

## DOCTORAL THESIS

### Home Literacy Practices of Four Families

### A Case Study of 4-5-year-old Children's Literacy Experiences in Plateau State, Nigeria

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**Home Literacy Practices of Four Families: A Case Study of 4-5-year-old Children's  
Literacy Experiences in Plateau State, Nigeria**

**By**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of PhD**

**Early Childhood Research Centre  
School of Education, Froebel College  
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## **ETHICAL APPROVAL**

The research for this project was submitted for ethics consideration under the reference EDU 16/ 123 in the School of Education and was approved under the procedures of the University of Roehampton's Ethics

Committee on 31.01.17.

## **Abstract**

The thesis emerged from a multiple case study of the home literacy practices of four families that impacted 4-5-year-old children's literacy experiences in Jos South Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. Purposive and convenience sampling were employed to select the four children and their family members in two communities, giving 26 participants. Drawing on Awogbade, Oduolowu & Nsamenang's (2013) eco-cultural approach, the thesis investigated how everyday home practices influenced preschool-aged children's early literacy experiences across the four home settings. Multiple data collection methods included participant observation, informal conversations, follow-up interviews, photographs, and children's writings. Thematic analysis was employed, and analysed data were supported with excerpts, diagrams, pictures, and children's works. The study's findings revealed four key environments that underscored the participants' home literacy practices: language, religion, child-initiated activities, and family social network. A cross-case analysis of the environments' interplay with the 4-5-year olds literacy experiences was discussed in the context of existing academic literature and research.

Findings indicated the children's multiliteracy experiences embraced: oral expressive and vocabulary development in their different mother-tongues and English, codeswitching, body-language, representations, singing, reciting and memorisation, writing, and print awareness. Family supportive networks included parent-child, siblings' interaction, grandmother-child, and community network, providing scaffoldings in everyday activities through instructing, questioning, explaining, reinforcing, guiding, initiating new words, and promoting the mother tongue culture. The implication is that funds of knowledge are worthwhile and demand an in-depth inquiry. Recommendations include the importance for early years' teachers to consider a cultural-sensitive approach of integrating children's everyday literacy experiences into literacy pedagogy for effecting a smooth transition from home to school. Also, local schools can partner with parents to initiate self-help intervention on storybooks in the language of the immediate community for children and parents. Further research collaboration on the impact of locally relevant resources on children's early literacy is imperative.

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my late parents, Daa Dastu Patrick Mudan  
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Who believed in girl-child education and enrolled me in school.

**BLESSED MEMORY**

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## **CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Overview**

This chapter provides a general introduction to the enquiry presented in the thesis. I present why the thesis focused on the home environment as the research setting, how key literature has studied the importance of family literacy practices and provided insights about young children's literacy experiences in the home. I then attempt to highlight the imperative of family members and everyday interactions as the impetus for children's early literacy experiences. And explain how and why the research took place in selected homes in Plateau state, Nigeria. I further argue why it is crucial to broaden the conceptualisation of literacy to embrace experiences beyond conventional reading and writing, especially in the study context. Finally, the chapter examines the policy context to encapsulate government blueprints on early childhood education, particularly early learning, literacy, and the home environment. Issues raised from the policy provide openings for research attention in the Nigerian context. In section 1.3.2, I outlined the research questions that guided the study and explained the significance of the study in section 1.4 and finally present the structure of the thesis in section 1.5.

### **1.2. Rationale of the Study**

For decades there has been great interest in understanding home literacy practices and children's literacy experiences in home contexts (Rosarito and Florida, 2018; Pahl and Burnett 2016; Johnson, 2010; Heath, 1983; Taylor 1983). Given that the home environment encompasses a rich repository of funds of knowledge (González, 2005; Moll *et al.*, 2005; Mercado, 2005), embracing: environmental print (Fern and Jiar, 2013; Hallet, 2008), communicative practices (Pahl and Burnett, 2016; Flewitt, 2008), languages (Reyes and Esteban-Guitart, 2016) and mediating social

networks (Reyes and Esteban-Guitant, 2016; Volk and Acosta, 2004). Research evidence highlight that resources in the home serve as nurturing grounds for supporting young children's learning trajectories (Newman and Obed, 2015; Serpell and Nsamenang, 2014, Tchombe, 2011). Research indicates the interrelatedness between resources of the physical, social, and cultural elements and building blocks for the children's early literacy foundation in the home (Plowman, 2014; Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013; Weisner, 2002). It is worth noting, children's interactions with resources in the home differ according to their unique social and cultural contexts. Importantly, it has been established that the home environment is a learning space. Although several studies abound mostly in Western societies about home environment outcomes on children's literacy development (Saracho, 2017; Johnson, 2010; Heath, 1983; Taylor,1983), the aspect of exploring home literacy practices and the impact on preschool-aged children's literacy experiences remain understudied. Thus, my research examined the home literacy practices of four families and how their 4-5-year-old children gained literacy experience through interactions with family members in the Nigerian context.

Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang (2013) highlight that children nurtured in complex networks of relationships through repeated participation in activities learn to make sense of their experiences and process the understanding of their worlds. Learning about children's experiences requires employing a research approach that involves naturalistic situations and cultural contexts of everyday life (Tudge and Hogan, 2005; Rogoff, 2003). Such research perspectives have been explored in Western countries (Johnson, 2010; Heath, 1983; Taylor, 1983), but more investigations needed in other cultural contexts outside the Western arena. Therefore, my study focused on contextual interactions that underscored children's literacy experiences and employed a research approach that connects the researched and the researcher (Mason, 2002). The experience enabled

me to explore how participating families engaged in literacy trajectories in diverse home contexts. That afforded a first-hand investigation of literacy experiences of the 4-5-year-old children in Plateau State, Nigeria.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2004) views literacy as a range of learning that supports people to realise their purposes, to acquire knowledge and skills that help them actualise their roles in life. Fundamentally, literacy in the context of my study encompasses oral/body language activities, print activities, media, and visual representations that children experience through many ways in different contexts (Cope and Kalantzis, 2009; Flewitt, 2008). Literature has documented that children's cultural pathways facilitate early literacy and language development relevant to lifelong learning (Weisner, 2002a, 2002b). The author observes that children's cultural pathways involve everyday practices in the home, including playing, homework, watching television, cooking with adults, role-playing, storytelling, mealtimes, and bedtime. That can imply that social and cultural interactions within indoor and outdoor spaces are crucial in understanding children's early literacy experiences. The context of interactions includes family members who support and employ cultural tools that mediate children's literacy experiences (Aika and Uyi-Osaterin, 2018; Volk and de Acosta, 2004). Highlighting further, Aika and Uyi-Osaterin, 2018 maintain that children's interactions within family contexts are important because of their impact on early development.

Additionally, the role of the family in children's literacy learning cannot be overemphasised. Saracho (2017) highlights family literacy is essentially rooted in the notion that parents are their children's first and significant teachers because they are motivated to provide support for their children's lifelong learning (Saracho, 2017). Apart from family support, children are active creators of their learning through initiated activities (Woods, 2017; Plowman, 2014). Therefore, we can

infer that everyday activities provide a vision of the family's ecology and cultural context. Thus, this can elicit important information that can contribute to the enrichment of literacy pedagogy.

In addressing some foundational literature in the field, Taylor (1983: 3) refers to the concept of family literacy as everyday routines which vividly build children's literacy and language in the home and further describes it as 'local literacies complexly and intricately woven into their lives. Also, Heath (1983) conducts an ethnographic study in an English language context and explored family literacy practices in three communities in the US, highlighted differences between school literacy practices and traditional home practices. Both studies carried out by Heath (1983) and Taylor (1983) highlight the efficacy of family networks in understanding children's literacy experiences in the home environment. However, despite extensive studies in family literacy, although mainly in Western countries, this is yet fully tapped by educationists in Nigeria. Probably because, as suggested (Odiaka, 2016; Udosen and Igbokwe, 2011), there is little attention and less recognition of the role of family literacy as a significant vehicle of educational development of the Nigerian child. That may have contributed to the scarcity of research on home literacy practices and the literacy experiences preschool-aged children can gain from interactions in early childhood education in Nigeria. Indeed, the currently reviewed National Policy for Integrated Early Childhood Development [IECD] (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2013b) highlights culturally relevant and desirable family practices encompassing mother tongue, cultural funds of knowledge, local games and play, psychosocial routines and stories. In addition, the policy gives a picture of resources that provide pathways to cultural activities in the home. However, literacy research has not paid attention to promoting multiple literacy practices of the Nigerian child through local practices. Therefore, this study attempts to bridge the gap centred on a postcolonial official English multilingual and multimodal context, which investigated locally relevant literacy practices, rather

than the mainstream English school-based literacy research promoted by Heath (1983) and Taylor (1983).

There exists a research vacuum in exploring everyday literacy experiences of children in the home environment and how such understanding can inform a pedagogical shift in facilitating contextualised teaching and learning situations in the Nigerian classroom. Balogun (2016) and Newman and Obed (2015) observe a major pitfall in most classroom practices in Nigerian is its failure to recognise the multiple linguistic and cultural resources which the child-learner is conversant with from home and to practice it in ways that respect integrity, minimise conflict and produce positive learning, rather western culturally practice of English language instructional resources dominates the scene. This line of thought accentuates my experience as a volunteer kindergarten teacher in a public school in Nigeria. My pupils came from diverse socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds. They struggled to connect to classroom literacy practices due to the stark contrast between what they had learned from their home environment and the decontextualised curricula and teaching techniques. Oyetunde *et al.* (2016: 23) point out that a longstanding factor affecting effective acquisition of literacy skills in early primary schools is the scarcity of 'culturally-relevant' instructional materials for children. Their observation synchronises the practice in most public schools in Plateau State. For example, in teaching the alphabetic knowledge of the adopted Jolly Phonics approach in public schools in Plateau state, many of the pictures in the alphabetic chart, workbook and the corresponding songs do not show relevance to local objects children can identify and understand. Instead, they represent vocabulary popular to western cultural contexts, like letter sound /t/, the object and songs indicates a child watching a tennis game. The picture of castanet and the song 'we are clicking castanet' represents a western cultural context and illustrate alphabet /c/ (Lloyd and Wernham, 2009a: 4, 8; 2009b: 22). Interpreting and

understanding the letter sounds becomes an uphill task; hence I provided support by drawing from the rich context of my pupils' home experiences by using vocabulary familiar to them. That provoked my interest in acquiring knowledge children learn from home and using it as a resource basis for improving literacy learning in school. My experience contributes to stirring my interest in researching home literacy practices of preschool-aged children. I believe that studying children from diverse backgrounds would shed more light on their early literacy experiences in their unique cultural, social, and linguistic backgrounds.

The conceptualisation of literacy has become fluid over the years, expanding to embrace a range of communicative practices instead of strictly conventional reading and writing (Aika and Uyi-Osaterin, 2018; Pahl and Burnett, 2016; Newman and Obed, 2015; Perry, 2012). Also, the meaning of literacy has gone beyond deciphering written text to valuing multiliteracies involving multimodality and multilingualism (Pahl and Burnett, 2016; Flewitt, 2008; Omoniyi, 2003). Indeed, listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills continue to be essential to becoming literate; however, the advent of media and globalisation has produced new literacy needs (Aika and Uyi-Osaterin 2018; Omoniyi, 2003). Multiliteracies in terms of multimodality and multilingualism suggest making meaning through various communicative channels, including visual, gestural, movement, music, drawing, and language forms of representation in communicative practices (Perry, 2012; Flewitt, 2008; Cope and Kalantzis, 2000). Children experience multiliteracies through various resources like print materials, language, stories, rhymes, symbols, numeric systems, play, and technologies (Flewitt, 2008). Due to cultural and linguistic diversities in many societies, literacy is attainable in different languages (Reyes and Esteban-Guitart, 2016; Omoniyi, 2003). Therefore, given the multilingual and multimodal setup of Nigerian society, it is essential to consider language and multiple modes involving visuals, songs, games, numeric symbols, and

other forms of representations as crucial literacy practices in my study. The consideration aligns with the advocacy about conceptualising multiliteracies as the enabling project to accelerate more 'African contribution to global knowledge' creation, which could remedy the prevailing superiority of western literacy and simultaneously investigating the 'potential to develop African languages and equip them to disseminate knowledge to several African people' (Omoniyi, 2003: 140). This insight calls for early childhood literacy educators in Nigeria to redress what counts as contextual literacy instructions for young children since they draw on diverse cultural resources for multiple ends in their everyday lives of home and school settings. Additionally, the issue requires a rethinking for policy makers and adults working with young children with diverse cultural backgrounds about what constitutes literacy space for children, and how to bring in children's background experience and appreciate their disposition in initiating activities that would contribute to meaningful teaching and learning experiences.

### **1.3. The Policy Context**

The revised National Policy on Education [NPE], (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2013a) and the National Policy for Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD), (FRN, 2013b) are Nigeria blueprints of intended and expected goals, direction, standards, and requirements for quality education delivery in Nigeria. Accordingly, educational policy in Nigeria is prime and significant, as education is an instrument of 'par excellence' for facilitating the development of the people and national transformation (FRN, 2013a: 4). The policy provides various stipulations for the development of the child into a sound and effective citizen. Therefore, as the focus of the current study was to understand the literacy experiences of preschool-aged children through their engagements in home literacy practices, it is important to consider policy provisions for early

childhood education for early learning and the role of the home environment. The National Policy on Education, which guides the IECD, refers to early childhood education as the education given to children before primary school in settings such as the crèche and nursery for children between 0-4 years and kindergarten for five years old children (FGN, 2013a). My study focused on children between 4-5-year old in selected homes in Plateau State, Nigeria.

### **1.3.1. The National Policy on Education and early learning**

On the aspect of early learning, the NPE (FRN, 2013a: 17) specifies in Section 11(e), the objectives of Universal Basic Education, which among others, to ensure that children acquire apt levels of 'literacy, numeracy, and communicative skills' to position the child on a solid foundation for lifelong learning, through 'inculcating the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, and forms, etc. through play'. Apart from these provisions, Section 15(e) states that the purpose of Early Childhood Care and Development [ECCD ], among others, is to 'inculcate in the child the spirit of inquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and the use of toys, etc.' The provisions can be considered creditable and vital because, if well implemented, they should allow children to learn the attitude of questioning, experimentation, discovery, and Creativity through the multiple means of play, drawing, music, and toys. However, they are insufficient concerning the specific roles of the home and the child learning processes. Also, the school's position in 'effecting a smooth transition from home to the school' is lacking (FRN, 2013a: 19). More so, there is a scarcity of research on how the home environment performs this role during the transition phase for preschool-aged children.

On the other hand, on language, the NPE policy addresses the mother tongue and English (FRN, 2004; 2013a). Specifically, the policy recognises the value of language in the educational system, as Nigeria is a heterogeneous nation with diversity in ethnicity and language. It emphasises the importance of language as an instrument for promoting social interactions, national unity, and cultural preservation. Section 1:10 specifies the goal of children language education shall be that 'every child shall be required to learn the language of the immediate environment', and that in the interest of national unity, 'it is expedient that every child shall be required to learn one of the three major languages of Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba' (FRN, 2004: 10). Besides, Section 2:14c of the policy stipulates that the mother tongue shall be the principal medium of instruction in the pre-primary school.

Furthermore, section 4.19 states English shall be taught only as a subject in primary school (FRN, 2004). However, the revised NPE (2013a: 15-16) did not contain the three major languages; it simply mentions that 'every child shall learn one Nigerian language'. Trudell (2018: 10) argues that the changes in the language policy provisions did not have any clearly defined rationale, besides the NPE did not provide a clear, coherent, and realistic 'language-in-education policy'. Also, drawing from literature, Trudell upholds that language issues in the multilingual Nigerian society are 'often quite explosive and conflict-ridden'. Nevertheless, the implication of the provisions suggests that the child's home language is recognised.

More so, according to Omoniyi (2003: 144), the notion of using mother tongue as language instruction in school suggests that the home and school contexts of literacy and language learning are not 'discontinuous systems'. However, do families understand the role of the home language in their children's early learning? How could investigating the home language through home literacy practices inform policy? These questions were loud and clear when I commenced the fieldwork

and guided by formal and informal conversations, and I understood how language (s) work in the different home contexts.

### **1.3.2. Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy: Views on Home Practices**

The role of the family, as stated in Section 9.2 of the National Policy on Integrated Early Childhood Development [IECD] (FRN, 2013b: 16-17), involves providing the following culturally appropriate and desirable practices for children from birth to five years:

Introduce native babies games, rhymes, praise songs portraying family history, introduce the child into the social world using mother tongue, engaging the child in dynamic interactions through plays and games using indigenous props and toys, promote grandparents to live in and share indigenous knowledge and teach a sense of obedience, respect and sensitivity to the child's needs.

This stipulation recognises activities in the child's home environment that can provide rich opportunities for enriching young children's language and literacy experiences. The IECD provision appears to agree with the assertion of Urban (2010) that every young child has their unique potential and further argues that it is the children's right to enjoy supports that would enable them to actualise their full potential. Although the policy fails to recognise the prospects that the child can contribute to their learning, instead, it focuses on what the adult can do for the child.

However, the IECD policy emphasises the need to research and understand key households' practices of 0-5-year-olds. Yet, research focus on the potential of the home environment as a domain for children's literacy development is not well tapped. As a result, less is known about the

child's literacy world in the home and how such an understanding can be explored to facilitate the process of teaching and learning (Serpel and Nsamenang, 2014). In this study, children are placed at the centre because they are nested in diverse activities and people through daily interactions with their immediate environment, the home (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Also, research is scarce in gathering data through approaches that encouraged first-hand information about family practices that impact preschool-aged children's literacy experiences in the home environment in Plateau State, Nigeria. Therefore, this research aims to bridge the research gap by exploring preschool-aged children's home literacy practices and understand how they impact their literacy experiences. Specifically, the study focused on exploring the richness of the language and literacy environments and their contributions to building early literacy foundations in the home. The IECD (FRN, 2013b: 20) policy on research stipulates that a 'database on key indicators' in early childhood be updated through research.

#### **1.4. Research Questions**

Consequently, the following research questions guided the study:

1. Which literacy resources and practices were identifiable in the preschool-aged children's homes in Plateau State, Nigeria?
2. How did family members' interactions with the preschool-aged children enrich their literacy experiences?
3. How did 4-5-year-olds child-initiated activities enrich their literacy experiences?
4. What were the parents' beliefs about home literacy practices offered to preschool-aged children?

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

The study is significant for several reasons. Firstly, the study tackles some acknowledged gaps in early literacy research, exploring the rich literacy resources embedded in everyday practices in a typical Nigerian home environment. As highlighted, the current IECD (FRN, 2013b) recognises the importance of indigenous culturally relevant and desirable home practices in the early learning of the Nigerian child. However, the prospects of home practices in enriching children's early literacy experiences appear undermined. Instead, most research has focused on the Western-style mainstream English language conventional competencies of print-based reading and writing in Nigeria (Gittins and Ekpo, 2018; Otukogbe, 2018; Osuorji, 2006). Again, less attention is given to the child's potentials to bring about their literacy learning; instead, literacy research has focused on what parents and teachers do to support the child at home and school. Also, literature extensively documents the absence of culturally relevant pedagogical resources in the Nigerian classroom that could subscribe to the smooth transition of the preschool-aged child from home to school (Oyetunde *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, my thesis attempts to address the gap by generating strategies to enhance parental participation and advocates for a shift in pedagogical classroom practices that recognise the cultural funds of knowledge the Nigerian child brings from home to school.

Secondly, the use of eco-cultural and ecological models is significant because of the shortage of models in literacy research in the research context. Adopting the models as a research approach allowed me to explore the participants' everyday engagements within the physical places, social networks and materials in the home environments signifying a methodological shift in understanding literacy trajectories (Pahl and Burnett, 2016) in early literacy research in Nigeria. Thirdly, the adoption of qualitative multiple case studies approaches facilitated the exploration of

the multifaceted contexts of the home literacy practices of participating families. The methodology challenges the conventional popular quantitative research approaches of survey and experimental research limited in accounting for an in-depth description of children's literacy experiences in Nigeria. My study's research approach corresponds to views that case studies are essentially descriptive to accomplish the researcher's intention of describing and conveying a context (Vasconcelos, 2010; Creswell, 1998). Accordingly, my thesis provides new insight on how home literacy practices enrich preschool-aged children's literacy experiences and the support that family members provide for them.

Finally, the findings promote a reciprocal exchange of knowledge and pose a debate between early childhood stakeholders for the diversity in cultural and literacy practices. It provides an opportunity for the reader to appreciate and learn from Nigerian indigenous literacy practices and how the children in this study acquired literacy in the home, which may differ from those outside Nigeria. I subscribe to Street's (1993: .8) submission that 'the issue of sustaining local literacies' is vital for language and literacy uses, and therefore, expedient to place to the international agenda in understanding the nature of literacy rooted in research and practice.

## **1.6. Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis consists of ten chapters. This first chapter introduces the study and provides an overview of the research context: the rationale, policy context and research questions. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study, providing a description of the eco-cultural framework and the rationale for using it to explore the key elements of the microsystem, which was a guide for data gathering and analysis. Chapter 3 presents a comprehensive review of relevant literature on the research topic's fundamental concepts and embraces arguments on the importance

of preschool years and its connection with emergent literacy and multiliteracies perspectives. I directed attention to the potentials of exploring the multiple opportunities of everyday home literacy practices as a springboard for facilitating young children's multiliteracies experiences in the study context. Also, the chapter reviews the realities of pre-school-aged children's unique capabilities in contributing to their own early literacy experiences through their initiated playful activities. Chapter 4 describes the rationale for the multiple case study research design adopted for the study. Finally, I adequately justified the ethical issues concerning the participants' recruitment and securing their informed consent and explained how the sources of data collection generated data in my qualitative research. The methodology section enunciated the processes involved in doing the research, how I thematically analysed, presented and interpreted the data.

Chapters 5 to 8 present the results of the case-by-case study, describing the home literacy experiences of each of the participating children. Chapter 9 discusses the findings of the cross-case analysis in the context of existing academic literature and research. Thus, it provides an argument on the findings' contribution to the understanding of home literacy practices embedded in four key environments that impacted the literacy experiences of the four preschool-aged children in Plateau State, Nigeria. Finally, Chapter 10 describes the conclusions, summary and recommendations of the thesis. The chapter includes providing the methodological synopsis of the thesis, summary of findings and its veritable contributions and implications for educational practice and policy. In retrospect, the chapter highlights the strengths and limitations of the study and presents the recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER 2. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1. Introduction**

The chapter examines the conceptual and theoretical framework for understanding children's literacy practices in the home environment. In this pursuit, the eco-cultural framework (Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013) was adopted, which underscores the home's physical, social and cultural parts during everyday routines (Tudge and Hogan, 2005; Weisner, 2002a; b). Additionally, the study gained support from Bronfenbrenner Models of Human Development that recognises the crucial role of the proximate environment in children's learning and the broader environment that directly or indirectly affects the child's experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The chapter also justified using the framework to explore everyday activities in the families that formed the research basis for home literacy practices. Finally, I enunciated the conceptual framework with a diagram that guided my research.

### **2.2. Eco-cultural Framework**

To generate relevant knowledge about the preschool-aged children's literacy experiences in the current study, I derived inspiration from Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang (2013) eco-cultural model of conceptualising indigenous early childhood care and education (ECCE) curriculum for Africa. The authors claim that it is essential for the curriculum to flourish and give attention to the child's context, behaviour, and actions. Thus, in my research, the child is at the centre.

The term eco-cultural is a fusion of two concepts, ecology and culture. The Greek word 'Oikos' is the root word for ecology, meaning 'a house, family or household', which comprises the physical

place and social system where children spend their time, the social network they spend time with, and the social roles they fill during the day (Plowman, 2014: 39; Super and Harkness, 1986). It includes active cultural components in that ecology among family members (Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang 2013). I adopted the eco-cultural framework to study the preschool-aged children immediate home's physical, social and cultural components impact on their literacy experiences (Burkey *et al.*, 2016; Nsamenang, 2015; Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013; Dasen, 2011). This research's immediate home environment is considered the microsystem, which interacts with other wider environmental settings influencing the child in different ways (Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013; Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Again, the child is at the centre of these surroundings. According to Dasen (2011), placing children at the centre considers their unique potentials in their learning. Subsequently, the child and adult family members are 'social actors who actively influence their interactions with people and physical resources around them' (Plowman, 2014: 43). While parents provide learning resources, the children initiate their learning by selecting choice materials and activities.

In particular, the cultural aspect of the framework involves family customs and practices that denote sequences of behaviour frequently employed when interacting with children. The engagement involves inherited and adapted ways of nurturing, entertaining, educating, and protecting the child, using cultural tools of oral traditions and mother tongue (Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013). It also includes parents' beliefs that can shape family practices (Super and Harkness, 1986). Weisner (2002a: 276) suggests that everyday routines of life are cultural activities through 'bedtime, playing, video games, homework, watching TV, cooking dinner, soccer practice, visiting grandma and babysitting'. These activities are in everyday life. Also, the theory acknowledges the home environment as interactional and ideological with

practices that support new knowledge and skills. Cultural models such as the sociocultural theory have been widely used to study children's participation in culturally structured activities (Callaway, 2012; Anning and Ring, 2004; Drury, 2004; Volk and de Acosta, 2004). But the scope of my investigation is not limited to structured activities; rather, through the lens of the eco-cultural framework, it explored the imperatives of the physical, social and cultural environments in which the child is nested; to understand the multiple dimensions of the children's early literacy learning (Tonyan, 2014). The eco-cultural framework provides a perspective to understand a child's lifelong learning emanating from daily experiences through engagement in everyday activities with family members (Nsamenang, 2015). Furthermore, Papatheodorou, Luff and Gill, 2011; Wenger, 1998 perceive such arrangements as a process of social participation (in which young children learn as beginners together with more knowledgeable members of the family).

Relevant to the eco-cultural framework is the function of mediators in introducing and guiding children to new knowledge and cultural practices to learn new skills. For instance, the mediators can explain something that children do not know and support to actualise their potential. The space between the child's actual learning stage through self-determining action and the stage of potential learning through scaffolding is the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978: 86). Bronfenbrenner (1994) views the home environment as a microsystem where the proximal processes of beneficial interactions occur daily and sustained over time. The patterns include social roles and interpersonal relations in a face-to-face context with children and their parents, siblings, and other family members, such interactions as parent-child, child-child, group, or solitary play, and reading. It also encompasses other vital material resources in the environment (Tudge and Hogan, 2005).

The notion of Vygotsky's ZPD suggests that children play an active role in their learning; thus, the eco-cultural framework depicts the space for exploring the diversities of family life, focusing principally on the visibility of children in everyday activities (Plowman, 2014, Tonyan, 2014, Weisner, 2002a; b). Therefore, it is important to recognise that the child is not an inactive beneficiary during interactions; instead, it contributes to constructing the nature of the learning processes (Nsamenang, 2015). Rogoff (1990: 65) claims the concept of 'guided participation' involves children active participation with more knowledgeable others, who serve as both guides and collaborators. Jointly, they draw on cultural resources and build on what children know and can do to create learning. For example, Tchombe (2011) reports that a group of Bamileke's parents of western Cameroon used cultural teaching strategies to foster children's participation in farming, trading, storytelling, and singing and dancing. The study claims the activities provided the basis for learning that incites self-evaluation that supports and accelerate learning. The author further maintains that children's learning is interest and need-driven. The context instilled cooperation rather than competition among family members. The activities enticed children's curiosity and excitement to provoke questioning and developing a sense of responsibility for their learning. However, there is a dearth of literature on children's active involvement in research that concerns them in Plateau State, Nigeria. The shortage could be attributed to Aika and Uyi-Osaterin (2018) and Ogah (2009) that children are hardly given a chance to voice their views in the home; they can only be seen and not heard as parents are the proprietors of knowledge. The present study supports that children's voice matters in research that affect them.

Moreover, research on young children's play suggests that play is an environment that enables children to be active creators of their learning to provide their scaffolding (Gregory, Long and Volk, 2004; Berk and Winsler, 1995). Also, literature documents that Vygotsky's idea of play

creates a ZPD in the child (Scharer, 2017; Bodrova and Leong, 2015) and thus offers the occasion for 'imaginative work that is culturally mediated' (Gregory, Long and Volks, 2004: 8). Similarly, Weisner (2002b) points that aspects of children's Creativity are considered in play research and determined in part by the absence of adult direction. In this way, children regularly create rich worlds within play contexts by drawing on many resources in their lives (Gregory, Long and Volks, 2004). Thus, employing the eco-cultural theory helps extend my research scope in exploring how the participating children initiated activities that impacted their literacy experiences.

### **2.2.1. The Role of the Wider Environment**

The microsystem is an open system where components are linked with other broader contexts and then impact the child's development (Nsamenang, 2015; Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013; Dasen, 2011). The contexts complement the activities families do at home and how they connect with their community and culture. Bronfenbrenner (1994) acknowledges that the microsystem, the mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem are socially organised to support and guide the activities that build children's experiences. The mesosystem refers to the connection between contexts. The instances are about family relationships with the school and other institutions. For example, the institutions encourage family literacy practices by inspiring parents to support their children in completing homework (Udosen and Igbokwe, 2011; Marrow, Paralone and Tracy, 1994). The ecosystem involves the linkages and processes occurring in the home in which the child does not have an active role, but the events have an indirect influence on him. Such an occasion could arise from the necessities of parents' professions which may influence

a child's pattern and level of interactions. The context of the macrosystem embraces patterns of the microsystem, the mesosystem, and exosystem characteristics of a given culture concerning the belief systems, epistemology (body of knowledge), customs, and lifestyle rooted in the wider community, which form a basis for the 'societal blueprint for a particular culture' (Bronfenbrenner, 1994: 40). Religion, ideologies, policies, or laws are macro-systemic funds that connect family beliefs and practices (Reyes and Esteban-Guitart, 2016). It can be a family embracing the national or dominant language of the immediate environment; or religious activities that connect people with their cultural heritage and the standard moral codes, manners, and conventions that prevail in the society (Dasen, 2011), which the family must inculcate in their children for their smooth integration into the community in life. It is essential to point the link between the chronosystem and the eco-cultural framework. The system represents the 'structure of environmental events and changes over time and across social-historical' situations (Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013: 71).

A vivid example could be the global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused changes and disruptions in educational institutions and created opportunities to develop context-specific educational strategies favouring the home environment. Globally, its implication affects teaching and learning processes. As a result, part of the new normal has significantly appreciated the crucial role of the home environment as a learning space and the increasing use of technology (Reimers and Schleicher, 2020).

### **2.2.2. Studying Children's Lives Through Eco-cultural Model**

Investigating children's early learning experiences in their family cultural contexts draws support on inquiry in naturalistic situations (Demuth, 2017; Rogoff, 2003; Nsamenang, 1992). An eco-cultural approach is a valuable tool in this regard (Tudge and Hogan, 2005). The approach involves capturing details about children's real world. In their view, Tudge and Hogan (2005: 102) state that the child and the context are inseparable because they are 'transactional'; that is, they reciprocally affect each other. Thus, children become the focus of observations involving many activities and interactions in the context that they are situated.

Pahl and Burnett (2016: 4) recognise the use of ecological approaches in research to explore diversities of literacy practices associated with 'multimodality, material culture and cultural geography' and understand space for literacy. In another study, Gillen, Gamannossi and Hancock (2008: 1) drew from the eco-cultural perspective of several family lives of two-year-old children from different contexts around the globe. For example, in Italy, they studied a child's eating event rooted in the context of the flow of family life to understand a 'negotiated social practice'. The investigation centred on the connection of the child's agency of interest to play with parents' pedagogic agendas during eating. Through collaborative learning, parents adapted their pedagogy to ensure that the child simultaneously feeds and acquires knowledge. Also, Plowman (2014) employed an eco-cultural approach and investigated children's everyday uses of technology in their homes. The finding ascribed a better understanding of the role of technology in young children's lives to the approach employed in my study. Above are some examples of studies that underpin the rationale for using the eco-cultural approach to explore children's literacy experiences in this study through their engagements in their everyday practices.

The literacy approach as a social practice draws attention to how children relate to the environments and aids in documenting activities and features of the environments (Tudge and Hogan 2005). Besides, it has been argued that conducting an inquiry into everyday life in the home context requires the methodological relevance of qualitative research using multiple varieties of methods, such as participant observational tool, videotaping, pictures open and semi-structured focus group interviews (Demuth, 2017; Gillen, Gamannossi and Hancock, 2008; Tudge and Hogan, 2005). These methods provide opportunities to gather rich, in-depth data required by an eco-cultural approach (Plowman, 2014). Despite the numerous studies on literacy practices in Nigeria, there is still little focus on applying the eco-cultural approach to explore the fabrics of children's everyday lives in the home context. The majority of the research focuses on quantitative paradigm ranging from scientific experimental designs to survey research (Oyetunde *et al.*, 2016, Maduabuchi, 2014; Duruamaku-Dim, Nnamdi and Arikpo, 2013; Osuorji, 2006; Odinko, 2004), which emphasises children's achievement tests, parents/teachers' responses, instead of giving attention to children's daily activities (Tudge and Hogan, 2005). The research orientation could be because of the long decade of African scholars and researchers' 'acculturation' into the Euro-American scientific paradigm and extensive preference for 'imitative and replicative research' (Nsamenang, 2007: 8). African's rich knowledge system remained unexplored and depreciated (Pence and Nsamenang, 2008). Urban (2010) suggests that professionals in early childhood should promote knowledge derived from a wealth of diverse local practices in different sociocultural environments. Another reason may be the scholars' unawareness of the Eurocentric nature of Euro-American models; they unintentionally promote the imported values and methodology to the inattention of their own (Pence and Marfo, 2008; Nsamenang, 2007). Pence and Marfo (2008: 43) suggest that African researchers should work together to identify and promote 'Africentric

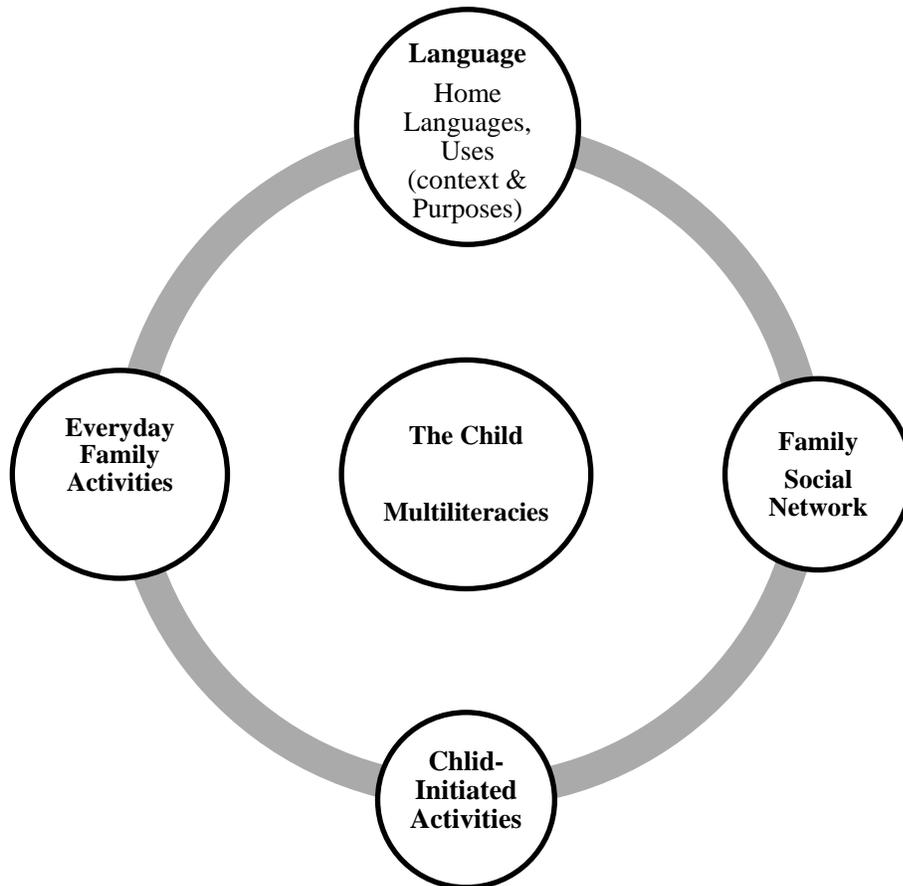
possibilities' that draws on contextual and cultural practices in early childhood care and education. However, the authors point out that pursuing such possibilities should include western viewpoints in a respectful and generative process that opens new channels for discussion and dialogue, creating space for diversity and respect for African voices.

### **2.3. Conceptual Framework of the Study**

The section delineates the conceptual framework of the study, comprising a system of concepts and presumptions that support and inform the research (Robson, 2011). These constitute the key ideas that underpin my understanding of how preschool-aged children's early literacy experiences are stimulated by literacy-rich home environments. Succinctly, the concepts served as a guide for data generation and analyses of the study (Robson, 2011).

Figure 2.1

*Conceptualising Home Influences on a Child's Early Literacy Experiences*



Deriving inspiration from the eco-cultural perspectives (Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013), the radial cycle diagram in Figure 2.1 illustrates a coherent conceptualisation about the likelihood of the influence of home practices on the early literacy experiences of 3-5 years old preschool children. Specifically, the figure was a working model of the possible impact of four interrelated cultural practices: home language (s), everyday family activities, social networks, and child-initiated episodes. The concepts are perceived as literacy-rich situations defined by various opportunities, including literacy resources and activities shaping children's literacy experiences.

The model permits collaborative engagements of the preschool-aged children in multiple modes of interactions encompassing diverse language opportunities, cultural activities embedded in family life such as chores, entertainment, school homework, and religious traditions. Others include interactions with material resources and spaces to account for the diversity of literacy practices and events within households (Pahl and Burnett, 2016; Tudge and Hogan, 2005; Weisner, 2002a).

Besides, the experiences are mediated by the social network environment of more knowledgeable people and from the broader community linkages (Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013; Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1973). Also, the child plays an active role in creating the experiences in collaborative ways. Notably, the conceptual model recognises the children as active creators of their learning through scaffolding and play (Gregory, Long and Volk, 2004). The resulting early literacy experiences are defined in terms of the child's multiliteracy level involving multilingual and multimodal literacies. The study conceives that when the child comes to school with background experiences learned from home, and it thus can contribute to a smooth transition to the school environment (Dasen, 2011; Tchombe, 2011).

#### **2.4. Summary**

Overall, the eco-cultural model is coherent in justifying constructive and encouraging adult-child interactions and child-initiated activities, including the imperatives of literacy-rich mundane activities. The model conceptualises literacy as situated in real-life contexts through interactions with a plethora of material and human resources, which offered a variety of potential literacy pathways and through other multiple modes of communication occurring within a specific time

and place. The framework likewise emphasises the importance of parental beliefs and goals as contributing factors in cultural tools and their support strategies. Significantly, family members are the crucial scaffolds and valuable resources in the home environment. The larger ecological environments, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem and the chronosystems are believed to influence the family cultural practices, parents' active participation, language use and activities in the microsystem. Ultimately, embracing the eco-cultural framework in this study is focused on understanding the family as a whole unit of exploring children's early literacy development, centred on what family members do daily, how they do it, and why they do it.

## **CHAPTER 3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **3.1. Introduction**

The chapter examines the significance of literacy in the preschool years as critical. It considers the Nigeria National Policy on Education (2013a, 2013b) in encouraging early literacy development for the Nigerian child. It highlights the nitty-gritty of children's early literacy experiences' idiosyncrasies, emergent literacy, literacy as a social practice and multiliteracies approach. The chapter further presents how children are active members of their families and communities participating in the context of significant activities. Specifically, it reflects on the perspective of family literacy in a global outlook by exploring some examples of classic works. And the brings to limelight family literacy practices in Nigeria embracing the cultural funds and early childhood literacy in Plateau state, Nigeria. Finally, it discusses the interplay of a child's active role in literacy practices.

### **3.2. The Preschool Child and Early Learning**

Early childhood is a critical period in every child's life as it is a period during which developmental trajectories are nurtured in homes and educational contexts (Serpel and Nsamenang, 2014; Dawes and Biersteker 2011). The right of every child to be supported to reach their full life potential (Urban, 2010; UNCRC, 1989) would be a worthwhile effort to investigate different understandings about their early literacy development. Literacy has been adjudged one of the fundamental attributes a child develops early in life and through everyday social and cultural experiences (Barratt-Pugh and Rohi, 2015; Scull, Nolan and Raban, 2013). The National Policy on Education [NPE] (FRN, 2013a: 14) provides various stipulations for developing the child into 'a sound and effective citizen'. The policy which guides the Integrated Early Childhood Development [IECD],

refers to early childhood education as the education given to children before primary school in settings such as the crèche and nursery for children between 0-4 years, and kindergarten for five years old children (FGN, 2013a). Thus, the IECD targets children from birth to 5 years to provide a holistic development for a 'good head start in life' (FRN, 2013a: i). The NPE (FRN, 2013b: 17) specifies three provisions on early learning: firstly, in Section 11(e), the objectives of Universal Basic Education, which among others, is to ensure that children acquire apt levels' literacy, numeracy, and communicative skills' and imbibe ethical and moral values to position the individual child on a solid foundation for lifelong learning. The stipulations suggest the importance of early literacy learning for preschool-aged children, but the provision did not adequately recognise what constitutes early literacy experiences for young children.

### **3.3. The Concept of Emergent Literacy**

There are thoughts about the essential literacy skills young children are required to possess at the beginning of schooling. The traditional perspective of the reading readiness model views literacy development as a maturational process and posits that children are at a certain point where they are ready to begin learning to read and write (Oyetunde, 2009; Merchant, 2008). However, the emergent literacy concept propounded by Marie Clay in 1966 challenges the readiness perspective (Rohde, 2015). In a review of Clay's argument, Doyle reports that Clay focused on the view that young children develop some emerging literacy-relevant skills before formal school literacy instruction. And highlights that at the age of 5, they bring their 'unique stores of knowledge' comprising oral language competencies, vocabulary skills, world knowledge and pre-school literacy experiences to formal school (Doyle, 2013: 637). Similarly, Snow (2006) and Whitehurst

and Lonigan (2001) describe emergent literacy as the competencies that frame the pathway to reading success which is the pedestal of future learning.

Emergent literacy is a continuum of developmental processes beginning early in life, extending to formal preschool and primary school (Whitehurst and Lonigan, 2003; Lonigan, Burgess and Anthony, 2000). In my study, the perspective has offered a more embracing and broad definition of early literacy to represent an early onset commencing before acquiring conventional reading and writing. Further, Lonigan, Burgess and Anthony, (2000) argue there is no distinction between pre-reading and reading since children experience the initial stages of reading by learning the distinct sounds in language. However, the context of their argument is the learning of sounds, mainly in the English language. Importantly, it suggests that emergent literacy consists of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are developmental foundations for conventional reading and writing (Whitehurst and Lonigan, 2003). Earlier, Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) describe emergent literacy to embrace two interrelated skills involving code-related and oral language recognised. Therefore, it can be inferred that oral language is a foundation for building young children's early literacy skills.

Oral language proficiency is a remarkable social skill used to achieve many objectives: express an opinion, explain an event or something, make a clarification, and pray (Honig, 2007). Further, in most societies, the author suggests children with parental tuition learn to speak and understand the relationship between verbal expression and meanings (Honig, 2007). Therefore, Children's language skills emerge from active engagements with others in interactions of meaningful events. Gentle (2003) identifies the earliest stage of children's language as pointing to things in the environment, naming and labelling people, animals, objects, places, responding by using single words, and employing simple sentences to narrate events and activities, and experiences. These

language activities demonstrate children's vocabulary skills because they use new words they have been exposed to and stored in their memory to describe their experiences (Faleti, 2017; Neuman, Pinkham and Kaefer, 2016). Oral language experience is divided broadly into receptive and expressive skills. Receptive language entails listening to, understanding words and sentences, and precedes expressive language, making speech (Honig, 2007). Therefore, creating rich contexts for language learning and conversations is important to facilitating children's oral language development (Flynn, 2008). Beyond that, oral language proficiency has been argued to build a foundation of the reading process (Oyetunde, 2009; Lonigan, Burgess and Anthony, 2000), which supports comprehension, which later fosters reading (Chan and Sylva, 2015). Thus, prospects of children reading and writing in a meaningful way are facilitated by the opportunity given to them to express their experiences and feelings in their language (Oyetunde, 2009).

Another vital skill that children develop in their early years is phonological awareness. Phonological sensitivity is about the knowledge that letters of alphabets represent sounds and that a spoken word consists of single sounds blended to form words (Lyod and Wernham, 2009; Oyetunde, 2009; Merchant, 2008; Lonigan, Burgess and Anthony, 2000). This skill is one of the strongest facilitators of 'short-and long-term' attainment in learning to read (Oyetunde, 2009; Lonigan, Burgess and Anthony, 2000: 597). Also, knowledge about print conventions identified as left-to-right- and top-to-bottom orientation, dissimilarities between pictures and print on a page, and print awareness all enhance the process of learning to read (Lonigan, Burgess and Anthony, 2000). Further, Oyetunde (2009) suggests that print knowledge does not only help children to form a positive attitude towards reading but encourages them to gather crucial determination and excitement of learning to read. Succinctly, Honig (2007) maintains that children's language knowledge encompasses five different but unified elements: phonological (sound structure of

language), semantic (word labels to specify concepts), syntactic (rules of how words are blended to create meaningful sentences and phrases), morphemic (word structures) and pragmatic (ability to know the intent of talking and speech). Although my research is not focused on children's language analysis, it is essential to highlight basic foundations relevant to understanding the concept of early literacy.

Additionally, Halle (2008) views emergent literacy as preschool-aged children's ability to recognize environmental print (like product labels on packages, food cans, calendars) reflects their early print awareness by demonstrating the skill to decode text within an environment. A study carried out by Newman and Obed (2015) indicates that children's active engagements in social and cultural activities enrich their early literacy experiences through varieties of literacy practices. The description of emergent literacy in this context expanded the idea about literacy and was viewed as a shared encounter in interactions with adults and other children on engagements with books, electronic print, signs, and pictures. Literacy involves print and is found everywhere through local activities in the environment (Hamilton, 2010; Barton and Hamilton, 2000; Barton, 1994), a perspective popularised as literacy as a social practice.

### **3.4. Literacy as a Social Practice**

The theory of literacy as a social practice emerged from the work of Street (1984) in Iran. The study describes the several means by which people used reading and writing for different purposes in their daily life. For example, street (1984) observes different abilities employed by people engaged in English, Qur'anic and Maktab, known as commercial literacy, used in the fruit market. The author then advocates a shift in understanding what counts as literacy, deconstructing the

tradition of focusing much on acquiring skills, thereby constructing what it means to think of 'literacy as a social practice' (Street, 2003: 77). The research challenged the autonomous approach, which strictly conceptualises literacy in technical terms or intellectual skills (Perry, 2012.) without much consideration for the contexts in which the learner learns. Instead, Street suggests the ideological model that conceptualises literacy as a set of established practices in specific contexts and elaborately linked to culture and power structures in the society (Street, 2003). The advocates of social literacy theories distinguished themselves as New Literacy Studies (NLS) (Street, 1996). The group focuses on how reading and writing are used in multiple ways in everyday interactions (Street, 2003; Barton and Hamilton, 2000). In their view, the way print works for different purposes for different people (Barton, 1994). For instance, Barton and Hamilton (1998: 238) conducted a study among a working-class community in Lancaster, Britain and found that literacy entrenched in the participants' everyday lives, and they used it for different purposes such as 'organizing life, personal communication, private leisure, documenting life and sense-making and social participation'. Thus, the culture in an environment impacts the meaning of literacy. Indeed, literacy activities and learning occur outside school to involve homes, religious settings, daily life tasks, community involvements, libraries, and youth clubs (Pahl and Burnett, 2016; Snow, 2006). This current thesis focused on contexts that support literacy practices in the home environment.

In understanding literacy as a social practice, my study draws from the view of Heath (1983) literacy events. Heath (1983: 386) claims a literacy event is any activity in which 'talk revolves around a piece of writing' and is 'central to the nature of participants interactions' and their meaning-making processes. The author emphasises that literacy activities are visible while practices are not observable but are units of behaviour that emphasise values, attitudes, feelings, and social relationships. However, the social processes contribute to the experiences people learn

from, so literacy events are observable experiences that arise from literacy practices and are shaped by them (Barton and Hamilton, 1998). Although, for example, Barton (1994) affirms that literacy events are activities such as an adult reading a book to a child at night, this is an observable event emerging from literacy practices such as the value placed on reading to a child. Therefore, practices are conventional patterns in utilising reading and writing in a particular situation (Barton, 1994) and the cultural knowledge of people influences such an activity. Thus, literacy practices integrate cultural values in creating unique experiences that are culturally and socially relevant (Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013; Street, 2003). In applying Heath's concept of literacy event, Gillen, Gamannossi and Hancock (2008) investigated a child's eating event in Italy and another child's shared-picture reading events in Peru. Their adult caregivers mediated both events. The study illustrates naturally occurring events embedded in the flow of family life and where print and talk permeated the social interactions in a mutual learning process.

Within the context of literacy as a social practice, another argument emerged that literacy events are not only about a written text but involve spoken language and other semiotic systems (Barton and Hamilton, 2000). It claims that written language employed in an integrated way as part of various symbolic systems encompassing numeracy, musical notations, drawings, and other non-text images in literacy events (Barton and Hamilton, 2000, Street, 1984). This idea draws from the multimodality of communication (Flewitt, 2008; Kress, 2002), which shows how children develop literacy in several ways, including learning to use a mixture of several modes. The multimodality model contests the NLS narrow range of the semiotic system, upholding reading and writing in association with other modes. The theory suggests that there are several different modes (Street, 1984). This perspective gives attention to the fluidity of literacy as a social practice that changes over time. New ones are frequently acquired through formal and informal learning and sense-

making (Barton and Hamilton, 2000). Therefore, proponents of multiliteracies believe in multiple pathways to literacy (Gregory, Long and Volk, 2004); this is in tune with the assertion that the ‘big picture and the new demands being placed upon people as makers of meaning in our changing lifeworlds’ (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000: 4).

### **3.5. Multiliteracies Approach to Literacy**

According to Cope and Kalantzis (2000; 2009), multiliteracies entail recognising the presence of multiple and different texts and emphasising the multiple pathways and media of communication and the increasing prominence of ‘cultural and linguistic diversity’ (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000: 5). The theory acknowledges the multimodality of communication against the singular emphasis on the paradigm of print (Flewitt, 2008; Paffard, 2008; Perry, 2012; Street, 1984). It has been acknowledged that conventional listening, speaking, reading and writing skills continue to be essential to becoming literate; however, the advent of modern technology has expanded and produced new literacy needs (Aika and Uyi-Osaterin, 2018). Thus, literacy regarding multimodality and multiliteracies suggests that meaning-making occur through various communicative channels such as visual, gestural, movement, music, drawing, and language forms of representation in communicative practices (Perry, 2012; Flewitt, 2008; Cope and Kalantzis, 2009). The multiliteracies approach views literacy practices in families as contextualised within other communicative modes. Likewise, the plethora of children literacies extends to practices in the home such as symbolising meanings through non-verbal communication skills, gesture, movements, dance, music, drawing, painting, modelling, building, storytelling, rituals, and religious celebrations, listening and talking while playing (Whitehead, 2010; Cope and Kalantzis, 2009). Others are objects, artefacts, visual representations, and crafts (Cope and Kalantzis, 2009).

Also, literacy modes like digital often use spoken and written language in addition to images and sound effects; body movements and facial expressions generally go together with written texts (Flewitt, 2008).

On the other hand, Pahl and Burnett (2016) draw attention to multilingual literacies due to global linguistic diversity. Bringing this to the context of the current study, Omoniyi (2003) argues that Africa must consider literacy to be multilingual and attainable in languages other than official languages. With this scenario, what counts as literacy in Nigerian literacy research efforts should not only focus on the traditional literacy ideas of reading and writing in the English language but also recognise multiliteracies' growing salience. In attempting to remedy the globalisation and imperialism of the Western literacy paradigm, Omoniyi (2003: 141) proposes a paradigm shift to multiliteracies concept tagged 'liberation literacy', which he observes as the best option for African countries whose people are multilingual. According to Omoniyi, the essence of the advocacy for liberation literacy is that literacy must be multilingual and thus attainable in languages other than the official languages. Adopting the former means appreciating and fostering literacy learning in the indigenous languages with a multiplicity of scripts instead of conventional literacy concepts (Pahl and Burnett, 2016; Omoniyi, 2003). This kind of literacy competency associated with different languages is known as bilingual or multilingual literacy practices (Pahl and Burnett, 2016; Barton, 1994). For instance, it is common in Nigeria for a child to learn two or more languages simultaneously in the early years (Nnamdi-Chukwu, Ojinuka and Ojinunuka, 2017; Sanusi; 2015). The practice of multilingualism is common in Nigeria, yet less is known about how preschool-aged children navigate languages in their everyday literacy experiences.

Furthermore, the National Policy for Integrated Early Childhood Development [IECD] (FRN, 2013b) suggests the acknowledgement of funds of knowledge that offer the potentials of expanding

language and literacy practices that accommodate multiple communication modes rather than the dominant research practice of single pathway of learning to read and write with print in Nigeria (Balogun, 2016; Newman and Obed, 2015). The IECD (FRN, 2013b) in Section 4.1(i) stipulates the inculcation of acceptable social and culturally appropriate practices, suggesting the recognition of Nigeria's rich cultural heritage and its international obligation to work within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to cultural identity (UNCRC, 1989). Implementing this objective recommends that learning resources include 'local song, stories, folklores games, dance, riddles, and jokes and locally made items and play tools' (FRN, 2013b, p. 19). The IECD objectives also include 'effecting a smooth transition from home to school'. To realise the objective, the policy established the roles of the family as a stakeholder in the IECD. Section 9.2 specifies the roles to include employing culturally appropriate and desirable practices for children below five years, such as teaching local baby games, rhymes, praise songs and family connections, introducing the child into the social world through mother tongue, and engaging them in dynamic interaction through plays and games through local toys stories. Unfortunately, the early childhood education system has been bedevilled by poor implementations strategies of promoting desirable and appropriate practices in the school system and homes (Omoniyi, 2003). For example, Oyetunde *et al.* (2016: 25) claim that the longstanding factor affecting effective acquisition of literacy skills in early primary schools is the scarcity of 'culturally-relevant' instructional materials for children. Equally, literacy research efforts have not given much attention to the IECD provisions in exploring multiliteracies potentials of the Nigerian child. This present thesis explores the multiliteracies contexts in the home environment and investigates everyday family practices and the impact on 4-5-year-old children's literacy experience in Plateau state, Nigeria.

### **3.6. The Role of the Family in Early Literacy Learning**

The family plays a significant role in young children's early literacy learning. According to Odiaka 2016; Barrat-Pugh and Malony 2015, the home is the first environment in which the child encounters language and literacy. Similarly, Saracho (2017) affirms family literacy is grounded on the belief that parents are their children's first and most prominent teachers. The setting offers opportunities for children to observe, explore, and participate in different activities. Children explore options that the social world creates to learn through various resources and the scaffolds provided by more knowledgeable family members (Vygotsky, 1978). Taylor establishes the concept of family literacy by depicting the roles of the family in children's language and literacy development in an ethnography study carried out in the USA (Taylor, 1983). The research focused on how the participating families used written language described as their 'local literacies are complexly and intricately woven into their lives' (Taylor, 1983: 3). The work suggests that early literacy research should move beyond a focus on formal schooling but extends to appreciate the cultural and linguistic resources of the family. Literature highlights family literacy can be viewed from two angles firstly, as a naturalistic informal occurring practice within the home and as family literacy programmes involving the community and structured activities (Hannon and Bird, 2004; Marrow, Paralore and Tracy 1994). According to Marrow, Paralore and Tracy (1994: 3), family literacy comprises 'parents, children, and family members practice literacy in the home and their community'.

The practices occur during daily routines and aid family members to complete tasks. Some of the localised tasks may include reading and the following instruction and reading stories, using drawings, and writing to share ideas. Additionally, it involves how ethical values and culture shape events either created with a motive or impulsively as parents and children interact to nurture

‘school-like’ literacy practices (Marrow, Paralore and Tracy, 1994: 3). Researching family literacy underpins entering natural social spaces of the home (Taylor, 1983). This may contribute to why qualitative ethnography studies dominate research exploring literacy practices emanating from family interactions and parental styles in naturalistic settings (Gregory, Long and Volk, 2004; Barton, 1998; Heath, 1983; Taylor, 1983). Despite extensive studies carried out in family literacy, although mainly in developed countries, this is yet to be fully tapped by the platform of literacy research in Nigeria. This study subscribes to informal family practices yet meaningful to learn about preschool-aged children’s literacy development. A review of such empirical studies is imperative in understanding the ideologies of literacy practices in contexts and establishing gaps in research in the present study area.

### **3.6.1. Empirical Studies in Family Literacy**

Heath (1983) conducted a ten years comparative ethnographic study of three native English communities in the United States in a Middle-class school-oriented culture community (Mainstream), a White working-class community (Roadville), and a Black working-class community (Trackton) described the relationship between language and social practice. The book “*Ways with words*” details how diverse socio-cultural home literacy practices, beliefs, oral and literary traditions differ across the three communities. In Mainstream, the focus of family literacy was on school-related practices. Parents read bedtime book stories to their children, engaged them in events of shared book reading, involved questioning sessions about stories, and drilled them to retell stories from books and events. They rewarded children for recreating stories. The purpose of employing such approaches was to help the children learn to read, read to learn, and support their school performance. The context values children's engagement in their literacy learning, a strategy

for preparing them for school. Families in the Roadville community were conservative Christians, and family literacy practices based on their religious beliefs. The parents used Christian literacy as a medium for instructing children morally. Reading to children was a rare event, and whenever they did, children did not have ample opportunity to ask questions as the children in Mainstream. Parents preferred using books that addressed their religious values instead of fictional stories. Parents used an authoritative approach to educating children; as such, they were trained to be submissive participants. By inference, creativity and independent learning were insignificantly valued. In the third context, the Trackton families believe children can learn themselves by experience. Reading books to children was not a regular event, and print materials were alien to the children except for Sunday school materials. However, siblings sometimes try to engage younger children in reading, hardly producing a result to pay attention. However, children were encouraged to narrate their own stories based on events they see or hear and their own experiences. In this context, the approach employed by families helped develop the children's narrative skills as an encouragement to be creative storytellers. The lesson here is that the children in the study were exposed to different beliefs in their homes. And point to the different experiences the children may have taken to school.

The different social and cultural context in which literacy is practised for diverse purposes aligns with the notion of literacy as a social practice (Flewitt, 2008; Street, 2003). The study further validates how literacy issues reflect power dynamics in societies and cultures (Street, 2003). Nonetheless, close observation reveals Heath's study consigned higher value on Mainstream's school-based literacy as a basis for school performance and failed to recognise the roles of other forms of multiliteracies as demonstrated in the contexts of the Roadville and Trackton families. The literacy practices in those families could be identified as equally important in contributing to

children's lifelong education beyond school, rather than stifle them. Furthermore, the forms of practices will enable children to acquire cultural knowledge and help them interpret and understand their literacy world, which is crucial to life in the twenty-first century (Flewitt, 2008).

Another classic study on family literacy is Taylor (1983), a three-year comparative-ethnographic investigation of how parents' biographies, educative styles, and rich-print environment enriched children's literacy experiences. Taylor studied six middle-class families varied in education and religion and lived in suburban towns in New York. Findings showed that the parents' multigenerational literacy experiences, such as life stories and educative styles, were dominant factors in facilitating the literacy experiences of their children in the home. The patterns of family literacy fluctuate to accommodate the daily experiences of parents and children. The study established the richness of the home environment with prints. The children were engaged daily, using them to write lists, letters to connect with friends and family members and explore the technological environment. Parents' literacy activities and older siblings enriched younger children's construction of their literacy skills. Imperatively, children's emergent literacy occurred through bedtime stories where the emphasis was on listening to shape their daily lives, watching educational TV programmes.

In contrast, their writing activities occurred undetected as children engaged in other activities (Taylor, 1983). The study also emphasised how culturally organised religious beliefs, attitudes and feelings influenced reading and writing. However, the limitation of the study lies in its emphasis and values placed on print literacy which acts as the dominant factor influencing the family literacy activities of the participants. Multiple modes of literacies were silent.

Also, in a case study, Johnson (2010) explored the use of reading and writing in the context of a 3-year-old child's literacy learning within an African American family living in the US. The participants comprised three adults and a preschool-aged child in Pinesville. Data generated through an unstructured life history interview yielded knowledge on local funds of knowledge. Seven literacy practices emerged- interactional, instrumental, news-related, financial, spiritual, recreational, and educational. Through letter writing and reading, family members built on their interactions. For example, the child was supported to write a letter to her hospitalised mother by a family member. Using a combination of print and oral text, family members shared recipes and sewing tips with each other. Through reading newspapers, members learned about local, state, international events and helped members connect to others in sharing sorrows and celebrations. Also, financial literacy helped members record transactions and prepare budgets, thus encouraging frugality skills.

Similarly, Bible reading, oral praying, religious posters, and calendars promoted spiritual literacy, family and community relationships. Love stories, folk and fairy tales were means of recreational practices for pleasure and entertainment. The family believed in pursuing education and using school-related practices to help the young child meet school requirements. For instance, the child in the family has engaged in school-related tasks like reading aloud and discussing text to support her transit easily to school. Although in the study, the 3-year-old child garnered several literacies from the intergenerational literacy culture of her family, it was blank on specific multiple literacies and how the child used them in the home except for two instances where she was engaged in letter writing and shared book reading. Also, account for the support offered to the child by family members was not described. The study's deficiencies could be due to a single data gathering method of an interview which focused mainly on the adult participants' voices. In contrast, the

voice of the child was silent throughout the investigation. This weakness underscores the importance of multiple sources of data gathering in qualitative research.

In addressing foundational literature in family literacy in the above-reviewed literature, the studies were conducted in a native English context, but my research of a postcolonial official of the English language multilingual context employed a multi-case approach and investigated locally relevant practices. I attempted to focus on specific localised practices and resources familiar to the children.

### **3.7. Literacy Practices in Nigeria**

There is an increasing interest in a shift in understanding the meaning of literacy to embrace multiliteracies (Aika and Uyi-Osaterin, 2018; Omoniyi, 2003). The move is important, especially when searching for knowledge as experienced by preschool-aged children. The early phase of early childhood is least investigated; thus, the need to explore literacy learning space, the nature of learners, how they learn in a multidimensional learning environment, and the role of others (Aika and Uyi-Osaterin, 2018). The multidimensional literacy environment embraces indigenous cultural practices and school-related practices (Bornstein *et al.*, 2017; Akinsola, 2011). These two expectations of acquiring culturally relevant literacy and the nationally valued mainstream practices are recommended by the IECD Policy (FRN, 2013). Still, much emphasis in literacy research in Nigeria has focused mainly on school-related practices in family contexts. Less is documented about preschool-aged children's everyday cultural practices in the home.

Cultural practices influence and sustain literacy (Barton and Hamilton, 1998; Barton, 1994; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984, 2003). Nsamenang (2011) observes that adults can learn from young children

through the light of their cultural practices and everyday life situations. Nigeria has a rich cultural heritage among its ethnic groups (Pam, 2008). This can impact the literacy practices of its people and the literacy learning spaces in the educational system (Aika and Uyi-Osaterin, 2018). Considering this, the National Policy for IECD (FRN, 2013b) documents that early childhood education should inculcate social and culturally appropriate practices. However, section 9.2 of the IECD policy (FRN, 2013b) states the importance of appreciating funds of knowledge in the child's home environment. Still, it fails to specify how the local practices could enrich young children's literacy and language experiences in the home environment. Equally, the policy did not recognise the child's potentials to use their abilities that could trigger literacy; instead, it focuses mainly on what parents can do for their children. Urban (2010) stresses the imperative for early childhood stakeholders to recognise the unique potentials of every young child and the right to enjoy opportunities that would enable them to actualise their full potential.

Nevertheless, little is known about how children use local resources to foster early literacy competencies. The present study's focus agrees with the IECD policy that recommends initiating and undertaking research to understand and document key household cultural practices. Therefore, it is worth investigating aspects of the cultural heritage concerning how it supports preschool-aged children's early literacy development in the home.

Culture is a way of life and behaviour codes of a people which embodies their knowledge, arts, language technology, religion, morality, ritual, and symbols transmitted to their children from one generation to another (Aika and Uyi-Osaterin, 2018; Pam, 2008; Rogoff, 2003). The transmission is achieved through social interactions with significant others, particularly parents being a child's initial contact (Aika and Uyi-Osaterin, 2018; Omolewa, 2007). Nigeria has long experience regarding care and education of children primarily within the family system before the introduction

of Western education (Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013; Akinsola, 2011; Gwanfogbe, 2011). Also, Nigerian families engage in unique pathways and strategies to teach and pass on their ways of life and cultural knowledge to their children (Akinsola, 2011; Omolewa, 2007). Pathways serve as cultural tools of daily routines whose central components are social responsibilities involve ‘imbibing moral and spiritual values, intellectual knowledge, imitation, recitation, and demonstration’ (Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013: 21). Other approaches for knowledge and skills acquisition of informal education include cultural tools of oral tradition such as riddles, praises, songs, storytelling, proverbs, folktales, games, dance, music (Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013; Esere, Omotosho and Idowu, 2011; Omolewa, 2007). Several authors claim that such cultural practices mediate literacy practices as distinctive in construction and tradition from the mainstream Western culture (Demuth, 2017; Serpell and Nsamenang, 2014; Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013; Omoniyi, 2003). Yet, very little literature is known about how the local cultural practices serve as pathways to their young children’s early literacy learning in Nigeria.

Nigeria is a nation of immense diversity in size and geography, and its culture demonstrated in languages, religion, political structure, education, economics, and trade (Dawes and Biersteker, 2011; Esere, Omotosho & Idowu, 2011). From language and religion, Nigeria has three major ethnic groups, namely Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba (Udoeye, 2016), while the people practice two major religions: Christianity and Islam (Pam, 2008). However, over 400 other ethnic minorities and languages are within the Muslim and Christian divide (Udoeye, 2016; Omoniyi, 2003). Therefore, it is imperative to consider these two powerful tools when exploring children’s literacy experience in the home. Thus, language and religion are fundamental cultural components that facilitate early literacy practices in Nigeria (Omoniyi, 2003). For example, Reyes and Esteban-

Guitart (2016) argue that religion links people to their cultural diversities and practising religious beliefs through their holy books generally involves literacy abilities.

### **3.7.1. Language and Literacy**

The communicative practice is at the centre of social interactions between parents and children (Aika and Uyi-Osaterin, 2018; Demuth, 2017). Noticeably, oral language is a dominant force among ethnic groups in Nigerian homes (Esere, Omotosho & Idowu, 2011). Indeed, language is the medium of meaningful communication between people and serves as a means of expression and thinking (Balogun, 2016). The notion of thinking is associated with learning, and thus, without language, learning cannot effectively occur (Balogun, 2016; Tchombe, 2011). Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, (2013) maintain that children's mental abilities are improved when learning is associated with their cultural identity. Cultural knowledge is demonstrated in native languages (Balogun, 2016; Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013). Therefore, teaching and communicating with children in their local languages are tools for enriching their cognitive stabilities for effective learning (Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013; Mielonen and Paterson, 2009). Communicative practices among ethnic groups in Nigeria include bilingualism, storytelling, oral narration, conversations, and errands.

Bilingual/multilingual practices denote an everyday situation where people are exposed to more than one language. Many possible situations exist within the available languages, such as the home language, school language, and language of the immediate environment (Barton, 1994). It has been argued (Eaton, 2018) that a bilingual/multilingual individual can suitably communicate in two or more languages. Such is the case for many children in their early years in Nigeria. Notably, Nigeria

is a highly multilingual society, and multilingualism is highest in urban areas than rural communities (Trudell, 2018; Ogunmodimu, 2015). In a typical Nigerian family, a child's home language can be a combination of mother, the language of the immediate community and the official of school and government. Only three major languages recognised are in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) are Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa, and English as government and education officials. Apart from the other minority languages, the Arabic language is commonly used in the Muslim communities because Arabic is unique and mandatory for most Muslim families being the language of the Islamic faith (Alidina, 2017; Ngbea and Achunike, 2014; Callaway, 2012; Flynn, 2008).

Literacy embedded in language associates with different languages, thus, bilingual and multilingual literacy practices (Barton, 1994). The terms depict the case of a Nigerian child in which they learn two or more languages simultaneously during the early years (Sanusi, 2015). Evidence indicates that such children develop linguistic thought that enhances literacy abilities (Flynn, 2008). Different literacies relate to different languages, and some may not be available in print (Barton, 1994). However, it is important to appreciate and give attention to how every child navigates their language and literacy orientations. Flynn (2008: 19) claims that children learn their home language in an environment that fosters 'spoken communication'. For example, the author explains that they will be celebrated and affirmed as they hear and use this language frequently with family members. The family members model diction, apt language use, and response in each context, so the meaning of words and concepts are embedded in practical examples.

In many cases, children practice codeswitching between the home language and English language or any other language during conversations (Trudell, 2018; Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013). The benefits of codeswitching among bilingual children is documented in

research. Reyes (2004), in a study among Spanish children, peer interactions codeswitched between Spanish and English. The author claims codeswitching enhances children's communicative competencies. According to Whitehead (2004: 46), 'mixing of languages and the switching of languages are powerful linguistic tools for bilingual children due to its several merits'. Mixing tends to communicate the blending of words and phrases from both languages in a single utterance, often by young bilinguals. The author maintains that codeswitching is not 'inadequate and partial language learning'(Whitehead, 2004: 46).

Moreover, the mother tongue is distinguished from other languages because it is the language spoken by either of the parents and that with which a child had first contact (Trudell, 2018; Sanusi, 2015). Proficiency in the first language enhances emotional and cognitive stability for effective learning (Sanusi, 2015; Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013). Further, Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang (2013) affirm a child will learn to read and write only in the language they understand and make meaning. Therefore, the oral language with which a child is in contact is best for initiating early literacy learning.

Already, the NPE (FRN, 2004) addresses the use of the mother tongue. Specifically, the policy recognises the value of language in the educational system, as Nigeria is a heterogeneous nation with diversity in ethnicity and language (Ogunmodimu, 2015). It emphasises the importance of language as an instrument for promoting social interactions, national unity, and cultural preservation. The government stipulates that 'every child shall be taught in the mother tongue or language of the immediate environment for the first four years of basic education. And that, in the interest of national unity, it is expedient that every child shall be required to learn one of the three major languages of Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba (FRN, 2004: 10), More so, the notion of using the mother tongue as language instruction in school suggests that the home and school contexts of

literacy and language learning are not ‘discontinuous systems’ (Omoniyi, 2003: 144). However, do families understand the role of the home language in their children’s early learning? Research documenting this aspect of multilingual literacy has been a prevailing theme over the last decade (Street, 2003; Omoniyi, 2003), but less is written about that form of practice in Nigeria. Therefore, this current thesis embarks to fill the gap.

Another common practice that impacts children’s language and literacy experiences are what is known as psychosocial surveillance. According to Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, (2013), psychosocial surveillance is a social practice encompassing parents and adult family members, closely observe and monitor children to ensure acceptable interactions with others and inspire positive conduct of the children. Barry and Zeitlin (2011) describe the practice as a process of teaching and enforcing the rules of what is permissible and forbidden to children. As a cultural tool, it is a component of the child-reading practices of the eco-cultural framework, and it is adequately a part of the socio-cultural environment (Demuth, 2017; Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013). The practice is crucial in transmitting indigenous knowledge and values to children (Dasen, 2011; Gwanfogbe, 2011). It is a period when adults function as facilitators, teachers, and parents. They use every opportunity with the children to teach different skills, correct children’s wrongdoings through the medium of oral instruction, dialogue, and conversation (Esere, Omotosho and Idowu, 2011; Tchombe, 2011; Omolewa, 2007). Those activities thus become cultural tools for enhancing the children’s oral language skills of listening and speaking and literacies in their mother tongue. Literature documents that when children have rich opportunities to listen and talk, they contribute to building the foundations of reading success (Oyetunde, 2009; McDonagh and McDonagh, 2008).

Similarly, through teachings, adults inculcate and monitor good socialisation customs and values to ensure that children's behaviours are shaped by inappropriate pathways cherished and desirable in the family and community. Examples are politeness and courtesy in speech and behaviours communicated using idiomatic expressions of different Nigerian languages (Akinsola, 2011; Osanyin, 2004). An example of politeness is respect for elders, which adult family members observe in children. Most cultural groups in Nigeria value respect for elders, and children learn to have absolute respect for elders irrespective of the relationship. Manners and codes in which children address adults differ among ethnic groups, suggesting honour and reverence. For example, it is common to observe children addressing elders using labels and titles such as an uncle, aunty, brother, sister, mother (mummy, mama, mum), father (baba, daddy, papa). Other ethnic groups require adding appropriate actions or body movements (gestures) that correspond to the title. For example, bow, kneel and prostrate (Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013; Akinsola, 2011). The greeting is appreciated and practised differently among the ethnic groups. Greetings form a crucial aspect of major tribes' daily lives and have different greetings for different occasions (Akinsola, 2011; Barry and Zeitlin, 2011). Greetings are short phrases used politely by children to welcome visitors (salutation), greet family members in the morning or go to bed, and commend and acknowledge support offered. It is common to find parents, other adults, and older siblings enforce or correct children when they err on social norms formally through sanctions and informally through body language and non-verbal communication signs. Through those practices, children learn terms to address people and encourage to communicate verbally and non-verbally (Tchombe, 2011) and enrich cultural norms and values, guiding the use of their literacy skills for educational sustainability.

Storytelling is a proper educational tool in most societies for developing language and cultural literacy (Mckeough *et al.*, 2008; Palmer *et al.*, 2000). It is a means of transmitting beliefs, traditions, and history to future generations, and it involves the use of oral language (Ogbu, 2018; Omolewa, 2007; Palmer *et al.*, 2000). Storytelling is a valued process to create an exchange in a repeated cycle of telling stories. It allows adults to provide a sense of making stories as a model to teach children that language is to construct meaningful situations (Palmer *et al.*, 2000). As such, it enables children to acquire ‘expressive and receptive language’ which provides occasions for children to ‘hear, process and practice models of language’ through discussions, retelling, describing, and expressing opinions on events and characters in their favourite stories (McDonagh and McDonagh, 2008: 10). Tchombe (2011) underscores how stories among Bemiléké people of Western Cameroon are the main themes of conversations and dialogues among family members in collective settings during meals, cleaning the courtyard, and farms. She found that stories encouraged arguments and enhanced communicative competence and language skills. The author employed a participant observation method and highlighted how children were encouraged to contribute and attract attention from others, and thus facilitated listening skills, vocabulary, and turn-taking skills during conversations. In another study among the Yoruba and Igbo ethnic groups, Esere, Omotosho and Idowu, (2011) argues that folktales deepened the creative sense of visualisation and imagination of young children. Their findings suggest that imagination is crucial in the planning, composition, climaxing, and telling of a folktale around objects or people.

The stories likewise teach moral lessons that children can learn and practice. Usually, the storyteller employs questioning techniques such as, what does this story teach us to do and not to do? Children’s responses are always related to their comprehension of the story (Esere, Omotosho and Idowu, 2011: 265). Among the Hausa people, storytelling is as *tatsuniya*. Story contents

usually use animals, men, maidens, and heroes to convey moral lessons and grandmothers in the households are customarily master storytellers (Molumfashi, 2017). During storytelling activities, the storyteller typically starts with the saying: “*Gata nan gata nan Ku*” [Story story]; children respond and say, “*Ta zo mu Ji ta* (RumbunIlimi, 2017). Parents also tell religious stories to inculcate religious morals.

Another practice is the communicative practice by engaging children in errands and home chores (Barry & Zeitlin, 2011; Mweru, 2011; Nsamenang, 2011; Tchombe, 2011) are common practices among most families in Nigeria. Through adult instructions, young children engage in errands and doing home chores. According to Barry and Zeitlin (2011), home chores and errands are tools parents use to teach children the names of objects. For example, they insert names of things into the messages and directives for errands and home chores. Tchombe (2011) maintains that engaging children in running errands foster children’s process of independent thinking learned through activities of preparing meals with parents, cleaning up, and bathing activities. Dawes and Biersteker (2011) sustain that errands enhance children's self-regulation, attention, and memory. Consequently, children running errands are involved in cultural pathways of building early literacy skills. Hallet, (2008: 65) enumerate examples of environmental prints children encountered in the kitchen by showing ‘labels (written and pictorial) on food packs, ready-made food, written shopping list and paper money’ and many others.

Finally, child-child practices are common for most Nigerian and other African families (Nsamenang, 2011; Mweru, 2003). The practice involves older siblings help in the upbringing of the younger ones. Siblings could be from the same parents or other parents of the same extended family (Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013). They may assist in providing custodial care for younger ones while parents are away or engaged in other home activities. They use such

opportunities to organise activities that help develop physical skills, such as engaging them in play, hiding and seeking games, singing, and dancing. Older siblings are good at engaging younger ones in activities that encourage intellectual and language skills, like telling stories that they learn from parents and other extended families. The younger stories or narrate their own in turn. Indeed, such practices promote language and oral development (Serpell & Nsamenang, 2014; Mweru, 2011; Nsamenang, 2011). For example, a study in the central province of Kenya about the Agikuyu and Ameru (Mweru, 2011) reveals that older siblings that were already in school instructed their younger ones in school-related activities such as counting saying the alphabets and scribbling. And that sibling teaching involved the use of objects found in the environment such as sticks, stones, and muds as they instruct younger children. Also, older siblings used riddles to impart knowledge, encourage mental exercise and entertainment. Research on other family members other than parents providing literacy support for young children has not attracted much research documentation in Nigeria. It justifies why this current research explored family social networks in the home environment.

### **3.7.2. Religious Practices**

The belief in God as the ultimate Supreme Being is a way of life that affects the socialisation pattern of the Nigerian society (Ngbea and Achinuke, 2014; Omolewa, 2007). It is the belief in ‘doctrinal propositions, obedience to a specified set of moral practices and the ‘performance of certain approved rituals’ (Isichei: 32). Reyes and Esteban-Guitart, (2016) assert that practising religious beliefs entails literacy abilities. Therefore, understanding how religious practices contribute to children’s literacy experiences is worth considering. The issue served as one of the

criteria for selecting the participants for my study and how it is considered a potential tool for enriching children's literacy experiences but has been least researched.

Among the Muslim communities, the unifying effect of language and religion shared cultural patterns that influence early literacy practices are observable (Alidina, 2017). The central principle guiding the content of the practices is not only of divine origin but aimed at directing members to respect Allah's command. Reading the Qur'an becomes obligatory for Muslims to be literate in the Islamic faith (Ngbea and Achunike, 2014). In the same vein, since the language of the Holy Qur'an Arabic, it is indispensable for Muslims to acquire Arabic literacy (Gwanfobge 2011). Concerning Muslim families, parents are essentially responsible for transmitting Islamic morals and etiquette to their children early in life (Gwanfobge, 2011, Hamza, 2010). Parents teach and ensure that their children perform the obligatory and fundamental practice of praying five times daily; teach obedience, submission, and devotion to Allah. Beyond this, parents send their children to Quranic (*or "Islamiyya"*) schools in neighbouring Mosques. In the schools, children aged between 4-10 years old sit with wooden tablets before their Islamic scholars, also referred to as *Mu'allims*. They provide a 'sequential and programmed curriculum intended to inculcate norms such as *Taqwa* (consciousness of Allah), Islamic and Quranic literacy, Tajwid and knowledge of the pillars of Islam' (Hamza, 2010: 13). Even though the Islamic teaching is in Arabic, it is a system that proffers crucial social and academic benefits because memorisation of the Quran, which is the cultural model of learning, is believed to engrave its content in the children's minds. Besides, Quranic schools blend traditional Islamic literacy with modern school literacy (Hamza, 2010). It is, therefore, a common practice to find children in Muslim families attend Qur'anic schools and the formal primary schools simultaneously (Alidina, 2017). Parents also support their children at home in Arabic literacy; thus, in a traditional Muslim family, memorisation and

recitation of the Quran and writing few verses are highly encouraged and recognised as literate (Stacey, 2009). The religious significance of memorisation and recitation in Arabic as a form of literacy provides a rationale for Islamic schooling (Gwanfogbe, 2011). This responsibility rested more with the women, the principal home caregivers, while the men are the primary earners and providers for the family (Alidina, 2017). The author further argues that a significant number of women in Muslim communities who do not pursue education after secondary school decide to marry to take up the house and family roles (Alidina, 2017).

On the other hand, Christianity conceptualises spiritual use of literacy as a social practice of reading the Bible in the home (Perry, 2012; Johnson, 2010). The practice is, in most cases, regulated by the social institution of the Church with historical and power dimensions (Perry, 2012). The Christian faith is intergenerational, transmitted among family members in which parents nurture and communicate their belief in God to their children (McMillon and Edwards, 2004). Spirituality among Christians is a direct, personal experience of the sacred, the awareness of a higher power of the deity of God (Kitause and Achunike, 2013). The relationship expressed in beliefs, worship, creed, and symbols (McMillon and Edwards, 2004) allows communication between the Supreme Being and the believer.

Bible reading among Christian families builds family members' faith in the supreme God and develops morality and ethics (Ngbea and Achunike, 2014; Perry, 2012). The Church Sunday School provides the child with a formal learning environment that offers children opportunities to build pre-reading skills through Bible stories, memorization and recitation of scriptures (McMillon and Edwards, 2004: 185), reading prayers and saying personal prayers (Perry, 2012; Johnson, 2010). Thus, children experience language and literacy experience through activities and events. Also, Christian parents require a functional role to educate their children with the rudiments of the

Christian faith through family prayer times within the home environment (Ngbea and Achunike, 2014; Johnson, 2010). Usually, family members gather for Bible reading and prayers; children are encouraged to listen and recite scriptural passages. Often parents read Bible stories and give opportunities for children to ask questions and respond to questions emanating from the stories.

### **3.7.3. Early Childhood Literacy Education in Plateau State**

Like other states in Nigeria, early childhood education (ECE) in Plateau State is guided by Section 2 of the NPE (FRN, 2013a) provision for basic education. It is segmented into 0-4 years; situated in crèches and operated mainly through the private sector and social development services, whilst schools for ages 5-6, referred to as kindergarten education, are within the formal public education sector and supported by the government in the form of free and compulsory. The government appears to emphasise kindergarten education because it is the period of transition to primary school. In addition, for policy coordination and monitoring, the government established a Universal Basic Education Programme (UBE). Among other purposes, early literacy education of the UBE ensures the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, communicative and life skills, and the ethical, moral, security and civic values heeded for laying solid foundations for lifelong learning NPE (FRN, 2013a: 17).

Furthermore, the government shall set standards of establishing early year centres, develop and disseminate IECD curriculum materials; implementation guidelines, promote teacher education for specialisation in early childhood, and that teacher education curriculum orientated toward the ‘play-way method’ NPE (FRN, 2013a: 20). The ECE curriculum developed was tailored to enable children to learn skills that will help them adjust to schooling and expose them to life-long reading

and writing attitudes (Ekpo, 2018). Specifically, it includes skills such as singing and dancing, self-expressing, greetings ethics, identification of objects, simple sentence making, and carrying out simple instructions. In addition, children shall learn to identify upper and lower cases of the English alphabet, read the letters, and read two-letter words. Furthermore, the government shall facilitate adequate production and effective utilisation of learning and instructional materials. And to ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the mother tongue or language of the immediate environment. To this effect, NPE (FRN, 2013a: 20) shall produce the orthography of more Nigerian languages, reading textbooks and instructional materials. Implicit in the provision is the expectation of the roles of stakeholders through multi-sectoral collaboration and synergy between government, civil society, organisations, private providers and communities to ensure the efficacy of ECE service delivery (FRN, 2013b). The government agencies responsible for monitoring and ensuring quality service provisions are the Plateau State Universal Basic Education Board (PSUBEB), at the state level, Local Government Education Authorities (LGEA) at the local government levels. In contrast, non-government agencies operate as Development partners (UNICEF, JICA, USAID, DFID) and Faith-Based Organisations at the community levels (UBE, 2009). In addition, the ECE programme in the state encourages parents, the media, and relevant tertiary institutions as partners (IECD, 2013b).

Despite the laudable objectives and the expected roles of different stakeholders in the policy, there is inappropriate curricular and teacher training and recruitment for the provision of child-friendly environments (Newman and Obed, 2015). Research indicates that most teachers lack specific skills in teaching early literacy, and thus, inconsistency prevails in the instructional strategies for early literacy development. For example, Korb (2010) observes that some in-service teachers undergoing teacher development programmes at the University of Jos lacked knowledge of

emergent literacy skills that children can learn before schooling. Muodumogu (2014) evaluation of school literacy practices in some selected primary schools located in Plateau, Benue and Nasarawa States of the North Central Zone of Nigeria maintains that teachers do not employ research-proven and result-oriented strategies in the classroom. Instead, the rote method of instruction was dominantly used (Ekpo, 2018). Also, the policy fails to implement the provision of adequate textbooks in schools. According to Korb (2010) and Adekola (2007), early childhood teachers lack an adequate supply of essential textbooks and instructional materials. Specifically, Korb (2010) maintains a non-availability of culturally relevant and appealing picture books for pre-readers because most available books are foreign. Likewise, Oyetunde *et al.* (2016: 23) contend that an established constraint facing the attainment of early literacy skills in early primary schools in the state is the scarcity of ‘culturally-relevant’ instructional materials for children. Studies indicate that the policy stipulation of the use of mother tongue and language of the immediate environment as instruction strategy in developing literacy and learning skills of preschool children has not been affected due to lack of appropriate methods and materials in the local languages (Ajayi, 2008; Adekola, 2007).

Also, Salami (2016) observes a weakness of the curriculum that emphasises teacher-centred direct instruction of learning in which children do not have opportunities for play-related activities. That overflows in research practice, as seen in the literature. For example, Muodumogu (2014) assessment of early year’s literacy teaching methods using the Teaching of Beginning Reading Skills Observational Checklist did not consider a play-way method of instruction. Therefore, we can imply that the policy stipulation of teaching the child spirit of enquiry and creativity through exploring the environment through a play-way teaching method is understudied (FRN, 2013a; b). Also, it has been argued (Ogunyemi and Ragpot, 2015) that the IECD policy statement of creating

an enabling play-rich environment for early childhood education has not been effective due to implementation challenges. Challenges such as an unattractive child-friendly learning environment lacking in indoor and outdoor play materials may have compelled more emphasis on adult-led academic activities for developing intellectual abilities (Salami, 2016). The situation pointed out portends schoolification, which reduces the time children spend playing, undermines potentials for independence and creativity (Weale, 2021). Also, in the UK, an alarm has been raised about the overbearing influence of schoolification of early childhood and how it contributes to eroding free play at home and school (Weale, 2021). Thus, how can young children's curiosity to play balance schoolification in the home environment?

Issues outlined in the preceding paragraphs justify previous findings (Gittins and Ekpo, 2018; National Population Commission [NPC], 2016) that pupils in early years are not developing essential literacy skills and prominence of insufficient child-friendly classrooms, particularly in public schools. Also, parents/guardians perceived that teachers are not performing according to expected standards (NPC, 2016). Nigerian teachers have significant competence challenges and limited opportunities to develop appropriate skills (Gittins and Ekpo, 2018; Adekola, 2007). Consequently, to improve early years literacy in Plateau state, the government, through PSUBEB in the first quarter of 2015, introduced an English language literacy methodology described as Jolly Phonics (a synthetic phonics strategy) in selected public lower primary schools (Kindergarten and Primary 1-3) in 2015. The approach was a collaborative effort between PSUBEB, Universal Basic Education Commission and Universal Learning Solution (ULS), a non-governmental organisation, in providing training and instructional materials for pupils and teachers in schools. Earlier studies (Ashbridge, 2018; Ekpo, 2018) claim that Jolly Phonics is fast-tracks children's pre-reading skills, thereby improving children's reading and writing competency through songs,

interactive story and body action activities of teaching letter sounds and blending of words. The report indicates that children's reading and writing have improved since the programme's inception (ULS, 2017). However, as one of the pioneer academics in that research, I observed that Jolly Phonics resources did not contextualise the instructional materials like the pictures on the alphabetic chart, workbook and the corresponding songs. They did not reflect local objects that children could quickly identify and understand. Instead, they represented pictures and vocabulary popular in western cultural contexts. Dasen (2011) maintains most local experiences that children have learned in their home environments and which has been considered essential to them are mainly not valued in the school context. The deficiency of the approach can be alleviated through effective home-school linkage. Although the IECD (2013b) delineates the role of the family in early literacy support for preschoolers' in culturally sensitive practices and emphasise an understanding of key households' practices, it is crucial to explore home-based practices as demonstrated by González, Moll and Amanti (2005).

Furthermore, the assessment procedure of the instructional strategy evaluates children's learning outcomes by standardised evaluation principles (Neudorf et al., 2017). Thus, basic language and literacy attainment aspects become scientific rather than contextual (Serpell and Nsamenang, 2014). For the benefit of the Plateau child, assessment and learning situation should consider children's desired learning contexts. Studies have shown that classroom teaching strategies that recognise practices and experiences of children's daily life in the home are effective for literacy development in the classroom context (Newman and Obed, 2015; González, Moll and Amanti, 2005). Therefore, early childhood literacy education in Plateau to adopt an approach that embraces appropriate knowledge and appreciation of the abundant cultural endowment of the local

community and creatively promote these in classroom learning space (Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013).

### **3.8. The Child Factor in Literacy Practices**

Putting the child at the centre of learning has recently attracted the interest of researchers in early childhood (Plowman, 2014; Nsamenang, 2011; Urban, 2010). The motivation emanates from the dearth of research to consider children as facilitators of their own learning experiences, as most research focuses on adult's roles (Plowman, 2014). A child's role in their immediate home environment is not passive but an active participant during mundane activities with family members and material resources (Nsamenang, 2011; Tchombe, 2011; Weisner, 2002a). Nsamenang (2011) sustains that children are co-mediators of their socialisation and learning and describes their role as the child agency. The active component of the agency is action, which entails a social process in which the child initiates a force that drives experience, learning, and development. It recognises the child as the manager and initiator of their development. The play context provides the opportunity for the child to develop early literacy experiences by drawing on many resources in the environment (Heath, 2016; Geogory, Long and Volk, 2004).

Play is an essential component of childhood, a pursuit that brings recreation to children, and a profoundly important activity in a child's life (Day, 2013; Roskos and Christie, 2013). Play is a deliberate and spontaneously selected conduct that is process-oriented, pleasurable, and enjoyable and permits the chance to construct and uncover their world (Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013). Children use their previously real experiences (Bruce, 2011) and allow them to represent objects, events, or people they have interacted with and reproduce the activities

through play (Scharer, 2017). Apart from this, the play has been indicated to enable children to collaborate with other knowledgeable others in social interactions as a means of acquiring knowledge (Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013; Bruce, 2011). Additionally, children's play is fundamentally dramatic, which encompasses creating an imaginary situation, acting a role, and following sets of rules influenced by specific roles (Scharer, 2017). Their dramatic play situation represents a reproduction of real situations. Within this world, the child can become a mother. For example, a child with a doll reproduces almost precisely what the mother does with her baby. Notably, the playground becomes the home, the shop, and the classroom where they create their dramatic world by organising experiences and making unstructured choices about what they want to do and the way or how to do it (Dunn, 2008). Such contexts provide opportunities for children to promote language experience that can build connections between oral and written modes of expression (Dunn, 2008).

Play attracts the attention of theorists and researchers in different fields of child development and early childhood on play in growth, literacy, and development from infancy to teenage years (Day, 2013; Morrow and Schickendanz, 2006; Isenberg and Quisenberry 2002). But many of these theorists have narrowed their researches on children's play as it enhances learning in the classroom environment (Morrow and Schickendanz, 2006). Such as supporting literacy in the classroom settings through play (Williams, 2004) and neglecting the wealth of play opportunities in the home environment. Home environments in Nigeria across the six geographical locations are rich in natural resources for children's play activities. Objects like stones, sharp sand, plants, fruit seeds, and different leaves, discarded objects and toys form the bulk of the materials children can explore for literacy and creativity (Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013). Still, less is known about

how children use the vastness of play resources to enhance their literacy acquisition in the home environment.

### **3.9. Summary**

The chapter explored the significance of preschool years and the connection with literacy in the early years, especially in the home environment where they interact with human and non-human resources. In doing this, I recognised the different literacy approaches ranging from the emergent literacy perspective, literacy as a social practice, and multiliteracies. A literature search indicates that literacy over the years no longer confines to the traditional print literacy of reading and writing. Rather it embodies literacy opportunities incorporating multiliteracies and recognising multilingual practices practised in many homes and societies. However, with a wide range of multiple communicative channels facilitating multiliteracies in the home environment, less has been documented, particularly the components of multiliteracies that children are learning in the home environment. Instead, there is a plethora of documented research, mainly on reading and writing, especially in the classroom setting. This research focused on bridging the gap.

Arguably, a typical home environment in Nigeria has arrangements of indigenous literacy practices that allow children to engage with a wide range of language and communicative channels that can enhance multiliteracies. It includes bilingualism, oral language and conversations, psychosocial surveillance, errands, and religious practices. Although the reviewed IECD policy acknowledges the role of the family in inculcating indigenous cultural traditions, it fails to clarify specific early literacy experiences that children may encounter, which may help transit smoothly to school. Importantly, it draws attention to more research on increasing databases for early literacy practices.

The current thesis response to that recommendation, in addition to my instinct in researching in the home environment.

The chapter also considered the role of the family in early literacy because the home is the first environment the child encounters language and literacy. Because the setting affords children to observe, explore, and participate in literacy activities that occur during daily routines, which aids them in completing tasks. Literature explored on foundations of literacy helps clarify the concepts that the current study investigated and provided a guide for data generation and analysis methods.

Despite the numerous studies in literacy practices in Nigeria, there is still less focus on the structure of children's everyday lives as it pertains to the activities, social networks, and interactions that form part of everyday experiences in the family settings. The majority of the research emphasised quantitative paradigm, ranging from scientific experimental or quasi-experimental designs to survey researches (Maduabuchi, 2014; Osuorji, 2006; National Reading Panel, 2005; Odinko, 2004) and relied on testing children's achievements, parents and teachers responses. Rather than observing children's regularly occurring daily activities (Tudge and Hogan, 2005). Moreover, children's agency in enhancing individual literacy experiences is an aspect that attracted attention in the literature reviewed. The chapter concludes by addressing child agency as crucial in contributing to children's literacy learning. Through their varieties of child-initiated play, children can mediate their literacies. Thus, the current study considered it worthwhile to explore that aspect of the literacy experience in the Nigerian context.

## **CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1. Introduction**

The objective of this study was to explore the home practices of four families and describe how the practices impact their preschool-aged children's literacy experiences. In the previous chapters, I have given the rationale for the context of the study and explored selected relevant literature that helped identify gaps in research methodology in the geographical area I carried out the research. This chapter provides a detailed description of the multiple case studies and the rationale for adoption, the critique of the design and justification. Additionally, the description of the research settings: location, ethnicity, language, cultural contexts, and the social status of the participating families are explicit in the chapter. The chapter further presents the researcher's role and reflexivity in conducting the research. And they were followed by a description and justification of the purposive and convenience sampling techniques used for sampling selection. Ethical issues procedure received adequate attention in the chapter. Subsequently, for research transparency, I present methods of data generation and timetable schedule of recorded observations. Finally, the chapter summarises the data analysis procedures and procedures for establishing the trustworthiness of the research.

### **4.2. Research Design and Rationale**

The empirical activities of the study adopted a qualitative multiple case study, built on keenness to have a direct experience and exploration and making a detailed description of the early literacy experiences of four preschool children in the home contexts of four families in Plateau State, Nigeria (Atkinson *et al.*, 2001; Mason, 2000; Creswell, 1998). The multiple case studies entail the collection of 'rich and deep data' rather than 'hard data' obtained through measurements of

variables and testing hypotheses synonymous with quantitative designs (Bryman, 2004: 394; Merriam, 2002). By employing this design, everyday home literacy experiences of children aged four to five years old were explored in a naturalistic (Tudge and Hogan, 2005) rather than an experimental setting. Thus, the study focused mainly on learning about the preschool children's home literacy experiences with physical settings and social networks and not attempting to evaluate what home literacy practices are effective. Actualising this task was possible due to the case study feature using extensive data collection options, enhancing data credibility (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Hence this study draws on multiple data-gathering tools of participant observation, interviews, and artefacts like pictures and children's works to compile robust data for the research (Vasconcelos, 2010; Baxter and Jack, 2008; Creswell, 1998).

Furthermore, the selection criteria in choosing qualitative and quantitative research designs are simple diversities between research strategies and data collection methods. Also, choices represent different philosophical underpinnings for analysing the nature of knowing, social reality, and processes of grasping the research experience (Creswell, 2003). So, employing the multiple case studies aligns with the philosophical orientation that relied on socially interpretative knowledge as it draws on the 'participants' views of the situation been studied' (Creswell, 2003: 8). The approach adopted allows me the opportunity to solicit sufficient information on four preschool children, their parents, and family members at different periods and within their natural home contexts. An approach contrary to reliance on the scientific method and statistical measurements in quantitative inquiry (Creswell, 2003).

The study's interest was directed on interactions between the participating children and their family members on the one hand and secondly, between the child and the environment to account for the children's agency tendencies in their literacy experiences. Knowing that the participants

make meaning as they engage in their social world and that there is no one objective reality out there; instead, meanings are formed from varied and multiple views (Creswell, 2003). Hence, the multiple case study provided the opportunity to have a close relationship with the participants to capture through observation and follow-up interview, a holistic view of the daily activities of the families and listening to their opinions through conversations and open-ended interviews to understand the cultural settings and environments of the participants (Robson, 2011; Baxter and Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2003, 2013; Mason, 2002).

The design provides answers to how what, or why questions, and that the research covers contextual conditions (Yin, 2014; Baxter and Jack, 2008) relevant to children's literacy experience under study. In the same vein, Yin (1994) describes a case study as an empirical inquiry that researches a current event within its context, especially when the boundaries between the event and its context are not clearly defined. Similarly, Merriam (2002) suggest using a case study to investigate the scarcity of information in an area of study. Therefore, the research design considered exploring how the available home environmental resources enriched the early literacy experiences of preschool children not yet known in Plateau state, Nigeria. Adopting the multiple cases offered me the prospects of accounting for a detailed description of the contexts, the networks of social interactions and how they enriched the children's literacy experiences. The expressions, engagements, and significances of interactions between children and family members were examined and documented (Vasconcelos, 2010). Notably, the practices I investigated are contemporary issues of understanding early literacy experiences in the 21<sup>st</sup> century encompassing a range of communicative practices beyond traditional reading and writing (Aike and Uyi-Osaretin, 2018; Pahl and Burnett, 2016).

Moreover, the research design recognises the delimitation of time, activities, contexts and resources, to ensure that the study remains reasonably focused on the scope (Vasconcelos, 2010; Baxter and Jack, 2008) and provides an in-depth account of participants' cultural practices (Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). Notably, the time constraint was crucial in the case studies. Therefore, it is expedient I achieved the prolonged period in the field to generate rich and deep data, establish confidence with participants, and enable access to their homes (Vasconcelos, 2010). To address this issue, I embraced Creswell (1998, 2003) suggestion that six months to a year is adequate, so the fieldwork was carried out in about ten months. However, the nature of the family routines of my participants, in which the preschool children were mainly available for observations during afternoons and evenings, my field works occurred during these periods. Nevertheless, I believe the generated data within the stipulated period was enough to provide rich evidence for a thick descriptive account of the early literacy experiences of the preschool children in the multiple case studies (Siraj-Blatchford, 2010).

Apart from this, an account of the participant's activities in the research settings captured and reflected meaningful and relevant actions to investigate the research questions (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). The study focused on experiences that provided significant opportunities emanating from multiple communicative modes apart from the usual reading and writing activities. Various data collection tools of participant observation and interviewing were crucial in identifying these meaningful activities. The research limits its scope to the home environment context considered the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). And then multiplied the contexts into four home environments to explore within and cross-case analysis (Merriam, 2002) and understand the similarities and differences between preschool children's literacy experiences.

Despite the thorough methodology of case study as empirical research, it has been criticised as being too subjective because of its assumed tie to the researchers' biased views of influencing the research findings (Yin, 2009; Bryman 2008). In mitigating such bias, I presented evidence about participants' voices of participants uppermost in all the data generated and analysed (Creswell, 2003). The section on reflexivity provides strategies I adopted to mitigate the overdependence of my professional experiences on the research outcome.

Another issue raised about the case study approach is its inability to be used for empirical generalisation in qualitative research (Yin, 2014; Bryman, 2008; Mason, 2002). That is a research strategy peculiar to qualitative research and not a weakness (Mason, 2002), whereas the contextual understanding of people's activities, perceptions, and practices are pursued (Bryman, 2008). Creswell (1998) argues that generalisation has little meaning in qualitative research and as such, samples are small and not representative of the population. But as a rule of thumb, he further suggests that multiple case designs should not be more than four. The idea of generalisability influences researchers to select a large number of cases (Creswell, 1998) as a statistical representation of a wider population (Mason, 2002).

Given that, this was not the intention of the current study, which explored literacy practices in four home settings and the impact on the four preschool-aged children. Creswell (1998) argues that the idea of generalisation has little meaning in qualitative research and, as such, samples are small and not representative of the population. But as a rule of thumb, he further suggests that multiple case designs should not be more than four. The sample facilitated exploration within a setting and across settings to understand the similarities and differences between the literacy practices of the families (Baxter and Jack, 2008).

Another contending issue was that prolonged time in the field results in massive unreadable documents gathered (Yin, 2014). Therefore, this study adopted the thematic analytical method to identify codes and themes in dealing with the large quantity of data in qualitative research (Robson, 2011). Similarly, in addressing the problem, I focused on analysing meaningful data related to literacy activities that occurred mainly between afternoons and evenings, particularly during various home activities, as noted in Table 6 in the subsection on literacy-related observation.

### **4.3. Setting of the Study**

The research took place in two communities (designated as A and B) in the Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. The setting is multi-cultural and multilingual and accommodates people of different ethnic groups such as Yoruba, Fulani, Hausa, and Igbo (Information Nigeria, 2017), apart from the prominent Berom indigenous tribe. The four homes investigated in communities A and B served as the context of the study. All the families practised their faith and used their preferred languages and cultural values. Two preschool-aged children of the Christian faith emerged from community A and the other two of the Muslim faith from community B. Both A and B were moderately resourced communities, and this affords the parents to be self-employed, thereby enabling children to spend time with their parents at home. At the time of the study, all the mothers were full-time at home, two were running small family businesses, and one was volunteering as a Nanny in the child's nursery setting. The other one was fully supporting the family at home.

On the other hand, two out of the four fathers were doing part-time jobs and two full-time civil servants. The characteristics of these family settings provided the ground for valuable accessibility

and negotiation. Also, the preschool-aged children had the opportunity to participate in the main events of inquiry: daily family routines through social interactions that facilitate their early literacy skills. These various demographic characteristics of the participants in the research setting are crucial in understanding the nature of the physical and social environments and local literacy practices embedded in the families in which the preschool child is nested (Creswell, 2003).

#### **4.4. Sampling Method**

Purposive sampling was used to select the sites and participants. The method is the most appropriate and recommended sampling technique for qualitative case studies (Fusch, Fusch and Ness, 2017; Creswell, 1998). The strategy aligns with selecting the participants based on some specific criteria in mind (Creswell, 1998). While employing the approach, the study adopted some ‘typology of sampling strategies for qualitative inquiry’ suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994: 28). First, it was convenient to select two communities that were easy for me to access due to the security challenges in the State during the period of the research. Also, because of my lived experience in Plateau State, I was able to purposefully select the two communities based on the conviction that its participants were ‘information-rich’ hence strategically relevant and can provide answers to the research questions of the study (Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 1998, 2003; Mason, 2002; Miles and Huberman, 1994: 28). More so, the two settings selected served to accommodate ‘maximum variations’ as a strategy for diversities in participants' characteristics and ‘multiple perspectives’ (Creswell, 1998, p. 120). Using this technique enabled me to assemble the participants according to some characteristics that satisfactorily address the purpose of the research and select those who showed a willingness to participate. The process accommodated the

advantage of ‘opportunistic sampling’ that establishes criteria for selecting and studying participants (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 28). The selection criteria used include the preschool-aged children belonged to the family size of between five and six, purposely to recognise the related roles of family members in the research process. I likewise emphasised the importance of cultural diversities of participating families to incorporate a variety of cultural traditions in multiple cases (Yin, 2009). I selected four families from different ethnic groups comprising one Mwaghavul, two Hausa, and one Yoruba. These families belonged to the two major religious groups Islam and Christian, in Nigeria. The selection criteria stressed the significance of exploring diversities of literacy practices embedded within families and communities.

Further, the convenience strategy enabled me to negotiate, access and select the participants in the two communities and to manage the limited resources of time and cost at my disposal. The procedure involved negotiation with the selected families. Consequently, a total number of twenty-two people were recruited and participated in the research, with none missing.

The use of a purposive sample, also recognised as a non-probability sampling technique, has been a matter of contention between qualitative and quantitative researchers. Criticism about the method is that only small samples of the population are selected from a particular locality and hence are impossible to generalise findings to other settings (Bryman, 2008). Literature has indicated that researchers’ choice of using any of the two designs depending on the fundamental intention of the researcher (Robson, 2011; Bryman, 2008). While the quantitative researcher wants to generalise findings to the broader populations, the qualitative researcher does not have that intention but to generate data sources and provide practical and meaningful contextual understanding (Bryman, 2008; Mason; 2000). The motive was to interpret the meanings from the participants’ view of their world (Creswell, 2003). The study benefited tremendously from purposive sampling to select four

families who are invariably not a representative sample (Creswell, 2003) but generated data through home literacy practices and how engaging activities with preschool-aged children enriched their literacy experiences. Doing that enabled me to take advantage of the ‘critical case’ strategy of purposive sampling that facilitates a ‘logical generalization and maximum applicability’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994:28) of case study findings to some specific settings with the motives of improving educational practice and outcomes (Silverman, 2013).

#### **4.5. Procedure for Recruiting and Negotiating Access to Participants**

The account in this section is about negotiating access and recruiting the 4-5-year-old children and their family members for the study. In line with Sergeant and Harcourt (2012), I consulted a gatekeeper to negotiate the process ethically. An ‘ethical gatekeeper’ is a person who is a member of or has ‘insider status’ in a community or a cultural group (Creswell, 1998:117). Consequently, I conveniently selected some gatekeepers in the two communities chosen for the study. They were my initial and critical contacts that facilitated the smooth selection of the children and their family members that participated in the research. Although because of differences in the communities’ cultural orientations negotiating access and selecting the participants differed significantly.

##### **4.5.1. Recruiting Participants in Community A**

Access participants in community A began via a small church institution where I was privileged to talk to the women’s wing on two different occasions about “*Providing a child-friendly environment in the home*”. The researcher was not a stranger, especially to the mothers; moreover,

I share the same faith background. Although getting access to the children was not a straightforward process, it entailed meeting two different church leaders, the gatekeepers. They served as my initial contacts whose permission was required to gain access to the children's unit of the church and establish rapport with them (Sergeant and Harcourt, 2012; Creswell, 1998, 2003). First, I approached the Pastor of the Church, explained the purpose of the research to him and requested to use the children's Sunday school facility to recruit preschool-aged children. I capped my request with a bargain to volunteer as a child support worker for one month, from 25<sup>th</sup> September to 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2016. The following day he directed me to meet with the head of the children's unit. My dialogue with both leaders facilitated positive results. During my first Church service on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September, I was introduced to the Church community as a researcher, temporarily working with the children's unit. I immediately joined the team of children workers and was placed in the toddler class of 3-4-year-olds. The children's Sunday school was from 9:30 am to 11:00 am. The second week into my new role, I conveniently identified three children that met the selection criteria: two girls and a boy. I then followed it up by visiting the families, one after the other, and explained clearly the nature of my research and how it would entail regular visits to their homes for observations and discussions and, in the end, round it up with a family interview. By the end of October, the two families of the girls accepted the invitation, while the boy's family registered objections and opted out.

#### **4.5.2. Recruiting Participants in Community B**

In recruiting participants in community B, I employed my connection with a retired top Plateau State government education official whom I worked with in the past to assist in selecting and

creating smooth negotiation of accessing participants in community B. He is of the same faith background as my prospective participants and has lived there for decades, and his community work among the people has earned him great respect and trust. Having foreknowledge about the culture in the community, with his consent, he served as the gatekeeper, and this enabled access to the participants (Sargeant and Harcourt, 2012; Creswell, 1998; 2003). The gatekeeper was necessary because community B has a culture of 'purdah'. And it was very challenging for me to have access to people's houses without an insider's help. However, contrary to community A where I had the upper hand to start the recruitment process by first identifying and selecting the preschool-aged children, in this context, the reverse was the case. As an insider, the gatekeeper advised that the best approach in community B was to begin the recruitment with parents to avoid the complication of obtaining consent. In his words:

The community culture here is different from yours. You can only have access to the children through the parents. You cannot just enter somebody's house without knocking on the door; the parents are the door in this case... First, we will ask the parents if they are interested and willing to join; the children will automatically join. And not the other way round (Gatekeeper, personal communication, October 1, 2016).

He initiated the process, suggested four families and then contacted them and arranged for meetings with the parents. During the meeting in all the houses, only the mothers were available. The gatekeeper introduced me as a teacher he had worked with and passionate about working with children and their families on literacy issues. He then allowed me to continue with the dialogue. I began with an explanation of the purpose and nature of the research and then responded to questions raised by the mothers. I also used the opportunity to see the preschool-aged children and other family members. The pre-knowledge the families had about our visit contributed to the

success of the meetings. I spent an average of forty minutes at each house. However, as the fathers were unavailable, the mothers had to consult with them before giving any feedback. A week later, they all shared a positive response. And by the end of October, the gatekeeper and I met and considered their feedback and selected two highly enthusiastic families to participate in the research.

#### **4.6. Researcher's Role**

As the researcher of this study, I live in the Jos South Local government Area with my family. I had carried out both public and community work like coordinating literacy lessons for children from different cultural backgrounds. During that time, I had observed with keen interest and enjoyed how the children I had worked with bring to bear their cultural backgrounds into the literacy sessions. My experience increased an understanding of how important it is for early childhood practitioners to consider children's cultural backgrounds in the process of teaching and learning. I am also a beneficiary of home literacy practices during my early years and a benefactor as a parent of three children and teacher in a teacher training college in Plateau State, Nigeria. These multiple roles enriched my knowledge about the setting, and it further enhanced trust and good rapport with my research participants during the data gathering period (Folque, 2010). Therefore, I discuss in the next section how these personal backgrounds moderated to eliminate biases that would have influenced data collection and interpretation of data (Fusch, Fusch and Ness 2017).

#### **4.7. Reflexivity**

Reflexivity refers to the reflections about the influence of the researcher's identity and experiences on the research processes (Bryman, 2008; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). At the onset of my study, the challenge was understanding what reflexivity means. But after extensive participation and readings of materials from Research Ethics lectures of the Research Student Development Programme, I became aware and more knowledgeable about the imperative of ethical conduct of ensuring trust, integrity in research and sustaining institutional and professional necessities (Israel and Hay, 2006). I understand that reflexivity as a research methodology connects my professional and personal life experiences and research. Gradually, after additional reflections and scholastic analyses, I learned how best to articulate these linkages that met the aims of reflexivity regarding my research topic and the later thick description of the literacy practices of my participants (Folque, 2010; Valandra, 2012). Documenting reflexivity in this chapter equates with Section 2 of the Code of Good Practice and Research Integrity that addresses the need for

Transparency and open communication in declaring conflicts of interest in the reporting of research data collection methods, the analysis and interpretation of data and making research findings widely available to other researchers and the general public

(The University of Roehampton, [UR], 2019: 7).

The first aspect of my doctoral research experience that impacted this study was addressing the ethical issue of respecting the cultural views of my participants in a practical way. It was important that as part of my dressing, I cover my head to shoulder when visiting some of my research participants (details documented under section 4.8). The attempt to apply the Research Ethic lectures about dealing with conflict of interest in sustaining research integrity. This action

increased confidence and trust between the researched and researcher. It facilitated my access to the families, and eventually, the established good relationship reflected positively in data generation (Israel and Hay, 2006).

Another aspect was avoiding inaccurate representation of data during the analysis and interpretation stages of writing my thesis. As an early childhood practitioner-researcher, I consider myself an insider to a family lifestyle culture; thus, I have wide-ranging knowledge of the context (Papatheodorou, Luff and Gill, 2011). Drawing from the University of Roehampton University philosophy “Open mind open space”, I was aware of the balance I intended to achieve between my career and informed research-based interpretations that resonate with my participants’ true-life realities and voices. Therefore, I adhered to the principle of being sensitive to ‘interpretations and voices in the data’ generated and a commitment to evaluate and query my perspectives and standpoints (Mason, 2002: 177). In doing this, I tried to offer a robust and unbiased argument by sustaining a balance so that my voice is not too strong that the story is all about me, yet not so weak that my participants’ voices and theories dominate. In addition, I tried making the research my own, building on the confidence built in me by my supervisors about asserting my voice in my research write-up.

At the same time, my insider view of the context did not hinder my capability to observe and interrogate the different aspects of the family routines (Papatheodorou, Luff and Gill, 2011). Although apart from my parental roles, I was a preschool teacher for eight years before my role as a tutor in a teacher training college, the knowledge and experience gained during the MA Early Childhood Studies programme taught me how to work with children in the family settings.

Due to a culture of authority regarding relationships between children and adults (James, 2001) in my research the setting, the children showed their instincts of respect and acknowledged my position as an ‘authoritative adult’ (James, 2001: 254) and addressed me as “Malama” and “Aunty” (used to manage a female teacher in schools). To manage this power relationship, I established a friendly rapport by listening and responding to their conversations; this created opportunities for them to interact freely and share their narratives with me without any tension. The strategy subscribes to James (2001) that child researchers compromise their power status by embracing children’s real-world and being involved in their various activities.

#### **4.8. Ethical Issues**

Ethical issues are critical in qualitative research (Sargeant and Harcourt, 2012; Robson, 2011; Mason, 2002; Ellen, 1994). Across the globe, universities generally provide codes of ethical conduct that researchers must abide by (Vuban and Eta, 2019) to promote and uphold a research environment that establishes intellectual integrity, academic and scientific objectivity (Sargeant and Harcourt, 2012). In this study, the ethical issues set out by the University of Roehampton Ethics Board include obtaining approval from the board before the commencement of fieldwork. The process involved applying, making amendments based on feedback received, completing and submitting Risk assessment, Ethics Overseas Background Information, and Authority to travel overseas documents. After completing these procedures, I got my approval on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017 and commenced my fieldwork immediately.

The research participants gave informed consent before embarking on the fieldwork. Informed consent is centred on the ethical view that all humans have the right to decide what is in their own

best interest (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007; Creswell, 2003). The process involved obtaining family consent, emphasising bargaining consent with the parents in the first week of December 2016 (see Appendix A), alongside giving a verbal explanation to all the families. The family consent contains the preliminary information about the nature of the research and seeks the families' voluntary agreement to participate in the study (Sargeant and Harcourt, 2012; Robson, 2011). The forms were completed and duly signed by the fathers following their culture, being the head with formal authority over their families (Gary and Kent, 1988). Thus, the big step to participation came through the fathers in the families. In their power to allow their families to participate, it was in their ability to request that their families withdraw.

However, to carry along the mothers in community B, I translated the informed consent form to the Hausa language, which they preferred for reading. The idea was to ensure that the research details presented in the language they understood (Brelsford, Ruiz and & Beskow, 2018). That was quite a difficult challenge for me; therefore, a Hausa language specialist was engaged to translate the informed consent form into the Hausa language (Brelsford, Ruiz and Beskow, 2018) (see Appendix B).

At the initial phase of seeking consent, there was no implication that the preschool-aged children had the right to consent. However, realising that my research centred on children, the parents understood the importance of allowing them to give their consent. I adopted a consent form from the UK Data Archive, University of Essex, 2017 and designed it, which afforded the children the right to choose to participate. While part A enabled them to complete the form by simply ticking 'Yes (to agree) or No' (disagree), part B allowed the parents to give parental permission for them to be focal children (see Appendix C). I offered guidance for the children to complete the child consent form in the presence of their parents. Also, the research process involved recording

audio/visual, photographs of the children, drawings/writings and personal documents of participants. Thus, the informed consent requested permission to engage such methods to generate data (Sargeant and Harcourt, 2012). Worth noting is that consenting did not end at this initial stage but continued throughout the research. Participants how comfortable continuing with certain activities at different times. For example, one of the focal children at her discretion withdrew from visual videoing during the research. In her words:

Covering her face with both hands and bending her head downward) ... I, I, don't want...I don't want my picture there! (Pointing at the video device with a finger and still covering her face (Chamun, personal communication, September 15, 2017).

That prompted me to discontinue the use of video recordings in all the families. Engaging the children in the informed consent process was to avoid undermining their rights (Gary and Kent, 1988) and recognise them as research subjects rather than as objects for testing (Einarsdottir, 2007). Also, I draw from the research perspective of Sargeant and Harcourt (2012) that when children exercised their right to be heard, they develop self-esteem and competence. In confirmation of the approach, the children felt and recognised their roles in the study and were actively involved. Importantly, all the parents were happy and endorsed the completed children's consent forms.

Another ethical issue was protecting the participants' right to confidentiality (Vuban and Eta, 2019; Sargeant and Harcourt, 2012). I then adopted pseudonyms to protect my participant's identity and respect for privacy (Robson, 2011; Ellen, 1994). Accordingly, the actual names of the two communities and the participants are all pseudonyms. Additionally, I needed to be conscious of cultural differences, which I addressed by demonstrating cultural sensitivity (Silverman, 1994)

to my participants, especially those in community B. For example, mothers in community B observed the issue of dressing etiquette. As a result, they suggested I put on a hijab whenever I was coming to their homes. Of course, outside my culture, but to respect their culture, I covered my head throughout fieldwork whenever I was visiting that community (see Appendix D).

Apart from respecting and cooperating with the dress code, I learned the “Salama Alaikum” culture. An approach used to announce my entrance into their houses at the gate. It is also a religious greeting of wishing the household peace. The gatekeeper had earlier given me an orientation about it. In his words:

Each time you approach the house, you must start greeting the people you meet outside and when you get to the gate before entering the house, shout Salama Alaikum, and the people inside will respond, ‘Wa Alaikum salam’. It a prayer which the religion enjoins we practice before entering someone’s territory

(Gatekeeper, personal communication, October 7, 2016).

#### **4.9. Data Sources and Method of Generation**

The data sources for the study were four 4-5-year-old preschool children, their parents and family members, considered a repository of knowledge and experience (Mason, 2000), which helped gather information relevant addressing the research questions. Data generated from the sources captured a more comprehensive range of connections between the ‘researcher, the social world and the data’ (Mason, 2000: 53). The researcher was actively creating knowledge about the home

literacy practices of the participants. Further, since the data were not ‘out there’ in a collectable form but constructed from their sources; hence multiple data generation methods were employed (Mason, 2000: 52). The methods include participant observation of daily family literacy activities with concurrent informal conversations to clarify issues and ensured rich data generation. In addition, an audio-recorded formal semi-structured interview with parents and family members occurred after the observation period. I gathered photographs of children’s writings, drawings, colouring, outdoor play, books, toys and improvised materials to illustrate their early literacy experiences. The interview guide consists of three parts: firstly, the family demographic characteristics encompassing contextual information like family location, nature of the family house with the corresponding physical settings and material resources accessible to the children. It also included family size, age and gender of the preschool children and their family members educational and occupation of parents. The second part generates information on ways the family provides literacy support for their children, and finally, the third part explored the technology used in the homes (See Appendix F).

Data generation commenced on January 31st, 2017 and completed in January 2018. However, I had to interrupt in March 2017 and returned to the UK to finish my RSDP sessions in August. I returned to Nigeria in September 2018 to complete the fieldwork, January 2019. Notably, before the data generation commenced, I arranged visits for each of the four families involved choosing the most convenient time when the preschool children would be available after schooling hours. Thus, the timing of my visits to the families took place between 4 pm and 7 pm on weekdays, but, flexible on weekends for conducting participant observations and other methods of data generation.

#### **4.9.1. Procedure for Participant Observation**

On the first day of my visits to the families, I collected the families' demographic data before observing the participant observation; see detail in Table 4.1 below. Within two weeks of the visits to participating families, it became apparent that they well received my presence in their homes. I was nicknamed 'Malama' by Ruffy and Umi and Aunty by Mide and Chamun, respectively, indicating a 'member' to their family life (Robson, 2011: 319). The reception facilitated my role as a participant-observer by taking notes, recording body expressions, images and asking questions through conversations observed to uncover the meaning behind the behaviours of my participants (Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2013). Thus, the observation captured children's everyday life in their home environments. Table 4.2 displays the key activities observed as delineated in the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the study.

Handwritten field notes were taken immediately during observation with participants (see Appendix E). The description describes participants' activities, reflective researcher notes, and responses from conversations with participants. The field notes also gave information on the field settings where the observation occurred, the time, location, and date of visits, as emphasised by Gall, Gall and Borg (2003); Creswell (2003). Since children's literacy experiences and the proximal interactions between parents and other family members happened concurrently, it was strenuous to document every utterance of a literacy scene. Accordingly, I used an android phone for audio recordings of conversations and photographed some of the children's activities and completed works as supplementary to my written documentation. Tables 4.3 to 4.6 indicate the outline of recorded literacy activities for each child extracted from my field notes. It contains dates, activities, and duration of observations.

**Table 4.1***Description of Research Participants*

	<b>Family 1 Ruffy</b>	<b>Family 2 Umi</b>	<b>Family 3 Mide</b>	<b>Family 3 Chamun</b>
<b>Focal child Age [as of January 31 2017]</b>	4 years, 1 month	4 years	4 years, 2 months	4 years, 3 months
<b>Sex</b>	Male	Female	Female	Female
<b>Preschool experience</b>	About one year	4 months	About one	About one year
<b>Home language</b>	Hausa [spoken often] and English [sometimes]	Hausa [spoken often] and English [rarely]	Yoruba and English [often], Pidgin [sometimes]	English [often] Mwaghavul [sometimes] Hausa [rarely]
<b>Number of Children storybooks</b>	Not available	Not available	3	2
<b>Religion</b>	Islam	Islam	Christianity	Christianity
<b>Family members/size</b>	Focus child, father, mother, brother [7 years] and brother [1-year-old]	Focus child, father, mother, sister [6 years], uncle [young adult]	Focus child. Father, mother, brother [7 months], and grandmother	Focus child, father, mother, sister [teen], brother [teen] and aunty [adult]
<b>Parents' education</b>	Father – Degree holder Mother –GCSE	Father –GCSE Mother –diploma	Father- Degree holder Mother- Not specified	Father- Degree holder Mother- Degree holder
<b>Parents' occupation</b>	Father-civil servant Mother-housewife	Father- car mechanic Mother- nursery class assistant	Father- civil servant Mother- trading	Father- gospel preacher Mother- housewife

*Note.* The description of the participants in this study is extracted from the researcher's field notes.

**Table 4.2***Observation of Children Activities According to the Theoretical and Conceptual Framework*

<b>Lessons<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Defined as deliberate attempts to elicit information relating to<sup>2</sup>:</b>
Family physical and social settings (initial collection of demographic information)	Contextual Information: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify key physical spaces (e.g. living room, kitchen) and materials available and their uses</li> <li>2. Structure of interpersonal relationships (the child and family members)</li> <li>3. Profiling of parents' social status (education and career), children schooling</li> <li>4. Religion faith (Christianity or Muslim), and language belief issues</li> </ol>
Family practices (Cultural tools and activities)	Observe vital everyday routines relevant to the children's literacy activities with family members
1. Language use	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Main language(s) used for daily family routines (contexts and purposes),</li> <li>ii. conversations and</li> <li>iii. non-verbal communications</li> </ol>
2. Household routines	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Household activities (e.g. cooking, praying, feeding of pets/domestic animals etc.)</li> <li>ii. Going on errands, and outings etc.</li> </ol>
3. Entertainments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Watching TV, using mobile phones/computers</li> <li>ii. (watching movies and playing games)</li> </ol>
4. Storytelling	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Narrating stories</li> <li>ii. Shared Bible story readings</li> </ol>
5. Religious routines	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Family prayers and meditation,</li> <li>ii. Reading Holy Bible and Quran and other religious texts,</li> <li>iii.</li> </ol>
6. Homework	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Support provided by the family in doing homework from schools attended by children: identifying various interactions with prints</li> </ol>
The child-initiated activities	To explore children's play activities and how they influence their literacy experiences:
1. Play (indoor and outdoor)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. What kind of Children play can be identified, the materials used, and the contexts of play?</li> <li>ii. roles played and</li> <li>iii. what early literacy and language experienced,</li> </ol>
Social networks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Ascertain various networks of mediators of the children (parents, siblings, and other family members,</li> <li>ii. Community linkages with the family that influence children literacy experiences</li> </ol>

**Note. Column titles (1 and 2) obtained from Tudge and Hogan (2005)**

**Table 4.3***Recorded Chamun's Literacy Activities*

<b>Dates<sup>1</sup></b> <b>(approximate)</b>	<b>Activities<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Duration<sup>3</sup></b>
4 <sup>th</sup> February 2017	Playing activities (stick, sand, and plastic objects)	60 minutes
11 <sup>th</sup> February 2017	Practicing numerals with Mum's guidance Talking with grandma and codeswitch English and dialect	60 minutes
23 <sup>rd</sup> September 2017	Playing with toys, drawing, and colouring with Mum Learning about print at family prayer routines	60 minutes
30 <sup>th</sup> September 2017	Playing and singing with body parts Dad, Singing in Mwaghavul with grandma	60 minutes
8 <sup>th</sup> Oct2017	Pretend play (with local things) to learn vocab	60 minutes
12 <sup>th</sup> October 2017	Shared Bible story reading with Mum Learns new word at piggery with Mum	60 minutes
26 <sup>th</sup> October 2017	Assists Mum to feed in poultry & use word banks Free play with toys, draw and colour toys	60 minutes
4 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2017	Helps Mum in the kitchen: watching, talking & serve meal	60 minutes
14 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2017	Used Mum's phone (search song), Leads prayer At mealtime and play games on the phone.	60 minutes
30 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2017	Cooks gwete with Mum: observing, counting &	60 minutes
14 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2017	Mum reads aloud Bible story Hands-on braiding, drawing doll baby	60 minutes

**Note.** Column titles (1, 2 and 3) from Callaway (2012: 77)

**Table 4.4***Recorded Ruffy's Literacy Activities*

<b>Dates<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Activities<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Duration<sup>3</sup> (approximate)</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> February 2017	Crafting papers into shapes & naming them.	60 minutes
9 <sup>th</sup> February 2017	Narrating events: well & home uses of water	60 minutes
22 <sup>nd</sup> Sept 2017	Watching and retelling Kannywood film	60 minutes
26 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2017	Observes brother sleeping & learns new words	30 minutes
2 <sup>nd</sup> Oct 2017	Revising Arabic schoolwork with Mum	30 minutes
10 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2017	Learns numerals with elder sibling and explores Dads dictionary	30 minutes
24 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2017	Doing culture as homework with elder sibling Using Mum's phone to talk with a family relative	30 minutes 30 minutes
31 <sup>st</sup> Oct 2017	Listens to Mum's Quran story with elder brother Retells the story in drawing	30 minutes 30 minutes
14 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2017	Talks and practice (drawing) schoolwork with me Operates TV to watch favourite programme	30 minutes 30 minutes

*Note. Column titles (1, 2 and 3) from Callaway (2012: 77)*

**Table 4.5***Recorded Umi's Literacy Activities*

<b>Date<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Activity<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Duration<sup>3</sup> (approximate)</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> Feb 2017	Listens to instructions from elder sister	40 minutes
9 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2017	Listening, dancing and singing to a religious song on TV	40 minutes
	Assist Mum to cook local rice for super	40 minutes
22 <sup>nd</sup> Feb 2017	Arguing about Cinderella film with sister and Mum	40 minutes
	A conversation about meat, bones, and flesh with Mum	40 minutes
29 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2017	Listen to Mum talk about send-off wedding party	40 minutes
	Narrating family biography with Mum	40 minutes
2 <sup>nd</sup> Oct 2017	Doing role play with Mum and	40 minutes
	Revise Arabic writing Homework	40 minutes
14 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2017	Homework: colouring Teddy Bear in a workbook with Mum	40 minutes
	Pounds pepper and learns new words with elder sister	40 minutes
24 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2017	Pretend play with water and empty bottles	40 minutes
5 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2017	Turn water-filled kettle into counting and identification	30 minutes
16 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2017	Pretend cooking roles with neighbourhood friends	60 minutes
28 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2017	Pretend mother's caring role (laundry and feeding baby to	60 minutes
12 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2017	Playing game with mum (family background)	60 minutes

**Note.** Column titles (1, 2 and 3) from Callaway (2012: 77)

**Table 4.6***Recorded Mide's Literacy Activities*

<b>Dates<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Activities<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Duration<sup>2</sup> (approximate)</b>
5 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2017	Talking and learning the new word “scorching sun” with me	60 minutes
7 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2017	Talking about the domestic dog’s behaviour and labelling it	70 minutes
24 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2017	Narrating classwork (moulding clay pot) with Mum	30 minutes
	Practising numeracy through making Choco drink	35 minutes
28 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2017	Identify 100 naira note and make a shopping list with grandma	
	Goes on errands, listen to correction in English Yoruba & Pidgin	70 minutes
5 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2017	Dialogue on living and non-living things with Mum	35 minutes
	Learning correct manners in English, Pidgin & Yoruba	35 minutes
12 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2017	Learns new words (food etiquette) and	35 minutes
	Fixes dog cage with Dad	35 minutes
29 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2017	Sings & danced to demonstrate body parts with dad	35 minutes
	Watched a recorded video of Mide’s Church event with Dad	35 minutes
1 <sup>st</sup> Nov 2017	Make-believe play as beans seller and myself as customer	35 minutes
	Reviewing classwork (spelling & reading) with Mum	35 minutes
16 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2017	Naming and drawing home objects as homework with Mum and	35 minutes
	Pretend role in caring for junior sibling	40 minutes
2 <sup>nd</sup> Dec 2017	Sole reading, drawing and praying in literacy corner	35 minutes
	Describing handwritings on Whiteboard	30 minutes
7 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2017	Sings School songs on body parts and	
	Learns numeracy with Mum	30 minutes
17 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2017	Going on errands to learning currency literacy with Mum	60minutes
19 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2017	Using a phone to talk to Aunty	60 minutes

**Note.** Column titles (1, 2 and 3) from Callaway (2012, p. 77)

#### **4.9.2 Procedure for Formal Interview**

On the aspect of a follow-up focused-group interview with family members, it took place at the end of participant observations in January 2018. The interview consists of a semi-structured interview form, an interactional exchange of dialogue (Mason, 2002). The questions worded in the clear, relevant language of the participants. For example, my knowledge of Hausa enabled smooth conversations in the language with Umi and Ruffy family. The questions were polite and asked to discover more about their home literacy practices and their support in creating a positive environment for enriching their children's early literacy. The data collected aided clarification of data already collected from observations, thereby, aided triangulation. Triangulation in qualitative research enhances the rigour and trustworthiness of the research (Robson, 2011; Creswell, 2003). The interview duration lasted between sixty and eighty minutes in all the families. Appendix F presents details of the family context and semi-structured interview questions.

#### **4.10. Data Analysis**

The analytical procedures are presented in stages comprising organising data, coding and developing themes from observation and interview data, and then using them to describe, interpret and represent data accordingly (Robson, 2011; Creswell, 2003). The first stage was transcribing participant observation data by typing my field notes (Appendix E) into a soft document (Appendix G) for each child and appropriately stored on my computer and other storage tools for security and easy accessibility. Afterwards, I read the transcribed notes for each case several times to understand the content, structure, and overall sense of the data and ponder its general meaning (Creswell, 1998; 2003). While performing this task, I highlighted on the margins of the transcripts some ideas about the activities and took notes about the main events and activities occurring, the

resources available, who initiate conversations or actions and strategies used by the participants (Creswell, 2003; Mason, 2002). I adopted Papatheodorou, Luff and Gill (2011) systemic and methodical analysis format for the observation data. For example, Appendix H shows the systematic coding of Mide's interactions with other mum and others in the family's shop. The comments (phrases) on the margin of the transcribed text illustrate the components of conversations, activities occurring, and the literacy concepts the child learnt. The identified words, sentences and phrases provided a way of reducing the data into codes and giving them meanings by labelling them as the participants' actual communication (Papatheodorou, Luff and Gill, 2011; Robson, 2011; Creswell, 2003). The codes represent literacy concepts, settings and context codes, activity codes associated with the analytical or theoretical framework of the study (Papatheodorou, Luff and Gill, 2011; Robson, 2011; Creswell, 2003). Correspondingly, the different scaffolds parents and family members (mediators) used to support the children's early literacy experiences are identified and indicated in the text and categorized in the margin. Next, I coded conversations with parents and the children to clarify certain behaviours, actions, and perceptions behind such acts. After this process, I generated a preliminary codebook from the categories written in the margin of transcribed texts (see Appendix I). The categories represent specific concepts that describe the meaning of the children's literacy experiences during engaged activities and definitions indicated with examples from the texts. To authenticate the codes and their meanings, I carefully reread all transcriptions and reviewed all the categories in the margin to verify the preliminary codes.

The next stage involved assigning the codes to relevant categories generating a reduced number of themes for the detailed description of the cases. Appendix J shows the sample of Mide's early literacy themes of language, vocabulary and errand. However, the process applies to each child,

and the overarching theme emerged by categorising the themes according to their repetitions (often, sometimes and rarely) (Robson, 2011). The exercise provided a novel direction to understand the nature of early literacy learning of the children and the strategies their parents performed to support their learning trajectories. The unique themes that emerged from the coding process represent the identified literacy practices of the children and the families, generally known as the within-case analysis. The key findings for the children encompassed multiliteracies: multilingualism (literacies in the mother tongue and English), multimodal literacies (print awareness, listening and speaking, singing, narratives, creativity, numeracy, drawing, writing as shown in Appendix K. Social and networking and mediating codes, strategy codes (about scaffolding by parents). The main result indicates parents provide the following supportive strategies for their children's literacy experiences: teaching, positive environment, communicating, and community engagements through parent-child, child-child, grandmother-child and community networks. Appendix L demonstrates the children and their mediating linkages as situated in their respective home environments.

The second data analysis stage involves transcription and coding of audio-recorded interview data in Hausa and English from Umi and Ruffy families and Chamun and Mide families, respectively (see Appendices M and N). The codes represented responses from parents and organised mainly through the interview questions focused on children's literacy experiences. The support parents provided in creating a positive environment to boost literacy experiences of their children, the socialisation among the siblings, and the parental perspectives about the supports they offer their children in shaping early literacy experiences of their children. I used the information gathered for data triangulation purposes to confirm the validity of observation data. Specifically, data generated

from follow-up interviews backed up observed data about children's early literacy experiences (Robson, 2011; Siraj- Blatchford, 2010; Creswell, 2003).

The third stage involved conducting the overall thematic analysis across the cases, termed the cross-case analysis (Creswell, 1998). The aim was to construct a cross-case table from the observation and interview codes and themes. The table illustrates the identified thematic peculiarities of within-case analysis by recognising similarities and differences between the four cases. The significant findings from the research presented in Appendix O indicate that the language, social, and child environments played substantial roles in shaping the early literacy experiences of the four preschool children across the families. Additionally, appendix P ascertain the accessible physical and social settings comprising the various spaces, material resources and their uses in each home environment. I also analysed some samples of children finished works and photographs collected to strengthen the study's findings, many of them included in figures in Chapters five to eight.

At this stage, I used the narrative form to convey analysis findings, involving descriptions of significant themes; this is the most frequently used way of communicating results in qualitative research (Creswell, 1998; 2003). The findings can be presented in descriptive and narrative form in a naturalistic study rather than scientific reports. The thick description was the vehicle for communicating the eco-cultural accounts of the preschool children's early literacy experiences in their home environments. The process involved telling the stories through children's voices, actions mediators and my perceptions as the researcher (Vasconcelos, 2010). In doing this, four chapters were delineated for the narratives of the within-case analysis (Creswell, 1998), titled home literacy experiences of Chamun, Ruffy, Mide and Umi in chapters five, six, seven and eight,

respectively. Each chapter presents with sub-sections labelled as the context of the cases, excerpts, and the use of adjuncts.

Context of the cases present a detailed description of the participants and their settings; it encompasses the context of each child's home environment concerning: the community settings, social and cultural backgrounds, the physical and social settings embracing the immediate family setup, educational status and accessible spaces used for literacy engagements (Baxter and Jack, 2014; Creswell, 1998). Additionally, excerpts present the dialogues between the children and family members, the researcher, and the children's independent activities to demonstrate literacy activities in a setting, which was vital in providing evidence to enhance and elucidate the findings for each case (Vasconcelos, 2010). The contents of the excerpts were the chronology of observed events with specific illustrations and wordings of the participants and quotations from an interview (Baxter and Jack, 2014; Creswell, 2003). This procedure of data presentation enabled an objective account of my fieldwork experiences presented an in-depth description of each child's early literacy experience. Notably, the two of the case studies excerpts written in the main home language of the families (Hausa), with the translation in English to show cohesiveness of the analysis. The process is coherent with the conventions of qualitative narrative, which suggests scripting and conversation in different languages to respect participant's cultural values (Creswell, 2003). The study adopted the Jefferson Transcription System (University Transcriptions, 2020) to explain participants' language patterns, style of conversations and translations where applicable. Table 4.7 presents the Jefferson Transcription System used for the analysis chapters, five to eight.

**Table 4.7:** Transcription Conventions of Participants Speech and Translations

Symbols	Definition and Use
( )	Empty parentheses unclear/uncertain speech
(.)	Pause
(( ))	Double parentheses contain comments or descriptions
// //	Double slashes overlapping speech
[ ]	Translation in bracket
:	Single colon indicates syllable emphasised
::	Double colon indicates prolonged emphasised
(h)	Laughter in the conversation

Note:

University Transcriptions (2020) – A guide to the symbols

Another effective presentation strategy was Adjuncts, which is crucial in presenting an in-depth analysis of findings. These are detailed visuals, tree diagrams, charts, photographs, figures, and tables as ‘adjuncts’ (Creswell, 2003: 194). For example, the tree diagrams indicate children’s literacy experiences, while the hierarchical relationship diagram suggests the order of proximity of children to family social mediating networks and children. The photographs of preschool-aged children display literacy materials and activities.

Finally, the findings of the cross-case analysis are discussed in chapter nine through the interpretive description from personal academic experiences and existing literature and research evidence to validate lessons learned and issues that emerged from the multiple case studies (Vasconcelos, 2010; Creswell, 1998; 2003; Stake, 1995). Thus, the chapter is a meeting point for

the preschool-aged children's literacy experiences in their different homes. Additionally, in chapter ten, the study presents a summary of findings and contributions to knowledge and the implications of the findings for educational practice and policy. It also suggests new issues the current study did not address and how further research could tackle them. The chapter also presents recommendations, particularly advocating literacy pedagogy in the school system that accommodates the preschool-aged children home experiences and policies for improving home-based practices. Finally, the researcher describes the conclusion of the thesis.

#### **4.11. Trustworthiness of Findings**

Qualitative research validity is its trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), like reliability in quantitative research (Bryman, 2008). Trustworthiness is verifiable through credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability of findings (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2003). The credibility of research findings establishes its acceptability to others with a standard of good practice. The dependability of research is enhanced when complete records are kept at all stages of the research process and can be accessible in a way that would warrant external auditing to confirm adherence to the prescribed procedure. Further, conformability ensures biases are eliminated by not allowing researchers' background, experiences and values to influence the conduct of the research. Finally, a thick description of findings determines the transferability of research outcomes to other contexts (Bryman, 2008).

Firstly, prolonged engagement facilitated the persistent observation in the different family contexts, which encouraged trusting relationships with the participants and enabled the capturing of significant everyday activities (Robson, 2011; Creswell, 1998). Second, the approach helped

minimised biases between the participants and the researcher (Creswell, 2003; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The trusting relationship is such that the family contexts in community B, named me “Malama” while families in community A, refer to me as “Big mama” and “Aunty”, a reflection of their custom that attaches intimacy and confidentiality in relationships with teachers and extended family members. Notably, during observations, I asked questions to clarify actions, conversations, and behaviours blurred before noting them in my field note. The step helped eliminate inherent biases and improve the accuracy of analysis (Robson, 2011). The actions increased my level of focus on what is relevant to the purpose of the study (Creswell, 1998). Earlier in the reflexivity section, I highlighted the influences of my past experiences. The verification process enhanced the validity of the research.

Secondly, a combination of data and methodological triangulation is a valuable strategy I employed to enhance the objectivity of the research (Robson, 2011; Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). I enriched my investigation with different sources of data collection. The procedure was a defined aspect of a good case study which involved deliberate employment of multiple data collection methods to provide robustness and rigour to the cases (Baxter and Jack., 2008; Creswell, 1998; 2003). The evidence from these sources helped to corroborate and build a consistent justification for themes (Creswell, 1998; 2003).

Thirdly, the self-reflection strategy employed right from the commencement of my research clarified any bias that may interfere with data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Also, it supported me to the narrative of the children’s early literacy experiences with openness and honesty (Creswell, 1998; 2003). The strategy ensures that external readers understand the researchers’ position and the categories of biases, and this action helped to convey the dependability of findings. The researcher’s reflexivity has already been detailed in Section 4.5

above. The fourth strategy undertaken was the process of double coding of data. It involved an initial coding of data, followed by some period to elapse, then returns to code the same data set, and compared the results to enhance consistency of the findings (Baxter and Jack, 2008).

Finally, the fifth procedure was the auditing of findings was solicited from the research participants. I engaged them through telephone conversations to check whether some of my interpretations fit into their perceptions. Subsequently, their input reflected in the revised versions of the analysis and discussion chapters. The process demonstrates that I valued my participants' contributions (Robson, 2011) and established credibility. Besides, my supervisors' insights and observations were helpful in further reshaping my final revision.

#### **4.12. Summary**

The chapter presents the rationale for adopting a qualitative multiple case study design and using purposive sampling to select the participants. I described the study setting, participants, and the method of gaining access. The data collection procedures include participant observations, follow-up interviews, collection of photographs and recording using field notes and audio recordings. I detailed the data collection timeline, activities observed and how I analysed them. The analysis involved transcribing, systematic coding and categorizing them into themes that indicated the overarching literacy practices in the families and the main early literacy experiences acquired by the preschool-aged children. Also, I present the interpretations of findings and outline how the study confirms the trustworthiness of the qualitative research.

Following this chapter are chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. In the chapters, I objectively present a detailed within-case analysis for each child respectively. I communicate my presentation in terms of the

nature of the physical and social settings, excerpts of the child's collaborative interactions with family members, depicting the chronology of literacy activities with their wordings, quotations from informal conversations and interviews. Tree diagrams and photographs illustrate the children's literacy experiences, accessible materials, and their engagements with prints and creative works through play. I end the analysis of each chapter with the strategies parents employed to support the child.

## **Chapter 5. HOME LITERACY EXPERIENCES OF CHAMUN**

### **5.1. Introduction**

The chapter presents the case study of Chamun family literacy practices and Chamun's early literacy experiences emerging from ways parents provided support and their literacy beliefs. I drew from the eco-cultural framework and organised the chapter into two major sections: the analysis from the within-case of observation and the analysis of the formal interview. The contextual and background information provide an account of a fuller picture of the family literacy practices, comprising a description of the physical and social settings and an outline of the family members' social and educational status, and the valued literacy practices. It also presents the everyday literacy activities that influenced the early literacy experiences of the preschool-aged child. This section is subdivided into three as indicated in Figure 5.5, showing the diagrammatic representation of Chamun's early literacy experiences. The figure depicts the connections of Chamun's multiliteracy experiences of Chamun categorised into multilingual literacies involving the English language, mother tongue and language of the immediate environment (Hausa). The multimodal literacies comprise spoken language, listening to stories, interactions with print, mainly religious and school-based, writing, and creativity. These experiences are enmeshed in collaborative interactions. The child's role is recognised, and the child's agency initiates her plays to explore the available physical materials: toys, books, and nature.

### **5.2. Physical and Social Contexts of the Chamun Family**

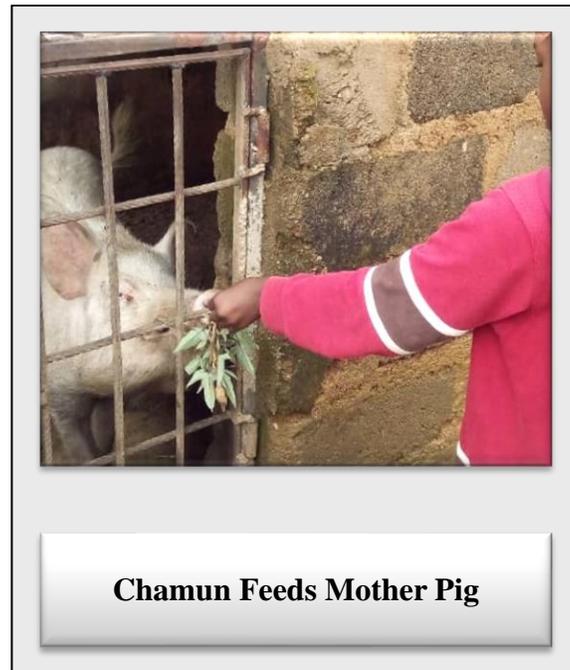
The Chamun family had recently moved to their new community, which the Berom ethnic group dominated. They live in their three-bedroom personal house with a vast space of land surrounding

the building. Around a corner on the ground was a heap of sand meant for construction work, but Chamun sometimes went there to play. Observations have shown how she translated natural playing on the sand to a literacy space (see Figure 5.6). On another occasion of playing outside, Chamun improvised play items by collecting discarded pieces of a broken plate and constructing an object she referred to as a 'man' (see Figure 8). In-depth detail about the child's engagement with the outdoor space and translated into literacy experience is under section 5.3.2 (Child initiated activities).

Other resources outside the house relevant to Chamun's literacy experiences include small poultry behind the kitchen and a piggery at the far end of the land, adjacent to the house. Chamun's mother highlighted during a walk around the land that engaging in piggery and poultry farming was a means of diversifying the family's income and noticed it is a learning environment for Chamun. In addition, informal conversation during observation corroborated the farm unit as a learning space for the child. For example, during a casual conversation, Chamun showed the researcher her picture (Figure 5.1), which was saved in mother's mobile phone and narrated how she also fed the pigs.

## Figure 5.1

*Chamun Working on the Piggery Farm*



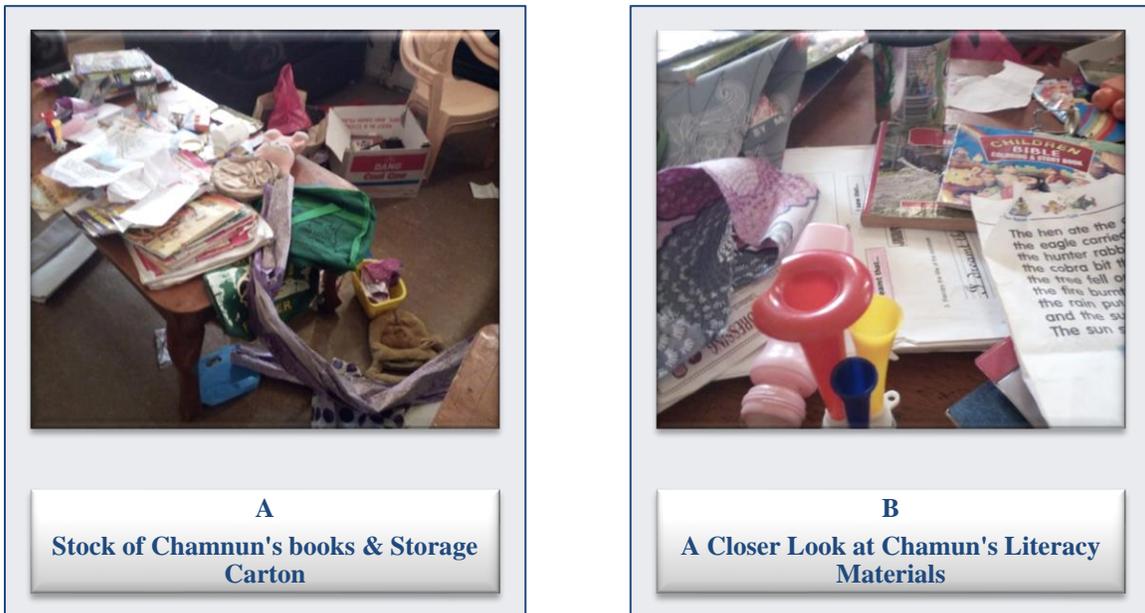
The indoor space highlights a description of resources and socialisation in the family that contribute an understanding to Chamun's literacy experiences. The sitting room had one three-sitter, a two-sitter, a single clothed sofa, and a small plastic chair (specifically for Chamun), surrounded by windows and the main entrance door that eased ventilation. The sitting room was a hub for the family's interactions, such as regular family prayers, leisure, and homework. Also, it naturally formed a setting for Chamun's play activities with literacy features. Significantly, the low wooden table in the centre of the room displays Chamun's possessions. They are a collection of books and few toys, secured in a big carton box and usually brought out whenever she wanted to put them in use. Three out of the many were her children's, while the rest were her siblings' old textbooks, inherited for play (see Figure 5.2).

Chamun gives a stock of her books:

I take Bobo book, I take Naadi book  
My book is now plenty (smiles)  
This one, this one, this one, is mayon (my own)  
I like this one (touches children bible storybook)  
(Field notes, 30/8/17)

**Figure 5.2**

*Chamun's Literacy Space in the Living Room*

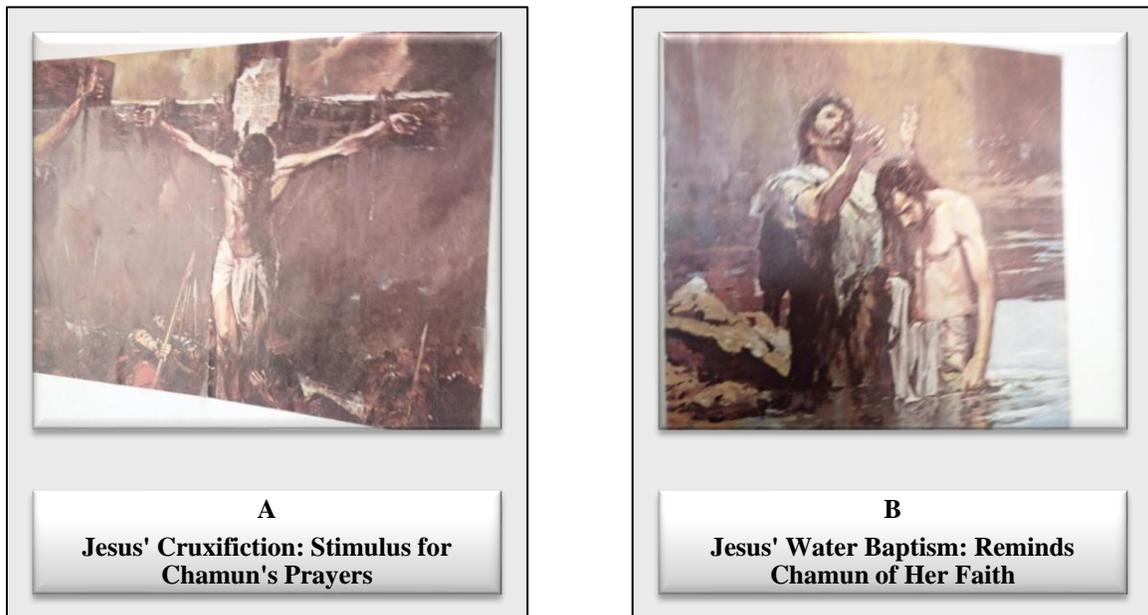


The Christian family hung portraits of Jesus' crucifixion and baptism on the wall (see Figure 5.3A & B). During the family follow-up interview, the father stated the portrait was “*a memorial of our faith, a daily reminder to us about what Jesus did for our children and for us to learn about it early in life*”. The father's highlight validated Chamun's earlier action and behaviour during the period of observation visits. She was cautioned by her sister (Naadi) not to pour water on the mopped floor, but she went ahead and deliberately did it. The mother intervened and scolded her,

saying: *'don't disrespect your sister, she is not your mate ... clean the water'*. Afterwards, Chamun sat soberly and facing the crucifixion portrait (see Figure 5.3A); she gently voiced: *'shorry Jesus, I pour water in floor'*. Mum later affirmed that the portraits serve as a stimulus for Chamun to speak to and a reminder of her faith identity.

**Figure 5.3**

*Religious Portraits Hung on the Wall*



Another resource in the sitting room was a television and under it was a silver shelf carrying a DVD player. Lack of regular electricity supply in the community limited the opportunity to observe the family's engagements with television programmes. During an informal conversation with the mother, which occurred in a lamp-lit room with a lesser degree of brightness, she peeped into my observation journal and spotted television as a literacy resource and then expressed disappointment over the issue of electricity by saying:

There are educational cassettes the father bought for Chamun  
but she cannot watch them because for almost one year  
we get few hours of light only at night ... when everyone is sleeping.

(Field notes, 28/12/17)

At Chamun's invitation, I was privileged to take her to the bedroom to sleep after the family night prayer. Chamun shared the room with Naadi and a 'church sister' (referred to as aunty by the children). In the room was the portrait of Jesus' crucifixion hung on the wall above her bed space. While talking with her, she pointed at the picture and said: '*Jesus is watching me, no boko haram here*'. Naadi and the church sister provided additional information about activities they sometimes engaged Chamun during bedtime, such as talking about the day's activities, responding to Chamun's questions. They also asked her about happenings in school and narrating Bible stories. Worth noting is the kitchen which provides a space for Chamun and the mother to interact meaningfully to build vocabulary during cooking, as demonstrated in excerpt 5.

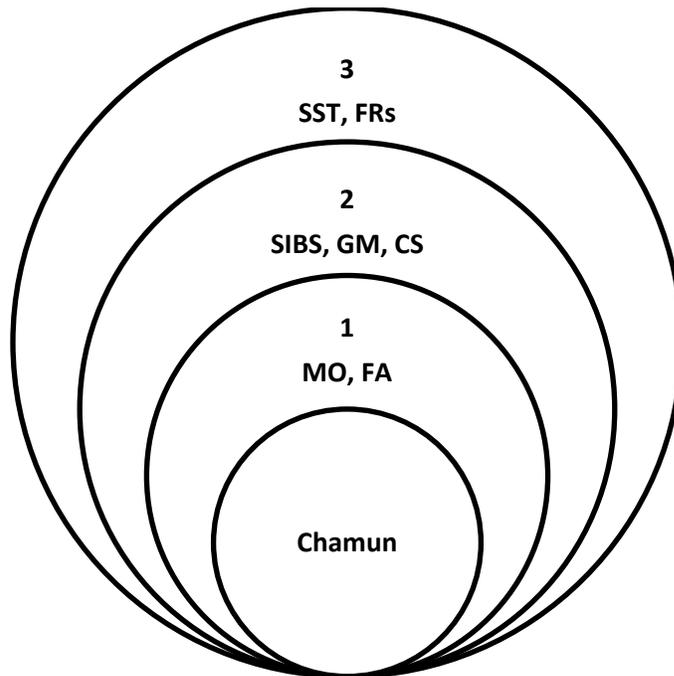
On the social networks for mediating literacy, the Mwaghavul family comprises six members consisting of a father, mother, three children, and an adult 'church sister' who lived with them. Chamun, 4 years 3 months old, was the youngest out of the family's three biological children and enrolled in a nursery/primary school for about one year. According to the mother, during an informal conversation, Chamun learned the English alphabet and counted activities in the home before her enrolment. The reading of the Bible and Bible stories were a daily routine between Chamun-mother. The family preferred using English as the language of everyday interactions. The family occasionally used Mwaghavul for interactions, and rarely Hausa, which is generally the community's language due to the mixed ethnicity families living in the community. Both parents obtained their first degrees from a Bible Theological Institution and practised as Christian gospel

ministers. Mum specialised in her training in Children Evangelism Mission and therefore worked mainly with young children.

On the other hand, Bobo (brother, 10 years old) was an upper-class primary school pupil and Nadii (sister, 13 years old) was a boarding student in a missionary secondary school. Paternal grandmother was an occasional visitor and communicated mainly in the Mwaghavul language with the family. Mum was full-time at home while dad, a writer and gospel preacher, sometimes were away from home due to preaching engagements but regularly available to support Chamun` whenever he was at home. Figure 5.4 provides a profile of Chamun`s social networks according to their closest and active mediators.

**Figure 5.4**

*Chamun`s Social Networks: Sphere of Influence*



*Note.* Graphic created according to Robson`s (2011, p. 485) advise of using `Context charts

showing interrelationships between roles’.

- Close contacts and mediators: **Mother (MO)** and **Father (FA)**
- Mild contacts during the study: **Older Siblings, Grandmother (GM), Church Sister (CS)**
- Community contacts and friends: **Sunday School Teacher (SST), Friends (FRs),**

### **5.3. Chamun’s Multiliteracy Experiences**

Chamun’s early literacy experiences are presented in Figure 5.5, depicting the multiliteracies and the connections between multilingualism and multimodal literacies. The experiences, as shown in the figure, are predominantly shaped by language and literacy practices enmeshed in regular daily social interactions between the child and family network. The child’s active role is embedded in collaborative activities.

#### **5.3.1. Multilingual literacies**

Chamun actively used three different languages in the home for various social interactions with family members and visitors. The home language used for everyday interaction in the family was mainly English, but the language environment changed to the mother tongue whenever the grandmother visited. Also, Chamun Hausa language to communicate with friends in the neighbourhood who had a different mother tongue and yet to learn the English language. The parents specified how the three languages function in the family during the focus interview as:

The English language is our main language used in the family for routine activities; I give it 80% and others: Mother tongue (Mwaghavul) sometimes used when Grandma visits

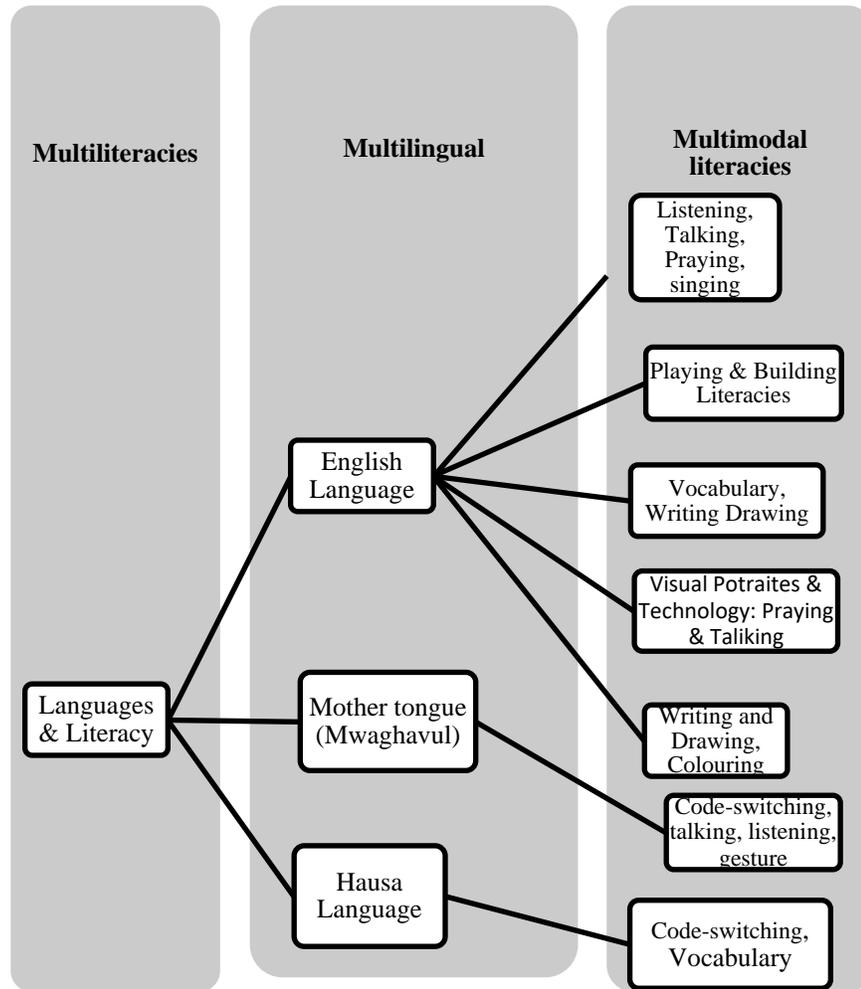
(15%), and Hausa language is used once in a while, especially with Chamun  
neighbourhood friends' visits (5%)

(Family follow-up interview, 28/01/18)

The engagement in the languages provides a key role in facilitating the building of her early literacy foundations. The following sections present the excerpts demonstrating Chamun's oral language experiences in the three languages involving conversations, storytime, singing, prayer time in the family with Chamun.

**Figure 5.5**

*Graphic Representation of Chamun's Early literacy Experiences*



*Note.* Diagram created according to Robson (2011, p. 486) guide in using ‘conceptually ordered tree diagram showing how phenomena are classified and subcategorized.’

### **5.3.1.1. Literacy in Mother tongue**

The practice of mother tongue for everyday interaction was not a common practice in the family. However, observation reveals that grandmother’s occasional visits often encouraged the speaking of Mwaghavul by the preschool child. Besides, Chamun’s periodic meetings with her friends in

the neighbourhood exposed her to the Hausa language. Excerpts 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4 describe instances of the practice.

### **Excerpt 5.1: Chamun showed a grasp of Mwaghavul in talk with grandma**

The excerpt emerged from a welcome scene between Chamun and grandma when grandma arrived from the village. Below is the conversation between:

1. *Grandma*: Kwang, kwang, (.) awe tulu? [knock, knock (.) is anyone home?]
2. *Chamun*: ((Rushes to the door and opens)) Is Kaa! [ it is grandma!]
3. *Grandma*: Aa re? [How are you?]
4. *Chamun*: Me: : em (.) bi kaas [I::am (.) fine]
5. *Grandma*: Yawwa! ((commenting Chamun for speaking Mwaghavul))
6. *Grandma*: Cin aam ngan shuwa [give me water to drink]
7. *Chamun*: ((Brings water and squats in respect as she gives her))
8. *Grandma*: Laa diret [good child]
9. *Chamun*: Plang: des [thank you: very much]
10. *Grandma*: Diikam khi tok shik (.) neh yi ji a pi re? [Grandpa sends greetings  
(.) he asks when you will visit him]
11. *Chamun*: ((Smiles)) tomorrow (.) tafi ((using English and Hausa))  
[tomorrow (.) I will go]
12. *Grandma*: Dadaar kas, yi so makaranta ((using Mwaghavul and Hausa))  
[not tomorrow, you have school]
13. *Chamun*: ((Brings a book, sits next to grandma, and flips through))  
Kaa naa (.) my book [grandma (.) see my book]
14. *Grandma*: A wii ran jir ah? [Did you write all these?]
15. *Chamun*: ((Nodding head))
16. *Dad*: You don't answer elders with head language  
Repeat after me ... ee kaa (yes grandma)
17. *Chamun*: ((Smiles)) ee kaa [yes grandma]

During the conversation, Chamun codeswitched in English and Mwaghavul lines 2 and 13 and

exhibited a grasp of Mwaghavul in lines 6 to 11 and the culture of respect of elders while performing grandma's request in line 7 as the language dominates their talk. The interaction also afforded Chamun to mix English and Hausa line 23 and gestured to facilitate the communication.

### **Excerpt 5.2 Chamun and grandma engage in storytelling**

Excerpt 5.2 comes from a language activity that began with a request from Chamun for grandma to tell her a story. The linguistic interaction goes as follows:

1. *Chamun*: Kaa, yi (.) sa:at (.) sweet story [Grandma, (.) tell me (.) a sweet story]
2. *Grandma*: ( ) Yi saat aa mee? [( ) what did you say?]
3. *Chamun*: (Quiet and looking somehow stranded)
4. *Mum*: Neh yi saat yakshi poo Mwaghavul  
[She wants you to tell her a nice story in Mwaghavul]
5. *Grandma*: Yi yit rah sat khi poo ki ra [allow her to speak]
6. *Chamun*: Yi (.) saat (.) story. [Tell (.) me (.) story]
7. *Grandma*: Bee mu tah a poo dii deh? (What language shall we use?)
8. *Chamun*: ((Laughs)) Mwaghavul!
9. *Grandma*: ((Grandma narrates a story in Mwaghavul, 'The proud girl'))
10. *Chamun*: ((Listens attentively and expresses understanding through body language as she smiles during happy moments and frowns during sad/tricky moments))

She made her request by code-switching Mwaghavul and English to help convey her message, line 1, but grandma's response indicates a lack of understanding of her request, line 2, and mum offered clarification, line 4. Grandma insisted that Chamun make her request again, line 5. Then Chamun moved on and codeswitched using Mwaghavul and English, line 6, and continued their conversation and story narration in Mwaghavul lines 7 and 9. Chamun listened keenly and

expressed her grasp of the storyline through gestures, line 10. The event facilitated Chamun building of her codeswitching and listening skills.

### **Excerpt 5.3 Chamun learns to sing in Mwaghavul with grandma**

The excerpt involved a song-related activity between Chamun and grandma while both were having their leisure moment in the verandah. The Chamun family had recently attended a wedding in their village, and Chamun had participated in dancing at a wedding. The memory of that wedding triggered grandma to teach Chamun the song below:

1. *Grandma*: Narin yi lang yil loh
2. *Chamun*: Aah! aah!
3. *Grandma*: Mish fi ni mu ji wul loh
4. *Chamun*: Aah! aah!
5. *Grandma*: Naring yi lang yil loh
6. *Chamun*: Aah! aah!

(Field notes, 30/9/17)

It was a moment in which Chamun was learning a new song in Mwaghavul. The song involved both taking turns. Chamun's turn in lines 2, 4, and 6 exposed her to sounding, an experience associated with phonemic awareness. This experience indicates that the engagement in their mother tongue enabled her to practice phonics in songs.

### **Excerpt 5.4 Mum supports as Chamun interacts with friends about piggery**

Excerpt 5.4 occurred from an occasion when two children of Chamun's age in the neighbourhood visited (I referred to them as friend 1 and friend 2). Friend 1 had been in an Internally Displaced

Camp (IDP) until a family recently moved her to live with them, and she could only communicate in the Hausa language. So the friends came to visit Chamun and the piggery.

1. *Friend1*: Mu je mu gani alede [let's go and see the pigs]
2. *Chamun*: Mother pig ta haifuwa chew:dren ((using English and Hausa))  
[mother pig gave birth to chil:dren]
3. *Friend 2*: How many children?
4. *Chamun*: ((Turns to friend 1)) yanzu, no English? ((using Hausa to English))  
[you still can't speak English?]
5. *Mum*: Chamun, be patient Friend 1 is new and learning English
6. *Chamun*: ((Smilingly nods her head and says to friend 1))  
Follow me ((demonstrates with hand))  
Mummy, we want to see mother pig and baby pigs
7. *Mum*: Baby pigs are called piglets, say piglets
8. *Chamun*: Pi (.) lech, baby pigs
9. *Mum*: Take it slowly, pig
10. *Chamun*: Pik
11. *Mum*: Lets
12. *Chamun*: Lech
13. *Mum*: Pig
14. *Chamun*: Pik
15. *Mum*: Lets
16. *Chamun*: Let
17. *Mum*: Piglets
18. *Chamun*: Piklech.
19. *Mum*: So, your problem is the 'S' at the end
20. *Mum*: Put on your shoes, let's go and see the piglets
21. *Chamun*: Yes::ss, come ((beckons friends)) let us run
22. *Mum*: Chamun, explain what you said to Friend 1
23. *Chamun*: ((Demonstrates come with hand)) come, mu gudu [come, let us run]
24. *Friend1*: ((Smiles as she makes her way out)) mu gudu [let us run]

Friend 1 spoke in Hausa when she raised the topic about going to the pig stall, lines 1. That allowed Chamun to communicate in Hausa but mixing with English to facilitate the communication with her, lines 2, 4 and 23. At some point, mum stepped into the girls' conversation and provided scaffolding for a new word. Mum engaged various strategies in the scaffolding process: gradual introduction of the word *piglets*, segmenting the word into two syllables and patiently helped her pronounce it, lines 7 to 18. But Chamun consistently pronounced the segmented in her level of speech development which mum affirmed in line 19. Nonetheless, the emphasis here concerns Chamun's language and vocabulary development, particularly her persistence of mixing two languages and demonstrating an understanding of some words in Hausa.

**Figure 5.6**

Chamun Family Piggery: Context for Vocabulary Learning



### 5.3.1.2. Oral Language Experiences

Chamun began learning the English language from birth. Parents and immediate family members related with her strictly in English. Interestingly, the family used the language for daily family operations such as conversations, family prayer times, shared book reading and reading aloud to the child. In addition, it was the language of play, homework and technology (mobile phone). Observation also showed that the child demonstrated active use of the English language in all activities; even when playing alone, she talked to herself in English. She naturally initiates interactions in English; also, family members engaged her in smooth conversations. The excerpts 5.5 to 5.11 illustrate oral language experiences in English.

#### Excerpt 5.5 Chamun and mum prepare to feed chickens

The excerpt emanates from the routine of feeding chickens that involved Chamun and mum. The interaction highlights how Chamun actively used selective words in the proper context.

1. *Mum*: It's time to feed the chickens
2. *Chamun*: ((Carries a small plastic bucket and goes outside))
3. *Mum*: ((Carries a bag of chicken feed and goes out too))
4. *Chamun*: Me, I do counting
5. *Mum*: Yes, you always do the counting
6. *Mum*: I will measure it, bring the bucket closely
7. *Chamun*: ((Places it close to the feed bag))
8. *Mum*: ((Fetches a bowl and pours into the bucket))
9. *Chamun*: one
10. *Mum*: ((Pours another))
11. *Chamun*: two  
...Continues until they got to number five and then stopped
12. *Mum*: Five is ok

13. *Chamun*: ((Lifts the bucket)) is *heavy*, I cannot cayyi [carry]
14. *Mum*: ((Carries it)) follow me
15. *Chamun*: Nooo! chicken *bite* me yesterday
16. *Chamun*: ((Squash face)) I *afraid*
17. *Mum*: I am here, don't be afraid, chickens will not bite you
18. *Chamun*: Yesterday, chicken *bite* me
19. *Mum*: Don't be afraid, come
20. *Chamun*: ((Moving away)) no, I *afraid*
21. *Mum*: The chickens are your friends
22. *Chamun*: Nooo!
23. *Mum*: You said the chickens are your friends?
24. *Chamun*: ((Sobbing)) Chicken *bite* me

From the observation, Chamun used the word *counting* to express her role in the activity, line 4, and the word '*heavy*' to indicate an understanding of weight, line 13. As mum continuously extended talking with her, Chamun repeatedly used the word *bite* in lines 15, 18 and 24 and established a connection between the word *bite* and *afraid* in lines 16 and 20 to express emotion. The routine activity *enhances* the language development and vocabulary building (word bank/memory) competencies.

### **Excerpt 5.6 Chamun learning about Berom cultural food with Mum**

It was Saturday afternoon; Chamun and her mother were in the kitchen to carry out the homework Chamun brought from school. The homework was written on a paper that read '*Learn how to make one Berom cultural food*'. Excerpt 5.6 emanates from this mother-children interaction in doing the homework and having a hands-on experience.

1. *Mum*: Your homework says, 'Learn how to make one Berom cultural food.'

2. *Chamun*: My friend Nyiri is Berom
3. *Mum*: What about you?
4. *Chamun*: Me (.) I yam Mwaghavul [Me (.) I am Mwaghavul]
5. *Mum*: Yes, proudly Mwaghavul  
*Tehre* is Berom people's traditional food.  
Some say *gwete*, but *tehre* is the Berom name
6. *Chamun*: Teh-re
7. *Mum*: Yes, we shall make tehre
8. *Chamun*: What is this, this, and this? ((touching the cooking items))
9. *Mum*: Alefo, cabbage, yakuwa, yalo, spring onion, tomato  
and acha, washed and cut, ready for cooking tehre
10. *Chamun*: No, maggie?
11. *Mum*: Berom don't use maggie and salt for Teh-re, but we can add it  
((Picks 4 maggie cubes and gives her)) peel them
12. *Chamun*: ((Counts the cubes)) 1, 2, 3, 4! ((peels all))
13. *Mum*: Good, there are four maggie cubes  
What are the things used for making Tehre?
14. *Chamun*: ((Names the items as mum touches))
15. *Mum*: ((Clapping)) good! What are we Cooking?
16. *Chamun*: Tehre!
17. *Mum*: Which people's cultural food is tehre?
18. *Chamun*: Berom!
19. *Mum*: Remember all these when your teacher asks you  
Now, let us start cooking

In the excerpt, mum and Chamun were engaged in a teaching-learning context with mum instructing and Chamun touching and questioning the food ingredients while provides names of the food ingredients there, lines 5 to 12. Lines 10 and 11 demonstrate Chamun's word knowledge of maggie and numerals. Afterwards, mum assessed the child's learned vocabulary of tehre local food, lines 13 to 118, and they cooked the food together, line 19.

### **Excerpt 5.7 Chamun prays at family mealtime**

The excerpt emerged from the Chamun family gathering for a meal, and they have a cultural practice of saying a prayer together before they start to eat. So Chamun offered to pray, and she was allowed.

1. Chamun: I want to pray for us
2. Church sister: Ok, say the prayer
3. Chamun: Everybody, close your eye
4. Bobo: Make the prayer short
5. Chamun: Shhhhhhh, everybody, close your eye
6. Mum: Pray! The food is getting cold
7. Chamun: Thank you God for chew:dren in the world  
They don't have food  
  
They don't have water  
  
They don't have house  
  
Eh, eh, (.)
8. Bobo: Amen!
9. All: Amen!!
10. Chamun: I am not finish prayer
11. Mum: That is ok for now, you can continue after the meal

The excerpt shows Chamun's self-motivation to initiate saying a prayer line 1 and directing family members to abide by the prayer rules, indicating silence with /sh/ sound, line 5. The wordings of her prayer illustrate her vocabulary and expressive ability.

### **Excerpt 5.8 Chamun and dad sing and demonstrate**

Daddy was relaxing on the sofa and talking with mother in the living room while Chamun played, which involved revising school funds of knowledge. She then invited dad to join her in a singing activity. The excerpt comes out of that engagement.

1. *Chamun*: Daddy, stand up and sing together
2. *Dad*: ((Laughs as he stands up and places hands on his waist))
3. *Chamun*: No, ‘hand akimbo everywhere.’  
((meaning, not to place hands on his waist))  
Do like me ((straightens hands downward position))
4. *Dad*: ((Laughs as he places two hands straight down)) like this?
5. *Chamun*: Yes
6. *Dad*: What next, madam?
7. *Chamun*: ((Leads the song and demonstrating))  
My head, my shoulder, my knees, my toes (3x)  
All belong to Jesus
8. *Dad*: ((Sings and demonstrates along))  
((They did that for a while, and Chamun changed the lyrics))
9. *Chamun*: ((Creating new lyrics and touching items mentioned)  
My dress, my shoe, my book, my mummy (.) all belong to Jesus
10. *Daddy*: ((Laughs)) Madam English

Chamun took the lead and directed dad to perform the demonstrations. In line 3, ‘hands akimbo’ and line 7, singing, demonstrating and naming parts of the body together. In line 9, she turned more creative and expanded lyrics. Dad appreciated her creativity with the phrase, “Madam English, ” which confirms her comfortability of frequent engagement of the English language.

### **Excerpt 5.9 Chamun builds word bank with research student (RS)**

The session reflected in the excerpt below was a significant language activity that happened during observation and opportunity in which Chamun learned a new word with the research student.

#### ***Excerpt 9: Chamun and RS work on Chamun learning a new word***

1. *RS*: ((Coughing))
2. *Chamun*: Drink water
3. *Mum*: Let me get water for you
4. *RS*: ((Coughing))
5. *Chamun*: ((Looking at RS as she coughs))
6. *Mum*: ((Offers RS water)) Have some water
7. *RS*: ((Drinks the water, clears throat, cough ceases)) Thank you, magic water
8. *Chamun*: Ma::gic? What is ma::gic?
9. *RS*: The water is magic; it stopped the cough
10. *Chamun*: Mummy, I want ma::gic water
11. *Mum*: But you are not coughing
12. *Chamun*: ((Coughs))
13. *RS*: ((Gives her water)) Drink the magic water
14. *Chamun*: ((Drinks)) No cough, ma::gic water
15. *RS*: Magic water has stopped the cough
16. *Chamun*: ma::gic, ma::gic water

Chamun learnt a new phrase from a cough experienced by RS while on observation, line 1. She suggested a solution to the cough with words she picked out of her word bank, line 2. RS responded to the child's vocabulary building and introduced the phrase *magic water* in their conversation, line 7. Chamun shows curiosity about the new word, line 8, while the researcher explained, and she goes on to utilize the new term repeatedly, lines 10, 12, 13, 14 and 16.

### Excerpt 5.10 Mum engages Chamun and Bobo in making decisions

Chamun and Bobo were in the living room helping mum prepare for the children's upcoming event in the Church. The conversations between them and Chamun operating Mum's mobile phone are in the excerpt.

1. *Mum*: What songs will we sing at the camp?
2. *Chamun*: I know! I know!  
Yesu maiceto na, ba wanda zaya raba ni da ka [Jesus my saviour,  
nothing shall separate us from you]
3. *Mum*: I think I have that song on my phone  
Bring the phone, let's choose some songs
4. *Chamun*: ((Quickly carries phone))
5. *Bobo*: Give mummy her phone, she will play the songs she likes
6. *Mum*: Allow her to search for the songs
7. *Chamun*: ((confidently presses the music file, plays different songs))  
Mummy, is this one shw:iit? [sweet] ((Seeking mum's approval))
8. *Bobo*: It is too slow
9. *Chamun*: it not mummy?
10. *Mum*: Play another one
11. *Chamun*: (Slides the phone, presses the keys, and plays more songs)
12. *Mum*: Hmmmm, give me the phone; I know the songs to choose
13. *Chamun*: ((Reluctant gives mum))

While Mum contemplates the song to sing at the event, Chamun suggested Hausa song, which she sang, lines 1 and 2. Mum engaged the children in search songs on her mobile phone, and Chamun was in charge of the phone, lines 3 to 6. She demonstrated digital skill of identifying the music file and searching for and playing different songs, lines 7 to 11. Subsequently, during the interview,

all family members agreed that Chamun liked music and dancing. Although there was no specific time slot for it, they indicated it often happened during leisure. They also viewed it as relevant for her language development and memory. Elder sister highlighted, "...she can say all words in songs like Fada, Fada, Yeh and she sings many of Franklyn Edward's songs." The main concern was the lack of constant electricity; hence they rarely used the DVD. However, offered occasions to play and to use saved music on the phone instead. Bobo, the elder brother, noted that Chamun: "likes dancing and can dance very well".

### **Excerpt 5.11 Storytelling: a cherished activity**

This section emerged from interview data. Family members stated storytelling was part of their literacy practice, and Chamun liked it. For example, the elder sister pointed out that Chamun "...likes telling stories about things that never exist ... she can begin blindly not knowing how it will end up, but she always concludes it." Also, dad disclosed, "I tell stories about my late father ... how he was a funny man... I used demonstrations to portray his funny behaviours".

The Church sister also mentioned that she invented animal stories and narrated them to Chamun. For example, "Mr Hare, Frog and fly, go hunting, Lizard sent the bird." But, again, the mother reiterated, "stories encouraged her listening and speaking because she always asks and responds to questions."

### **5.3.1.3. Print environment**

The section describes practices in the family that provided the opportunity for Chamun to experience print. All print environments in the home were in the English language and mainly

religious and educational. Thus, the literacy experience emerged mainly from family devotion and mother-child interaction. Excerpts 5.12 to 5.15 describe some print-rich family literacy practices in the family.

### **Excerpt 5.12 Time for family devotion**

During the holiday, every member of the Chamun family was around for the family routine evening prayer. Excerpt 5.12 comes from the event of family Bible reading and prayer in which Chamun actively participated.

1. *Dad*: It is time for family devotion  
((Calls children by name and asks them to come out for the meeting))
2. *All*: ((Chamun like everyone comes out carries Bible but two))
3. *Mum*: Chamun, why are you holding two Bibles?
4. *Chamun*: I want two Bible
5. *Mum*: You can only read from one at a time
6. *Chamun*: It is my Bible
7. *Bobo*: She just wants to show she has more than 1 Bible
8. *Mum*: Quiet everyone, it is prayer time
9. *Chamun*: I will pray?
10. *Mum*: Chamun, say the opening prayer
11. *Chamun*: ((Says the prayer))
12. *Dad*: ((Gives direction about Bible passage for reading))
13. *Chamun*: ((Searching the passage like others as she randomly flips  
through Bible pages from left to right and then stops at a page))
14. *Dad*: I will read (.) everyone listen ((Reads))
15. *Chamun*: ((Opens a page in the Bible and touching words with a finger  
and following the reading))

From the observation, Chamun said the opening prayer, and while dad gave direction of the Bible passage, Chamun flipped through her bible and open the passage to show the basic print concept of print awareness. Then, as daddy reads aloud, everyone follows with their Bibles; Chamun showed active participation too. She keenly followed the reading using her own Bible, opening pages, and using her fingers to read along, lines 13 and 15.

### **Excerpt 5.13 Mum engages Chamun in shared reading**

It was a quiet afternoon; only mum and Chamun were at home looking relaxed as they sat together on the double sofa with their heads covered with scarfs and having a literacy interaction time. Widely opened on Chamun's legs was her book, 'Children Bible Story'. They were reading the story of 'Noah and the Ark' together when I arrived. Mum was reading the story and touching words from left to right and referring to the pictures, while Chamun listened and followed along, moving her head from left to right and then turning over to the next page. The dialogue in excerpt 11 ensued after the shared reading, and mum asked Chamun to retell the story.

1. *Mum:* Let me hear you tell me the story
2. *Chamun:* ((Retells story of Noah and the Ark,  
touching words with fingers like mum))
3. *Mum:* ((Applauds Chamun))
4. *Chamun:* Mummy, God is (.) bad?
5. *Mum:* Why did you say that?
6. *Chamun:* Because people die
7. *Mum:* Remember we read; the people refused to enter the ark  
The flood came and swept them away
8. *Chamun:* Noah (.) do not open the door
9. *Mum:* Noah already warned them to enter before God locked the door  
God wanted to separate good from evil
10. *Chamun:* What good (.) evil?

11. *Mum*: (.) ((gives illustration))

Is it good the way Boko haram are killing people?

12. *Chamun*: ((Shakes head))

13. *Mum*: That is evil

Is it good to give clothes and food to children in the camp?

14. *Chamun*: ((Nods head)) will God kill Boko haram?

15. *Mum*: God loves everyone; he loves Boko haram

The excerpt showed Chamun retelling the story as guided by mum, lines 1 and 2. After that, curiously Chamun seeks more knowledge about the character of God and the difference between good and evil, lines 4, 8 and 10. Mum answered the questions using familiar situations and cues to help Chamun discover new knowledge, lines 7 to 15, apart from building listening, narrative and print awareness skills. Afterwards, mum confirmed this as she expressed her feelings about Chamun's literacy experiences in the home:

The training I received at the Seminary institution prepared me to teach young children in church and train children's workers in churches. I recognised the importance of training children to read and write early, and I used different ways to do that, not only with books. I know a child must play to explore, and I allow her to play a lot. I begin my charity at home. I make myself available and involve Chamun in things that are helpful to increasing literacy learning. So, like doing things together to help listen, speak, and correct her, exposing her to new words, reading, testing her understanding, and many things.

(Fieldnotes, 12/10/21)

#### **Excerpt 5.14 Chamun initiates reading event with mum**

It was an exciting atmosphere in the family, and everyone was relaxing and making their contributions to discussions on different topics. Chamun was not entirely talking but watching them. After some time, she went to her improvised mobile library box, took her 'Children Bible

Story' book, went to mum, and said, 'mummy, let us go to our room and read.' Holding the book firmly on her chest, they both went to the girls' bedroom and invited me to join them. They sat on Chamun's bed, which she shared with Naadi, and Chamun opened the book on her legs. Excerpt 5.14 documents the literacy event that emerged.

1. *Chamun:* ((Storybook on her legs)) I want 'Je:sush lof the litul chewdren'  
[I want Je:sus loves the little children]
2. *Mum:* You have the book (.) find the story
3. *Chamun:* ((Leafs pages randomly))
4. *Mum:* Can we see the story together?
5. *Chamun:* ((Allows mum leafs through with her and getting to a page she shouts)) stop! ... this one
6. *Chamun:* Je:sush lof all chewdren in the world!
7. *Mum:* yes, Jesus loves all children in the world

The event shows she selected the story to read, line 1, which provided the opportunity for her to search through the book, flipping pages with the help of mum, lines 3 and 5 and displaying print awareness ability. Subsequently, mum read the story, and Chamun listened attentively.

### **Excerpt 5.15 Chamun completes number writing homework with mum**

Chamun sat on her kid plastic chair next to mum in the living room. In front of them was the centre table with Chamun's book, a pencil, and an eraser. Mum reminded Chamun that the objective of the homework from school was to learn and practice writing numbers 1 to 30. Excerpt 5.15 reveals mum supporting Chamun with her writing homework.

1. *Chamun:* ((Flips through the book and stops on a page,

picks the eraser and cleans writing))

2. *Mum*: Why are you cleaning it?
3. *Chamun*: It is jagalajagala ((unclear writing))
4. *Mum*: That page is dirty; turn to the next and write
5. *Chamun*: ((Turns to next page and looks at mum))
6. *Mum*: We will continue with writing numbers 20 to 30. Write twenty ... two and zero
7. *Chamun*: ((Writes 20)) like this?
8. *Mum*: ((Claps)) correct! Write twenty-one, two and one
9. *Chamun*: ((Writes 21, raises her head smilingly towards mum))
10. *Mum*: Correct! A big clap for you ((clapping))

((They progressed successfully, and then Chamun got stuck at writing 30))

11. *Mum*: Write thirty, three and zero
12. *Chamun*: ((Looking sad and drops the pencil on the table))
13. *Mum*: What is the problem?
14. *Chamun*: I don't know thirty
15. *Mum*: Rest and we shall continue; this is the last number to write
16. *Chamun*: ((quickly pushes the table, runs outside and playing.

After some time, mum called her to come in))

17. *Chamun*: ((Came back with wet dress))
18. *Mum*: Go and change now! I told you not to play with that dirty water
19. *Chamun*: ((Went inside the bedroom and came out changed))
20. *Mum*: Sit down and get this done; write three and zero
21. *Chamun*: ((writes 30))
22. *Mum*: Correct!

((Mum and Chamun repeatedly practised reading 1 to 30))

The event indicates Chamun using her basic print concepts skills lines 1 to 5. Next, mum gradually scaffolds writing numbers 20 to 30, using the Child's previous knowledge of numbers 1 to 10. For example, mum says, "write twenty-one, two and one", and she wrote 21 affirmatively, lines 6 to

9. Both jointly continued until she got stuck, and mum gave her a break, a strategy that helped her overcome that setback, lines 11 to 16, and completed the assignment. She also employed praise to encourage the child's writing progress.

### **5.3.2. Child-Initiated Activities**

The spacious and material-resourced indoor and outdoor spaces in Chamun's home environments allowed her to initiate play activities supporting building literacy-related abilities. Similarly, the Interview data validates that the preschool child's disposition to initiate her literacy activities was evident in her regular pretend writing. Mum stated, "She engages in colouring activities, drawing and writing anywhere while playing with objects." Sister also confirmed, "she uses sticks, fingers, and old pens she picks outside and writes on the ground". Thus, family members agreed that play was significant to Chamun because of her unique creativity during play. Mum further said, "she talks to herself when playing and sometimes sings rhymes when playing and even asks adults to join her play." Excerpts 16 to 21 present these experiences.

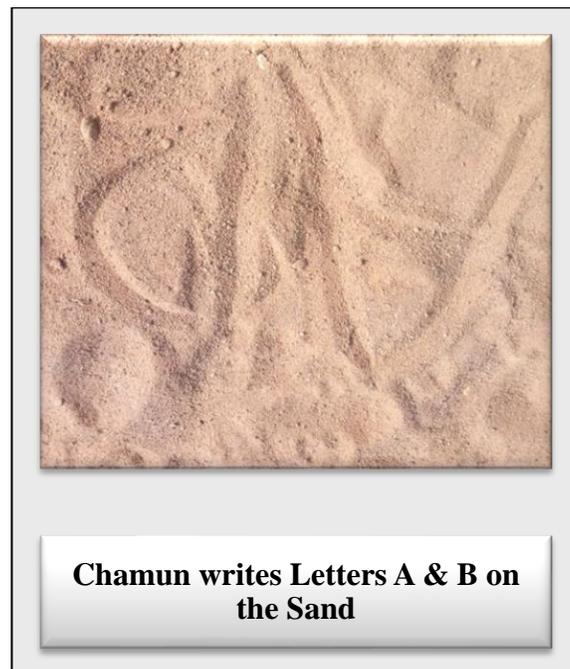
#### **Excerpt 5.16 Chamun transforms sand-play into writing**

It was a sunny evening as Chamun played outside the house in the company of mum. She sat on a heap of sand as she sang a song and moved her left and right shoulders as well as throwing up sand in the air simultaneously. Then she got up from the sand, walked around, found some sticks gathered in a corner, and then picked up two; a short thick stick and a longer one. She went back to the heap of sand, squatted, and gripped the tip of the short stick with three fingers (thumb, index and the middle one) with her right hand, stretched the left arm flat on the sand and began to scribble

lines while talking (to herself): *this one, straight* (vertical lines) *this one, straight* (horizontal lines). Next, she made many joint V patterns and said: *this one, jagalajagala* [pidgin word]. Mum stepped in, provided support and Chamun extended and wrote *A* and *B* as shown in Figure 5.7. The solitary play offered her space to build her print concept, writing, talking skills and vocabulary.

### **Figure 5.7**

Chamun Uses Space for Sand play and Practice Writing



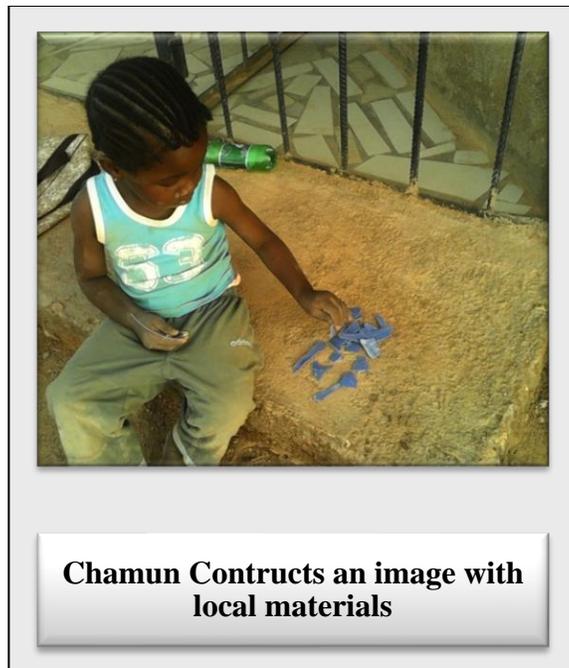
### **Excerpt 5.17: Chamun creates an object with discarded plastic**

Mum and a neighbour were outside their house catching up. Chamun used the opportunity and came out to play. She went to the reserved area where the family gathered discarded things and

found scraps of broken blue pieces of the plastic plate. Although mum tried to stop her, Chamun resisted and collected it. She took it to the veranda and began to arrange and rearranged the pieces into different shapes. She repeated it several times and then abandoned it. Next, she went inside the house, came back, and continued arranging/rearranging the scraps until she made a shape that she found satisfying. Then she stopped and expressed: '*see man smiling*' indicating her vocabulary and language development using short sentences to describe the image created. Figure 5.8 depict the child's creativity.

**Figure 5.8**

*Chamun Makes a Smiling Man with Broken Plastics*

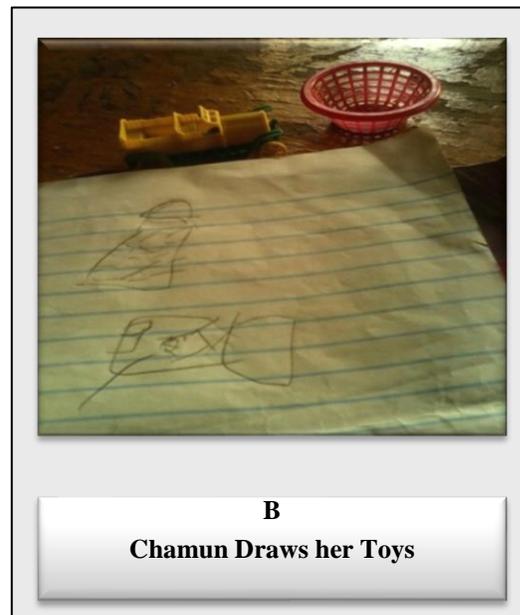
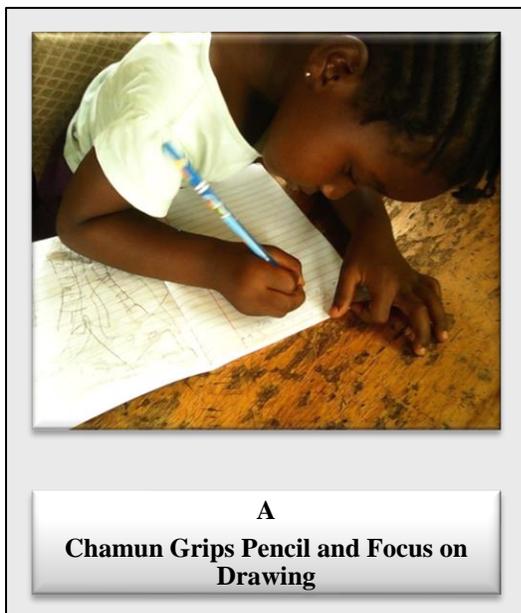


**Excerpts 5.18: Roleplay as multiple modes for building vocabulary and writing**

Chamun played with some lego pieces of basket and car (see figure 5.9B) on the table in the living room. She was acting in an accident scene with the toys. She placed the basket at one end, moved to the other end, and pretended to drive the car. She rolled the car towards the basket, making the sound *vu vu vu vu vu* and then hit the basket and shouted, *accident!* She took the car and went back to the squatted position and repeated several times; the sounding of *vu vu vu vu*, hitting of the basket and shouting *accident!* Chamun further diversified the play and told mum she wanted to draw the car and basket. Mum immediately provided her with a book and a pencil, and Chamun drew pictures of the lego, basket and car. The play offered Chamun the opportunity for displaying her sounding, vocabulary building and drawing skills. Figures 5.9a and 5.9b indicate her drawing and colouring activities.

**Figure 5.9**

*Chamun Engages Drawing during Play*

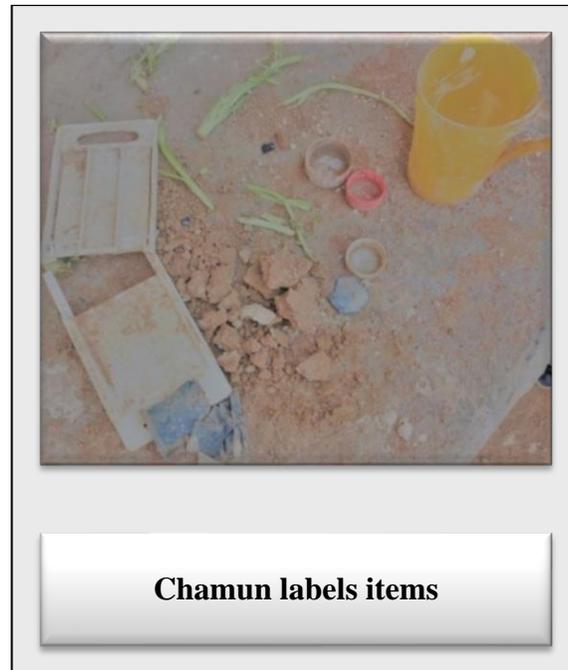


### **Excerpt 5.19 Chamun roleplay cooking tehre with improvised items**

Mum was outside pulling water from the Well, and Chamun was there too, role-playing cooking. She explored the environment, gathered objects, and named them to represent kitchen utensils and food items in Figure 14. Chamun took a cup and called it, '*yellow cup is big pot*'. She touched the three bottles tops and said, '*1, 2, 3 plate*' ((she counted three items and named them plates)). She lifted the red bottle top and said, '*red plate is me*' ((meaning the red bottle one was hers)). Again, she touched the two flat white rectangular objects and named them '*this one, and this one is mummy and daddy plate*'. She further stated: '*I have things (.) I will cook tehre*'. She then mentions them, *alefo* ((spinach- green stem of vegetable in the picture)), *acha* ((fonio grain)) as shown in Figure 5.10. Chamun's range of literacy build-up includes language development ((expressions in short sentences)), labelling and classifying items and plates, and vocabulary.

## Figure 5.10

### *Chamun Improvises Kitchen Items*



### **Excerpt 5.20. Doll play transforms into a literacy experience**

Chamun and mum were the only two in the house. Chamun was quietly playing with her doll's hair; she attempted plaiting and unplaiting the hair and having difficulty picking a bead and fixing the hair by herself. Mum observing the struggle, offered to help with giving her the beads and helping to twist the hair and then Chamun pushed the beads through the twisted hair. Significantly, she named and identified the colours and decided the pattern of the beads on the hair as indicated in Figure 5.11 a & b. Then, she moved on to draw the doll (see Figure 5.12).

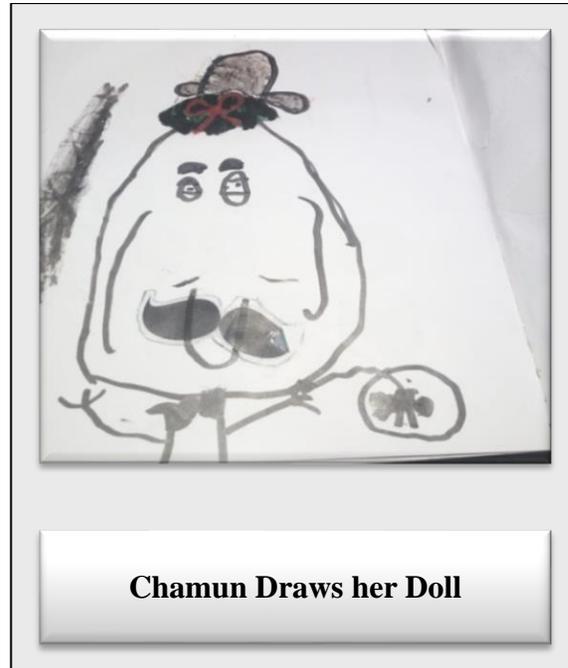
**Figure 5.11**

*Mum Supporting Chamun to Make Doll's Hair*



## Figure 12

*Chamun draws her doll*



### **Excerpt 5.21: Chamun explores games with Church sister's mobile phone**

This section presents an extract of field notes that shows Chamun playing a game with the mobile phone to activate her vocabulary.

Church sister was pulling water from the well, and Chamun was playing games with her mobile phone. RS asked what game she was playing, and she responded, *'I am talking, me and angela'* (a 'cat' in the game). She continued: 'How are you? How old are you? 'Show me your tongue' and 'sing for me'. And she would manipulate the game and made the cat respond to her requests and questions. Finally, she called angela a "*naughty cat*" and manipulated the phone to beat it for been naughty. Angela felt the pain of the beating, and she said, *'don't be naughty boy'*. Church sister cautioned her to switch the phone off because the battery may be low, but she enjoyed the game. (Field notes, 14/11/17).

## **5.4. Parental Support Strategies**

This section presents the Chamun family follow up interview responses on how parents and family members provided pathways to support Chamun's early literacy experiences in the home. The interview data provided corroborations of the observation data. The activities carried out at home to support the preschool-aged child's literacy experience yielded five themes.

### **5.4.1. Freedom of Space**

The parents voiced their efforts in providing opportunities for Chamun to participate in literacy activities. The father highlighted, "my wife and me, give her (.) let me call it, freedom to do those things that help her literacy learning". For example, allowing to participate in reading the Bible and saying prayers during family devotion and mealtimes. The mother explained further, "during Bible reading time, and we give her the opportunity read after us (.) somebody will read, she will read after that person (.) we do that a lot." Bobo added, "she likes saying the prayer before eating, and we allow her."

The strategy of freedom of space was not only demonstrated during religious activities. It was evident during observation and confirmed during the family interview. Similarly, the participants emphasised Chamun's use of space at her disposition, as the father stated:

We decided to create an atmosphere for play (.) ehhhh (.) even when you go to the bedroom there is a chair, called Chamun's chair, everything that is Chamun's, books, toys, old wrappers (.) you will see them scattered (.) pile up on that chair and table (.) nobody touches

that zone. The truth is that this means a lot to her ... when you touch her things, she gets offended, it means much to her, so we endeavour not to ... for us, it's too scattered, but it means a lot to her.

They felt that allowing her to use the space to enhance the child's engagement in reading and creativity.

#### **5.4.2. Body Expressions**

Mum mentioned using facial expressions to communicate to Chamun and keep track of chores asked to do. She gave an example, "I can decide to fix my eyes on something she is doing wrongly, and she will understand the language and stop it." The family all agreed that the child read body expressions and responded to instructions.

#### **5.4.3 Responsiveness**

The family pointed out responding to Chamun's interest was a way of supporting her. They all voiced that mum was more patient with Chamun than any of them because she responded promptly to her requests. For example, mum disclosed:

"when responding to her request of storytelling, she wants it to be narrated or read as if the story is happening in life, and she likes it that way. So, while reading or narrating a story, I often dramatize and give illustrations ...

The time is sometimes full of laughter and fun".

Also, the father revealed that they responded to her love for books by buying them "... we notice Chamun likes books (.) so we try to buy storybooks and other writing materials for her". Naadi ((sister)) added, "she has pencils, colour pencils, cleaners ((erasers)) and sharpener. And she is

always asking for paper to draw ..., and daddy will now give her his plain sheets”. Sensitivity to the child needs to establish an enabling environment for her literacy learning.

#### **5.4.4 Questioning Techniques**

The mother expressed that she used questioning techniques to engage Chamun in thinking before speaking. For example, “I ask her, you go ahead find out, ehhhh (.) what the thing is ... I want her to discover certain things by herself”. In addition, asking Chamun questions was observed during mother-child reading activities.

#### **5.4.5 Giving Applause and Commendation**

Everyone revealed Chamun liked compliments whenever she accomplished a task. The church sister pointed out that:

She likes you cheering her when she does something that is good, and if you don't, she will not be happy ... if she is trying to dress herself and you didn't commend, she will come around you so, you must say something, if you don't say something she will be disappointed.

On her part, mum stated, “I reward her with instant comments ... like ((demonstrates thump up)), my baby, my family doctor ((nickname)). While dad said, “I called her by her nickname ‘Cherisso, cherisso, cherisso’ to encourage her to continue any activity she was doing like writing, sometimes colouring”.

### **5.5. Summary of Chamun’s Literacy Experiences**

Chamun’s family home offers a positive and child-friendly environment comprising indoor and outdoor supportive resources used for various interactive activities. Her social mediators include mum, dad, grandma, and other family members, but Mum was the closest mediator in most literacy practices. Chamun’s early literacy experiences centred on listening to Bible stories, participating in routine house chores, doing homework, and initiating play activities. Mum’s reading aloud and shared reading of Bible stories enriches her listening, repetitive reading (reading along), book handling (left-right orientation), print awareness and making connections. Also, she acquired comprehension skills through retelling stories while responding to Mum’s assessment of Bible stories; and clarifying through questioning. Another emergent skill is drawing, describing, and naming parts of the objects drawn with short phrases “this is a car”, “this is the driver”, colouring and differentiating colours (pink and red). Finally, Chamun enriched vocabulary with Mum about a new word piglet and experienced hands-on skill of braiding dolls’ hair and crafting visual representations of her baby doll in drawing and colour discriminations. Through homework, Mum likewise helped Chamun learned book handling, pencil grip, numeracy, and self-correction. Also, grandma’s visits sustained constant use of family language and communicating through code-switching between Mwachavul and Hausa languages. She explores solitary play opportunities to use available environmental resources to construct these different literacies ranging from novice writing (scribbling), writing alphabets and creating images and labelling them. Chamun demonstrated vocabulary and expressive and receptive skills (naming and describing events and materials) in an accident scene and cooking of local diet. And finally, the parents used varieties of supportive strategies (giving opportunities, body language, sensitivity, questioning, and reinforcements) to mediate the child’s literacies.

## **CHAPTER 6. HOME LITERACY EXPERIENCES OF RUFFY**

### **6.1. Introduction**

Within the previous case-study chapter, the home literacy experiences of Chamun show patterns of multiliteracies and multimodal literacies in the English language, which was a significant home language in her context. However, this chapter presents a thick description of Ruffy, moving along a continuum of multiliteracies (as in Figure 6.3) where I observed a dominant use of his mother tongue: Hausa language in the home and from which he developed literacies. It also describes his other literacies in Arabic and English, particularly for religious and homework purposes. The chapter is in four sections, including the background profiling of the physical and social settings and their key elements. Next, the chapter presents the preschool child's early literacy experiences as multiliteracies accounted for under several excerpts of literacies in Hausa, English, and Arabic. And then, the child's agency section contributed knowledge about the child's literacy experiences from joint and solitary play contexts and, finally, the parental strategies.

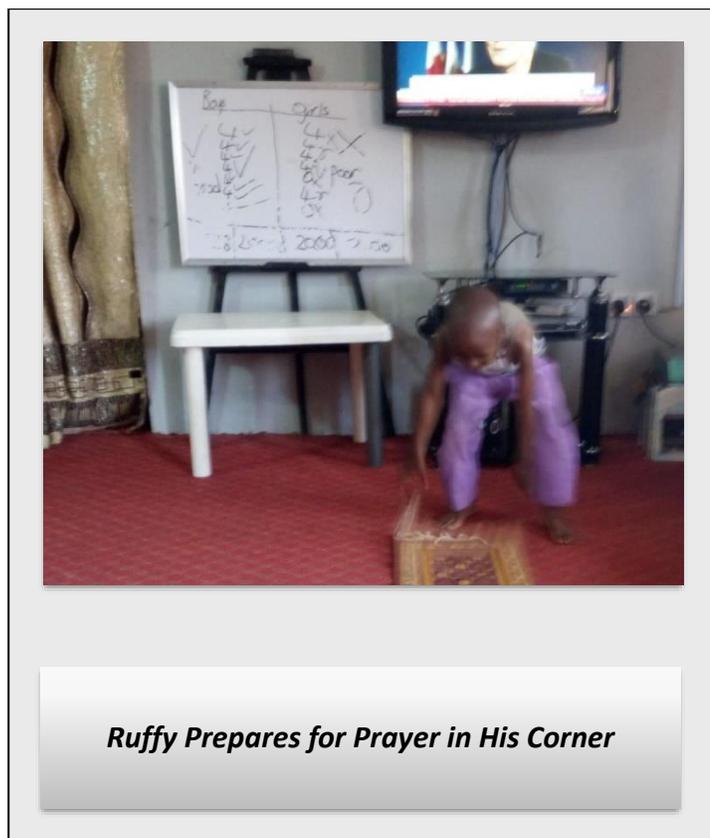
### **6.2. Physical and Social Contexts of the Ruffy family**

The Ruffy family lived in a three-bedroom house on a one-storey building floor, while another family lived on the first floor. The building was enclosed in a tall fence with the main entrance gate leading to a shared courtyard. Visible in the courtyard was a drilled Well, a central source of water for the two families. It was always under key and lock, except when in use by an adult. For family reasons, Ruffy parents preferred the children to stay indoors and came out mainly when going on errands or when the mother was in the courtyard doing some chores. Therefore, indoor space, the living room was the hub for various family interactions. The carpeted living room served

the purpose of a playground for the children, salah and relaxation. The parents assigned a corner in the living room for the children, called ‘*Lokaci koyo*’ (time to learn). The corner had a whiteboard on its stand, pens for writing on the whiteboard pens and a duster. Around the corner was a television with a corresponding metal shelf is used as a stand for the DVD video player (Figure 6.1 below).

### **Figure 6.1**

*Ruffy’s Assigned Lokaci Koyo Corner*



Ruffy also has a personal dadurma (praying mat) which he uses for salah. Figure 6.1 demonstrated Ruffy’s response to salah when the community Imam called for it. In the photo, Ruffy was preparing his space for salah. A Hausa film TV station- Kannywood production was a popular

entertainment in the family, although he was known for his American action films. Besides, Ruffy also had his dadurma (mat) for praying.

Ruffy's mother affirmed, "lokaci koyo corner" was the father's idea to create the space to encourage the children to learn in the home. She named the corner to draw their attention to it whenever they were playing rough, and they heard '*lokaci koyo*'; they would run to the board and pretend to read something or write. The children were also allowed to use the centre table for creativity and sometimes homework freely. A literacy book, 'Queen primer,' was bought for Ruffy by the father bought to help him learn to read. Although, I never saw him read the book during the time of data collection. The mother stated she did not know how to use the book. His textbooks were stored at school by his teacher, and he brought them home to carry out homework and then return them. Talking about Ruffy's books during an informal conversation, the mother says:

I don't understand the school  
Parents buy the books, but the school keep them,  
and there are no books in the house for Ruffy to use  
That is why the father made *lokaci koyo* because he plays too much  
but his brother helps him to learn

(Field notes, 1/02/17)

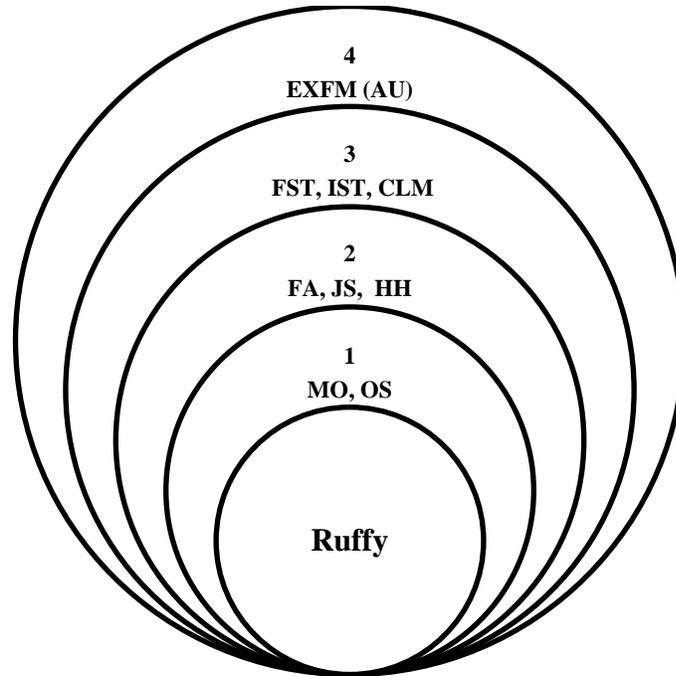
Additional print materials in the living room include one Oxford dictionary, three books on Office Administration which belonged to the father, and packets of white A4 papers and accessed by children for play. Other prints sighted include religious books such as the Qur'an, an English version of the Bible and Arabic books: Sikitabu, Taoheed, 'Brubul and Maraf.

The family social setting consists of Ruffy and his two brothers, who lived with their parents. Ruffy was four at the start of the fieldwork and the second child out of three children. His 7-year-old older brother (Musty) was in primary two, and the youngest (Ami) was less than a year. Ruffy's father held a BSc degree in Administration and Management and worked as a civil servant with an agency of the Nigerian government. The mother was a seamstress and held General Certificate School Examination (GCSE) qualifications. She looked after the children full-time. The family lived in a Hausa-Muslim dominated community that had a mixture of low and medium-income families, mainly civil servants and traders.

Although Hausa was the family language used for everyday interactions in the home, English was used but not as practical as Hausa. Musty was enthusiastic about speaking English with Ruffy, but he would often respond in Hausa. The family practised the Islam religion and learning the Arabic language required effectively practising Islam. That made it mandatory for Ruffy and Musty to enrol in *Makaranta Allo* (Islamic school) within the community. They attended the Arabic school three times a week and taught by a mallam (teacher) to read and write in Arabic and taught to memorize and recite the Qur'an for two hours. In addition, every day, they went for morning salah between 6:30 – 7:15 before proceeding to school. The children attended nursery/primary school outside their community which had a population of children and teachers from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds, which allowed them to meet with children from social, religious and language backgrounds. Apart from the immediate family, Ruffy always spoke with mum's sister Dr Sadiya through phone conversations. And Saratu, a 13-year-old that provided housekeeping service to the family three times a week. Figure 6.2 shows Ruffy's family social network.

**Figure 6.2**

*Ruffy Social networks: Sphere of influence*



*Note.* Graphic created according to Robson’s (2011, p. 485) advice of using “Context charts showing interrelationships between roles.”

- 1 Close contacts and mediators: **Mother (MO)** and **Older Sibling (OS)**
- 2 Close but no contacts during study **Father (FA)**, **House Help (HH)**, **JS**
- 3 Community contacts: **Arabic school Mallam (MAL)**, **Local Mosque Imam (IM)**
- 4 Occasional contacts: **Extended Family Members (EFM)** (**Aunty Dr Sadiya**)

### **6.3. Ruffy's Multiliteracies Experiences**

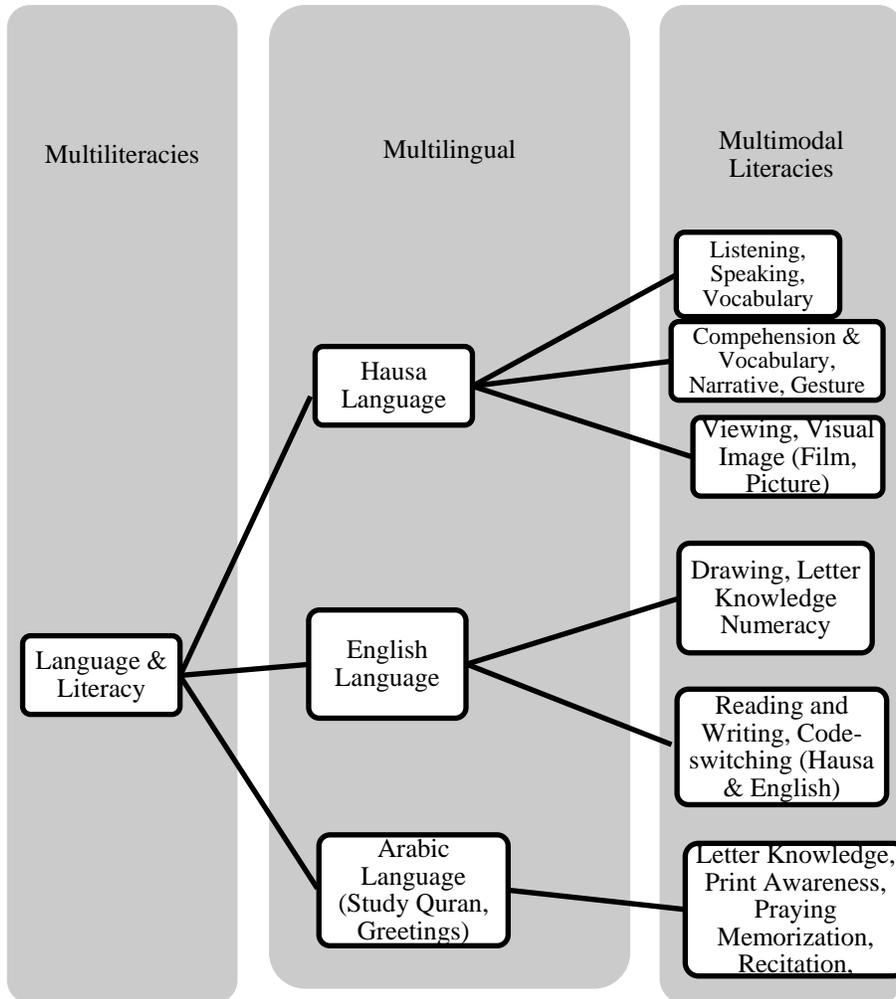
The early literacy experiences of Ruffy in Figure 6.3 illustrates the multiliteracies connections involving multilingualism (Hausa, English, and Arabic) and represented by multimodal literacies, which consists listening, talking, reading and writing, drawing, vocabulary and watching films, computer games, mobile phone, multiple modes words, texts, media, and play. The language and literacy experiences emerged through regular daily social interactions with his family. The child's active role is evident through initiated activities and collaborating with family members. Also, he was engaged in non-verbal communication such as body language. Mum described gestures as readable when passing a non-verbal message to the children; her facial expression communicated messages, and the child responded accordingly. She cited instances of using facial expressions:

When I stop them from going outside, and he insisted; first, he will check my facial expression and get an answer from it. Also, when visitors are around, and they are getting too intrusive, I roll my eyes in a certain way; and he understands. It either to quietly sit down or go to their room ...Ruffy can read my facial language very well.

(Interview transcript, 19/01/19)

**Figure 6.3**

*Diagrammatic Depiction of Ruffy's Multiliteracies*



*Note.* Graphic created according to Robson (2011, p. 486) suggestion of using “conceptually ordered tree diagram showing how phenomena are classified and subcategorised.”

### **6.3.1. Multilingual Literacies**

Ruffy actively used three languages: Hausa, Arabic and English languages. Hausa is the home language and was the medium used for daily communications among family members during home chores, entertainment involving watching films, and storytelling. The Arabic language was for studying the Quran, praying and greetings, and English to complete homework and watch cartoons and American movies. Ruffy also uses code-switching of Hausa and English to express himself to visitors like the researcher. Mum confirmed during the interview, saying, “We speak Hausa often ... but sometimes English because of his school homework”. Sections below present the excerpts revealing the preschool child’s oral language and literacy experiences in the three languages.

#### **6.3.1.1. Literacy in Hausa and English**

##### **Excerpt 6.1: Ruffy with siblings listen to storytelling with mum**

It was a hot afternoon, and there was no electricity supply; all windows and the main door in the living room were wide open, giving the room good ventilation. Mum and the children were relaxing on the sofas and enjoying an airy atmosphere, and then Ruffy asked mum to tell them a story. Mum allowed him to choose his cherished story, and he preferred: “Tatsuniya Anabi Yusuf ((The story of Anabi Yusuf)). The excerpt represents a pattern involved in storytelling time involving loud narrations of stories in the family and usually in a culturally devised sitting pattern on the traditional mat. Ruffy quickly collected the mat and set it up for a conducive space for all to sit and listen to the story. Excerpt 6.1 presents the experiences of Ruffy during the literacy-rich activity that enriched his vocabulary and retelling story abilities in Hausa

1. *Mum*: Ga tanan ga tanan ku ((Opening convention))
2. *Ruffy*: Ta zo muji ta ((Normal response from the audience))

3. *Mum*: ((Narrates the story in Hausa))
4. *Ruffy*: ((Listening and playing in between))
5. *Mum*: Tagurunkus! ((closing convention))
6. *Ruffy/Musty*: ((Smile and Clapping))
7. *Mum*: Lokacin kwaji [test time] (.) Ruffy, su wa suka yar da Anabi Yusuf a rijiya?  
[ Ruffy, who threw Anabi Yusuf inside the Well?]
8. *Ruffy*: Yanwa shi [his brothers]
9. *Mum*: Musty, bashi score daya [Musty, give him 1 score]
10. *Musty*: ((Writes 1 under Ruffy on the board))
11. *Mum*: Menene sunan baban Anabi Yusuf?  
[What is the name of Anabi Yusuf's father?]
12. *Ruffy*: Anabi Yakub
13. *Mum*: Kara masa daya [Another score for him]
14. *Ruffy*: Mama, menene kurkuku? [mama, what is prison?]
15. *Mum*: Musty, kai ka ansa // //
16. *Musty*: // // Polis suna kai barawo a kurkuku  
[When police catch thieves, they put them in prison]
17. *Mum*: Da duka wanda sun karya dauka ana kai su kurkuku  
[and all people who break laws go to prison]
18. *Ruffy*: Anabi Yusuf bai yi sata ba [Anabi Yusuf did not steal]
19. *Mum*: Bai yi sata ba (.) amma matan oga shi tayi masa karya  
[Yes, he did not steal (.), but his master's wife lied against him]
20. *Ruffy*: eh [yes]
21. *Mum*: Shi ya sa a ka kai she a kurkuku (.) Amma nufin Allah ne.  
Menene Anabi Yusuf yayi a kurkuku?  
[That's why he went to prison (.) But that was the will of Allah for him  
Remember what Anabi Yusuf did in prison?]
22. *Ruffy*: Ya taimake mutane [He was helping people]
23. *Mum*: Toh, ya kamata mu koya halinsa.  
[We should always do good, in good or bad times  
Just like Anabi Yusuf]

Mum narrated a religious story using a structure. It has an opening convention lines 1 and 2, followed by narration lines 3 and 4, and then the closing convention lines 5 and 6. After that, mum evaluated questioning lines 7 to 21 and finally pulled out the main moral lessons line 23. Ruffy listened to the story and answered all evaluative questions correctly, and mum provided reinforcement by scoring his responses, lines 8 to 17. Also, Ruffy enriched his comprehension when he asked a question (what is prison?), line 18, mum, and Musty answered him appropriately with explanations lines 19 to 21. As an indication of his comprehension, Ruffy emphasised the virtue of Anabi Yusuf, line 22; mum provided affirmation and clarification, lines 24 to 26. The activity enriched Ruffy's language expressive skills of listening, speaking, vocabulary and comprehension.

During a conversation, mum highlighted that she engaged the children in storytelling which could be traditional or religious, especially at weekends and holidays. She further revealed that storytelling provided opportunities for the children to develop listening and speaking skills and develop child's attention span and memory. She stated this about Ruffy:

Listening to stories makes Ruffy happy and inquisitive. He asks questions, questions about the people in the story and why things happened he listens, and when I ask him to repeat [retell], he can say it very well. I ask them questions to see if they understand and tell lessons from the story And Ruffy can participate well in all the interactions. He knows the pattern of telling a story, the start, the middle, and what to say when it ends. Stories that teach being good, honesty, obedience to godly rules.

(Field notes, 31/10/17)

### **Excerpt 6.2: Ruffy learns new words in Hausa with mum**

Mum has asked everyone to be quiet to enable baby Amii to sleep. She carried Amii on her back and singing a song to make him sleep. The excerpt emanates from the context of a conversation about Amii's sleeping situation in which Ruffy learns the words *Zomo* and *Kassa*.

1. *Ruffy*: Amii ya na barci? [Is Amii sleeping?]
2. *Mum*: Duba ko ya na barci [look and tell if he is sleeping]
3. *Ruffy*: Ido daya na bude [one eye is open]  
((waves hands over Amii's face)) ya na barci [he is sleeping]
4. *Musty*: Amii sleeping with one eye like zomo [Amii sleeps like rabbit]
5. *Ruffy*: Ido Amii kamar zomo [Amii eye is like rabbit]
6. *Mum*: Kamar kassa ba zomo ba [like kassa not rabbit]
7. *Ruffy*: Menene kassa? [what is kassa?]
8. *Mum*: Kassa, shi ne green macici mai dogo barci  
[green snake that sleeps for long]
9. *Ruffy*: Kassa zai tashi inda yinwa? [kassa wake up when hungry?]
10. *Mum*: Ki la [may be]
11. *Ruffy*: :((Singing and jumping)) Amii ya na barci kamar kassa  
((sings repeatedly, and Must joins))

Ruffy's curiosity about Amii's sleeping situation, made him asked a question, and mum instructed him to investigate lines 2 and 3. Waving his hands triggered a conversation that led to learning new words and their meaning, lines 5 to 8. Mum took time to explain using codeswitching to ease understanding. The interactions involved conversing, singing and learning words and phrases. Ruffy's experiences involved curiosity, viewing, questioning, inquiry and vocabulary development in Hausa.

### **Excerpt 6.3: Ruffy shows comprehension of the terms spoon and soldier**

Mum was busy sorting out kitchen utensils at the dining area; while the children watched the TV, the electricity supply got switched off from the main supply source. Ruffy then joined mum, and a conversation about the activity formed the content of excerpt 6.3.

1. *Ruffy*: Mama, menene ki ke yi? [mummy, what are you doing?]
2. *Mum*: Me ka gani? [what can you see?]
3. *Ruffy*: Ki na gyara chokali, fork da wuka [you are putting spoon, fork, and knife]
4. *Mum*: Ashe ka sani [so you know]
5. *Ruffy*: Mama, me a ke yi da chokali? (what is spoon for?)
6. *Mum*: Shan ruwa // // [For drinking water]
7. *Ruffy*: // // Ana ci rice ne ba shan ruwa ba [we use it for eating rice and not drinking water]
8. *Mum*: ((Laughs)) don me ka tambaya? [Why did you ask?]
9. *Ruffy*: Na sani (I know it)
10. *Mum*: Mallam Ruffy [Teacher Ruffy]
11. *Ruffy*: Ni major General Ruffy [I am major General Ruffy]

The scene shows Ruffy initiates the conversation with mum and both uses questioning about mum’s task, line 1 and 5. To test his knowledge about using a spoon, she answered wrongly and Ruffy his grasp by correcting her, lines 5, 6 and 7. Mum applauded his vocabulary and called him “mallam Ruffy” but he instead preferred to be called a soldier, lines 10 and 11. The extract showed that he understood the meaning and uses of a spoon, distinguished the word teacher and soldier, and expressed himself in Hausa and English.

#### **Excerpt 6.4: Ruffy communicates with a relation through mobile phone**

Mum's mobile phone rang, and that drew Ruffy's attention. He picked up the phone from the table, look at the screen and recognised the caller's name. It was mum's close relation, a medical doctor. Answering the call led to a conversation between them in excerpt 4.

1. *Ruffy*: Hallo! Aunty Sadiya, mutane nawa kin operation?  
[how many people did you operation?]
2. *Aunty Sadiya*: ((Laughs)) Banda yau [none today]
3. *Ruffy*: Don menene? [Why?]
4. *Musty*: Amma aikin ki ne [but that is your job]
5. *Aunty Sadiya*: [Yes, I am a doctor, but I don't operate on people every day.  
How are you, boys?]
6. *Ruffy*: Ni, I am soja man [me, I am soldier man]
7. *Aunty Sadiya*: [Yes, I know you want to be a soldier,  
I hope you read your books]
8. *Ruffy*: Aunty school ta na koya ma ni [my schoolteacher teaches me]
9. *Aunty Sadiya*: Ka na kokari [You are doing well]
10. *Ruffy*: Bye, bye, je ki yi operation [bye, bye, go and do operation]  
((Switches phone off))

The observed activity shows it's all about Ruffy's vocabulary on the occupational roles of a doctor and a soldier. He used the generalized phone greetings respectfully and initiated the talk about Dr Sadiya's professional role of operation, suggesting his knowledge about a medical doctor, line 1. She aptly responded lines 1, 2 and further informed her about his career interest in being a soldier, line 6. She acknowledged it and emphasised the need for him to be serious about his studies, lines 7 to 9. Ruffy ended the call with another greeting, line 10. Apart from his vocabulary of career roles, he also uses code-switching, ease of using the Hausa language, identifying the callers' name on the phone screen, and operating the phone

### **Excerpt 6.5: Ruffy narrates Kannywood movie with Family support**

Mum and the children were watching a drama on their favourite family TV station, Kannywood, when I arrived for the routine observation. We exchange the usual welcoming greetings, “*Salama alaikun, and Wa alaikun salam*”. Ruffy then invited me to sit and watch the Kannywood movie with them. Naturally, I accepted the invitation, and the excerpt emerged from his attempt to narrate the storyline to me after sitting with them.

1. *Ruffy*: ((Points to tv screen)) gani tsoho baba zai aure Maimuna]  
[see, old baba will marry Maimuna]
2. *Mum*: ((Storyteller))
3. *Ruffy*: ((Points again)) gani, *banza* Alhaji [see bad Alhaji].
4. *Mum*: Don me kace shi banza? [why is he bad?]
5. *Ruffy*: Banza Alhaji [bad Alhaji]
6. *Musty*: Me yake gaya wa Maimuna? [what is he telling Maimuna?]
7. *Ruffy*: Wai ta aure *tsoho* Baba [telling Maimuna to marry old father]
8. *Mum*: Madallah, wa ye Maimuna? [Good, who is Maimuna?]
9. *Ruffy*: Karamar yarinya [one small girl]  
((points to the screen)) ga ta! Maimuna tana kuka  
[see her! Maimuna is crying]

The above information showed Ruffy narrative skills, pointing to the different characters and mentioning their names and describing their actions. He also explained the sequence of events and simultaneously using his Hausa word bank of “*aure, yarinya, tsoho baba, banza Alhaji*” (marriage, small girl, old father, and bad Alhaji). The support giving by mum and Musty through asking him questions enabled him to progress with the narration.

### 6.3.1.2. Literacy in English

Though Hausa remained dominant as the home language, English usage in the family was observed particularly between the elder sibling and Ruffy while helping him complete school homework. The mother confirmed during the interview that doing school homework was the main literacy activity Ruffy does with Musty, the elder brother. She stated:

Every time Ruffy comes home with homework, I make sure Musty helped. Musty can do it more than me. I am always there to supervise that Ruffy listens to Musty. So, we always do and don't fail to do his homework. (Interview transcript, 19/01/21).

Ruffy also encounters English during leisure times while watching Hausa Kannywood movies, and home videos as translations in English appear on the TV screen. Excerpts 6.6 and 6.7 illustrates Ruffy engagement with print.

#### **Excerpt 6.6: Ruffy completes reading and writing homework with Musty**

Mum shows sensitivity by asking if Ruffy came home with school homework, and together with his elder Musty, found out he came back with homework. Musty then encouraged him to do it. Excerpt 6.7 presents the joint effort between the two of them in completing it.

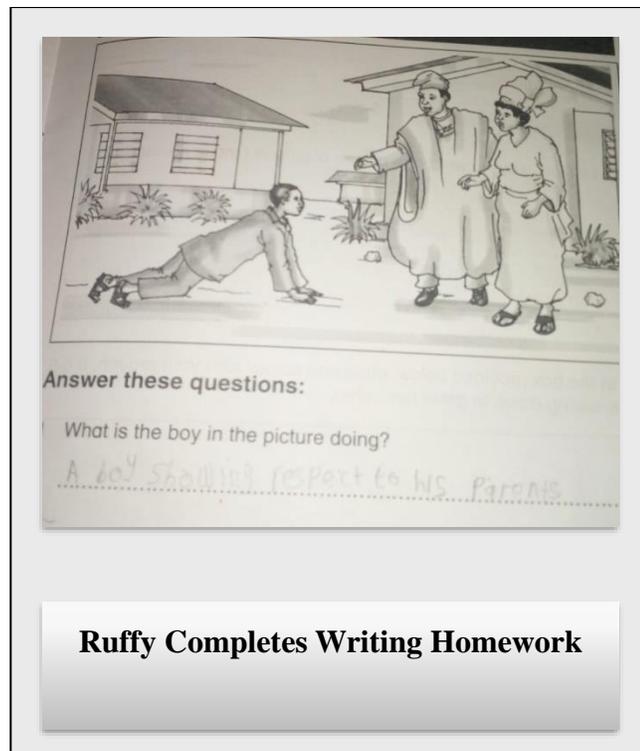
1. *Musty*: Bring, pencil and eraser
2. *Ruffy*: ((Brings it))
3. *Musty*: Ka fada abinda na fada [Read after me]  
Wed-nes-day, 10, Ja-nua-ry 20 18.  
Today topic is 'Mea:ning of cul:ture
4. *Ruffy*: ((Repeats after Musty))
5. *Musty*: ((Touching pictures)) this is father, this is mother, this is a boy
6. *Ruffy*: ((Touching and repeating after Musty))

7. *Musty*: ((Picture reading, asking Ruffy question about a boy))
8. *Ruffy*: Ya fadi [he fell]
9. *Musty*: ((Points Ruffy to the picture of the boy (.) prostrating before his parents in Yoruba culture and not falling. He helps Ruffy answer comprehension questions in the workbook))
10. *Ruffy*: (Copies answers in his workbook)

The excerpt reveals the literacy event in which Musty directed Ruffy to bring his writing materials. He used the “read after me” method, which involved segmenting words into syllables, touching pictures, and reading. Ruffy read after Musty. After the reading, Musty guided him to a writing activity inside his workbook (see Figure 6.4).

#### **Figure 6.4**

*Ruffy Writes in Workbook Blank Spaces*



### **Excerpt 6.7: Ruffy learn to read numbers with Musty**

Mum and Amii were in the kitchen doing, Musty was at the lokaci koyo corner writing on the whiteboard, while Ruffy watched an American war film on the television. Musty drew Ruffy's attention to his school homework, and Mum directed him to stop watching TV and do it. She shouted, "kashe TV kaje loakaci koyo, yanzu"! [off the TV and go to *lokaci koyo now!*]. Meanwhile, during observation, mum mentioned that Ruffy's teacher asked them to help Ruffy learn his numbers. She stated:

His teacher said Ruffy is struggling to know (.) count, numbers. Musty can handle him very well ((laughs)). So I told Ruffy to listen and allow Musty to teach.

(Field notes, 10/10/17)

Excerpt 6.8 explores the mutual involvement of Musty in supporting Ruffy with his numeracy homework.

1. *Ruffy*: ((Reluctantly switches the TV off and joins Musty))
2. *Musty*: ((Completes writing numbers on the whiteboard and asks Ruffy to read))
3. *Ruffy*: // // Zan karanta [I will read]
4. *Musty*: ((Gives Ruffy a ruler to use as a pointer and asks him to touch and read))
5. *Ruffy*: Ka koya mani [teach me]
6. *Musty*: Ka karanta 1-20, sai zan taimake ka [read 1- 20 and I will help you]
7. *Ruffy*: ((Touching and reading)) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, ...25 ((stops at 25))
8. *Musty*: ((Claps)) Mama, Ruffy ya iya karanta number 1-25  
[Mama, Ruffy can read 1-25]  
now repeat after me 26, 27, 28, ... 50
9. *Ruffy*: ((Smilingly repeats after Musty))
10. *Musty*: ((Read several times with Ruffy and then closed for the day))

Ruffy stopped watching the TV and joined Musty. Musty encouraged him to read numbers 1-100 on the whiteboard. Ruffy used a pointer to guide reading numbers (see Figure 6.5), while Musty provided scaffolding for Ruffy. They read together from 1 to 50. Mum and Musty applauded him for identifying the numbers.

**Figure 6.5**

*Ruffy Learns Counting Numbers*



### 6.3.1.3 Arabic Literacy

The Arabic language is a crucial resource in the practice of Islam, and Ruffy parents emphasised the children learn it. According to her, learning the Arabic language is mandatory in Islam. It is important for laying an early foundation in religious knowledge and practices such as Salat,

reading the Qur'an, learning to write in Arabic and memorizing Qur'an verses. Salat is the ritual prayer performed five times a day. Ruffy regularly engaged in religious activities. Mum acknowledges Ruffy practising praying five times in Arabic. She highlighted:

Ruffy practices prayer and learns Allah listens to prayers. I teach him to say prayers for different situations, before leaving for school and when he comes back, He is learning to pray before going out.

(Interview excerpt, 19/01/18)

In addition, Ruffy and Musty went to the Arabic school and taught by a mallam in Arabic literacy and the tenets of the Islamic faith. Reading and reciting Qur'an verses with the children in the Arabic language was a norm. The reading involved teaching Ruffy to memorize the Qur'an and giving the interpretations. Mum stated:

I read and interpret the Qur'an to the children  
I teach Ruffy to recite independently. There are other Arabic books,  
the Hadith, Sikitabu, Taoheed, Brubal maraf, I teach them to read.  
No pictures inside, only writing in Arabic.  
Ruffy is learning the Arabic language and reading the Qur'an in Arabic school

(Field notes, 09/02/17)

Excerpts 6.8 and 6.9 illustrate interactions in the Arabic language.

### **Excerpt 6.8: Ruffy engages in salat independently**

Ruffy was playing with Amii on the floor when I entered the house, and shortly, a loud voice from the community Mosque filled the atmosphere. It was the voice of the community Imam calling for

prayer with *'Allahkuhakbar'* [*"Allah is great"*]. Mum immediately asked the children to prepare for ablution (performing the ritual cleansing). Ruffy moved away from play, performed ablution, went inside the room, and came out with dadurma. Finding a comfortable place, he placed it on the floor and performed his *salat*. *Salat* involved standing on the religious mat (dadurma), facing the direction towards the Kaaba in Saudi Arabia, complete body movements in a series of cycles of bowing, and prostrating and touching his forehead dadurma silently recite "Allah is great". During a conversation, mum highlighted the meanings of different postures when doing *salat*. She said, "standing show respect and reverence for Allah, bowing is a mark of humility and prostrating is humility, submission and helplessness and asking for forgiveness."

#### **Excerpt 6.9: Mum and Musty assisted Ruffy revised for Arabic exam**

The children were getting ready to go to the Arabi school, and then Ruffy remembered he had a test to write that day. Mum inquired if he had revised and nodded his head (indicating he had not). The excerpt emerges from a literacy activity in which Musty and mum assisted Ruffy revised for the exam.

1. *Mum*: Ka iya fadan Alifu? [Can you say the alphabet?]  
Maza ka fada [Quick, say it]
2. *Ruffy*: ((Chanting in Arabic))
3. *Mum*: Ruffy, ba ka iya ba sosai [Ruffy, you cannot say it well]  
((Writes Arabic symbols on the board and reads with Ruffy))
4. *Ruffy*: ((Reads the symbols on the board after mum))
5. *Mum/Musty*: ((Applauds))
6. *Mum*: Ka fada aya Qur'an [memorize a verse from the Qur'an]
7. *Ruffy*: ((Recites Qur'an verses in Arabic))
8. *Musty/mum*: ((Applauds as he recites and provides corrections where necessary))
9. *Mum*: Yanzu, kayi shirin test. Ku tafi

[Now, you are ready for the test. Off you go]

The revision involved mum asking Ruffy to recite *Alifu* (Arabic alphabet, lines 1 and 7). She provided extra support by writing it on the board and reading with him lines 3 and 4. Finally, he memorised a verse from the Qur'an, lines 8 and 9. In brief, Ruffy gained by gesturing, identifying the Arabic alphabet and Qur'an memorization.

### **6.3.2. Child-Initiated Activities**

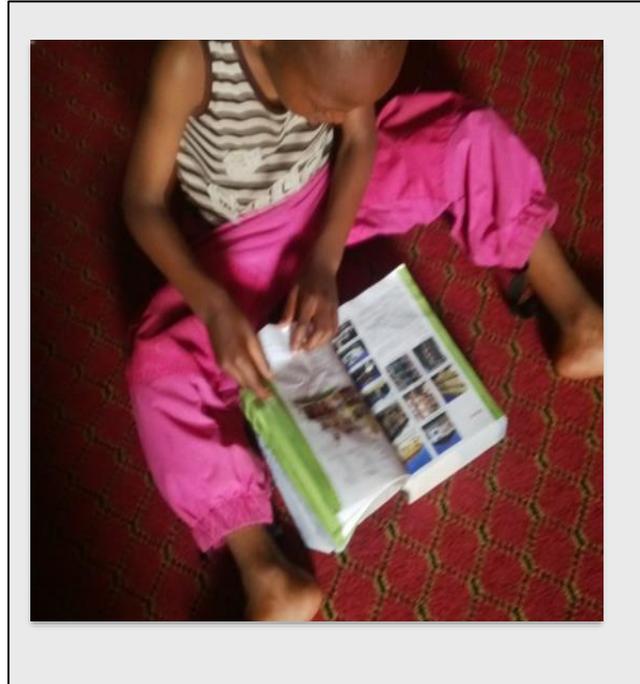
Ruffy's initiated play experiences were mostly indoor activities involving crafts, drawings and interaction with the text. He demonstrated capacities in engaging his hands, knowledge, and linguistic skills to construct literacy meaning in his different play contexts. Notably, the observation facts indicate that he uses both Hausa and English with codeswitching between the languages during play.

#### **Excerpt 6.10: Ruffy reads pictures inside Oxford English Dictionary**

Ruffy was ready for the usual Thursday evening Arabic school and sat on the floor in the living room while waiting for time to go. Finally, he stood up and went to dad's bookshelf and took the Oxford dictionary. Ruffy sat on the floor and began to open the dictionary, moving from page to page from left to right. Mum cautioned him for taking daddy's "*book*", and he responded, "*dicsiory ne ba book ba*" (It is a dicsiory, not book). Musty attempted to get him to pronounce the dictionary. He ignored him and focused on flipping through the dictionary, and when he got to a page with pictures of animals, he stopped, began to use *touch* (pointing), and gazing at the pictures to read the names aloud, "elephant, lion, chicken" (see Figure 6.6).

## Figure 6.6

*Ruffy Identifies Animal's Pictures*



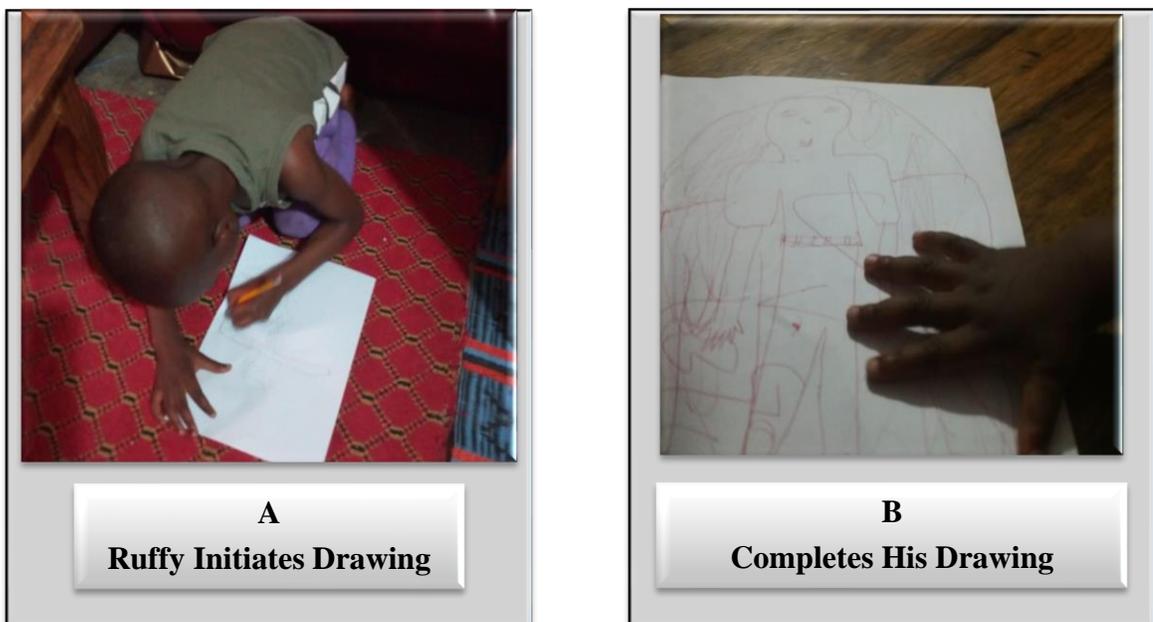
### **Excerpt 6.11 Ruffy retells Anabi Yusuf story in drawing**

Ruffy had listened to mum when she narrated the story of Anabi Yusuf (excerpt 3) and had knowledge of his life. He picked a plain A4 paper, collected a red pen from the research student, and drew on it. Musty offered to participate, but he refused. First, he drew a big circle and referred to it as Well. Then he drew a picture and named it Anabi Yusuf. He referred to the marks he made around the picture as water and expressed: “*Annabi Yusuf a rijiya*” (Prophet Yusuf inside the Well). He turned to me, pointed at his said, ‘*Gani rijiya wanda yanwa Annabi Yusuf suka yar da shi*’ (Look, the Well Annabi Yusuf’s brothers threw him). He then explained the drawing, the

circle around the boy is the Well, and the dots marks as water (see Figure 6.7 A and B). This experience points to the child's inspiration and ability to communicate his thinking.

**Figure 6.7**

*Ruffy Draws Favourite Character: Anabi Yusuf*



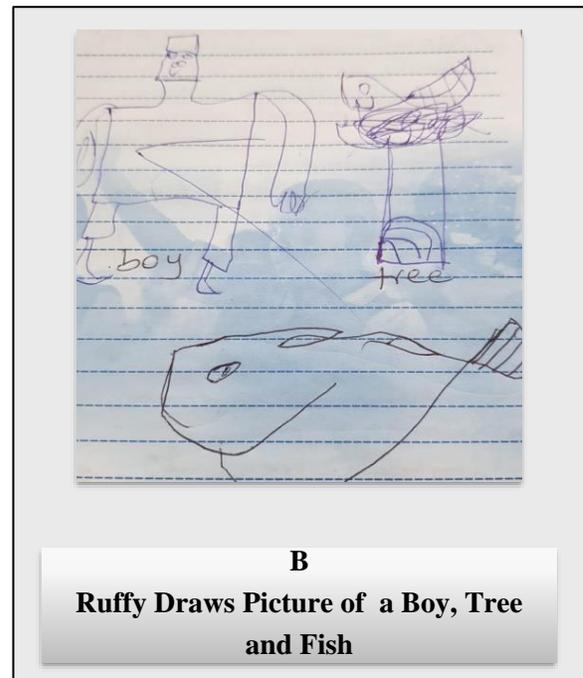
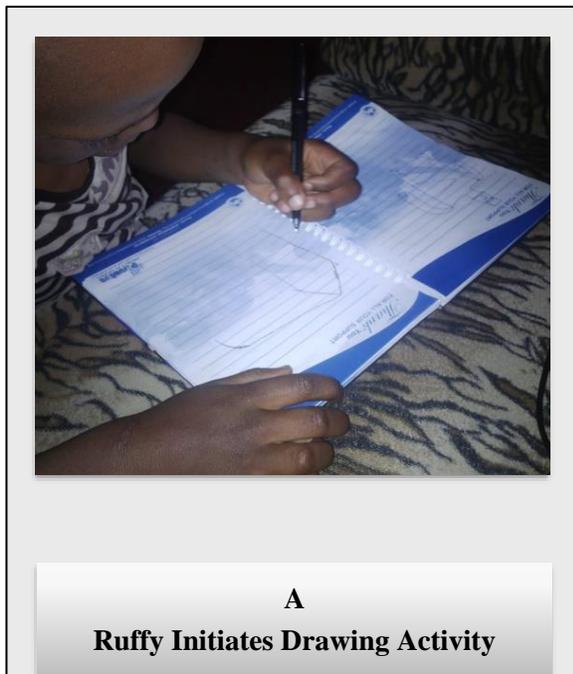
**Excerpt 6.12 Ruffy replicates drawing he learned at school**

It was a hot afternoon, and Ruffy was sitting on the sofa watching the television, a war film, when the researcher arrived. As soon as she entered the living room and after an exchange of greetings, immediately, he requested the researcher's book. She probed what he wanted to do with her

notebook, which had no pictures. Ruffy revealed his intention thus, “*zan rubuta abinda aunty ta koya mani a makaranta*” (I want to write what my teacher taught me in school). He collected the notebook and pen and drew three objects pictures. He finished and brought the book/pen back to RS and talked about the images (see Figure 6.8A & B). He said, “*na draw ma ki boy, tree da fish*” (I drew for you; boy, tree, and fish) [Note, he used Hausa and English]. Ruffy’s literacy experiences in the play include drawing, expressive ability, vocabulary, and codeswitching.

**Figure 6.8**

*Ruffy Draws Objects Learned at School*



### Excerpt 6.13: Ruffy paints and labels Musty's drawings

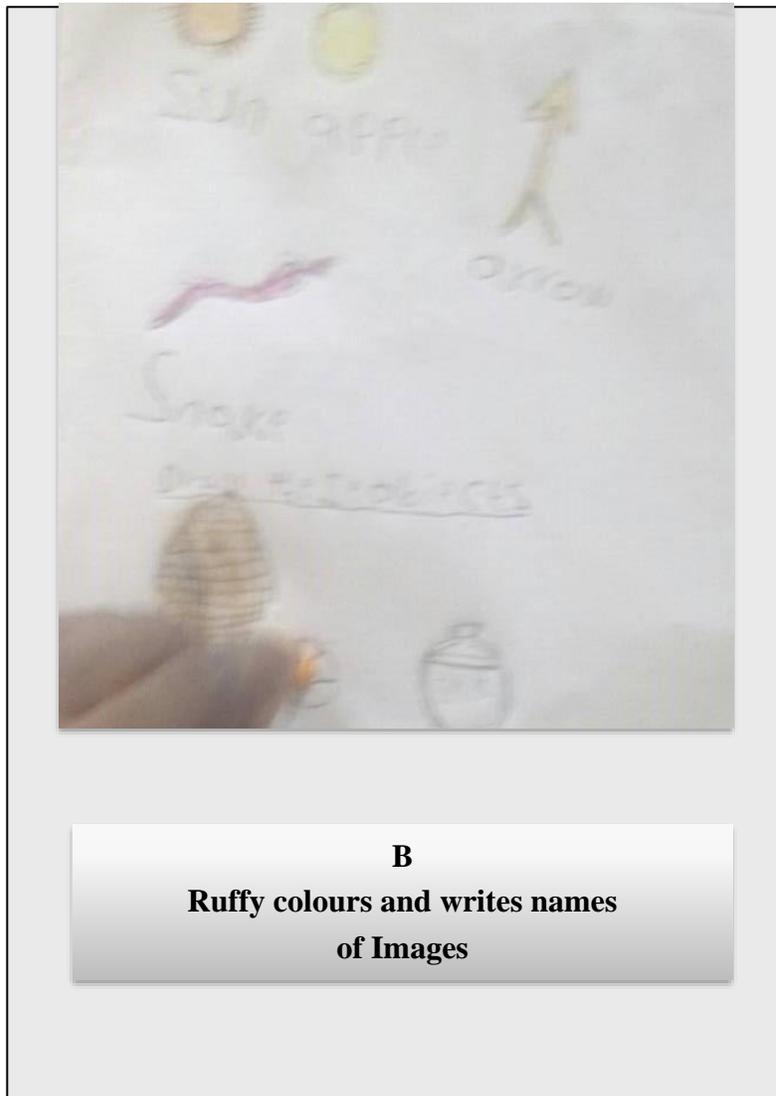
Artefacts obtained during the data gathering period indicate Ruffy had an interest in artwork and good at cooperating with Musty to achieve tasks. For example, while Musty drew the objects in Figures 6.9A and B, Ruffy coloured them. Likewise, Musty helped Ruffy describe images' actions in Figure 6.9A and name objects in Figure 6.9B. They also talked about the names of colours.

He wrote on the whiteboard and supported Ruffy copied it under the images. As a result, Ruffy experienced rich language and literacy activities involving colouring, vocabulary and writings.

### Figure 6.9

*Ruffy's Colouring and Writing Activity*





Mum pointed out during the interview that Ruffy is excited about books and fond of scribbling inside any books. He can write two and three-letter words. About drawing, mum said:

He enjoys drawing, drawing different things. Sometimes I tell the father he draws rubbish, but the father disagrees with me.

He says Ruffy is practising and will help improve his drawing.

**Excerpt 6.14: Ruffy engaged in making a kite with Musty**

It was a windy evening; mum and the children were indoors, and everyone was doing different activities. Musty was bending over the table and had plain A4 papers on it and invited Ruffy to join him in making a kite. Excerpt 7 emerges from the joint creative activity.

1. *Ruffy*: ((Accepts Musty invitation, jumps and screams)) Mu yi kite, sai mu fly a waje  
[let's make a kite and fly it outside]
2. *Musty*: Ka gani sai ka yi abinda ina yi [see and do what I am doing]
3. *Ruffy*: //Doing // Ina gani [I am watching]
4. *Musty*: ((Folds paper step-by-step))
5. *Ruffy*: ((Follows Musty step-by-step but gets stuck halfway))
6. *Musty*: ((Finishes making his kite, turns to Ruffy and codeswitch Hausa and English))  
Ina kite na ka? [Where is your kite?]
7. *Ruffy*: ((Stares at Musty's kite)) Ban iya ba [I can't do it]
8. *Musty*: Zo mu fly kite nawa [come let's go and fly my kite]
9. *Ruffy*: Ba igiya [no thread to hold it]
10. *Musty*: Kawo igiya na mama a kan machine [bring mummy's thread on the machine]
11. *Both*: ((fixed thread on the kites and went out throwing it in the sky))

The excerpt shows a sibling-sibling interaction in supporting Ruffy's creativity. We see Ruffy expressing delight in the activity by extending the intended kite making to flying it through code-

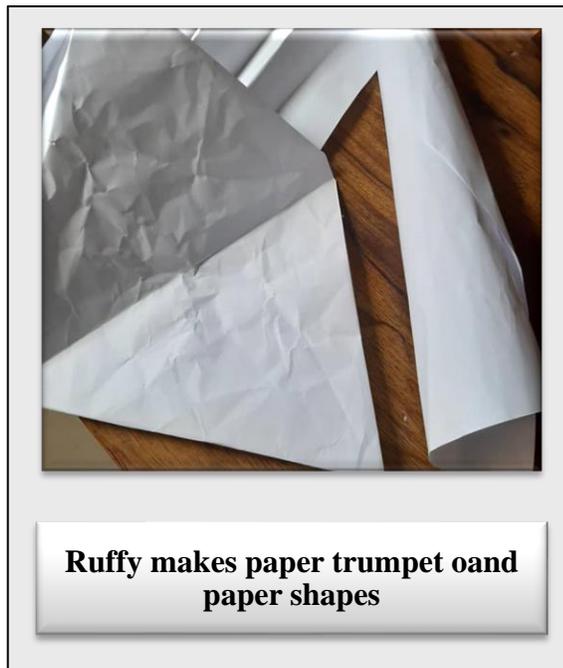
switching, lines 1 and 2. Musty using a “see and do” method, Ruffy keenly watching and follows the procedure until he got stuck and stop making the kite. Nevertheless, they were able to fly a kite together. Ruffy’s experiences suggest expressive skill, viewing, and showing word knowledge of “flying a Kite”.

**Excerpt 6.15: Ruffy makes his trumpet out of paper**

Mummy had restricted Ruffy from playing and asked him to sit quietly and not jump about in the living room. Mum went back to her sewing corner to continue working. Ruffy wiggled and moved his body restlessly on the sofa.

**Figure 6.10**

*Ruffy’s Crafted a Trumpet during Play*



When he couldn't stay in one place any longer, he tip-toed and went to the shelf, picked some papers, went to the table, and made different shapes. He made several attempts and did not seem happy with what he made; he then tore the papers. Then, he tried again and was happy. Then he shouted, '*gani abinda na yi!*' (See what I made!). *Na gyara 'trumpet, zan hura a class gobe'* (I made a trumpet, I will blow it in the class tomorrow). Ruffy's initiated play allowed him to demonstrate creativity, expressive, and vocabulary skills.

#### **6.4. Parental Support Strategies**

The section presents the family follow up interview on how the Ruffy family members provided pathways to support Ruffy's literacy experiences. Ruffy's mum was the only person available during the interview. Therefore, data generated based on her account. The interview response was in the Hausa language and transcribed to English. The information generated yielded four themes: Access to lokaci koyo, Involvement in meaningful activities, Teaching and learning strategies and Access to technology.

##### **6.4.1 Access to Lokaci Koyo**

Ruffy's mother viewed the provision of lokaci koyo corner as strategic for supporting Ruffy's literacy experience in the home. She stated:

Their father is not always around in the daytime (.) that is why he made a corner for lokaci koyo ((time to learn)). Sometimes, he will ask me or Ruffy, how he has used the space that day ... The father bought Queen Primer for him to learn to read (.) Ruffy does not like reading ... the brother will have to force him to do his school homework.

### **6.4.2. Involvement in Meaningful Activities**

The mother highlighted opportunities that they utilised and participated in activities that enriched Ruffy's literacy experience. For example, she voiced not been a book reader but did help with what she liked to do best.

( ) I am not a book, book, person (.) but I know what I have, and I use it to help the children. Salah ((prayer)) is very important for us Muslims. I am teaching Ruffy how to do it ... Musty ((senior brother)) can do it already. We do Qur'an reading and reading books from Arabic school. (.) we do storytelling often and a lot of conversations that help his literacy experience. ...

### **6.4.3. Teaching and Learning Strategies**

Data generated revealed family recognised specific strategies that enriched support for Ruffy's literacy experiences in the home. Mum disclosed:

When Musty is teaching him his homework, I hear Musty telling Ruffy to repeat things after him (.), and he will ask him questions to see if Ruffy is not playing when he is teaching him. I also teach him new things ... like, he can ask questions or want to know the meaning of some words. I deliberately teach him new words in Hausa because he is still learning, although it is our language. We clap for him when he makes progress (.) And Musty gives him scores on the board. Ruffy likes the scores.

#### **6.4.4. Access to Technology**

Mum perceived allowing Ruffy to access media technology was supportive to his literacy experience. She highlighted:

The children and I like to watch Tv when there is light  
(light powered by electricity). We enjoy watching Kannywood  
(Hausa language films). Ruffy likes American films (.) Musty too  
At least, that is helping him to learn more English.  
There are some religious films on the father's laptop ... he watches it  
there. He plays games on the father's laptop and mobile phone.

Mum qualified media environment as additional support for Ruffy to practice speaking the English language. However, further prompt to inquire whether educational programs were part of the child's media environment did not yield fruit. So instead, she focused on the child's interest in American action movies and used the laptop's mobile phone and computer games.

#### **6.5. Summary of Ruffy's literacy experiences**

The finding indicates that Ruffy's multiple literacy experiences include multilingual literacies in their mother tongue (Hausa), particularly oral language competencies. He mainly experienced Arabic and English literacies through religious activities and school homework. Besides, he uses code-switching between Hausa and English to ease communications. Specifically, multimodal literacies embrace oral language comprehension through conversations, listening to storytelling, retelling movies storyline, dialogue through the mobile phone in Hausa, learning Arabic letters, and reading numbers. He also learned new vocabulary and used his word bank to describe objects,

places, and activities, phonological awareness in both English and Arabic, picture reading (gazing, pointing, and naming), reciting the Quran, watching TV and movies (visual) and playing games on dad's laptop. Others are drawing to express a story in a picture mode, drawing different objects and labelling them. Mum and his elder sibling are the primary visible mediators, employing varieties of scaffolding strategies like providing a positive environment, direct teaching, using daily routines as literacy paths and allowing access to technology.

## **CHAPTER 7. HOME LITERACY EXPERIENCES OF MIDE**

### **7.1. Introduction**

The preceding chapters presented the case analysis of the home literacy experiences of Chamun and Ruffy in their peculiar home contexts, whose predominant patterns described in terms of their interactions with the different environments that surrounded them. The current chapter focuses on account of literacy experiences in the home. The analysis moves along a continuum of multiple pathways to literacy and Mide's active engagement in multimodal literacy through interactions with family members and resources. The first section of the analysis describes contexts that embraced the physical and social settings of the family, and the second a detailed analysis of the multilingual context comprising engagement in multiple languages. Next is section child-initiated play activities. The final section highlights the parental strategies engaged in supporting Mide.

### **7.2. Physical and Social Context of the Mide family**

The Mide family is of Yoruba origin made up of the father, mother, Mide and one younger child of about seven months, whom Mide referred to, her baby brother. Mide was already four years old when the fieldwork started and attended a nursery school from age two. Both parents believed a child's early exposure to a formal education setting was the best decision early in life. Mide's maternal grandmother, who was on a long-term visit at that time, participated in the study. Mide's father started his education at a nursery/primary school owned by his mother. He held a B.Sc. degree and worked with a government agency. The mother grew up in a family known for the supermarket business. She also managed the Mide family supermarket business. Until the Mide's father came to work in Plateau state, the family had lived in Ogun state, where both parents were born and grew up.

Dad's job transferred the family from Lagos to Plateau state. To save money, they chose a developing community (Diye) in Jos South Local Government Area, dominated by Christian ethnic groups, mainly business-oriented families and civil servants. Mide attended school in a different community where mum operates a foodstuff store to make life flexible. The supermarket was as good as Mide's second home because she often spent a chunk of after school hours there with mum and grandma while dad was at work. As a result, it formed part of the observation environment. In addition, the shop was part of the print environment for Mide, including writings packages such as bottles, seasonings/spices and noodles. Figure 7.1A and B illustrates an example of the print environment the child interacts with while in the shop space.

The family lived in a rented three-bedroom flat on a two-story building enclosed in a low fence. The living room was spacious and was a hub for social and cultural interactions for the Mide family.

**Figure 7.1**

*Mide Family Foodstuff Shop*



Mide had a special corner in the living room. The parents equipped it with resources, including a whiteboard and ensuring there was always writing pen, alphabet, number posters, three children's storybooks, writing materials such as a notebook, pencils, and crayons. Others are an alphabet board and a computer board game which were gifts from my paternal grandmother. However, I only witnessed Mide used the computer tablet and the alphabetic board as toys during play. The parents hinted at the difficulty of maintaining the toys to buy batteries to enable them to function. However, they disclosed making it available as a treat occasionally. They confirmed that Mide

used them and had helped learn letter names and sounds, songs, rhymes, and games. Other literacy resources parents provided were her children’s Bible and Sunday school workbook – Toddler zeal.

Additionally, a big flat-screen television hung on the wall and a DVD player on the shelf. However, Mide did not indicate interest in using them during the study period even when there was electricity supply, and rarely did the parents. They further disclosed that providing the resources was intentional to help Mide experience early literacy experiences and enjoy her childhood. In addition, she had toys such as dolls and a mobile phone which she used to imitate making calls. Figures 7.2 A, B & C shows some of Mide’s literacy resources in the assigned literacy space in the living room.

**Figure 7.2**

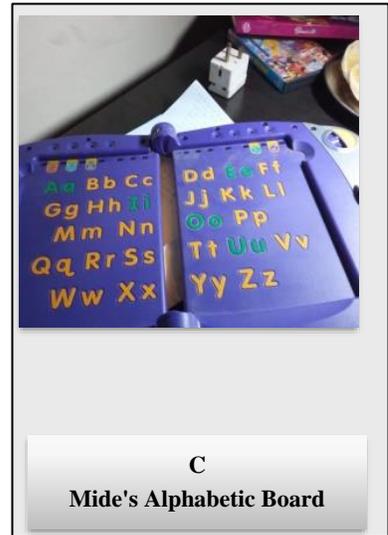
*Literacy Resources in Mide’s Assigned Space*



**A**  
Mides' Storybooks, toy phone  
and writing Materials



**B**  
Mide's Computer board  
game



**C**  
Mide's Alphabetic Board

The Christian family have an established daily prayer and devotional time, usually early mornings. The opportunity enabled the child to interact with children's Bible storybook, listen to scriptures read aloud by parents, and teach how to pray. Also, singing together was a regular religious activity in the home. Also, Mide attended the Children's Sunday school every Sunday. A service provided by the community church that the family were members. The experience there appeared akin to that of her nursery school because she used materials like books, pencils and crayons for activities and sometimes brought homework from the Toddler Zeal workbook. Like in the conventional nursery school, she referred to her Sunday teacher as "aunty".

The family engaged Yoruba and English for daily interactions, but grandma communicated with Mide in Yoruba and Pidgin. Dad specified:

We use the two languages interchangeably but, when she is doing her schoolwork, we use English, but in every other aspect, it is both (.). We use fifty, fifty, per cent (50,50) for both languages because they are important for her development ((language development)).

(Field notes, 7/2/17)

Mum adds that it was compulsory for Mide to greet them strictly in Yoruba, especially in the morning when she wakes up and at night when saying good night.

Regarding the influential figures in her early literacy experiences, Mum's supportive role involved intentionally engaging her in discussing what she had learned in school. In addition, she made herself available to respond to Mide's questions. Also, mum's emphasis on speaking and listening activities was a factor in helping her develop a firm literacy foundation. On his part, Dad arranged and set aside a corner specifically for Mide to help her engage in literacy activities. Although he worked during the day, he would engage in activities that supported her literacy experience. The

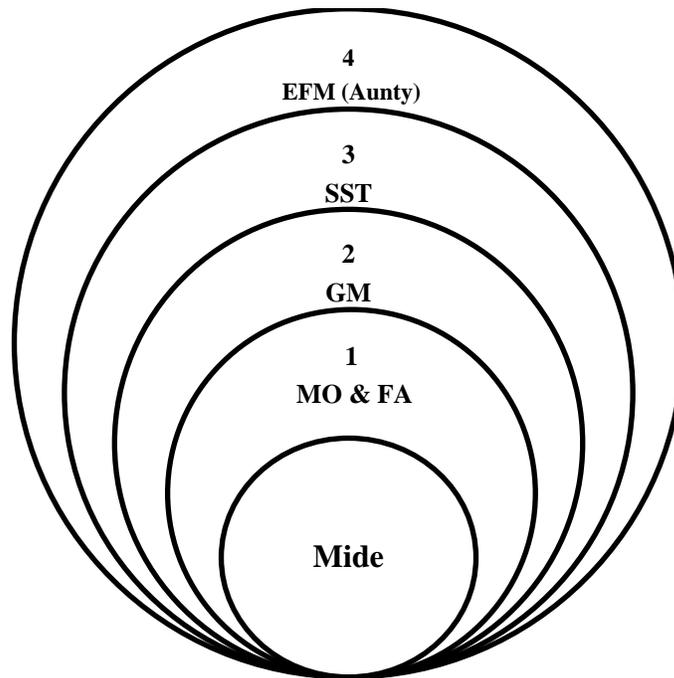
parents believed playing with toys are suitable for the child’s development. As a result, they bought a doll, Teddy bear and building blocks Mide used for dramatic play activities in the home. They also provided her with a children’s computer, which helps her to learn counting and alphabet, sounds, and words. The father stated:

Generally, children need something that will stimulate the brain intelligently (.) like to create things from playthings, so she plays with dolls, uses her building blocks to make different shapes (h). That is for brainwork.

(Field Notes, 5/10/17)

**Figure 7.3**

*Mide’s Social networks: Sphere of influence*



*Note.* Graphic created according to Robson’s (2011, p. 485) advice of using “Context charts showing interrelationships between roles.”

1. Close contacts and mediators: **Mother (MO)** and **Father (FA)**
2. Close but mild contacts during the study: **Grandmother (GM)**
3. Community contacts and friends: **Sunday School Teacher (SST)**
4. Occasional contacts: (**Extended Family Members (EFM)**)

Mide's participation includes initiating and sustaining conversations, curiosity, creating plays that boost her language and literacy experiences. Figure 7.3 indicate the connection contacts according to the proximity of Mide with her social networks.

### **7.3. Mide's Multiliteracy Experiences**

The early literacy experiences of Mide are represented in Figure 7.4, illustrating the multi-literacy connections involving multilingualism characterised by multimodal literacies. The child's capacity in initiating learning activities envelops her proximate interactions with parents, and a grandparent occasioned her literacy experiences. Literacy-related activities also flourished in her play contexts. The succeeding sections are descriptions of the experiences compartmentalised into literacy in Yoruba, Pidgin and English. The multimodal literacies constituents are under each of the groupings.

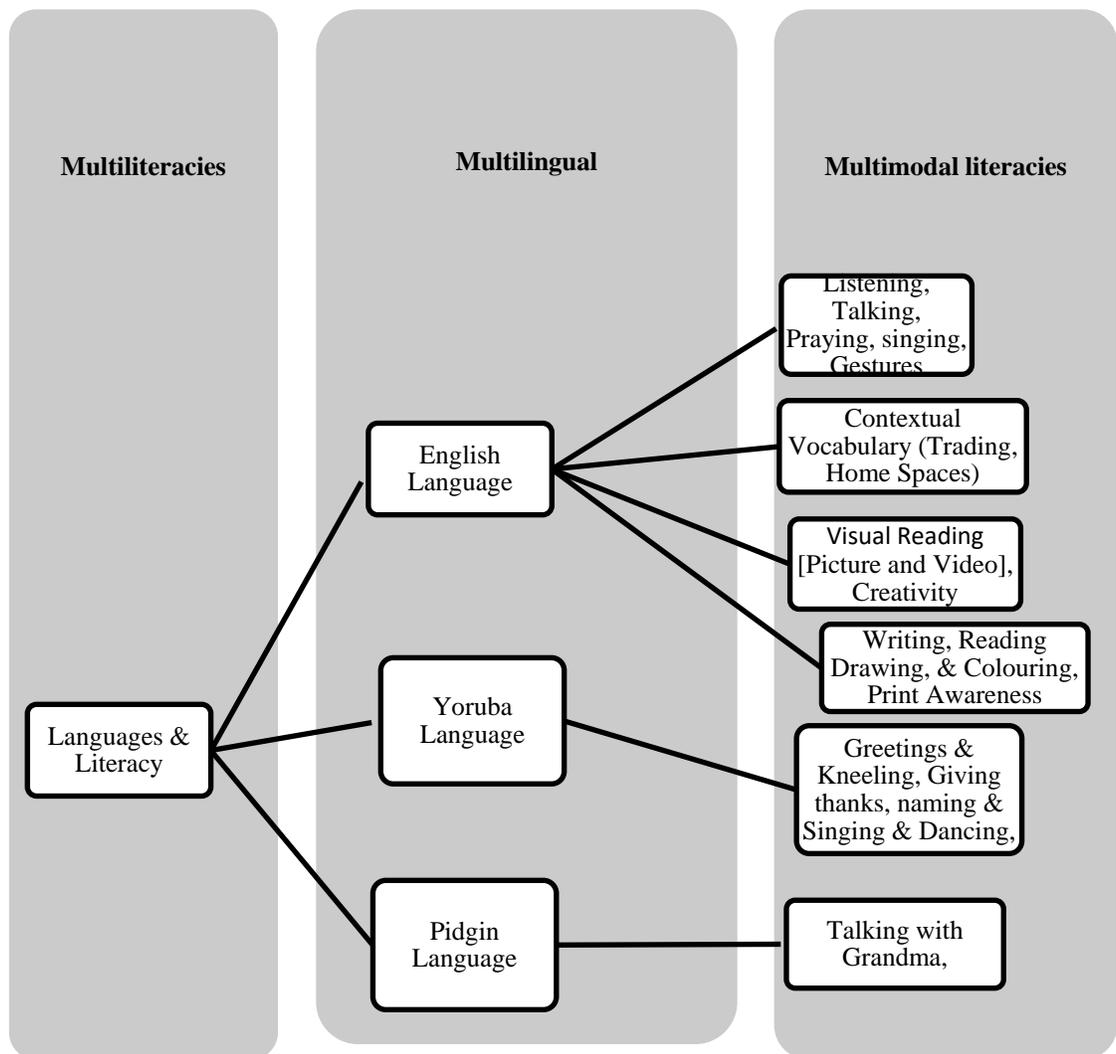
#### **7.3.1. Multilingual literacies**

Significantly, the use of language provided an understanding to child's developing bilingual skills, switching between languages in communications, contextual vocabulary building such as trading vocabulary, schoolwork language and weather vocabulary, singing and using visual mode with the aid of mobile phone rich interaction. Oral language activities in Yoruba include greetings, giving

thanks, naming, singing, and dancing. Speaking and listening to Nigerian Pidgin English was observed between her and grandmother, but mum discouraged her from using it in school. The following sections and excerpts present how language interaction as home practices supported Mide’s literacy experiences.

**Figure 7.4**

*Diagrammatic Depiction of Mide’s Multiple Literacies*



Note. Graphic created according to Robson (2011, p. 486) suggestion of using “conceptually ordered tree diagram” showing how phenomena are classified and subcategorised.”

### 7.3.1.1. Engagements with Yoruba language and Pidgin

The Yoruba family made a concerted effort to engage Mide in learning their mother tongue. Although the Mide was more comfortable speaking English, the parents felt it was important for the child to communicate in Yoruba and learn cultural values. Dad indicated further during the interview:

We use the two languages interchangeably, but when she is doing her assignment or schoolwork, we use English, but for every other thing, it is both ... how else can she school without learning English (.) Yoruba is her identity, and luckily it is a major language in Nigeria. She is learning both languages fast.

(Interview Excerpt, 26/01/18).

The child also communicated with grandmother in Pidgin to ease communication between them, even though they discouraged it.

#### **Excerpt 7.1 Mide builds speaking skills in Yoruba with dad's support**

It was Sunday afternoon, and the family members were sitting in the living room. Mum was alone on a single sofa while Mide sat next to dad on a double sitter sofa and talked. As I entered the house, Mide immediately initiated a narrative about brother and grandma, but mum changed the talk by instructing her to greet correctly in the Yoruba culture. Excerpt 7.1 detailed the child's conversations in the language apart from the usual English language practice.

1. *Mide*: Good afternoon ma
2. *RS*: Good afternoon, Mide
3. *Mide*: Grandma and my brother are sleeping in the room
4. *Mum*: ((Laughs)) storyteller, greet aunty properly in Yoruba
5. *Mide*: ((Bends knees to greet)) E ka so ma
6. *RS*: Kaso Mide. How are you?

7. *Mide*: A dupe
8. *Dad*: Yoh! My girl can speak Yoruba
9. *Mide*: Daddy, high five ((raises her five fingers))
10. *Dad*: High five my girl ((raises his five fingers))  
                     Ki ni o ruko e? [What is your name?]
11. *Mide*: Oruko mi Mide [my name is Mide]
12. *Dad*: Another plus!  
                     ((Stood up, singing, clapping hands, and moving his body))  
                     Jojolo  
                     omo kekere jojolo oo
13. *Mide*: ((Sings and dances along))  
                     Jojolo  
                     omo kekere jojolo oo

The excerpt revealed how Mide’s parents supported the child to learn the Yoruba language. They explored the tools of greetings lines 3 to 5 and questioning lines 6 to 9. Mide’s progressive response earned her clapping, singing and dancing from dad lines 10 and 11. Mide’s experiences in the excerpt display her speaking ability in Yoruba, particularly in greetings, personal identification and genuflection (symbol or curtsy) or showing respect in the Yoruba culture and singing. Besides, mum’s labelling of Mide’s as a storyteller indicates her ability to initiate conversations, line 1 and 2 and how English and Yoruba languages are used interchangeably for communication.

**Excerpt 7.2 Mide urged to communicate in Yoruba over the phone**

The excerpt emerged from a mobile phone conversation between Mide and Aunty Lara, a mum’s relative. The context of the talk elicits attention to the use of technology and the choices provided for Mide to maintain the use of Yoruba and English in social interactions.

1. *Mide*: Mummy, your phone is ringing

2. *Mum*: Answer the call and bring it to me quickly
3. *Mide*: ((Presses the answer key and hands over to mum))
4. *Mum*: ((Puts it on speaker)) Hello, hello ((speaks in Yoruba))
5. *Mide*: ((Standing close to mum and looking eager to talk))
6. *Mum*: Mide is eagerly waiting to talk ((gives the phone to Mide))
7. *Mide*: ((Smiling)) Hello aunty Lara
8. *Aunty*: Mide, Ba wo ni?
9. *Mide*: Fine, aunty Lara
10. *Aunty*: Answer me in Yoruba
11. *Mide*: A du pe [I am fine]
12. *Aunty*: Very good
13. *Mide*: Aunty Lara, today is my birthday. I am 5 years
14. *Aunty*: ((Sings happy birthday song)) hip! hip! hip!
15. *Mide*: Uray! [hurray]
16. *Aunty*: Now you can baboo your brother
17. *Mide*: You did not say you will give me cake
18. *Aunty*: ((Laughs)) I have not finished Mide  
                   When you come to Lagos for Christmas  
                   I will bake a cake for you and your brother
19. *Mide*: Is my birthday, is not baby brother birthday
20. *Aunty*: Okay, I will bake a cake for you
21. *Mide*: ((Smiles)) Bye, bye aunty Lara
22. *Aunty*: Bye Mide

The interaction showed Mide speaks English on the incoming call and mum asked her to answer it and put it on loudspeaker, which she effectively carried out. She later used the mobile phone to speak to the relative (with mum's support) aptly with the usual phone greeting culture, line 7. In the talk, aunty urged her to reply in Yoruba instead of English, and she responded well and received praise, lines 7 to 12. Then she continued her dialogue with aunty about her wishes for celebrating

her birthday in English. Speaking about her birthday, Mide showed understanding for the selection of words and phrases, lines 13, 17 and 19. Significantly, the episode also showed her listening skill, fluency in English, and vocabulary.

Her different approaches to the two languages corroborate the child's opinion about the preferred and frequently used language in the home during the follow-up family interview. She expresses that "I like English (.) mummy and daddy like me speak Yoruba ... because is our language... Yoruba is difficult, English is not difficult".

### **Excerpt 7.3 Mide builds communication in Pidgin**

The excerpt was an offshoot from an interaction involving Mide and grandma. Grandma triggered the situation upon returning from selling in the shop, and the mother emphasising the child greets in Yoruba.

1. *Mide*: ((Bends knee)) Welcome ma
2. *Grandma*: I no hiya wetin you tok [I don't understand you]
3. *Mum*: Grandma wants you to speak in Yoruba
4. *Mide*: (Bends knees) E kabo ma [welcome ma]
5. *Grandma*: Ehe ... I hiya dis wan [I now understand you]
6. *Mide*: U no answer me [you have not answered my greeting]
7. *Grandma*: O se omo mi [thank you my child]
8. *Mide*: Grandma, wetin you bring come from shop? [What did you bring from the shop?]
9. *Grandma*: I bring moni come for yo mama [I brought money for your mother]
10. *Mum*: ((Nodding her head)) Grandma is teaching you Pidgin
11. *Mide*: I sabi grandma English [I know how to speak grandma English]
12. *Mum*: Don't speak Pidgin in school o
13. *Mide*: My aunty teach me phonics in school, not grandma English
14. *All*: ((Laugh and applaud Mide))

Mide greets grandma in English, but parents urged the use of Yoruba instead, lines 1 to 3 to sustain the practice, but the subsequent dialogue with grandma prevailed in Pidgin English. Space provided the opportunity for Mide to use the language to ease her talk with grandma. Nonetheless, mum admonished her not to use Pidgin in school, lines 5 to 11. Mide accepts the advice and extends the talk to give a brief narrative of being taught phonics in school, line 13. Thus, indicating her understanding of the different languages, she was experiencing. That provided Mide with the opportunities to develop expressive language skills, listen, speak and communicate in the Yoruba language and Pidgin.

#### **Excerpt 7.4 Mide engages in Pidgin to explore commercial literacy**

In the excerpt, an interaction between Mide and grandma emerged on Mide's request for a hot drink, and the child's Pidgin speaking flourished as a communication tool with grandma. The contexts gave her additional occasion to build vocabulary in Nigerian currency, the naira and to name shopping items

1. *Mide*: Grandma, I wan tea
2. *Grandma*: ( ). Tek moni go baiyam for John shop  
[Collect this money and buy at John's shop]
3. *Mide*: ((Collects money))
4. *Grandma*: How much be that? [How much did I give you?]
5. *Mide*: Na hundre:d naira [It is one hundred naira]
6. *Grandma*: Omo daa daa [good child].  
You sabi wetin to buy? [Do you know what to buy?]
7. *Mide*: I sabi [I know]
8. *Grandma*: Tok am [say it]
9. *Mide*: ((Names items)) one sachet milk, one sachet Bournvita, one biscuit
10. *Grandma*: e do [that is correct], go buy

11. *Mide*: ((Goes and comes back with items))

Grandma take yah change

12. *Grandma*: How much change bi dat? [How much is the change?]

13. *Mide*: Na twenty naira [It's twenty naira]

14. *Grandma*: e do [That is correct]

The excerpt shows that Mide's conversation with grandma in Pidgin dwell more on the following: making a request, line 1, recognizing the amount of money in Naira and receiving praise, lines 3 to 6, line. But switched to English and named shopping list, line 7. Lines 10 to 14 also demonstrate the child going on errands involving purchasing, collecting, and recognising money balance. The child's experience in this context illustrates her developing receptive and expressive skills in Pidgin, the vocabulary of money and trade labels.

### **Excerpt 7.5 Dad assists Mide to learn new words during Teatime**

It was one of those cold evenings in December, and the family sat around the dining table, having hot drinks. Dad and mum took tea while Mide drinks her favourite chocolate drink. This event illustrated a prolonged conversation initiated by Mide's dining table conduct which prompted dad's utterances and scaffolding. The excerpt account for how the parents transformed the space created by Mide's dining etiquette into a vocabulary learning opportunity.

1. *Mide*: ((Using a spoon to drink hot chocolate))

2. *Dad*: You don't drink that with a spoon; use the cup

3. *Mide*: I want it like that

4. *Mum*: Only a bush girl drinks like that

5. *Mide*: What is bush girl?

6. *Dad*: ((Laughs)) a village girl

7. *Mide*: ((Shakes head and smile)) me, am not village girl

8. *Dad:* Then keep the spoon and drink with the cup
9. *Mide:* ((Keeps the spoon on the table))
10. *Dad:* ((Sips tea and places cup on the table)) now, you are not a bush girl
11. *Mide:* ((Imitates dad)) me, not bush girl
12. *Dad:* You are not. My girl is civilized
13. *Mide:* ((Laughs)) cibilize, what is cibilize?
14. *Dad:* ((Breaks word into syllables)) Ci -vi- lize
15. *Mide:* ((Repeats syllables after dad)) Ci- bi lize
16. *Dad:* A city girl, and she drinks hot chocolate with a cup and not a spoon.
17. *Mide:* Me, I am cibilize

Mum describes Mide's chosen drinking manner with a popular, playful phrase, lines 1 to 4. Mide exhibited difficulty in understanding the meaning, line 5. Dad worked with Mide using a familiar phrase, line 6, which helped her understand the contextual meaning of a 'bush girl', lines 6 and 7. Mide uses gestures (head nodding) to dislike the description, line 8, and dad goes ahead to demonstrate the correct dining etiquette. The child aptly imitated by emphasising not being a bush girl. Dad used the occasion to expand the knowledge as he introduced a new word, line 12. Again, Mide became curious about the new word, line 13. In turn, dad provided scaffolding on how to say the word by breaking it into smaller parts, lines 14 and 15. He then used the scenario to illustrate the meaning of the word, line 16. Mide expressed satisfaction and personalised the term, line 17.

During the conversation, dad emphasized that sensitivity to Mide's curiosity was a viable approach they usually used to introduce her to new words and phrases.

Dad opined:

Mide is a very curious and sensitive child ... I am always on alert for her (.) and deliberately use selected words when talking with her.

Mum added:

She can talk a lot, and you have to always be ahead of her ... do things higher than her because she will ask you why, what, where?

(Field notes, 12/10/17)

### **Excerpt 7.6 Mide learns a new word during a ride in Keke Napep**

It was a hot and sunny day when I alighted from the bus and crossed over the opposite side of the road, waiting for Keke Napep (customized public transportation) to go to the Mide family house. One Keke Napep with passengers unexpectedly stopped, and a child's hands waved to me. It was Mide inviting me to join them, and I accepted. Mum, baby brother, Mide and the driver were on board. The excerpt emerges from a significant conversation between Mide and the researcher during the ride.

1. *RS*: Thank you for saving me from the scorching sun
2. *Mide*: Why are you say scorshing?
3. *RS*: ((Blowing hands for air)) Because the sun is very hot (.) scorching sun
4. *Mide*: Scorshing sun
5. *RS*: Yes, the sun is very hot. Are you hot?
6. *Mide*: Yyy:es, scorshing sun ((fanning her face))
7. *RS*: The sun is boiling
8. *Mide*: ((wipes her neck)) See plenty water on my neck
9. *RS*: Yes, that is sweat from the scorching sun
10. *Mide*: ((Touching named body parts)) Sweat water on my neck, my face
11. *RS*: It is boiling, scorching sun
12. *Mide*: ((wipes face)) Scorshing sun making me sweat water
13. *Mum*: You have learned new words, scorching, and sweat  
We will use it continuously, so you remember

The excerpt indicates how the research student intentionally used the word ‘scorching’ to draw Mide’s attention to it and described it in context. Her exposure to the new word triggered her curiosity to know more about it, line 2. I provided a guided conversation to explain, and she Mide began to use the word, lines 4 and 6, that aided grasp. I then followed up from there and introduced another word, ‘sweat’; line 9, although she referred to it as ‘sweat water’, line 10 and applied the new word to her current experience, line 12. Importantly, the context in which “scorching and sweat” helped Mide progress with comprehending the words. Finally, in line 13, mum kept a record of the words for practice and retention.

During an informal conversation with the family, dad confirmed Mide’s subsequent use of the word. He said:

One hot Saturday, I arrived at the shop, and my face was covered in sweat and Mide asked me if there was scorching sun outside. The mum then mentioned that She learned the word from you (h)

(Field notes, 12/10/17)

### **Excerpt 7.7: Vocational activity with dad spurs Mide to build vocabulary**

The excerpt comes from an interaction between Mide and dad as they fixed their dog’s cage. Dad used the opportunity occasioned by her participation and exposed her to new words related to carpentry vocation.

1. *Mide*: Daddy, me helping you yepair [repair] sponky house
2. *Dad*: Actually, a cage because we lock sponky inside
3. *Mide*: Cage, cage, cage, sponky cage ((repeats words in high and low pitch))
4. *Dad*: Yes, sponky cage
5. *Mide*: Cage, cage, for sponky
6. *Dad*: Yes, the cage is for sponky ...give me that small wood

7. *Mide*: (Picks wood and gives dad)
8. *Dad*: (Hitting nails with a hammer)
9. *Mide*: Daddy, you beating nail *kak kak kak kak* (h)
10. *Dad*: Yes, carpenter hits nails with the hammer  
(showing her) this is a hammer, this a nail
11. *Mide*: I know nail ... hammer, daddy hit the nail *kak kak kak kak*  
Where ish capinter?
12. *Dad*: Car -pen- ter
13. *Mide*: ca-pin-ter
14. *Dad*: Carpenter is someone who makes a dog's cage with wood
15. *Mide*: Is me, you capinter?
16. *Dad*: We are fixing sponky's cage (h); we are carpenters
17. *Mide*: ((Laughing)) Mide and daddy is capinter. Daddy, high five
18. *Dad*: High five. We are carpenters!  
We use wood, nails, hammer and make sponky's cage

Dad used the word “cage” to expand Mide’s knowledge of a dog house, lines 1 to 4, and Mide gripped it as she repeatedly said it loud, lines 3 and 5. Then, he moved on and worked with her on identifying carpentry materials and how the carpenter uses them: fixing the cage involved hitting nails through the wood with the hammer and producing sound in lines 6 to 8. Next, Mide turned that to phonics practice, lines 9 and 11. Further, dad focused on teaching Mide to learn a carpenter’s job within the activity context and apply the word for which dad gave her praise lines 12 to 18. Afterwards, during an informal conversation, dad commented:

With Mide, everything you do with her is a learning process. She asks a lot of questions, and she is ready to learn new things. The words cage and carpenter are permanently stored in her memory, and she will tell stories out of it to everyone.

(Field notes, 12/1017)

### **Excerpt 7.8: Mide revises schoolwork with mum's assistance**

The excerpt emerged from a purposeful language event involving Mide revising her schoolwork with mum's assistance Mide. The interaction focused on increasing Mide's comprehension and vocabulary, which Mide initiated on revising her school subject. The examples she gave indicated an incorrect grasp of the topic, which generated a meaningful interaction between her and mum.

1. *Mide*: Living tins is table, chair, pot,
2. *Mum*: Table, chair, pot are not living things
3. *Mide*: Aunty say is is living tins
4. *Mum*: Living things are things that can talk and walk  
((pointing to her small table)) Can your table walk?
5. *Mide*: ((Silent))
6. *Mum*: Mide, go and bring baby's bottle
7. *Mide*: ((Goes and brings it))
8. *Mum*: ((Touches table)) Mide's table, go and get me a cup of water
9. *Mide*: ((Laughs)) my table cannot go
10. *Mum*: Why can't your table go?
11. *Mide*: Because my table cannot go
12. *Mum*: Your table cannot go because it cannot walk
13. *Mide*: Sponky can walk and run fast
14. *Mum*: Yes, Sponky can walk and run, Sponky is a living thing

15. *Mide*: Baby brother cannot walk
16. *Mum*: He can't because he is still a baby, but he can cry
17. *Mide*: He can cry and drink his milk
18. *Mum*: Non-living things cannot cry and drink.  
Like a table, pot, chair,
19. *Mide*: Stone
20. *Mum*: ((Claps)) Good! Tell us two non-living things that cannot walk
21. *Mide*: My table, chalk!
22. *Mum*: Good!
23. *Mum*: What about two living things that can walk and talk
24. *Mide*: Sponky and Mide
25. *Mum*: ((Claps))

Mide listed table, chair and pot as living things, line 1 and created the opportunity for mum to provide scaffolding of the differences between living and non-living things. Next, employing practical illustrations, mum helped Mide explore the zone of proximal development: using her previous knowledge, she differentiated the two terms, lines 6 to 12. From then on, she shown grasps by naming, describing, and categorising objects according to the concepts of living and non-living things, lines 6, 14, 18, 22. Finally, mum assessed her comprehension through cues and questioning, in which Mide's responses demonstrated comprehension and vocabulary lines 23 to 25.

### **Excerpt 7.9 Mide names and identifies parts of the body**

After school hour, Mide was with mum in the supermarket talking about what she had learned in school. They were in the middle of it when I arrived. The excerpt documents the narrative and the eventual revision of the topic: a song of body parts.

1. *Mide*: Aunty teach us parts of the body, and we sing song  
 ((Singing and demonstrating, and repeating many times))  
 Head, shoulder, knees, and toes  
 Knees and toes  
 And eyes and ear and nose and mouth  
 Head, shoulder, knees, and toes
2. *Mum*: Was that all you did?
3. *Mide*: Aunty show us picture of body part in our book
4. *Mum*: Now, no singing. Touch the part I will say  
 touch your knees
5. *Mide*: ((touches knees)) knee
6. *Mum*: Touch your shoulder
7. *Mide*: ((Touches shoulder)) shoulder
8. *Mum*: Touch your ear and nose
9. *Mide*: ((Touches ear and nose)) ear, nose
10. *Mum*: ((Claps)) Wise girl! Now touch and name parts of the body
11. *Mide*: ((Gradually)) My head, eye, nose, mouth, ear, shoulder, knees, toes

Next, mum assessed her knowledge of body parts aimed at supporting her develop an understanding of naming and touching parts of the body and involved different but engaging strategies. Revising the topic with a song method helped Mide remember and identify parts of the body taught in school, line 6. The excerpt is an example of how Mide is gradually collecting more vocabulary in her bank words.

#### **Excerpt 7.10: Mide engages mobile phone technology**

Mide and dad were relaxing in the living watching and singing songs from music videos together on dad's mobile phone. Clutching on the phone and operating it, she narrated a recorded past event.

The excerpt emanates from a collaborative interaction that supported Mide's language and vocabulary learning.

*1a. Mide:* ((Searching recorded videos in dad's phone))

I want another video (.) the one I am winner in church game

1. *Dad:* Bring the phone let me help you find it

2. *Mide:* No! I can do it myself ... This one!

Let's watch this one ((plays video))

See me playing game with children

3. *Dad:* ((Watching the video with Mide)) What do you call the game?

4. *Mide:* I don't know

5. *Dad:* ((Pointing)) what are you doing here?

6. *Mide:* See! I am carry water with spoon

Run to cup and put it inside

7. *Dad:* I was there too, and I remember the game was called 'Water challenge'

8. *Mide:* ((Focusing on watching)) water shallenge

9. *Dad:* It is challenging to use a spoon and fill a cup with water

10. *Mide:* See children shouting 'go Mide, go Mide' (h). And I am the winner

11. *Dad:* And what prize did you get?

12. *Mide:* ((Opens pictures file)) they gave me big balloon

See me holding balloon

13. *Dad:* What colour is the balloon?

14. *Mide:* Red and white balloon

The excerpt shows Mide operating the mobile phone to search for her recorded video of participating in a game during the children's annual funfair in the church, lines 1 to 3. On one side was her experience in navigating the technology and then recounted her role in the game with the help of visual images, line 7. Worth noting was dad's strategy of interaction which involved asking

straight questions, lines 3, 5, 11 and 13. The questions served as a guide and helped Mide reminisce the events and describe the prize she won (see Figure 7.5).

**Figure 7.5**

*Mide's holds her Prize of Red and White Coloured Balloon*



**7.3.1.2. Interactions with Print**

Homework from the nursery school and Sunday school created additional space for Mide to engage with print. That involved the child doing drawing and painting, reading, and writing. Other information gathered from the parents showed that the family everyday Bible reading triggered Mide to read her Bible and Bible storybook. Although with their assistance. Print activities provided the child with different literacy experiences especially practising her writing skills

involving the writing of numbers and letters of the alphabet, imitating read aloud and translating local resources into literacy. Below excerpts illustrate Mide's engagement with the print environment.

### **Excerpt 7.11 Mide revises schoolwork with mum's assistance**

The excerpt emanated from a drawing event initiated by Mide telling mum that her school homework was to identify and draw objects in her home environment. The excerpt illustrates how mum and Mide collaborated to identify objects, draw and label them.

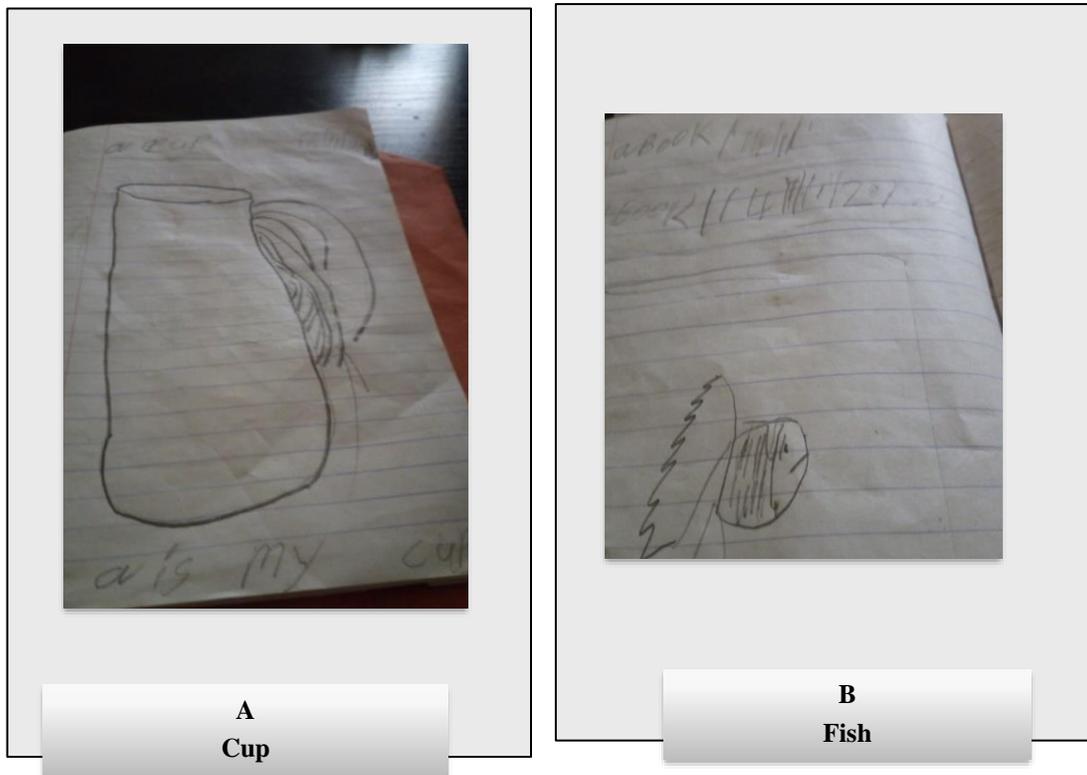
1. *Mide*: Mummy, aunty say we should draw objects in our house
2. *Mum*: Draw objects like what?
3. *Mide*: She say, draw objects you see in kitchen  
in parlour and everywhere
4. *Mum*: What objects are there in the kitchen?
5. *Mide*: We have pot, spoon, plate, blender, cup
6. *Mum*: What about objects in the parlour?
7. *Mide*: ((Points to jug on the dining table)) jug, clock, chair, table
8. *Mum*: There are so many objects in the house  
What will you draw?
9. *Mide*: May be pot, eh jug! clock  
I draw the fish in your shop fridge
10. *Mum*: How many objects did your aunty say you draw?
11. *Mide*: I don't know
12. *Mum*: Ok. Go to your literacy corner and do the assignment
13. *Mide*: ((Settles at the literacy corner and focuses on drawing))  
Mummy, I finish drawing
14. *Mum*: What did you draw? Bring it here; let me see
15. *Mide*: I draw cup, fish, big pot, and I draw clock on the wall
16. *Mum*: Go and write the names of what you have drawn
17. *Mide*: ((Back to literacy corner and wrote cup under the object A in figure 7.6.

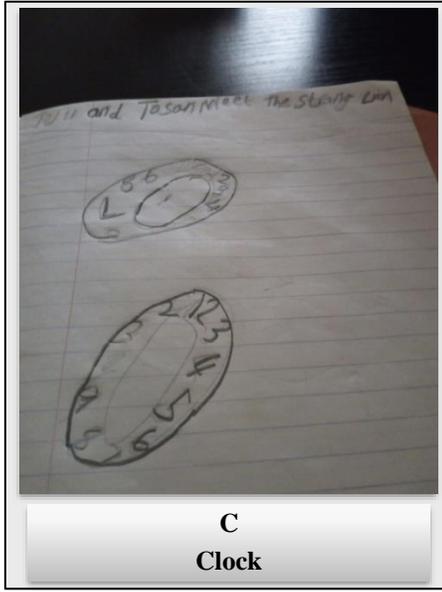
Then she stopped and told mum she was tired))

The excerpt shows that through questioning, mum scaffolded Mide to identify, name and categorize objects according to their unique spaces in the house, lines 1 to 7. Next, mum asked Mide to go to her literacy corner. She went there and drew the objects she liked (see Figures 7.6A, B, C, and D). And with mum's assistance, Mide practised describing the pictures and writing in short sentences (see Figures 7.6A).

**Figure 7.6**

*Mide draws objects in the home environment*





**C**  
**Clock**



**D**  
**Pot**

### **Excerpt 7.12 Mum assists Mide with reading and writing homework**

It was a blackout evening with no electricity supply, but the shared battery lamp in the living room was bright enough for Mide to focus on her writing and reading tasks. The excerpt emerged from a literacy event in which mum supported Mide to practice reading a list of ‘Look and Say words’ given to her as homework. She cooperated with Mide initially by writing the words to perfect her writing skills and finally jointly practice reading the list of words. Excerpt 7.12 accounted for these literacy events.

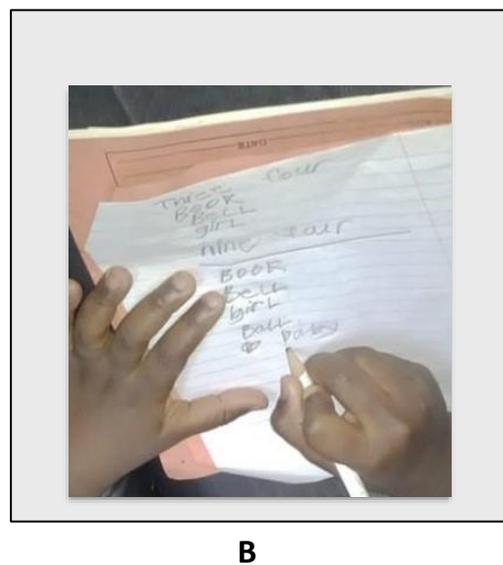
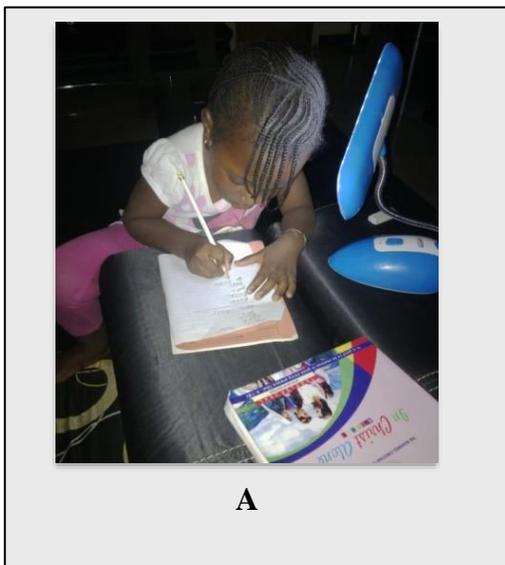
1. *Mum*: Write the ‘Look and Say’ words
2. *Mide*: Yes ma
3. *Mum*: *Mum*: You will write, and we will read together when you finish
4. *Mide*: ((Grips pencil and writes as mum dictates letters of each word))
5. *Mum*: Let me see what you have copied
6. *Mide*: ((Moves closer to mum))
7. *Mum*: Good, your handwriting is improving. Can you read the words?
8. *Mide*: I can read **b a b y** ((Says each letter name and then pronounces the word))

9. Mum: ((Clapping)) good!
10. Mide: Mummy, you say we read together
11. Mum: Ok, let's do it together  
Repeat after me ((touches and says each word))
12. Mide: ((Repeats each word after mum))
13. Mum: Now, read the words
14. Mide: ((Slowly points and reads)) Book, ball, girl, baby (.)  
I read the rest tomorrow

Figures 7.7A and B and lines 1 to 4 in the excerpt demonstrates Mide writing the words as mum reads them out (dictates). Also, the figures show Mide gripping the pencil and writing from right to left direction. In lines 5,7, and 9, mum assesses and praises her work. Mide prompted mum for them to read together. Mum scaffolded the activity as she pointed at each word while reading out and Mide followed the same pattern lines, 10 to 12. Mide's interest is evident in lines 8 and 14.

**Figure 7.7**

*Mide Engages in Writing*



### 7.3.2. Child-Initiated Activities

Mide was with good attention, creative and keen on trying out new things. The parents shared a similar idea and pointed to her care for her baby brother and dolls. The excerpts in this section demonstrate how those characteristics pointed to her literacy experiences in the home.

#### **Excerpt 7.13 Combining role-play, singing and conversation to wait for dinner**

Grandma was yet to return from the supermarket. Daddy and baby brother were in the living room watching television while Mide played around the dining area close to the kitchen, and mum was preparing supper. She engaged in multiple language ways as she played with her doll. The excerpt highlights the activities deployed.

1. *Mide*: ((Hugs her doll, patting and singing for it))  
My baby don't cry; baby don't cry  
Mummy is cooking; mummy is cooking  
My baby don't; baby don't cry ...
2. *Mum*: ((Calling from the kitchen)) Mide
3. *Mide*: ((Goes to the kitchen)) Mummy, food is ready?
4. *Mum*: What can you see on your plate?
5. *Mide*: Yam and stew
6. *Mum*: Is the food ready?
7. *Mide*: Yes mummy. O se ma [thank you ma]
8. *Mum*: Omo dada [good child]
9. *Mide*: ((She took her plate of food and sat on the dining table, turns to her doll))  
Baby, let us pray ... Dear God, thank you for this food, Amen

Mide role played a mother and child situation with her doll and imaginatively sang to calm the hungry crying doll, lines 1 and 2. When her mother eventually served her meal, Mide engaged the doll in shared prayer before eating the meal, line 9.

### **Excerpt 7.14 Mide sings in mother tongue for baby brother**

Mide was playing with her baby brother while mum was carrying out house chores. They were playing with his toy, and he began to cry. The excerpt gives an account of the literacy experience that emerged from this context.

1. *Baby brother:* ((Sitting inside his walker))
2. *Mide:* ((Playing musical toys on baby's walker))  
Play your music things
3. *Baby brother:* ((Crying))
4. *Mide:* Stop crying! look, play your toys  
((supports his hand to play the toys))
5. *Baby brother:* (Cries louder)
6. *Mide:* ((Presses musical keys louder)) krink krink krink krink
7. *Baby brother:* ((Increases cry))
8. *Mide:* Mummy, baby brother ish ungary [hungry]
9. *Mum:* I need to finish the washing, make him stop crying
10. *Mide:* ((Sings, claps, and dances))  
Jojolo  
Omo kekere [small child]  
Jojolo oo!
11. *Baby brother:* ((Calm and listening))

In the excerpt, Mide imitated sounds from the toys, line 5 and used the situation in calming distressed brother. When that did not work, she initiated singing and dancing in Yoruba, which contains some rhyming features.

### **Excerpt 7.15: Mide moves from role-playing to literacy**

Mide was in the supermarket after afterschool with grandma. She watched the interactions between the grandmother and the people that came to buy things. Grandma mistakenly spilt beans on the floor, and Mide collected them and created her beans selling corner. Excerpt 7.15 stems from a transition from role-playing beans seller to been creative.

1. *Mide*: Grandma, beans is pouring on the floor
2. *Grandma*: I go dey careful [I will be more careful]
3. *Mide*: ((Picks up the split beans in a bowl))  
I am selling beans
4. *RS*: Give me ten-naira beans [N10]
5. *Mide*: ((Measures with bottle top)) Take ten-naira beans
6. *RS*: That is small for ten-naira
7. *Mide*: I put gyara for you [I give you bonus]
8. *RS*: Thank you
9. *Mide*: ((Moves away and finding a clear space, she squats and starts playing with the beans and resolved to making letter S))  
do you like my letter 'S'?
10. *RS*: Yes, it is beautiful. Can I take the picture?
11. *Mide*: Yes::s

Mide role-played selling beans to a customer. First, she demonstrated the knowledge of sales vocabulary and money, lines 3 to 7. And then, she switched to making letter shapes with the beans, line 9 (see also Figure 7.8).

## Figure 7.8

*Mide Constructs Letter S with Beans in the Store*



### **Excerpt 7.16 Mide engages in reading, colouring pictures and saying of her prayer**

It was a beautiful Thursday morning during the school holiday period. Mide, mum and baby brother were in the home. Dad was at work, and grandma had already gone to help with sales at the store. My observation appointment was 10:30 AM, and Mide was in her room when I arrived. When she heard my voice, she came out and went straight to her literacy corner. Mide picked the book titled ‘Sesame Street’, leafed pages from left to right and roleplaying reading pictures. That didn’t last when she switched and picked her Sunday school book and invited me to move closer. She leafed through, got to a page and then screamed, “homework page!” Mide pointed at each word on the page as she read (see Figure 7.9A). She then said a prayer:

Angel of God watch over me  
Watch over a baby brother  
Bad people will not see us and kill us

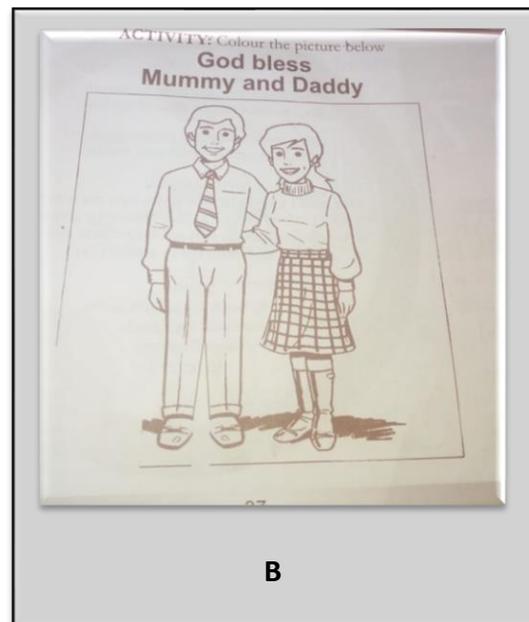
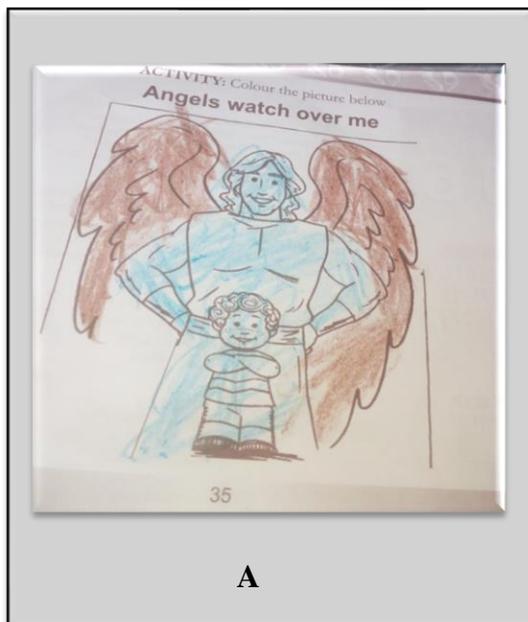
And then turned to the next page, Figure 7.9B, and said a prayer from the picture:

God bless my mummy and daddy  
God bless baby brother  
God bless all the children in the world

(Field notes, 2/12/17)

**Figure 7.9**

*Mide Completes Sunday School Homework*



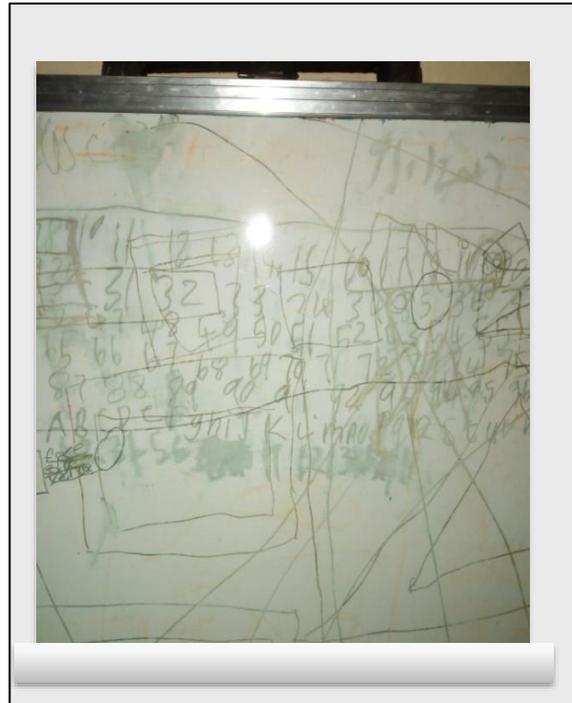
Mide engaged me in talking about the pictures, describing the images in Figure 7.9A as angel and Mide, and daddy and mummy in Figure 7.9B. When asked about her baby brother, Mide said he was sleeping. After the dialogue, she moved on, coloured figure 7.9A and stopped. Next, Mide switched to play with her doll.

**Excerpt 7.17 Mide acts as a teacher**

Figure 7.10 represents the writing Mide did on her whiteboard. She said she was a teacher and teaching children in the class and invited me to her corner, “come and see what I write”. I moved closer, and she explained the writing on the board (see Figure 7.10). Mide progressed to read the numbers from 10 to 100. Also, she read A B C D to Z and identified the shapes as “tra-angul (triangle) rec-angul (rectangle), and a small circle”.

**Figure 7.10**

*Mide Writes Numbers Alphabets and Draw Shapes*



#### **7.4. Parental Support Strategies**

The section presents the family follow-up interview responses on how the parents provided literacy pathways to support the preschool's multimodal literacies enrichment. The interview data provided corroboration of the observation data. The activities carried out at home to support the preschool-aged child's literacy experience are categorised into three themes: Providing literacy space and materials, Encouraging everyday conversations and reading and Assisting the child with school homework.

#### **7.4.1. Providing Literacy Space and Materials**

The parents believed they performed their roles as literacy mediators by providing a positive environment to boost Mide's literacy experience. Specifically, they pointed to the earmarked corner in the living room for Mide. In addition, their voice corroborated observation data in Figures 7.2 A, B and C.

#### **7.4.2. Encouraging Everyday Conversations and Reading**

The parents viewed that they engage in conversations every day with Mide as part of the literacy activities they carried out with her and as evidence in the excerpt presented above. They disclosed that carrying out domestic errands in the home and the shop created paths to engage her in learning many things. However, they admitted that the activities were not structured but meaningful. The dad echoed:

Mide talks and ask too many questions, and we must talk too. We also ask her questions, which she learns from it ... Ok, like ((expression during conversation)) the day she was helping with repairs of the dog's cage (.) She asked for the names of tools we were using ... hammer, nails, wood, (h) ... it didn't end there. She asked why we used wood for Sponky house, and our house is not wood.

The parents revealed that they engaged Mide in reading and prayer daily during morning family devotions in the living room. They mentioned resources for the meeting include the Holy Bible, her children's Bible storybook, and the family devotion manual. During the family devotion, the

father or mother reads aloud while the child pays attention. They believed the activities encouraged her to listen and speak more. Dad reiterated:

Usually, either my wife or myself will read loudly, and others will listen (.) Mide is very good with listening and asking questions ... She knows it is good to read... but we rush in the morning because of time ... no enough time.

Singing during morning devotions is regarded as a literacy activity which they engaged her almost daily. “We sing gospel songs in Yoruba and English, sometimes we play the music on DVD player or mobile phone, and as we sing, she sings along”. Importantly, they explained the meanings of the songs when necessary. Dad pointed out that “sometimes she will ask for the meaning before you initiate to tell her”. Also, they said Mide initiated singing, and they joined and provided scaffolding for the correct pronunciation of some lyrics. Other activities the parents recognised that they engaged with Mide included conversations during mealtimes and sending her on errands in the home and shop. The latter corroborated with observations in excerpts 7.4 and 7.5.

### **7.4.3. Assisting Child with Homework**

Parents believed helping Mide with her school homework was supportive to her literacy experience in the home. Mother pointed:

( ) Bringing homework from school is good for her ... it makes her read Not only play (h). I help her every day with her homework (.) She comes home with reading and spelling homework almost every day from school”.

The above assertion relates with observation data in excerpts 7.11 and 7.12, where mother-child were engaged in practising reading and writing, which Mide brought home from school.

Dad affirmed:

Sometimes, before you realise, she has started doing her homework and when she gets to a difficult area (.) eh, I mean when she doesn't understand something, then she will ask for help.

Also, the father viewed engaging in Mide's homework to assess and know her competency level.

Therefore, participating in the homework was to assist and not to do it for her. He highlighted:

We guide her (.) we guide her, we don't do it for her. We explain the work to her and put her through (.) She does it by herself. She writes by herself, sometimes she reads by herself. She can read some sentences ... which makes it easy.

(Field note, 7/12/17).

## **7.5. Summary of Mide's Literacy Experiences**

The analysed data provided a context to understand Mide's literacy experiences in the home. The child's home languages are Yoruba, English and Pidgin, and she engaged the three languages in her everyday life. Specifically, interactions with her parents happened in Yoruba and English. At the same time, she communicated with her grandmother in Yoruba and Pidgin. The parents intentionally provided print materials and writing tools in which the child actively engaged with them. Additionally, play, errands, mealtime, family devotion, songs, and dance were everyday activities that enriched her multiliteracies experiences. The summary of the focal child's literacy experiences is in Figure 7.4.

## **CHAPTER 8. HOME LITERACY EXPERIENCES OF UMI**

### **8.1. Introduction**

Preceding chapters detailed the stories of Chamun, Ruffy, and Mide. Their predominant patterns of early literacy experiences described as multiliteracies expressed in interactions with their mediators and their own initiated play activities. This chapter presents the analysis of Umi's literacy experiences in the family. The analysis commenced by recognising her family social and physical settings and then move to describe her multiliteracy experiences. It includes the child's oral multiple language experiences, her engagements with the print environment and her initiated play activities in which some literacy experiences emerged. Also, the chapter gives an account of the parental strategies employed in providing literacy support for Umi. The use of extracts from observations and interviews, figures, photographs and finished works sustained the attempt to provide thick descriptions

### **8.2. Physical and Social Contexts of the Umi Family**

The Hausa-Muslim family lived in their personal house divided into ground and first floors. The ground floor accommodated the family, while the uncompleted first floor used for rearing free-range chickens and goats. Getting involved with animal care was not as interesting to Umi as enjoying the meat; however, she preferred chicken meat. Although wired with electricity, the inconsistent power supply was a barrier to utilising electrical gadgets. Below extract highlights the above context:

Umi and her sister wrapped themselves in wrappers. They laid quietly on the mat

in the centre of the living room, after a disappointment of electricity cut off when watching television. She expressed boredom *ba wuta, ba za mu kalla TV ba* (there's no light [electricity], we cannot watch TV). She pointed out that mum did not allow them to play outside because of the dusty weather. The conversation continued, and Umi talked about the animals the family reared. She ended the narration by expressing her knowledge about goats and preference for chicken meat:

*“akuya ba su jin magana, kuma suna wari ... ni na fi so nama kaza”*

(goats are stubborn, and they stink ... I prefer chicken meat)

(Fieldnotes, 01/02/17)

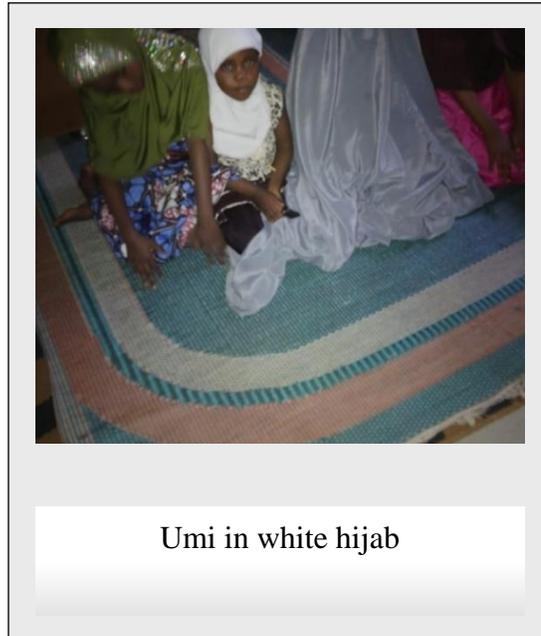
The whole building was enclosed with a tall fence and secured with a gate. The front of the gate had a verandah, floored with a rough surface which Umi used as a playground when playing alone and with friends. The courtyard was also floored with a rough surface and served as a space for daily family interactions such as house chores, salah, homework, play and *alwala* (*ablution: the routine rituals of washing some parts of the body Muslims before prayer*). All *buta* *sallah* were kept in an accessible corner for *alwala*. Umi liked to fill up everyone's *buta* for *alwala*, which the mother underscored was beyond a religious practice. In her words:

You see, you will think *alwala* is only for salah. It is not  
Umi is learning there is time for everything. And you see,  
The step-by-step of going to fetch water, going to the *alwala* area  
Watching us ((adults and older siblings)) perform ablution  
You see her imitating prayer. She is learning a lot of things  
like routines.

(Field notes, 01/02/17)

## Figure 8.1

### *Umi Participates in Sallah*

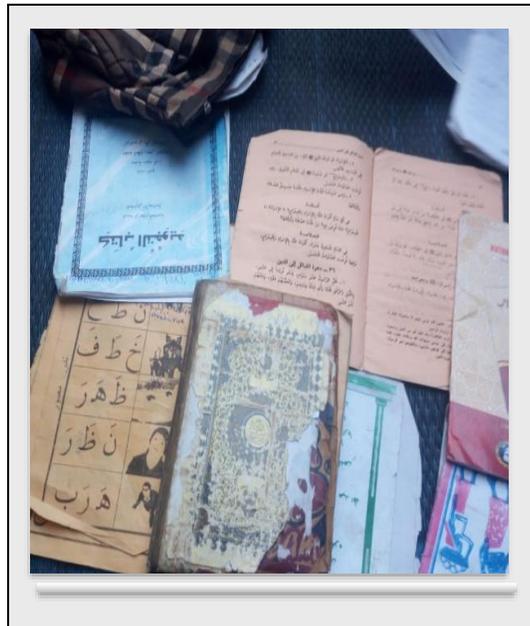


Apart from the outside environment, the living room was a hub for social and cultural interactions by the family, embracing eating together, performing prayers (see Figure 8.1), listening to stories. All interactions were carried out in the Hausa language except in few cases. A corner in the living room was equipped with a television, a DVD player and children's DVD cartoons and arranged on the shelf. Umi's favourite children's film includes 'Cinderella' and 'Tom and Jerry'. Print materials noticeable in the home were religious, and two calendars hung on the wall. Umi brought books from school only when she had homework.

The Muslim family enrolled the children in Arabic school, which they attended three times a week and taught oral memorization and recitation of the Quran, reading, and writing in Arabic. Also, the mother voiced reading the Qur'an aloud and reciting simple verses with the children were regular practices in the home. Other activities included singing religious/moral songs, giving extra support to Umi with assignments. Figure 8.2 are examples of Arabic books.

**Figure 8.2**

*Religious Texts in Arabic Writing*



Hausa is the primary language for everyday interactions in the Umi family, while Arabic and English for specific purposes. The observation about the use of the home language corroborated with interview data. Below are two responses from the family.

Mum:

Our everyday language is Hausa. It is our constant, language and that is what we use for everything. Sometimes we speak English because the children are learning it in school. We sometimes use it during school homework or when asking what they learned at school. Sometimes we deliberately do greetings in English. But Hausa is mainly the language we use at home; it is important to us.

(Interview Excerpt, 13/1/18)

Yakub:

In this community, Hausa is the most common, followed by English, because of School learning. We don't speak Arabic; everybody is learning it is the language Of the Holy Qur'an. Because the language is hard, you start learning it as children. Like Umi is learning Arabic symbols, saying of prayer and we read the Qur'an to her and her sister

(Interview Excerpt, 13/1/18).

At the time of the data collection, Umi was four years old and could orally express herself in the Hausa language. Umi, Yaya (8-year-old sister), with four orphaned cousins (all teenage-aged boys), lived together. Among the cousins, Yakub (I named him) was close to the children and occasionally engaged them in storytelling, singing and dancing (see Figure 8.3). Umi never missed out on such activities.

### Figure 8.3

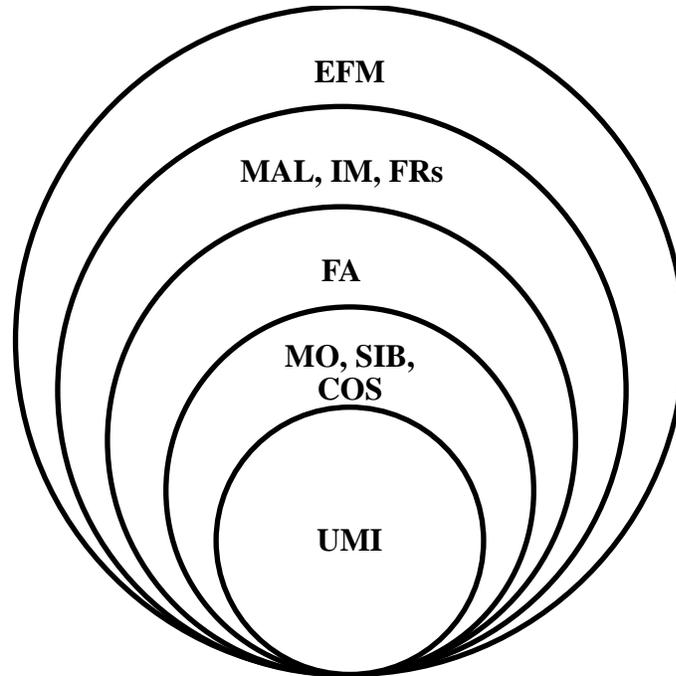
*Yakub Engaging Umi and Friends in Singing and Dancing*



Umi's mother, a diploma holder, worked as a classroom assistant in the community-based nursery setting where Umi was enrolled and handy in supporting her with school-related practice. Mum highlighted the school drew from predominantly children with Hausa-Muslim backgrounds, which are the community's population characteristics. The father was a self-employed mechanic and combined business with the role of a community youth leader. Mum and dad were involved in peacebuilding among neighbouring communities due to the crisis in some parts of Plateau state during data generation. However, due to our cultural differences, I never met him face-to-face; Yakub, Umi's older cousin, represented him. Nevertheless, the father's impact on the family's literacy practices was emphasised by the mother in providing the family's basic needs. Figure 8.4 shows the proximity of Umi's interactions with the people that surrounded her.

**Figure 8.4**

*Umi's Social networks: Sphere of influence*



*Note.* Graphic created according to Robson's (2011, p. 485) advice of using "Context charts showing interrelationships between roles."

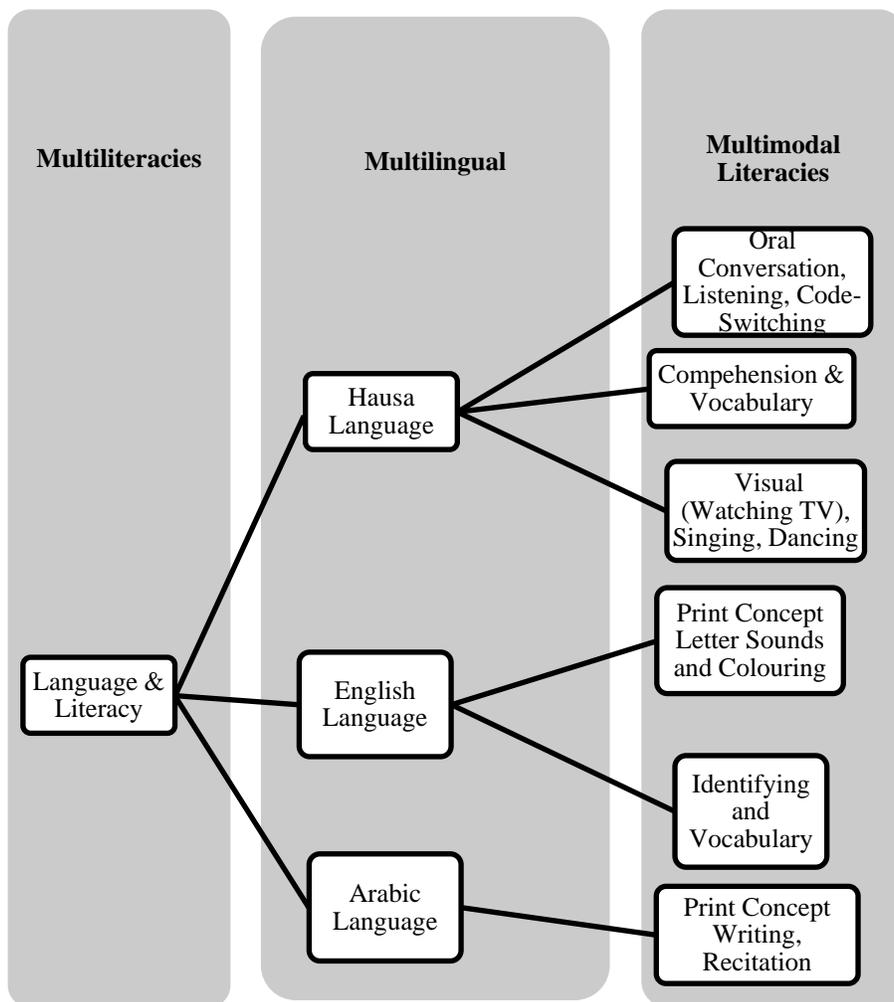
1. Close contacts and mediators (**Mother [MO], Sibling [SIB-Yaya], Cousin [COS-Yakub]**)
2. Close, but no contacts during the study, **Father [FA]**)
3. Community contacts and friends (**Arabic School Mallam [MAL], Mosque Imam [IM], Friends [FRs]**)
4. Occasional contacts (**Extended Family Members [EFM]**)

### 8.3. Umi's Multiliteracy Experiences

Figure 8.5 is the graphic illustration of Umi's multiliteracy experiences involving multilingual and multimodal literacies. The preschool-aged child's literacy experiences are predominantly shaped by language and literacy practices rooted in daily routines of daily social interactions of parent-child, siblings' interactions, and child-initiated play activities. The child's active role in the learning process is recognised.

**Figure 8.5**

*Graphic Illustration of Umi's multiliteracy experiences*



*Note.* The diagram created according to Robson (2011, p. 486) suggestion of using “conceptually ordered tree diagram showing how phenomena are classified and subcategorised.”

### **8.3.1. Multilingual Literacies**

Umi was engaged with three languages, although the levels of engaging them to differ. The following sections present the excerpts revealing the preschool-aged child’s oral language experiences in the three languages involving conversations, storytelling, prayer time, play and entertainment.

#### **8.3.1.1. Oral language activities**

Oral language interactions were major home practices in the family that emerged from mundane activities but loaded with literacy experiences. That suggests the child experienced rich verbal interactions in meaningful contexts and events

#### **Excerpt 8.1 Umi and Yaya engaged in laundry chore**

The excerpt emanates from an interaction between Umi and Yaya during a laundry chore in the living room. Yaya gave a step-by-step direction, and Umi carried it out. The language exchanges between them drew attention to the preschool-aged child’s language experience in the home.

1. *Yaya:* ((Looks towards Umi)) hanun ki da datti, wanke mu nade kaya  
[Your hands are dirty, wash before we fold the clothes]
2. *Umi:* ((Washed her hands and ready to fold)) gani, yayi clean [see, it is clean]
3. *Yaya:* Ki nade kanana; vest, su pants da dankwali  
[fold the small ones like vest, pants, and scarfs]
4. *Umi:* ((Folding clothes)) na nade harda su t-shirt [I folded all with t-shirts too]
5. *Yaya:* Mun gama, kai daki [finished, take them to the room]

6. *Umi*: Daki mama? [Mummy's bedroom?]
7. *Yaya*: Kai dakin mu ba kayan buki ba  
[take it to our room, these are not outing clothes]
8. *Umi*: ((Takes it to their bedroom))
9. *Yaya*: Kin sa kaya a ina? [Where did you keep the clothes?]
10. *Umi*: A kan gado [on the bed]
11. *Yaya*: Zo, mu sa a cikin akwati [come, let's put them inside the box]
12. *Umi/yaya*: ((Both went to the bedroom))

Directives given by yaya guided Umi's responses. It provided Umi opportunities to listen, speak, and perform tasks, lines 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10. Her responses involved codeswitching in Hausa and English and asking questions to clarify a given instruction, line 5. The siblings' interaction in this excerpt points to an understanding of Umi's attention to foundational literacy skills of listening, speaking, and comprehension.

### **Excerpt 8.2 Umi enriches vocabulary during mealtime**

Apart from the kitchen, there is a cooking stove in the courtyard. Umi's mother was cooking outside when I arrived, and the girls were playing nearby. Finally, the food was ready to be served, and mum asked the girls to set the 'dining' in line with the family culture of eating on the mat.

Excerpt 8.2 emerged from an interaction involving Umi, Yaya and mum.

1. *Mum*: Abinci ya kusa, shirya wuri [food is almost ready, prepare place to eat]
2. *Umi*: Zan dauko blue taburma [I will bring the blue mat]
3. *Yaya*: Mu dauka taburma uncle Ali [Let us use Uncle Ali's mat]
4. *Umi*: Shine blue taburma [that is the blue mat] [lifts the mat]
5. *Mum*: Yaya, taimake ta [yaya, help her]
6. *Umi*: A'a! zan dauko shi [no! I can carry it]
7. *Mum*: Ya yi kato, zai karya karamin kashin ki

- [It is too big and can break your small bone]
8. *Umi*: Ba ni da karamin kashi? [I don't have small bone]
  9. *Mum*: ((Touching Umi's wrist)) kashin wuyan hannu ki  
[the bones in your wrist are small]
  10. *Umi*: ((Touching her own arm))  
Akwai kato kashi a hannu na [there's big bone in my arm]  
Kaza na da karamin kasha a kafa [chicken has small bone on the leg]
  11. *Mum*: Akwai nama da kashi a kafan kaza  
[chicken leg has flesh and bone]
  12. *Umi*: Muna cin nama ne [we eat only the flesh]
  13. *Mum*: Muna cin nama da kashi [we eat the flesh and crack the bones]
  14. *Umi*: Ina son nama kaza [I like chicken meat]
  15. *Mum*: Babu yau, maza shirya wuri [none today, quick prepare space to eat]

Umi responded to mum's instruction by engaging codeswitch to describe the mat they would use 'blue taburma', line 1. However, carrying the blue taburma alone did not seem a good idea, and mum asked Yaya to help. That provided the opportunity for a deeper conversation among them and resulted in exchanges with new vocabulary been introduced such as 'kato kasha [big bone], karamin kasha [small bone], karya kasha [break bone]. Umi moved on to distinguish between hers as big bone and that of a chicken as small bone. The mother-child interaction reveals how unintentional conversation can progress to the child's learning, as demonstrated in this excerpt.

### **Excerpt 8.3 Umi narrates how to cook *tuwon shinkafa***

It was a relaxed Saturday afternoon; Umi and mom sat on a long-wooden bench; between them was a tray filled with *shinkafa* (local rice), which they picked out dirt. The context enabled a meaningful conversation between the researcher and Umi. She narrated the cooking 'tuwon

shinkafa' (a thick pudding prepared from local and popular food of Hausa people in Northern Nigeria). The excerpt accounts for this engagement.

1. *RS*: Salama Alaikum
2. *Mum/Umi*: Wa alaikum salam
3. *Umi*: Zo ki zauna a nan [come and sit here]
4. *RS*: Thank you. Me ki ke yi? [What are you doing?]
5. *Umi*: Muna chire datti shinkafa [we are removing dirt from rice]
6. *RS*: Wane iri datti? [What kind of dirt?]
7. *Umi*: Gani, karamin duwasu [look, small, small, stones]
8. *RS*: Ya ya aka samu duwasu a shinkafa? [How did stones get inside the rice?]
9. *Umi*: Ban sani ba, mama ta che mu chire duwasu  
[I don't know, mama said we should remove stones]
10. *RS*: Me za a yi da shinkafa? [What will you cook with the rice?]
11. *Umi*: Mama ta dafa tuwo shinkafa [Mama will cook *tuwo shinkafa*]
12. *RS*: Ya ya a ke dafa? [How is it prepared?]
13. *Umi*: ((Looks at me surprisingly)) Baki sani ba? [You don't know?]
14. *RS*: Ban sani ba, koya mani [I don't know, teach me]
15. *Umi*: Mama zata wanke shinkafa da kwarya [mama will wash rice with calabash]  
Sai ta zuba a tukunya [She will pour it inside pot]  
  
Sai ta dafa da kyau [she will cook it very well]  
  
Sai ta tuka da murciya [she will smoothen it with a wooden stick]  
  
Sai ta kwashe da mara [she will pack it with mara]  
  
Ta sa a kwano mu ci da miya [and put it on the plate and we eat with soup]  
  
Shikena! [that the end!]

The excerpt opened with an exchange of greetings in Arabic, followed by questions leading to Umi's response to listening and speaking. The last question asked provided ample opportunity for Umi to gradually describe the process of making *tuwon shinkafa*, line 15

#### **Excerpt 8.4 Umi and mum engaged in 'tarihin mu' (family story)**

It was a hot day; mom and Umi were in the courtyard, relaxing and talking on the mat. As they spoke, a significant literacy-related game episode initiated by Umi developed. Mom confirmed she created simple oral games in English to encourage the practice of school language in the home. Mum highlighted, "*All the children in the school speak mostly Hausa because that is the language of the community.*"

1. *Umi*: Mama, muyi wasan tarihin mu [mama, let us do family story]
2. *Mama*: (Laughs) Wanne? [Which one?]
3. *Umi*: Wa ye Umi? [Who is Umi?]
4. *Mama*: lokacin turanci, kin shirya? [time for English, are you ready?]
5. *Umi*: Yes
6. *Mama*: Ki ji da kyau [listen attentively]  
Who are you?
7. *Umi*: I am Umi
8. *Mama*: Umi who?
9. *Umi*: Umi Hassan
10. *Mama*: Hassan who?
11. *Umi*: Hassan (.) Goro, Hassan Goro
12. *Mama*: Goro from where?
13. *Umi*: Goro from Gidan Waya
14. *Mama*: Gidan Waya where?
15. *Umi*: Gidan Waya Kaduna state
16. *Mama*: Kaduna where?
17. *Umi*: Kaduna state Nigeria

18. *Mama*: ((Claps)) a tafa wa Umi [clap for Umi]

The excerpt shows Umi's gradual progression switching sentences from Hausa to the English language. The game commenced with a questioning technique that provided an attention model of turn-taking for Umi to respond, lines 5 to 17. Her performance attracted the praise of clapping from mum, line 18. During the family interview, the Yakub reiterated that "*even though Hausa is permanently used for communication at home, sometimes we mix with English because it is important for her [Umi] schooling.*" Umi's language experience in this excerpt embodies the child listening, speaking and reveals her knowledge of family history.

#### **Excerpt 8.5 Umi builds expressive language through role-play with mum**

The excerpt emanates from a role-play of Umi acting as a buyer and mum a seller in a store. Umi and mum initiated the play played along as they transacted business using the contextual language of transaction.

1. *Umi*: Mu yi wasan shago [let us do shop play]
2. *Mum*: Toh, ki fara [ok, you start]
3. *Umi*: Waye na shago? [who is in the shop?]
4. *Mom*: Ni ce [it's me]
5. *Umi*: Ina so tsaya abu [I want to buy something]
6. *Mum*: Wa ne iri abu? [What kind of something?]
7. *Umi*: Ina so biscuit da suweet [I want biscuit and sweets]
8. *Mum*: Biscuit nawa? [How many biscuits?]
9. *Umi*: Biscuit biu da suweet [two biscuit and sweet]
10. *Mum*: Sweet guda nawa? [How many sweets?]

11. *Umi*: Suweet na 10 naira [Ten-naira sweets]
12. *Mum*: Gashi biscuit da sweet [take your biscuits and sweets]
13. *Umi*: ((Turns to leave)) thank you
14. *Mum*: Ba ki biya ba [You have not paid me]
15. *Umi*: (Laughs, gives a piece of paper)  
Gashi 50 naira, bani chanji [take fifty naira, give me change]
16. *Mum*: Gashi chanji ki [take your change]
17. *Umi*: Bye, bye, madam
18. *Mum*: Bye, bye, customer

Findings from excerpt 8.6 showed Umi's understanding of the communicative value of expressive language, experimented with codeswitching between Hausa and English; lines 7 9 and 11, knowledge of commercial vocabulary; 11 and 15, expresses in English; lines 14 and 17. Likewise, mom responded in English, line 18. Experiencing those aspects of literacy was supported through the role of mom, who cooperated in playing with her.

### **Excerpt 8.6 Mum and Umi talk about neighbour's send-off party**

A neighbour's daughter was getting married, and as the culture in their community to gather young girls and women to dine and pray with the bride-to-be, Umi and Yaya were invited for the send-off party. They looked gorgeous in their traditional clothes and ready to go, and excerpt 8.6 emanates from interaction among them, in which mum helped Umi to understand the purpose of the event.

1. *Umi*: Sai mun dawo mama [See you later mama]
2. *Mum*: Kin san wurin da zaku? [Do you know where you are going?]
3. *Umi*: Eh [yes]
4. *Mum*: Ina? [Where?]
5. *Umi*: Gidan su Rahama [Rahama's house]

6. *Mum*: Mai ke faruwa? [What is happening there?]
7. *Umi*: (Holding chin with two fingers) hmmm
8. *Yaya*: Bude baki ki yi magana [Open your mouth and talk]
9. *Mum*: Bar ta, ta yi tunani [allow her, she is thinking]
10. *Umi*: Aure! [wedding!]
11. *Mum*: Madallah! Amma ba aure ba [good! But not wedding yet]
12. *Yaya*: Send-off party na Rahama
13. *Mum*: Send-off ne [it is a send-off]
14. *Umi*: Mene sen-off? [What is send-off?]
15. *Mum*: Kai, Umi da tambayoyi [Umi and questions]
 

[Send-off is a party for a grown-up girl when she is about to get married.  
Family young and older women, friends and neighbours  
gather at the house and do things, like  
eating, singing, praying for her, and giving gifts to the bride to-be]
16. *Umi*: Za'a bani nama kaza? [Will they give me chicken meat?]
17. *Mum*: Eh, idan akwai nama kaza [Yes if there is chicken meat]
18. *Umi*: Yaya mu tafi [yaya let's go]

Mum used questioning to help Umi understand the event. That created the opportunity for a discussion between them in which Umi responded and questions to express her knowledge. Importantly, mum provided scaffolds to her response by explaining the send-off party, line 15. The conversation added a plus to the child as she expressed her knowledge and asked questions about things that were of interest to her, lines 14 and 16.

### **Excerpt 8.7 Argument about 'Cinderella' facilitates Umi to retell the story**

It was the holiday period, and on a Thursday, Umi and Yaya were in the living room watching the 'Cinderella' cartoon when suddenly the electricity supply was cut off. The girls looked

disappointed. And then Umi broke the silence, line 1. The episodes in excerpt 8.7 accounted for claims about the film.

1. *Umi*: Mama Cinderella muguwa ce [Cinderella's mother is wicked]
2. *Yaya*: Cinderella ba ta da mama [Cinderella has no mother]
3. *Umi*: Akwai mama a cartoon [there is mother in the cartoon]
4. *Yaya*: Ba mama Cinderella ba [that is not Cinderella's mother]
5. *Umi*: Mama Cinderella ne, har da yanwa [it is Cinderella mother and her sisters]
6. *Yaya*: Mama ta mutu, yan mata ba yanwa ta ba  
[her mother is dead; the girls are not her real sisters]
7. *Umi*: ((Sobs)) Mama Cinderella ba ta mutu ba, yan mata yanwa ta ne  
[Cinderella mother is not dead; they are her sisters]
8. *Yaya*: Mama ta mutu, yan mata ba yanwa ta ba  
[the mother is dead, and those girls are not her sisters]
9. *Umi*: Karya, Mama Cinderella muguwa ce  
[liar, Cinderella mother is wicked]
10. *Yaya*: Mama ta mutu, baba ya aure muguwa mata  
[the mother died; the father married bad mother]
11. *Umi*: ((Sobs)) Mama ba ta mutu ba, muguwa ce  
[the mother is not dead, she is wicked]
12. *Mum*: ((Explains in Hausa)) [Umi is right, did we see two mothers in the cartoon?  
Yaya, how do you expect Umi to accept that *Cinderella* mother is not dead?  
The cartoon shows only one mother  
You know about the stepmother because Yakub told you  
We don't understand the English spoken in the carton  
It is fast and twisted; we watch and sometimes make guesses  
Umi has more evidence; Cinderella mother is not dead]
13. *Umi*: Ba ta mutu ba, a cartoon, akwai mama, akwai baba,  
Akwai yanwa biu da mutane dayawa  
[She is not dead, in the cartoon, there is mother, there is father,  
there are two sisters and many people]

Umi's claim about a character in the film, line 1, triggered the argument. The direction of the discussion provided the opportunity for her to retell elements of the story, such as naming characters and describing the main character, lines 5, 9, 11. Mum had listened to them without interrupting and then gradually mediated the argument, line 12. The scaffold provided enabled Umi to expand the naming of characters, line 13. The argument created a context for Umi to express her views based on available evidence, listening and building vocabulary like the word 'muguwa' (wicked) repeatedly in her expressions.

### **Excerpt 8.8 Building vocabulary through singing and dancing**

It was Friday after school, and the girls relaxed in the living room, singing and dancing to a Hausa song played from the DVD Hausa video. The atmosphere was filled with Umi's voice as she happily sang and danced to the rhythm. The excerpt presents Umi participation in the music dance video.

1. *Yaya*: ((Gives direction on how to move the body as they all sing))
2. *Umi*: ((Looking at the screen, she follows direction; skillfully moves her  
Shoulder front and back))  
raise hands and claps, taps feet on the floor and repeats lyrics)  
yan makaranta mu yi **ladabi** [school children be obedient]  
sai mun sa sunan Allah [let Allah be first]  
ka bamu illimi ya Allah [give us knowledge, o Allah]  
((Music ended and another one started))
3. *Umi*: ((Goes out))
4. *Mum*: Ya ya kin taho waje? [Why did you come out?]

5. *Umi*: Angama waka [The song is finished]
6. *Mum*: Ama dai ana wani [but another one is playing]
7. *Umi*: Bana so shi [I don't like it]
8. *Mum*: Baki so? [You don't like it?]
9. *Umi*: Bana so shi [I don't like it]
10. *Mum*: Mai waka na yabin Allah [The musician is praising Allah]
11. *Umi*: Ban so, ina so 'yan makaranta' [I don't, I like 'yan makaranta']

The excerpts witnessed Umi singing out lyrics of a song in Hausa from the television. Although the song's lyrics appeared on the screen, it was not certain if she was singing from it or her memory. She continued singing and moving her body repeatedly until the music ended, and she left the scene. She continued singing and moving her body repeatedly until the music ended. And then a verbal interaction emanated between her and mum, lines 3 to 11. She expressed reasons for her actions, lines 5, 7, 9, and song preference, line 11. Afterwards, during an informal conversation with mum, she confirms engaging in such activity was a regular practice and teaching the meaning of songs and words. In her words, “Umi now knows the meaning of the word **ladabi** because I explained the meaning of the song to them”.

### **Excerpt 8.9 Umi learns new words in English during pepper grinding chore**

The excerpt emerged from a chore involving Umi pounding dried pepper using a mortar and pestle (see figure 8.6).

1. *Umi*: Yaya, daka ya isa? [Yaya, is the grinding enough?]
2. *Yaya*: Ya yi rough, daka shi smooth [it is still rough, pound it smooth]
3. *Umi*: ((Squashed face)) menene yough, sumoot? [What is rough, smooth?]
4. *Yaya*: ((Explains to Umi mixing Hausa and English))

[Teacher taught us *rough* and *smooth* objects today

Touch the floor, how does it feel?]

5. *Umi*: ((Touches it)) Ban sani ba [I don't know]

6. *Yaya*: Floor ya yi rough [the floor is rough]

7. *Umi*: (rubbing floor with hand) yough, yough

8. *Yaya*: Rough ba yough ba [rough not yough]

Tabarya hannun ki fa? [What about the pestle in your hand?]

9. *Umi*: ((Rubs hands it)) Ba yough [No rough]

10. *Mum*: ((To Yaya)) Nu na mata gari alibo mai sumul

[show her smooth cassava flour]

11. *Yaya*: ((Brings cassava flour)) ta ba garin [feel the smoothness]

12. *Umi*: ((Smiling and touching)) ya yi sumoot [it is smooth]

13. *Yaya*: Daka barkono haka [pound the pepper to be smooth like that]

14. *Umi*: ((Pounding and smiling)) zan daka sumoot [I will pound pepper smooth]

15. *Yaya*: ((Smiles)) remember (.) rough floor, smooth mirror

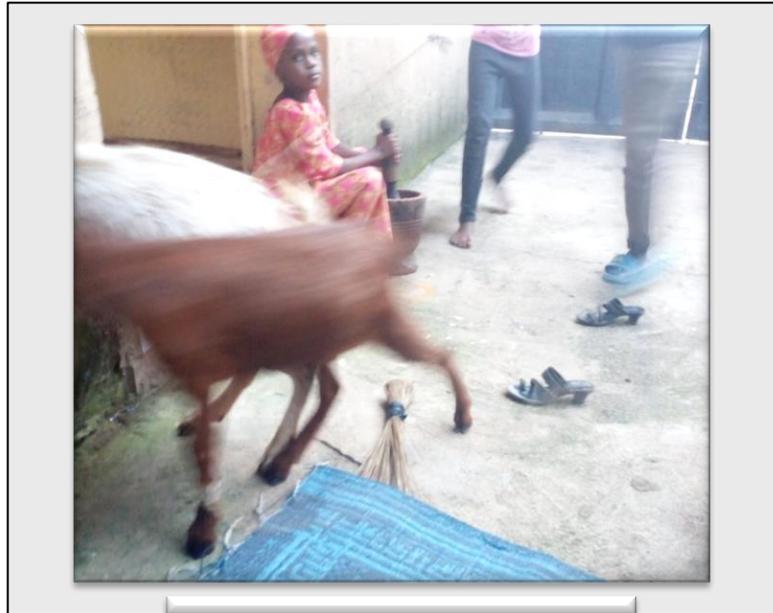
16. *Umi*: Sumoot, yough

17. *Mum*: ((Claps)) Akwai cigaba a Turanci [Your English is improving]

Umi asked a question, and Yaya employed previous knowledge gained from school to answer the question. However, the response created the opportunity for Umi to another question, and the conversation focused on helping Umi to understand the meaning of the words smooth and rough and made many attempts to pronounce the word. In addition, illustrations in the activity helped Umi understand the concepts and acquire new vocabulary in English.

**Figure 8.6**

*Umi Engaging in House Chore of Pounding Pepper*



### **8.3.1.2 Print Activities in the Home**

Home literacy practices that involved print emerged mainly from Umi's school homework. Specifically, the mother was proactive in completing tasks brought home either from the conventional or Arabic school.

#### **Excerpt 8.10 Mum triggers Umi to do her school homework**

Mum drew Umi's attention to her homework from the nursery school. The response of a squashed face from Umi did not stop mum from persuading her. She reluctantly brought the workbook, and

excerpt 8.10 emanated, and it presents the account of the mother-child literacy event in which mum supported Umi to colour a picture.

1. *Mum*: Umi, kin yi homework? [Umi, have you done your homework?]
2. *Umi*: ((Squashes face))
3. *Mum*: Colouring fa? [the colouring?]
4. *Umi*: a'a! [Noooo!]
5. *Mum*: Kawo workbook [bring the workbook]
6. *Umi*: ((Reluctantly brings the book))
7. *Mum*: Nu na mani homework [show the homework page]
8. *Umi*: ((Leafs from left to right quickly))
9. *Mum*: Yi a hankali [go slowly and find the page]
10. *Umi*: ((Leafs through slowly)) wanene mama? [which one?]
11. *Mum*: Ina ki ka yi last? [Which page did you colour last?]
12. *Umi*: ((Leafs and finds it)) gashi nan [look at it]
13. *Mum*: Ju ya next page [Turn to next page]
14. *Umi*: ((Leafs next page)) wannan? [this one?]
15. *Mum*: Shi ne [It is]
16. *Umi*: ((Touching picture)) ga hoto! [see the picture!]
17. *Mum*: Kin yi bisimilahi? [Have you said prayer?]
18. *Umi*: ((Whispers prayer)) mama, Ina zan fara colour?  
[where do I start colouring?]
19. *Mum*: Duk waje da kin so [Start wherever you like]
20. *Umi*: Zan colour kafa brown, sai riga blue  
[I will colour the leg, brown and the dress, blue]
21. *Mum*: ((Smiles)) Yi shi da kyau [just colour neatly]
22. *Umi*: ((Picks brown and blue colour pencils and colours the picture))

Following mum's instructions and help, Umi flipped through the workbook and found the assignment page, lines 1 to 9. She showed excitement and exclaimed, "ga hoto! (see the picture!)",

Mum reminded her to do “bismilahi” before the activity. Through scaffolding, Umi used codeswitch to name colours and coloured the picture. Umi finally completed colouring the image successfully, line 16. The event allowed Umi to write from left to right.

### **Excerpt 8.11 Umi engages in Arabic writing**

Umi was in the courtyard sitting on the mat, and beside her was an Arabic workbook and pencil.

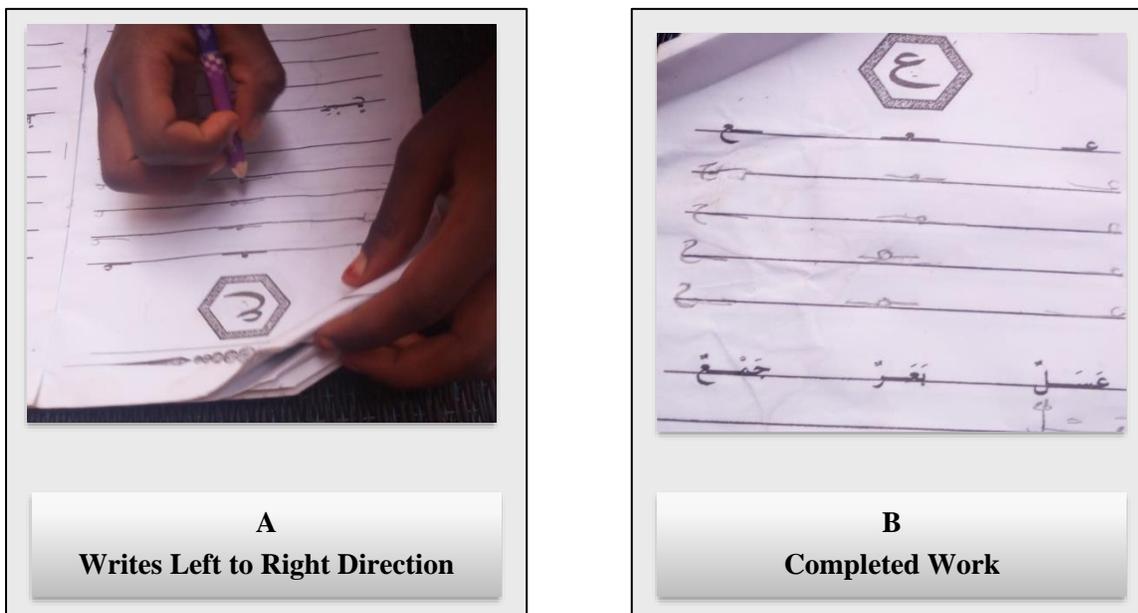
Excerpt 8.11 comes from the literacy event that showed mum provide support for Umi to do her homework.

1. *Umi*: ((Lies on the mat in the courtyard with Arabic books all over))
2. *Mum*: Menene ki ke yi da takardu? [What are you doing with the books?]
3. *Umi*: ((Touching the books)) Malam ya che na koya mushit  
[teacher said I should practise writing mushit]
4. *Mum*: Kina wasa ko dai rubutu? [Are you playing or writing?]
5. *Umi*: ((Covers face with hands and sits up))
6. *Mum*: Cigaba da rubutu [continue the writing]  
((showing Umi)) Rike pencil da kyau [hold the pencil correctly]
7. *Umi*: ((Grips the pencil firmly))  
Na rike da kyau [I am holding it correctly]
8. *Mum*: Kin san assignment di? [Can you do it by yourself?]
9. *Umi*: I, gani [Yes, look]
10. *Mum*: Kopa a layi na kasa [copy it on the lower lines]
11. *Umi*: Na sani, na sani [I know, I know]  
[Holding the pencil firmly as she squats and writes on the mat,  
speaks in Arabic as she writes right to left]  
Mama, ki gani rubutu na [Mama, see my writing]
12. *Mum*: Kin iya rike pencil [your control of pencil is good]
13. *Umi*: Na iya rike pencil [I can hold pencil]

The activity started with mum prompting Ruffy to focus on the writing activity rather than playing. She demonstrated a good grip of the pencil (Figure 8.7A and B).

**Figure 8.7**

*Umi Completes Arabic Handwriting Homework*



After the observation, mum highlighted:

Mushit is a handwriting workbook for Arabic school, which Umi uses to practice how to read and write in Arabic. Mushit” are symbols used for practising handwriting in Arabic Like practising writing alphabet in English. It is a good exercise to help her hold the pencil appropriately

(Field notes, 2/10/17)

### 8.3.2. Child-Initiated Activities

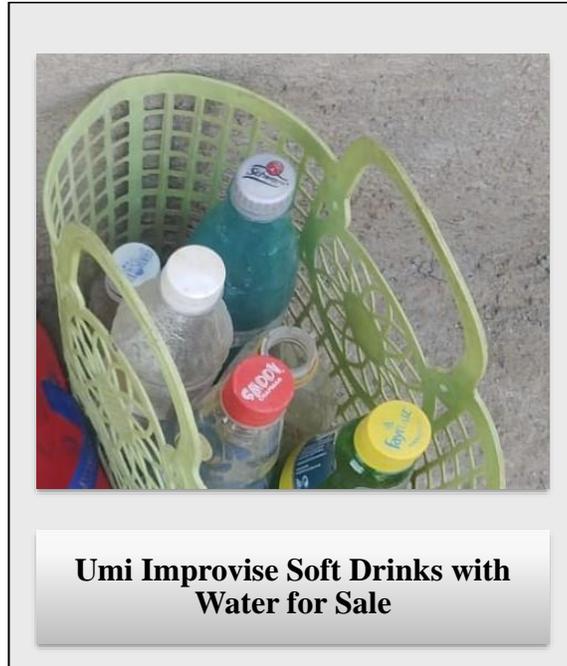
Umi initiated and engaged in different activities such as water play, Alwala preparation and role-play. Her creativity during play provided an understanding of her vocabulary development, particularly in the Hausa language. The excerpts below section are examples of the child-initiated activities and how they enriched her literacy experience.

#### **Excerpt 8.12 Water play facilitates Umi’s language expression and vocabulary**

It is a calm Saturday; Mum, Yakub, Yaya and Umi were at home, doing different things. Despite the shortage of water supply, mum allowed Umi to play with it. Umi improvised resources for water play. Although alone, she talked to herself as she played. She gathered empty bottles of soft drinks and named them “*ga kwalabe fanta*” (see fanta bottles) and commented on the availability of water “*akai isasshe ruwa wasa*” (there is enough water for play). She brought a small bucket to the tap point, turned on the water to fill it, and said, “*ruwa ya cika boketi*” (the bucket is filled with water). She tried lifting it but could not and then called out, “*Yaya, zo ki taimake ni, akwai nauyi*” (Yaya, come help carry, it is heavy). Yaya was not available to help, so she pulled the bucket away from the tap, used the water and filled the bottles. She named them brands of different soft drinks coke, mirinda, fanta, and zobo (see Figure 8.8). Finally, she “*kowa ya zo ya saya fanta a shago na*” (everybody come and buy soft drinks in my shop). She was engaging in imaginative play, and talking provided an understanding of how Umi was developing vocabulary through water play and displaying expressive language competence.

## Figure 8.8

### *Umi Engages in Water Play*



### **Excerpt 8.13 Umi fills up buta for alwala**

A loud voice echoes through the atmosphere with the Arabic chanting of “*Allahhhh ku hakbar.*” It was the community Imam drawing Muslim faithfuls’ attention to evening salah. The chanting prompted Umi to gather buta (prayer kettle) and fill them with water (see Figure 8.9). She spoke to herself in the process, “*na cika duka buta, zan kai su a wuri alwala*” (I have filled all buta, I will carry them to the ablution area). She then counted the buta, “*daya, biu, uku, hudu*” (one, two,

three, four) and moved on to identify each buta with a name “*buta mama, na Yakub, na Yaya, ga na wa*” (mother’s buta, for Yakub, for Yaya, this is mine). She lifted mama’s buta and dropped it, and said, “*akwai nauyi*” (it is heavy) and then called Yaya to help, “*Yaya, zo ki kai wa mama buta*” (take mama’s buta to her). “*Na wa ba nauyi*” (mine is not heavy).

**Figure 8.9**

*Umi Filled buta with water for Ablution*



**Excerpt 8. 14 Umi initiates mother-children play with friends**

It was a bright and shiny Saturday; Umi and three friends were playing on the veranda. Umi initiated they acted “mother and children”. She said, “*mu yi wasa mama da yara*” (let’s do mother and children play). Next, she assigned roles to everyone, “*nine mama, kune yara*” (I am the mother,

you are children). The children said they were hungry, and mother Umi assured them of food, “yau zamu dafa jollof rice” (today we are cooking jollof rice). First, she needed to go to the market, “zan je saya abinci a kasuwa (I am going to the market to buy foodstuff). Before she left, she instructed the children, “je ki kawo itacen” (you, get firewood); to the next child “gyara murhu” (make the cooking stove) and to the last child “dan na dawo za ki yanka tumatir da albasa” (you will cut tomatoes and onion when I come back). Off she went and came back with improvised items which she identified: *shinkafa* [rice], *tumatir* [tomato], *albasa* [onion], *barkono* [pepper], Maggie, *kabeji* [cabbage]. They prepared the food together. Figure 8.10 shows Umi feeding her *bebi*” (baby) with the cooked “jollof rice”.

### Figure 8.10

*Mother Umi feeds “Bebi”*

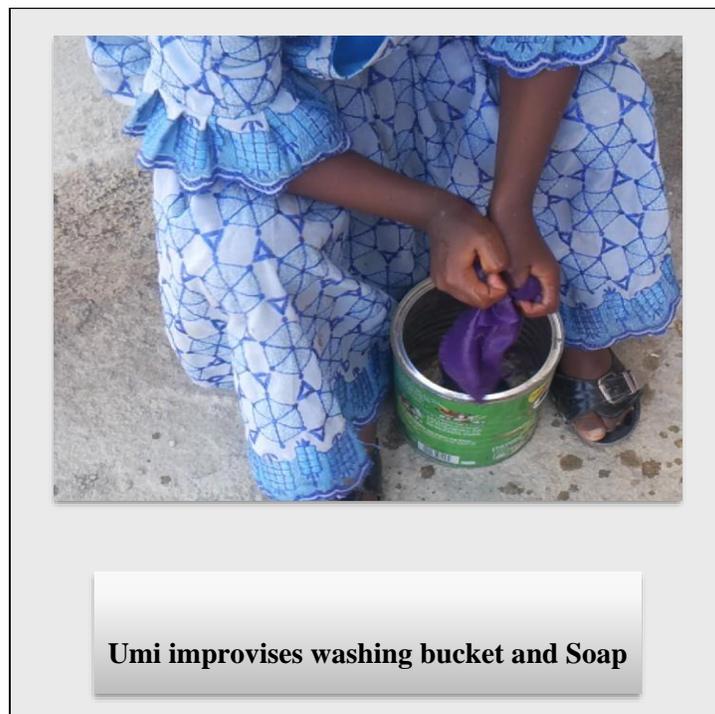


### Excerpt 8.15 Umi roleplay laundry chore

It was a warm Tuesday evening; Umi was alone on the veranda and playing. Wrapped on her back was a teddy bear she referred to, “bebi na” (my baby). Umi swept the play area and separated bebi’s clean and dirty clothes for washing. She improvised the washing materials and labelled them. The washing basin was an empty beverage tin, a stone for bar soap, and fabrics for clothes. Umi She described her actions, “*riguna bebi sun yi datti*” (baby’s clothes are dirty), “*zan jika a boketi*” (I will soak in the bucket), “*zan wanke da sabulu*” (I will wash with soap). Figure 8.11 show Umi engaging in washing. As she washed, Umi said the baby was crying. She then gently pat it, “*bebi ki de na kuka, mama ta na wanki*” (baby stop crying, mother is washing).

### Figure 8.11

*Umi Acts Laundry Play*



## **8.4. Parental Support Strategies**

The section presents interview data on how parents and family members perceived they provided literacy support for Umi in the home. The responses were those of Umi, mother and Yakub, voiced in Hausa and translated into English. The interview data provided corroboration of the observation data. They yielded six themes: Encouraging child's engagement in community activities, Storytelling, Everyday house chores and religious activities, Facial expressions, Assisting the child with school homework, and Engaging the child with media technology.

### **8.4.1. Encouraging Child's Engagement in Community Activities**

The mother revealed that they encouraged Umi to attend community activities in the company family members, go on errands and visiting her extended family and following mother for shopping. The most common community ceremonies included apprenticeship graduation, *walima* and naming a newborn child of family and friends. In excerpt 8.6, Umi attended a community pre-wedding ceremony. The family believed such outings enabled Umi to enrich her cultural knowledge and out of school experiences. Also, such engagements allowed Umi to ask questions and collect discarded materials for her playful activities. Mum recapped that:

We deliberately take her along to *walima* ((*walima* is a pre-wedding ceremony or send-off party before *shaadi*- actual wedding)). When you get to the event centre, sometimes she asks questions (.) like, is the *amarya* ((bride-to-be)) beautiful? "Will they give children fanta?" ... she joins other children to play. After the event, she will collect empty bottles and bottle tops for her play at home ... I cannot pin the exact things she is learning, but she is learning.

Mum further highlighted that their community ceremonies are religious-based, and Umi participated in enabling her to listen to the Imam ((Islamic preacher)) preach in Arabic and Hausa languages. They learn trading ideas according to Qur'anic injunctions and receive guidance for the future. She gave an example:

Anything about graduation, like tailoring, artisan, is always a religious event. because as a Muslim, you must work to earn a living, it is from the Holy Quran (.) Also, for *wallima* (pre-wedding celebration) it is mixed with prayers and fun So, it becomes a kind of religious event ... Children are introduced to it (.) someday they will want to get married ... and the ceremony is familiar to them. That's why they will go there and see what is happening.

Also, Umi went to the market with mum to buy her shoes and clothes for the Eid celebration ((celebration after Ramadan)), took her to the tailor for her measurements. Additionally, Umi voiced that she participated in errands, "*Ina je saya Maggie*" (I can buy Maggie). Mum expanded that engaging Umi in running errands to buy things opposite their house was preparing her commercial literacy skills:

I send her to buy me things like soap and Maggie ((cooking seasoning cubes)) We usually explain how to spend the money (.) You will be given change for the money or there is no change ... it helps her to know her expectation from the person selling to her ... Toh, I write the amount I give her on paper and write the amount they will give for the change.

Other engagements outside the house included a journey to the village to visit grandparents and other family relations who were herdsmen. In addition, Yakub revealed, “Umi enjoyed engaging in farming activities like milking cows”. Generally, they felt that involving Umi in such activities helped her learn about the environment. They further highlighted that explaining and describing things to the child does impact her learning, a strategy the mother disclosed she used a lot when interacting with Umi. Indeed, taking time to explain things was evident in the observations data during mother-child interactions.

#### **8.4.2. Storytelling**

Family members emphasised that storytelling was an important activity in the family. For example, Umi voiced, “zan gaya shanu kaka” (I will tell you about grandfather’s cows). Yakub explained further:

Umi can narrate stories about milking cows and sing some cattle herders’ songs (.)  
Although she cannot sing them very well ... She tries to recollect and tell stories  
that the grandmother told them in the village.

Yaya ((Umi’s sister) added, “( ) Umi can tell stories about rocks on the big hill”. Umi interjected; we stand on the rock and shout muuuu! (h). Kaka makes sweet fura da nono ((Hausa-Fulani indigenous food)). The mother further highlighted they engaged Umi in dialogue form of retelling their family history.

### 8.4.3. Everyday House Chores and Religious Activities

The family revealed engaging Umi in house chores and religious activities were intentional. Probing further, mum recapped how involving the child in routines such as cooking preparation were supportive to Umi familiarizing with objects in the kitchen.

So, I can ask her to go and bring (.) matchbox to light the stove ...

Or go and bring the pot for cooking soup, or the pot for preparing tuwo

((common food in Plateau state prepared with cornmeal)). And if we are making

miya tumatir ((tomato stew), I will ask her to bring the pot for cooking stew

You see, she is learning different pots are used for different things.

She also elaborated that she intentionally described items of foodstuff and utensils and believed they were all part of the literacy learning process in the home. Indeed, this information aligned with figure 8.6, where Umi engaged in pounding pepper with the mortar and pestle.

On the aspect of religious practice, mum stressed that as Muslims, it was important to teach Umi skills involved in prayer and that the best way to get her to do that was by seeing adults doing it. Mum further stated the importance of learning *alwala* ((ablution)) early in life. That when the voice of the community Imam is heard in the atmosphere calling for *salah* ((prayer)) “*Allhu Akbar Ashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah*” ((God is great, I bear witness that there is no god except the one God)). Then they perform *alwala* ((ablution)), a religious obligation: an occasion in which the children imitate their parents. Mum’s response corroborated some observation data about Umi’s engagement in religious activities in the home.

Uhhh (.) *alwala* has a step by step procedure. For example, when the Imam calls for *sallah*, I will carry my *buta* and ask Umi to carry hers. Now she learns to carry it without being

told and fill it with water(.) we will go to the alwala spot and watch how I am doing it, and she will imitate me. Gradually, she understands following the steps involved, and they also repeat prayers they hear from us and our body movements during salah.

(Field note, 5/11/17).

Mum believes that children at an early age learn many things through imitations; as they observe family members, they usually reproduce others' acts beyond alwala. Even during salah ((prayer)), Umi would imitate others' actions.

#### **8.4.4. Facial Expressions**

Mum and Yakub pointed out facial expressions as one of the ways mum communicated with Umi. Mum stressed that Umi knew how to read the meaning of her facial expressions occasioned by the child's involvement in unacceptable behaviours, especially in the presence of visitors. She gave an example:

Like when we have visitors, and we offer them something to drink or eat Umi sometimes will go close and even stares at them (.) while eating may be expecting them to share with her ... when she looks at my face (h) she understands it means to go out.

#### **8.4.5. Assisting Child with Homework**

The family revealed that they helped Umi with homework. Yakub cited, "Some of the assignments are reading and writing numbers, learning English alphabets, learning to write in Arabic and now

we are teaching her to learn to recite memory verse from the Qur'an". Probing further, mum reiterated:

We do not buy other books apart from the textbooks recommended by Arabic and nursery schools (.) But the nursery school keep the books with them and she comes home with it only when she has homework ... to colour, read numbers and alphabets (.) and write in the workbooks (.) we assist her in doing it ... we explain things to her and respond to her questions.

Indeed, during observation visits with the Umi family, mum was observed supporting Umi to complete writing activity in her Arabic workbook as in excerpt 8.10 and figure 8.7.

#### **8.4.6. Allowing Child Access Media Technology**

The family voiced the perspective about allowing Umi to access media and supporting the child's literacy experience in the home.

Yakub's view:

The children watch TV (.), but we (.) supervise what they watch ... especially watching TV is more of religious activity combined with entertainment, singing and dance ... During the celebration of Prophet Mohammed's birthday we call it "*mawlid*" (.) they watch TV ... yes! They watch singing and dancing to the praise of the Holy Prophet in Arabic.

Mum confirmed, "...the children sing and dance along with the lyrics as they watch the different religious performances on TV". The above information indicates that religious inclined tv programmes motivated the child to access the tv. However, mum clarified that beyond religious

programmes, “Umi likes cartoon *Tom and Jerry* and watches with her Yaya ((sister)) ... she can operate the TV with the remote control”. She then pointed out a major challenge to engage more with media technology “...when we are watching TV, electricity can just go off ((electricity power failure from service provider)) ... and the children will change to play ...or house chores”.

### **8.5. Summary of Umi’s Literacy Experiences**

Umi’s family settings of physical spaces and social mediators provided a positive environment for the child’s oral development expressed mainly in the first language (Hausa) and English and Arabic mainly during homework and Islamic engagements. The child learned and used vocabulary in describing activities and experiences (like laundry, cooking, trading) emanating from the everyday social interactions with Mum, elder sister, the researcher, and her dramatic plays. Listening to and watching religious music also contributed to the development of listening and visual literacies. Attends community ceremonies (naming, wedding and graduation) and visiting extended family offered chances to develop listening and narrative skills. For instance, she listens to religious sermons during ceremonies and describes activities she observed like herders rearing and milking cows.

Furthermore, interview data showed that Umi participated in singing and dancing activities with Uncle, and she operates a TV remote control to watch her favourite Tom and Jerry cartoon. Finally, Umi’s engagement with print was principally pre-writing pictures, colouring and practising Arabic letter writing. As a result, she understands the left-to-right writing sequencing in English and the right-to-left writing orientation in Arabic and without any confusion.

## **CHAPTER 9. DISCUSSION**

### **9.1. Introduction**

The purpose of the study was to explore home literacy practices of four preschool-aged children in Jos South, Plateau state and how the children's engagements with family members and available resources impacted their literacy experiences. Through the lens of eco-cultural and ecological frameworks, to generate data. It involved using` participant observation, informal conversations, collection of photographs and follow-up family interviews which enabled the first-hand experience. Data were thematically analysed using observation and interview excerpts, pictures and diagrams as supporting evidence. Significantly, findings in the current study underscored four key environments that impacted the participating families' home literacy practices. The environments comprise Language, Religious, Child-initiated activities and Family social networks. The preschool-aged children's literacy experiences are nested in the environments. Rosemberg, Stein and Alam (2016) argue that children accumulated personal experiences, influences of their ecological and physical situations, social environment, and cultural world, facilitate their learning. Therefore, the chapter presents the discussion of the themes: language environment, religious environment, child environment and social network environment as vital in enriching the early literacy experiences of the four preschool children in Plateau State, Nigeria.

### **9.2. Language Environment**

Evidence gathered through home literacy practices of the four participating families shows that the language context constituted several activities that underpin everyday family interactions. Conspicuously, the preschool-aged children engaged with multiple languages, which provided them with foundation knowledge and vocabulary in the different languages. Notably, each family's

preferences facilitated the choice of home language. For example, Umi and Ruffy engaged Hausa, the mother tongue, for everyday interactions, while Arabic and English were for specific interactions. In contrast, Chamun often experienced interactions with English every day and less of her mother tongue, Mwaghavul. Moreover, although the child understood Hausa, it did not function as a home language; instead, it facilitates communication with friends in the neighbourhood.

On the other hand, Mide was engaged with English and Yoruba and Pidgin daily. Other language practices across the families include code-switching between languages and body language. The language practices in the different homes provided opportunities for the children to experience multiple languages. The multilingual practices support previous evidence that a Nigerian child learns two or more languages simultaneously at home (Trudell, 2018; Sanusi, 2015; Omoniyi, 2003). The findings are coherent with previous studies on multilingual settings. For example, Fern and Jiar (2016), in a qualitative case study of three Chinese families in Malaysia, found that it was common to see the three participating children learning two or more languages comprising Chinese, English, and Malay. The authors claimed language preference influenced social circle and adults' choices and abilities in the language. To better understand the central theme of language environment, four sub-themes guide the discussion; Mother: tongue a tool for supporting conversations; English language: a tool for facilitating communication and literacy engagements; Codeswitching: a tool for supporting ease in communication; and Body language: a tool for supporting mother-child communication.

### 9.2.1. Mother Tongue: a Tool for Supporting Conversations

Findings across the cases indicate that the mother tongue sustained conversations in families, although the experience differs for each preschool-aged child because of family values. However, parents' attitude enforces and monitors core cultural practices in the mother tongue across the four settings.

Ruffy and Umi families maintained a strong preference for the Hausa language through dialogues; thus, analysis of excerpts of Ruffy and Umi in chapters 6 and 8. The findings revealed Hausa is the language for greetings, daily forth and back conversations, play, leisure/entertainment, and mundane activities. For example, the Ruffy family entertained themselves with Kannywood films during which they engaged in discussion about what they were watching. Such conversations not only enriched Ruffy's listening but supported his learning of new vocabulary and narrative abilities (see excerpt 6.5). Other examples show Ruffy learning new words such as *kurkuku* (excerpt 6.1) and *kassa* (excerpt 6.2). In a similar context, the Umi family had a pattern of engaging the media to listen and sing along songs played in Hausa. For example, in excerpt 8.8, Umi was observed singing lyrics of a Hausa song displayed on the television through a DVD player. The mother explained the meanings of selected lyrics. For example, the mother taught her the importance of "ladabi" (obedient) from the song. Thus, the preschool-aged children conveniently conversed in the Hausa language.

On the other hand, Mide child experienced mother tongue daily but slightly different from the Ruffy and Umi contexts. Mide's parents often initiated a discussion with the child in the mother tongue, the Yoruba language. The child was learning greeting procedures, saying her name responding to instructions through actions and codeswitching English and Yoruba. The

engagements provided the opportunity to enrich Mide's expressive language and vocabulary in Yoruba (see excerpts 7.1 and 7.2). In excerpt 7.1, Mide expressed short greetings expressions with respect and responded to saying her name in Yoruba. Mum affirmed in the follow-up interview that the child could greet with appropriate bowing for elders. These cultural norms are beyond addressing elders but provide the child with the opportunity to communicate verbally and non-verbally (Tchombe, 2011).

In the case of Chamun, using mother tongue for everyday interaction was not a common practice in the family. However, finding revealed that the grandmother's occasional visits to the family often changed the atmosphere of the language environment. Interactions using Mwaghavul became a regular practice with her presence. Significantly, it provided the opportunity for Chamun to learn new words and reciprocate conversations with grandma. Evidence shows Chamun and grandma were engaged in storytelling (excerpt 5.2), as Chamun gave attention to listening and speaking Mwaghavul and witnessed her learning new words/phrases through songs (excerpt 5.3).

The finding of the mother tongue resonates with a recent qualitative study (Suatengco and Florida, 2020) of the home literacy practices of three families in an urban community in the Philippines. Children aged between 2- to 8-year-old children acquire conceptual knowledge of directives and fish types in their mother tongue through interactions with their grandparents. They also claimed that the children's engagements in their local languages during home chores allow the development of oral language and fluency, word study and recognition, and vocabulary. The finding of family values is consistent with Tchombe (2011) that cultural knowledge is transmitted in the mother tongue through verbal instructions, greetings, and affirmations. Thank you, good morning, good girl (Tchombe, 2011: 211). The aspect of monitoring and enforcing good conduct are documented as common mother tongue childcare practices of psychosocial surveillance in Nigeria and other

parts of Africa to inculcate indigenous knowledge and enhance language skills (Demuth, 2018; Awopegba and Nsameng, 2013; Barry and Zietlin, 2011; Esere, Omotosho and Idowu, 2011). Mother tongue practices across the cases are in tune with the National Policy for IECD (FRN, 2013b) in Nigeria, highlighting the use of desirable and culturally relevant practices such as the mother tongue in social interactions to enable the child to acquire indigenous knowledge.

### **9.2.2. English Language: a Tool for Supporting Communication and Literacy Engagements**

The study found that although English language practice was visible across the participating families, the value placed on how frequent it was engaged depended on each family's preferences. Therefore, similarities and differences existed across the cases. For example, in the families of Chamun and Mide, engaging English during everyday interactions with parent-child and child-sibling interactions was prevalent. Noticeable was the language of conversations, Bible reading and praying, carrying out child's writing and reading homework, and mundane activities such as house chores. Thus, analysis sections and excerpts in chapters 5 and 7 presented in the English language. Findings similarly revealed that books in those two home settings are in the English language, except Mide's grandmother, who had her version of the Holy Bible in Yoruba. Parents in both settings voiced similar views at different interviews. They intentionally used the English language as the main home language because they believed it was significant for enhancing the children's literacy skills and prospects in future career opportunities. Although, as earlier indicated, Mide's parents upheld the practice of using Yoruba and English are equal, but observations revealed the child communicated more often in English than Yoruba. Thus, Mide and Chamun experienced communication every day in the English language.

On the side of Ruffy and Umi families, findings showed that parents believed learning English was the school's responsibility to teach the children; nonetheless, they sometimes explained school task in English while doing homework and rarely during mundane activities. It is also evident that educational cartoon DVD's were English versions (excerpt 8. 7). These findings suggest that apart from the dominance of Hausa practices, the children sometimes engaged in English in their interactions for educational purposes. For example, Musty assisted Ruffy with homework, and interactions involved English (excerpt 6.6 and 6.7). Also, Yaya and Umi engaged in spoken English during engagement in kitchen chores to encourage the child to practice the language (excerpt 8.9). The attitude of the families to the functionality of English based on the values they attached to it, and the exiting result indicates it diversifies among the families. According to Trudell (2018), language attitude in Nigerian shows variations between ethnic groups and demographic locations. The author points out that among the Hausa communities in northern Nigeria, the Hausa language is favourable compared with other ethnic groups that preferred both English and a mother tongue for their children. Thus, multilingual practices in Nigeria often include English as a 'national self-identifier' (Trudell (2018: 240). My findings highlight the different intensities of English practice among the participating families. Moreover, it aligns with the provisions of the eco-cultural framework the child's connection to broader societal blueprint, in this case, the English language experience, a foreign and official language in the current study context.

### **9.2.3. Codeswitching: a Tool for Facilitating Communication**

Evidence derived across the cases highlights codeswitching (CS) between languages during interactions in families. Specifically, findings show that engagements in codeswitching supported the children to progress with conversations during face-to-face communication with family members and completing school homework. The context of the use of CS was similar for Chamun and Mide as they engaged it when negotiating and conveying their intentions with their grandmothers during conversations. Also, Ruffy and Umi contexts of using CS were similar. Codeswitching use was an attempt by the children to practice vocabulary knowledge to express their intents. Their older siblings engaged CS and codeswitched between Hausa and English languages when assisting them with school homework and helpful for smooth expressions during homework interactions. Worth noting, social situations necessitated practising CS, which supported the children to progress with interactions thereby, facilitates a smooth transition between the languages (Drury, 2004). Also, my findings showed the social agreement between CS users and how it facilitated communication. Woolard (2006) maintains codeswitching is socially meaningful rather than indicative of a speaker's incompetencies. Whitehead (2004: 42) also supports my finding, who affirms that there is no linguistic evidence for the 'misinformed' view that codeswitching indicates inadequate and confused knowledge of languages. However, there is no known research on the practice of codeswitching among families with preschool-aged children in the home environment in Nigeria; however, Trudell (2018) studied primary school children's codeswitching experience in the classroom context.

The findings also resonate well with Callaway (2012) ethnographic multiple case studies of two Libyan American and Syrian American immigrant children in the US. The current research discovered a related codeswitching behaviour and mixing English and Arabic to ease

communication with family members and Arabic-speaking friends in their home environments (Callaway, 2012). The current finding confirms previous submissions (Trudell, 2018; Park, 2013; Callaway, 2012; Gort, 2012; Drury, 2004), highlighting that codeswitching is popular among people with linguistic diversities.

#### **9.2.4. Body Language: a Tool for Supporting Mother-child Communication**

Findings across the homes indicate that using body language was a practice employed to bolster communication; specifically, the practice promoted mother-child communication. For example, facial expression from a mother was to give instructions, directives, approval or disapproval of child's actions), head-nodding (to indicate yes and no responses), giving affirmations to child's effort (clapping) and kneeling (to show respect to elders during greetings). It was evident that the children promptly responded to and understood the body expressions in all the cases. Literature underscores the importance of gestures such as combining spoken language with body movements or facial expressions to convey meanings in social interactions (Awopegba, Odoulowu and Nsamenang, 2013; Flewitt. 2008). Therefore, the current findings suggest that body language communication is a catalyst for children's literacy development, raising awareness for early literacy research to expand focus on this kind of practice since there is a scarcity of documented knowledge about it in Nigeria.

### **9.3. Religious Environment**

It is not surprising that the religious environment impacted the children's literacy experiences significantly. Indeed, religious activities and resources participating families played a significant role in children's development (Isichei, 2004; Omolewa, 2007; Ngbea and Achinuke, 2014). The

religious environment in the current study refers to the families' practical practice of faith in the Supreme Being, which Christian families called 'God' while the Muslim families as 'Allah' (Isichei 2004; Omolewa, 2007; Ngbea & Achinuke, 2014). Across the home settings, various family's religious engagements in everyday interactions encompass joint prayers, shared readings of the Bible and Quran, singing and dancing to religious melodies, recitations, and memorizations of verses in the sacred texts. Apart from participating in religious activities in the home, Ruffy and Umi attended an Arabic school where Mallam (teacher) taught them the knowledge of Islam and the Arabic language. This finding echoes Hamza (2010) that attending Arabic school is a mandatory requirement for inculcating Islamic norms of the consciousness of Allah, Islamic and Qur'anic literacy, and "Tajwid" (dictions and memorization of the Quran), and knowledge of the pillars of Islam. Also, Mide and Chamun attended morning Sunday school every week, a religious and educational setting attached to the church where children learn the tenets of the Christian faith through print, media, and language resources through trained religious teachers. The findings relate well with literature documented by Reyes and Esteban-Guitart (2016: 165) that some Polish Christian home religious practices in a London community reflect the practices in which children participate in the larger Polish Faith Community's 'multiple literacy strategies embracing: song, dance, gesture, repetition, recitation and memorization of Hail Mary Prayer' individually in proximate family gatherings. Evidence showed that apart from the children learning about their religious and spiritual values, the engagements in the activities were meaningful to their early literacy experiences.

This section considers the literacy opportunities offered by different religious practices across the settings.

### **9.3.1. Family Prayer Time: Opportunities for Literacy Interactions**

Findings in the current study denote that similarities and differences emerged from the family prayer times as a foundation for meaningful literacy interactions. The activities included daily family devotions in the Christian families, which incorporate joint Bible reading and memorisation of scriptures, discussion on bible passages, praying, singing gospel songs, and shared parent-child Bible story reading and retelling. For example, Mide's parents corroborated during the interview that they engaged Mide in reading and prayer during daily morning family devotions in the living room. The event enhances her listening and speaking skills and exposes her to religious texts.

On the other hand, religious activities practised in the Muslim homes involved *alwala* (ablution), *Salah* (prayer), memorisation of the Qur'an, reading religious books (*Sikitabu*, *Taoheed* and *Brubul Maraf*), narrating religious stories, listening to religious songs. The Arabic language was a key resource in the religious practices of Muslim families. According to the participating mothers in this context, learning the Arabic language is a precursor of discovering Islam knowledge and is used for laying an early foundation for *salah*, reading religious books, learning to write in Arabic and memorizing Qur'an verses. For example, in excerpt 6.9, Ruffy memorized the Arabic alphabet and Qur'an verses. Also, Figures 8.1 and 8.11 showed Umi engaged in joint prayers with sibling and mum and writing the Arabic alphabets, respectively.

Additionally, in both settings, findings showed the practice of religious salutation in Arabic "Salama Alaikum" (peace be upon you) and the response "Wa Alaikum salam" was highly sustained during my visitations to the families. The families also created time for telling children religious stories. The findings suggest religious practices are resources to enrich the children's language skills and print experience. This speculation reflects Lawal's (2016) position about the

connection between Islam religious practices and literacy. The author upholds that recitation and memorization in Islam are spiritual literacy comprising the ‘3 Rs of reading: Reciting, Reflecting (or thinking) and Ramifying (reproducing)’ Lawal (2016: p 8). Again, the findings harmonise with earlier ethnographic studies (Callaway, 2012; Alidina, 2017) of Muslim immigrants living in Canada and America, respectively, indicating families’ religious practices involve learning the Arabic language, oral recitation, and memorization of Qur’an and daily prayers.

### **9.3.2 Religious texts: Tools for Strengthening Literacy Experience**

It is clear from the findings that parents regularly drew their children’s attention to print through religious books, which they believed was significant to their faith and lives. Parents pointed children to the importance of the books as they involved them in shared-book reading. The finding was profound in Mide’s daily family routine, family devotions, and Chamun’s mother-child shared reading interactions. For example, during Chamun’s shared Bible reading with mum, she could handle the book by flipping through the pages, touching words, referring to pictures, and reading along with mum (see excerpts 5.13 and 5.14). Mide’s engagements during daily devotions involved reading and prayer events, which enhance her listening, and speaking skills. The event similarly exposed her to religious texts like the Holy Bible, the “Open Heaven” meditational manual, and her own Children Bible with pictures. In both cases, parents served as models to the children in helping them to connect words and pictures, reading and giving explanations of the Bible passages and praying. The culture of reading the Bible/children’s bible stories and praying together was every day in the families. Tatel-Suatengco and Florida (2018) argue that prayers and discussions on Bible passages between the children and family members are regular practices. The study also indicates that religious images of Jesus, Saints, Mary, and the rosary serving as multiple channels for enriching oral language experiences.

Research has shown that children acquire emergent literacy skills through learning Bible stories and other religious activities. For example, Sawyer *et al.* (2016) study documents that mothers' engagements in shared-book reading (pointing at words while reading) and teaching print concepts supports their children's early literacy experiences. Also, McMillon and Edwards (2004) establish that Bible stories and scriptures memorisation enhance print awareness, sight-reading, vocabulary building, comprehension and oral language development.

Similarly, findings in Umi and Ruffy settings indicate the mothers engaged the children in reading religious books. However, due to the researcher's cultural differences with the families, it was not convenient to have a first-hand experience. But mothers confirmed through the family follow up interview that they helped their children to understand and read the Qur'an for religious purposes. Other religious practices involved narrating stories of key Prophets in the Holy Qur'an, praying, memorization and recitation of the Qur'an (see excerpt 6.1). For instance, Ruffy's own experience encapsulated the expansion of his comprehension to represent Anabi Yusuf's story with a drawing to describe the main character inside a Well after listening to the account during their leisure time with the mother. Regarding Umi's experience, her engagement in practising Arabic writing in her mishit handwriting workbook demonstrated competence in a proper pencil grip, positioning, and directionality rule (See excerpt 8.11 and Figure 8.6).

Significantly, the patterns of findings across the homes indicate that the use of religious texts in the house was helping the children to get familiar with print and words through their experience of engaging in reading, writing, and drawing. Thus, the children experienced literacy through their engagement with religious resources. But, equally, it illustrates that, other than engaging religious materials for a spiritual purpose, the activities pointed the children to the significance of literacy.

The findings resonate with a previous study (Reyes and Esteban-Guitart, 2016) in a London community. Families value the Qur'an, and their children learn to recite from the holy book. The children also garner similar experiences with their Imam in Arabic classes, during which they memorise texts by repeating the recitation by the teacher in Arabic.

### **9.3.3. Religious Interactions: Tool for Supporting Receptive and Expressive Language**

The use of the various religious prints connects with the children's literacy development, particularly receptive and expressive language. For example (Excerpt 5.13), Chamun displayed listening and narrating through retelling the story of "Noah and the Ark" and asking critical questions, which expanded the conversation with mum about the character of God and thus boosted her vocabulary. Besides, the child utilised the portraits of Jesus as an environmental space for praying to Jesus. An example was when Chamun deliberately poured on the flour the sister had mopped, and mum scolded her. She became remorse and afterwards sat facing the crucifixion portrait, looked at it and gently voiced, '*shorry Jesus ... I pour water in floor*' (last paragraph 5.2). Also, Mide utilised the pictures in her workbook (Figures 7.9 A and B) and created a prayer (Excerpt 7.16).

Furthermore, the children recited and memorised Bible verses with family members scaffolding through repetitive reading and giving interpretations. Also, they sang songs during family devotion and leisure and verbally expressed prayers. An earlier study (Tatel-Suatengco and Florida, 2018) revealed Pilipino children in Manila verbalised prayers, jointly read and dialogue on Bible stories with older siblings. Also, my finding echoes Esteban-Guitart (2016), who claimed some Polish Catholics children in London using multiple literacy approaches of song and dance.

The current findings have filled the gap of the shortage of knowledge in literacy research exploring the potential and viability of religious environments regarding preschool-aged children's literacy learning. That is a good development as most literacy research in Nigeria has been focused on school-related literacy practices (Oyetunde *et al.* 2016; Muodumogu, 2014; Okebukola, Owolabi and Onafowokan, 2013).

#### **9.4. Child-initiated Activities**

A striking finding across the cases showed the children actively initiated activities through play. That provides opportunities to allow them to dig into their literacy and language world. The play resources emerged from locally available materials that triggered their interests. However, a significant resource for the children was using home language to verbally express their actions in play situations, as evidenced across sections of child-initiated activities across the four analysis chapters. Indeed, previous studies (Daniels, 2016; Roskos and Christie, 2013; Tsao, 2008) agree that play impacts children's early literacy skills.

Precisely, my findings highlight role-play facilitated the children's vocabulary building, and creative play enriched their prewriting and reading experiences. This has demonstrated an expansion of research my effort to document the self-motivated account of preschool-aged children's play activities in the home instead of the concentration on children's play in school settings (Roskos and Christie, 2013; Woolnough, 2012).

#### 9.4.1 Role-play: Opportunities for Supporting Vocabulary Building

The preschool-aged children in the study made progress in their language experiences by acquiring vocabulary in the mother tongue through role play. The children role-played alone and at other times with family members and neighbourhood friends. Significantly, they consistently explored and expressed their experiences with oral language. Thus, Guilfoyle and Mistry (2013) subscribe to the effectiveness of supporting children's language development.

For example, Umi identified and repeatedly mentioned the items key to her play, such as *kwalabe* (bottles), *ruwa* (water), *nauyi* (heavy) (see excerpt 8.12). Also, she was creative in describing the roles of the play team and objects. An example is excerpt 8.14 when Umi and friends roleplay a mother and her children. For instance, she said, *nine mama, kune yara* (I am the mother, you are children) and assigned a task to one of them, *gyara murhu* (get ready the cooking stove). Also, she named the food ingredients items: *shinkafa* (rice), *tumatir* (tomato), *albasa* (onion), *barkono* (pepper), *kabeji* (cabbage).

Ruffy engaged codeswitching to describe the object he made to his elder brother. He said, *trumpet ne, zan hura a class gobe* (this is a trumpet, I will blow it in the class tomorrow) (Excerpt 6.15). Also, Chamun, while roleplaying a driver, she described a car accident scene using the word *accident* (Excerpt 5.18). Another play showed her roleplay cooking by improvising kitchen utensils and described *yellow cup*, *big pot* and *red plate*. She spontaneously named her local menu as *teh-re*, and then she moved on to label her improvised ingredients in the Hausa language: *alefo* and *acca*.

Literature reveals children learn by using words or experiences they had previously acquired and innovate ways of absorbing them as their own (Bruce, 2011; Palmer and Bayley, 2008). Also,

Heath (2016) suggests social-dramatic play offers children opportunities to use multiple channels for expressing an attitude, character intensions and desires, leading to vocabulary enhancement.

Indeed, Mide, in a play situation, sang in their mother tongue to calm baby brother's restlessness. She sang a song with dancing actions in the Yoruba language with repetitive words: *Jojolo, omo kekere, jojolo oo* (cradle, cradle small child). Bruce and Spratt, 2011: 106) affirm that 'action songs are an introduction to rhyme' and making movements while singing is vital for brain development. Although the context of their emphasis is the English language, this study draws attention to the child's use of the mother tongue and the advantage of developing speech, body movements and self-expression through dancing.

The findings suggest the potential of role-playing in enriching children's vocabulary; therefore, a future study could consider preschool-aged children's language repertoire. Unfortunately, this is the least researched aspect of early literacy development that requires further research in early childhood literacy in Nigeria.

#### **9.4.2. Creativity: a Tool for Emergent Literacy Experience**

In the study, it was clear that the parents' intention to provide a child-friendly environment was to increase their children's school-related skills. However, findings derived from the study indicate three of the children demonstrated creativity during their play engagements practising writing and reading skills. They drew signs and verbally gave them meanings. For example, Chamun skillfully gripped an improvised stick as a pencil and concentrated on making marks while playing on the hip of sand. She simultaneously talked and drew horizontal and vertical lines initially and then progressed to complicated scribbling (zig-zag patterns). Then, still playing on the sand, she moved ahead with the mother's support to write and read the alphabet letters (see Figure 5.7). A child's

ability to name letters of the alphabet suggests an initial beginning reader level (Vorkapic and Katic, 2020; Palmer and Bayley, 2008).]

Playfully, Mide suitably formed an alphabet with eatable raw beans and rightly named it ‘letter S’. In a different play situation, she incorporated various writings on her whiteboard, which looked like a puzzle. And brilliantly dissected and read the numbers and alphabet separately and then assigned names of shapes to the last set of drawings, which gave her writings more meaning. Finally, Ruffy retells the story of Anabi Yusuf by drawing a picture. Remarkably, he attracted the attention of his listeners and verbally assigned meanings to the circle around the image as the Well and some dotted spots as water. Heath (2016) affirms that play enables children to use their hands to create sketching, drawing, and modelling representations to demonstrate stored memory knowledge.

Several scholars argue that materials availability is central in children’s play. For instance, Gripton (2017) emphasised that children need material resources to represent their ideas; Dune (2008), Li, Hestenes and Wang, (2016) stressed that children use available resources to express their ideas during play, like converting cardboard boxes to cars. In addition, Bruce (2014) and Dunn (2008) highlighted those play activities symbolise many experiences opportunities to use contextualised vocabulary. Finally, as evidenced in the current study, role-play offered preschool-aged children the opportunities to enrich their experiences of oral language, phonological awareness, and print knowledge (Heath, 2016).

The findings indicate that the children involved ways that highlighted an understanding of literacy embedded in play. For instance, creativity provided the opportunity for the children to explore their potentials by scaffolding their learning spaces through improvisation of resources, self-

expression and using a memory of stored words in conversations and play. The finding agrees with Woods (2017), who claimed children fully explore their potentials by participating and making their voice heard, demonstrating competencies and learning within environments that afford them many possibilities.

The finding indicates the families provided means through which the children can moderate the potential schoolification experiences in the home. The preceding discussion on child-initiated play environment in all the families indicates a balancing up with school-related skills of emergent literacies. The four preschool children simultaneously play with numerous indoor and outdoor materials and experiencing multiliteracies. At the same time, parents were available to provide support through a child-friendly environment by the supply of play materials, space, and guidance, thereby allowing them to engage in play. Siencyn (2008) argued that play is inherent to childhood, and children have the motivation to explore and create. When the environment offers them materials, they discover ways to express and develop their thoughts in creative play. Literature has revealed that the increasing phenomenon of schoolification of childhood may weaken and reduced opportunities for children-initiated play and creativity at both home and school (Weale, 2021; Neudorf et al., 2017; Richardson, 2013). Therefore, the current findings suggest that when children are allowed to play freely, their language and literacy experiences thrive, as demonstrated by the participating children.

### **9.5. Family Social Network Environment (FSNE)**

Another significant finding of the study is the imperative of the family social network environment. It involved family members and the immediate community in supporting the

preschool-aged children's literacy experience. Thus, the section considers categories of family networks of mediators and the unique strategies they employed in providing their supportive roles. The hierarchical diagram presented in Appendix P illustrates the relationship between family social networks (FSN) and the children. The findings indicate four significant patterns of FSN interactions that emerged from the study. They are parent-child, grandparent-child, sibling-child, and child-initiated agency. Besides the conventional patterns of parent-child interactions, several studies have identified different categories of adult/child interactions in literacy mediated activities such as sibling-child (Serpell and Nsamenang, 2014; Tchombe, 2011; Volk and Acosta, 2004; Williams, 2004), grandparent-child (Johnson, 2010; Olmedo, 2004), and child agency (Gregory, Long and Volk, 2004; Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The interactions are proximal processes that form the primary engines (Tudge and Hogan, 2005; Bronfenbrenner, 1994) for building early literacy foundations in the home. Also, Tatel-Suatengco and Florida (2018) claimed that family members involving parents, grandparents and older siblings participated in mediating literacy experiences of Pilipino children.

However, a notable finding of the FSN is the variations in gender involvement of parents across the families; dissimilarities exist regarding those visible in participation. In the light of this, all mothers actively observable in the homes, but only fathers in Chamun and Mide families were visible. Although the fathers in Ruffy and Umi's settings were not visible, they indirectly supported providing literacy materials. Both Ruffy and Umi mothers stated it was in line with their religious practice that the father's primary role was to provide for the family. At the same time, the women handle the care and education of children in the home. The finding is consistent with Alidina (2017), who claimed that Muslim patriarchal societies submit to the teachings of the Qur'an that men are delegated the roles of provider for the family, while women are assigned the

role of caregivers and recognised as “the first school” of the child. Similarly, previous studies (Barton and Hamilton, 1998; Sawyer et al., 2016) have discovered gender dissimilarities in family literacy studies. Thus, the study identified the significance of the different categories of the FSN in the following subsections.

### **9.5.1. Parental Involvement: Environment for Supporting Literacy Development**

Findings across the cases revealed that parents were committed to providing resources and opportunities for the children in the home. That includes storytelling, reading and exchanging ideas, engaging them in conversations, play, non-verbal communication, giving them access to indoors and outdoors space, buying school recommended school books and helping with homework. The findings challenged previous studies on parental participation in Nigeria, which marginalised the potential of everyday activities and funds of knowledge in the literacy experiences of children and instead focused on the mainstream practices (Muodumogu, 2014; Maduekwe and Adeosun, 2010) and teaching strategies of teachers in the school contexts (Okebukola, 2018; Oyetunde *et al.*, 2016). The current study attempts to bridge this gap by suggesting different views on parents’ engagement in preschool-aged children’s literacy experiences. The discussion on parental involvement is below.

#### **9.5.1.1 Providing Freedom to Access Literacy Space and Resources**

Across the homes, parents allowed the children to access spaces and resources that contributed to their literacy experiences. For example, all the preschool-aged children could use the living room to engage in meaningful literacy opportunities, as demonstrated in the analysis chapters. Two out of the four parents specifically assigned a corner in the living and furnished with a whiteboard, whiteboard markers, and chairs for the child’s age, for the children. While the other two allowed

the children to use the space at their disposal. The freedom of space spurred the children to engage in literacy activities such as doing their school homework, singing songs, making representations through drawing, and engaging in music and dance.

Additionally, the freedom is not limited to indoor space. The children had access to an outdoor environment, enabling them to source play materials and creatively transform the space into a literacy opportunity. Also, the children freely engaged their parents in different interactions such as playing with them, requesting storytelling and conversing freely. Nsamenang (2015) attested to the viability of the home environment encompassing physical space, things, and people linking with the cultural practices that permeate family life and mundane activities. Furthermore, Pahl and Burnett (2016) established that home and community are valuable literacy spaces for understanding multimodality, material culture, and cultural geography. In the same vein, several studies corroborated that participating families provided multiple meaningful occasions for their children to encounter language and print that promote a positive environment and literacy-rich activities (Tatel-Suatengco and Florida, 2020; Sawyer *et al.*, 2016; Fern and Jiar, 2013; Carter, Chard and Pool, 2009). However, the potentials of exploring family literacy with the connections between place, space and literacy in the home environment in Nigeria has not received much attention.

#### **9.5.1.2. Involving Children in Meaningful Mundane Interactions**

Findings across the four settings showed mothers engaged their preschool-aged children in purposeful mundane interactions such as taking turns to speak, children learning new words during leisure, responding to mother's facial expressions, and engaging them in chores that provided opportunities for them to listen and to express themselves. These are cultural pathways with

potential for rich language and cognitive learning opportunities (Sawyer *et al.*, 2016; Carter, Chard and Pool; Tchombe, 2011; Omolewa, 2007). Likewise, Neuman, Pinkham and Kaefer (2016) claimed children gain knowledge through everyday conversations with adults. Specifically, mothers engaged the children in meaningful engagements of shared understanding with the children at mealtime, shared reading. Those interactions support them to experience vocabulary, listening and speaking, and narrative language. Previous studies that showed conversations between adults and children during mealtime (Kultti and Pramling, 2015; Gillen, Gamannossi and Hancock, 2008; Weisner, 2000), play, house chore and watching television (Tatel-suatengco and Florida, 2020; Sawyer, Cyck, Sandilos and Hammer, 2016; Fern and Jiar, 2013; Weisner, 2000), cooking and visiting (Weisner, 2000).

### **9.5.1.3. Encouraging the use of Technology**

Notably, the study outcomes signify that technology resources like television and mobile phones were available across the home settings. However, the children were limited in enjoying the television environment due to inadequate electricity supply, but mobile phones were handy. Notwithstanding, observations in two homes revealed that the preschool-aged children experienced written language on the TV screen and dancing to music watched from TV stations. Specifically, Ruffy's mother confirmed during the follow-up interview that Ruffy often repeats what he watched on TV during solitary play. She said, "You find him repeating what actors in movies, he will turn and start speaking to us in English". Ogah (2009) argued that speeches of several film characters could encourage children's language development.

On the other hand, the mobile phone was a handy tool used to speak with distant relations, reflecting on past events on recorded videos and playing games. Only one family attested the

preschool-aged child had access to the father's laptop for playing games and watching films. Previous studies affirmed that allowing children to engage with media resources facilitates their exposure to visual literacies, embracing learning to reading images and actions, screen text and directionality (Flewitt, 2009; Ogah, 2009). Empirical evidence likewise indicates children acquired comprehension about the world through songs, rhymes, new vocabulary, colour, shape, letter and number recognition and socialisation skills in their engagement with film and TV (Marsh, 2008). Besides, when parents' dialogue on the programmes children watch on TV in follow-up interactions facilitates their literacy development (Ogah, 2009).

#### **9.5.1.4. Direct Involvement in Teaching**

Result reveals that the parents in performing their role as first teachers employed several teaching methods: storytelling, giving explanations, responding and reinforcing children's responses, and helping with homework. For example, parents involved in teaching children the read religious text. However, strategies differed across the homes. Generally, it involved picture reading with the child, and the adult pointed on words with fingers as the child followed. This finding agrees with research that revealed parents' role as teachers demonstrated parent-child shared reading interactions in which parents' points to and identify letters sounds (Tatel-Suatengco and Florida, 2020; Saracho, 2017). Others include the repeat and say method in teaching Arabic sounds, read aloud. At the same time, the child listened, interpreting religious text after reading and guiding the child to write numbers and letters and assessing the child's comprehension after storytelling. Importantly, parents reinforced clapping and giving praise when the children complete tasks. Vygotsky (1978) validated that children gain specific knowledge from parents, peers, and teachers who are more knowledgeable in their proximal development zone (ZPD). Burns and Radford (2008) justified in a study involving three Nigerian parent-child dyads that instructional talk was

the preferred strategy for enhancing their children's language development. In the current study, parents guided their children in completing literacy tasks using language strategies such as giving clues, questioning, and explanations that helped them progress with their writing, reading and colouring experiences. In their research, Sawyer *et al.* (2016) established that more mothers used language strategies like open-ended questioning and probing children's responses to support their children's language development.

### **9.5.2. Siblings' Interaction: Environment for Literacy Experience**

A key finding of this study revealed meaningful interactions among siblings across the families, which impacted the preschool-aged children's literacy experiences. Evidence generated shows that three families with older siblings in primary school supported their preschool-aged siblings with school homework. Worth noting are literacy interactions between Musty and Ruffy when carrying involving counting numbers and writing activities as homework tasks. Generally, the older siblings engaged younger ones in conversations, including exchanges through turn-taking and assisted them in learning new concepts. An example of the latter is the case of Yaya in Excerpt 8.1, supporting Umi to learn new English words during house chores. The current findings resonate with Mweru's (2005, 2011) findings that older siblings who are already in school instructed their younger ones in school-related activities such as counting, saying the alphabets, scribbling and developing intellectual and language skills. However, the case was different in the Mide family, where the preschool-aged child was the older sibling. Mide was responsible for caring for and keeping baby brother company, including when their mother was engaged in house chores. Her custodian role (Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, 2013) provided several opportunities to

sing and play with him. For example, in excerpt 7.14, she utilised family funds of knowledge (Ngwaru, 2014) and sang a lullaby in her mother tongue for her baby brother. The finding of siblings' interactions in this study echoes Volk and de Acosta (2004) that sibling caretaking and instructing are valued features within the family setting. The current finding of siblings' mediation contributes to additional knowledge about the pedagogy of funds of knowledge utilised to develop early literacy in the home. That draws attention to more research on the roles of siblings in mediating early literacy in the home.

### **9.5.3. Grandma-child interactions: tools for Language Experience**

Findings showed that grandparents served as literacy mediators in two families. Their roles enriched language experience and promoting cultural heritage to preschool-aged children. They employed a conversational strategy of exposing the children to language mother tongue, storytelling through songs, and encouraging them through positive reactions and reinforcements by praising their progress in communicating with various languages. Although the IECD (2013b) policy in Nigeria emphasised the role of grandparents in sharing indigenous knowledge with children, little is known about these crucial roles in the transmission of their rich funds of knowledge to the younger generations. The current study contributes by identifying how the grandmothers played their roles in enriching the preschool-aged children's bilingual literacy and cultural heritage.

### **9.5.4. Community Network: Space for Spurring Everyday Literacy Engagements**

Findings across the four families revealed a similar characteristic of a network between them and the community through a partnership with educational and religious settings. Although they differed in their religious beliefs (Islam and Christianity), all participating family members shared

their devotion to their faith every day. In the various homes, information gathered showed everyday religious practices such as; involved the children in saying prayers, read the Bible and Qur'an with the children, supported them to memorize Holy scriptures and ensured they performed ablution (for the Muslim families). Also, the families collaborated with the children's educational/religious settings by supporting them to complete their homework tasks through guiding and encouraging them. The practice of networking with the community was observable during various activities that impacted children's literacy experiences. Specifically, the children were learning to; count and write numbers, read words, engage in conversations, practice the art of drawing/colouring and teach them the language of the family's religion. Ruffy and Umi, in which their mothers and older siblings supported them, learned how to read and write in Arabic. Participation in these activities showed the values that the families placed on the community network. Connecting with the community environment encouraged the families to build a sustainable everyday literacy practice. Thus, it enabled the preschool-aged children to experience and shared the values of their educational and religious settings in the home. The findings resonate with Fabian and Dunlop (2002) assertion that interplay between the home and school is essential for young children's language and cognitive development before school starts.

## **9.6. Summary of Discussion**

The chapter has discussed how the findings of this study contributed to the understanding of how home literacy practices of four families impacted the literacy experiences of 4-5-year old pre-school children's literacy in Plateau state, Nigeria. The identified home literacy practices emanated from four key environments: Language, Religious, Child-initiated activities, and Family social

networks. The discussion also captured the similarities and diversities embedded in each family practice with their ethnicity, religion, and cultural values. The language environment serves as a pedestal for building narrative, vocabulary, expressive skills, while English functionality was found in building communications, homework, and other literacy engagements. Also, codeswitching and body language supported parent-child communications. The discussion also focused on religious meetings in everyday family activities (joint prayers, shared readings of religious texts, singing and dancing, recitation, and memorization). It contributed meaningfully to the early literacy experiences of preschool-aged children.

Moreover, the pre-school children activities in initiated their plays provided opportunities for them to create literacy worlds that supported their language and literacy experiences. Finally, the chapter deliberated on the significance of parental supports across families. That centred on their responsibilities to their children's literacy experiences through the provision of literacy resources, creating literacy opportunities, encouraging mundane interactions (conversations, storytelling and dialogue, non-verbal communication), and direct involvement in teaching and helping to do homework. The section also focused on the roles of siblings and grandparents in encouraging the literacies of the children. The impact of the family-community linkages on their home literacy practices noted and discussed.

## **CHAPTER 10. SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **10.1. Introduction**

The chapter presents the conclusions, summary, and recommendations of findings from the study of 'Home literacy practices of four families: A case study of 4-5-year old children's literacy experiences in Plateau state, Nigeria'. The research questions guided the study's focus: to identify literacy practices and resources available in homes, explore how family members support enriched preschool-aged children's literacy experiences, child-initiated activities boosted their literacy experiences and parental beliefs that energised parents support. An eco-cultural framework was adopted as a guide for the qualitative multiple case studies and used as a lens to generate data through an ethnographic approach of participant observation, informal conversations, follow-up family interviews, photographs, and children completed works. The fieldwork took place from 31 January 2017 to January 2018 in the four different home environments.

Several studies revealed the home environment is a rich resource-base for supporting young children's learning trajectories (Newman and Obed, 2015; Serpell and Nsamenang, 2014; Tchombe, 2011; González, Moll and Amanti, 2005; Heath, 1983; Taylor, 1983); however, the potential is yet to be exhaustively explored by early childhood literacy scholars in Nigeria. Research in early literacy in Nigeria marginalised in-depth qualitative empirical inquiry of children's everyday lives, social networks, and interactions in the home environment. Most of the research focused on quantitative paradigms ranging from scientific experimental designs to surveys (Maduabuchi, 2014; Duruamaku-Dim, Nnamdi and Arikpo, 2013; Osuorji, 2006; Odinko, 2004). The story about children in the studies emerged from adults' perspectives, and the children not considered subjects that concerned them. Therefore, I drew the inference from Fine and Sandstrom (1988) and focused my investigation on children as subjects rather than objects in the

current study. Also, this study was an attempt to learn and hear the story of the children's literacy experiences from them and their immediate family members that provided support to them. The paradigm enabled me to explore and represent the children's experiences through taking photographs, recording their conversations and representations.

The motivation to conduct this research is beyond the need to progress in my career. I have travelled thousands of miles from my home to learn from the UK higher education, and I wonder what new knowledge I would take back home in Nigeria. Unfortunately, qualitative research is scarce in early childhood literacy in Nigeria. Therefore, I became keen on qualitative research during my MA studies and the interest extended to my PhD study. Working within this paradigm enabled in-depth analysis about the role of the home environments in building early literary foundations in the study context. In addition, this allowed me to gain first-hand knowledge of each child's daily family literacy experiences in their different contexts.

## **10.2. Summary of Findings and Contributions**

Findings from the study revealed some far-reaching veritable methodological and empirical contributions of study. The methodological contribution is the use of an eco-cultural framework to direct an understanding of everyday interactions of the preschool-aged children to account for the diversity of literacy practices in the home in the Nigerian context. The model provided the structure to observe how the children relate with family members, places, and materials and how these connect with practices that encompass everyday activities. Thus, addressing the issue of practices and resources identified in the research. Literature on the use of the eco-cultural framework is scarce in early childhood literacy research in Nigeria. Therefore, this research contributes to bridging the literature gap in the eco-cultural approach to literacy research.

Another contribution encompassed investigating the everyday life of preschool-aged children as they engaged in various interactions resulting in enriching their multiliteracies experiences. The activities include a wide range of accessible home spaces both indoors and outdoors resourced with copious religious texts, school-based textbooks, language, mild use of technology like TV, video and mobile phone, locally sourced play materials by the children and few factory-made toys like teddy Bear, and dolls, kitchen wares, livestock units, symbols of trading goods with family scaffolding networks. Employing the participant observation method for the research allowed capturing the children's engagements during family devotions, prayer time, watching TV, conversations, homework, dining, storytelling, shared book reading, house chores, and play. Findings regarding this aspect shed light on how family members' interactions with preschool-aged children enriched their literacy experiences. Additionally, evidence from the data showed how children initiated play impacted their literacy experiences. Finally, the findings drew inferences from discussing the importance of space, place, materials and family social network. Thus, suggesting the significance of the home as an enduring space for enriching children's literacy experiences (Mills and Comber, 2016). My research provides opportunities to promote a reciprocal exchange of knowledge and pose a debate between early childhood stakeholders regarding the diversity in cultural and literacy practices in Nigeria. Already I have taken part in academic conferences and shared this aspect of my work in 2019, first, at the school of Education doctoral students' conference and the International Conference of Early Childhood Association of Nigeria (ECAN). And some scholars and members of the Early Childhood Association of Nigeria have approached me to network in research practice.

Another significant contribution is the study's response to the National Policy on Integrated Early Childhood Development IECD (FRN, 2013b) to research key household practices of children

between 3-5-year old and the implication for policy. Significantly, the language environment was flexible and allowed the children to use different languages for different purposes through collaborative mediated strategies. The preschool-aged children experienced multilingual literacies in their mother tongues and other languages, embracing expressive and receptive skills, vocabulary development, and print awareness. Family beliefs influenced the place of the English language in the various homes. However, codeswitching supported the children to progress in their conversations. For example, it helped them clarify expressions and move ahead when stuck in talking (Callaway, 2012; Drury, 2004; Reyes, 2004). Also, the children understand facial expressions of directives by parents, use head nodding to indicate yes and no responses, and kneeling to show a sign of respectful greetings, particularly by the Yoruba child. These findings are congruent with the provision of IECD (FRN, 2013b) that the home environment in Nigeria should adopt culturally appropriate and desirable practices for children between births to five years. This finding points to the need for the school to examine its role in affecting a smooth transition from the home to the school by contextualizing the teaching and learning environment through building on the children's home-based literacy experiences, which may be incongruent to the school practices.

The finding of religious practices emerged strongly as a significant trajectory for the preschool-aged children's acquisition of early literacies in the home. The environment built a bedrock for oral and print interactions involving print awareness, vocabulary, and narrative language. Specifically, it encouraged shared family time and allowed children to learn ways of relating to the family's religious beliefs. Receptive and expressive experiences were evident during family devotions reading, conversations on spiritual matters, storytelling times, and prayers. Parents intentionally provided explanations and interpretations to written and verbalised texts. Children were allowed

to ask and make contributions such as memorising and reciting religious texts, retelling stories, acquiring vocabulary, and verbalising prayers. Also, singing and dancing impacted the children's literacy experiences. Unsurprisingly, the religious environment emerged as an active domain in providing the children with rich literacy experiences, as earlier suggested by previous studies (Aika and Uyi-Osaretin, 2018; Ngbea and Achunike, 2014; Hamza, 2010; Omolewa, 2007). However, this study has done more than mere opinions and provided empirical evidence of literacies emerging from home literacy practices of a small population of families with Christian and Islamic backgrounds. The methodological contribution can motivate researchers' interest to replicate the inquiry in other settings to establish the transferability of the research.

Another notable empirical contribution is the finding that the children actively initiated activities through play and creativity. The resourced indoor and outdoor space in the homes allowed an enabling environment recreation. Worth noting, the children improvised resources during role-play for cooking, caring for a baby, trading, teaching, craft, house chore and learning. All these draw attention to the child's potentials and point to the importance for early childhood educators in Nigeria to rethink our pedagogical approaches in classroom instruction and policy to provide quality culturally relevant early childhood literacy practices (Awopegba and Nsamenang, 2013). Furthermore, the knowledge from this finding represents a move for the teacher who may be reading to consider the children's interest-driven learning initiatives by adopting a child-centred approach that provides a learning space that values mutual and teacher scaffolding activities. Essentially, it raised a consideration for a pedagogy that imbibes learning possibilities that enable the child to participate, lend their voice, discover knowledge through teachers' support, and show creativity potentials.

Lastly, the study identified categories of the family network that were supportive resources and primary engines through the children's engagements in home literacy practices; they are the proximate parent-child, grandparent-child, and sibling-child relationships. Explicitly, mothers appeared more active with engaging children in various interactions across the homes. At the same time, the fathers that were invisible during the study period supported the provision of literacy resources for the children in the home. The wide range of resources includes academic materials (notebook/workbooks, alphabetic charts, pencils and crayons, and whiteboard); religious resources (Children Bible storybook, Quran and other religious books). Generally, it is fair to recognise that all the network groups were active in their different roles and allowed opportunities in everyday life to benefit the children's literacy experiences. For example, allowing the child to play games with the phone or laptop, engaging the child in conversation and errand in the kitchen, taking leisure in the living room, eating together, having conversations, singing, watching TV, storytelling, and caring for domestic animals and trading in grocery. Besides, intentional interactions with print during school homework and family prayer time. Additionally, the family network engaged the child by instructing, questioning, explaining, and reinforcing common supportive strategies. The roles of the family networks are described in detail in chapters' five to eight in a case by case analysis of each family.

The findings suggest that family social networks are funds of knowledge and great resource a teacher can learn from their experiences. Children can be encouraged to actively share their collaborative learning with parents, siblings, and grandparents to participate in classroom teaching and learning processes.

### **10.3. Limitation of the Study**

The study is not without its limitations. Firstly, I only explored case studies of four families. The number of cases in an in-depth qualitative inquiry is usually at the researcher's discretion, constrained by time and competence. Furthermore, due to the limited sample, the findings may not be used for empirical generalisation as it is in quantitative research. This is because the selection criteria used in the purposive and convenience sampling methods are statistically deficient to warrant any form of generalisation.

Nevertheless, it facilitates a 'logical generalization and maximum applicability' (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 28) of the findings to some specific settings with the motives of improving culturally appropriate literacy practices in both home and school contexts in the area of study (Silverman, 2013). Similarly, engaging the qualitative case study is a valuable experience for me because it allowed me to have a first-hand experience of the world of the children that formed the centre of my research (Atkinson et al., 2001; Mason, 2000; Creswell, 1998). Therefore, exploring their everyday life and making a detailed description is worthwhile.

The second limitation pertains to my inability to explore the preschool children's literacy transactions in their school contexts. That may have enabled me to learn how their home experiences are appreciated and supported by classroom pedagogies. Data gathering of the children's classroom experiences would have been worthwhile and added to the richness of the findings of the present attempt. But this was not possible because of the instability in the school calendar caused by the abrupt closure of schools during the prevailing security challenges in the area. Further, the distance between my study base in London and the research context made it difficult to predict when schools would be stable. That is an aspect that I would like to consider in my future research.

#### **10.4. Implication and Practical Recommendations**

The current study has scholastic implications of inquiry children's everyday literacy experiences in the home, expanding the conceptualisation of literacy to embrace contemporary knowledge of multiliteracies and culturally relevant pedagogical approaches to classroom practice. Particularly child-centred learning resourced play materials that offer indoor and outdoor activities pertinent to the children's contexts. The knowledge about home literacy practices and the preschool-aged literacy experiences is unsurprisingly little in the study context using the eco-cultural framework (Awopegba and Nsamenang, 2013) and ecological models (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), which have been deemed crucial in this kind of research. The findings that emerged from the present study underscored the richness of resources in the home environment in supporting early literacy foundations for children. The models hold the most direct relevance and key to better understanding children's daily lives in the field of early literacy research (Plowman, 2014; Weisner, 2002a). Implying that there are many paths in which young children's literacy experiences are mediated and taken for granted in early literacy discourses in Nigeria. The outcome of the study draws attention to the meaning of literacy beyond the notions of the conventional skills to an understanding of literacy as multilingual and multimodal emanating from culturally sensitive home practices

The pedagogical implication of this study for teachers concerns the need to recognise the funds of knowledge children have already acquired from home because the two settings are mutually related. But the success and efficacy of the school in achieving the NPE (FRN, 2013a) objective of effecting the smooth transition from the home to the school depend on how it keenly recognise and engage the several home language and literacy knowledge the children bring to school. A practical application could be to involve a school at the local level of government to create a

cultural-sensitive approach of assessing children's funds of knowledge instead of western assessment tools (Serpell and Nsamenang, 2014), mostly used in a standardised test for measuring children's early literacy competencies in Plateau State. The widespread standardised practice limits recognising children's diversity and the role that child agency plays in their early literacy development. The outcome can be helpful to redesign literacy pedagogy to take care of the children's cultural experiences. That can improve the quality of learning by expanding learning outcomes from the conventional competencies of literacy to include local values, needs and expectations of children's social, ethnic diversities in the classroom, and ensuring good harmonisation between teachers, the child and families (UNESCO, 2013).

The findings revealed that home environments are rich in cultural resources like storytelling by parents and grandparents. The findings consolidate the importance of the school exploring the possibilities of learning from the parents and grandparents in the community by forming the practice of inviting them to the classroom to share life stories with children (Olmedo, 2004). This approach could trigger children's curiosity and help them develop imagination about their interests and choices to talk, and encourage them to narrate their own stories. It could also expand their cultural knowledge and vocabulary and reinforce what children learn in school (Olmedo, 2004), making the school pedagogy more culturally sensitive. A collaborative storytelling project between a school and parents can be adopted at the government local level as recommended by the IECD policy. They should encourage regular engagements for community dialogue, adequate community mobilisation, linkages and partnership building for sustainable IECD implementation (FRN, 2013b). The partnership could gather stories into a children's storybook in the language of the immediate community and make it accessible to stakeholders. That could ameliorate the lack of access to storybooks in children's mother tongue (Trudell, 2018). It will also strengthen the

local government efforts in capacity building and service delivery for parents by promoting and making available suitable materials, ideas, and thoughts in early literacy.

Additionally, the study showed how the participating children engaged in fun activities demonstrated through singing and dancing with parents and siblings. Likewise, schools could encourage learning in a fun way that is interesting to young learners by occasional cultural festivals of local music and dance where parents and community leaders interact with children. Again, that can be a good context for curriculum building and literacy development (Olmedo, 2004); as the learning environment becomes interesting, literacy learning becomes more effective, meaningful, and relevant.

Besides, the current findings have shown that the children's language and literacy experiences squarely predicated on their creativity in improvising local objects and using toys to represent real-world experiences during their role-playing activities. Notably, the children initiated and engaged in play activities of their choice and interest, and through creativity, they flowed from play to literacy. That knowledge can help develop insights to help parents and early years teachers promote children's literacy learning in outdoor contexts. In particular, the Nigerian Policy on IECD's (FRN, 2013b: 4) objective to: 'inculcate the spirit of inquiry and creativity through the exploration of the environment, art, music and playing with toys. Thus, classroom pedagogy should explore the possibilities of a child-centred context that appreciate children's agency to initiate, improvise local materials and create their own literacy space and self-discovery through play rather than a sole focus on teacher-centred tuition that emphasised schoolification characterised by academic activities.

Meanwhile, in recent times, there is a growing global awareness of the broader meaning of literacy, which has gone beyond the conventional reading and writing skills to embrace diverse channels in

which literacy is supported, acquired, and sustained is notably significant (Aika and Uyi-Osaretin, 2018; Pahl and Burnett, 2016; Cope and Kalantzis, 2009; Omoniyi, 2003). The present study has provided evidence of the imperative of rich literacy contexts: visual materials (signs, portraits, picture books) or communication and electronic media (TV, computers, and mobile phones). Other literacy modes are speech, drawing, gesture, modelling (craft making), and digital literacies (computer and online games, operating TV and mobile phones, and the like). These practices have enabled children's engagements with text-based material and provide a range of opportunities for acquiring multiple literacies for lifelong learning. This concept of literacy has already been suggested to improve the contribution to 'global knowledge' creation to reduce the influence of Western education's prevailing 'hegemony' (Omoniyi, 2003: 140). The study recommends that parents in Plateau State be encouraged to appreciate the significance of everyday life in the home as opportunities for building preschool children's multiliteracies experiences.

Notably, the study recognised that the children were accessible to digital technology with the explicit support of parents. That has implications for the current global impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic, which has made the relevance of visual and digital literacies more compelling for the expansion and sustainability of the educational space in the home environment (Reimers and Schleicher, 2020). This broader knowledge of literacy opens a fertile ground for further research into early childhood literacies in the current study area.

A further implication for the families of preschool children is that parents should recognise their crucial roles as their children's first teachers and key stakeholders in early childhood education. The findings show that parents in this study supported their children's early literacy experiences by providing learning materials and opportunities, instructing them through questioning, introducing, and explaining new words, telling and reading religious stories and reinforcing

learning successes. However, for more effectiveness, parents can be supported by empowering them with information and skills. At the local levels of government, capacity building programmes could serve as avenues for empowering parents on basic teaching strategies, employing locally developed and accessible indigenous materials, and ideas that would help them intentionally engaged their children in meaningful interactions and activities that are beneficial and geared towards building literacy foundations in the home.

In my contribution to my community of early childhood educators' network in Plateau state, I intend to use the outcome of this research as a guide to promoting a proposed strategy: "Field to Practice", an approach to building parents and teachers capacities in recognising and using several cultural tools as building blocks for literacy practices. Furthermore, drawing from my personal experience of using the participant observation approach and the work of González, Moll and Amanti (2005) on theorising funds of knowledge practice in home and communities and schools, I intend to be practical with my experience in the training early childhood teachers on how to research home practices and create a scheme of work that combines children's home knowledge and classroom practice at micro-levels.

### **10.5. Recommendations for Further Research**

The research a multiple-case inquiry is my attempt as a teacher going into households as a student researcher seeking to learn and understand the everyday life experiences of preschool children early literacy practices through ethnographic approaches of participant observation, formal and informal conversations, and follow-up interviews. Although I purposely explored a small sample to enable me to have a first-hand experience that has made my findings more detailed, I

recommend a comparative study of preschool-aged children's literacy experience in homes and schools. It will also be worthwhile to investigate the nature of preschool-aged children's engagement in socio-dramatic play and the impact on their literacy experiences in rural communities. On a large scale, as part of the roles of early childhood literacy researchers in Nigeria as indicated in the IECD (FRN, 2013b), there might be a need to carry out large-scale longitudinal research on the impact of locally relevant literacy resources on preschool-aged children's literacy experiences in the home. The study could likewise expand this knowledge to determine if preschool-aged children's home experiences are sustained and improved for school success and influence curriculum review and more provisions of the National Policy of Education on Early childhood education.

## **10.6. Conclusion**

The study has demonstrated several literacy values in the home practices of four families and how these practices enriched the literacy experiences of preschool-aged children. My research placed preschool-aged children at the centre of research that concerns them. That has closed identified gaps in the existing literature on early literacy research in Nigeria; In the light of the previous chapters, this final chapter sums up by underscoring the contribution of this thesis to the field of research. It calls attention to Nigerian researchers interested in studying young children's lives and families not to restrict their investigations to the quantitative paradigm. My thesis has expanded empirical knowledge about employing the qualitative paradigm to delve into preschool-aged children's literacy worlds in their various homes.

Further, it has shown that literacy matters in everyday activities and events. Lastly, the research processes I engaged, and the findings of the thesis have empowered me with a wealth of knowledge and skills for the next step. Therefore, apart from sharing my experiences in conferences, writing academic papers and teaching, I intend to expand and promote a novel concept of 'literacy in children's everyday lives in my research practice in Nigeria.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



(Family consent form)

**Title of Research Project: Family literacy considerations in effecting smooth transitions of preschool children in Plateau State, Nigeria**

#### **Brief Description of Research Project, and What Participation Involves:**

This research attempts to better understand the nature of literacy practices and events surrounding the growing child in the home. Although research has been conducted on early literacy practices in the Nigerian context, much of the attention has been paid to standardised tests. As a result, very little is known of what constitutes literacy for young children and their families. I hope that the knowledge and insights you share as part of the overall findings of this study will deepen the current understanding of family literacy practices as it pertains to children's transitions from home to school- particularly given that the home is a rich repository of accumulated knowledge useful for moulding children's literacy skills early in life. **This will involve doing a pilot before commencing the main study. Consequently, I will recruit two families for the pilot and 4 for the main study.**

As participants, your child will be observed along with other family members **during events and activities such as story-telling, religious activities, children's play and family interactions** in the home. For the pilot study, the observation will be for **three weeks**, and **there will be one focus interview with all family members after the last session of observation**. I will wish to take photographs and videos during observation sessions. I need your permission before I can take any of these **and** ways you are comfortable for me to use any images of observations. **In other words, I will ask for your consent to use the photos.**

I anticipate that the interview will last about an hour with you at a time in your home. The discussion will involve questions about your interpretations of literacy and how you usually engage your family in literacy activities. To allow the insights you share to be accurately recorded and transcribed, I will also seek your permission to audio record the interview. Otherwise, I will take

notes manually. If at any time during the interview you feel uncomfortable with the information being shared, I shall stop recording or taking notes or both, depending on your preference.

I expect to conduct only one interview with you. However, I would like to seek your permission to contact you again to follow up and/ clarify any ideas that might arise from this interview.

**Investigator Contact Details:**

Name: Nanbam Ojo  
Department: Education  
University Address: University of Roehampton, London  
Postcode: SW15 4PU  
Email: [ojon@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:ojon@roehampton.ac.uk)  
Telephone: + 447438787343, +2348065392032

**Consent Statement:**

I understand the nature of this research and agree to take part in it, and I am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason, although if I do, I understand that my data might still be used in a collated form. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings. That data will be collected and processed according to the Data Protection Act 1998 and the University's Data Protection Policy.

I agree and would like to participate in (please tick one or more of the following)

- Observation
- as group interview
- /video tape
- graphs

Name .....

Signature .....

Date .....

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries, please raise this with the Director of Studies. However, please contact the Deputy Director for Research if you would like to contact an independent party.

**Director of Studies Contact Details:**

Name: Prof. Mathias Urban

University Address: University of Roehampton

Froebel Building

London

SW15 5PJ

Email: [mathias.urban@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:mathias.urban@roehampton.ac.uk)

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**Deputy Director for Research Contact Details:**

Name: Prof. Andrew Stables

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SW15 5PJ

Email: [andrew.stables@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:andrew.stables@roehampton.ac.uk)

## APPENDIX B

### HAUSA TRANSLATION OF PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



#### TAKARDAN NEMAN YARDAN MAI AMSA A WANNAN BINCIKEN

(Takardan neman izini na iyali)

**Kan bincike: Tsarin koyon da iyali suke ba wa yara kanana a gida kafin su shiga makarantan boko a jiharPilato, na Nijeriya.**

#### **Gajeren kwatancin bincike da abinda ake bida a wurin mai bada amsa:**

Ina neman ganewa ne da wannan binciken akan yanda iyalai suna koyar da yara kanana a gidaje kafin lokacin da zasu shiga makarantan boko. Ko da yake anyi bincike akan yanayin koyar da yara kanana a Nijeriya, amma an fi bada hankali akan ainihin gwadawa ne kawai. Saboda haka, kalilar sani ne a ke da shi akan koyo na yara kanana kafin lokacin shigan bokon su. Ina fata cewa amsoshi da zaku bani zai kara mana wayewa a kan yanda yara suke samun koyarwa tun kafin lokacin shigan makarantan su yayi, domin na tabbata da cewa iyalai ne suke da hakin tarbiyar da yara a cikin al'umma tun kafin su yi girma.

A matsayin mai bada amsa, Ina neman amincewan ka/ ki domin samun lura da yadda iyalinka/ ki suna tafiyar da koyon yara kanana a gida.Zan yi hakan ne son uku a kowane mako,har tsawon makoki shidda.Yin haka zai bida daukon hotuna harda vidi'o a wannan lokacin binciken. Saboda haka, Ina neman izininka/ ki kafin na ci gaba.

Ina zato cewa wannan hiran zai dauki sawon sa'a daya kachal kuma a gidan ka/ki. Kuma ita hiran zata dauki tambayoyi ne game da yanda kuke gabatar da koyarwa ga yara kanana a cikin iyalinku. Dalilin haka ne nake neman izinin ka/ki domin na rekodi muryarka/ki na kuma rubuta amsoshin a lokacin bayani. Amma idan ban samu izinin ka/ki ta wurin rekodi ko rubutun ba, za mu daina domin gudun muskune ma ka/ki.

Bukatan na ne na yi hira son daya kachal da iyalin ka/ke. Amma Ina neman izinin ka/ki domin na sake zuwan neman Karin bayani idan akwai bukata.

#### **Adireshin mai neman amsa:**

Suna: Nanbam Ojo

Sashen: Neman ilimi

AdireshinJami'a: Jami'ar Roehampton.

AkwatinWaya: SW15 4PU

Ragargizo: [ojon@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:ojon@roehampton.ac.uk)

Lambarwaya: :+ 44 07436871425, +2348033277816

**Kalmar izini:**

Na yarda in bada kai na domin cingaban wannan binciken, kuma na san da cewa zan iya ja da baya ba tare da bada daliliba, ko da shike ina da sani cewa za a iya amfani da amsoshi da zan bayar. Na kuma gane cewa ita mai neman amsan nawan zata rike mani sirrin bayanai na.Kuma na tabbata cewa ba za a yaudare ni a cikin wannan rubutun ba musamman domin tsarin kiyaye wa na 1998 da kuma tsarin na jami'ar da wannan mai neman bayani ta fito.

Sunan mai bada izini-----

Sa hannu-----

Rana-----

Abin lura: Idan ka/ ki na da wani matsala ko tambaya game da bayani da aka nema gareka/ ki saika/ ki tuntubi dairektan karatu. Amma, idan ka/ kin fi so wani ne dabam, to sai ka/ ki tuntube mai lura da sashin neman ilimi na wannan jami'ar.

**Adireshin Dairektan karatu**

**Adireshin mai lura da sashi**

Suna: Prof. Mathias Urban

Suna: Prof Micheal Day

Adireshinjami'a: Jami'ar Roehampton

Adireshinjami'a: Jami'ar Roehampton

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**APPENDIX C  
PARTICIPATING CHILD CONSENT FORM**



**PARTICIPATING CHILD CONSENT FORM**

**TO BE COMPLETED BY THE CHILD AND PARENT/GUARDIAN**

**Title of Research Project: Home Literacy Practices of four Families: Case Study of 4-5-  
year-old preschool children in Plateau State, Nigeria**

**PART A TO BE COMPLETED BY THE CHILD**

I agree to take part in the research project and would like to participate in (please tick one or more of the following)

Being observed

A focus group interview

I also agree to be audio/video taped my participation

**PART B TO BE COMPLETED BY THE PARENT/GUARDIAN**

I have read and understood the accompanying letter and permit the child (named above) to be included.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to child \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX D**

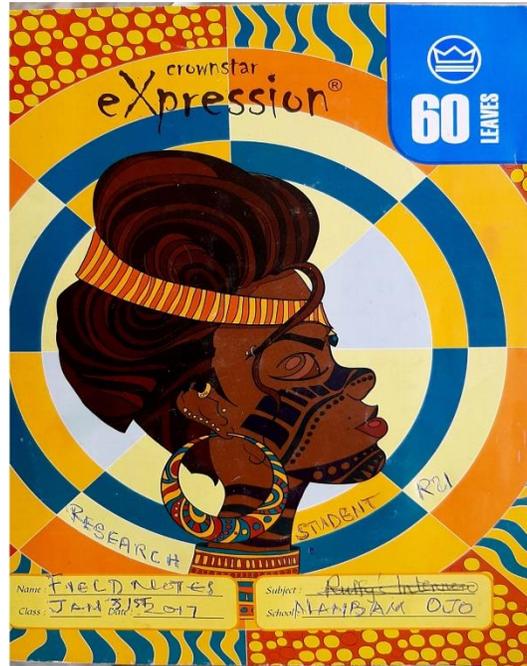
**CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE DRESSING CODE DURING  
FIELDWORK IN COMMUNITY B**



Researcher' Dress Code Compliant

## APPENDIX E

### RESEARCHER'S FIELD NOTEBOOK AND SAMPLE OF NOTES



30th Sept 2017

Chamun family visit  
Date: 30th September 2017  
No of people: dad, mum, grandma, and church sister  
Context: Chamun is sitting on dad's leg and talking with him about things randomly. Suddenly, she got up and started singing a song in English and invited dad to join her. (on the voice recording is on)

*Remember, she was singing with her hands.*

[Pause writing - will use recorded activity for transcription]

Episode ends

Grandma chipp chipped in chips, asking Chamun to sing a song in Mwangi. The girl struggles ...

Mum tells her to remember any songs the family wedding they recently attended in their village

Chamun couldn't and moved closer to grandma.

Grandma begin to teach her songs. But only one captures her interest and they sang it over and over.  
(See recorded audio for song content)

## APPENDIX F

### SAMPLE OF RECORDED OBSERVATION

#### Umi Observation Vignette

Family: Umi- target preschool child; Father, Mother, Yaya (elder sibling) Cousin (Yakub)

Type of family: nuclear Children are all girls,

Home location: Bukuru (Suburb)

**Date:** 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2017 **Time:** 4.30-5.30 **Venue:** Living room **Context:** Watching Cinderella movie, electricity disruption prompted conversation

**Malama:** Salama alaikun

**Mum/Umi:** Wa alaikun salam

#### Background:

Mum, Umi and sister are engaged in conversation about 'Cindrella' movie. Dad had bought the animated cartoon of the film that week. Mum and the girls had watched it a couple of times. This afternoon, they are talking about the film. Umi actually triggered the conversation after electricity was interrupted. She sits in between sister and mum on a two-seat sofa.

*Umi:* Mama Cinderella muguwa ce [Cinderella's mother is wicked]

*Yaya:* Cinderella ba ta da mama [Cinderella has no mother]

*Umi:* Akwai mama a cartoon [there is mother in the cartoon]

*Yaya:* Ba mama Cinderella ba [that is not Cinderella's mother]

*Umi:* Mama Cinderella ne, har da yanwa [it is Cinderella mother and she her sisters]

*Yaya:* Mama ta mutu, yan mata ba yanwa ta ba

[her mother is dead; the girls are not her real sisters]

*Umi:* (Sobs) Mama Cinderella ba ta mutu ba, yan mata yanwa ta ne

[Cinderella mother is not dead; they are her sisters]

*Yaya:* Mama ta mutu, yan mata ba yanwa ta ba

[the mother is dead, and those girls are not her sisters]

*Umi:* Karya, Mama Cinderella muguwa ce

[liar, Cinderella mother is wicked]

*Yaya:* Mama ta mutu, baba ya aure muguwa mata

[the mother died; the father married bad mother]

*Umi:* (Sobs) Mama ba ta mutu ba, muguwa ce

[the mother is not dead, she is wicked]

*Mum:* Umi is right, did we see two mothers in the cartoon?

*Yaya:*, how do expect Umi to accept that *Cinderella* mother is not dead?

The cartoon shows only one mother

You know about the stepmother because Yakub told you

We don't really understand the English spoken in the carton

It is fast and twisted, we just watch and sometimes make guesses

*Umi:* has more evidence, Cinderella mother is not dead

*Umi:* Ba ta mutu ba, a cartoon, akwai mama, akwai baba,

Akwai yanwa biu da mutane dayawa

[she is not dead, in the cartoon, there is mother, there is father,  
there are two sisters and many people]

## APPENDIX G

### INTERVIEW GUIDE: DEMOGRAPHIC AND SEMI- STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE

#### **A. FAMILY DEMOGRAPHIC PARTICULARS**

##### **I. Physical settings**

1. Home Location.....
2. Type of housing.....
3. Accessible spaces for family life (mention them and their functions)
4. Available literacy material.....

##### **II. Personal details**

5. Parent's Name.....
6. Pre-School Child's Name.....
7. Pre-School Child's Gender.....
8. Class Grade of Pre-School Child.....
9. Number of other Children (siblings) according to gender:
  - I. Male.....
  - II. Female.....
10. Total family size .....
11. Educational Qualification(s):
  - I. Father.....
  - II. Mother.....
12. Types of Occupation:
  - I. Father.....
  - II. Mother.....
13. Religion.....

##### **III. Language use in the home**

14. What language(s) do you use for daily interactions? and how often?
15. Why do you use the language(s)
16. How would you say the home language practice enrich your child's literacy experience?

**B. WAYS OF SUPPORTING LITERACY**

17. What activities/use of resources do you consider as home literacy practices?
18. How do you provide support for the child through with the activities/resources?

**C. TECHNOLOGY USE AT HOME**

19. What technology does in the home does your child has access to? And why?

## APPENDIX H

### SAMPLE OF SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS OF OBSERVATION DATA

Coding: systematically.

**DAY 8**  
 Date: 28<sup>th</sup>-09-17 Day: Thursday Time: 16:00-17:10pm No of people: 4  
 Venue: Family grains shop → Shop setting: Grandma interacting with Mide  
 Context: Mide request to drink tea Mide

Mide was brought to the shop after school. Mum dropped her and went home to attend to other things. Grandma is busy attending to clients who have come to buy things, Mide is playing with doll in a corner. When grandma finished selling, Mide requests to drink tea. The conversation below occurred ...

Initiate the main activity of interaction

Language: Pidgin Expressive  
 I want tea Making request Gives money & direction in Pidgin

Mide: grandma, I wan tea. Grandma: tek moni go buy tins for John shop. Mide: [collects money and turns to go]. Grandma: how much bi that? Mide: Na hundred naira. Grandma: omo daa daa. You sabi wetin to buy? Mide: I sabi. Grandma: tok am. Mide: one sachet milk, one sachet bournvita, one biscuit. Grandma: e de, go buy. Mide: [back] grandma, tek yah change. Grandma: how much bi dat. Mide: na twenty naira. Grandma: e do

Recognize #100  
 Switch to English.  
 Went on errand & returned with ~~the~~ change  
 Recognize change (money balance)

Good child, Do you know what to buy?  
 Making a list of tea items (shopping list)  
 • Know trade marks about sachet (vocabulary)

Summary

Mide

- Expression / speaking in Pidgin English
- Receptive / listening and understanding directive
- Vocabulary - naira currency (#100, #20) - trade labels
- Initiate activity - and connects with grandma or achieve her interest.

Grandma

- Giving directives
- Using questioning to assess Mide's knowledge
- Giving commendation

## APPENDIX I

### OBSERVATION CODE BOOK

*Code Book of observed, informal and formal interview Preschool children literacy behaviours*

Category	Definition from Field Data
Attentive	Listening activity of listening to story, instructions and bible reading
Arabic	Use of Arabic (Praying, recitation and memorization)
Babysitting	Mide babysitting junior brother while Mum cooks and attend to customers
Bedtime stories	Stories narrated by Chamun's siblings while on the bed to sleep
Book handling	Flipping book pages in the right order
Bilingual	Ability to speak more than two languages
Buying	Shopping activity of going on errand to buy items
Choices making	Chances given to children to choose interested events (Tell us Anabi Yusuf, story, I want to write, I will do my homework, I want Jesus loves little children story)
Code-switching	Children mixing English with dialects during interactions (mother pig ...ta haifuwa chedren [mother pig gave birth to children, I put gyara for you- I will give you bonus])
Clarification	Asking for clarification in different languages ('menene kurkuku' - Hausa: what is a prison; like this [ while writing 20])
Colouring	Colouring of pictures in workbooks as homework
Constructing	Making shapes with papers and discarded materials
Connection (Linking)	Linking words to real life experiences, words (a table cannot walk, big & heavy etc.
Curious	Probing to know more about new words (what is a bush girl... carpenter?)
Drawing	Drawing objects either on paper or pretend use of artificial surface (sand)
Expand knowledge	Using word knowledge to personal experiences (I am <i>afraid</i> ... yesterday chicken <i>bite</i> me)
Gesturing	Body movements to communicate action (nodding head for either no or yes, kneeling to greet- showing curtesy)
Grasp	Comprehension of new words and stories
Greeting	Welcoming, salutations and acknowledgment in Hausa, English, Yoruba and Arabic (Good afternoon ma, alekumsalam)
Help	Asking for help (I don't know)
Initiate activity	Children initiating literacy events and play (...tell us a story, I want to write, I will pray)
Labeling	Naming, identifying, naming of different items and objects
Language	Speaking and listening (expressive and receptive) skills (single words, phrases and full sentences) e.g. "See what I am doing..."
Memorization	Reading Bible and Quran verses after parents several times
Motivation	Showing interest or drive for an event
Narrating	Describing an event from personal experience
Numeracy	Reading or counting numbers either during homework or doing routine events (cooking, feeding livestock)
Operating media	Using TV/Video, mobile phone for entertainment and talking (switching on TV/Video, searching for songs, receiving phone call)
Pencil grip	Correct handling of pencil
Phonological awareness	Associating sounds with letters, songs
Phone talk	Talking on mobile phone with family relations
Pidgin English	Speaking English-bases lingual franca (Na hundred naira: Its hundred naira)
Picture reading	Looking at pictures and reading
Pointing	Pointing to a picture to read or making emphasis
Praying	Leading opening prayers during family devotions, meal times and praying in Arabic
Questioning	Asking a question (what is..., will God kill Boko Haram?)
Reciting	Reciting scriptural verses from the Bible and Quran
Retelling	Retelling storylines of films and bible stories ( [pointing] this old man said he wants to marry one small girl...Memuna... she doesn't like him...)
Responding-verbal	Responding to questions, instructions and so on
Repetition	Repeating after mediators utterances
Role play	Acting a role independently (mothering role, business roles)

Self-correction	Correcting own mistake (I will erase <i>this one ... jagalajagala</i> [pidgin word for 'nonsensical' writing])
Self-talk	Talking to self while playing
Scribbling	Prewriting activity of chamun drawing lines on sand with dry stick as pencil
Shopping list	Listing items to purchase (one sachet of milk...biscuit...)
Singing	Singing songs (my head, my shoulder.... All belong to Jesus, lullaby songs)
Social-drama play	Acting parents roles with others (I am selling beans... I put gyara for you: I will put bonus for you)
Vocabulary	Knowing the names of objects , feelings concepts and ideas and linking words to real life
Watching TV	Watching TV/Video films (American, Tom and Jerry, Kannywood)
Writing-Arabic system	Writing from right-left sequence
Writing-English system	Writing from left to write sequence

## APPENDIX J

### SAMPLE OF SEGMENTED OBSERVATION RECORD AND ASSIGNED CATEGORIES<sup>1</sup>

Segmented observation record <sup>2</sup>	Initial and (in shaded rows emerging assigned categories) <sup>3</sup>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mide initiates main activity of the interaction her interest</li> <li>2. Speaks the Pidgin English understood by grandma</li> <li>3. Grandma sends her on errand</li> <li>4. Grandma questioning about money</li> <li>5. Grandma still questioning about things to buy</li> <li>6. Grandma affirm child's knowledge</li> <li>7. Initiate chats with Researcher</li> <li>8.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Setting the stage for mutual interaction with grandma</li> <li>2. <b>Language:</b> expressing her wish through speech in Pidgin</li> <li>3. <b>Language:</b> listen to and understand directive in Pidgin</li> <li>4. <b>Vocabulary:</b> Recognized 100 naira note</li> <li>5. <b>Vocabulary:</b> Made a list of what to buy plus their quantities. Display grasp of trade labels and packaging (E.g. one sachet of milk)</li> <li>6. <b>Errand:</b> Went on errand and came back with change or cash balance from purchase</li> </ol> <p><b>Note:</b> Mide building early literacies in Pidgin (although parents advised not to use in school); vocabulary in expression and listening</p>

*Note.* 1, 2 and 3 obtained from Papatheodorou et al. (2011, p. 189-190)

**APPENDIX K**

**LITERATURE -BASED THEMATIC ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK OF EARLY LITERACY**

**PRACTICES**

Contexts of events <sup>1</sup>	Emerging themes	Observed emergent coded categories <sup>1</sup>	Occurences of Events <sup>2</sup>			
			Umi	Ruffy	Mide	Chamun
Language: Hausa, Yoruba, English, Pidgin	Multilingual	Mother tongue	O	O	O	S
		English language	S	S	O	O
		Code-switching	O	O	S	S
Language: Oral	Oral conversations	Listening (receptive)	O	O	O	O
		Speaking (expressive)	O	O	O	O
		Vocabulary	O	O	O	O
Non-verbal	Body language	Gestures	O	O	O	O
Religion (R), Homework (HW) Watching TV (W) Chores (C), Technology	Multimodal (Emergent literacy, and digital/media literacy)	Print awareness	S	S	O	O
		Vocabulary	O	O	O	O
		Recitation, Listening, singing	O	O	O	O
		Speaking (expressive)	O	O	O	O
		Writing (Arabic & English )	S	S	O	O
		Narrative (Retelling stories)	O	O	O	O
		Drawing & Colouring	S	O	O	O
		Numeracy	S	S	O	O
Technology experience	S	S	S	S		
Play Solitary Role play	Multimodal	Creativity (Crafting)	O	O		O
		Vocabulary	O	O	O	O
		Expressive	O	O	O	O
		Letter knowledge, Numeracy	S	S	S	O
		Directionality rule	O	O	O	O
		Listening and speaking	O	O	O	O
Social Network	Providing supportive Environments for children's literacy experiences: teaching, provides positive environ, communicating and community activities	Parent-Child	O	O	O	O
		Sibling-Child	O	O	S	S
		Grandparent- Child	Nil	Nil	S	S
		Community network (Arabic school Sunday school, Mosque)	O	O	S	S
			O	O	O	O

*Note:*

1. Literacy occurrences are denoted by **Often (O), Sometimes (S) and Rarely (R)** (Robson, 2011)
2. The emerging themes are components of literacy examined and observed as literacy events. They are described as follows:

**Multilingual:** the use of two or more language to communicate meaningfully

**Multimodal Literacies:** refers to how meaning is expressed by varieties of modes of depiction not just through words but by blending of words, images sounds etc. (Flewitt, 2008). They include the following:

**Oral conversation:** the of use spoken language in proximate interactions. Particularly using receptive (listening), expressive (speech) vocabulary in communication (Chan, et al., 2015 )

**Concept of print:** knowledge about the rules of print including alphabetic knowledge and phonemic awareness and directionality of print (Volk et., 2004)

**Word recognition:** the competence to recognize a familiar word (names of objects, feelings, concepts, and ideas) and linking them to real life situations (Faleti, 2017; Volk et al., 2004)

**Word analysis:** the skill of blending letter sounds to form meaningful sentences and phrases (or pre-reading or syntactic ability) (Honig, 2007; Volk et al., 2004)

**Oral comprehension:** the ability to build meaning from stories, conversations and picture texts and knowledge of print or conversation as a source of information (Chan et al., 2015; Volk et al., 2004)

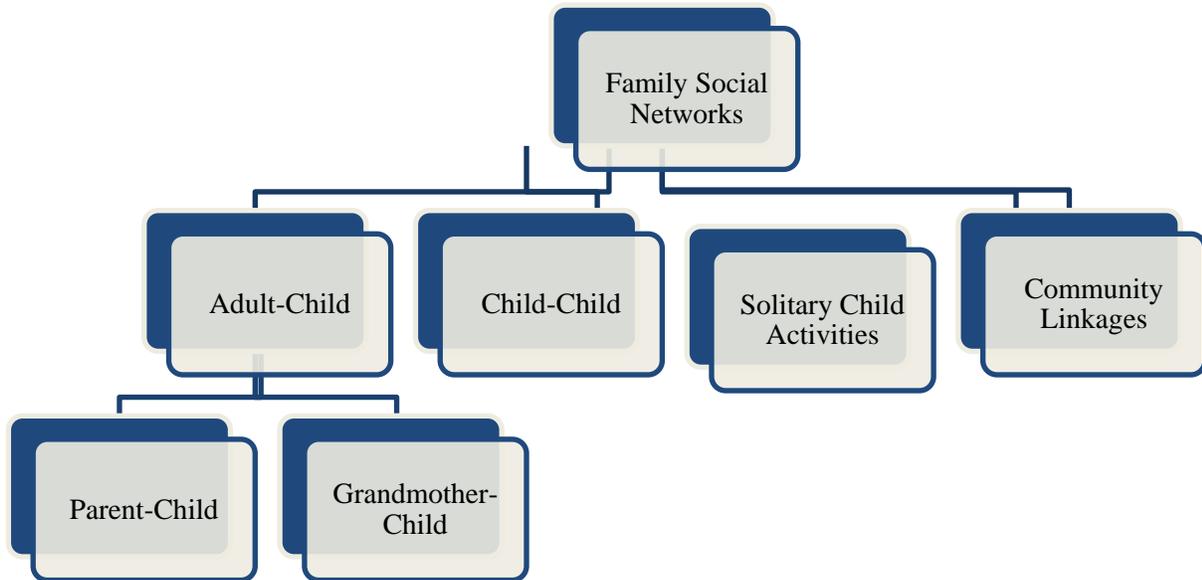
**Narrative skill:** the ability to describe things and events; being able to retell stories (ie understand stories)

**Media literacy:** ability to understand songs, vocabulary, colour, alphabets, relationship skills (social and personal) from film and television (Marsh, 2008)

3. Decision rule for determining the practices occurrences involves: 12-18 high repetitions as **often**, 3-7 repetitions as **sometimes**, and 1-2 repetitions as **rarely**.

## APPENDIX L

### CATEGORIES OF SOCIAL FAMILY NETWORKS



## APPENDIX M

### SAMPLE OF SYSTEMATIC CODING OF INTERVIEW DATA

INTERVIEW WITH RUFAI AND FAMILY

-0: Ok, the questions are segmented into sessions, so first I will be asking about home language, meaning the language spoken at home. So what languages are used by family members in the house?

**Home Language - Hausa**

-4: We speak two different languages, Hausa -0: Speak audibly so that I will be able to hear the conversation clearly while typing out. Each day they wake up in the morning which they eat their breakfast. After which they go to a school not very far from here, it's an Arabic school, outside. -0: Arabic what? what do you mean by "waje"? Islamic Arabic taught in a mosque not far from here, outside because it's not here (-0: Ok, +4: they go to read there till around 7:15. -0: from what time?, from 6:30-7:15. On return, they will wear their canvass and by 7:30 they have gone to school, so they will return by 8. On Monday, 3, Tuesday 1:30, Wednesday 3, Thursday 3, Friday 12:30, Saturday they go to Islamic school by 8, Mallam Babangida- Madarasatul nurul Islam. -0: kindly say the name slowly. -4: Ma-da-ra-sa-tul nu-rul ls-lam and they close from there by 11. -0: which language do you communicate with them whenever you wake up in the morning? Hausa. -0: Hausa? Uhm. -0: Basically, you speak Hausa always? -4: Well, we use Hausa time to time, that's the truth about how I communicate with them, other times we speak English but Hausa is often the language. -0: But is English spoken in this house? -4: yes, we do very well, -0: Does the child understand and speaks it? -4: Yes, he speaks it. -0: Ok. -4: In fact, in their class he came the best in the area of Hand writing, in their class in Corona -0: Uhm! -4: He is a lefty, his teacher told me.

-0: Going back to Hausa, Elrufai speaks Hausa, he speaks English

-4: Yes, there are times he speaks a language like Jarabci -0: What is Jarabci? Arabic -0: Is it Jarabci the same as Arabic? -4: Yes, Jarabci is in Hausa while Arab is in Arabic. -0: Yes... (DOOR OPENS) -0: meaning sometimes he speaks English. -4: Yes, -0: but basically the language he speaks most often is Hausa. -4: Yes, Hausa -0: with? -4: English because once they are in school, no Hausa throughout till they return home. Even at home, Rufai likes to speak English a lot. He is a boy that enjoys speaking English, whenever he sits with his father, he will not speak Hausa with his father, Musty speaks good English than El Rufai, though speaks Hausa more often, but El Rufai prefers to speak English regularly. For instance, you will find me speaking Hausa to him but he will rather respond in English, that's El Rufai for you. Even this morning, that was what happened, he enjoys speaking English to me while I enjoy speaking Hausa to him, -0: you're referring to El Rufai? -4: Yes, his major interest is to speak good English, he doesn't mind speaking bad English, he will rather do that and be corrected by us. Whenever he is corrected he immediately implements the correction and continues. He's simply interested in English. -0: You are right, because I have heard him with the father, there was a time. -4: Yes, whenever his

1 - Rufi  
4 - Mother

1. Dominant language at home: Hausa  
2. Schools attended: Arabic 6:30-7:15am  
Preschool 7:30 am  
3. English Language - understands & speaks sometimes, Best in Hand writing in class.

*Handwritten notes on the left margin:*  
Daily Prayer  
Daily Hygiene by Child  
Brush teeth  
Preschool 7:30 am  
Mum  
Language Hausa often

*Handwritten notes on the right margin:*  
Mum  
• bath  
• wear uniform  
Attend Arabic School Located in Mosque  
6:30 - 7:15 am  
Sat: 8 am - 11 am  
Ruff (speaks English sometimes)  
Best in school - Hand writing  
Bilingual  
speak Arabic sometimes  
Mum speaks Hausa but often respond in English

## APPENDIX N

### SAMPLE OF RECORDED INTERVIEW: CODING OF RESPONSES

<b>Language Use</b>			
1. What language(s) do you use for daily interactions? and how often do you use the language(s)			
Examples of Coded Items			
Chamun	Ruffy	Mide	Umi
<p>(1) Home language: <u>English language often used</u> for everyday home interactions</p> <p>(2) Other languages:</p> <p><u>Mother Tongue:</u> (Mwaghavul) <u>occasionally use</u> whenever grandma visits</p> <p>(3) Hausa: (Language of immediate environment) rarely (only use with friends from neighbourhood)</p>	<p>(1) Home language: <u>Mother tongue Hausa often used</u> for everyday interactions</p> <p>(2) <u>Other language: English language, occasionally use</u> during <u>homework, watching TV and films. Code-switching</u> with <u>Hausa is often</u></p> <p>(3) <u>Arabic language:</u> used mainly during ‘<u>salah</u>’ and <u>greetings</u></p>	<p>(1) Home language: <u>English often used for daily interaction. Equally used</u> with the <u>mother tongue (Yoruba)</u></p> <p>(2) <u>Pidgin English</u> occasionally used with grandma while on visit</p>	<p>(1) Home language: <u>Hausa mother tongue often used</u> for family life activities.</p> <p>(2) Other language: <u>English on occasion of doing homework, Code-switching with English</u></p> <p>(3) <u>Arabic language:</u> used mainly during ‘<u>salah</u>’ and <u>greetings</u></p>
<b>Ways of supporting literacy</b>			
(2) What activities do you use to boost your child’s oral conversations and literacy?			
Examples of Coded Items			
<p>(1) Using <u>regular prayer meetings (reading along)</u></p> <p>(2) <u>Leading prayers</u> before meals and prayer times</p> <p>(3) <u>Accessing play materials</u> (mobile library) and spaces</p> <p>(4) <u>Narrating stories</u> with humour on request</p> <p>(5) Using <u>questions to support to scaffold</u> knowledge &amp; <u>assess</u> grasp</p>	<p>(1) Engaging him in <u>routine activities</u> of prayer times, watching TV and movies (Hausa &amp; English movies)</p> <p>(2) <u>Helping with homework</u> (Arabic &amp; Preschool)</p> <p>(3) <u>Storytelling</u> with questioning</p>	<p>(1) Engaging her in <u>routines</u> activities: errands,, participating in daily devotions (listening to Bible readings)</p> <p>(2) <u>Singing and dancing</u> during prayers</p> <p>(3) <u>Doing homework together</u></p> <p>(4) <u>Talking</u> during <u>meals</u></p>	<p>(1) Allowing her to <u>attend outings</u> especially: <u>community ceremonies</u>, visiting extended family members, <u>doing role play</u></p> <p>(2) <u>Narrating true stories</u> (retelling and listening to parents)</p> <p>(3) Engaging her in <u>routines:</u> cooking, religious activities</p> <p>(4) <u>Doing homework</u> with her (Arabic &amp; Preschool)</p> <p>(5) <u>Watching religious TV &amp; movies</u> (music &amp; cartoons)</p>

Adapted from Grace, et al., (2014)

## APPENDIX O

### PRESCHOOL CHILDREN'S EVERYDAY MULTILITERACIES: A CROSS-CASE

#### ANALYSIS

Themes	Chamun Family	Ruffy Family	Mide Family	Umi Family
Literacy Practices	Child Multi literacies	Child Multi literacies	Child Multi literacies	Child Multi literacies
<b>Language Environment</b>	Bilingual: English (main), Mwaghavul & Hausa (occasional), Code switching	Bilingual: Hausa (main), , Greetings (Arabic), English (occasional), Code switch (English, Hausa)	Bilingual: English (main), Yoruba (Main), Pidgin (occasional)	Bilingual: Hausa (main), English (occasional) Code-switch (Hausa & English),
	<b>Listening and Speaking</b> Singing songs (dialect & gospel songs), Learn phonics Saying Prayers (mealtime & devotions) Narrating stories (fictions) Self-talking while playing	<b>Listening and Speaking</b> Narrating events, Telephone conversation Imitates parents' speech <b>Vocabulary</b> (Hausa & English)	<b>Listening and Speaking</b> Initiate & Narrating events (Classwork activities) Greetings & Giving gratitude, Singing Phone talk, Answer questions, Expressing intents, , Praying (making connection) <b>Vocabulary</b> (learning new words) Using word memory, Recognizing trademarks (Coke etc.) Recognizing 50, 100, 200 naira <b>(3) Body Language:</b> nodding, eye contacts etc.	<b>Listening and Speaking</b> Describing events & family history Argue (film actors with facts, Singing (Hausa/Arabic) <b>Vocabulary</b> (Hausa & English)
<b>Religious Environment</b>	<b>Listening and Speaking</b> Attentive (Devotional Bible & bedtime stories, music, & instructions) Retelling Bible stories Request clarifications Inquisitiveness (about stories & new words), Reading aloud with Mum Grasp explanations	<b>Listening and Speaking</b> Attentive (story), Response Imam Call to prayers, Asking questions, Reading Arabic letter sounds, Answering questions, Praying in Arabic Grasp clarifications Recitation & memorization of Quran (Arabic)	<b>Listening and Speaking</b> Attentive to reading aloud Bible passages & Devotional Leading prayers Reading Visual images (Pictures) Asking Questions Singing and dancing (gospel songs)	<b>(1) Listening and Speaking</b> Responds to Imam's call for prayers) Retelling story, Responses (verbal directives, questions), Request clarifications, Response (non-verbal-dancing to music rhythm), Discriminates songs, Curiosity of new words Taking facts & expand cognition
	<b>Print Awareness</b> Book handling: left-right orientation in reading) Repetitive reading		<b>Print Awareness:</b> directionality rules Narrative skill	Counting numbers (Hausa), , Pencil grip, Single out colours (colouring Teddy bear)
	<b>(3) Vocabulary</b>	<b>(2) Vocabulary</b> Learning new words	<b>(3) Vocabulary:</b> Biblical concepts, Using word bank	
<b>Social Environment (1)Homework</b>	<b>(1) Pre-writing &amp; Drawing</b> Show curiosity to writing & drawing, Pencil grip Scribbling lines and writing Drawing and colouring toys Making colour choices <b>(2) Letter sound knowledge, Numeracy, reckoning</b>	<b>(1) Pre- reading, writing, &amp; Drawing</b> Drawing & labeling (book, fish, tree), Drawing to recap story Pencil grip Reading culture picture <b>(2) Repeating/reading numbers 1-100, drawing)</b>	<b>(1) Pre-reading, writing &amp; Drawing</b> Print Awareness Copying words Drawing (pot, jug, fish & clock), Pencil grip, Copying letters & numbers (from literacy charts) Drawing shapes (square, triangle & rectangle)	Writing: Know left-right orientation & right left orientation (English & Arabic) & pencil grip

			Colour recognition	
<b>(2) Home Chores</b>	<b>(1) Vocabulary</b> Naming of local food items & kitchen utensils; Recognize cooking activities (pounding) Grasping new words, Using known terms Describing and naming objects drawn with short phrases “this is a car”		<b>(1)Vocabulary</b> Naming items (prior knowledge), Comprehension, Expands knowledge Identify home areas, & List items in them, Identify shapes (square etc.)	Grasps & expand knowledge (bone etc.), Links words (big & heavy etc.), Grasp meaning by touching, Recognize trade labels (Coke, Mirinda, Fanta, & Zobo),
<b>(2) Liesure (Watching TV &amp; Using mobile phone)</b>	<b>(3) Technology</b> Using phone music app to play music & games, use computer toy to play games	Watching TV & video films, Retelling Kannywood movie stories Reads Visual Print (on TV screen)		
<b>(3) Community Engagements</b>				
<b>Child Environment</b> Role-play and Creativity	<b>(1) Vocabulary</b> Construct a shape (form plastics) Labels shape “a man smiling”, Cooking & serving, Create accident scene (using basket & car toys and sounding /v/) Talking & playing ABC (on sand with dry stick and fingers),	<b>(1) Vocabulary</b> Craft making with papers & Identifying them, Flipping pages to read Animal Picture reading,  Labeling objects, learning new words,	<b>(1)Vocabulary</b> Role play (Caring mother, Trader) Construct a shape with beans “letter /s/” Babysitting (brother) & Singing (Yoruba rhyme)	Role play (Trader, exchange goods for cash & collect cash balance), Role-play (mother home roles (fetching water, & cooking), Devise food items & utensils, directing, caring for baby doll (watching cloths, showing warmth)
Solitary Play (Dramatic)			Operates phone key to search her recorded Church event), Watching video	Operates TV remote control, watch cartoon

**Note: obtained from both observation and interview data**

## APPENDIX P

### STRUCTURE OF PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL SETTINGS

1. Literacy Space	Accessibility in Homes	Uses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living room</li> </ul>	All four families	Hub of family interactions Chamun: praying, homework, involved in reading with mother, space for conversation, writing, singing, eating and play Ruffy: praying, homework, listening to stories, conversations and watching television Mide: praying, homework, play, singing, conversations and eating Umi: praying, dancing, homework, eating,
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literacy Corner</li> </ul>	Chamun, Ruffy, Mide	Chamun: improvised by the focal child to interact with books and toys Ruffy: Assigned and equipped by father for the purpose of homework and practicing reading/writing skills Mide: Assigned and equipped by parents for the purpose of practicing reading/writing skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bedroom</li> </ul>	Chamun	A shared space used for language activities such as talking about the day's events and bedtime oral Bible stories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kitchen</li> </ul>	Chamun, Umi	Cooking activities involving carrying out errand of unwrapping seasoning, listening to instructions and <u>responding in speech and learning new ideas.</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outdoor Space</li> </ul>	All focal children	Chamun: the courtyard was close to second classroom where she engaged in various activities such as creativity and make-belief play Ruffy: Not actively engaged with the outdoor space but for one occasion when he used the Well in the courtyard as a language resource Mide: family owned grocery store was a learning outdoor space while the family house courtyard served as playground, the courtyard as social space for interactions with family and friends Umi: Verandah and courtyard was a space for make-belief play and social interactions with family and friends
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmhouse (Piggery &amp; Poultry)</li> </ul>	Chamun	Routine feeding of animals, environment for language activities, opportunities to develop vocabulary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foodstuff store</li> </ul>	Mide	Her after school space which provided opportunities for language and literacy activities
<b>2. Language resources</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English</li> </ul>	All focal children and families	Chamun family- It was the main language for all social and cultural interactions Ruffy family- Sparingly in use except during homework, and sometimes when exchanging compliments with the research student Mide family- It was used frequently for communication and all interactions Umi family- Rarely used
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mwaghavul</li> </ul>	Chamun family	The mother tongue was active mainly whenever grandma visited
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hausa and Arabic</li> </ul>	Ruffy family, Umi family	Hausa is the mother tongue and was the main language of communication and all interactions in both families Arabic was used mainly when performing religious activities, and doing Arabic school homework/revision

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yoruba/Pidgin languages</li> </ul>	Mide family	Yoruba is the mother tongue and sparingly in use. It was active during exchange of compliments such greeting and welcoming visitors Pidgin English was the convenient for grandma to communicate and interact with Mide
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Code-switching</li> </ul>	All focal children	Chamun- codeswitched between English and Mwaghavul Ruffy- codeswitched between Hausa and English Mide- codeswitched between English and Yoruba Umi- codeswitched between Hausa and English
<b>3. Literacy Materials</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School books particularly workbooks</li> </ul>	All focal children and families	Doing homework and Print awareness/orientation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A4 plain Papers</li> </ul>	Ruffy	Creating shapes of objects and drawing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notebook</li> </ul>	Chamun, Ruffy, Mide	Chamun-Practicing writing skills Mide- Practicing writing skills Ruffy- Drawing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pencil, Crayon and pen</li> </ul>	All focal children and families	Chamun-Doing homework, writing, writing, colouring Ruffy- uses pen for drawing Mide- Writing Umi- doing homework (writing and colouring crayons)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children Bible Storybooks</li> </ul>	Chamun, Mide	Chamun- Shared book reading, Reading aloud and Print awareness Mide- Print awareness, reading resource,
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quran and other religious books</li> </ul>	Ruffy, Umi	Memorization and recitation of verses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alphabet and numbers charts</li> </ul>	Mide	Learning letters of the alphabets, words and numbers, Print motivation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wall Prints (Photo Portraits)</li> </ul>	Chamun	Inscription of family faith Having conversation with the image (Jesus), Family history
<b>4. Auxiliary Literacy Materials</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>White Board &amp; Accessories</li> </ul>	Ruffy, Mide	Revision of schoolwork, practice writing skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plastic Chair &amp; Table</li> </ul>	Chamun, Mide	Chamun- Chair height supported appropriate sitting position for writing activities, embraced the family centre table to use with her chair Mide: Both chair and table heights supported sitting position for writing and reading activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mat &amp; Wall-to-wall Carpet</li> </ul>	Ruffy, Umi	Safe play and praying space, listening to stories
<b>5. Technology &amp; Toys</b>		
<b>A. Media</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Television/DVD Player</li> </ul>	All families	Using remote control to on & off & change channels; Watching TV programs & films. But erratic electricity supply affect sustainable & effective use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Laptop</li> </ul>	Ruffy	Playing computer games on the father's laptop
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Computer tablet</li> </ul>	Mide	For learning letter songs and rhymes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mobile Phone</li> </ul>	Chamun, Ruffy, Mide	Speaking to relatives (with parent's support), watch recorded video and listen to music
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cartoons</li> </ul>	Umi	Retelling the storyline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hausa Films</li> </ul>	Ruffy	Facilitate retelling and narrating stories in Hausa
<b>6. Auxiliary Media Resources</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absence of electricity supply</li> </ul>	All families	The families of Ruffy and Umi reverted to storytelling
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rechargeable lamp</li> </ul>	Mide	Used in the absence of electricity to do assignment
<b>B. Toys</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Doll baby/Teddy Bear</li> </ul>	Chamun, Mide and Umi	Use for pretend plays
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Model car and basket</li> </ul>	Chamun	Replicate toys in drawing activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Car</li> </ul>	Ruffy	Playing activities
<b>7. Improvised Materials</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discarded Materials- Outdoor activities</li> </ul>	Chamun, Umi	Chamun-Role plays, creativity play, writing activities, Umi- Labelling objects, role play
<b>8. Human Resources</b>		

• Mothers	All families	Mediating the children's early literacy experiences, because of their sustained presence in the home
• Fathers	Chamun and Mide	Providing mediating role when available
• Absentee fathers	Ruffy and Umi	Sponsored literacy materials in the home
• Older siblings	Ruffy and Umi	Ruffy- helping with homework Umi- Teaching concepts, play mate
• Younger sibling	Mide	Environment for singing lullaby
• Grandmother	Chamun, Mide	Chamun- storytelling, mediator for codeswitching (between English and Mwaghavul languages) Mide- learning commercial skills in the foodstuff store, mediator for codeswitching between English and Yoruba, environment for interacting with Pidgin English
• Uncle, Aunty	Umi, Chamun	Storytelling, Singing
<b>9. Pet/domestic animals</b>		
• Dog, Piggery/Poultry -outdoor interaction	Mide	Environment for learning new word, playmate
• Free range chickens/goats	Umi	Opportunity to encounter domestic animals

Note: Obtained from demographic questionnaire and observation data

## APPENDIX Q

### CODES AND THEMES: FAMILY SOCIAL NETWORK SUPPORT STRATEGIES

*Family Social Network strategies (Extracted from Observation informal Conversation & Interview data): A Cross-case Analysis*

Themes	Chamun	Ruffy	Mide	Umi
Teaching strategy	Using syllable to teach diction Teach dialect with story & songs Pointing & reading aloud (story Giving illustrations, (Boko Haram) from Noah & Ark story Initiate new words Shared book reading & reading aloud, Reads & tell stories with humour, Use questioning to help her uncover facts	“Repeat & say” method of Arabic letters, Touching and reading pictures Giving explanations and life applications Initiate new words	Giving illustrations, Using practical engagement of child to discover knowledge, Evaluate knowledge by Probing (using clues, What & Why questions) Initiate new words Giving explanations (using clues) Touching and reading aloud	Giving instructions Questioning, Giving cue Initiate new words Demonstrate facts Giving examples (insert Yaya’s role) Giving explanations (as children brain innately retains fact like stone) to boost learning Describes kitchen items
Communication Method	Listening & responding Foster use of English Use gestures (to respect adult talk, correction), keep acts unhindered	Listening and responding Foster use of Hausa	Listening and responding (verbal & non-verbal), Foster use of dialect, Object use of Pidgin English in school Everyday talk Use of gesture (eye contacts) to correct misconduct at visitors’ presence	Listening & Responding to sustain conversation & speaking Using gesture (eye contact to correct misconduct
Learning opportunities (spaces, materials and technology)	Creating free learning opportunities (play), Partnering to play along, giving chances to read, pray Choice to select story	Granting learning opportunities (choose story, play, use laptop on Dad’s consent), Buys books (but rarely used)	Providing literacy materials (literacy charts, Whiteboard, Picture Bible story etc.), Also reads Yoruba storybook (to create print interest) Use children “Zeal” faith book to enrich dictionary on morality, enforce use of literacy items to avoid distractions	Providing opportunities for choices, partnering in a play role,
Community Engagements	Encouraging attendance of Sunday school	Fostering community religious role enrolls child in Arabic school, Helping with Arabic homework	Encouraging attendance of Sunday school, Helping with Sunday school homework	Enrolls child in Arabic school, Encourage attendance of community rites, helping with Arabic homework
Reward and punishment	Applaud progress (verbal), Praise with pet names, (My Family doctor, Cherisco) Spanking	Applaud progress (clapping) & Punish bad conduct (deprivation of interest)	Applaud progress (high five, praise, clapping) Discipline (how?)	Applaud progress (clapping) and praise
Sensitivity	Awareness of child’s literacy interest, & responds to requests (lively reading with drama, buys books, gives writing items) Use wisdom to attend to tough questions	Showing concerns about school performance Enforce TV rules and Security (padlocking well)	Correct bad manners (courtesy to adults) & mistakes,	Correcting mistakes with explanations, provides boost to do homework and school learning, reminding child to pray before activities

## APPENDIX R

### GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

