shaped by the data that are collected and the analysis that accompanies the entire process. Without ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocussed, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material. (p. 162)

Although I did not transcribe and analyze the interviews until they were all completed due to time constraints, I did go over field notes conducted during the interviews, as well as look over documents supplied by participants soon after each interview was completed. I typed field notes that had been made by hand and stored them in a file so that I could later easily cut and paste pertinent parts into files based on emergent themes when I had transcribed the interviews. Any issues that I noted during this review process could be brought forward in subsequent interviews. An example of the evolutionary process of particular themes and issues that came up was in regards to access to

technology. I found varied responses from participants, not just throughout the district, but also at individual school sites. Because I had noted this issue, I made an effort to deepen my inquiry on this topic in an attempt to understand why some participants seemed to have or to perceive themselves as having sufficient access to technology in their role as classroom teachers and others did not.

Therefore, as mentioned previously in this chapter, the responsiveness required to achieve an understanding of the case involves the process of ongoing analysis of data in order to guide the study. Also, because of the amount of data collected, it was essential to consider what I was learning as I moved through the collection process rather than simply collecting the data and then beginning analysis.

After completing my across case analysis and writing the initial draft, I decided to include a within case analysis of each participant in order to convey the range of literacies that teachers were integrating into their classes, as well as the individual approaches and motives conveyed by these teachers. Although I had initially attempted across case analysis and written a draft depicting the literacies that teachers were exploring in their classes, there was too much variety in the data to portray coherently to readers. Consequently, I chose to go back through the process of analysis and consider each participant individually. For this portion of the study, I used the interviews, observations, field notes, and documents that teachers had given me, which I had filed individually for each participant. I used handwritten notations on the interview transcripts to note themes that appeared within each individual participant's interview, and added notes about the other types of data from the study, like teaching artifacts or observation notes, that related to the themes that I identified in the participant's interview. For

example, during Tina's (all names are pseudonyms) interview, she focused on technology in almost all of her responses. She used technology to connect students' personal literacies to school based literacies, as well as to form relationships with students based on this common interest and provide support to students who struggled with print. Consequently, I identified technology as an overarching theme that connected to these beliefs and practices that formed her pedagogical approach to teaching the English Language Arts. The results of my within case analysis are presented in Chapter 4.

#### *Analysis of Two Lessons Featuring Visual Modes*

Because one of the central questions of this inquiry was how teachers enacted a multiliteracies approach in the classroom, I decided to include two descriptions of classroom observations featuring visual modes. As mentioned earlier, teachers chose the class that I would observe and I did not provide them with any directives or suggestions concerning their lesson plans. Scheduling was the most decisive factor in selecting the lessons that I would observe because I had two young children at home and needed to secure childcare for the appointed times. Despite my initial plan to analyze data only across the cases of participants, I believed that these two lessons portrayed the enactment of elements of a pedagogy of multiple literacies in a classroom setting. In addition, these lessons illuminated why the instructional components of this pedagogy, as described by The New London Group (1996), are necessary for students' development of understanding of and facility with multiple literacies. I conducted three classroom observations, and included the data from these observations in my initial across case analysis, and later in my analysis within cases. The third observation was not included in this part of my results because the topic of the lesson, personal responses to novels, did

not allow for the comparison and analysis on elements of a pedagogy of multiliteracies that I identified in the two lessons featured in Chapter 4. I wrote a descriptive narrative for each of the three observations as soon after the observation session as was possible, and I used the field notes I had taken during these sessions as a means to include the pertinent details that I had noted.

I chose to present the two lessons that featured visual literacies and analyze these observations using the framework of a pedagogy of multiliteracies as developed by The New London Group (1996) and discussed in Chapter 2. I considered the Design Elements that were apparent in the lessons (linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial and multimodal). Attention was given to the New London Group's concept of Design, in which students explore the features of existing Designs and how they are created, and finally Redesigning in which students take what they have learned and create their own Designs. I studied the teachers' instructional practices in these lessons by using the instructional components of situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed practice as a lens for analysis. I looked for exploration of the d/Discourses inherent in the literacies portrayed, with attention to the development of students' understanding of meta-languages to analyze these d/Discourses. I also considered links to students' out of school literacy practices in the lessons, as well as attending to elements of critical literacy in my analysis because of the integral role these features play in a multiliteracies pedagogy.

Again, my observations of these lessons featuring visual literacies were serendipitous as I had not discussed the topic of the lessons with the teachers beforehand. Further, I decided to include this data in a narrative form and to analyze this data using

The New London Group's (1996) framework after I had begun my across case analysis. I called on the flexibility and responsiveness inherent to qualitative research methodology as I rationalized that the inclusion of these observations and the subsequent analysis using the framework described by The New London Group best conveyed my findings to my initial research questions. Further, I believed that the qualities of depth and richness apparent in the presentation of these observations in a narrative form justified this change of course from the original design of my study.

#### *Across Case Analysis*

Throughout the analysis of field notes and documents during the study, and later after the interviews had been transcribed and observations had been conducted, I sorted through the data accrued, and identified particular themes across the cases. I printed out field notes and interview transcripts and used a colour coding system once I had read through the data several times to establish these guiding themes. As I moved through the research process, I constructed a file for each theme that emerged throughout the study, and sorted or classified the data accordingly (Bassey 1999; Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2001) using a word processor program in which files were titled with these classifications and anecdotes, examples or pieces of dialogue. Examples from the data accrued through field notes, observations and documents, were cut and pasted into the appropriate files. At the onset of this analysis, I identified numerous themes, like reconfiguration of grades in the district, that I later regrouped into more encompassing and general themes. I reviewed each file numerous times, looking for consensus and patterns across themes and noting irregularities in the data to refine and collapse these themes. In addition, I identified relationships between various themes. For example, I identified the theme of time as

being integral to other themes into which I had originally organized my data. Access to technology that most participants had noted as necessary to the exploration of multiliteracies was contingent on having the time to either set up equipment, fill out application forms to acquire equipment for their classrooms, learn to use the technology or find solutions to problems that arose when using the technology in their lessons. Time was also integral to other themes like professional development and education for participants to develop an understanding of multiple literacies. I therefore collapsed these initial themes into the overarching theme of time. I then sorted data again into individual files for each of the collapsed themes that had emerged that related to my central inquiry. I also continued to look back at the original raw data to ensure that I had considered aspects like context in order to convey the meaning of what participants had said. As I moved further into the analysis phase, I wrote pieces of text and then went back to my data sources to compare my conclusions with the data that I had accrued. In some cases, I found that I needed to revise my interpretation of findings based on this revision process. Therefore, the process of writing my results became integrated in the process of analyzing the data (like that of collection and analysis) in that I went back and forth. Data analysis was an iterative process. The results of my across case analysis are presented in Chapter 5.

#### *Strategies to Ensure Rigor and Quality of Results*

To ensure that my conclusions were accurate and authentic, I looked for triangulation in the data. Stake describes triangulation (2005) as “generally considered a process of using multiple perspectives to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation” (p. 454). During the analysis in which I identified

themes across the cases of participants, I looked for consensus in the data of at least three participants. For example, the theme of uncertainty in assessing nonlinguistic modes was identified in the interviews of six of the eight participants. Documents such as assignment sheets and rubrics were assigned to this theme of uncertainty in assessing non-linguistic modes because they portrayed the need for written explanation of non-linguistic projects that the participants had indicated during their interviews. In regards to the within case analysis, I identified themes again based on repetition within a participant's interview, and in the other data such as field notes, observation notes and documents. The use of multiple types of data from multiple sources was also a method to ensure rigor in the results of this study (Gillham, 2000; Yin, 1984). In addition, I presented the results with descriptions from the raw data to demonstrate the relation between the data collected and my conclusions (Creswell, 2007).

My analysis also included irregularities in which participants presented alternative views or feelings about topics that did not conform to the pattern that I had identified in the data and I addressed these incongruities in my results. Further, to ensure that I understood the meaning conveyed by participants, I contacted some through email when I felt that there was ambiguity in the data. The theme of uncertainty in assessment provided one such example. Although Janet had expressed confidence in assessing non-linguistic modes during the interview, the assignment sheet that she gave me included a written component for a project that was visual. Students were to write about how they had communicated central themes in their visual project. In addition, during my observation of her class, I also noted that Janet did not provide any explicit instruction regarding students' responses to a novel using nonlinguistic modes, but rather focused on

a written response in a demonstration for students. Consequently, I asked her to clarify this ambiguity and she noted that she had not previously considered the need to assess students' ability to communicate their meaning through the visual mode. Therefore, she altered her original response because she commonly used students' ability to explain how they expressed content using nonlinguistic modes to assess their work. She had initially expressed confidence because she had not considered the need to assess students' capacity to communicate in a variety of literacies without explanation as support. I also contacted two participants because I was uneasy in that they may have given me information hastily that they would later regret. In both cases, participants encouraged me to use this information as they viewed it as being accurate to their views about a topic.

#### Overview of Research Sites

As I was investigating instruction of multiliteracies at the secondary level, in designing the study it seemed obvious that I would include the four senior secondary schools in my school district as sites in order to achieve an overall perspective as to what was happening on a district level. As the study progressed, Secondary School D's status shifted from that of a secondary school (2007), to an undetermined level (2009), and now appears to be in the process of moving back into a middle school which will house Grades 7 to 9 (2010/ 2011). I should also note that distance education provides secondary students in our district with an alternative source from which to achieve credits in English Language Arts, but I did not include it as a site for this study. The reason for this exclusion was that I wanted to focus on classroom teachers, although some of the participants have taught in distance education and certainly commented on their experiences during their interviews. Although each school site demonstrated individual

characteristics and a unique culture, commonalities appeared across sites, providing a picture of the district as a whole in regards to the instruction of multiliteracies.

*The Valley: School District*

The valley is a picturesque region located in rural British Columbia. A ski resort, air force base, as well as educational and health services are the central sources of employment in the area, followed by retail and construction. In addition, a college is situated in the main town; thus, students are able to pursue some post secondary education locally. According to 2006 BC census, the population was listed as 62, 326, having experienced about a 10 % growth during the last decade. Although the valley has experienced population growth in the last few years, school enrolment has declined from 10, 172 students in 2003/ 2004 to 9, 059 students during the 2008/2009 school year (British Columbia, Ministry of Education. School and District Data Summary Reports, 2008, p. 3). The trend projection of student enrolment in this school district over the next decade is a continuation of this decline. Consequently, the district has undergone radical restructuring over the last year in an effort to accommodate fewer students, as well as the impending decline in student bodies in years to come, adopting a two tiered system in which middle schools were eliminated in 2008. This process is by no means complete, as a committee reconsidering potential grade configurations met during the spring of 2009 and submitted a report (school district website) detailing various possibilities for the future. Discussion about the configuration of the district has been ongoing among stakeholders, although it appears that movements towards another reconfiguration process may begin in the 2010/ 2011 school year (school district website).

There are 510.4 total FTE (including both part-time and full-time teachers) in the school district, and the average age of teachers is 45.6 years, which is slightly above the provincial average. The average number of years of experience of teachers is 13.9 years (BC Ministry of Education: District Data Summary Reports, Teacher Statistics, 2008, pp. 1-2). The ages of participants in this study range from early thirties to mid-fifties, with teaching experience ranging from approximately 5 to 25 years.

In regards to literacy initiatives, the school district, in conjunction with other community groups, has launched a Literacy Plan, conceived in 2008, which provides clear objectives and goals for the purpose of “creat[ing] awareness and rais[ing] literacy in the [Valley] (Valley District Literacy Plan, 2008, p. 7). In addition, the 2009-2012 Achievement Contract detailing goals, objectives and strategies to develop literacy performance by “purposefully engaging diverse learners in the process of making meaning across all subject areas”(Achievement Contract, 2009, p. 1) is available to the public through the district website. One of the ways in which to achieve this goal is by targeting the primary years; “We place a huge emphasis on the early years so that our students will have the foundation in literacy to help them to succeed in the secondary years” (p. 1). This emphasis can be seen in initiatives such as the early intervention programs for reading support and the development of performance standards and writing rubrics at the elementary grades. For English Language Arts teachers at the secondary level, there are programs in place to provide professional development opportunities at the district level, such as a series featuring visiting literacy experts (like Faye Brownlie and Leyton Schnellert), as well as funds to supplement individually conceived initiatives, as seen in the Professional Partnership grants for which teachers can apply for funding to

the school board. Several of the participants in this study took part in this program to bring technology into their classrooms, as well as to procure time to work on their skills with this technology.

#### *Secondary School A*

Secondary School A is located in one of the adjacent towns. At the time of the research, it housed a population of approximately 1, 000 students with a Grade 8-12 configuration, having recently shifted from a Grade 9-12 configuration as a result of district restructuring. One aspect of this school's culture that makes it unique amongst the secondary schools of the district is its house system in which an administrator heads each house with about 12 Advisor groups within it. Each advisory group is headed by an 'advisor' teacher who is responsible to supply guidance for the students within his/her group throughout students' time at the school, up until graduation. Secondary School A boasts a broad range of programs beyond academics, including fine arts, journalism, tourism and technology. Before reconfiguration, it had housed the French Immersion Program at the secondary level, but this program has been subsequently moved to Secondary School B.

#### *Secondary School B*

Secondary School B is the newest secondary school in the district, having been established as such in the last ten years. It too has undergone a recent transformation from a Grade 9-12 school to an 8-12 school, and due to restructuring, houses the French Immersion program, which had previously been delivered from Secondary School A. At the time of the research, this school's population was approximately 950 students. This school's design is modern, which can be seen in a theater that hosts school productions

from around the district and classrooms that boast amenities such as television and DVD machines that are suspended from the walls. Although equipment located permanently in the classroom may appear inconsequential, media equipment is stored in a central location at the other secondary schools and teachers book equipment in advance through the library which can be inconvenient for teachers, and result in competition for these resources. Secondary School B is also the site from which district wide professional development days are held, not only because of its facilities, but also because of its central location which lies on the border between two towns, and students from both towns, as well as outlying locations, attend this school.

#### *Secondary School C*

Secondary School C was the largest school in the district at the time of this research, serving approximately 1,300 students from a vast geographical area, including communities to the north, and islands to the south, as well as the in the city which the school is situated. This school offers a breadth of programs, curricular and extra-curricular to accommodate the needs and interests of this diverse population. Programs such as robotics, chef training, journalism, drama, and choir demonstrate the range of options available to students.

#### *Secondary School D*

Secondary School D, centrally located near the city's downtown, shifted from a Grade 7-9 configuration to that of Grade 8-10 for the 2008/2009 school year. The initial plan to add a grade each successive year until the school housed an 8-12 program like those of other secondary schools in the district had been under review due to public pressure, and plans to move Grade 10's to Secondary School C for the 2010/2011 school

year are now being considered. The small population of about 350 students and facilities that have previously serviced middle school grades are among the factors that were considered for Secondary School D's future standing. Students who live in the surrounding area of the central town, as well as the surrounding islands, attend this school until Grade 11 when they move on to Secondary School C. Plans for Secondary School D will also have a large effect on the population of Secondary School C as it is one of its major feeder schools. Considerations such as electives offered and numbers for extra-curricular activities feature among debates about future options.

### Overview of Participants

#### *Secondary School A*

##### *Graham*

Graham has been teaching for 10 years in this school district where he completed his practical education in the PDPP program at the University of Victoria. His undergraduate degree is in History and Political Science, and consequently, he considers himself principally a Social Studies teacher, although he has taught English out of necessity. During his tenure in the district, he has taught at Secondary School C, in distance education, and has been at Secondary School A since 2006. A lack of seniority has been the chief reason for his movement in the district and he has had to be flexible in regards to the subject areas he has taught as a result.

He currently has shelved his teaching load to serve as acting Vice-Principal of his school to cover a sick leave and was in the process of transferring his classes when I met him in his classroom for our interview. Regardless of this abrupt transition, he continued with our arranged plans and appeared to be calm despite the changes he was

experiencing in his professional life. He is clearly an adaptable person. He is also an engaging conversationalist with an outgoing personality, conveying an enthusiasm for his teaching and providing many exemplars of the literacies he explores with his students. A data projection cart with a laptop was positioned in the middle of his room and he pulled up examples of assignments, presentations and student work and projected them onto the overhead as we talked in order demonstrate various points. A self-described ‘technophile,’ he is able to apply this interest to his classroom teaching. The manner that his classroom was arranged spoke to this familiarity with technology, as the laptop and projector enjoyed a central position, with no open chalk or white board in view. He explained that other passions such as music, drama and film are incorporated into his teaching as well. Although he is currently pursuing a Master’s of Educational Leadership through the University of Victoria, he did not credit his ability to incorporate a wide variety of media in his classes to his formal education. He asserted that his personal interests have directed and informed his teaching, propelling him to share these interests “that are close to his heart” with students. Greg’s interview length was approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes.

### *Janet*

Janet has been teaching since 1982 in such locales as Edmonton, Vancouver, Shawnigan Lake and in the Valley for the past 15 years. She achieved a Bachelor of Education (majoring in English) at the University of Alberta and recently completed her Master’s of Arts in education at the University of Toronto. After completing her Bachelor of Education, she took part in a teacher effectiveness program, again through the University of Alberta, attending meetings with other teachers and coaches on a monthly

basis. She described this experience as “incredible.” She has been an English teacher at Secondary School A for the past five years, and has taught at Secondary School C and a local middle school during her employment in the district. She recently took a leave of absence for a year to teach at a private school in southern Vancouver Island and this experience featured largely during the interview. Janet was the only participant in the study who has taught outside of the public system and her responses and attitudes were markedly influenced by her time in the private system.

When we met for the interview, she was in the process of organizing a field trip for her Grade 12 English students to travel to the University of Victoria. Her rationale was to give these students the opportunity to experience campus life, but she specifically wanted students to consider post secondary options featuring the Humanities and to consider potential careers that could be pursued with this specialization. Janet is clearly passionate about her subject area and her profession and this passion came across with conviction during our interview. Her love for English Literature informs her teaching and she clearly wants to impart this appreciation to her students.

Her manner during our interview was very frank and direct; she did not appear to edit herself readily in regards to criticism offered. She began the interview stating “I will give you whatever I can but I worried, you know. I look at the culture of the district and you find with the type of system we are in, that sometimes the cool things that you do should be kept quiet so that you are not completely isolated.” Despite this cautionary remark, she was not guarded by any means during our interview and she presented very clear ideas of how she thinks the district should be supporting classroom teachers on the subject of multiliteracies. Again, her year in the private school system provided her with

a teaching experience that contrasted sharply to her current situation. She found far more professional development opportunities and availability of technology in the classroom in the private school.

Despite Janet's initial comments and reticence at the onset of our interview, she showed more personal interest in this research study than any other participant. Later, after I had observed her class, she initiated a meeting to go over further questions rather than correspond through email and she asked me to send her copies of articles that I had read on the topic of the study. Several weeks later, she sent me an email in which she thanked me for "opening her eyes to a new way of teaching literacy" and wrote enthusiastically about the work her students were doing with visual literacies. Janet's initial interview was approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes.

#### *Secondary School B*

##### *Laura*

Despite her education in elementary education, Laura has been teaching primarily at the secondary level since beginning her teaching career six years ago in the Valley. She completed a Bachelor of Arts majoring in English and History at the University of British Columbia, and later went to Malaspina College to complete her teacher education, shifting from a career in Health Services. Due to a lack of seniority, Laura has been fairly transient thus far, having taught at all of the secondary schools in the district and several middle schools as well. She has taught predominantly English Language Arts and Social Studies, but has also worked as a guidance counselor, again having to be flexible because of tenuous job security. She has been teaching at Secondary School B for two school

years but has taught at this school before. I was able to observe her teach her Grade 10 English Language Arts class in the fall of 2009.

Laura has a self deprecating manner and an easy laugh. Her students and coworkers describe her as easy going and optimistic, these qualities certainly proving to be essential in the beginning stages of a career in a district that has been laying off teachers for numerous years as a result of declining enrolment. Her perspective is certainly shaded by her experience of moving from assignment to assignment, and in so doing, gaining insight into the culture of each new site and the district as a whole. Having lived for several years in a small community in Brazil, in which she learned a new language and adjusted to a foreign culture, Laura appears to have become a master adaptor. Her time in Brazil also provided Laura with the experience of living in what she described as a “non-literate” culture, in which the majority of the people did not read or write. In response to her perceived need for local education, she created a school from her home for the children although she would not become an accredited teacher until much later. Laura attributes these experiences, as well as that of working in Health Services, as being fundamental in the development of her pedagogy. Laura’s interview was approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes in duration.

### *Hannah*

Hannah has been teaching at Secondary School B from 2001 when it was instated as a secondary school to alleviate the overpopulation of the two other secondary schools in the district. Before moving to Secondary School B, she taught briefly at Secondary School C, coming from Richmond where she had taught for eight years at the elementary, middle and secondary levels. Hannah began her teaching career in Prince Rupert, where

she taught for two years after completing her education (English major and Social Studies minor) at the University of Alberta.

She has not only had a variety of experience in regards to the grade levels she has taught, but has also worked in learning assistance and as a teacher librarian. Having completed her Master's in Language Education at the University of British Columbia several years ago, she conveyed a keen interest in the exploration of various literacies with her English Language Arts classes and was able to show me some innovative ideas she was using in her classes. She has been the president of the LSA (Local Specialist Association) for the last two years and has had other positions of leadership such as that of an English department head in Richmond. She has also presented workshops on such issues as educational blogs at local professional development seminars, as well as for BCTELA (British Columbia Teachers of English Language Arts).

Her manner is very calm and she was obviously prepared for our interview, having looked over the list of topics I emailed to her, as well as referring to the relevant portion of the IRPs (Integrated Resource Package). Her responses were concise and thoughtful and her classroom, where we conducted the interview, was extremely organized and serene. A large piece of fabric art constructed by a student as a unit project was the predominant fixture on one wall and there was a lack of the clutter in the classroom. In considering our interview, I was left with a sense that Hannah thinks very deeply about her teaching and her motivation for the strategies that she uses. Her interview took approximately 1 hour during a spare period of her school day.

*Secondary School C**Doug*

In 1993 Doug began teaching in the cook training program after a decade long career as a chef. This career move was based on the need to support his wife and three children after incurring the expense of retraining in his move from working as a chef to becoming a teacher. Although he had the practical experience to successfully run this program until 2006, his passion was English Literature and his desire to teach the English Language Arts. His educational background, a Bachelor of Education specializing in English at the secondary level from the University of Victoria, supported this transition.

For the past three years, Doug has been pursuing his desire to teach the English Language Arts and more specifically, English Literature, which he began teaching in the spring of 2009. His focus, since graduating from university, has been on learning more about the literature he loves and developing teaching strategies to impart this material to students. In addition, Secondary School C is not only the venue of his teaching career, but also the school from which he graduated and consequently he portrays a very deep understanding of this particular culture and its evolution. His classroom is a barrage of student projects and posters featuring works of literature that are pasted on every available piece of wall. An aroma of books fills the room. These books are everywhere, jamming the available shelf space and piled on the tables that create a horseshoe in place of rows of desks. There is an astounding mass of materials here for one who has just recently begun to inhabit this space and teach this subject.

In conversation, Doug is certainly an abstract thinker and this quality was reflected in our conversation. He has a tendency to embark on entertaining tangents

seemingly unrelated to the initial question. He is a long distance runner, as well as an accomplished guitarist, and he describes his running partner, another English teacher in the district, as his “professional significant other. He is a more experienced English teacher and we have discussions while we run.” Although he approaches his subject in an abstract way, his teaching is certainly informed by the practicalities of his previous teaching position and examples from his days in the cafeteria program, many of them quite humorous, peppered his answers. A central theme that bridges his experiences in the cafeteria and the English Language Arts classroom is that of relationships. Doug is very thoughtful in creating and maintaining relationships with students, as well as with colleagues, and this attribute is entwined with his views on pedagogy and curriculum, really providing the foundation of his teaching. Doug’s interview was approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes in length.

### *Daniel*

Daniel occupies the classroom across the hall from Doug and while Doug’s room is bursting with books and other print materials, Daniel’s room is neat and edited, posters tastefully centered on walls and desks lined neatly in rows. During our conversation, Daniel answered each question succinctly and precisely with little superfluous information, managing to be the shortest interview out of all of the participants (approximately 50 minutes). He has been teaching for five years, two in distance education and the other three at Secondary School C. Like Graham, he considers himself a Social Studies teacher who has taught English Language Arts out of necessity. In fact, he has taught mostly English Language Arts during his tenure in the district. He completed a Bachelor of Arts majoring in History and a Bachelor of Education at The

University of Victoria, and is currently pursuing a Master's in Educational Leadership at North Island University in Nanaimo.

Daniel is extremely busy, both personally and professionally. Although recently starting a family, with his second child due in spring 2010, he continues to pursue his educational goals, as well as coaching rugby which requires a great deal of time for practices, games and administration. Despite these responsibilities, Daniel was also taking advantage of initiatives offered by the district such as a Professional Partnership working with another teacher at the school in the use of a computer tablet in the classroom. In order to achieve the funding for the tablet, as well as release time to meet with the other English teacher to develop lessons, he had to complete a proposal to the school board which was accepted in the winter of 2009. Daniel was very sincere during our interview, and I thought, quite forthright about his practices.

#### *Secondary School D*

##### *Diane*

Diane has been a teacher in the district since 1989, and has taught at the middle and secondary school grade levels. She has had a diverse teaching experience since completing her Bachelor of Education at the University of British Columbia, and before coming to school, taught on the Queen Charlotte Islands after transitioning from her first career in accounting. She completed her Master's of Arts at The University of Victoria with a focus on Curriculum and Social Foundations.

Diane has been involved with other professional activities such as curriculum development and resource selection at the provincial level and regularly marks Provincial Examinations. She has an interest in visual arts, and has taught photography and native

studies courses at the secondary level as well as her central focus of English Language Arts. This desire for novelty and challenge can be seen in her trial year working as teacher librarian at Secondary School C and in her requested transfer to Secondary School D which she says was in part because of the potential of shaping an English Department during the transition period from middle to a secondary school. She did not finish the school year at Secondary School D, but rather transferred back to her previous school because of a “change in administration.” Much of her approach to her teaching certainly reflects this mutability and recent projects included the creation of an English Department website on which she posts resources, lessons and updates for students and parents, as well as having presented a proposal for using such mediums in creating a student directed English Language Arts program. Diane also recently advocated teaching a Grade 12 English class from a feminist perspective. This initiative was unsuccessful because of a lack of departmental support. Diane is extremely focused on her school work, and this part of her life appears to take precedence as seen in her description of the creation of the website over Christmas break. Diane’s initial interview was approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes.

### *Tina*

As her spouse is in the air force, Tina has taught in many different locations such as Ontario, Alberta, Manitoba, as well as having taught in the Valley for the past 10 years, and at an earlier juncture when her husband was stationed at the air force base. She has taught at all levels, from kindergarten to Grade 13 in Ontario, although she has worked at the middle and secondary levels in this district. In the valley, she has taught at all of the secondary schools, and some middle schools in the district, working both as a

Humanities teacher and a teacher librarian. She is particularly interested in technology and completed her Master's of Educational Technology at the University of Newfoundland in 2006.

Currently, Tina is teaching Humanities at Secondary School D, as well as acting as Teacher Librarian. With three young children, Tina has been juggling career and family for the last decade, and this ability to juggle is demonstrated in her professional life as she attempts to fulfill her teaching obligations while providing support to other teachers in her role as teacher librarian. During our interview, which took place in the library as she does not have her own classroom, the constant interruptions from individuals seeking help with this or that certainly gave me a sense of the integral role she plays in the school. Given this vantage point as the hub of resources and technology, Tina provided insight not only into her own practice, but also that of the teachers she works with, as well as the politics involved from the perspective of a support teacher. As an individual with both education in and experience with technology, her responses to many of my questions reflected innovation in terms of using new tools to explore the English Language Arts curriculum (such as cell phones and texting), but also frustration at the obstacles she perceives in providing students with the educational opportunities she believes should be available. Tina's interview was approximately 1 hour in length.

### Conclusion

As a practicing English Language Arts teacher, I am acutely aware of the isolation that often occurs as one goes about the daily business of teaching. The pace of school life is such that we are not often afforded opportunities to really think about the 'why' behind our choices in the classroom, let alone granted time with colleagues to discuss such

matters. Often, we are swept up in the process of planning, assessment and reporting, as well as the other infinite number of tasks required to fulfill our classroom and school duties, to the extent that we are unable to move beyond the immediate and contemplate our teaching within the larger context. This kind of exploration would serve us well, not only in regards to the improvement of our own instructional skills and our knowledge that supports such instruction, but also in providing input about the context in which we teach. Unfortunately, the demands of teaching, compounded by the responsibilities of our personal lives, push to the back burner the need to connect with other English Language Arts teachers, especially those outside of our individual schools. This research project allowed me, as well as those who volunteered to participate, the chance to do just that. In essence, I was able to move outside of my own classroom, and take a peek into the classrooms of my colleagues. I was given a guided tour by my participants as they articulated the rationale behind the choices they made in their instructional practices, as well as the context within which they made these choices. This experience afforded me not only a better understanding of the instructional process and provoked me to reconsider my own teaching, but also allowed me a more thorough and balanced understanding of the district as a whole and the role of the English Language Arts teacher within it.

In this chapter, I explored my position as a practitioner/researcher, as well as presented the use of qualitative methods and the design of case study to answer my research questions. I described the sources and types of data that I used in the study, and my methods of data collection and data analysis. Finally, I provided an overview of the study's sites and participants. In Chapter 4, I present the results of the within case

analysis of my study. In this chapter, I consider participants' motivation for including a range of literacies, the literacies that they are incorporating, and how they are incorporating these literacies through a case by case analysis. To portray how these literacies are being integrated into the classroom, I provide a contrast between two classroom observations using the instructional components outlined by The New London Group as a frame for analysis. I then consider the across case themes that were evident in the study and pertinent to the enactment of multiple literacies in the English Language Arts in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 4

### Results: Part I

In this chapter, I first present the within case themes that emerged through the analysis of interview transcripts, field notes, documents, and, in some cases, observations, for each of the eight participants in this study. Secondly, I describe and contrast two lessons featuring visual literacies by two different participants, which I analyze using the components of instruction, situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed practice, as outlined by The New London Group (1996).

#### Case by Case Analyses: Multiple Literacies in the English Language Arts

##### *Secondary School A*

##### *Graham*

Graham has been teaching the English Language Arts for 10 years, although educated as a Social Studies teacher. The first major theme that arose from the analysis of his interview and my field notes, in which I documented observations of his classroom and of students' assignments that he presented to me, was that he sees himself as a risk taker. Throughout our interview, he discussed his incorporation of media such as film, recordings of spoken poetry and music as being partially due to this willingness to take risks. Risk taking for Graham involves incorporating literacies in his program that he is not yet entirely comfortable teaching, such as student created films, but that he feels these literacies augment the traditional literature like novels, poetry, and Shakespearean plays that he uses as the foundation of his practice. Although he is not knowledgeable about teaching some of these literacies and is unsure about how to assess them, he is willing to incorporate them into his classes because he feels strongly that his students benefit from experiencing content in a number of different ways. He stated,

The value for students is in looking at content in a different way and you have to show a little courage and a little faith and sometimes it blows up in your face. I've definitely dealt with that. But it is worth it because kids will enjoy the experience of the novel. And if you can encourage kids to be life-learners, it begins with enjoyment.

Risk taking was also evident in his willingness to share pieces with students that move him emotionally. He plays a spoken poem in which the poet struggles with the death of his father from cancer and he says the poem always moves him to tears when he listens to it with students.

Graham's willingness to take risks extends to his colleagues who he has invited into his classroom to experience activities like this spoken poem, despite his belief that other teachers in his department view the English Language Arts as being primarily print focused. Part of Graham's view of incorporating multiple literacies in his classes as potentially risky is within the context of a culture that he views as traditional and conservative:

The department is very traditional. I would explain traditional as read chapters one through four and write an essay about what you read. All of them are weak with technology. It is a personality type and a willingness to try things. They have found things that work really well for them and they have stuck with those things.

He described his approach to teaching as being grounded in a willingness to integrate literacies from contemporary culture in order to render traditional texts to students in an appealing manner that will capture their attention, another risk taking behaviour.

A second theme that arose from the analysis of Graham's interview and my field notes was that of technology. Graham's facility with technology is another facet of his teaching that he feels differentiates him from his colleagues, as well as providing him a means to bringing students' personal literacies into the classroom. He uses technology as a means through which to access clips from You Tube and films and project them onto the screen at the front for student viewing. He explained that the data projector positioned in the middle of his classroom is used in almost every class as he is constantly projecting short clips to relate to the themes of the literature that students are reading. He described himself and his students as having short attention spans, and consequently these short pieces induce discussion. He further explained that he rarely shows films in their entirety because they fail to hold his own interest. Graham's use of technology extends to the development of blogs as a means for his students to share opinions about texts and respond to each other's writing. His proficiency in developing blogs as an instructional tool has been used as a resource by other staff members as he has conducted professional development workshops in his school. Graham stated that he is fascinated by technology and views it as a common interest that he shares with students. Despite his interest in and facility with technology, Graham does not attribute the same level of competency to himself as he does his students, saying, "They are the natives." Rather, he views himself as developing skills with technology that appear to come naturally to his students.

Graham's passion for teaching was obvious during our interview, and it seems at times that he slipped into his teaching persona as he pulled out exemplars and projected clips onto a screen at the front of the room during our interview. Yet, while he was clearly enthusiastic about the literacies that he integrates into his lessons, his intention in

bringing these literacies into the classroom was clearly to provoke student interest and engagement in canonical literature which represents a third theme in the analysis of this case. Graham described the inclusion of such materials in his unit for the novel *Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 1958), “The stuff that I do in addition to the book makes the book so awesome, and it is really a brutal book to read, full of dense description. It is almost unreadable to kids, but the extra materials make it palatable.” Graham explained how he also focuses on writing, and at times was apologetic when he does not include a written component to projects like his soundtrack assignment for *Lord of the Flies*. He stated that he probably should provide another opportunity for students to write but noted that he does not have the time to mark yet another written assignment. Although Graham distinguished his approach to teaching as different from his colleagues whom he described as traditional and focused on print, he continually relayed the incorporation of multiple literacies as building on a foundation of reading literary texts and writing literary responses. He did not describe the need for students to learn skills inherent to the variety of media that they explore in his class but rather explained how these literacies can be used as a bridge to building reading and writing skills with print forms.

Interestingly, although Graham described himself as a risk taker this view was juxtaposed to many of the attitudes and beliefs on which he built his pedagogical approach to teaching the English Language Arts. Despite crediting himself with a willingness to take risks in his teaching, the underlying foundation of his pedagogy was presented as one that conforms to those views that he notes in his colleagues in which literary texts and literary responses are the central focus of his program. He stated, “Let’s be honest. In order to write well you need to write a lot.” This approach echoed an earlier

comment that he made about his colleagues' beliefs, "To them, English is reading and writing and the more you do, the better you will be." His incorporation of students' personal literacies, as well as the integration of a variety of media, may set him apart from his coworkers, but ultimately, he prescribed to the same values in regards to the skills that he felt students should develop in his program.

*Janet*

A theme that emerged in Janet's interview was her emphasis on culture, and for the most part her meaning was aesthetic. She saw culture as developing an appreciation for art, whether it is visual art, literature or drama. Janet described her life as being a rich source from which she draws to inform her teaching practices:

My husband is a painter and he's exuding art regularly. I grew up in the drama department and my father is a winner of the Order of Canada for his contribution to culture. My brother is a film director and so I've worked on film sets...My life is multiliteracies. My life has always been multiliteracies.

Ultimately, her incorporation of a variety of media in the classroom was anchored in urging students towards an understanding and appreciation of these forms. In this sense, her approach can be described as more aesthetic than technocratic as she did not portray a need for students to develop skills to navigate the proliferation of media in contemporary culture or for future roles in the workforce, but rather described her teaching as designed to give students the opportunity to experience and recognize culture.

A theme of isolation was also apparent in the analysis of Janet's interview. Having lived and taught in areas that are more urbanized than where she currently

teaches, she described a sense of isolation because she has been cut off from culture although she does think that things are improving.

I've always had this exposure to culture and I have struggled with it here because for a long time there was nothing. Things are starting to happen here like a film festival, and these things definitely impact the classroom. We are getting a little more exposure and becoming a little less isolated with a new population from the city. But it is still hard.

This theme of isolation was not limited to Janet's current residence in which she felt cut off from the cultural influences that she experienced in more urban locations, but she also described a sense of isolation as a teacher. She portrayed a lack of the collegial relationships in her present school that she had enjoyed as a teacher in other districts and at the private school in which she taught.

Perhaps as a response to this feeling of cultural isolation, she strives to bring culture into her classroom. Janet's integration of multiple literacies into her classes demonstrated her emphasis on a culture which she saw as more important than popular culture. During my observation of a class in which she explored personal responses to literature with her students, she urged students towards more literary choices in their selections. She differentiated between a literary selection in which students were stretching their abilities towards analysis, and popular escapist texts that they read in their personal time. She projected an example of a student response to James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Joyce, 1977) onto the overhead for student analysis, which certainly reflects an ambitious novel selection for a Grade 11 student. Similarly, her choices in literacies demonstrated an attention to and appreciation for time

honored classics such as Renaissance art depicting chivalry or art from the Byzantine era. She also brought in articles from *The Globe and Mail* and *National Geographic*, as well as having students listen to short stories from the CBC. Again, these selections were not chosen as a means to connect students' personal literacies to school literacies, but rather as a way for them to expand their understanding through engaging with materials that they would not seek in their personal time.

Janet was pushing students beyond their current experiences and perceptions, attempting to give them access to literacies that they would likely not have explored on their own. This exploration was mostly through connections to literature and for the purpose of developing students' skills in reading literary texts, as well as writing in response to literary texts. This pedagogical approach represents a third theme in the analysis of Janet's case. She considered an extension from literature as being necessary to "students developing an understanding of all of the different ways we can experience a piece of literature." Her planning reflected attention to her perceptions of students' needs in these specific areas. She gave the example of close reading, in which students were taught how to analyze a piece of literary text, moving beyond a plot synopsis into an understanding of theme and connections between literature and human lives. Her approach to integrating multiple literacies followed a similar logic, as these literacies are grafted onto this core of literature and used as a means to illustrate the generality of theme.

A final theme identified in Janet's case was that of critical literacy. Although Janet's approach to teaching the English Language Arts was rooted in a respect for classic literature and a belief that students need to develop reading and writing skills

principally with these associated forms, she did encourage students to take a critical stance in their engagement with language. Janet considered the ideological nature of language. She discussed issues of power with students, saying that, “language can be empowering but it can also allow people to have power over you.” In this sense, her approach to literature did not demonstrate cultural transmission in which students are encouraged to accept dominant values reflected through canonical works. Rather, she urged students towards considering alternative perspectives, as well as thinking about the intentions of the authors. Consequently, despite being very selective in terms of what she viewed as the quality of materials she incorporated into her classes, Janet did engage in critical literacy in her instruction of these materials. Her classroom walls reflected this theme as well. Posters urging students to take a critical stance on subjects like gender, body image and homophobia were arranged throughout the room. One poster directed students to “Get Involved.” Therefore, Janet’s approach to teaching the English Language Arts demonstrated an unapologetic focus on literary texts and skills, yet she simultaneously pushed students towards a critical understanding of language.

*Secondary School B*

*Laura*

One theme that emerged from the analysis of Laura’s interview data and through the documents that she gave me was her recognition of students’ need to develop proficiencies with multiple literacies, which she described as part of the “real life skills of reading.” Laura’s teaching was informed by her previous profession in which she had to “read different types of text. Learn to read lab reports, graphs and statistics. That knowledge came from working in health care and gave me an appreciation for the need to

be able to read a variety of texts. I developed an understanding of the real life skills of reading.” She also described her education as an elementary specialist as being fundamental to her development of a pedagogy that she considered as more “open to multiple literacies than most secondary English teachers because I was trained in different subject areas and I see the need for students to be able to read texts in these different areas.” Her motivation for integrating multiple literacies into her classroom was to develop students’ skills in using the variety of media that she recognized they will need to be literate in this changing world.

Laura’s incorporation of a variety of literacies into her English Language Arts classes reflected her desire to develop students’ skills with a variety of media. The development of students’ understanding of multiple literacies was apparent in the handouts she gave me for her unit on graphic novels. Although Laura portrayed herself as a learner of the literacy of graphic novels, the resources she produced for this unit demonstrated attention to and knowledge of the form of the medium being used. She provided explicit instruction outlining the terminology (such as the gutter and the surface) and prepared students to identify features of the visuals, like pictorial markers for sound, time, or emotion. She compared this form to others, like comics and manga. In addition, Laura’s students created their own short graphic novels, moving into the design phase of instruction.

Laura’s use of media specific analysis was also evident in her integration of film in the English Language Arts. She produced a handout for students, “Watching Film with a Critical Eye,” in which she supplied students with some basic terminology for analysis

of cinematography such as different camera shots and lighting effects which they discussed and then used in film analysis. She described her use of film as,

Not just looking at narrative, but cinematography as well. It is a personal interest, a fascination and interest in film. I've read about it and watched a lot of films. But still, there is a lot of learning as you go because you are translating this for kids, building the vocabulary of film. The impact of watching a film. How it affects you in ways that you are not aware of. How does the camera create? It is a completely different medium.

The theme of addressing media specific skills and language was also apparent in Laura's recognition that she lacked understanding and knowledge of some of the forms that she explored with students, and was consequently unable to provide the type of instruction that she would like. She particularly noted a lack of knowledge about visual modes, saying, "I don't have the knowledge base on how to criticize art." Although she has been able to learn about and develop resources that target the development of media specific skills, she did acknowledge struggling with several of the literacies that she explored with students.

Another theme that emerged in the analysis of our interview was Laura's interest in exploring different cultures with her students and in so doing, urging her students to consider alternative perspectives. Laura initiated a blog for her students with another teacher in Saudi Arabia in which students post their responses to the novel that both classes are reading. This project facilitated discussion about the use of language when interacting with students living in a very different society, "I had to talk to the kids about what is not open for discussion. Although freedom of speech is important you still have

to be sensitive and consider what is appropriate in another culture or country.” Laura also portrayed her use of spoken poetry as a means for students to reflect on cultural stereotypes. She had students listen to a recording of a spoken poem by a Canadian poet from a Lebanese and Chinese background who has chosen to dress in traditional Muslim attire. She used this poem as a means to “talk about stereotypes and how we look at people and judge them. She is saying that she is a modern, educated, young woman who has chosen to wear a veil.”

Although Laura incorporated a variety of literacies in her program, and attempted to address these literacies in a manner that will facilitate students’ development of media specific skills, she considered print as being of central importance to the English Language Arts. This focus on print was a third theme that I identified in the analysis of her interview data. Laura described her perception of the importance of print:

In the real world, visual is important and part of what people do, but it has not overtaken print. I still think that we are a print based society. People say that we are moving away from that and then I look at business or real life work, and there is such a demand to be able to read and read well and read a variety of print. The education system is very print focused because that is the way we work and how we think.

This attitude about the importance of print was also apparent in Laura’s views about provincial exams, which she supported because of their role in maintaining standards of reading and writing. Further, she described discussions with students about the evolution of language, and how language is dynamic. Yet, ultimately she concluded with specific instruction about how students should write in the English Language Arts, “My speel is

that when you write for me, you use academic English, and these are the rules.” Like Laura’s views about students’ need to develop skills with multiple literacies because of necessity in the real world, she also attributed the refinement of students’ ability to read and write academic English as being important for their “real lives where they need to write a cover letter or report and they need to be able to tap into those skills.” While Laura’s pedagogy is in the process of adapting to the changing literacy needs of students in this modern world, she balanced this shift with adherence to many traditional values and beliefs about literacy learning in the English Language Arts.

### *Hannah*

Hannah’s view of literacy learning as being interdisciplinary was a theme that resonated throughout her interview. She pointed to a period in which she taught at the elementary level, having moved from secondary English Language Arts, as being the impetus for a shift in her perspective of literacy education. Before this move, she viewed her teaching as subject focused in which she perceived literacy learning in a traditional, print centric manner. Her tenure at the primary level moved her towards a more thematic and holistic approach. She credited this period as being transformative because it opened her eyes to multiple forms of literacy:

It was a real eye opener for me. It became such a delight when I first began to think about thematic teaching. I remember a unit on *Charlotte’s Web* (White, 1952). We caught spiders for science and watched films and created songs about bugs. And that is when I realized the different parts. That it could look different. And when I went back to middle school, I brought that with me. I started my

Master's at the same time and then everything came together. But that pivotal moment showed me another way of thinking and conceptualizing.

Hannah's experience as an elementary teacher, outside of the secondary English Language Arts classroom, was instrumental in the establishment of her pedagogy when she returned. Her willingness to move across disciplines was portrayed again in her descriptions of accessing the knowledge and resources of teachers in the art department to develop her own understanding and that of her students when incorporating visual media into her program.

Hannah's thematic approach was apparent in her course planning and further emphasized this shift in her conceptualization of the English Language Arts and represents a second theme. She integrates a multitude of different media into her classes that are organized around a common theme. In Hannah's unit on child labour, she plays songs like one called "All I Need" and then students read the lyrics, watch a music video, read poetry and non-fiction articles, look at picture books, as well as create visual artwork. In some units, like a novel unit or a unit featuring a Shakespearean play, she pulls out themes from the literature that she uses as connections to other literacies. For example, with Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003) as a base, she explored the themes of genetic engineering and reality television which incorporated tabloid magazines featuring "the Octo-mom," non-fiction articles, and debates in which students presented a particular position on the topics explored. Hannah also gave students the option to use a variety of forms with which to respond to central themes in unit projects. A stunning piece of fabric art featured on her classroom wall is an example of such an assignment, as was a student's interpretive dance which she described as lovely.

Hannah's development of skills with technology was a third theme that featured during her interview. She initiated a professional growth plan several years ago in which she targeted technology skills because she "would have conversations with the TV about the VCR not working." She has since created blogs for students' writing and is almost paperless in her Grade 12 English class. She has used this documented professional growth to advocate for technology in her classroom like a tablet, projector and wireless internet. She noted that part of her motivation for incorporating technology into her classes is because she recognizes changes in her students.

The world they live in has changed and they don't sit back quietly. They tell you. We are talking about rules with technology now with I phones. Some teachers let kids listen to music, others don't. But suddenly it isn't just music. They are texting their friends and they can get right onto the internet in your class. But this might be helpful in your course. The world is changing and we need to adjust somewhat to accommodate that. The skills students are needing is changing and the classroom needs to reflect that.

Hannah continues to work on her professional growth plan featuring technology and in using the equipment that she has been able to secure although she has experienced several challenges in incorporating this technology into the classroom. She used You Tube regularly to show students clips but this program has been recently locked out because students were accessing it and slowing the system down. Similarly, her preferred program for blogging, Word Press, has been locked out and she has had to shift to Edublogs, despite finding it a less effective tool for her students. She noted that "these little frustrations take up a lot of time."

Hannah's ability to find ways to work through the challenges that she has encountered in the integration of multiple literacies into her classes is a theme that intertwines each topic through much of her interview. She was particularly adept at making connections with administration or other staff members such as teachers in different departments, teacher librarians and technology support technicians to solve the problems that arose. She saw opportunities for learning in her classes, such as in the debate about I phones, where perhaps other teachers would recognize distractions and impediments. Ultimately, Hannah's incorporation of multiple literacies in her classes was facilitated by her attitude and beliefs about her role as a teacher. She demonstrated flexibility, creative problem solving, and determination to achieve her goals in the classroom.

*Secondary School C*

*Doug*

One of the most obvious features of Doug's approach to teaching the English Language Arts was his focus on classical canonical literature in a traditional manner and this feature presented a central theme in his descriptions of his practice throughout his interview. His focus on literature was evident in aspects like planning in which he builds from the literature, and literacies which he described as "other than the ancient" were incorporated for the purpose of creating relevance for students. Doug presented literature to students with the intention of facilitating their ability to recognize literary patterns. He described his unit on The Hero's Quest in which students learned about Joseph Campbell's analysis of myths which the students then applied to classical works such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Raffel, 1996) and more contemporary films like *The*

*Matrix* (1999) and *Star Wars* (1977). He took students through the stages described by Campbell and applied this analysis to each of the works in this unit. His purpose was to

Show students that this structure is part of us and how we tell stories. We see that long before film and before we were self-conscious about the patterns of stories, authors wrote stories that fit this pattern because that is the way we tell stories. I want them to see that it isn't artificial.

His approach to teaching the English Language Arts was transparently built on a model of cultural transmission and he described his practice as “top down because I am a teacher. I am the one who facilitates students' learning and ultimately, I am responsible that my students get what they need.” Part of this view appeared to stem from his belief in a commonality among students and that his approach facilitated the “building of a community of learners.” Therefore, he did not seem to perceive his pedagogy as being potentially alienating to students who did not reflect or relate to the dominant values stressed in his teaching of literature. Rather, he saw his role as creating cohesion.

The main way that Doug attempted to relate the applicability and universality of dominant themes and patterns in literature to contemporary students was through the use of film. Doug's incorporation of film presented a theme in that this aspect of his practice was featured in most of his descriptions of the incorporation of literacies other than print in his classes, and he stated that he incorporated film, “every chance I get.” He described this analysis of film as moving beyond one that just considers literary analysis and involves attention to specific features of the medium of film. Doug talked about the types of analyses his students conducted of the film *Easy Rider* (Hopper, 1969) which he uses as part of his Hero's Quest unit.

The choices that a director makes have a lot to say. The symbols are meaningful. A camera shot can say a lot, panning into or away from something. At the beginning of the film the two knights take off their watches and throw them into the dirt. We talk about that. We like to consider why film makers make the choices they do. Are they trying to appeal to the masses? What are they trying to say? I think they have a grammar for this discussion that they aren't even aware of. We talk about continuity and flashback. So when we discuss dramatic exposition, they know it, they just maybe need the words for it.

Doug portrayed his teaching methods as discussion based and his instructional strategies for film were built on engaging students in discussion about the films that they watch. He credited students with having an ingrained understanding of the features of film, although he provided some explicit instruction through this discussion of the language inherent to film criticism. Yet, ultimately, his purpose in bringing films like *Easy Rider* into the classroom was not to develop students' understanding of the form itself, but really to address commonalities between these forms and literature.

Despite adhering to a very traditional view of the English Language Arts, Doug described a need to connect to "the world of students." This viewpoint presented another facet to Doug's pedagogy and consequently, a theme in his interview. He said,

There is a place for these worlds if they help students get their heads around the things that we are doing like looking for meaning in stories, novels and poems and how they might apply to the whole human race. Kids can use other forms to get to that. I think my role is to help them find this meaning in what we are doing and apply it to their own lives.

He described part of this process of connecting to students' worlds as being founded in the creation of relationships with students. His years of experience working in the cafeteria program at the school before shifting into the English Language Arts emphasized this need for teachers to establish relationships with students and understand where they are coming from. Although he did not appear to translate students' personal literacies into the content of his teaching and was quite skeptical about the literacies that he saw students enacting in their personal lives, he did make a point of establishing relationships with students on an individual level.

I am seeing a lake that is a mile wide and an inch deep. I am seeing a lot of communication going on with very little substance. I think it is easy to skim the surface, but it takes work, mental work, to look at things deeply...I think my role is to help them find meaning in what we are doing and applying it to their own lives. You do have to know what they are talking about, their worlds.

He explained that he spent a great deal of time in conversations with students that he believed would foster this connection. This desire to connect with students and create a community seemed very genuine, and Doug's own background fueled this desire to really nurture his students. He has overcome some major impediments in his own life and shows great empathy and concern for his students perhaps as a result. Thus, he portrayed the need to connect to students and develop an understanding of their individual situations despite being resistant to altering his practice in a manner that incorporates these individual differences and perspectives into the content of his classes.

*Daniel*

Daniel is the youngest participant in this study and has been teaching for approximately five years. He was educated as a secondary Social Studies teacher, although he did not teach this subject because of the availability of positions in the English Language Arts. One of the central themes that emerged during his interview was one of conflict in Daniel's pedagogical beliefs about the integration of multiple literacies in the English Language Arts. On one hand, Daniel noted the need for teachers to incorporate a range of literacies, "If your goal is to create well balanced and life-long learners, then you need to. Also it seems to be the general idea in the IRP's." Despite this declaration, he also portrayed many attitudes and behaviors during the interview that reflect a print centric approach in his teaching. He described his Grade 12 program as being focused almost entirely on the types of texts and forms of writing that are apparent on the provincial exam: "It is so print based and it is our responsibility to get kids ready for the final exam because it is worth 40 % of their mark. So if we don't teach them this print based content they might not pass and they might not graduate." Although acknowledging parts of the curriculum that support a multiliteracies approach in the English Language Arts, he did not address them at times in his classes because he felt that he did not have the time. He struggled with the oracy component of the curriculum, saying that, "Students refuse to do it and then what?" Daniel also described concerns about not meeting students' basic literacy needs when integrating multiple literacies into his program, noting, "You may just gloss over stuff with a broadening range of literacy. How does this affect the core aspects of reading and writing?"

Throughout our interview, Daniel portrayed uncertainty about his pedagogical choices in integrating multiple literacies in the classroom. This uncertainty in his responses conflicted with his manner during the interview which was very confident and precise despite the indecision that was actually apparent through his words. Perhaps this uncertainty can be attributed to a lack of experience or education. It could also be partly because of his belief that other teachers are reluctant to incorporate multiple literacies into the English Language Arts.

I think that multiliteracies are beginning to be implemented but the respect is not what it will be in the future. I think that it is about tradition. English is traditionally print based, and teachers being as conservative as they are, it's resistant to change. Even within our school, you see the reaction to some teachers who do like graphic organizers that are visually based, teachers will say they are just doing it to kill time or because they don't want to mark another essay.

Writing is key and everything else is fluff. Especially at the upper levels. It is not parents or students. It is teachers.

Daniel's lack of certainty about his position on the incorporation of multiple literacies in his classes may be due to adherence to what he viewed as a conservative English Language Arts teacher culture. Ultimately, although Daniel was at times enthusiastic about integrating a variety of literacies into his classes, there were as many instances in which he questioned this choice.

This theme of conflict or uncertainty about bringing a range of literacies into the English Language Arts was not only apparent in Daniel's contrasting views during his interview, but also in discrepancies between his interview and the assignment sheets that

he provided to me as examples of his integration of multiple literacies in his classes. Although Daniel described himself as using little to no drama in his English Language Arts classes, he gave me an assignment sheet that outlined a unique activity in which students were to pantomime scenes from a novel. The focus of the activity was on gestures and facial expressions with which students had to convey meaning without dialogue, although they were allowed to have a narrator set up the scene. Further, there were several assignments that allowed students to respond to literature using visual modes, such as one in which students were to create visual symbols for each of the characters in a short story.

Another theme that was apparent during the analysis of Daniel's interview, the field notes collected in his classroom, as well as several assignment sheets that he provided me, was his facility with technology. Technology was one area that he felt at ease about incorporating into his classes, as he portrayed both a lack of interest and knowledge in areas like art, drama, or music that could inform teaching a variety of literacies. He was currently working with another teacher to develop resources for the classroom using his tablet and projector. He used the projector currently to show students clips from You Tube or clips of films that connect to themes in literature. He will be expanding his use of this equipment as he develops his capacity with it. He also pointed to several web based assignments that he did with students for research purposes to support the literature on which he structured his courses. As a progressing teacher, Daniel is in the process of amassing materials, developing skills, and refining his pedagogy in the English Language Arts. Considering that he has been placed by necessity out of his

subject area, it is not surprising that he articulated conflicting ideas and opinions about the integration of multiple literacies in the English Language Arts.

*Secondary School D*

*Diane*

A major theme identified in my analysis of Diane's interview, and which I also noted during an observation and in materials accessed through her website and other assignments that she emailed to me, was her attempts to incorporate multiple literacies into her classes through technology. Diane attributed her career in accounting to her sense of comfort with technology that has made incorporating new technologies into the classroom less problematic because she was "unafraid because I had to learn to use it when everyone was just learning how to use it." She has created a unit on the discourse of advertising that is completely web based in which students explored how advertisers are using this media to promote products. These advertisers also tapped into social networking sites like 'Facebook,' which she explored with her students as part of the unit. She designed websites for her classes, posting many of their assignments on line to the point that she used very little paper in her classes. She projected pieces of art, such as images of woodcuttings portraying scenes from *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (Coleridge, 1974), for student analysis, using a data projector and tablet that she has procured for her individual classroom use. She used these images of woodcuts for a pre-reading activity in which students attempted to predict the narrative and sort the order of the woodcuts based on these predictions. During my observation she projected a series of photographs by British photographer Alison Jackson as a means to investigate the construction of identity in conjunction with reading Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* (1991).

Another theme that I drew from my analysis of Diane's interview was her growing awareness of students' skills with technology-based literacies. Diane's development of technology skills in areas such as website design has afforded her the opportunity to consider her own learning. She related this learning process in which she has developed meta-cognition as an invaluable tool in teaching students. Although she recognized students' facility with technology, she also conveyed the need for students to develop meta-cognition with these forms.

It is an inherent part of their language to a certain extent, but they really haven't developed meta-cognitive skills about it. The grammar is not there for them and we need to teach it to them. This is an interesting challenge because I am in the process of developing my own meta-cognition about these technological literacies while I teach them.

She described students' needs to develop an understanding of the meanings of the icons and images that are commonly portrayed in computer based literacies. She noted that students must develop facility with features of computer based literacies, not only for the sake of navigating through literacies like websites, but also to be able to read them critically.

Another facet of Diane's approach to teaching the English Language Arts that I identified as a major theme in her interview data was her attention to d/Discourses and the development of students' critical literacy. Concerns about students' facility with numerous d/Discourses and students' development of critical literacy were woven into many of her responses. She considered students' exploration of a variety of d/Discourses

as being more essential to their literacy development than a focus on the features of Standard English.

We are talking about public education where 20% at the very most will go on to university, so I need to think about who I am teaching. The other thing is understanding the discourses of language will get kids thinking critically and get them engaged and this will empower them for university. I am not trying to get my students to think just like me. I am trying to empower them to think for themselves.

She cited examples in popular culture, which she described as being rarely communicated through print, as being an impetus for her consideration of multiple literacies and various d/Discourses in her teaching. She believed the world of popular culture as being communicated primarily through visual and auditory modes, and consequently she addressed these media that students use in their out-of-school lives in her classes in order to develop students' skills specific to these modes.

In addition, I identified Diane's use of print as a foundation to her teaching as a theme in the analysis of the data for her case. Diane's approach to teaching the English Language Arts was one in which she considers students' literacy skills and needs beyond those associated with print. She addressed literacies that students are likely to encounter outside of her classroom. Yet, she did consider print forms as the foundation of her English Language Arts courses, "Print is the anchor that I move from. It is in that I always start from a narrative, although you can find a story in other places. But in western culture, it is really is about print forms. And really, in using the form of a narrative or a story, I am trying to make it accessible to the kids I teach." Despite her use

of printed materials, like novels, plays, short stories, non-fiction texts, and poetry as the foundation of her courses, she described a willingness to explore other literacies that she may have been hesitant to include in her classes a decade earlier. She portrayed this pedagogical shift as being in response to changes in culture, as well as changes in the literacy needs of her students.

*Tina*

Given Tina's educational background in technology, it is natural that technology would be a central feature during her interview. Tina used technology in as many facets of teaching the English Language Arts as she possibly could. One purpose for her use of technology is what she portrayed as the creation of "hooks" to the print literacies that formed the basis of her course. This use of technology as a means to engage and interest students in the literary texts they explored is a major theme in her interview. She described her use of web quests for students to learn background information for Shakespearean plays, flickr to assemble imagery for visual assignments, and even cell phones. She had students form groups and construct text messages using the personas of various characters. Although she has experienced some issues with colleagues who feel that cell phone use is inappropriate in the classroom, she ignored these detractions because she believed that students "love it when you can bring their interests into the classroom and apply what they do in their real lives to their class work. They are always surprised that I am able to do that and it forms a connection in that I have similar interests as them." Rather than the discussion groups attributed to literature circles, Tina had students engage with one another in response to the novels through wikis because she felt that this form is more engaging for students. She showed students You Tube clips that

related to themes pulled out of the literature that she was teaching, such as clips about Utopias relating to the novel, *The Giver* (Lowry, 1993). Students produced films using the program Movie Maker depicting their renditions of scenes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare, 1993). Tina has found ways to apply technology to almost all of the facets of her teaching. For example, visual works that many teachers would assign as poster projects are constructed using programs like flicker where students are able to collect images. She considered technology use in the classroom as essential in relating the curriculum to the contemporary lives of adolescents.

My students love it [her incorporation of technology] because it is something they are connected to. Every single one of my students has a Facebook account. The ability to use something that they know about that connects to their personal lives is important. They are the 2.0 generation.

Technology for Tina was a means to connect school and home literacies, and render her subject area relevant and relatable to students. Part of this connection is also in her ability to link her interest in technology with that of students, a means to creating relationships with students based on this commonality.

Tina also used her skills with technology as a means for students who have difficulty reading printed text to access the content of her English Language Arts classes. This use of technology as a support measure for these students presents a second theme during her interview. She described the importance of using multiple literacies for learners who struggle in the English Language Arts:

I don't feel that children's literacy needs are being met by a traditional read and write delivery of the curriculum. Not everyone learns in the same way and people

tend to gravitate towards what they feel they are good at. Students who feel that they are not good readers or writers are really reluctant to pick up anything that is print based. So you need to have little incentives that motivate these students towards print.

She used a program, Kurzweil, as part of a school initiative for the Universal Design for Learning that allowed students who struggled with print text to record oral responses to class work and email them for marking. She uploaded materials for these students, such as oral readings, that they could access through a website and download onto their Ipods or MP3 players as supplements to the written text she is using in her classes.

Tina's classroom teaching is mostly informed by her knowledge of technology and she used it as a means to connect students to the print based literature that she studied with her classes, which presented a final theme in Tina's case. Through the use of technology as "hooks" to relate school literacies to home literacies, she engaged students in the print materials they explored in her classes. She is able to render these school literacies relevant, accessible and relatable to students by using technology. Further, technology afforded her the means to support students' individual learning needs, particularly those students who she identified as struggling readers. Yet, she never mentioned her intention in using these technologies as facilitating the development of students' technology skills. Tina was clear throughout the interview as stating her purpose in using technology as a means to the development of students' skills in reading and writing of print based texts.

### *Conclusion*

Participants demonstrated a range of literacies that they incorporated into their classes, and their motivations for doing so reflected their own individual experiences and beliefs about literacy education. These teachers cited examples of film, drama, visual modes, music, spoken poetry, and texts from popular culture such as graphic novels that do not conform to Cummins's (2006) portrayal of Canadian literacy education as almost entirely print based. Most participants recognized the changing literacy needs of students and many noted the need to connect home and school literacies. All of these teachers integrated digital literacies, such as blogs, Movie Maker, and PowerPoint, into their classes to some extent, although some more enthusiastically than others.

Certain elements of a pedagogy of multiliteracies (The New London Group, 1996, 2000) were identified in participants' descriptions about their practices, while other integral factors of a multiliteracies pedagogy were absent. For example, Tina used technology to bridge students' out-of-school literacies to school literacies. Yet, she maintained a focus on the print based skills that are traditionally taught in the English Language Arts. In contrast, Janet described exploring numerous literacies with her students as a way to enrich traditional literature, yet she did not portray the attempt to connect home and school literacies. Therefore, the within case portion of this study depicts a range of approaches, beliefs and practices that do not conform to the portrayal of English Language Arts teachers as traditionalists (Burroughs & Smagorinsky, 2009). Yet neither did these teachers, with the exception of Diane, demonstrate beliefs and practices that adhere to those presented by The New London Group.

Despite the variety of approaches that were described by participants, I was able to identify common themes in the data across the participants' cases and these themes are portrayed in Chapter 5. I present my conclusions from the within case analysis of the data from my study in relation to the research questions in Chapter 6. Further, I compare these conclusions in detail to those portrayed in the literature on multiliteracies in Chapter 6 as well. In the next part of this chapter, I present data obtained through two classroom observations. The purpose of this section is to provide insight into the enactment of multiliteracies in the English Language Arts classroom.

#### Classroom Contexts: Two Observations

Of the three classroom observations that I conducted, by chance two featured visual literacies, in one case picture books, and the other, photography. Again, as discussed in Chapter 3, I chose not to present the third classroom observation in this section of my results because the topic of the lesson was personal responses to novels. Although I included the data from this observation in both my across case analysis and my within case analysis for the study, I decided not to feature this lesson in the following section because the topic of the lesson did not allow for the comparison between lessons and analysis of these lessons using the framework for a pedagogy of multiliteracies. Again, I discussed the components for this framework in both Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. Despite the commonality of visual literacies in the lessons presented by the two teachers that I portray in this section, the approaches of these two teachers were different, and I believed, that the contrast between the two observations emphasized the necessity of the components of instruction as described by The New London Group (1996, 2000). Although Laura incorporated a visual mode through picture books into her lesson, the

lack of overt instruction resulted in students neither engaging with the multimodal media nor understanding essentially what was being communicated through it. In contrast, I could identify each of the four components of instruction as outlined by The New London Group (1996) in Diane's lesson, and this facilitation of situated practice and scaffolding through overt instruction encouraged students towards critical framing in which they were able to take a critical stance, as well as transformed practice in which students were able to implement the understanding that they had learned.

*Laura's English Language Arts 10 Class*

When I requested to observe Laura's Grade 10 English class, Laura was welcoming but also warned me that she was "going to try something new." My observation was to take place during the last class on an early dismissal day, the Thursday before a professional development day. Needless to say, these conditions did not provide an ideal situation for Laura, given that many students were absent in order to travel for sporting events taking place the next day, and those students who were present were eagerly anticipating a long weekend. Although acknowledging these circumstances, Laura urged me to continue with our established plans despite the awkward position of having me observe on a day where students were likely to be unruly.

The previous year, Laura and another teacher at Secondary School B had applied for a "Professional Partnership" grant through the school district in which they had attained funds to purchase picture books specifically for a Humanities project. Laura was using these picture books, *The Table Where the Rich People Sit* (Baylor, 1994), *The Blue Stone: Journey Through Life* (Liao, 2008), *Secret of the Dance* (Spalding & Snow, 2006), and *The Wretched Stone* (Allsburg, 2006), on the day of my observation as material for

group discussions for an introduction to literature circles. She described the activity as a “taste of talking about books.” She had specifically chosen richly illustrated books with very little text that she believed were “accessible” to students, and the imagery depicted in the illustrations were tied to central themes or issues of the books. The groups were composed of members who had chosen the same novel for the literature circle unit and each member had been given a discussion guide on which to take notes individually, as well as another handout which will be completed afterwards by the group and then reported to the rest of the class. Each handout was a quadrant and with the titles “Making Connections,” “Discussion Questions,” “Passages of Text” and “New Vocabulary.”

After Laura had given the instructions for the activity, to read the book, individually fill out a handout, and then discuss their responses and fill out the group quadrant before reporting back to the rest of the class, and the students had moved into their groups, one student was elected to present the book to the other group members. As each group began the stories, three of the four groups focussed almost entirely on the text aspect of the books. One group pulled out a dictionary with which a member looked up the meanings of some of the more difficult words, not surprising given the “New Vocabulary” section of the handout. Another group reader presented the story in a manner that parodied a book being read to young children. The fourth group reader questioned the other group members, “Do you want to look at the pictures, or should I just read you the story?” As the activity progressed, three of the four groups were focused entirely on the text of the stories, preoccupied with completing the quadrants that they had seemingly interpreted as being entirely text based. The students had not received any instruction from Laura in regards to discussion about the visual components of the books,

nor did the handouts offer them direction about discussing the pictures. Despite a lack of direction, the fourth group's discussion became focused on the imagery of *Secret of the Dance*. They noted the use of black and white in contrast to colour, the reoccurrence of symbols throughout the story, and the creation of mood through imagery. At the conclusion of the activity, each group presented their book to the rest of the class and only the fourth group discussed the illustrations and how the book's artwork depicted contributed to the central theme of the story.

After the class, I discussed the activity with Laura, asking her if the students had had any instruction or preparation with visual imagery or the use of text in combination with visual imagery before partaking in this group activity. Although they had completed concept maps in an earlier short story unit which were posted on the wall and certainly reflected an understanding of visual symbols, as well as examining another picture book in an earlier class, the majority of the students, with the exception of the fourth group which Laura described as "upper level," really did not appear to place much value in the illustrations of the books or view them as contributing to the central themes or issues that they had been asked to analyze and discuss. This neglect of the visual components of the books was particularly evident in the group that treated the book as being juvenile, despite the exploration of mature themes like poverty and child labour. Laura's choice of books was such that the text was minimal and the illustrations were not peripheral as many of the students appeared to believe, but rather integral to understanding and appreciating the central themes and issues portrayed.

As is often the case in the classroom, teachers find themselves teaching in less than ideal circumstances amidst numerous distractions, and Laura and I both recognized

that this class certainly reflected this reality. Although most of Laura's students were attempting to fulfill the task at hand, elements such as early dismissal and low attendance likely affected morale and most of the students were not as engaged in the activity as she would have hoped. But, regardless, I want to address several points. First, the focus of most students on printed text rather than imagery in their attempt to complete the day's activity and get off to their long weekend was pronounced. Students demonstrated the presumption that this activity was text focused, despite the fact that the texts being used were largely visual, which may indicate an ingrained view of the purpose of English Language Arts Class as being fundamentally focused on reading and understanding print based text. In addition, the need, first for direction (and motivation) to examine the illustrations to allow for situated practice (which was lacking in the handouts), and second, overt instruction, and scaffolding, were necessary for the majority of students to interpret this imagery.

*Diane's English Language Arts 12 Class*

It was Tuesday morning, after a long weekend, and Diane's Grade 12 English students were quietly absorbed in silent reading. A bank of computers lined the back wall and a tablet and projector sat on a long table at the front. Her desk was cluttered with papers awaiting marking and students' journals were scattered on another table beside the row of computers. As they read, students nibbled on the banana bread Diane had brought for them and sip the tea that they had helped themselves to from the pot sitting near the white board. Some students shuffled in after the bell, and settled themselves, grabbing a piece of banana bread and opening their selected books without instruction. After the silent reading period was over, Diane quickly summarized where they were in terms of

preparation for the provincial exam. She assured them, “Don’t worry, we are well on our way to being ready” and then began introducing the activity she had planned for the day’s class. She reminded them of the upcoming quiz on the novel *The Things They Carried* (O’Brien, 1991), urging them to Google the author beforehand.

Students were asked to pull out a piece of paper so they could jot down ideas about a series of photographs she was going to show them over the projector. Although the network was down at that moment and she could not access the PowerPoint program she had initially chosen to use, she asked them to bear with her. She pulled up the pictures individually from her tablet. “Today’s lesson,” she informed the class, “is connected to our work on the novel, exploring the concept of memory, and the construction of truth and knowledge.” She drew a box on the whiteboard and talked about the construction of ‘truth’, how we build identity, both for ourselves and others, and how identity is shaped by forces outside of the individual. “You are in Grade 12 now,” she pointed out, “and you will begin to experience more freedom and choice about who you manufacture.” She talked a little about Noam Chomsky and his theories about language and culture. Each student had brought a photograph of themselves that they were using as a source for contemplating and writing about this central theme of identity construction. At the end of the unit, after engaging in activities such as the one I observed, the students were going to produce a piece of writing that reflects this journey.

Diane briefly warned the students that there was some nudity and an obscene gesture before beginning to project a series of photographs by British photographer Alison Jackson. As we moved through the six photographs, Diane allowed students time to scrutinize each one before prompting discussion. She pointed to features such as the

use of black and white rather than colour for the impression of a formal portrait in contrast to the informality of a snapshot. She urged students to consider the role of the photographer and the location of the camera. The facial expressions, positioning of the subjects, as well as the framing of the photographs (through windows or cracks in doors) were also drawn into the discussion, especially in regards to issues of privacy. As Jackson is a British photographer and several of the photographs depict scenes featuring members of the British Monarchy, Diane provided students with necessary background information to enable the deconstruction of the photographs.

In response to a photograph of Prince William gazing into the mirror while dressing into his formal attire, one boy blurted out, “That’s a queer kid dressing like a queen.” Diane urged the students to consider how he came to this conclusion and they focused on the concepts of costume and nudity, but reconsidered his initial reaction once they learnt that Prince William was not dressing in a costume but was second in line to the British Throne. Issues of media construction were discussed when an image of George Bush with a perplexed expression while attempting to solve a Rubric’s cube was projected onto a screen. Diane asked the students to consider where the photograph was set, as well as if the subject was aware of the photographer’s presence. After some conversation, the students concluded that the photo depicted George Bush at work in the oval office, “playing a kid’s game” which implied, given the expression on his face, that he is unintelligent. The class considered the construction of this persona as it had been portrayed in the media, and one student interjected, “Actually, Rubric’s cubes are really hard to figure out.” A black and white photograph of Princess Diana gazing directly into the lens of the camera with a knowing look, while giving the finger prompted discussion

about her death and conspiracy theories that were linked to her. The ‘fairy tale’ quality attributed to her life was also discussed, as was the idea of “giving the finger” and how this gesture differs among cultures.

The final photograph was that of Michael Jackson looking into a mirror. His nose was grossly disfigured and his expression was disturbingly blank. This image was particularly topical given Michael Jackson’s recent death and prompted students to consider issues of race, as well as the concept of fame. Diane asked them to be sure to note their own reactions to this picture. After students responded, she asked them to consider what their reaction would be if a similar photograph of an unknown person were to appear on Facebook. One student responded that “a regular person wouldn’t be funny.” The discussion then turned to the construction of Michael Jackson as a subject of ridicule. Diane concluded the discussion, stating, “What we read in a picture demonstrates our construction of reality,” and she questioned students if they realized that these photographs had been staged. Based on the discussion that had occurred during the analysis and the observant remarks that students had made, at times provoking Diane to inspect the photographs more closely herself and alter her initial interpretations, I was surprised when the majority of students had not.

*Analysis of Diane and Laura’s Lessons Using the Framework for a Pedagogy of  
Multiliteracies*

Diane’s lesson demonstrated numerous elements of a pedagogical approach of multiliteracies as described by The New London Group (1996, pp. 11-15). Several ‘Design Elements’ were considered in this lesson, including visual, linguistic, gestural, spatial and consequently multimodal designs. Further, Diane developed students’ facility

with ‘metalanguage’ for the analysis of these photographs, pointing out features and conventions through language specific to the medium of photography. The lesson itself was designed with the intention of facilitating these skills, as Diane explained at the onset; the students were conducting an analysis of their own photographs, ultimately an exploration of their own identities, as part of the novel study. This lesson also demonstrated the four integral components of literacy instruction as described by The New London Group (pp. 20-23): situated practice through the analysis and discussion of the photographs, and overt instruction as Diane guided the discussion, pointing out features of this d/Discourse, and providing cultural information when needed. Both situated practice and overt instruction occurred naturally within the discussion, as she noted information or direction that was necessary. Students were urged to take a critical stance throughout the analysis, considering how identity and our perception of other people are created, and discussion of aspects such as gender, sexuality and race were considered. This critical stance was extended from the photographs into other areas of culture and into other types of texts than what was immediately apparent, such as fairy tales and tabloids. Also, students were asked to take on multiple perspectives, considering the perspective of the subjects of each photograph, as well as the photographer. Finally, students engaged in a process of ‘transformed practice’ as they shifted these skills to their own photo analysis and writing project, as well as their reading of the novel *The Things they Carried* (O’Brien, 1991).

As a teacher, I certainly appreciated the level of skill that Diane demonstrated during this lesson. It was not merely the lesson itself that reflected Diane’s experience and knowledge, but the creation of a community in which this type of discussion and

analysis can occur. Although some of the topics that came up in response to the photographs could have been dismissed because they were uncomfortable to discuss or deemed inappropriate for the classroom, Diane instead guided students in a process of deconstruction that deepened students' understanding of the social and cultural elements at play in the construction of these images. Despite laughter in response to the statement about one photograph portraying "queerness," Diane evenly asked the student to explain his reaction which turned the discussion back to a serious analysis, allowing the students to deconstruct his interpretation, which he did. The atmosphere in the class was comfortable and friendly, but also productive as students appeared interested in and focused on the lesson and discussion. Last minute technical problems, such as that seen with the network, can certainly discourage the use of technology in the classroom as it can be difficult to adjust lesson plans at the last minute. None of these factors, or my appearance in the first class after a long weekend, seemed to rattle Diane.

Diane was also explicit about the purpose of the activity, as mentioned earlier, and she connected her purpose to the 'real world' experiences of students; first, she considered the commonality that they shared being at the precipice of adulthood. Secondly, she made frequent connections to students' experiences and out-of-school literacies during the activity itself such as asking students to consider how they would feel if they saw an image on Facebook. Her approach to language was transparent, and she informed students about the social constructivist ideology on which she based her instruction.

The contrast between these two lessons demonstrated that despite including a multitude of literacies in the English Language Arts classroom, how teachers enact these

literacies with their students will likely have a profound effect on students' learning. Students in Laura's class, for the most part, did not even really engage with the visual aspect of the activity, and consequently could not have achieved the level of understanding of these texts that they would have from an analysis that included both textual and visual components. In contrast, Diane explained to her students why they were engaging with these photographs, which they did, and were supported by her comments and questions throughout the activity.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the results drawn from the within case analysis of the data and the results from the two classroom observations of lessons that featured visual literacies. For the two classroom observations, I provided an analysis using the instructional framework for a pedagogy of multiliteracies developed by The New London Group (1996, 2000). In the purpose of answering my initial research question regarding how multiliteracies are enacted in the English Language Arts, as well as to address the gap that I identified in the literature, I believed that it was essential to present these results to my readers in a descriptive manner that captured the implementation of theory in the classroom. In Chapter 5, I present the results of my analysis of the data between the cases of the study. I portray findings from the within case analysis, the analysis of classroom observations featuring visual literacies, and the following between case analysis in relation to my initial research questions in Chapter 6.

## Chapter 5

### Results: Part II

In this chapter, I discuss the across case themes that were identified through the analysis of participants' interviews, my field notes, documents given to me by participants, and the three classroom observations I conducted. I describe the across case themes relating to the enactment of a pedagogy of multiliteracies in the classroom that I identified in the data; uncertainties in assessing multiple literacies, multiple literacies as peripheral to central texts and skills, and finally the persistence of a dominant d/Discourse in the English Language Arts.

In addition, across case themes that I identified in the analysis of the data that reflect the factors that either impede or support a multiliteracies approach in the English Language Arts are presented. Topics like standardized tests, teachers' education, access to resources like technology, as well as teacher and school cultures, that were noted in the literature on multiliteracies, as described in Chapter 2, were featured in the questions participants were asked during their individual interviews (Appendix F). Their responses to these questions provided the data from which the across case themes were identified. These themes are: first, criticism of and compliance with provincial examinations; second, teachers' stress on the experiential over the theoretical; third, the theme of time and how teachers allocate their time; and finally, teacher culture as resistant to change.

#### Across Case Themes: The Enactment of Multiliteracies in the Classroom

*"I cannot assess what I have not taught"*

Descriptions about assessment practices provided insight into how participants were instructing students in a range of literacies. Across these descriptions in interviews

with participants, the theme of uncertainty about assessment because of a lack of knowledge about the media integrated into their classes was revealed. Teachers, when unsure of how to teach media specific skills, were consequently uncertain about how to assess students' learning of these skills. Laura commented on this saying,

I often mark higher with visual assignments because I don't have the knowledge base on how to criticize art. Even when marking oral presentations, I feel like I am not getting it and the kids don't really understand why it is important. They think the worksheets and the essays are the important things. If we were comfortable ourselves, that would help. We are good writers so we feel comfortable marking essays. I think if we look around us and say these are important skills then we would teach them [literacies] as skills and assess them as skills.

Daniel presented a similar sense of unease with areas in which he felt he lacked competency, noting, "I haven't trained them how to do it and I don't have time. I can't assess them on what I haven't taught them." Graham considered that assessment is not a problematic issue when he chooses assignments such as the sound track assignment for *Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 1958) because it is "close to his heart" and he believes he has the knowledge base about music to discuss with students issues of "tone and mood" beforehand. He provided examples in which he instructed students on how tone and mood are achieved. Yet, he noted that he does falter at times when assessing such products as student made films. He stated that he does not have the knowledge base about film production or criticism to assess these skills. Tina also expressed tension with assessing a range of literacies in her English Language Arts classes. Because of her

graduate work in technology, she stated that she feels comfortable with the assessment of anything “computer based.” When assessing such items as a student created film, she explained, “I am not up to thinking about things like lighting.”

Several participants found alternative ways to assess students’ work in literacies with which they lacked the knowledge to directly evaluate students’ skills, and I identified alternative assessment strategies as a theme across the interviews with participants, as well as in some of the documents that participants provided to me. One alternative method that was used by Janet, Daniel, Doug and Laura was the inclusion of a written portion to assignments so that students could explain what they were trying to achieve in a particular mode, such as visual. Another alternative method of evaluation was the use of participation marks. Doug described his use of participation marks for visual literacies, “What I am marking them for is their integrity; their focus and willingness to take on the task at hand. These are nebulous but I have a good feeling for it. I am holding them accountable.” Thus, these teachers were integrating these literacies into their classes but had to work around the difficulties that assessment presented when incorporating those literacies with which they had not developed the skills to teach and assess.

Diane and Hannah presented an exception to this theme of uncertainty with assessment. Diane explained that she uses content as “an anchor” in her assessment of a variety of literacies, as does Hannah, who described her assessment as either “content or skills based.” Both teachers also make use of rubrics that they have found on line and performance standards in the IRP’s. Hannah portrayed her assessment practices as an evolution in which she has become increasingly at ease with the assessment of non-print

literacies. Although she described struggling with such aspects as assessing a student's interpretive dance, she has come to developing "core things that I am looking for. I am not marking how pretty your poster is. I am looking for these five ideas or understandings and how they are communicated." Both Diane and Hannah are experienced teachers and their understanding of the assessment of multiple literacies is an ongoing process in which they have to develop assessment strategies in response to changing literacies. Diane was developing an advertising unit with websites, and although she was still working out how to assess student learning, she planned to "focus on the content in the unit because if kids are able to navigate the websites, they should be able to extract the content. Isn't that the point of any form of communication? Getting at the content?"

Hannah and Diane described a process in which they developed strategies (and continue to work on developing this area of their practice) to assess a variety of literacies. These strategies involved seeking out information about the literacy that they were teaching from various sources (such as colleagues), developing or finding resources like rubrics to aid in assessment, and ensuring clear criteria before teaching skills or content associated with a particular literacy. Both teachers attributed their experience as being fundamental in their ability to assess a range of literacies.

The responses of participants demonstrated firstly a lack of understanding of the communicative elements of some of the literacies that were apparent in their English Language Arts classes. Secondly, in these instances, teachers noted that they did not explicitly instruct students in skills with these media, and thirdly, they were unable to directly assess students' use of the media. Jewitt (2003) noted the connection between assessment and learning in regards to multimodality, "If learning is multimodal and

assessment is restricted to the modes of speech and writing the assessment will ignore (and in the process negate) much of what is learnt (p. 84). Callow (2008) pointed to the need for teachers to develop assessment strategies specific to multimodal texts, yet also that while “the need to address this evolving textual landscape is well founded on the theoretical level, there is an increasing call to develop the next level of implementation, that is the curriculum and assessment aspects” (p. 616). These participants demonstrated this need for more direction in the assessment of modes outside of the linguistic ones that are taught and assessed in the English Language Arts. A multiliteracies approach is challenging for many teachers as they must develop skills and knowledge in areas that are foreign to them. Yet, while these participants struggled with issues of instruction and assessment when bringing a range of literacies into the classroom, they, for the most part, persevered in this integration.

Kalantzis, Cope and Harvey (2003) recognize the tension between traditional forms of evaluation and assessment that are often focused on aspects like individual achievement and skills such as rote memorization that do not transfer to the co-operative, dynamic and creative features of student learning that are prioritized in a multiliteracies pedagogical approach. Further, the emphasis of a multiliteracies pedagogy on the development of skills that are not applicable only to school based literacy but to the literacy activities students do and will enact in the real world is problematic for many teachers as well. The very act of evaluating students’ skill in real world literacies is perhaps a feature of schooling that renders such literacies unauthentic (Bruce, 2009; Moss, 2001; Myers, 1992). Assessment of multiple literacies not only presents teachers with the challenge of procuring new skills and knowledge, but also the ideological

foundation of this pedagogy urges teachers towards a re-conceptualization of the methods of assessment and evaluation that have been traditionally employed.

*Multiliteracies: Peripheral Literacies*

A second major theme that emerged from the analysis of all of the participants' interviews was the incorporation of a variety of literacies as a means to either enrich canonical works or as a means to connect these texts to students' outside of school experiences and literacies. Throughout the interviews, teachers portrayed students as "loving" the incorporation of these literacies, particularly those that they pursued outside of school, into their classes. All of the participants, with the exception of Hannah, organized their curriculum using literature as their "base" or "anchor." Other materials like film clips, pieces of non-fictional texts, spoken poems, art, music or forms accessed through technology such as websites were used to enrich this base in order to expand on themes and connect them to contemporary culture, as well as augment student interest and engagement. Graham described the inclusion of such materials in his unit for the novel *Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 1958) in order to make the book more appealing to adolescents.

Part of the centralization of traditional school-based literacies for most of the participants was apparent in their focus on the skills of reading and writing these print based texts. Other literacies were integrated, as in Tina's use of technological literacies as "hooks," as a means for students to develop these skills. Little consideration was given by participants, although Diane and Laura were exceptions, about the skills that students need in regards to literacies other than those associated with print. Also, print texts were

limited mostly to the canonical literature often associated with the English Language Arts in the forms of novels, Shakespearean plays, poetry and short stories.

Another theme that I identified in participants' interviews and in observation of both Janet's and Laura's class was the view that these canonical works ascribed to school literacy provided a means to improve students' literacy learning because they provide more depth and challenge to students than the literacies that students engage with out of school. Laura told of conversations with her class about the popular *Twilight* series (Meyer, 2005). Although she felt that such discussions were valid and useful in her classroom, and portrayed herself as "going out of her way" to connect home and school literacies, she did not view these novels as appropriate for a class novel study. Hannah, although open to incorporating students' personal literacies as a starting point, also asserted the need to "stretch" students through more traditional literary texts. Similarly, during a discussion with her English 11 Honours class, Janet articulated the need for students to choose novels for an independent novel study that moved beyond the 'escapist' books that students may read during their recreational time. For the most part, personal literacies were seen as peripheral to the exploration of school-based literature. School-based literature was described as ascribing to particular standards of 'depth' and 'difficulty' which were not attributed to the literacy practices of students outside of school.

The value placed on certain texts and communicative forms by participants in this study conforms to the research that notes the central positioning of these entrenched school based literacies (Carrington, 2005; Hagood, 2000; Larson & Marsh, 2005; Luke, 2003; Mills, 2009). Jewitt (2008) writes, "The classroom construction of literacy occurs

through the legitimation and valuing of different kinds of texts and interactions,” (p. 248) and for the majority of teachers in this study, literacy skills are based in reading mostly canonical texts and in writing standard English. Despite teachers’ agreement that other literacies should be included in the curriculum and their integration of numerous literacies into their classes, the positioning of certain texts and communicative forms as central was evident. The organization of classes into units built around literary texts, the explicit instruction of Standard English as the communicative form used in the English Language Arts were features of this positioning. In addition, a lack of overt instruction of features of other literacies, as well as the practice described by many participants of incorporating these literacies as ‘hooks’ to school-based literacies, maintains this hierarchy.

The literature on multiliteracies points to the need for students to develop skills, and meta-knowledge, of a variety of literacies, and these components are essential towards students engaging critically with these literacies (Gee, 1989, 1997, 2001; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; The New London Group, 1996 & 2000; Rhodes & Robnolt, 2009; Stone, 2007; Weinstein, 2002). Further, theorists of semiotics (Jewitt, 2008; Kress, 2003; Siegel, 2006) described the specificity of skills with various modes necessary to construct meaning from communicative acts. They identified the common focus on the linguistic modes in literacy education as facilitating only a limited understanding of communication. Dyson (2004), Siegel (2006), Whitin (2005), and Zoss (2009) have described the need for students to develop media specific skills beyond literary analysis when engaging with different literacies in the English Language Arts. Further, as theorists of semiotics have argued, no one mode exists in isolation. Students are not using

potentially rich and diverse tools of meaning making if they are limited to only the linguistic modes (Kress, 2003).

The necessity for students to develop knowledge of a variety of modes is emphasized also in the literature that describes the interplay of text, sound and imagery that is often inherent to technological literacies. The literacy skills needed to navigate these texts need to be addressed in literacy education beyond the use of these literacies as a source of engagement for students (Alvermann, 2009; Gee, 2003; Kress, 2003; Lankshear & Knobel, 2007; Luke, 2003; Mills, 2009; Moss, 2005; Stone, 2007; Unsworth, 2008). Although the majority of the participants in this study were integrating other modes into their classes, this integration did not involve consideration of the literacy skills needed for students to become multi-literate. Rather, for the most part, the purpose of incorporating these skills was to facilitate the development of literacy with printed text.

#### *A Dominant d/Discourse in the English Language Arts*

The persistence of a dominant d/Discourse in the English Language Arts was apparent in the responses of participants across their interviews, as well as in class observations, and indicates a third major theme in the data. The centralized positioning of texts and skills is one aspect of this subject d/Discourse. But it also extends to the positioning of students, in which a certain identity is ascribed and particular types of behaviors are encouraged. All of the participants described the importance of students' developing an awareness of appropriate types of language and behaviors for different situations, yet there appeared to be a focus on ensuring that students maintained classroom norms, that they understood how to communicate and behave in the classroom.

This understanding of a formal setting was extended to situations like job interviews that students need to navigate. Comments about shifting identities, in which one adopts a particular persona for different situations was voiced by several participants. Graham noted that, “Students’ street persona is going to have to be different from their school persona.” Students’ school identity was reinforced by several of the participants, as they described the need for students to conform to the communicative forms and behaviors of this particular setting. As described by Doug, “In an academic setting, what English teacher hasn’t had to talk to students about colloquialism and slang? How can one take you seriously in this mode?” Daniel communicated that he does not perceive of language as being socially enacted and dynamic, noting, “I don’t see language as socially situated” and consequently did not reflect on d/Discourses in his classroom.

Elements of a dominant d/Discourse were also evident in terms of the types of expression and forms of analysis that are available to students in the English Language Arts. Laura discussed the evolution of language with students, describing language as dynamic, but ultimately concluded with, “This is how you write for me.” In some cases, such as when Doug proclaimed instructing students on “how we tell stories and have always told stories,” teachers were likely unconscious that they were operating within a particular d/Discourse, and in so doing shutting down the opportunity for students to consider alternative viewpoints. Although many participants recognized the existence of other d/Discourses, such as when they discuss features such as the slang that students use outside of school, the central d/Discourse that was explicitly taught appeared to be, for the most part, that associated with Standard English, and the approach to texts as that of literary analysis. When observing Janet’s Honours English 11 class (not described in this

thesis), I was struck by how self-conscious the students appeared to be in a shift from a literary analysis to a personal response to a novel. One student commented that she was so used to being “detached” and taking an “objective point of view” when reading texts for school that it took practice to be “in the moment and just enjoy the experience of reading.”

There were exceptions to this theme. Diane considered students’ exploration of multiple d/Discourses in the classroom as central to their literacy development. Further, Janet’s view of language as a tool for power facilitated students’ taking a critical perspective on discourses, although she did not use this terminology. Janet ascribes to a traditional approach in terms of the communicative forms that are central to her practice. Yet, she also articulated views that encouraged students towards a critical stance of these materials despite their centrality in her course. Further, Hannah and Laura stated that they deliberately attempt to provide students with connections to a variety of cultures. Laura’s use of blogs to create a community with another class in a different culture presented a valuable resource for students to develop skills with d/Discourses. Hannah and Laura, having come from more urban school districts, also commented on a lack of cultural diversity in the valley and the need for teachers to really seek out ways for students to develop facility with other cultural d/Discourses. Hannah commented, “On the island, it is not so diverse. I tell them when I came here, my first impression was that everyone is the same and I will miss that diversity.” Although most teachers conformed to the dominant d/Discourses of the English Language Arts, there were examples when participants did introduce non-dominant d/Discourses into their classes and stressed the

need for students to develop facility with those d/Discourses that are not commonly associated with education.

The New London Group (1996, 2000) described the need for students to develop an understanding of the socially situated nature of communication. The recognition of multiple d/Discourses facilitates the development of meta-knowledge and critical literacy. Moje (2000) depicted students' engagement with a wide assortment of literacies without developing an understanding of the d/Discourses in which they are moving. Although the students described in her study were able to communicate using the features of these discourses, they lacked the ability to take a critical perspective of these forms with which they communicated. This awareness of d/Discourse, or meta-knowledge, according to Gee (1997) facilitates students in "the ability to juxtapose Discourses, to watch how competing Discourses frame and re-frame various elements. And this is an act that always gives rise immediately to questions about the interests, goals, and power relationships among and within Discourses" (p. xviii). In essence, students are given the tools to take a critical stance. Yet, by keeping these discourses in the peripheries, students are not taught the skills to develop a critical perspective of the literacies with which they are engaged. The persistence of a dominant d/Discourse in literacy education is noted by many individuals writing on this topic (Apple, 2004; Burroughs & Smagorinsky, 2009; Carrington, 2001; Gee, 1989, 2002; Hagood, 2000; Luke, 2003, Weinstein, 2002). Also, as discussed in Chapter 2 in reference to Delpit's writings (1988, 1992), the need for students to have explicit instruction about the features of the dominant d/Discourses in society is also important to ensure access to the cultural capital associated with these

Discourses to all students. Such explicit instruction can only occur if teachers are aware that they are operating within d/Discourses.

This study revealed many attitudes and approaches of participants that certainly conformed to the writings on the topic of d/Discourses in the English Language Arts. The majority of participants reflected the values and beliefs that reinforce the persistence of a central d/Discourse in the English Language Arts. Yet, there were also examples of teachers whose pedagogies conflicted with the view of the English Language Arts as being principally attentive to one dominant d/Discourse. Further, certain teachers, such as Janet and Laura, portrayed traits that could be ascribed as maintaining standard norms, as well as other traits that signaled a critical perspective of literacy.

#### Across Case Themes: Factors that Supported or Impeded a Pedagogy of

#### Multiliteracies in the English Language Arts

##### *Provincial Exams: Critique and Compliance*

The theme of criticism of the provincial exams was identified to varying degrees in the responses of all participants. These exams were critiqued by the majority of participants firstly because of a lack of congruity with the curriculum prescribed by the Ministry of Education. Daniel explained that “the new documents said that 25% to 30% of classroom time should be focused on oracy but they don’t have an oral component to the exam so if they are going to change the curriculum, they should change the exam.” Another source of criticism that was levied against this use of standardized testing was the high percentage afforded the exam at the Grade 12 level. As noted by Hannah,

I understand it would be very difficult to create an exam that reflected the IRP’s, which might question the whole idea of the exam in the first place, but if they are

going to have an exam that was testing such a tiny piece of the pie, then I wish the percentage was tiny as well. Let the percentage reflect what the test is measuring. When you are encouraged to include multiple literacies in your program and that is not reflected on the test that is worth so much of students' final mark, that is unfair.

The narrow focus of the exam, on reading and writing of print text, was noted by several participants as potentially skewing the delivery of the curriculum. They believed that teachers' credibility and student achievement motivated many teachers to focus on the two central areas of reading literary texts and writing literary responses. Diane and Janet pointed to pressure to have the exam mark match the class mark as furthering this emphasis on specific types of reading and writing. Janet remarked that, "One of the criteria that is used to rate schools by the Fraser Institute is that the class marks are close to those of the provincial exams." Daniel explained that his focus on specific types of reading and writing at the Grade 12 level, to the point that he spends 90% of his class time on the areas covered in the exam, was due to a fear that "students wouldn't graduate unless they were properly prepared." Tina also noted that "it is the whole stress of results that are published and everybody knows them. You get them back and so does your principal. Somebody who is looking at multiple literacies will not have the same results as someone who is stressing an essay all year long."

The pressure for students to perform well on exams was an associated theme that was described by the majority of participants. Low seniority was a factor that may influence a teacher to teach to the exam, as noted by Graham:

Results are scrutinized. For a teacher like me, who is laid off every year, and you have a vice principal patting you on the back because your kids did well on a provincial exam says to me that results matter. They may not matter and whether you buy into it may be an individual choice but if management is looking at it, then consciously or subconsciously, I am going to look at it that way... I feel the pressure and I feel that my professional reputation is on the line.

Considering that Graham has 10 years seniority and 2009 was the first year since being hired by the district that he was not laid off, it is perhaps not surprising that he may feel vulnerable to scrutiny. Hannah also noted the pressure to have students perform well on these exams, although she commented on differing attitudes about the performance of students in different school districts.

Some districts are more preoccupied with test scores than others. This one is more than my last. My first school in the district was [Secondary School C]. I don't remember ever worrying about them in my previous district and I taught in ways that I thought were authentic and my students did well. Which is my point, there is cross over. Suddenly, it was like football teams, who they beat. It is hard not to look at it. The district has included scores on its student success mandate. It is part of our students' success so it puts emphasis on achievement on tests.

None of the participants noted direct administrative or parental influences as creating this pressure. Rather, they ascribed it to concern for their professional reputations because of publication of marks, and concern for their students' future opportunities.

Despite criticism of features of provincial exams, only one participant described herself as opposed to standardized testing, and this position was more inferential than

directly oppositional. As mentioned earlier in this section, Hannah suggested that the difficulty in matching the exam to the curricular outcomes puts into question the continuation of such examinations. Teacher compliance with the use of standardized testing represents a theme that juxtaposed the criticisms of these exams in participants' descriptions in their interviews. Laura, Tina and Doug expressed that the focus on reading and writing in the exam were positive elements. Diane, who takes part in marking provincial exams, suggested that marking may be a factor in teacher compliance (three of the participants in this study mark provincial exams). Another factor that may support compliance with standardized tests in the English Language Arts is the view that it is a subjective discipline. As Laura remarked:

It keeps standards up because it [English] is something that other teachers could say is wishy washy. If you are not teaching it, you don't understand how hard it is or how important it is. There is such a push now for kids to go into sciences and English skills are so transferable to so many fields. It is really important to be able to read and write well.

A need for standards to be upheld was also noted by Doug as a positive feature of the exam, as he described students' performance on exams as being an indicator for his own evaluation of students' skills.

The literature on this topic appears to present views unanimously opposed to standardized testing. Researchers noted that these tests prioritize basic and individual skills (Kalantzis, Cope & Harvey, 2003) that are not applicable to the real world literacies of youth today (Alvermann, 2009; Carrington, 2005; McClay, 2002; Siegel, 2006; Zoss, 2009). The focus of these tests on linear print and canonical texts is antithetical to much

of the current literacy research (Marshall, 2009) that advocates for students' development of competency with numerous types of modes and literacies. Yet, the voices of teachers in this debate between policy makers and those writing about literacy education do not appear to be at the forefront (Marshall). The participants in this study reflected a range of responses in the face of standardized tests. At one end, Hannah continued to teach in what she viewed as an "authentic manner," although cognizant of exam marks as being considered by district administrators as indicators of students' achievement. In contrast, Daniel planned his Grade 12 English class specifically attending to those literacy skills that are assessed by the provincial exam. All of the participants stated that they felt some pressure to ensure that students perform well on these tests. Despite criticism about the high percentage afforded to the test in regards to students' final marks and a lack of congruity with the curriculum, the majority of participants did not articulate opposition to the persistence of these tests in the English Language Arts. Considering that English is the only subject area in which students are required to write a provincial exam at the Grade 12 level, it was interesting that English Language Arts teachers were ultimately either compliant with or supportive of this testing. Therefore, although these examinations were certainly considered to impact instruction in the English Language Arts, this influence might be fairly minimal in that teachers' views and values about literacy education hold more weight in determining their instruction of multiple literacies in their classes. A teacher's beliefs about what is important for students to learn in the English Language Arts will guide their incorporation of multiple literacies in their classes.

*Experience over Theory*

All of the participants in this study described experiences, in the classroom, or in other careers, or through collaboration with other teachers, or because of other interests as providing them with the skills and knowledge to incorporate multiple literacies into their English Language Arts classes. Considering that most of the teachers completed their teaching education before this pedagogical approach was published (The New London Group, 1996, 2000) it is not surprising that teachers would not have encountered this pedagogical approach until after their programs were completed. Yet, with the exceptions of Laura and Doug, all of the participants were either in the process of or had completed graduate degrees, and even then, they described themselves as receiving little preparation for teaching multiliteracies.

All of the participants in this study described teaching experience as being fundamental in their facility with teaching a variety of literacies in the classroom and I identified this theme in my analysis of the data of all participants' interviews. Doug commented:

I've always had this argument in my head, can universities give you everything you need or do you have to do this on your own? I certainly was taught and talked to my professors about the idea [of incorporating a variety of media]. But as far as how, I had to look to other teachers for models. I had to think about what would be more effective. And I had to do things by trial and error.

Similar to Doug's line of thought, the majority of the participants in this study questioned how prepared one can be for the tumultuous shift to the classroom from the university and stressed the importance of experience in shaping one into an effective English

Language Arts teacher. In accordance with Doug's views, a combination of attempting different approaches in the classroom, in conjunction with collaboration and discussion with other teachers, were valued by all participants and considered integral to this evolution from beginning to mature teacher. The concept of mentorship, of more experienced teachers acting as models in this transition, was noted by several participants as being particularly important in developing the skills needed to teach effectively and in providing a supportive community in which to grow professionally. As the teachers began to accrue more experience, knowledge and understanding of their job, this need for mentorship appeared to shift to a desire for collegial relationships that involved discussion and sharing with other teachers. Janet, an experienced teacher who has worked in three different school districts, as well as the private school system, described her facility with a variety of literacies as "literally coming through practice and through change. That kind of training comes through openness to change and discussion with other professionals who are committed to literacy. I've never had any formal training."

A desire for collaboration with other teachers was an issue that resonated with all of the participants in the study, and was seen by them as integral to the development of a pedagogy that supported a multiliteracies approach to literacy education. Consequently, this concentration on collaboration represents an important facet of the theme of teachers' stress on the development of knowledge through teaching and through other teachers. Yet, this desire was described as unfilled by the majority of participants, despite the view that sharing resources and strategies was of primary importance. Although the school district had brought in literacy experts, and all of the participants who attended these sessions noted them as informative, teachers continued to emphasize the importance of

collaboration with other teachers. Though this sharing was a priority for most participants, little was described as taking place beyond that between small groups of teachers working together in the district either through Professional Partnerships such as that which Daniel was taking part or fostered through informal collegial relationships. The English Language Arts Specialist Association, according to Hannah who was acting as president, did not meet regularly because of scheduling conflicts with members, despite being given money from the district. Hannah attributed this inability to meet to the reconfiguration process in the district noting, “This has been a tough year all around. With all of the change and our class sizes being so large, it is really hard to coordinate meeting times. People are burnt out.”

As the participants are using experiences as teachers, both in the classroom and in collaboration with other teachers, to inform their teaching a variety of literacies, they are also calling on their experiences outside of the classroom through personal interests or other types of work experiences to enrich their literacy programs. Each participant was drawing from their own personal skill set, much garnered from experience outside of their educational background. Each participant cited an example of how he/she is able to bring an interest such as photography, film studies, technology, art, music or drama into the classroom. Graham described his interest in drama as being a large part of his teaching in the sense that it informed his persona as a teacher, “It impacts how I teach because I see how I teach as a narrative and I try to bring those stories to life through things like assumption of character or roles.” Doug’s love of music and capacity to play the guitar motivated him to incorporate this talent into his English classes. Janet drew from a youth spent in the drama department of a university in which her father was a

professor, as well as her own work experience on film sets, in her teaching of drama and film. Diane's hobby of photography has been featured in classes such as that which I observed. Laura's interest and fascination with film have motivated her to learn a considerable amount about film criticism and production, which she uses in her teaching of this medium. The participants of this study certainly reflected a wealth of knowledge about and capacity with numerous modes and this facility was for the most part obtained because of personal interests and experiences that the teachers segued into the classroom.

The teachers who participated in this study viewed practical experience as being fundamental to their teaching a range of literacies, and given that the majority had completed their pre-service education before this theory was published, this onus is not surprising. Those writing on teacher culture, particularly in regards to student teachers who enter this professional culture, note the tendency to stress the practical aspects learned on the job over theory accrued in their studies at university (Allen, 2009; Marsh, 2006; Roswell, Kosnik & Beck, 2008). Many of the participants, despite having gone on to pursue post-graduate degrees, continued to look to collegial sharing as a central source of professional development, citing the need for such contacts to incorporate a variety of literacies in their classes. Although this collegial sharing is certainly an essential part of professional growth, it perhaps limits the impact of contemporary literacy theory on practice. One positive feature that I noted was that these teachers displayed a large pool of talent and a diverse range of interests from which to draw in teaching a variety of literacies that goes much beyond what many would likely ascribe to English Language Arts educators. The challenge is to connect this practice to the theory developed by

researchers so that teachers can apply this wealth of experience into meaningful and relevant literacy instruction for students.

*“Time is our Enemy”*

Doug’s assertion that ‘time is our enemy’ reverberated through all of the interviews. The resource of time, and more specifically a lack of time, was apparent throughout the data of the interviews as participants described a lack of time to develop resources, engage in professional development, work with colleagues, accrue technology, learn technological skills, deal with technology problems and familiarize themselves with current literacy theory. The scarcity of the resource of time was described as a major impediment to teachers’ ability to incorporate a variety of literacies into the English Language Arts classroom.

The issue of time, and specifically how this resource should be allocated, provided an insight into the perceived role of the English Language Arts teacher and a facet of the theme of time. Throughout all of the interviews, the amount of work required of English Language Arts teachers was commented on mostly in terms of marking load. This allocation of time for assessment of mostly print-based assignments, such as literary response essays, again emphasizes an ingrained view of the ‘work’ of English, not only in terms of students’ work, but also of teachers’ time. Graham was in the process of moving back into Social Studies, attempting to teach fewer English Language Arts classes, despite the fact that he really enjoys teaching English. He asserted that, “The work load is too much. You have to mark so much because for kids to write well, they have to write a lot.” While all of the participants saw the incorporation of a variety of literacies as being worthwhile, they simultaneously focused a great deal of professional time on the

assessment of print literacy. The consequence of an inordinate amount of time being spent on one facet of teaching, assessment of mostly a narrow set of skills means that teachers are left without the time to develop other areas of their teaching. Ingrained values not only of certain literacies that are privileged above others, but of the attributes of a good English Language Arts teacher, one who is overburdened by marking, ultimately seemed to contribute to a state of stasis in the English Language Arts classrooms of the participants.

Time was also an issue in regards to teachers' ability to accrue resources. All of the participants in this study expressed the need for access to technology in order to incorporate a multiliteracies approach in their classes. Teachers specifically valued using such tools as a data projector and computer tablet as a means to explore these literacies in their classrooms. The ability to quickly display a clip from You Tube or play a song without having to book, move and set up equipment greatly eased and encouraged the incorporation of multiple literacies. Some teachers were able to access this technology through the Professional Partnership program in the district, although as described by Daniel, "It involves a hefty application process and that takes a lot of time." In the cases of Diane and Tina, whose administrator had done all of the paperwork to procure equipment for staff through The Universal Design for Learning initiative, time to learn how to use this equipment in the classroom had created impediments for many teachers. Tina described the persistence of "print, print and more print" in the English Language Arts despite this infusion of technology because many teachers lack the time to learn how to use the equipment. The obstacles that came up when attempting to integrate technology into the classroom also created a drain on teacher time. Tina was working to

remove spam blockers so that her students could download images for an assignment. Hannah also described a similar need for time to address the technology issues that continually surfaced in her classroom.

Unequal access to literacies through technology is a feature noted by some writers on the topic of multiple literacies (Bruce, 2009; Gee, 2003). Although access to technology was unequally distributed among participants in this study, the main reason for these inequities was what some teachers described as a lack of time to pursue acquisition of either or both equipment and training. Although descriptions of “insider knowledge” were depicted by participants like Laura that made it easier for some teachers to acquire these resources, all of the teachers were able to apply for funding to enable these acquisitions. Time appeared to be the biggest impediment to teachers who did not take advantage of these initiatives.

The theme of time was also evident in regards to teachers’ professional development. The central issue that participants believed needed to be addressed through professional development initiatives in the district was in terms of the allocation of time for collaboration with other secondary English Language Arts teachers. Several participants described taking part in ongoing professional development in which visiting literacy experts, Fay Brownlie and Leyton Shnellert, conducted series of workshops on literacy. Those who did not take part were aware of these opportunities, but described a lack of time as being a primary reason for failure to participate. In addition, all of the participants recounted taking part in a variety of workshops on incorporating different media in their classes such as websites or blogs. Yet, as Diane pointed out, “as far as understanding the literacy of the medium, such as designs or symbols, that is all me.”

Similarly, Laura had taken a workshop on graphic novels but noted that she is still in the process of developing her understanding of this literacy. The need for time to contemplate, discuss and develop strategies beyond the initial workshop in order to implement these ideas in their classes was a recurring issue with all of the participants in the study. For these types of activities to impact teachers' practices, they needed time to develop understanding and reflect on strategies for incorporating multiple literacies into their classes.

Teachers' comments on where their time is spent reflected their values and views about literacy education. Some teachers, like Diane and Hannah, spent considerable time on developing their technology skills so that they can integrate a variety of media into the classroom. Doug commented, "If I am doing my job properly, I should not have the time to advocate for resources like technology." In contrast, Daniel viewed the integration of technology as important in his classes and therefore took the time to apply for funding to accrue a data projector and tablet for his classroom. Yet, he did not take part in district professional development initiatives despite being very knowledgeable about what was offered because he stated that he did not have the time. In some instances, time was taken up by factors like large class sizes and meetings about grade reconfiguration, as discussed by Hannah. Consequently, teachers did not have the time to address other professional areas. Time is a finite resource, and it seemed that the teachers were making choices about where to apply this resource where they deem most necessary. In many instances, these teachers recognized needs that they were not addressing because of a lack of time. Further, factors that were beyond teachers' control, like meetings for reconfiguration or large class sizes, created an additional drain on this resource. The integration of multiple

literacies into the classroom was certainly impacted by limited time, and although some teachers described this area as being a priority, others were addressing this area of their practice with less insistence.

*Teacher Culture: Resistant to Change*

English Language Arts teacher culture was described by participants, with the exceptions of Doug and Hannah, as reluctant to change towards a multiliteracies approach. This resistance to change in teacher culture is the final theme that I identified across the interviews of participants. Most participants portrayed the continued focus on literacy as being print based in the English Language Arts. Graham relayed a core belief in his department that the English Language Arts is about “lots of writing and pain and suffering.” Diane considered the instruction of a range of literacies in the district as “spotty.” Tina noted the English Language Arts teachers’ focus on “print, print and more print,” and Janet also described an emphasis on traditional texts and linear print. Daniel, as conveyed in the previous chapter, pointed to the “conservative” quality of teachers, noting a focus on “writing and everything else [as] fluff.”

Yet, although the majority of teachers in this study recognized entrenched attitudes amongst colleagues that do not bode well for students’ opportunity to explore numerous literacies in the English Language Arts, several also pointed to the movement of teachers within the district towards the encouragement of this pedagogical perspective as being a potentially positive force. The infusion of new teachers from middle schools into secondary school cultures in a fairly dramatic manner may work towards eroding ingrained views of literacy. As described by Laura:

I find that teachers coming up from middle schools are more willing to work with multiple literacies. Lots of the people coming up from [a former middle school in the district] who had support with technology and professional development offer a lot of encouragement, and they lifted the tone of what some of us are trying to do here. It might have been just that particular school but when I did my practicum at [a different former middle school in the district] there was a similar feeling of community in which teachers and administration are willing to go there.

Janet described transition as “breathing new life into [Secondary School A]” and Diane reflected on a similar “openness to change” during her short tenure at Secondary School D because of a dynamic staff. Doug, who has spent a considerable portion of his life as both a student and teacher at Secondary School C, commented on shifts in culture due to changes in department members:

This is a fairly transient department. So I don’t see any entrenched behaviors. I always fear that if I had to come up against the old school department where so and so was like Jehovah, that they would see me as a silly and frivolous person. They are a dinosaur breed now. Things are changing because they have to change whether we like it or not because society is changing.

Although transition has placed pressure on staff, as voiced by Hannah in terms of staff burn out, it may also perhaps allow for shifts in culture that may encourage English Language Arts teachers at the secondary level to make meaningful changes towards a pedagogy of multiliteracies. Despite the predominant belief of most participants that teacher culture is resistant to change, and consequently teachers in the English Language Arts continue to address their subject in a traditional manner, some teachers saw the

potential for the evolution of attitudes towards acceptance of multiple literacies because of the physical movement of teachers. The existing secondary school cultures may change because of the introduction of new teachers who may be more willing to incorporate multiple literacies into their English Language Arts classes.

The characteristic of teacher culture as being resistant to change has been noted by many researching secondary school sites (Burroughs & Smagorinsky, 2009; Hilferty, 2008; Moje, O'Brien & Stewart, 2001). Like the majority of the participants in this study, these researchers noted the entrenchment of values, beliefs and pedagogical approaches shared by teachers in a particular subject or discipline subculture. Although many of the participants did not identify themselves as embracing the values that they attributed to their colleagues, most participants described their fellow English Language Arts teachers as being reluctant to adapt their teaching practices towards a multiliteracies pedagogical approach. Yet, the infusion of middle school teachers into these secondary school cultures presents a unique and potentially transforming element that is not considered in the literature. As the process of reconfiguration was recently initiated at the time that the data for this study was collected, it was too early to conclude the long-term impact that will be levied to the subject subcultures that were described by the participants. Despite the potential for changes in the secondary school cultures in which they taught, the majority of the participants described their work cultures as being slow to accept multiple literacies in the English Language Arts.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the results of my analysis across the cases of this study. I identified the theme of teachers' uncertainties with assessment because of a lack

of expertise with nonlinguistic modes. In addition, I identified the themes of a focus on linguistic modes, particularly print based texts, as well as the maintenance of a dominant d/Discourse in the English Language Arts classroom. The factors that I noted through the analysis of the data that influenced the enactment of a pedagogy of multiliteracies were teachers' stress on the experiential, lack of time, and a teacher culture that was resistant to change. Although participants were critical of some aspects of standardized testing, these tests did not appear to significantly influence teachers to either include or exclude a variety of literacies in their programs.

In Chapter 6, I present my findings in relation to the research questions that were described in Chapters 1 and 2. In addition, I outline recommendations to both teachers and policy makers in consideration of the findings of this study, as well as calls for further research. The topic of enacting a pedagogy of multiliteracies in the classroom is complex and consequently, several items by necessity were not explored to their potential. As a result, there remain questions that beg further analysis in the integration of theory into the practical realm of the classroom. Particularly in regards to practitioner research, this topic presents numerous opportunities for teachers to investigate their own practice and perhaps offer solutions to issues that challenge teachers in the adoption of this pedagogy. In contrast, this topic also presents research questions for researchers outside of the practical sphere of teaching. Although I found this research process illuminating, I do note that I identified strongly with my participants because of my own role as an English Language Arts teacher. As discussed in Chapter 3, my role as a practitioner researcher does not negate these findings, but it does present a particular perspective that should be contrasted to perspectives of researchers from an etic position.

## Chapter 6

### Findings and Recommendations

In the final chapter of this thesis, I discuss the findings of the study in relation to the research questions, followed by recommendations to teachers, policy makers and researchers in consideration of these findings. First, I provide a brief review of the study, including the theoretical foundations as portrayed in Chapter 2 and the methods that I used to collect and analyze the data on which I based my findings as considered in Chapter 3. Second, I present the findings of this study in relation to the four research questions on which the study is based. Last, I present recommendations to teachers, policy makers and researchers in consideration of my findings. This study emphasized several issues that are impeding teachers from incorporating a multiliteracies pedagogy in their English Language Arts classes. Recommendations to teachers include the following subjects; interdisciplinary knowledge, collaboration, time, and links to theory. The recommendations to policy makers that I offer are in regards to the issues of standardized tests and resources. Finally, in calls for future research, I discuss specific topics for practitioner research, as well as consider some other areas for future research from an etic perspective.

### Review of the Study

The purpose of this study was to research the literacies that a group of secondary teachers were incorporating into their English Language Arts classes, their motivations for integrating multiliteracies and how these teachers were enacting these literacies in their classes. In addition, I sought to understand the factors that were either impeding or supporting the teachers in a multiliteracies pedagogical approach in the English Language

Arts. Further, my intention was to relate the findings from my study to the existing literature on multiliteracies.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the theoretical foundation for a pedagogy of multiliteracies as presented by The New London Group (1996, 2000) is that of social constructivism in which literacy, and communication in general, is perceived as socially enacted (Berk & Winsler, 1995). In contrast, approaches to literacy instruction that are based on individual skills and universal patterns do not acknowledge the multitude of d/Discourses that students bring with them to school or those that students will use in their future lives (Bizzell, 2003; Gee, 1989, 2002; Heath, 1982). Rather, a pedagogy of multiliteracies urges teachers to attend to the out-of-school literacy practices of students, particularly given shifts in communication practices as a result of technological innovations (Luke, 2000; Moss, 2003; Rhodes & Robnolt, 2009; Ryan, 2008; Unsworth, 2008) and our growing understanding of the multimodal nature of communication as presented in theories of semiotics (Jewitt, 2008; Kress, 2003).

Further, a pedagogy of multiliteracies was developed as a means to address entrenched inequities in literacy education that privilege the d/Discourse conventions of some, particularly those whose primary d/Discourses are congruent with Standard English (Apple, 2004; Bizzell, 2003; Jewitt, 2008; Luke, 2003). Therefore, teachers who embrace a pedagogical approach of multiliteracies attempt to connect students' out-of-school literacies to school literacies, as well as urge students towards developing meta-knowledge (Gee, 1989, 1999; Moje, 2000) and critical literacy skills (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Morgan, 1997) in response to numerous d/Discourses.

Chapter 3 of this thesis outlined the research methods that I employed for the study. I used qualitative research methods to collect the data through interviews, field notes, documents, and observations. The design of the study was case study in which I collected data from eight participants who taught from the four secondary school sites in the school district in which the study was conducted. I first analyzed the data across cases, and I identified themes through the analysis of all of the data collected from each of the eight participants in the study, and the results of this analysis were presented in Chapter 5. I analyzed the data collected from individual participants and the themes that I identified in my within case analysis were presented in Chapter 4. Finally, in Chapter 4, I also presented descriptions of two classroom observations that featured visual literacies. I used the instructional framework outlined by the New London Group (1996, 2000) and discussed in both Chapters 2 and 3 to analyze this data. In the following part of this chapter, I present my findings in relation to my research questions.

#### Research Findings in Relation to Research Questions

##### *Question #1:*

*What literacies are being taught in the secondary English Language Arts classrooms?*

This study demonstrated some positive factors supporting teachers' adoption of a pedagogical approach of multiliteracies in the English Language Arts. Most importantly, the teachers recognized that students' literacy needs are changing and that they need to bring students' out-of-school literacy practices into the classroom. Further, all of the participants were incorporating a range of media in their English Language Arts classes, and they believed that the curriculum supported this pedagogical approach.

Multiliteracies as a pedagogical approach has not received the attention in Canadian schools that it has in other nations like Australia. Callow (2008) noted that, “In Australia, visual literacy is integrated in all literacy syllabus documentation across states and territories” (p. 616). A perspective of multiliteracies in the context of Canadian schools is difficult to judge as much of the literature on multiliteracies is focused on Australian, British and American literacy education. Cummins (2006) portrayed Canadian secondary literacy instruction as mostly print based. Veeman, Ward and Walker (2006) described a lack of connection between students’ home literacies and school literacies. Although the participants in this study reflected a focus on print materials, and mostly traditional canonical texts like novels, short stories, and poetry, they also demonstrated a willingness to integrate other literacies, for the most part either as a means for extension or connection to these texts.

The teachers in this study portrayed examples of film, drama, visual modes, music, spoken poetry and in one instance, dance, as well as texts from popular culture like graphic novels and tabloid articles in their English Language Arts classes. The prevalence of different literacies in these teachers’ classes does not support a view of the English Language Arts as entirely print based, although the extent to which students are developing media specific skills with these multiple literacies varied between cases.

Technology based literacies were integrated into all of the participants’ classes and many participants used technology as a means to connect students’ personal literacies to school literacies. Rhodes and Robnolt (2009) concluded that, “Although the current pace of technology use has lagged behind student use outside the school environment, modern students are encouraging, nudging, and pushing educators to bring experiences

and learning into the school house” (p. 160). This feature of contemporary students was noted by several participants and cited as an impetus for their own integration of technology based literacies in the classroom. Much of the literature also reflects this position, in that teachers are attempting to address technology in the classroom although often not in a manner that reflects the immediate literacy needs of students (Alexander, 2008; Alvermann, 2009; Antsy & Bull, 2006; Black & Steinkuehler, 2009; Jewitt, 2008, Mills, 2009; Stone, 2007).

Most of the participants demonstrated awareness that technology needs to be featured in the English Language Arts and were consciously acquiring the skills and adjusting their practices in order to support this facet of students’ literacy learning. The examples of teachers’ use of literacies accessed through technology in the classroom, I believe, demonstrated quite a range of literacies and reflected that which is portrayed in the literature as beneficial for students (Alexander, 2008; Bruce, 2009; Kadjer, 2007; Mills, 2007; Rhodes & Robnolt, 2009; Ryan, 2008). Participants described incorporating such digital literacies as blogs, wikis, flickr, PowerPoint presentations, Facebook, YouTube clips, websites, texting with cell phones and Movie Maker. Given the speed at which technology changes in contemporary culture, and the feature of adolescents as being at the forefront of such changes (Alvermann; Stone), most participants demonstrated attempts to adjust their practices in as timely a manner as one could likely expect.

Computer games, such as online games, are portrayed in the literature as commonly practiced by adolescents in their personal time and some researchers have considered the potential of integrating these games into the classroom (Bruce, 2009; Gee,

2003; MacArthur Foundation, 2006; Rhodes & Robnolt, 2009). Such games were not described by any of the participants in this study, and consequently, inattention to the literacy practices of adolescents who play computer games was an exception to the inclusion of students' digital literacies in the participants' English Language Arts programs. Therefore, teachers were integrating multiple literacies into their English Language Arts courses to varying degrees, including those computer based literacies described in the literature with the exception of computer games.

*Question #2:*

*What motivates teachers to integrate multiple literacies in their classes?*

Mills (2009) describes the ongoing debate amongst literacy teachers and researchers. On one hand, a "time honoured, 'quality', and classical" approach in the English Language Arts is espoused in contrast to a pedagogy of multiliteracies which is "inclusive of informal, open-ended, multimodal forms of communication, which cross national boundaries and support productive diversity" (p. 105). She noted the incongruity between these two positions, as the former is concerned with using texts as 'reproductions' and the latter urges students to "think about how textual practices work in the construction of subjectivity and production of culture" (p. 105). I believe that the majority of the participants in this study reflected a position in the crossroads of this exchange.

The participants varied in their willingness to incorporate literacies other than the canonical print ones that are attributed to the English Language Arts (Burroughs & Smagorinsky, 2009). Their motivations for integrating multiple literacies reflected their individual values and beliefs. Participants' motives were also integral to how they

incorporated these literacies into their classes. For example, although Janet is integrating a range of literacies in her classes, she does not explore these literacies for the purpose of bridging home and school literacies. Rather, her purpose is one of enrichment in which she connects these literacies to the literature students study in her class and she chooses literacies that suit this purpose. Further, her insistence on students taking a critical stance in respect to language does not fit the model of cultural reproduction that is ascribed to a traditional, canonical approach in some of the literature on the topic of multiliteracies (Carrington, 2005; Hagood, 2000; Luke, 2003; Mills, 2009; Moss, 2006). In contrast, both Graham and Tina were motivated to integrate digital literacies as a means to provide “hooks” to traditional literacies, yet neither of these participants described addressing students’ skills with the media that they incorporated. Hannah portrayed attention to media specific skills, but she attributed her motivation for incorporating multiple literacies as a way to extend themes from the literature that she was exploring and connect these themes to contemporary culture. Both Diane and Laura discussed the need for students to develop media specific skills to effectively navigate the literacies apparent outside-of-school. Yet, Laura also stated reluctance about bringing some of students’ out-of-school literacies into the classroom that she deemed lacked quality or rigor. Doug and Daniel were the most hesitant to incorporate a range of literacies in their courses. Although Doug did attempt to address students’ out-of-school literacy practices in his English Language Arts courses to connect school and home literacies, he articulated skepticism about the value of these literacies. Daniel depicted conflicting beliefs about the incorporation of a variety of literacies in the English Language Arts, although he did note the value for student engagement.

Again, the participants reflected a range of motives for integrating a variety of literacies in their English Language Arts programs. None of the teachers in the study could be ascribed to one side of the debate as described by Mills (2009) in which traditionalists are pitted against those who advocate a multiliteracies approach in the English Language Arts. Rather, teachers demonstrated features that reflected both positions and their motives for including particular literacies in their classes were contingent on their views about literacy learning and their beliefs about the needs of their students. Therefore, my findings revealed these teachers' range of motives for their pedagogical choices that do not conform to the view of English Language Arts teachers as traditionalists (Burroughs & Smagorinsky, 2009). Yet neither did participants, with the exception of Diane, articulate adherence to the beliefs about literacy instruction as presented by The New London Group (1996, 2000).

In particular, participants did not portray the need for students to develop awareness of multiple d/Discourses as a motive for incorporating multiple literacies in their classes. Rather, most participants described integrating multiple literacies as a support to traditional school based literacies and d/Discourses. Only two teachers considered the power relations at work in regards to literacy (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). In contrast, most participants presented their views about literacy learning as what Larson and Marsh (2005) described as "a context-neutral skill." As a result, teachers did not question the maintenance of a dominant d/Discourse in their classrooms. Given the "transformative agenda" (Jewitt, 2008) that prompted the genesis of a multiliteracies pedagogical approach with the goal of addressing entrenched inequities apparent in

literacy education, the majority of the participants in this study did not portray their own pedagogies in a manner that conformed to these ideological foundations.

Participants' motives for integrating multiple literacies into their English Language Arts classes were integral to how they enacted these literacies in their classrooms. As many participants, such as Tina and Graham, were motivated to incorporate a variety of literacies because they wanted to render traditional texts to students in a relatable manner, they did not describe consideration of the features of the literacies they were integrating, nor did they portray instructing students in skills specific to these literacies. Daniel stressed that students' out-of-school literacies were incorporated "for engagement not for academic merit." Much of the literature on multiliteracies portrays the need for teachers to explicitly teach media specific features and skills (Siegel, 2006; Suhor, 1992; Zoss, 2009) in order for students to be literate (Langer, 2009) in contemporary society. Diane was an exception to this theme because her motivation for including a range of literacies in her classes was based on her belief that students required instruction in media specific features. In addition, she stated that students' exploration of multiple d/Discourses supported the development of critical literacy skills. Consequently, Diane's integration of multiple literacies differed from that of most of the participants because her goal was to facilitate students' development of multimodal skills, and their understanding of multiple d/Discourses.

Another finding that I identified regarding the motivation of teachers to include certain literacies in their English Language Arts classes was that of interests and experiences outside of teaching that supported a multiliteracies approach in the classroom. All of the participants were able to cite outside experiences, interests, and

hobbies that they incorporated into their classes. Teachers were calling on interests such as music, film, technology and photography to inform their teaching of the English Language Arts because it felt natural for them to share these interests with students. Similarly, teachers also described using skills accrued through other work or experiences outside of teaching to inform, as well as motivate them, in their teaching multiple literacies. Consequently, participants demonstrated skills and interests beyond their educational backgrounds that were motivating and informing their integration of multiple literacies. Such a diversity of talent, experiences and interests as displayed by participants goes beyond the skill set I believe is ascribed to English Language Arts teachers. In addition, their reasoning for including a variety of literacies because of interests and experiences outside of teaching was not based on literacy theory.

*Question #3:*

*How are teachers enacting these literacies in their classes?*

One of the major findings of this study was my identification of a lack of explicit instruction of the literacies that teachers were incorporating into their classes. In the description of my observation of Laura's English 10 class and my subsequent analysis using the instructional framework portrayed by The New London Group (1996, 2000), I noted the absence of explicit instruction to facilitate students' interpretation of visual imagery. A lack of explicit instruction of nonlinguistic modes was also identified in both the across case and the within case analysis of the data. Discussion about assessment prompted teachers to consider if they had taught students media specific skills, as well as to question their own understanding of the mode that they were assessing. Several researchers have noted the problematic nature of assessment of multiliteracies as

discussed in Chapters 2 and 5 (Callow, 2008; Jewitt, 2003; Kalantzis, Cope & Harvey, 2003; Moss, 2001; Myers, 1992). Traditional forms of assessment have been critiqued due to lack of applicability to real world literacy practices (Kalantzis, Cope & Harvey). Further, the continued focus of assessment of linguistic skills refutes the learning that students have accrued in multiple modes (Jewitt, 2003). The need for both explicit instruction in multiple modes, and development of media specific language (or meta-language), that are incorporated in the English Language Arts classes is apparent in the writing by literacy researchers (Antsy & Bull, 2006; Callow, 2008; Jewitt, 2008; Seigel, 2006; Zoss, 2009). Further, the critical perspective afforded through this pedagogical approach (The New London Group) is untapped if students are not taught the tools with which to take this stance.

Yet some examples of teachers' instructional practices reflected the instructional components described by The New London Group (1996, 2000) as detailed particularly through my observation and analysis of Diane's English Language Arts 12 class. Laura and Graham described literacies such as music and film, noting that they were able to teach the features of these forms to students and consequently they were at ease in their assessment practices. Yet, Laura and Graham also noted other literacies that they were less knowledgeable about and consequently were less sure about their instructional and assessment practices when integrating such literacies into their classes. A few teachers, such as Laura and Janet, noted the need for explicit instruction in modes other than the linguistic ones traditionally focused on and were attempting to adjust their skills to achieve this end. Despite the lack of explicit instruction revealed through the theme of assessment in the practices of most participants, I think the fact that some teachers

communicated contemplating this area of their practice and noting deficiencies is part of an evolutionary process. The shift of this pedagogy from theory to practice ensures that teachers will encounter uncertainty as they integrate multiple literacies into their classes.

This study also identified numerous challenges that educators face in adjusting their pedagogical approach to address the changing literacy needs of students. Entrenched values which privilege particular kinds of texts and skills were portrayed in the responses of participants. The focus of most participants on Standard English and literary texts was another finding that I identified in this study. Consequently, the exploration of different literacies themselves, in many instances, did not consider the communicative elements of the form used because these forms were viewed as peripheral to instructional purposes. Several teachers used nonlinguistic modes or students' out-of-school literacies as hooks or as a means to extend themes of traditional texts. As a result, the features of these literacies were themselves not explored. In addition, in many cases the d/Discourse portrayed in the classroom was that traditionally associated with the English Language Arts, in which certain types of behaviors and forms of language are centralized. Participants presented little consideration of incorporating and juxtaposing various d/Discourses, and this omission is problematic to the development of students' understanding of the ideological function of d/Discourses and in their ability to take a critical stance (Gee, 1989, 1999; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Moje, 2000). The adoption of a pedagogy of multiliteracies requires teachers to alter many fundamental beliefs about literacy learning and their own role as literacy teachers. This adjustment of perspective is likely one of the largest challenges to overcome in the goal of providing students with a multiliteracies approach in the English Language Arts classroom.

My findings do not entirely support those depicted in the literature (Alvermann, 2009; Burroughs & Smagorinsky, 2009; Cummins, 2006; Luke, 2003; MacArthur Foundation, 2006) that have claimed, such as Moss (2003) that “the literacy curriculum is profoundly out of step with the times” (p. 145). Rather, the participants in this study were attempting to provide students with relevant literacy instruction by incorporating a variety of literacies into their English Language Arts classes, including students’ out-of-school literacies and technology based literacies. Yet, I did identify that participants, with few exceptions, continued to focus on traditional skills and texts, conforming to the findings in the literature on multiple literacies, despite teachers’ willingness to integrate a variety of literacies mostly in a peripheral manner. Unsworth’s (2008) description of a “literacy of fusion” that merges school-based literacies and those literacies identified in popular culture was also not apparent in my analysis of the collected data. The teachers, for the most part, continued to perceive literacy in a traditional manner. Consequently, despite a willingness to integrate multiple literacies into the English Language Arts, the majority of the participants in this study were not achieving the pedagogical goals as described by The New London Group (1996, 2000).

*Question #4:*

*What factors are impeding or supporting teachers in their integration of multiple literacies?*

With a rethinking of literacy in our contemporary times, must also come a reanalysis of the role of the English Language Arts teacher and the purpose of this subject. A pedagogy of multiliteracies urges teachers towards a different conception of the skills required to do their jobs, as well as the environment in which their work takes

place. Hilferty's (2008) description of subject subcultures as a primary influence on teachers appears to hold true, although participants were at times largely critical of attributes they identified, such as "conservatism," within their departments. Yet, despite criticism, fundamental similarities among many of the participants' beliefs about literacy and the English Language Arts were apparent. Many of the participants portrayed their pedagogical approach as one that prioritized linguistic modes, specifically Standard English and literary texts. The maintenance of norms specific to a subject d/Discourse is apparent in much of the literature on secondary school culture and multiple literacies (Burroughs & Smagorinsky, 2009; Carrington, 2005; Moje, O'Brien & Stewart, 2001; Moss, 2003). Therefore, despite the willingness of participants to incorporate multiple literacies into their classes, most participants' fundamental views conformed to those portrayed in the literature stressing a focus on traditional approaches in the English Language Arts.

The emphasis on experiential knowledge as described in the literature reinforces many prevalent attitudes and beliefs about literacy learning (Allen, 2009; Marsh, 2006; Roswell, Kosnik & Beck, 2008). Teachers' formal education in theory that supports a multiliteracies approach was nominal, and a focus on experience, either in regards to their own experiences or in sharing the experiences of other teachers, as being the primary source for knowledge about teaching a range of literacies was evident across cases. Although the teachers presented a diverse range of abilities and knowledge that could provide a rich resource for collegial sharing if it occurs, the concentration on the practical side of teaching perhaps ignores the importance of theory in literacy education. Such elements as explicit instruction of media specific features, which were not addressed by

most participants in this study, may be the result of a lack of familiarity with contemporary literacy theory.

The identity of English Language Arts teachers certainly influences their conceptions about their job and a thorough investigation goes beyond the scope of this study. Views concerning use of professional time, allocation of resources, and the skills and knowledge that an English Language Arts teacher should portray appear to be part of this subject d/Discourse and consequently affect pedagogical changes in the classroom. Although standardized tests were a factor in teachers' choices of the literacies integrated into their classes, the individual values of participants about literacy learning, and likely the values inherent to the subculture to which they belong, carried more weight in the pedagogical approaches that they portrayed. Consequently, teacher identity and teacher culture were found to play a greater role in literacy education than extrinsic factors like standardized tests and the allocation of resources in this study.

The literature on multiple literacies points to standardized tests as being a major impediment to the enactment of a multiliteracies pedagogy in literacy education (Alvermann, 2009; Carrington, 2005; Marshall, 2009; McClay, 2002; Siegel, 2006; Zoss, 2009). In contrast, the findings from this study indicate that although all of the participants considered these exams as indicative of student achievement, teachers who valued the integration of multiple literacies in their classes persevered in doing so because this pedagogy conformed to their views about literacy education. Conversely, teachers, such as Daniel, who designed their programs specifically to attend to the provincial exam, also described beliefs and values that positioned the literacies apparent on these exams as being of central importance. Consequently, I believe that teachers'

individual values and beliefs about literacy are the most important factor in determining the literacies that students will explore in the English Language Arts.

### *Conclusion*

My findings from the analysis of the data collected from participants in the study reveal some positive factors in the literacy education of students at the secondary level. First, teachers are motivated to incorporate multiple literacies, particularly the digital literacies that have been identified by researchers as paramount in the lives of many adolescents (Alexander, 2008; Black & Steinkueler, 2009; Bruce, 2009; Stone, 2007; Ryan, 2008). Secondly, teachers also display a wide assortment of skills, knowledge and talent with which to facilitate the integration of multiple literacies into the English Language Arts Classroom. Yet, although participants described integrating numerous literacies into their programs, they continued to portray their views about literacy learning as being grounded in traditional conceptions of literacy and these views were reflected in their motives for incorporating multiple literacies and how they enacted these literacies in their classrooms.

Through my analysis of participants' responses regarding factors that influenced their incorporation of multiple literacies in their programs, I identified the entrenchment of values and beliefs about literacy as being a major obstacle to reforms to literacy education. Teachers' beliefs and values motivated their allocation of professional time which consequently affected other factors such as professional development, the acquisition of resources, and collegial sharing. In the following part of this chapter, I offer recommendations to teachers and policy makers, as well as suggestions for future research on the topic of multiple literacies.

## Recommendations to Teachers

### *Interdisciplinary Knowledge*

One of the greatest challenges that teachers face in the implementation of multiliteracies in the English Language Arts classroom is the shift from the disciplinary segmentation of knowledge that is the mainstay of secondary schools (Burroughs & Smagorinsky, 2009; Hilferty, 2008) to one that is interdisciplinary. According to Hannah, her pedagogy had been revolutionized by her brief tenure at the elementary level. She described her perspective as being dramatically altered because of the holistic approach that she was encouraged to take, and she brought some of these techniques with her into the Secondary English Language Arts classroom. The holistic approach to learning at the elementary level is a feature that may provide insight to teachers at the secondary level towards integrating those literacies that have been traditionally undervalued in the English Language Arts.

Dyson (2004), Kress (2003) and Siegel (2006) write of the need for students to apply the resources they bring with them from home to the sign systems explored within school so that they can make use of their full “semiotic tool kits” (Siegel, p. 73). The advantages for literacy teachers to access this knowledge benefits linguistic learning as students are facilitated by their previous knowledge and abilities. Further, theories of semiotics and multimodality (Kress, 2003; Jewitt, 2008) point to the need for students to learn the features of these various modes, which they describe as always working in tandem, in order to be able to make meaning. Accordingly, to only facilitate students with the linguistic modes ensures that they are unable to really grasp the full meaning of a literacy event (Kress). In addition, the need for students to develop meta-language

appropriate to the form of media being used is described by numerous researchers (The New London Group, 1996; Siegel; Whitin, 2005; Zoss, 2009). Therefore, literacy teachers need to expand their understanding of literacy, as well as the skills that they bring to the literacy classroom. This rethinking of literacy is a momentous task, given that many of us have spent years immersing ourselves in a discipline focused educational system, both in terms of our own schooling and as teachers in which depth of knowledge in one's specific subject is valued (Moje, O'Brien & Stewart, 2001).

Yet, regardless of the discipline specific nature ascribed to knowledge in this system, there are extremely knowledgeable people who work in these schools who are educated to teach. I think that these teachers from other disciplines are, for most secondary literacy teachers, a largely untapped source for learning. Hannah's description of using the expertise of the professionals with whom she teaches demonstrates the sort of initiatives that could be very helpful for literacy teachers. These teachers have subject knowledge, understanding of instructional practices particular to these subjects, as well as assessment strategies that would benefit literacy teachers.

### *Collaboration*

The need to collaborate with other literacy teachers was unanimously cited by the participants in the study as integral to developing resources and instructional strategies that would facilitate their incorporation of multiple literacies in the classroom. Collaboration between teachers would certainly be helpful as the participants in this study presented numerous abilities, talents and experiences that could prove useful to other teachers. But this perspective is limited, given that teachers in other disciplines could also provide expertise in how to teach various modes effectively, as well as offer suggestions

for assessment measures, an area with which many participants struggled. Secondary schools house teachers with specialties in music, drama, dance, art, technology, and media and these teachers are on site and accessible.

In addition, elementary teachers present another possible resource for secondary literacy teachers. Secondary school English Language Arts teachers could perhaps benefit from gaining an understanding of some of the theory and strategies that elementary teachers use, particularly those who take a holistic, interdisciplinary approach to education. Both teachers in this study who had elementary education (Laura) and experience (Hannah) described these attributes as facilitating their incorporation of multiple literacies in their English Language Arts classes.

Therefore, my suggestion to English Language Arts teachers on the basis of the findings of this study, and research presented in the professional literature (Siegel, 2006; Suhor, 1992; Whitin, 2005; Zoss, 2009) is to move beyond their subject area and collaborate with teachers from other disciplines, as well as other levels of schooling. A pedagogy of multiliteracies demands that teachers, like our students, should be able to use creative problem solving skills, work cooperatively and reconsider students' literacy needs.

### *Time*

Another resource that all teachers who participated in this study described as lacking but necessary to integrate multiple literacies into the classroom was that of time. Teachers require time to learn about various modes, amass and develop classroom resources, cultivate instructional strategies, and shape assessment practices. The time required for teachers to do this amount of work is considerable. Yet, the time needed to

integrate multiple literacies is that which English Language Arts teachers at the secondary school level do not have. As described in the previous chapter, the issue of assessment in terms of the marking load of teachers in the English Language Arts resonated throughout the interviews with all of the participants. Participants stated that this deficit of time impeded them towards making pedagogical shifts.

Burroughs and Smagorinsky (2009) describe the focus of teachers on discipline specific forms like the five paragraph essay. They note that this type of writing is only really performed in the context of the secondary English classroom, and is not apparent in the writing that most students will do either in university (with the exception of perhaps first year composition courses) or in the world of work. This literacy practice is perpetuated in the English Language Arts, but exists in isolation from any other social context. In contrast, The New London Group (1996) emphasized the need for literacy practices in school to connect to literacy practices outside of school. Although altering practices challenges teachers and researchers as they attempt to enact these literacy practices in what remains the contrived experience of the classroom (Jewitt, 2008), this consideration does prompt teachers to turn a critical eye to the types of their classroom practices and the usefulness of these practices outside of school.

The concentration on particular forms of writing that are valued both in the disciplinary culture of the English Language Arts and through standardized tests is a significant impediment to teachers' incorporation of multiple literacies in their classes. Issues of values aside, teachers simply do not have the time to make pedagogical adjustments in a significant manner. A rethinking of the use of time and the effectiveness of where time is spent needs to be made by English Language Arts teachers. The need for

teachers to reconsider their use of time does not negate the need for teachers to be given time with which to do the work necessary to adjust their pedagogy, and ironically, it will take significant time for teachers to consider and change their practices. Yet, the potential for teachers to pull out of the marking stasis that has been entrenched in the discipline of the English Language Arts would greatly improve their effectiveness in providing relevant literacy instruction to students, and possibly end the draining of teacher time on many irrelevant assessment and evaluation practices.

### *Links to Theory*

Another facet of teacher culture that was observed both in this study and discussed in the work of other researchers (Allen, 2009; Lakly & Johnson, 2002; Marsh, 2006; Roswell, Kosnik & Beck, 2008; Smagorinsky, Gibson, Bickmore, Moore & Cook, 2004) is the value placed on the experiential side of teaching. Researchers have noted the engulfment of pre-service teachers into this element of teacher culture, and consequently, links to theory need to be made between teacher culture and the theoretical side of teaching beyond that of teacher education. In this study, participants emphasized their need to collaborate with other teachers in order to incorporate multiple literacies in their classes. Langer (2009) writes that such collaboration is essential to facilitating effective literacy instruction, but she also points to the need for teachers to be knowledgeable about current literacy theory. As mentioned in Chapter 3, practitioner research is one means to bridging these two spheres but further measures can be taken. In addition, the workshops in the district of the site of this study that feature visiting literacy specialists are another feature that encourages this link. The Local English Language Arts Specialist Association is a further means to bridge practice and theory.

Given the multiple roles that teachers must play and the variety of demands that are placed on them in their attempts to meet students' needs, teachers are often left with very little professional time to familiarize themselves with current educational research. The Local Specialist Association could be a means towards presenting teachers the relevant literature on literacy, as well as a channel towards bringing literacy teachers together to work collaboratively. Although a Local Specialist Association is present in this district, with funding from the school board, it is not currently being used by teachers in a manner that exploits its full potential.

As in the case of teacher time, creating links to literacy theory requires teachers to shift their priorities. This shift is not a small undertaking, and there are numerous factors that impede a change in outlook. Yet, the need for access to current theory was evident in this study and should, I think, be a priority amongst literacy teachers, administrators and policy makers.

### Recommendations to Policy Makers

#### *Standardized Tests*

Literacy researchers have emphasized the tendency to focus on entrenched texts and skills as a result of standardized tests (Alvermann, 2009; Carrington, 2005; Kalantzis, Cope, & Harvey, 2003; Luke, 2009; Marshall, 2009; McClay, 2002; Siegel, 2006; Zoss, 2009). Many teachers in this study also focused on the literacies that are featured on the tests, and consequently, the literacy education that the students experience in their secondary classrooms is less relevant and is less meaningful to worlds outside of school than it potentially could be. In addition, the high percentage afforded the provincial exam at the Grade 12 level and the lack of congruity between the exam and the curriculum, as

described by the participants of this study, extends this focus on a limited number of texts and skills. Despite recommendations by the British Columbia Ministry of Education (2008/09) to evaluate the components of the curriculum that are not featured in the tests, the use of these tests as central measurements of student achievement is pronounced. Maintaining an emphasis on these tests creates impediments to teachers' enactment of those practices and approaches to literacy that have been advocated by research. Serious reconsideration of these testing practices, and their effects on students' literacy learning, needs to occur by policy makers.

#### *Access to Resources*

As demonstrated by the participants in this study who all described the need for time, students' access to multiple literacies in the classroom is impacted by a lack of teachers' time to develop the necessary skills and knowledge, as well as to procure resources. Although attempts were made in the construction of policy to provide access of resources to teachers like technology, the need to apply for these resources was a further drain on teachers' time. The finite nature of teachers' time is an issue that is perhaps not given the attention that this study demonstrates it deserves. Teachers are choosing where their limited time is focused, and as a result, some students have access to literacies in their English Language Arts programs that other students do not. Although teachers should have the autonomy with which to manage their professional time, these participants described having to neglect areas of their practice because of the scarcity of time. With more time, teachers indicated that they would be able to attend to these issues, like amassing resources, taking part in professional development and collaborating with other teachers, that they were neglecting. Even in cases where administrators or teacher

librarians advocated for teachers' procurement of resources, such as technology, participants, like Tina and Hannah, noted that time was needed in order to effectively apply these resources or skills in their classrooms. The need for teachers to have structures imbedded within their working culture for collaboration and professional development was consequently also evident. Therefore, although some initiatives to provide teachers with support in professional development and resources like technology were noted in this district, attention needs to be given to the time that is taken to accrue these items, as well as the time needed to implement new technologies and strategies learned through professional development into their classes.

### Implications for Research

#### *Opportunities for Practitioner Research*

Positioning a pedagogy of multiliteracies into the English Language Arts classroom is particularly ripe with potential research topics for practitioner researchers. Many writing on multiliteracies have noted the need for research on integrating this approach into the context of the classroom (Callow, 2008; Jewitt, 2008; Unsworth, 2008). Participants in this study revealed common characteristics that could be addressed through research with the aim of finding solutions for teachers in classrooms. Teachers demonstrated a need for knowledge outside of their subject area to understand the multimodal nature of communication, strategies for teaching a range of literacies effectively in ways that facilitate students taking a critical stance, and guidance in the assessment and evaluation of multiple literacies.

As outlined earlier in this chapter, adopting a pedagogy of multiliteracies necessitates a shift in the perspectives of English Language Arts teachers. In doing so,

English Language Arts teachers need to broaden their knowledge of other fields. Practitioner researchers could undertake action research projects in which they are mentored by teachers in other disciplines in order to develop their understanding of a subject like music, art, or drama, as well as learn about assessment and instructional practices in this subject. Further, teachers could team teach with a partner in another subject area in order for both teachers to learn about practices outside of their particular discipline. These teachers could study this experience using an action research methodology, and document their learning in order to benefit other teachers. In addition, teachers could address specific topics, such as the assessment of visual literacies, and conduct action research projects which inquire into that one feature of their practice, providing perhaps greater depth than in more general projects. There are a large number of approaches that a teacher researcher could take in studying the enactment of a pedagogy of multiliteracies in his/her classroom that would be beneficial to other teachers as well as researchers.

*Suggested Topics for Researchers from an Etic Perspective*

Research that seeks to better understand English Language Arts teacher culture could provide helpful insight for those who attempt to reform literacy practices. Such an investigation could potentially consider the dominant d/Discourse that is evident in the entrenchment of values, but also the multiple competing d/Discourses that literacy teachers enact. The participants of this study demonstrated many conflicting views about literacy education, and I perceived them as occupying a place of tension in which many were attempting to adjust their pedagogies to meet students' needs in a changing society and simultaneously maintain constructions of standards and traditional approaches to

their subject areas. Teacher identity is a strongly related topic and its study could produce some insights into the pedagogical approaches that teachers adopt. Although this facet of teaching extended beyond the focus of this study, participants revealed attitudes and ideals about their role as literacy educators that guided the pedagogical choices that they made, as well as determined how they functioned within the secondary school setting.

These attitudes affect how a pedagogy is enacted in a classroom. An example of how ingrained views and behaviors may affect a teacher's enactment of this pedagogy in the classroom was described in a study by Mills (2007). Although the teacher in the case being studied had been educated in how to teach multiple literacies and was attempting to enact this pedagogy in her classroom, inequities for minority students appeared as they were given traditional assignments like worksheets because these students were viewed as disruptive in class. Consequently, Mills surmised that these students were denied access to multiple literacies because their primary d/Discourse was not congruent with school practices such as putting one's hand up before speaking. Consideration of the competing d/Discourses in the classroom, and the consequent silencing of some voices, needs to be undertaken in a variety of classroom settings.

Given the relative novelty of this pedagogical approach, emphasis appears to be, for the most part, on the planned and enacted stages, and consequently, student learning needs to be studied in order to determine if this pedagogical approach can produce the equitable literacy educational opportunities for students that the designers intended (The New London Group, 1996 & 2000). As a result, the relationship between the enacted and the received parts of the curriculum from this pedagogical approach need to be studied as well. Just as teachers have entrenched views about literacy, students may also have

engrained views about the purpose of the English Language Arts. Students may resist approaches that do not conform to their individual preconceptions about literacy learning. Jewitt (2008) describes the research that Knobel and Lankshear (2006) conducted in which they studied the incorporation of students' out-of-school technoliteracies into the classroom. They noted several areas of traditional schooling that were incompatible with the multiliteracies approach.

They identify the difficulties in bringing out-of-school cultural practices into the classroom, including the compulsory character of schooling, the individualization of student identities, the lack of authentic purposeful activities, and how interests and technoliteracies are socially constituted and regulated through adult control in classroom spaces. They conclude that different conditions and new virtual spaces will be required for their effective use. (p. 250)

As noted by researchers, numerous factors inherent in schooling need to be reconsidered for the successful integration of this pedagogy. Students' responses to these shifts between the literacies of home and the literacies of school is certainly one such factor that needs investigation. A pedagogy of multiliteracies has been advocated by researchers (Mills, 2009) as a possible means to achieving greater equity in literacy education, but much work needs to be done in order to make this goal a reality in the classroom.

### Conclusion

The shift of literacy education towards a pedagogy of multiliteracies presents numerous challenges for educators, policy makers and researchers as we attempt to bring this theory to life in the English Language Arts classroom. Some of the impediments noted in this study, such as entrenched values amongst literacy educators, the persistence

of standardized tests, disconnection to theory, and lack of time, require flexibility, adaptability and resourcefulness to overcome. Yet, these traits are exactly the types of attributes that those theorists who advocate this pedagogy predict will be valuable and demanded in our students' future lives. Those of us who work in literacy education need to embody these traits as well in order to adjust our pedagogies to adapt to these new times that our students encounter.

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## APPENDIX A



University  
of Victoria

**Human Research Ethics Board**  
Office of Research Services  
University of Victoria  
Administrative Services Building - 2nd Floor  
Tel (250) 472-4545 Fax (250) 721-8960  
Email ethics@uvic.ca Web www.research.uvic.ca

## Human Research Ethics Board Certificate of Renewed Approval

<u>Principal Investigator</u> <b>Megan Haut</b> Master's Student	<u>Department/School</u> EDCI	<u>Supervisor</u> Dr. Deborah Begoray
<u>Co-Investigator(s):</u>		
<u>Project Title:</u> Multiliteracies in the Senior Language Arts Classroom		
<u>Protocol No.</u> 08-07-333	<u>Original Approval Date</u> 16-Nov-07	<u>Renewed On</u> 14-Oct-09
		<u>Must Renew By</u> 15-Nov-10

### Certification

This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.

**This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol. Extensions and/or amendments may be approved with the submission of a Request for Annual Renewal or Modification form.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Afzal Suleman  
Associate Vice-President, Research

08-07-333 Haut, Megan

## APPENDIX B

July 2, 2008

Re: Request for approval of Research Study

Dear XXX

Thank you for your speedy reply to my letter requesting both yours and the school board's approval of my research study. As mentioned in my letter, this study will be published in my final Thesis of an MA in Language and Literacy through the University of Victoria. Consequently, I have obtained approval for this study through the Human Research Ethics Committee and have attached a copy of this certificate as requested. As for the other items listed, I have written a brief description for each below.

**Target Research Participants:**

The participants for this study will be Language Arts teachers who currently teach at the secondary level in the XXXX. As this study uses only qualitative research methods for the purpose of obtaining a depth of insight into the pedagogical choices these educators are making, there will be a small number of participants. Currently five teachers have agreed to participate and the members of this group are diverse in terms of their educational backgrounds and experience. Optimally I will be able to recruit two more participants, but I can conduct the study with the current number. Also, I have recruited participants from each of the four secondary schools in the district. The participants will have the option of using pseudonyms to protect their identities and will sign a consent form before participation which I have also attached to this letter.

**Research Methodology and Instruments:**

This is a case study, and the particular design was chosen because of the need for depth and flexibility in attempting to understand the multitude of factors that contribute to the pedagogical choices that an educator makes in regards to multiliteracies.

Keeping this in mind, I will use an open structured interview to obtain data from participants that will be audio taped and later transcribed, encoded and themes will be identified in the analysis of the data. Focus groups may also be used as a means to obtain data from participants in addition to individual interviews if I see the need for more data or if I find that interviews are not an adequate tool for obtaining useful information from participants.

Further, artifacts such as unit and lesson plans, assignments, activities, and various materials that teachers are using in their instruction of English Language Arts may be used as data with the permission of participants as a means of gaining understanding of

the literacies that are being explored in their classes and how students are engaging with these literacies.

The analysis of individual interviews, artifacts, and perhaps responses from participants in focus groups, will hopefully yield insights about the site as a whole in terms of what literacies are being taught, how they are being taught, interpretations of the IRPs for English Language Arts, and the impediments or facilities that support a pedagogy of multiliteracies in the district.

I have also attached a sample of the interview questions that demonstrate the central themes that I believe this study will explore.

**Time Frame:**

My hope is to conduct the interviews throughout the month of August, 2008, subject to approval, and each of my participants has agreed upon availability during this time. Analysis of the data and writing of the results will be completed by the summer of 2009. I have been assured by the Ethics Committee that there is flexibility to these dates, and my certificate of approval does not expire until November of 2010. As I have already encountered delays to my initial timeline because of work and family priorities, I am hesitant to set dates in stone and am grateful for understanding in this regard. That being said, I am eager to begin my research and to complete my program.

Again, thank you for your consideration of and interest in my research proposal. I am more than enthusiastic to share my findings once I have completed my thesis. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions or if you have suggestions to offer.

Sincerely,

Megan Haut

## APPENDIX C

June 23, 2008

Dear Mr. XXXX :

I am in the process of completing my Master of Arts degree in Language and Literacy in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at The University of Victoria. In order to complete my program, I must conduct a research study, the results of which will be published in my final Thesis. With your approval and that of the School Board of District XXXX, I would like to conduct research inquiring into the range of literacies that English Language Arts teachers at the senior levels are incorporating into their programs.

The purpose of this study is to collect information on the types of literacies (print, visual, audio texts, etc.) that are being explored in the English Language Arts classroom at the senior level in the location of the XXXXX. Consideration of the Language Arts curriculum in British Columbia and to what extent the Prescribed Learning Outcomes directed towards multiliteracies are translated into actual classroom instruction will be explored. Factors that limit or support teachers in the incorporation of a range of literacies in the Language Arts classroom in terms of resources available to teachers, teacher culture within the district, and individual teacher's pedagogical views regarding multiliteracies will be studied in the attempt to understand the range and types of literacies that are apparent in the English Language Arts classroom and why teachers are making these particular pedagogical choices.

The importance of this research lies primarily in the exploration of how theory and curricular design are actualized in the field. Gaining an understanding of the choices that teachers are making in the implementation of the Language Arts Curriculum at the senior level and their rationale for making such choices, encourages a dialogue about the gap that often exists between theory and practice and the application of mandated curriculum in the classroom, as well as aiding in the identification of factors that limit or support the instruction of a range of literacies in the classroom.

The research design will be that of a case study in which teachers, who voluntarily agree to participate, will be interviewed about their practices and pedagogical choices on the subject of multiliteracies. Participants will be selected based on the criteria that they are currently teaching English Language Arts at the senior level in the XXXXX and the only foreseeable inconvenience will be a loss of personal time. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time and may choose to have the data accrued from their participation in the study will only be used with their permission. Further, participants' identities will be protected by the use of pseudonyms in the final Thesis unless a participant chooses otherwise.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, you can contact my supervisor, Dr. Deborah Begoray (250- 472-4129), or the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or [ethics@uvic.ca](mailto:ethics@uvic.ca)).

Sincerely,

Megan Haut

## APPENDIX D

Dear Participant:

You are invited to participate in a study entitled “Multiliteracies in the Senior Language Arts Classroom” that is being conducted by Megan Haut, a graduate student in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction department of the University of Victoria. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements for a Master of Arts in Language and Literacy, and my supervisor, Dr. Deborah Begoray, can be contacted at 472-4129 if you have any further questions or concerns.

The purpose of this study is to collect information on the types of literacies (print, visual, audio texts, etc.) that are being explored in the English Language Arts classroom at the senior level in the location of the Valley. Consideration of the Language Arts Curriculum in British Columbia and to what extent the Prescribed Learning Outcomes directed towards multiliteracies are translated into actual classroom instruction will be considered. Factors that limit or support teachers in the incorporation of a range of literacies in the Language Arts Classroom in terms of resources available to teachers, teacher culture within the district, and individual teacher’s pedagogical views regarding multiliteracies will be studied in the attempt to understand the range and types of literacies that are apparent in the English Language Arts classroom and why teachers are making these particular pedagogical choices.

The importance of this research lies primarily in the exploration of how theory and curricular design are actualized in the field. Gaining an understanding of the choices that teachers are making in the implementation of the Language Arts Curriculum at the senior level and their rationale for making such choices, encourages a dialogue about the gap that often exists between theory and practice, as well as aiding in the identification of factors that limit or support the instruction of a range of literacies in the classroom.

Participants are selected based on the criteria that they are currently teaching English Language Arts at the senior level in the Valley. If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include interviews that will likely take a few hours of your time over a period beginning in January of 2009 to April of 2009 at a convenient location. You may also be asked to allow me to observe an English Language Arts class that you are teaching in October or November of 2009. The purpose of this observation session is to give me the opportunity to see how you are addressing multiliteracies in your classes.

The only foreseeable inconvenience to you in participating in this study is that of lost time. There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

The benefits of participating in this research include the opportunity to engage in discussion about curricular issues and contribute input on the practical application of curriculum and curricular theory in the classroom.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you should feel no pressure to volunteer because of a collegial relationship with the researcher. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any point and the data that has been obtained because of your participation will only be used with your permission. Your anonymity will be protected through the use of a pseudonym in the final Thesis and the data will be stored in password protected files to ensure confidentiality. Finally, the data will be destroyed by erasing electronic data and paper copies will be shredded at the conclusion of the study. Yet, despite the use of pseudonyms in the final thesis, readers may be able to infer the identity of participants as the pool of potential recruits for this study is fairly small. Descriptions of such aspects as teaching experience and education may lead to inference of the identity of a participant. Given that there are only 4 secondary schools within this School District, complete confidentiality cannot be ensured despite the precaution of using pseudonyms. Also, if you agree to participate in a focus group, other participants will be aware of your participation. If you are concerned about a lack of anonymity due to participation in a focus group with other participants, you may choose to decline participation in this part of the study and only participate in an interview with the researcher.

In addition to myself, you may contact my supervisor as mentioned previously, or the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or [ethics@uvic.ca](mailto:ethics@uvic.ca)) if you have any concerns.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.

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Name of Participant

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Signature

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Date

APPENDIX E



University of Victoria

Human Research Ethics Board
Office of Research Services
University of Victoria
Administrative Services Building B202
Tel (250) 472-4545 Fax (250) 721-8960
Email ethics@uvic.ca Web www.research.uvic.ca

Human Research Ethics Board
Modification of an Approved Protocol

Form containing Principal Investigator (Megan Haut), Department/School (EDCI), Supervisor (Dr. Deborah Begoray), Project Title (Multiliteracies in the Senior Language Arts Classroom), Protocol No. (08-07-333), and Date (24-Feb-10).

Certification section stating that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined the protocol and concluded it meets standards of ethics. It includes a signature line for Dr. Afzal Suleman, Associate Vice-President, Research.

08-07-333 Haut, Megan

## APPENDIX F

## Interview Questions

1. How long have you been teaching and where?
2. Did you train as a secondary ELA teacher?
3. What pre-service training did you receive on the topic of incorporating a range of literacies in the Language Arts Program? Do you feel you were adequately prepared for this aspect of teaching Language Arts?
4. Have you undertaken any post-graduate education that has allowed you to build on this knowledge?
5. Do you have any other experience or education in your background that facilitates your teaching a range of literacies (such as art, film, technology, drama, music, etc.)?
6. What professional development opportunities have you been able to participate in that have allowed you to develop your knowledge of and application of multiliteracies in the classroom after you began teaching? Where were these programs offered?
7. What motivates you to incorporate multiple literacies in your classes?
8. In regards to the incorporation of the Prescribed Learning Outcomes for the English Language Arts, what role do you see multiliteracies as playing in terms of meeting these outcomes? Do you see using a range of literacies as necessary to meet curriculum objectives?
9. How much class time do you designate towards literacies other than print?
10. Describe a lesson that incorporates literacies other than print?
11. Can you give a rough outline of a unit of study in one of your English Language Arts classes and describe the range of literacies that you incorporate within this unit?

12. How comfortable and capable do you feel in the assessment of literacies other than print? What assessment kinds of assessment tools do you use?
13. What resources are available to you in terms of technology, training, etc. that support a range of literacies in your programs?
14. What resources are lacking that you feel would enrich your program in regards to having students develop skills in a range of literacies?
15. Do you feel that other English Language Arts teachers are incorporating multiple literacies in their classes?
16. How do you think standardized tests such as Provincial Examinations effect a teacher's enactment of multiple literacies in the classroom? How do they influence your teaching?
17. Do you feel that your students and students' parents are receptive to an English program that presents students with a variety of literacies rather than focusing strictly on reading specific types of print, such as novels and poetry, and traditional types of writing activities, such as essays?
18. Do you feel supported by colleagues, school administrators, district administrators to include multiliteracies? Please provide examples.
19. Do you incorporate the literacies that your students' pursue in their personal lives in your English Language Arts program?
20. Do you discuss the differences between various modes of communication with your students?
21. Do you consider d/Discourses in your instruction of the English Language Arts?
22. Do you use media specific language when engaging with texts other than print?

## APPENDIX G

## Quotations Relating to Multiliteracies

“It is no longer possible to think about literacy in isolation from a vast array of social, technological and economic factors. Two distinct yet related factors deserve to be particularly highlighted. These are, on one hand, the broad move from the now centuries-long dominance of writing to the new dominance of the image and, on the other hand, the move from the dominance of the medium of the book to the dominance of the medium of the screen” (Kress, 2003, p. 1).

“A pedagogy of multiliteracies should include the expanse of cultures, diversity of language, and the variety of texts that people encounter in their daily lives” (Hagood, 2000, p. 312).

“Adolescents use multiple forms of representation (e.g., Mark’s African drumming; Jane’s dramatic performances and paintings; Chile’s films, music, and journal writing; Katie’s poetry; Anthony’s graffiti) in their everyday practice, but we do not use such forms very often in school. As a result, we do not teach them how to move back and forth with ease between these forms, or, more important, how to know when to move back and forth...they are not learning how to navigate different Discourse communities consciously; that is, they do not have meta-knowledge of Discourses” (Moje, 2000, p. 88).

“We agreed that in each of the English-speaking countries we came from, what students needed to learn was changing, and that the main element of this change was that there was not a singular canonical English that could or should be taught anymore. Cultural differences and rapidly shifting communications media meant that the very nature of the

subject -literacy pedagogy- was changing radically” (The New London Group, 1996, p. 63).