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# Navigating Chinese and English Multiliteracies Across Domains in Canada: An Ethnographic Case Study of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Children's Literacy Practices

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

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NAVIGATING CHINESE AND ENGLISH MULTILITERACIES ACROSS DOMAINS IN  
CANADA: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY OF CULTURALLY AND  
LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE CHILDREN'S LITERACY PRACTICES

(Monograph)

by

Xiaoxiao Du

Graduate Program in Education

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

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada

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## Abstract

Increasing diversity in the globalized world challenges the field of education such as policy development and curriculum design (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2009). With more and more students speaking a home language other than English entering schools, numerous studies have examined their English language development with a focus on how they learn to read and write at home and school. However, less is known about culturally and linguistically diverse children's literacy practices across domains. This study investigated Chinese children's literacy practices and asked What are Chinese children's literacy practices at school, home, and in the community? What (linguistic and sociocultural) resources do Chinese children draw upon in their literacy practices? In what ways (if any) do classroom teachers, parents, and communities support Chinese children's literacy practices?

The study is situated within the social and cultural perspectives toward literacy with a focus on multiliteracies (The New London Group, 1996). In order to examine children's literacy practices across domains, I employed the case study using ethnographic tools such as participant observations and semi-structured interviews to collect data (O'Reilly, 2005; Yin, 2005). Participants included Chinese families and teachers. Data analysis involved data triangulation, constant comparison and critical reflection.

Findings of the study indicated that children's literacy practices were directed to print literacy in adult-organized literacy activities/events and children's literacy practices were multimodal in children-initiated literacy activities/events, children drew upon their social, cultural and linguistic background to explore literacies, and adults provided certain degrees of support based on their understanding and background. The study recommends that educators, researchers and practitioners take the widened lens to view and understand literacy as social, cultural, and multiple (Larson & Marsh, 2013). In addition, children should be regarded as capable meaning makers who bring their own funds of knowledge to understand the world around them. Further, school, home, and community need to work together to support children's multiliteracies exploration and learning by providing opportunities, resources and scaffolding. Lastly, the study was designed to contribute to the knowledge base of multiliteracy especially the complicated and dynamic literacy practices of culturally and linguistically diverse children in Canada.

## Keywords

Literacy, print literacy, biliteracy, multiliteracy, case study, culturally and linguistically diverse children, home, school and community.

## Dedication

This study is dedicated to culturally and linguistically diverse children and their families including mine.



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## Chapter One

### 1 Introduction

#### 1.1 Coming to the research

This doctoral research is a case study examining the literacy practices of children navigating Chinese and English languages at home, school, and in the community. I have designed this section to provide a rationale for the study and to help readers understand my positioning as a researcher and the factors which drew me to the study.

Between the years 2004 and 2005, I taught English at the secondary level in mainland China. In my role I felt constrained by the directive to focus on preparing my students for the national exam rather than helping them to learn and appreciate the English language, including its cultural components. To broaden my view and update my professional knowledge, I came to Canada as an international graduate student in 2005. I had been learning English since I was six years old, but despite my facility with the language, I experienced culture shock and encountered challenges with academic English. I could read and understand the graduate level course readings, but I did not know how to participate in the class discussions. My previous educational experiences had taught me to wait for my turn or to be asked to share before offering an opinion. Furthermore, I was unfamiliar with the Canadian academic writing style. I was trained to begin my writing indirectly, by giving examples of the topics first and then providing the main idea. Although I was studying and working in English, my approach to academia was distinctly Chinese.

Early in my graduate work, I recognized that these practices were not going to bring me success in Canada. Fortunately, one of my professors had been to China and knew about Chinese culture and noticed my situation in class. He kindly talked me through the culture shock and



provided me with opportunities to join in the class discussions. I began to feel more confident. Aware that being shy and overly modest was not going to help me succeed in Canadian classrooms, I sought to change my behaviour. I began to take an active role in classroom discussions and contributed to the graduate program as much as I could. In my practicum at a secondary school, I learnt more about education in Canada, especially as it pertained to English literacy instruction. I successfully earned a Master of Arts degree. However, I still felt that I had more to learn about language and literacy education in Canada, particularly in its treatment of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. My curiosity prompted me to complete a Master of Education program and then to enroll in doctoral studies. I conducted this study in partial fulfillment of a Doctor of Philosophy in Education.

My doctoral research focuses on the literacy practices of CLD children living in Canada. About eight years ago, I began volunteering in a public elementary school in southwestern Ontario with a high percentage of CLD students. In that volunteer position, I learnt from CLD children who came from many different countries. I witnessed these children navigating a new culture and language and noticed with sadness that the children began to replace their first language with English in an English only environment. To learn more about CLD children's literacy learning in Canada, I wrote a Master's thesis on bilingual literacy learning of children who spoke Chinese. The study focused on teachers' and parents' perceptions of bilingual literacy learning and bilingual literacy teaching at home and school. I found that even though the participating teachers and parents expressed positive attitudes toward children becoming bilingual, their support for bilingual literacy varied. The teachers and parents held different concepts of children's language learning, in particular as it related to print literacy learning and the ways in which learning English would shape the children's literacy practices. The teachers

also varied in their ability to support children in the midst of busy classrooms with many competing demands. In the current study, I continue to focus on the literacies of children who are navigating English and Chinese, but have focused on the children themselves and their literacy practices.

I have carefully considered the language used to describe the children in my study. *Chinese immigrant children*, *Chinese-Canadian children*, *Chinese-American children*, *children with Chinese heritage* and *children from China* have all been used in the literature to refer to children who come to North America from China. Many of the children in these studies speak Chinese and/or are of Chinese cultural and linguistic heritage (Du, 2008; Kenner, 2004; Li, 2006; Gregory, 2008). The signifiers “Chinese” and “children” do not go together unproblematically. Depending on their combination, they can connote and denote specifics regarding language, nationality, citizenship, race, and ethnicity. Moreover, off-hand significations can sometimes make it unclear whether children in a study were born in mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, or Taiwan and/or whether they lived in other Asian locales; whether they are visitors to, immigrants to, or citizens of Canada, the United Kingdom, or the United States; and/or if the families of the children in question stay in their country, return to their home country, or travel back and forth. So the same term of *Chinese children* may refer to different people in different situations across different studies.

In my study, some of the participating children held Canadian citizenship, and others, Chinese. For those who held Chinese passports, some were permanent immigrants to Canada and others were visitors with visitor visas. Despite the differences, the children had in common that their parents had been born and raised in the People’s Republic of China or mainland China and had chosen to visit, study, or live in Canada. All the children could understand, read, and speak

Mandarin Chinese, as well as write simplified Chinese characters. The children were all CLD and navigating both the English and Chinese languages and cultures to make meaning. Hereafter, I refer to these children as the *participating children*. However, I sometimes use the term *Chinese children* as a sort of shorthand to refer to children in the literature whose households are Chinese-speaking.

My study aimed to acquire an in-depth understanding of the literacy practices of a small group of students from Chinese families. There is considerable evidence that parents and teachers can effectively support CLD children's acquisition of multilingual literacies (Cummins & Early, 2011; Gibbons, 2002; Li, 2009). By documenting practices in different domains, my study has potential to increase teachers' awareness of and ability to support the literacy learning of children navigating Chinese and English. Barton and Hamilton (2000) define domains as "structured, patterned contexts within which literacy is used and learnt" (p. 11). Domains in the study include school, home, and community.

The study also aimed to provide empirical research findings to help parents and children understand Canadian school culture including but not limited to teaching and learning with the hopes that this understanding may cushion culture shock and provide a smoother transition from the home to the school. My main research question is: What are the literacy practices at home, school, and in the community of children who are learning English and Chinese? My sub-questions are (a) What (linguistic and sociocultural) resources do these children draw upon in their literacy practices? (b) In what ways (if any) do classroom teachers, parents, and communities support these children's literacy practices?

## 1.2 Background

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is a globalized world in which people, texts, and contexts are connected with and influence each other. Literacy education may need to be placed in both globalized and local contexts so that people can effectively communicate with each other using different forms of texts. Suárez-Orozco and Suárez -Orozco (2009) argue that increased migration has changed schools and schooling worldwide and that globalization requires students in contemporary times to be equipped with advanced literacy skills to participate in “a globally interlinked economy” as well as become “globally conscious and engaged citizens of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (p. 62).

According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) (2013), there were 257,887 immigrants who came to Canada in 2012 and 38.4% of those immigrants chose to settle in Ontario. Ontario has been and continues to be the top choice of settlement in Canada for over 10 years. The People’s Republic of China has been the top immigration source country to Canada and Mandarin Chinese has been the most frequently reported mother tongue (except for English) since 1998 (CIC, 2013).

As the above statistics show Canadian classrooms are increasingly diverse, and public education is still grappling with how to respond to this diversity. Experts in literacy education and CLD children find that it is crucial for teachers to learn about their students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds in order to support their school success. At the same time, researchers argue that the maintenance of languages other than English and creating schools that value plurilingualism are also vital (Cummins & Early, 2011; Gibbons, 2002; Li, 2009). In Ontario, where the study took place, the Ministry of Education has begun attempts to support educators to teach CLD children. In 2005, the Ministry published a curricular support document entitled, *Many roots, many voices: supporting English language learners in every classroom*. While the

document contains a section pointing out the importance of children's prior knowledge and first languages, it is problematic given that its end goal is CLD children's acquisition of Ministry curricular outcomes of which plurilingualism and/or the maintenance of one's first language are not included (*Many roots, Many voices*, 2005). Later in 2008, the Ontario Ministry of Education created a strategy for Ontario schools entitled *Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*. The stated purpose of the strategy is to "continue to advance three core priorities of improving student achievement, reducing achievement gaps, and increasing public confidence in our education system" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 10). In this strategy, the Ontario Ministry of Education envisioned an inclusive education system where "all students, parents, and other members of the school community are welcomed and respected" and "every student is supported and inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning" (p. 10). In other words, according to the Ministry of Education documents, Ontario schools are charged with supporting *all* students in their education. The implications of this document for what actually happens in the classroom, in particular with CLD children, however, is unknown. This study is designed to explore the realities of working across languages across domains.

There are numerous studies of CLD children's literacy learning. Some studies investigate children's print literacy development, that is, how children learn to read and write print (Ehri, Nunes, Willows, Schuster, Yaghoub-Zadeh, & Shanahan, 2001; Hanley, Tzeng, & Huang, 2006; Morrow, 1997; Juel, 1988; Rog, 2011), while other studies examine children's literacy learning processes and experiences (Baker, 2006; Cummins & Danesi, 1990). With some exceptions (e.g., Gregory, 1996; Kenner, 2004; Li, 2006) there are few studies that specifically address the education and literacy practices of children who are learning English and Chinese, and even

fewer that examine their literacy practices at school and at homes in the Canadian context (Dyson, 1993, 2003; Genishi & Dyson, 2009; Kendrick, 2003; Li, 2000; Gregory, 2008). This study is also designed to address the above gaps in the literature.

My study examines the multiliteracy practices of CLD children who were navigating between English and Chinese at their public school, community heritage language school, and in their homes. The study employs a sociocultural perspective of early childhood and considers literacy as socially and culturally situated in particular historical and political contexts (Gee, 1996; Street, 1984; Wertsch, 1994). To obtain an in-depth understanding of the participating children's literacy practices across domains, I conducted an ethnographic case study using participant observations, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, and artifacts to help answer the research questions. The findings of the study indicated that children drew on their *funds of knowledge* to practice their print literacy in adult-organized literacy events and multimodal literacy practices in child-initiated literacy events. For example, participating children drew on what they knew about English, Chinese, and their cultures to practice reading and writing in teacher-organized literacy activities in the morning and teacher-facilitated literacy centers in the afternoon. Participating children also practiced multiliteracies at different times of the day in different places across different domains. For example, the participating children used gestures, sounds, and available material, such as paper, markers, stickers, buttons, and stones they found from home, school, and in the community, as well as their knowledge of languages and culture to make meaning of texts and to navigate the different domains in which they live, study, and play. Adults, including teachers, parents, and grandparents, provided various degrees of support for these practices based on their understanding of the work, educational backgrounds, work schedules, and their daily routines.

### 1.3 Overview of the dissertation

The dissertation is organized into five chapters. In Chapter 1, I talk about the researcher and the rationale for conducting the study. I also state my research questions and provide contextual information for the study. In Chapter 2, I begin by discussing the key tenets of the New Literacy Studies (Street, 1984). I define the children's literacy events and literacy practices and then go further to discuss multiliteracies, as well as CLD children's print literacy acquisition such as biliteracy. After that, I review the existing literature on children's literacy learning at home and school in North America and discuss what researchers have discovered about the literacy practices of children who are learning Chinese and English across different domains. In Chapter 3, I start by systematically exploring the tenets and implications of a sociocultural perspective on literacy education for CLD children situated within the broad umbrella of social constructivism and then I discuss the design of the study by explaining my rationale for choosing an ethnographic case study approach, the data collection and data analysis, and issues of trustworthiness, ethics, and limitations of a qualitative case study. In Chapter 4, I first introduce the participants and the domains, and then I report my data through narratives of children's literacy practices at home, school, and in the community that were crafted through a triangulation of the data. In Chapter 5, I discuss the major findings, draw conclusions, and identify implications for schools, teachers, and parents. Finally, I make recommendations for future research.

### 1.4 Significance

The study has specific implications relative to the CLD children's syncretic literacy practices (Gregory, 2004), identity choices and construction, as well as their parents' understanding of literacy and support toward multiliteracies at home. The findings of the study could also have

useful implications for classroom teachers and practitioners to further support CLD children's literacies at school by getting to know CLD children's cultural and linguistic backgrounds, creating an inclusive and welcoming learning environment, providing diverse opportunities for children to make sense of literacies based on their needs and interests, and collaborating with communities to support children's meaning making. The findings might also be helpful to Chinese parents who want to know more about their children's literacy practices at schools to rethink their children's literacy practices at home, and to scaffold their children to become multiliterate. Furthermore, the findings suggest educators, caretakers, curriculum designers and policy-makers should continue to investigate, debate, and discuss the meaning of being literate in the twenty-first century and the influence of multiliteracies on people's lives, at different levels of society, and in different parts of the world.



## Chapter Two

### 2 Literature Review

#### 2.1 Introduction

There is a plethora of research concerning CLD children's literacy practices, including their practices at home and school (David, Raban, Ure, Gouch, Jago, Barriere & Lambirth, 2000; Gregory, 1996, 1997, 2008). However, many of the studies are concerned with Latino children's Spanish and English learning in the United States (Campos, Delgado, & Huerta, 2011; Gilda, 2007; Lutz, 2006; Pérez, & Torres-Guzmán, 1996; Rolon, 2005). Studies about "Asian American" children's literacy learning (e.g., Li, 2009; Park, Endo, & Rong, 2009) tend to cluster in American contexts with some notable Canadian exceptions. These include Li (2001, 2003, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2009a) who has conducted studies of both the home- and school-centered literacy practices of Canadian children whose parents were Chinese, and Moore (2010), Norton and Gao (2008), and Toohey (2000) who all investigated Chinese students' literacy learning and their identity options in Western Canada, and finally studies by Chen and her team (Anderson & Chen, 2013; Chen, & Lin, 2008; Hao, Chen, Dronjic, Shu, & Anderson, 2013; Luo, Chen, Deacon, Zhang, & Yin, 2013) who have investigated Chinese children's literacy development in Ontario from a cognitive perspective. However, there is a shortage of research examining Chinese children's literacy practices across domains in Ontario from a multiliteracies perspective. This dearth is despite the fact that Chinese people have been among the largest immigrant populations to Canada since 1998, Mandarin Chinese has been reported as the most often used language at home by the Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC, 2013), and there is ever-growing attention being paid to multiliteracies.

In this chapter, I provide a survey of research literature on the topic of CLD children's literacy practices across different domains with an emphasis on research pertaining to children living in Canada. Before I present this research literature review, I discuss research and theoretical literature from a broad field known as New Literacy Studies (NLS). Specifically I discuss multiliteracies (e.g. Cope & Kalantzis, 2000), multimodality (Jewitt & Kress, 2003), syncretic literacies (Gregory, Long & Volk, 2004), artifactual literacies (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010), and play-as-literacy (Wohlwend, 2011).

## 2.2 New Literacy Studies

New Literacy Studies (NLS) is an umbrella term for literacy-related endeavours that emphasize the social and cultural characteristics of literacy practices which Street (2003) defines as

a series of writings in both research and practice that treat language and literacy as social practices rather than skills to be learnt in formal education. Research within this frame requires language and literacy to be studied as they occur in social life, taking account of the context and their different meanings for different cultural groups. (p. 79)

Researchers in NLS examine the meaning and forms of literacy in people's lives and explore "what people do with literacy" (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005, p. 11). NLS presents an expanded definition of literacy that recognizes many forms of literacy and different ways to understand literacy in diverse domains. NLS stresses the situational nature of literacy and the ways in which literacy practices are embedded in social institutions. Street's ideological and autonomous models of literacy are one NLS way of theorizing the ways in which literacy and the social are entwined (Street, 1984; Street & Lefstein, 2007). Each model is a challenge to the other. The autonomous model of literacy conceives of literacy as made up of a universal, independent set of

technical skills. In contrast, the ideological model reflects “the way in which literacy is grounded in, how it is used, and how it relates to power structures within a society” (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005, p. 14). The ideological model can be used to illuminate the ways in which social and cultural factors shape the kinds of literacy practices emphasized in, for example, school, which has been argued to privilege literacy practices that reflect a political and economic agenda (Hornberger, 2003).

*Literacy events* and *literacy practices* are central constructs for NLS. The notion of a literacy event was first proposed by Heath (1983) who defined a literacy event as “an occasion where written text and talk around that text constructs interpretations, extensions and meanings” (p. 19). Later, Street (1995) proposed the following definition:

[T]he concept of literacy practices is pitched at a higher level of abstraction and refers to both behavior and the social cultural conceptualizations that giving meaning to the uses of reading and/ or writing. Literacy practices incorporate not only ‘literacy event’, as empirical occasions to which literacy is integral, but also folk models of those events and the ideological preconceptions that underpin them. (p. 2)

Pahl and Rowsell (2005) suggest more contemporary definitions of the terms *literacy event* and *literacy practice* that can include multimodal literacies. They state that “the moment of composing a text can be described as a literacy event, an event in which literacy forms a part. Part of the composing process draws on a child’s experience of literacy practices” (p. 9). For example, children who do a daily writing activity in the classroom may use different literacy practices in order to organize the ideas in their writing. These practices are unique and culturally shaped. Outside of school, children are involved in many literacy events and literacy practices. A

young child may read a school book to a parent as part of the daily homework routine. Later that day, he might use the family's computer to help his grandparents access their favourite TV program. Besides print-focused literacy events and practices, there are also multimodal literacy events and practices. For example, CLD children use what they know about their home languages, English, and their past/current experience to draw and colour their understanding of topics of interest to them.

In this study I adopt the definitions of literacy event and literacy practice proposed by Larson and Marsh (2005). These definitions are in keeping with those presented by the authors who are mentioned above. According to Larson and Marsh (2005), "literacy events are conceived as occasions where texts (in a variety of forms) are central to participation" and "literacy practices may include literacy events, but also include a larger set of social, cultural, historical and political practices" (p. 131). Further drawing on central ideas from Barton and Hamilton's classic NLS text, *Local Literacies* (1998), Larson and Marsh (2005, p. 23) propose eight principles of NLS. The following four statements from that work are important to my study.

1. Literacy practices and events are always situated in social, cultural, historical, and political relationships and are embedded in structures of power (Barton, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Street, 1995, 1997, 1999).
2. Being literate involves being communicatively competent across multiple discourse communities (Barton, 1994; Gee, 1996, 2001). Literacy practices and events are embedded in Discourse (Gee, 1996, 2001; Gee, et al., 1996) and are integrated into people's everyday lived practices on multiple levels (Gee et al., 1996).
3. Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and

cultural practices (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 2001; Street, 1995).

4. Literacy practices change, and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense-making (Barton & Hamilton, 1998).

In the study, NLS theories helped me to examine children's literacy practices across different domains such as school, home, and community from a social and cultural perspective. NLS scholars also point to a need for researchers to use the plural form "literacies" rather than the singular form of literacy. People use different sign systems and modes in literacy practices. Different literacies reflect and connect with different languages and cultures (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). Even "within a given culture, there are different literacies associated with different domains of life" (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 10). For example, in Canada, CLD children learn English at school while at the same time they may speak different languages at home. Barton and Hamilton (2000) argue that "activities within these domains are not accidental or randomly varying: there are particular configurations of literacy practices and there are regular ways in which people act in many literacy events in particular contexts" (p. 11). With these imperatives in mind, I adopted a multiliteracies framework for my study.

### 2.2.1 Multiliteracies

The notion of multiliteracies is attributed to the New London Group (NLG), a cluster of New Literacy Studies scholars who published a classic paper entitled *A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures* (New London Group, 1996). All the following scholars have contributed to the publication of the paper: Courtney Cazden, Bill Cope, James Cook, Norman Fairclough, Jim Gee, Mary Kalantzis, Gunther Kress, Allan Luke, Carmen Luke, Sarah Michaels, and Martin Nakata. The "pedagogy of multiliteracies" embraces both multilingualism and the idea that literacies are practised across a range of modes. Jewitt and Kress (2003) define

*mode* as “a regularised, organised set of resources for meaning-making, including, image, gaze, gesture, movement, music, speech, and sound-effect” (p. 1). They point out that “a multimodal approach to learning requires [researchers] to take seriously and attend to the whole range of modes involved in representation and communication” (p. 1). When people communicate with each other or engage with different texts in different contexts, they make use of more than one mode. As Jewitt and Kress (2003) put it:

There are always many modes involved in an event of communication (say, speech, gesture, posture, maybe images) then all these modes together will be representing significant meanings of the overall message. The meaning of the message is distributed across all of these, not necessarily evenly. In short, different aspects of meaning are carried in different ways by each mode. (p. 3)

An example from my family life illustrates the multimodal nature of communication. Suppose my two-year-old Chinese-speaking child wants to get a juice box that is out of his reach. He can communicate this message to his caregivers using different modes. He can choose to use the modes of speech, gestures, and facial expressions. The child could use language to say the word *thirsty* in Chinese and/or English. In order to convey the message of what kind of drink he wants, he can use gestures or fingers to point to a particular juice box. If the caregiver picks up the right kind, he will show a smiling face. At the same time, the child may express this message by saying “Yes” in Chinese and/or English. Reflecting on routine events in family life helps me to understand that children can make use of diverse modes as resources for communication.

Multimodality also reflects the complexity of culture, as well as local and global contexts (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Thus, the multiliteracies perspective can guide research that examines

children's literacy practices across different domains and *languages*. As Cummins (2006) explains:

[T]he term multiliteracies was introduced by The New London Group (1996) to highlight the relevance of new forms of literacy associated with information, communication, and multimedia technologies and, equally important, the wide variety of culturally-specific forms of literacy evident in complex pluralistic societies. (p. 53)

Cummins points out that multiple literacies exist in any society. Multiliteracies embraces the multilingual features of communication as well as diversity and complexity within a single language. Chinese, for example, is diverse and complex within China. Most people in mainland China understand Mandarin Chinese, people from different parts of China speak the same Chinese with local dialects, and some people write the simplified Chinese characters while others write in their ethnic scripts, such as Zhangwen. Indeed, literacies and languages are multiple and diverse.

In addition to multimodality, my study draws on three other multiliteracies constructs: syncretic literacies (Gregory, Long & Volk, 2004), artifactual literacies (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010), and play-as-literacy (Wohlwend, 2011).

Syncretic literacies acknowledges the funds of knowledge from which children draw upon to make sense of the world. Duranti and Ochs (1997) define syncretic literacy as “an intermingling or merging of culturally diverse traditions [that] informs and organizes literacy activities” (p. 172). Gregory, Long and Volk (2004) use the term of syncretism to emphasize “the fluid and creative interaction of words, ideas and practices to create dynamic, fruitful and

positive whole” (p. 4). There are certain beliefs shared in the Syncretic Literacy Studies literature (Gregory, Long & Volk, 2004, p. 5) including:

- Young children are active members of different cultural and linguistic groups and appropriating membership to a group is not a static or linear process.
- Children do not remain in separate worlds but acquire membership of different groups *simultaneously*.
- Simultaneous membership means that children *syncretize* the languages, literacies, narrative styles and relationship roles appropriate to each group and then go on to transform the languages and cultures they use to create new forms of relevant to the purpose needed.
- Young children who participate in cross-linguistic and cross-cultural practices call upon a greater wealth of metacognitive and metalinguistic strategies. These strategies are further enhanced when they are able to *play out different roles and events*.
- Play is a crucial feature of children’s language and literacy practice with siblings, grandparents and peers.
- The mediators, often bicultural and/or bilingual, play an essential role in early language and literacy learning.

Syncretic Literacy Studies situate literacies within social and cultural perspectives and value the active role of children in meaning making. Children who make meaning across more than one language and culture draw upon their linguistic *funds of knowledge* to make sense of the world with support from their peers, siblings, parents, and grandparents. Syncretic Literacy Studies also



emphasize the process through which children syncretize literacies and cultural *funds of knowledge* by transforming existing semiotic resources (including different languages) for meaning making into new ways of understanding and engaging in literacies. Gregory, Long and Volk (2004) put it as follows.

Syncretic Literacy Studies . . . go beyond issues of method, materials, and parental involvement toward a wider interpretation of literacy, including what children take culturally and linguistically from their families and communities (prolepsis), how they gain access to the existing *funds of knowledge* in their communities through *finely tuned scaffolding* by mediators and how they transform existing languages, literacies and practices to create new forms (syncretism). (p. 5)

Syncretic Literacy Studies is vitally concerned with how children working across languages and cultures do more than adopt existing semiotic (including linguistic) resources to make new signs and grammars to fit their unique situation at-hand. This perspective provides me with the tools to capture CLD children’s literacy practices in a way that values the diverse languages and cultures instantiated within their literacies and literacy practices. It also allows me to position children as active meaning makers who draw upon their funds of knowledge (Moll, 1992) to make meaning of diverse texts in different domains so as to see how children make use of the available resources to negotiate their identity options (Cummins, 2000) within and across domains.

In *Artifactual Literacies*, Bartlett and Vasudevan state in the forward (2010) that Pahl and Rowsell “introduce a theory about the significance of artifacts in mediating our everyday literacies” (Pahl and Rowsell, 2010, p. vii). Pahl and Rowsell draw on Kress’s (2003) theoretical ideas about multimodal literacy and present an in-depth approach to understand children’s

meaning making process. Pahl and Rowsell (2010) situate children's text making in social and cultural contexts and work from the premise that artifacts can tell stories about the ways in which meaning is being made. Pahl and Rowsell (2010) refer to an artifact as an object that has the following qualities:

- Has physical features that makes it distinct, such as color or texture
- Is created, found, carried, put on display, hidden, evoked in language or worn
- Embodies people, stories, thoughts, communities, identities, and experiences
- Is valued or made by a meaning maker in a particular context (p. 2)

For example, a paper airplane created by a child can be considered as an artifact. The child makes the airplane using paper, colours the airplane in his choice, and designs it based on his understanding. In addition, the airplane can help the child to express his multimodal literacies, reflect his experiences, and provide an opportunity for him to tell stories. In a word, artifacts are “infused with meanings” and “tell stories, hold memories, and evoke identities connected with their existence” (Bartlett & Vasudevan, 2010, p. vii).

Artifacts provide a venue for people to express understanding and reflect upon their backgrounds as well as an opportunity for researchers and educators to rethink literacy. Pahl and Rowsell (2010) argue that “artifacts open up worlds for meaning makers ... Artifacts link to students' everyday lives and cultural histories. Artifacts provide the connecting piece—they move, travel across home and school, and these movements provide power to students” (p. 3). The concept of *artifactual literacies* helps researchers and educators to rethink the multimodal feature of literacies in artifact-making and meaning making with emphasis on the meaning makers, as well as point to new ways for educators to apply the situated and material nature of literacies across domains. In summary, “Pahl and Rowsell illustrate a nuanced argument about

the mediating nature of artifacts in connecting communities, affording new forms of talk, engendering critical literacy, and providing spaces for authoring new selves” (Bartlett & Vasudevan, 2010, p. vii).

The idea that play is a form of literacy is helpful to understand children’s multiliteracies practices across domains such as children’s multimodal literacy practices at home, school, and in the community. Rethinking play as literacy points to play processes in which children make use of the available resources to make meaning of different texts in different contexts. The idea that play can be a form of meaning making is not new, but Wohlwend (2011) offers a novel understanding of children’s play as meaning making and she challenges educators to rethink their ideas about these two terms. Wohlwend regards “play as a literacy for creating and coordinating a live-action among multiple players that invests materials with pretended meaning and slips the constraints of here-and-now realities” (p. 2). Play is one form of a child's literacy practices, and to some degree, it is an action-based practice among one or multiple people who make use of the available resources to create new forms of texts based on their interests and needs to express their understanding in their ways. “Play allows children to draw upon their imaginations and their lived experience and to tap into their passions and experience” (pp. 2-3). In other words, play offers an opportunity for children to make identity choices by pretending or being who they want to be, doing what they want to do in their ways based on their interests. Indeed “play [can be seen] as an embodied literacy” (p. 7) that connects with and reflects children’s backgrounds. In her book titled *Playing Their Way Into Literacies: Reading, Writing, And Belonging In The Early Childhood Classroom*, Wohlwend (2011) provides an analysis of kindergarten children’s multimodal play that is infused with text design and transformation, identity construction, critical discourse around gender, and consumer economy. Play is more than what children do. It can also

help children to make sense of the world through their observations, interpretations, and actions. In brief, “play is not only a set of transformative literacy practices but also a powerful means of shaping children’s identities and participation in classrooms. Play allows children to take up powerful literate identities that expanded their opportunities for classroom participation” (p. 112). Taking a view of play as literacy inspired me to take a closer look at children’s practices across domains especially in places such as community playgrounds, parks, and public libraries. Furthermore, I can observe and examine children’s diverse ways of meaning making when they engage with different texts and people in different play sessions in different domains.

### 2.2.2 CLD children and print literacy acquisition

There are a variety of terms and theoretical perspectives in the literature pertaining to children who are learning to be literate in more than one written language. In this chapter I survey some of the key authors in the study of CLD children’s literacy and point to some of the roots of the complexity in conceptualizing, talking about, and studying such phenomenon.

Biliteracy is a major construct in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Hornberger’s work is foundational in the SLA literature related to literacy. In defining biliteracy, Hornberger (1989) states that it “represents a conjunction of literacy and bilingualism” with each of these terms itself being accompanied by a range of research literature. The attempt to define biliteracy requires entering into the already complicated discussions about the definitions of literacy and bilingualism across domains. Hornberger (1989) thus adds that

Neither a complete theory of literacy nor a complete theory of bilingualism yet exists. In both fields, the complexity of the subject; the multidisciplinary nature of the inquiry, including educators, linguists, psychologists, anthropologists,

sociologists, and historians; and the interdependence between research, policy, and practice make unity and coherence elusive objectives. (p. 273)

Hornberger created a *Continua of Biliteracy (Continua)* (1989, 1990, 2003) in an effort to provide a framework for understanding biliteracy in a dynamic and globalized world. The *Continua* can be viewed as “the overarching conceptual schedule for describing biliterate contexts, development, and media” and “these continua are interrelated dimensions of one highly complex whole” (Hornberger, 1989, p. 272). The *Continua of biliteracy* (Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2003) provides a framework to understand and examine learning to be literate in more than one language. There are four clusters in the *Continua*, that is, *contexts of biliteracy* (micro vs. macro, oral vs. literate, and bilingual vs. monolingual), *development of biliteracy* (reception vs. production, oral vs. literate, L1 vs. L2), *content of biliteracy* (minority vs. majority, vernacular vs. literacy, contextualized vs. decontextualized) and *media of literacy* (simultaneous exposure vs. successive exposure; dissimilar structures vs. similar structures, divergent scripts vs. convergent scripts).

Based on the *Continua*, the issue of children learning to be literate in Chinese and English in Canada can be understood in the following aspects. First, in the *contexts of biliteracy*: children who are learning English and Chinese can be considered as emergent bilingual children who may not have balanced degrees of oral and print literacy in their home settings (micro) and the larger society (macro). Second, regarding the *development of biliteracy*: on an individual child level, the traditional language skills including listening and reading (receptive skills), speaking and writing (productive skills) are not learnt in a fixed nor linear way, but in a dynamic and bidirectional way. Third, for the *content of biliteracy*: in Canada, Chinese is considered to be a minority language and English is the majority language; thus, learning English at school can be

viewed as decontextualized since children may not have the Canadian experience or background to support their literacy learning. Finally, with respect to *media of literacy*: children learn to be literate in more than one language through successive exposures and in nonlinear ways. English and Chinese have different structures in that their writing systems are located at the opposite poles of the continuum (Edwards, 2009). These four clusters are interrelated and nested. For example, children's biliteracy development may be different in different domains, and in the same domain the content may vary and be learnt differently.

Other literature including literature from NLS, suggests that for CLD children, literacy cannot be solely concerned with the acquisition of print literacy skills in two or more languages. Rivera and Huerta-Macias (2008), for example, attempt to open up the definition of biliteracy saying that it is “more than reading and writing; it includes the ability to construct and communicate meaning in two languages across diverse social contexts and in socioculturally appropriate ways” (p. 5). Learning to be literate in more than one language can thus be understood to include a range of semiotic modes and media through which CLD children communicate. Even though two languages, English and Mandarin Chinese, were being used by the participating children in the study, like all CLD children, my participants were negotiating diverse modes in a range of domains as well as diverse linguistic worlds (Gregory, 2008; Kenner, 2004). To make meanings, they drew on diverse sociocultural resources and their *funds of knowledge* (Moll, 1992).

Another scholar who has sought to expand notions of biliteracy, is Edwards (2009) in her book, *Learning to be Literate: Multilingual Perspectives*. Edwards discusses the issues of literacy in more than one language. She states that “biliteracy is a highly complex phenomenon, best described in terms of a series of intersecting and nesting continua” (p. 61) and “individuals

become biliterate in many different ways along a continuum of simultaneous-successive exposure” (p. 56). Edwards (2009) also explains how understanding the process of learning to be literate in more than one language requires key concepts of bilingualism proposed by the pivotal figure, Jim Cummins. These concepts are the Interdependence Hypothesis, the Threshold Theory, the Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis, and Conversational versus Academic Language Proficiency. In her reading of Cummins’ work, Edwards posits that what CLD children have learnt in one language can be transferred to another language even though some of these languages seem to be very different from each other on the surface level. The more developed a child’s first language, the less difficult it is for that child to develop the second language. CLD children can rapidly develop and achieve their conversational proficiency among daily interactions with people and texts, but it can take them at least five years to develop and achieve the academic proficiency. Furthermore, Edwards (2009) argues that literacies are social and cultural and that CLD children “have a well-developed idea of how you [people such as teachers, family and community members] ‘do literacy’ in different settings and draw on elements of both community and school approaches in their own engagement with the written word” (p. 97). To sum up, literacies are not technical skills but social and cultural activities and each CLD child learns to be literate differently. There is no fixed route to becoming literate in more than one language.

Wang’s (2011) discussion of ways in which families influence CLD children’s literacy practices corroborates and illustrates Edwards’ points. Wang states that, “[I]n essence, to be literate in today’s society means being able to engage in a range of literacy practices, drawing on different sets of skills and processes suited to those particular practices” (p. 12). In addition, she positions parents as active partners in their children’s multilingual literacy learning and she

values the diverse ways that parents practice literacies with their children. She helps parents to situate multiliteracies learning in children's daily lives, emphasize planning and "overt instruction", value home teaching assessment, encourage parents to work together with school, and activate parents' own background knowledge (p. 12). In brief, parents can support their children's literacies in their own ways at home.

The literature indicates that it can be challenging for CLD children to become literate in more than one language in the local and global context for a variety of reasons (Cummins, 2000; García, 2009). First, English has become the dominant world language associated with political power and social mobility (García & Baker, 2007; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006, 2009; Skutnabb-Kangas, & Heugh, 2012). For example, even though the Canadian population is made up of people from a broad range of linguistic and cultural traditions, English is one of two official languages in Canada and it is the dominant one (Cummins, 2000). In Canada, the official languages, English and French, are languages of power which can help individuals to achieve social mobility. It may therefore be understandable that some immigrant parents and educators believe that learning English or adding English to children's language learning experience is helpful to children's success at school and in their future careers (Du, 2008; Li, 2003). For example, the teachers and parents who participated in my Master's and doctoral research expressed positive attitudes toward their children becoming biliterate and multiliterate.

Second, my experience suggests that the distinctions between social conversational literacy and academic literacy (Cummins, 1979) may not be well known among immigrant parents and educators. Participating parents and teachers in my Master's thesis expressed that they were often impressed by children's progress of oral English fluency while at the same they still worried about children's print literacy skills. They expected children to function and make



progress at the same level in both oral and print literacy. However, research suggests that becoming literate in more than one language is bidirectional and it can take five to seven years for children to achieve their potential in academic domains (Cummins, 1979). In short, learning to be literate in more than one language is a dynamic, elusive, and flexible process (Edwards, 2009; García, 2009; Gort, 2006).

Third, it is a mistaken belief that CLD children will get confused if they learn or use more than one language at the same time. The issue of being confused by more than one language has been widely debated and the findings from many research studies tell a different story (Baker, 2000; Cummins, 1979, 1996, 2000; Kabuto, 2011; Kenner, 2004; Gort, 2006). They have found, for example, that CLD children as young as four years old clearly understand the differences among two or more languages. They use their cognitive and cultural knowledge to negotiate and make use of the differences existing in different languages in their own ways to support their literacy learning in different domains (Bauer & Gort, 2012; Genishi & Dyson, 2009). The following studies support the view that children will not get confused when they learn two or more languages at the same time. In *Learning to Read in a New Language: Making Sense of Words and Worlds* (Gregory, 2008) and *Becoming Biliterate: Young Children Learning Different Writing Systems* (Kenner, 2004), Chinese children who learnt to read Chinese and English at the same did not get confused at all but showed that they could apply similar reading strategies to different languages to make sense of the texts and they also demonstrated a good understanding of the differences in written languages, which helped them to positively engage with different scripts. In addition, first language (L1) learning and maintenance will not negatively affect the second language (L2) development, but it can contribute to the second language learning. Cummins (1979) proposed the *developmental interdependence* hypothesis, that is, “the

development of competence in a second language (L2) is partially a function of the type of competence already developed in L1 at the time when intensive exposure to L2 begins” (p. 222). This hypothesis indicates that when children have learnt certain functions and concepts of L1, these skills and concepts can help them to learn and develop L2. In brief, the literature has shown that learning/communicating in two languages and traveling between two cultures give people who speak more than one language great advantages in developing higher-order thinking and meta-linguistic awareness, enhancing their understanding of intercultural communications, and providing more career opportunities in the context of a globalized world (Baker, 2000; Gregory, 2008; Hornberger, 2003; Kabuto, 2011; Kenner, 2004).

Fourth, generally speaking, in the Canadian context CLD children’s first languages, as well as their social and cultural knowledge, are quite often not seen as resources, nor valued, supported, or nurtured in public education systems. Instead, they are seen as a problem or a barrier that prevents students from reaching their English academic potential and fully participating in social events (Cummins, 2000; Du, 2008; Li, 2006). Furthermore, it is all too common to hear educators who kindly advise CLD children’s parents to speak and practice English with their children as much as they can to support their children’s English literacy learning (Du, 2008; Li, 2006). Such educators may not realize that, for CLD children, learning English is not going to be a problem in Canada in the long run but keeping and continuing to develop their first languages can be very challenging due to the lack of resources and continuous support from parents, teachers and community (Cummins, 2000; Edwards, 2008). Children can learn English at school and in the wider society, but they may only learn their first languages from their parents and perhaps from heritage language schools if there are some within parents’ financial and geographical reach. To some extent, there are limited places for children to learn

and practice their first languages. Parents need to make efforts to support their children's literacies, and at the same time, children need to make their own efforts to learn English and Chinese in a society where their first languages are not the official languages and there is a lack of support and resources. It is not just about learning which language and/or which literacy, it is about learning more than one or two languages/literacies together and finding support and space to practice the multiple languages/literacies. In short, it takes time and effort for CLD children to add or learn another language/literacy besides English.

### 2.3 Literacy learning Domains

Now I turn to more literature and present the research findings about how Chinese children learn to become literate in different ways at home and school.

#### 2.3.1 Home Literacy Domain

The literature is replete with examples of how the home literacy environment affects and shapes children's literacy learning. Leichter's (1984) findings provide a general understanding of the relationship between children's literacy learning and the family literacy environment, that is, the home literacy environment may affect children's reading experiences in three ways: interpersonal interaction (e.g. literacy experiences shared by family members); the physical environment (e.g. print materials); and motivational climate (parents' attitudes). Similarly, Anderson, Li, Ku, Shu, and Yue (2002) add the important role of the home literacy environment in a young child's literacy learning by stating that the following factors play a part: literacy resources in the home, parent-child literacy related activities, family status, parents' education, and a child's independent literacy-related activities.

In addition, parents have great influence on children's multiliteracy learning. For example, Kenner (2004) points out that parents' support and attitude toward first languages at

home plays an important role in young children's biliteracy learning. In a study of children's literacy at home, Kenner (2004) explains that each family has its own way to teach children how to learn, and especially how to write in their first language. Teaching styles may depend on family members' literacy knowledge, time, and cultural traditions. Similarly, Li (2006b) catalogues the family factors that may affect children's literacies learning at home, such as parents' understanding of their status in the society, their beliefs about the majority and minority languages, their teaching methods, and their own proficiencies in the dominant language. Li argues that positive parental attitudes toward Chinese and English and sufficient home literacy support can contribute to children's literacies learning. In her study, the more parents valued Chinese and English, the more attention and efforts they provided in learning two languages, and the more likely their children were to succeed in literacies learning. In another study, Li (2006a) describes Hong Kong immigrant parents' perspectives and ways of supporting their children's literacy learning at home in Canada. For instance, most families invested money and hours in after-school private tutoring for their children such as English and Math with the hope that they would do well at the public school. Parents' attitude toward the dominant status of English influences their way of making English the priority for their children's literacy development in Canada. This again confirms Li's argument about the critical role parental attitudes and support towards literacy development can have on children's multiliteracy learning.

Besides parents, other family members like grandparents, siblings, and friends have also played a role in children's literacy learning. For example, Volk and Acosta (2004) refer to "older siblings from other diverse cultures as skillful mediators who work together with younger ones in ways that can advance the literacy learning of both" (p. 37). They discuss siblings' co-constructed literacy understanding and multiliteracy practices at home with the guidance of their mother.

Kelly (2004) describes how a grandmother of a four-and-a-half-year-old child introduced the child to literacy texts and literacy practices that were meaningful and common to the family, but the oral tradition of this particular family was not recognized nor valued by the nursery school. This indicates that home literacy practices may be different from school literacy practices. Gregory (2008) also points out the important role of family in children's literacy learning. In particular, she (2008) has used the following terms to explain the importance of family context and how family members support and co-construct literacies: "Siblings as expert reading teachers", and "Grandparents as mediators of literacies" (p. vii).

Furthermore, multiliteracy learning is complicated and many factors may influence children's multiliteracy practices such as family traditions and values and differences in two or more linguistic systems. For example, Kendrick's (2003) narrative study examined the home-based play activities of a five-year-old Chinese-heritage girl and indicated the complicity of gender, identity, family literacy, and culture in children's literacy practices. Within home play, Kendrick illustrated what it meant to be a child language learner in more than one linguistic and cultural world and how a young girl negotiated between different literacies and cultures. Another example is Gregory's book titled *Learning to read in a new language* (2008), which talks about the process of children learning to read and how children make sense of more than one language. Gregory (2008) states that when children learnt to read in a new language, they lived in different worlds simultaneously, which means children are "'acquiring membership of different culture, language and literacy groups in different contexts or domains of their lives" (p. 25). That is, young children are capable of constructing meanings and transforming what they know to help them to learn other languages. This also reflects what Gregory, Long, and Volk (2004) call *syncretic literacies* that have been discussed earlier in this chapter.

The amount and kinds of literacy resources in a home also influence children's literacy learning. Research into emergent print literacy showed that print-rich home environments supported young children's print literacy development at school (Taylor, 1983; Sulzby & Edwards, 1993).

The stereotype is that there are literacy-rich homes in which there are multiple literacy materials and many literacy events (events involving literacy either directly or indirectly, in which children are observers or active participants), and where parents are physically and emotionally available to interact directly to encourage children with activities that closely match those found in school environments. Such an environment would support children's active explorations in literacy. Actual observations point to greater variety and complexity than the stereotype. (Sulzby & Edwards, 1993, p. 162)

The amount of print literacy materials available at home provides clues to help researchers infer certain aspects of parents' attitudes toward educational issues, such as the value of literacy and the willingness of providing literacy resources. However, this alone cannot determine a family's literacy attitudes nor family literacy support. In fact, it is complicated. And to a certain degree, the model of native English-speaking middle-class families' literacy practices such as reading bed-time stories may marginalize CLD children's home literacy practices that engage children with literacies differently. The literature indicates that different families have diverse ways to support their children's literacy learning (Gregory, 2008, Kenner, 2004, Li, 2006b).

There is also an association identified in the literature between socioeconomic status and literacy achievement, though the nature of that link is not fully clear. In studies that pre-date the NLS research, children from lower socio-economic status families were seen to be left behind

from mainstream families regarding academic achievement at school (Hoff-Ginsberg, 1991; Ninio, 1980, Raz & Bryant, 1990; Steensel, 2006; Wells, 1985). This type of dynamic was later seen by Li (2001), who also identified a strong relationship between children's biliteracy learning and family socio-economic status and parents' education. In her study, a working class Chinese family operated a small Chinese restaurant and the parents had a high school education. They struggled to make a living and did not have extra money or the energy to concentrate on their children's literacy development. The children learnt a little English mainly by communicating with Canadian customers in the restaurant and they did not learn English well at school. Li (2001) indicates that the lower socioeconomic background of the family and the parents' limited education prevented the parents from providing full support for their children's literary learning. This was in comparison to the other Chinese families in the same study whose parents were graduate students and who could provide more literacy support for their children's bilingual literacy learning due to their fluency in English and the high value they placed on their children's education. The role of the public school was not specified in Li's study as her study focused on home literacy. The single socio-economic family factor cannot explain nor determine a child's "unsuccessful" literacy learning at school. The mismatch between home and school literacies must also be taken into account, and that will be discussed later in this chapter.

In summary, the family context greatly influences CLD children's literacy practices. Family context includes parents' educational backgrounds, parental support, parents' literacy-related involvement with children, parents' awareness of and attitudes toward multiliteracies, the roles played by grandparents and siblings in the home learning environment, the availability and types of literacy resources at home, and the socio-economic status of the family.

### 2.3.2 School Literacy Domain

As might be expected, the school literacy domain profoundly affects children's multiliteracies. The following factors have been identified as influences: school culture, school language policy, curriculum, teachers' factor such as teaching philosophy and pedagogy as well as literacy instruction.

Schools can support CLD children to become biliterate and/or multiliterate. Goldstein (2003) finds that it is possible for public schools to help children to maintain their first languages and support multiliteracies classroom activities rather than have an English-only classroom. In addition, Schecter and Cummins (2003) argue that it is of great significance and use to make school-based language policy reflect the culturally diverse contexts by creating an inclusive and friendly climate for newly-arrived students, respecting and valuing different students' cultural backgrounds, taking multilingual and multicultural approaches in teaching and learning, creating more opportunities for CLD children to express themselves, actively communicating with parents and community, and figuring out ways to meet different students' needs. Houk (2005) uses the term of Democratic school culture to refer to an inclusive and supportive school climate that welcomes and values CLD children's first languages and home cultures. Therefore, creating a democratic school culture is of great importance in supporting CLD children's multiliteracies learning at school.

School culture is an important concept in the literature concerning CLD students' literacies learning, and parts of its formation as a multiliteracy-supportive culture concerns the following. As mentioned earlier, the concept of *funds of knowledge* is crucial; specifically, the literature advocates for CLD children's background knowledge to be valued, respected, and taken into consideration in terms of curriculum development (Schecter & Cummins, 2003; Houk, 2005; Gibbons, 2002). After synthesizing the field, Gibbons (2002) asserts that teachers should



recognize students' differences. It also helps if teachers believe that children have the potential to achieve academic progress and if they support CLD learners in becoming familiar with the school environment. Teachers' beliefs, values, and pedagogies influence children's learning (Cummins, 2000; Genishi & Dyson, 2009; Hornberger, 2003) and should take a critical view of assessment processes (Gibbons, 2002). Language and literacy need to be taught in contexts of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and they need to be practiced in a range of school subjects. Baker (2000) suggests that

if parents, community leaders, workers and artists are included in the learning experiences of children, home notions of culture are represented, valued, and celebrated. Different forms of worthwhile knowledge, experience and expertise are shared in the classroom, raising the self-esteem of children, the language minority group and the community. Hidden talents, oral histories, household skills, and latent abilities are discovered and shared. These social, cultural and intellectual resources become important curricular elements. (p. 84)

The literature argues that CLD children's *funds of knowledge* are indeed valuable resources that need to be not only respected, but also integrated into mainstream classrooms. Given that the literature contains the important role of school culture in children's literacy learning, the way schools deal with multiliteracies can highly influence CLD children's literacy learning and future language choice.

Currently trends in population mobility have created "increasing linguistic and cultural diversity of urban education systems" across the world; however, instead of an increased focus on multiliteracies, there has been an "escalating demand for English- medium education based on the perception of parents and policy-makers that English is the key to economic and social

advancement” (Cummins, 2006, p, 51). English-only is the unspoken language policy or rule at some schools, which has great influence on children’s attitudes towards maintaining minority cultures and learning minority languages (Li, 2006). In 1990, Cummins and Danesi stated that “Canadian schools have succeeded much better in encouraging students to relinquish rather than maintain their culture and language” (p. 102), and this statement is still valid today. For large numbers of CLD children born in Canada or arriving in Canada prior to attending school, learning English is not a big problem; however, “maintenance of the first language is extremely problematic” (Cummins & Danesi, 1990, pp. 105-106). Even though certain schools will allow children to speak their home languages at school, most of the time it is for the purpose of daily communication and not in the sense of supporting children’s multiliteracies (Du, 2008).

There can be great “conflict” regarding understanding of literacy instruction between teachers and parents (Li, 2006a). In a study of literacy learning of children who learnt Chinese and English at school and home in the west coast of Canada , Li points out that the English-only policy and the dominant social status of English affected both students’ and parents’ attitudes toward learning Chinese, and resulted in a language shift to English. In another study, Li (2003) contends that Chinese students “suffer” at school due to cultural differences, and school policies and instruction (p. 195). In addition, Li (2006a) found that some Canadian teachers believed that because children spoke too much Chinese at school, they may not learn English well. As a result, most teachers did not allow children to speak Chinese at school. When minority language provision is rigidly separated from the mainstream school classroom, the teachers studied in the literature often expressed that children’s first language was none of their business and teaching English language was the priority at a mainstream school. This belief can communicate to minority children that “their first language has no place in the school or in their education”

(Cummins & Danesi, 1990, p. 110). This attitude to children's first languages can have a negative effect in supporting children's multiliteracy learning at school. Therefore, teachers need to have positive attitudes toward multiliteracy. In brief, school culture including the role of teachers and their beliefs in multiliteracies can have great influence in children's literacy learning (Cummins & Early, 2011; Houk, 2005).

Building an inclusive school environment can help CLD children's multiliteracies and positive identity construction. Establishing "cultural democracy" can affirm and embrace students' culture and first languages, and in this way multiliteracies can be valued at schools (Houk, 2005). Pahl and Rowsell (2005) argue that teachers should highly value students' home culture and make full use of their home cultural and literate backgrounds in their teaching practices at school, and in this way teachers can create "a third space" (a space for children to choose what they want to write about using different texts) for minority children to practice their literacy (p. 65). It is important for educators to practice pedagogies that value and support multiliteracies in classrooms in order to facilitate CLD children's multiliteracies (Chow & Cummins, 2003). It has also been found that teachers' positive attitudes toward minority languages and cultures can facilitate children's multiliteracies (Liu & Taylor, 2004). In the Liu and Taylor study, for instance, a Chinese boy's mother received repeated positive comments from the teacher on maintaining the child's first language while learning English, which affirmed the Chinese mother's understanding of the value of the home language and support for raising her son to be literate in more than one language.

In summary, the school literacy domain is important to CLD children's multiliteracies learning because democratic and inclusive school literacy environments make CLD children feel respected and help them to see their backgrounds as valued. Teachers with positive attitudes to

multiliteracies and the willingness to meet different needs in the classrooms can make efforts to support CLD children's multiliteracies learning at school.

### 2.3.3 Home and school

CLD children have been found to experience more dissonances in literacy learning at school and at home than their Canadian peers. This happens for a variety of reasons that centre on the mismatch between home and school literacy practices and communication. For instance, Dyson (2001) finds that immigrant parents in the United States communicated less frequently with teachers or the school compared with other non-immigrant families. Most Asian immigrant parents put great emphasis on communication of their children's academic progress or achievement at school, and they were much more concerned with the quality of teaching at school than other aspects of school life such as social activities (Li, 2006). This may also relate to parental understanding of what literacy is and what is important to their children's academic development at school. Li's study argues that it is of great importance to have continual parental involvement and effective communication with teachers and school. However, parents from different cultures often emphasize different perspectives of school life, which may surprise their children's classroom teachers.

Literature pertaining to CLD children learning in Canadian schools finds that children who learn Chinese and English, especially those who were born in China and recently arrived in Canada, may encounter culture shock as well as language barriers. In a study of children's literacy learning, Li (2003) finds that a Chinese immigrant family encountered great difficulties with schooling. The study described and analyzed the complicated interrelationships among home literacy, minority and majority cultures, and the policies of the school in relation to children's multiliteracy learning. Li argues that cultural difficulties were not the only factors that

lead to students' school failure and other factors also play a part, such as misunderstandings of multilevel interactions among parents, teachers and the school, culture shock, different models of incorporation, and imbalanced power structures between the school and home in society.

#### 2.4 Concluding Remarks

In summary, the above literature review provides research findings related to CLD children, especially the multiliteracies of children who are learning Chinese and English in different literacy domains. Both home and school literacy domains play important roles in children's literacy learning. In the home literacy domain, the following factors have been noted as affecting children's multiliteracies learning: parents' educational background; parents' knowledge or belief about multiliteracies; parental support of their children's multiliteracies learning; parents' literacy-related involvement with children; parents' attitude toward minority and majority languages; home, social, and economic status; and literacy materials available at home. In the school domain, school culture, language policy at school, teachers' understanding of multiliteracies, especially in CLD children's home languages, and literacy instructions in a diverse classroom have to be considered. There is less literature regarding the influences of community on children's literacy learning. In this study, I followed children in their communities to learn about their ways of meaning making.

Even though all the above studies concern literacy learning of children who are learning Chinese and English, not all Chinese families have the same home literacy practices, because Chinese families are from different parts of China such as Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and mainland China and they have different dialects or accents or languages and even different print literacy practices, educational backgrounds, economic status, and perceptions of multiliteracies. Most research studies focus on print literacies: either reading or writing. There is a need for more

studies that examine literacies beyond reading and writing, studies that are concerned with multiple modes that children use in their lives at school, home, and in the communities in which they play and learn. The above literature review found studies conducted at home and at school, but fewer studies investigated both home and school, and even fewer examined literacies in communities (Kim, 2011) or connections between practices in home, school, and communities in Canada. This study was designed to address these gaps.

## Chapter Three

### 3. Theoretical grounding and methodology

#### 3.1 Introduction

The study was designed as a qualitative case study to investigate the literacy practices of children who were learning Chinese and English across different domains including school, home, and community. The main research question was: What are the literacy practices of children who are learning English and Chinese at school, at home, and in the community? The sub-questions were inquiries into the linguistic and sociocultural resources children drew upon in their literacy practices and the ways in which classroom teachers, parents, and communities supported children's literacy practices.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the study is located within a multiliteracies theoretical framework. In this chapter, I discuss multiliteracies as a sociocultural approach to literacy research within the broad epistemology of social constructivism. I then describe the characteristics of the qualitative case study approach. I present a rationale for choosing the case study approach and for pairing it with ethnographic data collection methods. The rationale is followed by an outline of the steps I took to conduct the study and a description of the sampling, data collection activities, data analysis, ethical issues, and limitations.

#### 3.2 Social Constructivism

Sociocultural approaches to literacy research draw on the theoretical foundation of social constructivism. Social constructivists argue that people are active agents in social interactions and knowledge construction (Vygotsky, 1978). They also hold that social reality is a subjective entity. This means that what is true for one society or one person at one time may not be true for another society or person, or for that society or person at another time. It means that facts are

situated in particular social contexts. For a social constructivist, knowledge construction and accumulation are dynamic processes located in particular historical and cultural contexts (Puddephatt, 2002).

Many researchers and educators from different disciplines have discussed the ways in which Vygotsky's work has influenced educational practice and research (Apple, 1986; Bakhurst, 1986; Bruner, 1987; Cole, 1990; John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Leontiev & Luria, 1968; Levitin, 1982; Oloso, 1986; Riviere, 1984; Tharp & Gallimore, 1989; Wertsch, 1985). Literacy researchers who subscribe to a social constructivist frame (e.g., Cole, 1990; Moll, 1990; Scribner 1985) emphasize the social and cultural aspects of teaching and learning. They also argue that "education itself [is] a sociohistorically determined activity" (Moll, 1990, p. 3). That is, literacy education, teaching, and learning are situated in, influenced by, and, in turn, influence social, cultural, and historical contexts. Scholarship in this area suggests that children need to experience the use of higher mental functioning in social situations before they can internalize such functioning and use it independently. Children also need to learn about cultural communication systems in social settings prior to using the systems by themselves in social and cultural communications (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Consequently, social interactions and social contexts play a significant role in a child's meaning making and knowledge exploration. It is within social contexts and through interaction with people and texts that children construct their understanding of the world (Vygotsky, 1978).

Perhaps the most well-known and most influential concept from Vygotsky's work is the concept of the *Zone of Proximal Development*, which is also important to this study. The popular understanding of the *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD) defines it as "the distance between the [child's] actual developmental level as determined through independent problem solving and



the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). In other words, activities that children can perform today with guidance or collaboration they can later perform by themselves. For example, a boy learns to greet or talk to guests in a culturally appropriate way through observations, demonstrations from family members, and practices within the family. Rogoff and Gardner (1984) explain that “the cognitive ability that occurs in the interaction is apparent in the adaptations made by the participants as the novice gains greater understanding of the problem and as the expert evaluates the novice’s readiness to take greater responsibility for the cognitive work” (p. 95).

Children play an active role in their knowledge production and the literature identifies various people and artifacts that can facilitate learning in the ZPD. Educators who take up the notion of ZPD such as Rogoff and Gardner (1984) define the role of adults in children’s learning as one that is to “provide guidance in creating links between the context of a novel problem and more familiar problem contexts, allowing the application of the available skills and information” (p. 96).

A diversity of cultural tools has been found to support children in their learning. Although popular ideas about ZPD have tended to stress the importance of social assistance for children’s learning (Moll, 1990), “Vygotsky never specified the forms of social assistance to learners that constitute a zone of proximal development” (Moll, 1990, p. 11). Rather, Vygotsky uses terms such as collaboration, guidance, and assistance. For example, the concept of ZPD is expanded through Brown and her collaborators (1993) to include not only people (e.g., adults and peers) but also artifacts "such as books, videos, wall displays, scientific equipment and a computer environment intended to support intentional learning” (p. 191). According to this line of thinking,

the ZPD can be conceived as a space in which a community is built during the learning process through children's social interactions with people and their active engagement with diverse texts and environments (e.g., Brown et al., 1993; Moll, 1999). In my study, parents and peers, literacy resources, and literacy environments might all be understood as contributing to a ZPD in which children accumulate meaning making practices.

The concept of the ZPD needs to be situated in the broad discussion of the relationship between learning and development. Moll (1990) argued that the ZPD could be thought of "as a characteristic not solely of the child or of the teaching but of the child engaged in collaborative activity within specific social environments" (p. 11). The emphasis is on the social and Moll advocates for children to be provided with opportunities to learn in a social system that is mutually created by teachers and students who are actively engaged in the learning process.

In summary, Vygotsky's (1978) work points to the significance of social contexts in children's cognitive, social and cultural development. Vygotsky's ZPD can be understood as a space for children to engage in collaborative learning with texts and people. Social constructivists in literacy research argue that literacy learning is social and contextual, and social interactions highly affect children's learning literacy and practices. Children have the opportunity to learn the most about sign systems in social interactions.

### 3.3 Sociocultural approach to literacy research

The sociocultural approach to literacy emphasizes the active role of social interaction in meaning making. "A sociocultural approach concerns the ways in which human action, including mental action (e.g. reasoning, remembering), is inherently linked to the cultural, institutional and historical settings in which it occurs" (Wertsch, 1994, p. 203). The sociocultural approach focuses on putting literacy and learning into social, cultural, and historical contexts, emphasizing

the active role of children in language socialization, as well as the social and cultural characteristics of literacy.

Key concepts from sociocultural research on literacy that are most relevant for the study are as follows. First, culture plays a significant part in children's literacy learning (e.g., Cole, 1996; Gregory, Long & Volk, 2004; Pahl & Rowsell, 2010; Razfar & Gutierrez, 2003). A sociocultural perspective interprets culture "as non-normative, non-integrated, and dynamic in which culture is instantiated in the practices and materials conditions of everyday life" (Razfar & Gutierrez, 2003, p. 35). Culture is constructed, developed, practiced, cultivated, and maintained in different activities (Razfar & Gutierrez, 2003). For example, the People's Republic of China is a country with over five thousand years of recorded history. Many traditions and festivals have survived over this long history, including the Spring Festival, which is also called the Chinese Lunar New Year. People in various regions of China have maintained the traditions of the Spring Festival celebration in unique ways, and they have also developed new ways of celebrating. For example, the Lion dance and the Dragon dance can be performed differently in different parts of China. Jiaozi, Chinese dumplings, can be made differently across different areas. Furthermore, the 2014 Spring Festival Gala produced by China Central Television reflects China's technological developments and economic growth. Culture is interwoven with all aspects of human practices. Finally, culture may be reflected in everyday routines (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). When I go grocery shopping, I never have a shopping list and this is not part of my family's practices. However, using a shopping list seems to be a common practice among shoppers at my neighbourhood grocery store. The fact that this everyday literacy practice is not a universal practice serves as a reminder that research studies concerning literacy should take local practices seriously.

Second, children play an active role in language socialization that not only takes place at school but also at home and in the wider community (Lave & Wagner, 1991; Ochs, 1991; Pahl & Rowsell, 2010). Children who are engaged in meaning making actively participate in a plethora of diverse authentic literacy events and activities mediated by competent peers and adults and cultural tools (Gregory, 2008; Moll, 1992). They are capable and creative learners who bring cultural and linguistic knowledge to their literacy practices (Vygotsky, 1978). The concept of *funds of knowledge* developed by Moll and his colleagues (Moll & Greenberg, 1990; Moll, 1992; Moll & Gonzales, 1994) recognizes children's valuable background knowledge in literacy learning, that is, the "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (Moll, 1992, p. 213). Community members share cultural knowledge and assist each other when necessary. Even when children's *funds of knowledge* differ from the knowledge recognized as standard knowledge in schools, researchers (e.g. Cummins & Danesi, 1990; Li, 2006; Moll, 1992) argue that those *funds of knowledge* should be respected and viewed as resources for school learning and be included in the curriculum. This is in large part to signal to children that their *funds of knowledge* are valuable and that they can be used to scaffold learning. Home and community are important literacy domains where children practice literacy and need to be recognized and supported (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). Literacy research should not be limited to school domains, but should also examine literacy in children's homes and communities.

Third, language and literacy should be studied in domains because literacy is social and cultural. Scholars who take a sociocultural perspective view literacy as social practices that reflect the cultural values of specific domains. Harding-Esch and Riley (2003) further explain that "language is a social phenomenon and language learning is therefore a social activity. Razfar

and Gutierrez (2003) argue that “sociocultural views of early literacy development emphasize that human beings are socialized to particular language practices through language itself.

Language socialization is the process whereby novices gain knowledge and skills relevant to membership in a social group” (p. 41). In brief, literacy learning is situated in particular domains, and social interactions play a significant role in literacy learning.

Furthermore, if literacy practices are embedded in culture and society, any analysis of literacy processes needs to be situated within an analysis of its domains which could include home, school, and community. Two groundbreaking studies draw attention to the importance of studying literacies in different domains. Cultural psychologists Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole (1981) studied the literacy practices of the Vai people of western Liberia. Their findings demonstrate that diverse literacy practices are associated with people’s ways of learning. Forms of literacy are linked to different sets of practices and literacy practices are themselves embedded in cultural values and specific contexts (Scribner & Cole, 1981). In Shirley Brice Heath's study (1983), different family language and literacy practices were found in three American communities and the study noted that discontinuities between home literacy practices and school literacy practices seemed to be related to children’s achievement at school. Such studies led me to make the decision to observe children’s literacy practices across domains, including home, school, and the community with a view to understanding relationships between home, school, and community literacy practices.

Now I turn to the design of the study. I start by defining a qualitative case study and explain why my case study used ethnographic methods for data collection. Next I write about the setting, the sampling, data collections, and data analysis. I finish the chapter with discussions of trustworthiness and the limitations of the study.

### 3.4 Qualitative case study

A qualitative case study is “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (Merriam, 1988, p.16). A qualitative case study aims to describe, interpret, and analyze in depth a social phenomenon. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) explain that “case studies strive to portray ‘what it is like’ to be in a particular situation, to catch the close-up reality and ‘thick description’ of participants’ lived experiences of, thoughts about and feelings for, a situation” (p. 181). A case study is an apt approach to reflect and investigate a phenomenon that is “a process, event, person or other item of interest of the researcher” (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007, p. 447). In my study, the phenomena or instances being studied were the literacy practices of children who were learning English and Chinese in Canada. The macro-social context of my study was a medium-sized city in southwestern Ontario, Canada. The micro-social context of my study was the participating children’s literacy learning domains, especially classrooms, children’s homes, and communities. The research site was naturalistic in the sense that it is “where the particular actors are participating in the phenomenon” (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007, p. 449). The main actors were children who were learning Chinese and English, their teachers, and parents who were the major characters participating in children’s literacy learning at school, home, and in the community. In summary, my study was a single case study that has characteristics of ethnographic and descriptive case studies in the sense that it focused on a particular group of students, that is, children and their specific literacy practices across domains; it aimed to provide detailed descriptions of children’s literacy practices based on fieldwork. Fieldwork is a general word used in this study to describe the ethnographic approaches to data collection.

Now I turn to the rationale for choosing a qualitative case study using ethnographic methods for the study. A case study approach supported the exploration and examination of children's literacy practices. Yin (2005) states that researchers can apply a case study approach in at least two situations:

[T]he case study method is pertinent when your research addresses either a descriptive question (what happened?) [...] Second, you may want to illuminate a particular situation, to get a close understanding of it. The case study method helps you to make direct observations and collect data in natural settings, compared to relying on the 'derived' data. (p. 381)

I chose a case study because my research questions were descriptive, and my intent was to conduct a close investigation of CLD children's multiliteracies practices across domains. Ethnographic methods included conducting participant observations and interviews and collecting other forms of data such as visual data and artifacts (e.g. pictures and drawings), which allowed me to spend ample time with participants, make close and direct observations, and collect different forms of data in the natural settings to examine and understand the participating children's literacy practices from their perspectives (O'Reilly, 2005). My goal was to have an in-depth understanding of children's literacy practices in different domains. Using a case study helped me to achieve this goal and ethnographic methods allowed me to go into the field and closely observe children's literacy practices, as well as to provide rich descriptions of these practices.

An ethnographic case study allowed me to provide a holistic description of the children's literacy practices. Yin (1984) argues that "a case study is a design particularly suited to situations where it is impossible to separate the phenomenon's variables from their context" (cited in

Merriam, 1988, p.10). Ethnographic methods further allow investigating a particular cultural group in a specific context. In my study, these methods granted me access to a particular context to study a particular group. I was able to participate in children's daily routines and to "watch what happens, listen to what is said, ask questions, and produce a richly written account that represents the irreducibility of human experience" (O'Reilly, 2005, p. 3). As Becker (1968) further states, the purpose of a case study is "to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the group under study" (cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 233). In summary, I selected a qualitative case study as it afforded a context-specific examination of the target children's literacy practices cross domains. Ethnographic methods were employed to help me to go into a focused cultural group, that is, families who are of Chinese cultural heritage; to address the research questions; to "produce in-depth descriptions and interpretations" as a participant observer; and to investigate Chinese children's literacy practices "for the purpose of illumination and understanding" (Hays, 2004, p. 218).

### 3.5 The Study

In this section, I describe the study by introducing the research settings, explaining the sampling, discussing the data collection and data analysis.

#### 3.5.1 Setting

The geographic site of the study was a medium-sized city in southwestern Ontario, Canada. Ontario has been the number one choice of immigrants' landing destination for several decades. In 2012, there were 257, 887 immigrants coming to Canada and 38.4% of them or 99,154 people chose to settle in Ontario. The city in my study was in the top five ranked by number of immigrants where there was a large population of Chinese immigrants (CIC, 2013). The sites in my study were primary grade classrooms in a public elementary school where there are students



from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and a large population of Chinese students, a community Chinese language school, and the participating children's homes and communities.

### 3.5.2 Sampling

My study intended to understand and gain insights into the literacy practices of children who were learning English and Chinese in Canada. I used purposeful sampling since I was particularly interested in children whose parents had been born and raised in China. There were seven participating children: three boys and four girls who were learning English and Chinese at the same time. The children were placed in Grade one in a primary public school. Since the children had just begun their formal education, it was a good time to examine their literacy practices across domains. The children's parents and teachers also participated in the study.

### 3.5.3 Data collection

Data collection methods came from a combination of case study and ethnographic forms. Yin (2003) identifies six common types of data collection in qualitative case studies:

“documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations and physical artifacts” (p. 85). A common data collection method in ethnographic research is participant observation, though there are also in-depth interviews, visual data and documents (O'Reilly, 2005). I chose ethnographic methods within the case study approach because my research questions concern a specific cultural group and focus on a particular phenomenon, that is, children's literacy practices. Ethnographic methods allowed me to go into the research site to learn about literacy practices by observing the events in which the practices were embedded “within context[s] of their own lived experience” (p. 84). In the study, I went to the research site with research questions in mind and spent approximately six months with the focal children to examine their literacy practices at school, home, and communities. I spent two days a week in

two Grade one and two combined classrooms at the public school and in the beginner level classroom at the Chinese school. I also visited the focal children's homes once a month. Data collections included conducting semi-structured interviews and direct participant observations, as well as gathering physical artifact collections.

#### 3.5.3.1 Interviews

Hays (2004) highly recommends conducting interviews because “interviews are one of the richest sources of data in a case study and usually the most important data to be collected” (p. 229). Interviews can provide a great range of information from diverse perspectives. There are three types of interviews, categorized by the kinds of questions asked in the interview: “highly structured, semi-structured, and unstructured” (Merriam, 1998, p. 75). There are also single interviews and group interviews. In the study, I conducted single semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents respectively. Semi-structured interviews are used to “respond to the situation at hand, to the merging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic;” and allow interviewees to respond in their own way and explain their undertakings and ideas freely (Merriam, 1998, p. 76). Therefore, semi-structured interviews were chosen to better represent participants' viewpoints in the study.

#### 3.5.3.2 Observations

Observations are important sources of data in that they are “contextual—covers context of event, reality—covers events in real time” (Yin, 2003, p. 86). Participant observations gave me the opportunity to be in real-life contexts with my participants to understand their literacy practices. To gather data, I went to two split Grade one and two classrooms with six- and seven-year-old children in a primary public school to observe the participating children's literacy learning practices at school. I also visited the participating children's homes and accompanied the

children in their community to observe their literacy practices. Participant observations allowed me to examine children's literacy practices in detail across domains. The key elements of my data collection were gaining access, spending time on learning about the children, understanding their literacy practices, and taking notes (O'Reilly, 2005). Observational field notes were important sources of data. My field notes included the time, date, and location, as well as the specific activities and events I observed. I also recorded my initial understanding of different literacy events and practices during my observation, and later, when I transcribed the field notes, I wrote down further comments and reflections. The limitation of direct observation is selectivity in that it is not possible to cover all the literacy related events at school. However, the advantage of the direct observations is to give the researcher the first-hand information in its context.

#### 3.5.3.3 Artifacts

Physical or cultural artifacts were important in the study because they are "usually non-reactive and unobtrusive, and ubiquitous and readily available for study," and can also be used to "supplement data gathered through interviews and observations" (Merriam, 1998, p. 118). There is a wide range of physical or cultural artifacts that can be collected, such as "a technological device, a tool or instrument, a work of art, or some other physical evidence" (Yin, 2003, p. 96). I collected literacy-related work samples from the focal children such as journals and literacy worksheets done at school and in their homes. I also took photographs of artifacts made by the focal children at school and home. Visual data (such as photographs) and other artifacts are used to "represent as 'writing' to support the ethnographic data and to aid presentation of the results" to further understand Chinese children's literacy practices (O'Reilly, 2005, p. 174).

In summary, ethnographic methods made my data collection diverse and rich in information. All of the data sources helped me to have a more precise understanding of children's

literacy learning, to prepare a detailed description of the case, that is, the literacy practices of children who were learning Chinese and English, to develop “converging lines of inquiry,” and to write a convincing and accurate dissertation (Yin, 2003, p. 98).

#### 3.5.4 Data analysis

There are three main types of approach used to analyze qualitative case study data:

*interpretational analysis*, *structural analysis*, and *reflective analysis* (Tesch, 1990). Structural analysis aims to “identify patterns inherent in discourse, text, events or other phenomena” (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007, p. 471), so this is often used in communication analysis. In reflective data analysis, “the researcher relies on intuition and judgment in order to evaluate the phenomenon” (p. 473), so this is often used for evaluations. Interpretational analysis is employed to “find constructs, themes, and patterns that can be used to describe and explain the phenomenon being studied” (p. 466). In my study, I sought themes that could describe and forward an understanding of CLD children’s literacy practices. Therefore, I employed interpretational analysis. All forms of data were coded and analyzed carefully, systematically, and critically.

My interpretational analysis began with putting all the collected data together. All field notes were reviewed and coordinated into Word documents. All audio-taped interviews were transcribed into separate Word documents and e-mailed to interviewees (teachers and parents) for confirmation and suggestions. All data were sorted according to the domain in which the event took place. Then, I reviewed the data carefully. Merriam (1998) states that the process “begins with reading the first interview transcript, the first set of field notes, the first document collected in the study” (p. 181). I started by reviewing the purpose of the study, which is to understand children’s literacy practices, and my main research question, which is, "What are the literacy practices of children who are learning Chinese and English across domains?" After that, I

reviewed my data and made reflective comments, and tried to find the tentative themes in the first data review.

Next, I printed hard copies of all the collected data documents in my study, and page by page, I wrote reflections and tentative categories. In this process, I analyzed all the data and conducted constant comparisons that helped me to work on the entire data without losing important information. I reviewed the tentative categories and examined these categories in detail, and then redefined them based on the following guidelines:

[C]ategories should reflect the research purpose; categories should be exhaustive including all the data that are important or relevant to the study in a category or subcategory; categories should be mutually exclusive, in that a particular unit of data should fit into only one category; categories should be sensitizing, that is, the name of the category clearly tells what is in the data; categories should be conceptually congruent which means that the same level of abstraction should characterize all categories at the same level. (Merriam, 1998, pp.183-184)

I developed major categories or themes and sorted all interview transcripts and field notes according to them. The major themes were further categorized into specific or smaller ones after careful, systematic, and comparative analysis. Next, I had a clear and detailed set of themes, in which I identified various events from different sources of data collection that helped me to further understand children's literacy learning practices.

### 3.6 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness can be understood as the worth or the truth value of research studies (Guba, 1981). I discuss the issue of trustworthiness using Guba's (1981) model in which trustworthiness is evaluated based on four aspects of research: *truth value*, *applicability*, *consistency*, and

*neutrality*. These four aspects can be used in both qualitative research and quantitative research. However, because qualitative research aims to investigate a specific phenomenon in its natural context, Lincoln and Guba (1985) use the following terms to assess the trustworthiness of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. I next describe the study's attempt to foster trustworthiness through a combination of these two sets of related terms.

First, regarding credibility, Sandelowski (1986) suggests that a qualitative study is credible when it represents detailed and accurate descriptions and interpretations of human experience that people who share or have had that experience feel connected to, echo, or recognize. Credibility requires researchers to spend an extended period of time with the participants doing intense, persistent, and reflexive observations in order to find reappearing patterns or themes to answer the original research questions. Second, regarding the issue of transferability, qualitative research studies may not aim to generalize the findings to all other settings. Rather, qualitative research studies live with their "situational uniqueness" so "the factor in the transferability of the data then is the representativeness of the informants for the particular group" (Krefting, 1991, p. 220). Furthermore, Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss transferability from the point of view of readers who want to transfer the findings of the original study to other contexts. If the original researchers clearly provide detailed and sufficient information of the research design and research process, the applicability is reached because readers can have enough information to assess how transferable the findings are and they can also compare the findings in different settings. Thirdly, based on the discussions from Guba's (1981) model, dependability relates to the consistency of findings. The researcher in the original study needs to provide a dense description of the data collections and data analysis so that other

researchers have a clear understanding of the research and they can decide whether or not the study can be replicated or to what extent the original research is unique. Fourthly, Guba explains neutrality not from the point of view of researcher's subjectivity, but from the neutrality of the data. The conformability of the data can be achieved by triangulation of multiple data collection and analysis methods, data interpretation from different theoretical perspectives, as well as the reflective analysis from the researcher.

To achieve the trustworthiness of my study, I adopted the strategies identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as well as ethnographers Goetz and LeCompte (1984): prolonged and varied field experience, triangulation of data sources, member checking, peer examination, interview techniques, dense descriptions, and low inference descriptors. I spent over six months with my participants, got to know them, learnt about their understanding of literacy learning, and collected different kinds of data directly from the field, such as at the public school, at the community language school, at children's homes and in the community. Additionally, I kept a reflective field journal in which my observations, comments, questions and reflections were written down. This journal helped me with my data collection with regard to when, how long, and in what ways I should conduct participant observations. It also helped me with the process of data analysis in which my comments and reflections provided the basis of findings concerning the first set of emerging themes among all the collected data. When I talked with participating children, I tried to give time to their ideas and asked open-ended questions; and when I conducted semi-structured interviews with participating adults (teachers and parents), I stepped back and created opportunities to let them tell stories and share their experiences and ideas, rather than asking questions and being provided with quick answers. I also asked for participants' and supervisors' comments on the study and actively interacted with my colleagues for further

suggestions. Furthermore, I followed the techniques suggested by Merriam (1998). Merriam writes that “the investigator’s position, triangulation and audit trail” can help to ensure the results were trusted and dependable (pp. 207-208). I explicitly and clearly stated my research questions, and explained the sample selection, data collection and data analysis in detail, and the social context from which data were collected. I also used multiple methods to collect and analyze data, to diversify the data sources so as to get more ideas of the topic of literacy practices. All the above techniques have helped me to enhance the trustworthiness of my study.

### 3.7 Ethical issues

Since the study involved human subjects, I paid great attention to ethical issues. I respected participants’ dignity, and privacy and paid attention to justice and inclusiveness. I tried to maximize possible benefits; I gave careful consideration to vulnerable people, that is, children, and respected free and informed consent. There was no known harm or risk to the participants in the study. In the whole study, no real names of school, teachers, parents, and children are mentioned, and anonymity and confidentiality were ensured by using pseudonyms. For anonymity, although I knew all the participants, I would “in no way make the connection known publicly” or reveal the true names of the participants (UWO Ethical Review, 2002, p. 62). To achieve equity and inclusiveness, both female and male children were chosen. I tried my best to maximize the benefits of the study to all participants by providing the findings of the study through this dissertation and in publications and presentations afterward. I am a competent bilingual speaker in English and Mandarin Chinese. I prepared the Letter of Information and the form of Informed Consent in both English and Mandarin Chinese as clearly, systematically, and as detailed as possible so that all participants could understand what the study was for and about. I only entered the school, classrooms, homes, and communities to conduct observations and



interviews after I received their informed consent. Since I worked with CLD children and their parents, cultural and linguistic sensitivity was needed during the entire research process. My Chinese cultural and linguistic background helped me to develop rapport with the participants. For example, the Informed Consent was explained clearly in either/both in English and/or Mandarin Chinese, respecting the cultural dynamics that appeared during the study, and allowing parents and children to ask questions about the study. I asked my colleagues who were bilingual in Mandarin Chinese and English to check the written Informed Consent and the interview transcripts that were prepared in both Mandarin Chinese and English to make sure the translation was accurate. Because I worked with children, I used simple language and watched for their comfort level. For example, I did not choose to do formal interviews with children but chose to have informal conversations during my observations at home. In a word, children and adult participants' needs and rights were respected and protected.

### 3.8 Limitations of qualitative case studies

A possible limitation of my study lies in the process of analyzing data in that I may have been influenced by my own cultural background and neglected some other possible interpretations. There were also limitations related to participant observation. It takes a long time to systematically examine children's literacy practices when using the expanded definition of literacy employed in multiliteracies research. Also, literacy practices change over time and vary across domains. Literacy learning may not always be a linear process for CLD children. For this reason, I focused on "snapshots" of the focal children's multiliteracies practices. Furthermore, the findings of the study cannot be generalized to all children who are learning Chinese and English in Canada, since the sample size was small and participants were not randomly chosen.

However, the purpose of the study was not to generalize the findings, but to gain an in-depth understanding.

### 3.9 Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the theoretical orientation of my research within the broad epistemology of social constructivism. I presented key ideas from sociocultural approaches to literacy research. I defined what a case study is and described the characteristics of the qualitative case study approach and then explained the rationale for choosing the case study approach using ethnographic methods. After that I have outlined the specific steps I took to conduct my study and provided a description of the sampling, data collection activities, data analysis, ethical issues, trustworthiness and limitations. In the next chapter, I introduce the participating families, teachers, schools, and the community, and then present the data. Finally, I discuss the findings of the study across different domains.

## Chapter 4

### 4 The case and data

Data were collected during visits to homes, schools and community settings over a period of more than six months. In this chapter I present data collected during those six months of field work. I first introduce the participants. I then present a series of vignettes in which participating children engaged in meaning making events. The vignettes are organized by domain: that is, School, Home, and Community. Each vignette responds in some way to the research questions and sub-questions: What are the literacy practices of children who are learning Chinese and English at school, home and in the community? What linguistic and sociocultural resources do Chinese children draw upon in their literacy practices? In what ways (if any) do teachers, parents, and the community support Chinese children's literacy practices? The vignettes are interpretations of my observations, but they make visible deeper issues that will be discussed in the final chapter.

#### 4.1 The participants

Seven families participated in the study. All participating parents held university degrees. The four teachers who taught the participating children also participated in the study.

##### 4.1.1 The participating families

Table 1: The participating families

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Birth place</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Family information</b>
Brian	Canada	Male	Grade 1	Brian was the only child in his family. His father was a doctoral student in science at the local university and his mother worked part-time in private school residences.
Shasha	China	Female	Grade 1	Shasha's family was new to Canada and she was the only child in her

				family. Her father was a Master's student in computer science at the local university and her mother cared for the home.
Vanessa	Canada	Female	Grade 1	Vanessa had two younger brothers who were often cared for by her grandfather. Her mother worked in the local university and her father worked in a local company.
Jiajia	China	Female	Grade 1	Jiajia was the only child in her family. Before coming to Ontario, she was living in Montreal where her mother studied. Her mother continued to study as a postdoctoral fellow in science at the local university. Her father worked in China.
Eric	Canada	Male	Grade 1	Eric had a little sister who was taken care of by his grandmother. His mother worked at the local university and his father owned a convenience store.
Leno	China	Male	Grade 1	Leno was the only child in his family. He had been in Canada for less than two months and he was taken care of by his grandparents. His mother was a visiting scholar at the local university. His father worked in China.
Samantha	Canada	Female	Grade 1	Samantha was the only child in her family. Her father was a post-doctoral fellow at the local university. Her mother worked part time in a local store. She returned to China at the end of the school year.

All of the names used in the study are pseudonyms. I selected these pseudonyms in consultation with the children and their parents. If the children used Chinese names at school, then I gave the children Chinese names that were meaningful to the children based on what I knew of them; similarly I gave some children English names based on their own choice of names at school and what their parents shared with me regarding name choices.

Of all the focal children in the study, only Shasha and Leno were newly arrived in Canada when school started in September. Jiajia was new to the participating public school while she had previously lived in Montreal, and she knew a little bit about the Canadian education system through her kindergarten experience in a French language environment. The others were born in Canada and had participated in two years of kindergarten in the same public school. In short, children with both Chinese education experience and Canadian education experience were included in the study.

In all the participating families, the parents and grandparents were born and educated in China and then came to Canada for different reasons. I did not know the families' citizenship status as not all participating parents wanted to share this information given its personal and sensitive nature. I learnt that three of the families were visitors to Canada, that is, international students with study permits, or scholars with visitor visas. Among those three visitor families two mothers told me they would like to apply for immigration and wished to stay in Canada for the education and better future of their children. As I have discussed earlier in the thesis, the participating children were CLD children who were learning English and Chinese in Canada.

#### 4.1.2 The participating teachers

There were in total four teachers participating in the study including two teachers from the local public primary school and two teachers from a local Community heritage language school.

##### 4.1.2.1 Teachers from the public primary school

Table 2: The participating teachers at the public school

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Teaching Grade</b>	<b>Teacher information</b>
Mrs. G	Female	Grade 1 and 2	Highest level of education: Bachelor's degrees.

			Experience: Taught at several primary schools in the local school board for more than ten years.
Ms. K	Female	Grade 1 and 2	Highest level of education: Bachelor's degrees. Experience: Taught at public primary schools in the local school board for the past two years.

Mrs. G had studied courses related to teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) and special education. She had taught ESL in primary schools and had also taught adults with special needs. In summary, she had professional education in ESL teaching and experience teaching students from diverse backgrounds.

Ms. K got her Bachelor of Education degree in 2007, and later she began supply teaching at a variety of schools within her school board. She was new to the participating public primary school and in fact she only held a five-month teaching contact from February to June to cover a parental leave.

#### 4.1.2.2 Teachers from the community heritage language school

Table 3: The participating teachers at the community heritage language school

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Teaching Level</b>	<b>Teacher information</b>
Ms. Q	Female	Beginners	Highest level of education: Bachelor's degrees. Experience: Ms. Q has been teaching at the school for the past two years. She also taught Mandarin Chinese in a weekend heritage language program.
Ms. W	Female	Beginners	Highest level of education: Bachelor's degrees. Experience: Ms. W was new to Canada. She used to be a teacher in the subject area of Mandarin Chinese at the elementary school level in southern part of China.

Ms. Q taught the beginning level of Mandarin Chinese (including children from Kindergarten to Grade 3 from the public school system) at a community heritage language school. She had been in Canada for more than ten years. Before coming to Canada, she worked in the field of teacher education in mainland China. As a mother of two, she had experience in supporting her own children learn English and Mandarin Chinese in mainland China and Canada. In a word, she was interested in supporting children from Chinese backgrounds to learn and maintain Mandarin Chinese and Chinese culture in Canada.

Ms. W was supply teaching in the beginning level of Mandarin Chinese at this community heritage language school. She came to Canada at the beginning of 2011. Before coming to Canada, she worked in a business setting in China. She used to teach Mandarin Chinese at an elementary school, but found that her teaching experience was not rewarding nor what she wanted; so she decided to pursue an administrative job related to human resources in a nationally-owned business company. She was visiting her husband who was a post-doctoral fellow in science at the local university. During this time she took the Mandarin Chinese teaching job at this community heritage language school, because Ms. Q had to go back to China for a month to visit her mother who was in a critical health condition. Ms. W got hired by the parents committee since she had experience teaching Mandarin Chinese in mainland China. In a word, Ms. W came to teach Mandarin Chinese at this school due to her interest and the idea of exploring Canadian education in her free time.

#### 4.2 The research site

The geographic setting for the study was a medium-sized city located in southwestern Ontario, Canada where there was a large Chinese-speaking population including but not limited to recent Canadian citizens with Chinese heritage, Chinese immigrants, Chinese international students,

Chinese visiting scholars, Chinese post-doctoral fellows, etc. The research site consisted of one public primary school in which there were students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and a large number of Chinese students, one community heritage language school that was near the public school in the community, the homes of Chinese families, and the larger community made up of many seniors, immigrant families, and university students. More specifically, I conducted field work in two Grade one and two classrooms in the public primary school, one classroom in the community heritage language school, the Chinese children's homes, and community settings such as libraries and parks.

#### 4.2.1 The public primary school

The participating public primary school, hereafter referred to as the public school, was made-up of students from diverse socio-linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It had been founded during the 1950s and was part of a large school board in southwestern Ontario, Canada. There were 21 teachers including 3 education assistants and 270 students. The public school was located in a culturally and linguistically diverse community. At this public school, most children's parents worked or studied at the local university near the public school.

The school building was extended due to the demand for full-day kindergarten programs in Ontario and the closure of another local school. There were multiple classes from Kindergarten to Grade six. Every year, there was a book exhibition to promote reading and fundraising for the school library. There were also fundraising projects carried out by teachers and students (e.g. United Way food drive, Canadian Tire Jump Start Foundation, and Heart and Stroke Foundation). Other activities aimed to enhance the relationship between the school and students' families. These included the newcomer Family Night and Meet the Teacher night. In addition, the school supported the Students' Council who organized a variety of extracurricular



activities for the children, such as the Terry Fox Run and a Guess the Value of a Gift Basket game.

#### 4.2.2 The community heritage language school

The community heritage language school, hereafter referred to as the Chinese school, was located in the same geographic area as the public school. It was housed in a heritage building in a multicultural and multilingual community where a great number of Chinese people lived. The Chinese school functioned as a non-profit education organization managed by parents. It had been founded in 1994 by the Chinese Scholars Association at the local university to help Chinese parents take care of their children after school and support Chinese children in the neighbourhood to learn the Mandarin Chinese language and Chinese culture. With the development of the Chinese school and demand from parents, a parents' committee consisting of five children's parents plus one principal was founded in 2006 to facilitate communication between parents and teachers and to better serve the Chinese community.

According to the teachers and the parents' committee, the goals of this Chinese school were to foster Chinese children's interest in learning Mandarin Chinese, to improve their overall Mandarin Chinese language ability in listening, speaking, reading and writing, as well as to maintain, inherit, and develop a prominent Chinese ethnic culture.

The Chinese school operated according to the calendar of the public school. Classes were in session from 3:30 to 5:30 in the afternoon on weekdays. When the Chinese school was first founded, there was only one class. One year later, two classes at the beginning level and intermediate level were established due to the large number of students. At the time of this study, there were twenty-seven students including twelve students at the beginning level and fifteen students at the intermediate level. Most students were Chinese and there were four children from

other cultures such as European and South American in the community attending the Chinese school. The tuition was seventy Canadian dollars per month to cover the rent, teachers' salaries, and some supplies.

Every school day afternoon, two Chinese school teachers went to the participating public school to pick up children and walk with them for about ten minutes to the Chinese school. The first period of the class was from 4:00 to 4:40pm. It mainly consisted of reviewing and learning new lessons. Recess time was 4:40 to 5:00 pm. During recess, weather permitting, children could choose to go outside and play on the playground in the large yard. They could also stay inside and do an activity of their choice such as playing board games and practicing paper folding. The second lesson period was from 5:00 to 5:30 pm. It involved engaging children in learning Mandarin Chinese through literacy activities. These will be discussed in the Findings and Discussion chapter.

The teachers employed a Chinese subject textbook published by Nanjing Normal University Press. Ms. Q considered this textbook to be suitable for Chinese children to learn Mandarin Chinese or Putonghua outside mainland China. In my interview with her, she told me she believed that this book could help children to learn Pinyin and Chinese characters and the Mandarin Chinese language as a whole with appropriate activities and exercises, which were helpful for children to build their confidence in learning the Mandarin Chinese language and Chinese culture. At the Chinese school, children at the beginning level learnt about three to five new Chinese characters each day and completed a full text each week. They were required to read fluently or to recite certain texts. There was a monthly quiz on what children had learnt such as writing some of the Chinese characters from the textbook.

#### 4.2.3 The Community

In this section, I define the term community and talk about the community domain in my study.

#### 4.2.3.1 Defining community

The terms *community* and *neighbourhood* overlap (Stooke, 2010). My study adopted a definition provided by The Centre for Family Literacy Society of Alberta (2002).

Communities can be geographical such as a neighbourhood, town, or city, or can be based on mutual interest or involvement such as in a neighbourhood school, workplace, cultural group, advocacy group and so on. Community can also refer to the ways that people interact with one another and with other communities and institutions. (pp. 3-7)

#### 4.2.3.2 The community context in the study

The neighbourhood in which my study was conducted was a mixed area which included lots of low rental housing for graduate students enrolled at the local university. The community consisted of people from diverse cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds, who brought their traditions, values and knowledge to the local neighbourhood. There were people from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America. The specific spaces or places I discuss in detail are parks, playgrounds and a public library.

### 4.3 Organization of data

The study is premised on the assumptions that “being literate involves being communicatively competent across multiple discourse communities” (Larson & Marsh, 2005, p. 23) and that literacy practices are “integrated into people’s everyday lived practices on multiple levels” (p. 23), while they are also connected with and reflect “larger social, cultural, historical and political practices” (p. 131). In the following section, children’s literacy practices at school, at home, and

in the community are reported and described in relation to different literacy events, by which I mean “occasions where texts (in a variety of forms) are central to participation” (p. 131).

#### 4.3.1 At school

Literacy practices at school usually involved print literacy in teacher-organized literacy events, yet multiliteracies were evidenced in child-initiated literacy events. In the following sections, I describe children’s literacy practices at the public school and the Chinese school.

##### 4.3.1.1 At the public school

At the public school, I observed many teacher-organized literacy events with a focus on print literacy. I observed that in most of the events the focal children were expected to practice English reading and writing by themselves after receiving directions from their teachers. Children reacted and responded in various ways to the organization of literacy events designed by the teachers.

##### 4.3.1.1.1 Teacher-organized literacy events

Each school day was filled with many literacy events including reading sessions, discussions, and writing sessions in which children worked by themselves or in groups. These events were similar in that they all emphasized print literacy: reading and writing. They differed in that they occurred in relation to different subject areas such as Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, and Art within theme-based instruction on topics such as changes of seasons and community helpers. In the following vignettes, I describe a morning and an afternoon session. My observations of the morning session focus on a Quick-Write literacy event that took place at the beginning of May 2011. Quick-Write is a school writing format in which children quickly jot down their ideas on a certain topic provided by the classroom teacher.

Vignette 1: On a sunny Monday morning, the children happily came into school and followed the usual routine in the hall: they took off their jackets, hung up their backpacks,

got their daily planners, took off their outdoor shoes, put on their indoor shoes, and then went to the carpeted area of the classroom. The participating children, Brian, Shasha, Vanessa, Eric, Leno, Jiajia, and Samantha, were busy with these routines as they tried to get to the carpet. The class started by singing the national anthem, *Oh Canada*, and listening to the principal's morning message on the public announcement system.

Ms. K and Mrs. G gathered the children to sit on the carpet in Ms. K's classroom, and then Mrs. G played the video *Brita Water Filter - Change for Good Canada* from YouTube. Children were sitting in rows watching the video on the SMART board™. No participating children sat in the first row. Jiajia was in the third row. Vanessa was in the middle of the fourth row, Eric was in the fifth row, and Samantha was in the fourth row. Shasha was in the hall putting up her red shoes and then she joined Jiajia in the third row, Leno was in the second to last row, Brian was sitting at the very back, partially because he went to get his planner and came back to the carpet late.

The video was about one minute long. After the video was over, Mrs. G asked the children, "What do you think the commercial is trying to tell us?"

Several students put their hands up, including Vanessa, who answered, "Buy it."

Mrs. G did not directly comment on Vanessa's answer but said, "This commercial makes us THINK." And then she turned to Ms. K and said, "Let's do the attendance."

Mrs. G started to take her class's attendance first.

Eric and Leno said, "Here."

Jiajia said, "Present."

When Mrs. G finished her class's attendance, Ms. K took the attendance for her class.

When it came to Vanessa's turn, she said "Think deeper."

Ms. K did not comment but just smiled and moved on.

Shasha copied Vanessa's answer, and Brian simply said "Here."

After the attendance was done, the two teachers decided to play the video again because they thought most children did not get the message from the commercial video about reducing the use of water bottles. This time, Mrs. G explicitly asked the children to watch carefully. Children sat on the carpet with their eyes on the SMART board™.

Here I describe the video. The video starts with a scene of a dark room, and then a person opens the cupboard door. He is trying to get his tennis racket when lots of empty water bottles fall onto the floor. The next scene shows a woman stretching and there were many empty water bottles on the floor. Next, there is a man on the sofa reading newspapers in front of several huge bookshelves and there are many empty water bottles under his feet. After that, there is a person playing guitar in a room where there are also many empty water bottles on the floor. Near the end, envelopes fall from a mail slot onto a floor covered with water bottles, and in another scene, a dog picks his way across a similar floor. The last scene shows a woman standing in front of a swimming pool filled with thousands of empty water bottles. There are also quotations at the right corner of the screen that read, "Ever thought how many plastic water bottles Canadians bought last year? The earth needs Brita." The video finishes with a picture of Brita water filter.

When the video was over, Mrs. G turned to the children and asked them to "talk with your elbow partners, discuss these questions: What do you see and what are they trying to sell?"

Vanessa talked with a girl next to her about the empty water bottles. Brian talked about the empty bottles with a boy. Brian also used gestures to show how different people were doing different things in the video such as standing up to reach the tennis racket, exercising, sitting, playing guitar, and, in the dog's case, running. Jiajia and Shasha talked about seeing a lot of empty water bottles everywhere, and then commented on “the cute white dog” and wished they could have a pet. Eric talked with a boy sitting next to him about the large number of empty bottles he saw and tried to figure out the last scene of the commercial video. Samantha talked with the girl beside her about the great number of empty bottles.

The children discussed the video for less than five minutes, and then Mrs. G counted, “Three, two, one,” and asked the children to turn around and face the SMART board™. Mrs. G closed the discussion by saying, “They try to stop using water bottles.” Then she asked children to go back to their desks and “Write a couple of I think... in the Quick-Write.”

Eric, Leno, Samantha, and Jiajia went back to their classroom with Mrs. G. Vanessa and Shasha quickly walked to their tables, opened up their Quick-Write books and started to write; while Brian slowly got up from the carpet and walked back to his table.

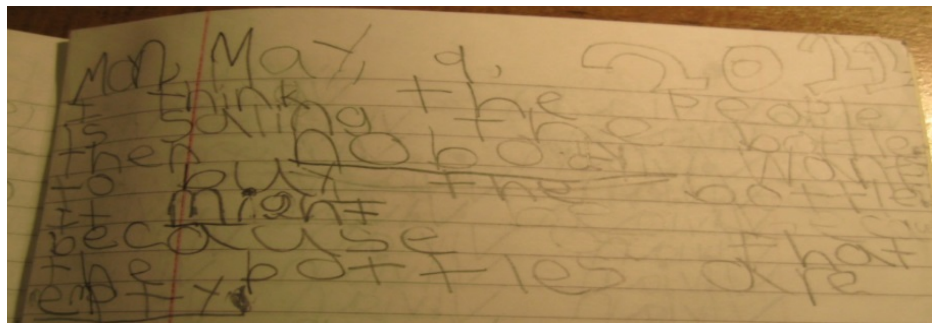
Ms. K elicited from her students that “The first thing you write on top is ...” and some students said “The date”. Ms. K said, “Start out with I think... or I wonder...”

Brian sat at his desk, opened up his Quick-Write book, and following Ms. K’s instructions, he started his writing by putting the date at the top of the page: *Monday, May 9, 2011*, and then he stopped, looked up into the ceiling for a moment, and continued his

writing with “I think...” He stopped writing again, looked around and found me sitting near his table. He looked at me for a few seconds. I was sitting nearby and was not sure what to do next. The other day, when I had offered to help, he used his facial expressions to tell me he did not want help. I decided to give him some working space. I walked away and sat near Vanessa’s table.

Vanessa was busy with her writing and she did not notice my presence. I took a peek over her shoulders and saw she had written the date at the top of the page: *Mon, May, 9, 2011*. She also wrote: *I think the people is saving the bottle. Then noboty want to buy the bottle. It miet because that the bottles are eply.* (See Figure 1: Vanessa’s Quick-Write) She underlined three words because she was not sure about the spellings. She first tried to sound them out to herself and then spelled the words on the paper. When she finished her writing and noticed I was sitting nearby, she came to me and asked me how to spell the underlined words. I spelt **nobody**, **might** and **empty** to her and then she carefully erased the wrong letters and wrote the correct ones. She thanked me for helping her with the spellings, returned to her writing book, and reread her writing before she went to see Ms. K to hand in her work. Ms. K took a look at Vanessa’s writing, smiled at her and then directed her to put the Quick-Write book in the basket located in the front of the classroom.

Figure 1: Vanessa’s Quick-Write





The literacy practices related in the above vignette include watching the video, discussing ideas with classmates, using gestures to express ideas (Brian), following teachers' instructions, and writing about the message of the video. In these practices the children were engaged in all strands of the language arts curriculum: reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and representing.

Teachers' comments can have different degrees of influence on students' work. In the above vignette, Vanessa's final writing did not match her original answer to the teacher's question regarding what the video aimed to communicate. Vanessa appeared to watch the video carefully and when Mrs. G asked what the video tried to say, she answered that the message was to "buy it." This was an appropriate answer given that the commercial was meant to sell the Brita water filter, but Mrs. G was not satisfied with Vanessa's answer. She told Vanessa to think more deeply. Vanessa appeared to be trying to make meaning of the video by thinking about what the teacher said about "commercial video", observing the images in the video, (the huge number of the empty water bottles and the final picture of the Brita water filter); and then concluding that it was telling people to buy the water filter. Later, when Ms. K was doing the attendance, Vanessa appeared to be confused. Instead of answering "I am here" or "Present", she said, "Think deeper." When it was time for the discussions, she talked about all the empty water bottles she saw and the last few seconds of the colourful scene with the Brita water filter. This time she was not sure that it was about selling the water filter, but she followed the teachers' direction, quickly going back to her desk and starting to write in her Quick-Write book. She wrote down her ideas in three sentences. She started by saying that people were saving the bottles, and then suggested that people did not want the bottles since they were empty. It appeared to me that this may not

have been her original plan, based on her first answer. I inferred that Vanessa's writing was influenced by the teacher's comments, but those comments did not help her to gain a better understanding of the video. Vanessa seemed to be focused on phonics and mechanics rather than meaning. She drew upon what she knew about English letters and Pinyin in Mandarin Chinese to help her to figure out the spellings of three words. She underlined three words that she wanted to check for spelling. She used the strategy of sounding out each word. She put down her guessed spellings before asking me to help with the spellings. She also made sure each sentence began with a capital letter, and put a period after each complete sentence. Ms. K, considered Vanessa to be "a competent learner." She described Vanessa as "a good reader and writer". I inferred that the way Vanessa carefully checked her writing and emphasized accuracy reflected certain cultural values in Chinese writing in that children need to make sure every single stroke is correct in each Chinese character writing because if one stroke is wrong, the whole Chinese character is wrong and may turn into another Chinese character such as Tu 土 in soil and Shi 士 in soldier. Culture can be considered as a resource that has an effect on children's way of making meaning (Razfar & Gutierrez, 2003).

In terms of the support provided by teachers, the teachers were the organizers of the morning literacy events in that they chose the video for students to watch; they allotted a short period of time for discussion, and they directed students to begin their written responses using "I think" and "I wonder" sentence stems. My observations led me to conclude that there was not enough background information presented or pre-viewing discussion of issues related to plastic water bottles for children to know what the video was about. Shasha and Leno may not have heard of Brita water filters before; and all they saw were the empty bottles. The teachers provided a limited amount of support in the Quick-Write session. They reminded children to put

the date on top and start with *I think*, but left it to the students to write what they wanted. In a later interview with Ms. K, she mentioned the purpose of Quick-Write is to “encourage students to write, get the ideas out.” She did not check the grammar in students’ writing because the aim was to get the students to write their ideas down and hope student could produce a critical written response to the video. However, there appeared to be inadequate scaffolding from the teachers. Also Ms. K did not correct Vanessa’s idea of people saving bottles. As long as she wrote down her idea, the aim of the Quick-Write was met. The pedagogical assumptions informing the Quick-Write contrast with the Chinese understanding of a teacher’s role in literacy support. Chinese teachers would be expected to give explicit instructions, point out children’s mistakes, and tell them how to correct them. The Chinese parents I talked with all emphasized the importance of having correct pronunciation, spelling and grammar in their children’s literacy learning. It is possible that the focal children had a different understanding about what a piece of writing should look like compared with their teachers. Without sufficient background information and support, it was challenging for CLD children to produce a critical piece of writing.

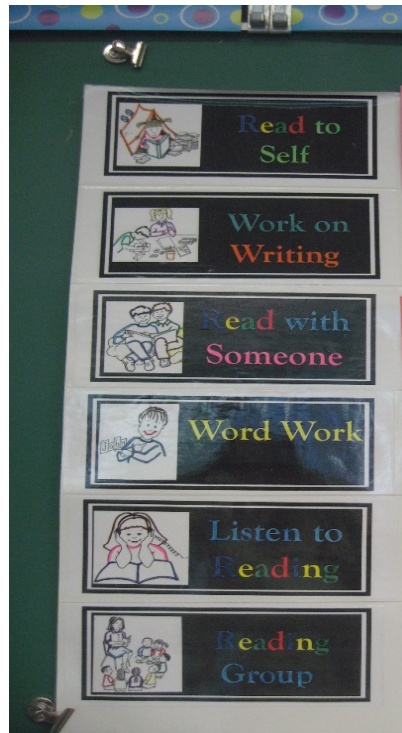
A description of the afternoon literacy events in the classrooms helps to further elucidate children’s literacy practices at school. The afternoon literacy sessions were organized in “Daily Five” (Boushey & Moser, 2006) literacy centres in which children were expected to do both independent and collaborative literacy work with a primary focus on reading and writing. The *Daily Five* is a way for teachers to organize the classroom for children to independently engage in literacy practices. Boushey and Moser (2006) refer to the *Daily Five* as “a student-driven management structure designed to fully engage students in reading and writing” (p. 12). In accordance with the *Daily Five*, each afternoon there were five centres: *Read to Self*, *Work on*

*Writing, Read with Someone, Word Work, Listen to Reading* or *Reading Group*. Boushey and Moser (2006) explain the functions of the five literacy tasks as the following,

*Read to Yourself:* The best way to become a better reader is to practice each day, with books you choose on your just-right reading level. It soon becomes a habit. *Reading to Someone:* allows for more time to practice strategies, helping you work on fluency and expressions, check for understanding, hear your own voice, and share in the learning community. *Work on Writing:* Just like reading, the best way to become a better writer is to practice writing each day. *Listening to Reading:* We hear examples of good literature and fluent reading. We learn more words, thus expanding our vocabulary and becoming better readers. *Spelling/Word Work:* Correct spelling allows for more fluent writing, thus speeding up the ability to write and get thinking down on paper. This is an essential foundation for writers. (Boushey & Moser, 2006, pp. 11-12)

According to Boushey and Moser (2006), the five tasks in the *Daily Five* help students to practice print literacy and form good learning habits through self-monitoring and independence “so that we [teachers] are free to work with small groups or have individual conferences” (p. 15). In the study, teachers assigned students to move from centre to centre based on an order that was posted on the blackboard (Figure 2: *Daily Five* chart in the classroom). Students worked at each centre for 15 minutes and then rotated among the five centres. When they heard the teacher ring a bell, students were expected to stop what they were doing and move to the next literacy centre. The centres all required students to work individually except when reading with a peer. While students worked in the centres, teachers either checked students’ assignments or conducted reading assessments with individual students.

Figure 2: Daily Five chart in the classroom



The vignette below describes Brian’s literacy practices at the *Work on Writing* centre and *Reading with Someone* centre. *Reading with someone* involved two students taking turns to read a book from an assigned difficulty level. *Working on writing* means children would practice writing such as writing a journal or a reading response. The vignette illuminates Brian’s school experience, including his literacy learning at the public school.

Vignette 2: It was mid-afternoon. The children had been working at literacy centres for about 10 minutes. The structure of the activity was to work at one centre for 10-15 minutes and then to move on when the teacher rang the bell.

Brian was still working on his writing when the teacher rang the bell to say it was time to move on. One girl who sat at his table stood up and was about to move on to the next literacy centre when she saw that Brian was still writing.

She moved her head close to Brian and told him, “Time to stop.”

Brian looked up at her and then slowly got up from his chair while trying to finish the writing and drawing of his reading response (see Figure 3) to the book *Rosie's Walk*. When Brian finished enough to move on, he put his reading response notebook into a blue basket on the shelf, stopped for a moment, looked up at the blackboard to find out that his next literacy centre was *Read with Someone*.

Brian walked toward a bookshelf to pick up his reading folder. In front of the bookshelf, two students were there trying to find their reading folders and another three students were trying to put back their reading folders. Brian stood and watched the busy traffic in front of the bookshelf. He lifted his eyebrows and decided not to enter the high traffic area. Instead, he wandered around the classroom, although he was ostensibly waiting for his turn at the bookshelf.

Soon after, Brian heard his reading partner, Emily, who is a native English speaker, calling him to the carpet where they needed to be for their shared reading session. He looked and noticed that Emily had already got their reading folders, so he walked slowly toward Emily and joined her for their reading session. Brian sat on the carpet with Emily, who had already picked up a book to read. Emily opened up the book. There was a bookmark which showed them where to continue from their last reading. Brian looked at the book while moving closer to Emily. She told Brian that she would read two pages and then it would be his turn to read the next two pages. Brian nodded and said "OK", and then he looked at the book, and listened to Emily's fluent reading.

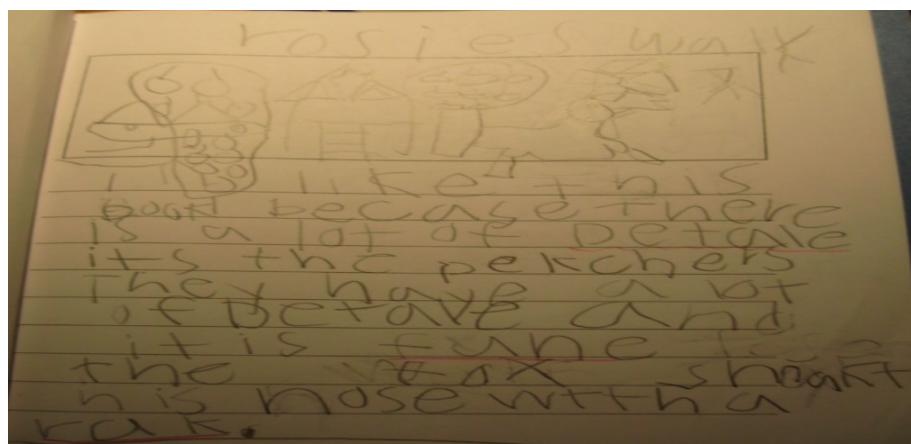
When Emily stopped reading, Brian seemed to still be engrossed in the story. He had not noticed that Emily had finished reading her part. When Emily handed the book to Brian, she had to tell him it was his turn to read. Brian picked up the book, found the

place to begin and then started to read. Whenever there was a new word, he stopped for a moment gazing at the word, and then read the word slowly, after that he looked at Emily to double check if he got it right. Sometimes when Brian stopped for a little bit longer, Emily would simply tell him the right way to say the word. Brian continued his reading with some help from Emily. The shared reading session went on and the two students took turns doing their reading.

When the bell rang, the students were supposed to tidy up and move to the next centre. Although Brian had not finished reading his part, Emily tried to get him to stop. It seemed that Brian did not want to move to the next centre until he finished reading the last sentence. Eventually, he closed the book and handed it to Emily who inserted the bookmark, put it back in their reading folder, and returned the folder to the bookshelf by herself. Brian watched as Emily managed to put the reading folder back in the high traffic area. He then turned his head toward the blackboard and double checked where he needed to be for the next literacy centre.

Figure 3: Brian's reading response to *Rosie's Walk* (Hutchins, 1971)

I like this book because there is a lot of detale it's the pekchers. They have a lot of detale and it is fune the fox shoakt his nose with a rak.



This is just one of the many literacy events in which Brian was provided opportunities to practice literacy in the English language. A first glance at Brian's vignette suggests that he did not follow the classroom rules and routines as they were prescribed by the teacher. When the bell rang, he was expected to quickly move away from *Work on Writing* to the next literacy centre *Read with Someone*, but he wanted to finish his writing first and then took his time to find his way to the next literacy centre. According to the teachers, the literacy centres were set up to facilitate students' literacy learning by giving them opportunities to participate in different literacy events. But for Brian, the organization of the *Daily Five* literacy centres did not provide enough time to engage with literacy texts. For example, he was supposed to move to the next literacy centre when he was trying to finish up his writing and when he was reading with Emily, he demonstrated what he knew about English letters but the limited time and the structure of the centre did not allow him to take more meaning from the assigned book. I concluded that the *Daily Five* literacy centres as a classroom management system dictates aspects of the classroom curriculum and limits how students can make meaning with texts available in the classroom.

Time and culture could both be considered resources that the participating children could draw upon in the meaning making process. Brian would have benefited from more time. He wanted to finish up writing his reading response but the bell rang and he was supposed to stop and move onto the next centre. He stayed a bit longer in his writing before he moved to the reading centre, and again, he could not finish what he wanted to do within the limited time period. In addition, culture may have also implicitly affected Brian's ways of meaning making. Brian was learning the English language from different texts and people based on what he knew from Chinese and English. He showed motivation to learn in the classroom through determination to get his work done, trying to find his reading folder in a busy place, taking his



time to figure out the pronunciations of new words based on what he knew, despite the fact that his efforts did not seem to fit in the particular classroom schedule which was organized by the *Daily Five*.

In summary, Brian's literacy practices included writing a reading response and reading a book with his peer. During the literacy events he observed the traffic in front of the bookshelf, responding to Emily's call, being a good team member by agreeing to what Emily had decided, being a good listener, and trying to be a good reader. Even though the timing of the *Daily Five* literacy centres was not a good fit for Brian, he still tried to finish the literacy tasks and demonstrated what he could do in the classroom.

The above description raises questions about the role of teachers and the organization of literacy events in a classroom, especially when there are a great number of CLD children in the room. In the vignette, the teachers were the organizers of the literacy events, but the *Daily Five* program greatly affected the pedagogical environment. Teachers provided limited direct teaching by directly following the structure of the *Daily Five*. Based on my interviews with the participating teachers, they saw *Daily Five* as a tool to organize the classroom and a way to help "build up students' literacy skills" as well as to "encourage students to practice their reading and writing." Children were expected to know what they needed to do, at what time, and in what ways. It seemed that there was limited teacher supervision during the *Daily Five* since students were involved with English reading and writing with their peers and by themselves without direct teaching. The centres approach was totally different from pedagogical approaches in the Chinese classrooms familiar to Leno and Shasha. Leno and Shasha were used to listening to their teachers who would explicitly teach or tell them what to do in a whole-class setting rather than working by themselves or with a peer. Leno certainly had trouble getting used to this new style

of learning. For most of the time in the afternoon literacy centres, Leno wandered around the classroom. He observed what others were doing and he had to be told where to be and what to do.

Next I describe afternoon literacy events in Mrs. G's classroom. The vignette provides information about Eric, Leno, and Jiajia's literacy practices.

Vignette 3: The children had been in the afternoon literacy centres for about five minutes. Leno was standing near his desk and looking at the other students. Mrs. G was busy marking students' assignments. When she lifted her head to check on the students, she found that Leno was not participating in any literacy centre. She called him to her desk and asked Leno, "What are you doing?"

Leno looked at Mrs. G, who looked serious. He gave a smile and did not say a word. Mrs. G moved her head a little bit to the left so that she could take a good look at Leno.

"Which centre should you be in?" She asked.

Leno looked down and then looked up. It seemed that he was thinking what to say. He answered, "I do not know."

Mrs. G was a little bit frustrated and she told Leno: "If you do not know which centre you need to be, you need to ask the classroom helper. Eric will help you."

Mrs. G called Eric who was doing his writing at his desk to help Leno. Mrs. G explained to Eric that Leno was not sure where he needed to be. Eric used his pencil to point at the blackboard where there is a list of the *Daily Five* centres and besides each centre there was a sticky note with students' names. Leno followed Eric to the blackboard and listened to Eric, who told him that "You need to work on the *Word Work*."

Leno made his way back to his desk, sat in his chair for a second, turned his body to face the cupboard where he could find a piece of paper for his Word Work. He pulled out one piece of paper, put it on his desk, picked up a pencil, and held the pencil on the paper for a moment. He began his writing with a big letter W, looked up the blackboard, continued to write *Word*, he wrote another W besides Word and looked up at the blackboard searching the correct spelling. The bell rang and other children started to move back and forth to find their next literacy centres. It was not easy for Leno to find the word he needed to finish his writing. He moved his head left and right, stood up, got the spelling, and wrote down the word: Work. He simply put this Word Work under his desk in the drawer.

Eric took the responsibility of a classroom helper, came to Leno and reminded him that “The *Listen to reading* is closed. You need to do the *Read to Self* now.”

Leno smiled and nodded his head. He went to the bookshelf, found his reading folder, picked it up, and walked to the carpet. He saw that Jiajia was sitting on the carpet and doing her reading, so he decided to go to the carpet to do his reading rather than joining others who were sitting on the sofa in the reading corner (Appendix J: A picture of the reading corner in Mrs. G’s classroom).

Jiajia saw me walk toward the carpet. She immediately invited me to sit with her and listen to her reading. She had already taken out all of her books from her reading folder and laid them on the floor. She picked a book with a green cover on which there was a picture of a girl and the title was “I can”. She looked at me and said “It’s easy.” She opened up the book and quickly read the whole book to me. While she was reading to me, I noticed that it was indeed an easy book. There was just one sentence on each page and

the whole book was about learning sentence structure for *I Can* as well as some verbs such as *read, run, jump*, etc. The books in Jiajia's reading folder were not the levelled books that the other children had, but little photocopied books. Jiajia read the *I Can* book very well.

When she finished reading the *I Can* book, she put it down on the carpet. She was going to pick up another book, and then she noticed Leno was sitting nearby. She moved closer to Leno and asked, "What are you reading?"

Leno smiled at Jiajia. Before Leno even answered her question, Jiajia noticed the picture of a monkey on the page that Leno was reading and commented that "You are reading the Monkey book. I had that one before." She continued to ask Leno, "Which level are you? I am Level [number] and I need to move up."

Before Leno could comment on the reading levels or the book he was reading, Jiajia had moved on. He simply smiled and said, "I like the Monkey book. It's funny."

When Jiajia and Leno were talking to each other, the ESL teacher came in. She walked toward Jiajia and Leno. It was obvious that Jiajia was happy to see her ESL teacher. She had a big smile on her face. Jiajia picked up the *I Can* book and showed it to the ESL teacher, Ms. D, saying, "I can recite this book. It is too easy."

Ms. D said, "Good for you. What about the other books?" Ms. D pointed to a book with a blue cover and suggested: "How about reading that book with Xiaoxiao?" Jiajia happily agreed by saying "Ok!"

Ms. D directed Jiajia to me so that she could have time to sit with Leno and help with his reading. Ms. D knew that Leno needed more support.

Jiajia quickly picked up the book. She began to read fluently, “At school, we learn...” This book was still easy for Jiajia who could easily read every page. She was a very outgoing girl. Since she was confident about her reading these easy books, she was a little bit loud compared with other children.

I tried to remind her that others needed to concentrate and told her, “Jiajia, we cannot be too loud.”

Jiajia did not pay attention to what I said. I knew this could cause trouble. Before Jiajia even finished reading her second book about school, she was called to Mrs. G’s desk. Mrs. G pointed to the earphones on top of a pile of books on her desk, she picked it up, and gave it to Jiajia.

Jiajia held the black earphones in her hands and asked Mrs. G “What is it? What is it for?”

Mrs. G explained to Jiajia, “It’s a pair of earphones. You need to learn to whisper. Put it on and try to whisper to yourself.”

Jiajia did not put the earphones on immediately but rather studied them for a moment. The earphones were big, black and worn. Mrs. G saw Jiajia’s hesitation, so she approached Jiajia and said, “It’s okay. Try it on.”

Jiajia slowly put it on and said, “Hello.” Her face indicated her confusion. She quickly took them off and gave them back to Mrs. G.

Mrs. G reminded Jiajia that she needed to be quiet in the classroom. Perhaps realizing that those books were too easy for Jiajia, Mrs. G suggested to Jiajia, “Why not go back to your desk and work on your journal?”

Jiajia did not say yes or no but asked, “What about Leno?”

Mrs. G answered, “He cannot write a journal yet.”

Jiajia continued to ask, “Why me?” Mrs. G explained to Jiajia that her English had improved a lot and now she could write a journal. After hearing that Mrs. G confirmed her progress in English, Jiajia happily agreed to do her journal writing. At the same time, Leno was reading to the ESL teacher. I saw Leno stop reading several times and ask the ESL teacher for help with some words in the book.

Jiajia came back to the carpet, tidied up her books, and put them back in her reading folder. She told me, “I need to do my journal writing.”

I commented, “You read very well and now it’s time to do some writing.” Jiajia left the carpet and put back her reading folder. I also noticed that Eric was reading a blue and green covered chapter book by himself at the sofa located in the reading corner. Jiajia was now sitting at her desk, holding a pencil with the journal book open. She seemed to think for a moment about what to write before she started to write. I was planning to check what Eric was reading, when Jiajia waved to me. I went to Jiajia’s desk, she had written, “On the.”

Jiajia asked me, “Weekend 怎么拼 (How do you spell weekend?)”

I spelled w-e-e-k-e-n-d. Jiajia tried to print it. She sounded out the letters to herself, “w-e-k?”

This time, I repeated it slowly and watched her write down each letter, “It’s W-e-e-k-e-n-d”. Jiajia carefully wrote down each letter while sounding it out, ‘w-e-e-k-e-n-d, weekend.” Then she talked to herself, saying, “On the weekend, I went to the playground.” She knew there were two parts of the word playground, one was play and the other was ground. She was not sure how to write the part of ground. She turned to me

for help again. I spelled the word “g-r-o-u-n-d” for her. When I was spelling the word “ground,” we both heard the bell ring. Jiajia quickly finished up her sentence, closed her journal book, and put it back into the red basket. The literacy centres continued, and the children tried to find their way to their next literacy centres...

In the vignette, each child drew on their *funds of knowledge* and their understanding of the classroom organization. For example, Eric was the classroom helper assigned by Mrs. G. He knew what he needed to do, where he needed to be, when to stop, and when to move on. Eric also took the helper’s role in that he helped Leno to find his literacy centre and reminded Leno about his next literacy centre. Based on Mrs. G’s descriptions, “[Eric] is a great student. You do not need to remind him of what to do. He always finishes his task on time. And [he is] a great helper, too.” Eric was considered a good student in the *Daily Five* classroom because he did what he was asked to do and completed the task within the time slot.

Leno and Jiajia were both new to Mrs. G’s classroom and they were categorized as English as a Second Language (ESL) learners by the school. They were required to attend pull-out ESL lessons with the ESL teacher in the ESL classroom at school. Even though they were both new to the *Daily Five* literacy centres, Jiajia seemed to do well with moving around and doing different literacy work in different literacy centres. This may be because she had spent time in a kindergarten classroom in Montreal. By contrast, Leno was totally new to the Canadian classroom. And he knew that he would only stay in Canada for less than a year during which he would learn some English. At the end of the year he would go back to China to attend a primary school. According to Leno’s mother, she wanted Leno to enjoy Canada. There was no pressure for Leno to move up in the reading assessment.

Leno had difficulty adjusting to the *Daily Five* in the Canadian classroom. He was used to the Chinese preschool classrooms where teachers would teach for the whole class. Here in Mrs. G's classroom, Leno had to figure out what he needed to do and when to switch the literacy centres. To some degree, it was too much for Leno, who was also trying to learn to read and write the English language. Even though Leno may not be considered a "good" reader or writer compared to his classmates in a *Daily Five* classroom, he certainly improved his oral English vocabulary. Now he could understand most of the classroom instructions, read simple books and write sentences (Appendix K: Leno's Quick-Write samples). Leno's writing started with two or three words and then he was able to write sentences using connecting words such as "and" and "because". Mrs. G described Leno as "nice and quiet" when he first started. Now "he can read and write a little bit." Jiajia's participation in classroom activities was very different from that of Shasha and Leno who began with a quiet period. Jiajia started by participating in the classroom discussions and literacy work as much as she could. She was very confident and she did not hesitate to ask about things she did not know. Mrs. G said, "She has learnt a lot by just asking questions."

In summary, the focal children had their own ways to understand and practice literacies. Children drew on what they have known about languages, classrooms, and literacies to make meaning of the assigned texts at school. According to the classroom teachers, Eric was regarded as a good literacy learner who engaged with the assigned literacy texts. Leno was an ESL learner who was trying to learn to read and write in English. Jiajia was an ESL learner who knew what she wanted to achieve in her reading and who had learnt to write in the English language. The teachers provided limited support during the literacy centres. There was some degree of instruction given to Jiajia and the ESL teacher helped with Leno's reading. During the literacy



events, Jiajia and Leno used what they knew about Pinyin to help them to spell and pronounce the English words in their reading and writing. For example, I observed how Jiajia drew upon what she knew in the Chinese linguistic system, that is, Pinyin, to help her with the spelling of the word "weekend." I also observed how Leno used what he knew from Pinyin to help him to guess the sounds or the pronunciation of new words when he was reading on the carpet. In addition, the Chinese culture of being polite certainly influenced Leno. He often smiled, no matter whether he knew the answer or not. He was trying to "enjoy" the Canadian classroom learning. In brief, these three children's literacy practices were reading and writing. And they tried to use what they knew about English and Chinese to help with their English reading and writing.

#### 4.3.1.1.2 Child-initiated literacy events

At school, the focal children also engaged in informal literacy events outside the classroom. For example, on the playground during recess, the focal children were able to explore meaning making around literacies. The following vignette concerns Jiajia and Shasha and how they examined and made meanings of the stones and buttons they found. This vignette indicates that when children were given time and opportunities to make meaning of diverse texts, they would explore literacy using a variety of resources from home, school, and the community to help them to understand the people, things, animals, and places around them.

Vignette 4: After finishing up the morning literacy session of a read-aloud, it was time for recess. When children heard the bell ring, they looked happy and all of them wanted to go outside and play.

Shasha went to the hallway and tried to find her outdoor shoes. She saw Jiajia who was standing in front of her backpack and was trying to find something. Shasha went over to see Jiajia and asked in English, “What are you doing?”

Jiajia smiled and then suddenly put her arms up in the sky, saying to Shasha, “Surprise!”

Jiajia put her hands down. I noticed she had something in her right hand. Jiajia asked Shasha in English and Chinese, “Do you want to know what’s in my hand? 想知道我手里有什么？”

Shasha nodded her head in curiosity, Jiajia slowly opened up her right hand and there were several buttons and stones in her hand. Shasha said, “Wow!” as she moved closer to take a good look at the buttons and stones.

There was a big red button, a small blue button, a yellow one as well as two stones with coloured stripes on them. They were shades of red and dark brown.

Jiajia noticed I was looking at them and said to me in Chinese, “Beautiful, right? 美吧!”

I nodded my head and said in Chinese, “Yes, they are. 是。”

Shasha asked Jiajia, “Where did you get them? 你从哪找的？”

Jiajia answered in Chinese, “I got the buttons from home and picked up those stones from the playground. 纽扣是从家里拿的，石头是从小区的 playground 捡的”

Shasha said in Chinese, “Home? 家里？”

Jiajia explained to her in Chinese, “Yesterday, I found a sewing box at home when my mum was fixing her pajamas. 昨天我妈妈在缝她的睡衣，我发现了一个针线盒。”

Shasha asked, “What happened to her pajamas? 她的睡衣怎么了?”

Jiajia answered, “Oh, the buttons were loose. 啊, 纽扣松了。”

Shasha asked Jiajia “What else did you find in the box? 你还发现什么了?”

Jiajia answered “Sewing needles. 针。” She looked up at me and said in Chinese, “My mum said it was dangerous for children, so I cannot play with the sewing needles. 我妈妈说小孩子拿针危险。”

I commented in Chinese, “It was sharp and it is for sewing, not for playing. 针太尖了, 是用来缝衣服的, 不能玩。”

Shasha continued her inquiry by asking Jiajia in Chinese, “Did you find the stones at the school playground? 你是在学校的 playground 发现这些石头得?”

Jiajia answered, “No, the community one. The one we always go. 不是, 是小区的那个。我们常去的那个。”

Shasha was a little bit confused and told Jiajia, “I know that one, and I never find any stone like yours. 我知道呀, 我怎么没有发现呢。”

I agreed with Shasha. I said in Chinese, “I have not found stones like these. 我也没有看过这样的石头。”

Jiajia said, “I know, you need to look closely. They are special ones. 我知道, 你得认真找。他们很特别。”

In order to cheer Shasha up, Jiajia said in Chinese, “We can play with these buttons and stones together. 咱俩一起玩。”

The children were busy discussing their treasures and did not notice that the rest of the class had all gone outside. Mrs. G and Ms. K came out and saw Jiajia and Shasha were still there. They asked them to hurry up and go outside. Shasha and Jiajia went to the cupboard where their outside shoes were stored. Since Jiajia was still holding her treasures, she managed to take off her indoor shoes without using her hands. Shasha quickly took off her indoor shoes, put them into the shoe cupboard, got her outdoor shoes and put them on. When she finished up, she saw Jiajia was trying to get her outdoor shoes using her left hand. Shasha offered help.

“May I hold the buttons for you? 我帮你拿着吧?”

Jiajia looked at Shasha and agreed. She put her treasures in Shasha’s hands and told her to be careful. Jiajia quickly put on her outdoor shoes and took back her treasures from Shasha.

I wanted to follow Jiajia and Shasha to learn more about how they were making meaning from the buttons, but Ms. K asked me if I could help her to do some photocopying. By the time I finished up the photocopying, the recess was almost over. I hurried outside and tried to find Jiajia and Shasha. Jiajia and Shasha were each holding something in their hands, and they moved their hands to different directions. I thought they were trying to catch something. I quickly walked to them and tried to find out what the girls were doing. Jiajia held the red button in her left hand and Shasha held the yellow one in her right hand. They were trying to catch the sunshine on the buttons to make them shine.

Jiajia could not wait to show me, “See, it is shiny. Beautiful, right? 看，很亮，美吧!”

I smiled and said, “Yes, indeed. 是呀，确实很美。”

Shasha commented, “They are really special. 他们很特别。”

Jijia pointed to the blue button and told me, “This one is not shiny but there are two holes in the middle, and you can see through them. Want to try? 这个不亮，不过它的中间有两个洞，你看看？”

I moved my head closer and tried to see through the holes in the blue buttons. I saw Shasha’s nose. I guessed Shasha did this on purpose. We all laughed happily. I asked them, “Where are the stones? What did you do with the stones? 那些石头哪去了？你放哪了？”

Just then the bell rang, and we had to run back to the school door and line up to get back to the classroom. On our way to the door, Shasha returned the yellow button to Jijia. When we were lining up, they told me in English, “We were trying to build a house. We used the regular grey stones from the school playground.”

Shasha said “We made a house and the shape is a circle.我们做了个圆形房子。”

Jijia added, “We used my special stones for the windows and the door. 我们用那些特别的石头做窗户和门。”

I commented that “That is a good idea. What is the house for? 很好呀。房子用来做什么？”

Shasha said, “Small animals. 给小动物。”

Jijia said, “Insects. 昆虫。”

I said, “You mean bugs like ants or lady bugs. 你是说虫子，像蚂蚁和瓢虫。”

Shasha said, “Yes. 是的。”

Jiajia said, “It could be anything. You know bugs live happily together.什么都, 大家一起住。”

Shasha added, “We can check it after lunch. 午饭后我们去看看。”

I said, “That’s a good idea. 这个想法很好。”

We walked together back to the hall. Jiajia carefully put her treasures into a plastic bag and sealed them inside, and then she put them safely in her backpack. Recess was over. The girls went back to their classrooms.

The above vignette described Jiajia’s and Shasha’s meaning making practices around buttons and stones at school. Their friendship was enhanced and literacies were explored based on their interests. Even though it was a routine recess, it was filled with Jiajia and Shasha’s friendship sharing and their meaning making with buttons and stones. Jiajia and Shasha were both relatively new to the public school and they both lived in the same community near the public school. They became good friends shortly after they met each other. They were in different classrooms. Jiajia was in Mrs. G’s class, and Shasha was in Ms. K’s class, but their classrooms shared the big room and the bookshelves in the middle of the room divided the room into two classrooms. Sometimes the teachers did literacy activities and social science sessions together so they had lots of opportunities to spend time together at school. They also had similar cultural and linguistic *funds of knowledge* (e.g. the Chinese writing and sound system) which may be one of the reasons that they got along very well and quickly made friends with each other. Shasha was usually quiet in the classroom, but when she was out with Jiajia she was no longer shy. She had many questions to ask and she made inquiries all by herself through

conversations and observations. Jiajia was like Shasha's big sister. When she thought Shasha was sad about not finding special stones on the community playground, she suggested that they play together with the buttons and stones that she had found. Together they used the stones to make a house with windows and a door for bugs. They also explored the plastic buttons that could reflect the sun rays and become shiny, as well as the blue button with the tiny holes through which one could see.

Artifacts and natural objects such as buttons and stones provide children with opportunities to make sense of their surroundings. Jiajia and Shasha's meaning making around the buttons and stones was integral to their literacy practices. They talked about the stones and buttons; they asked questions; they made new things using the stones; and they explored ways to use them, deciding to make them into a house for bugs. These literacy practices illustrate how artifacts themselves tell stories and afford children opportunities for literacy learning (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010). The children made artifacts using what they had on hand and gave those artifacts particular meanings that reflected their social and cultural values.

The vignette also illuminates the concept of *syncretic literacy* (Gregory, Long & Volk, 2004), in other words, ways in which the children, as capable meaning-makers, recontextualize (Genishi & Dyson, 2009) what they learnt at home, at school, and in the community. For example, Mrs. G and Ms. K were teaching children about Wh-words including *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why*, as well as teaching children how to use the Wh-words to form questions. During their informal interactions and literacy practices, Jiajia and Shasha used Wh-words to ask questions to one another. They also used what the teachers called *juicy* words such as *beautiful* and *special* to describe their buttons and stones. Literacies are embedded in children's daily practices, practices in which Jiajia and Shasha made meanings of texts around them, gave new

meanings to ordinary texts and transformed the texts into meaningful artifacts. In the above literacy exploration on the playground, they read their stones and buttons and made new meaning of the stones and buttons. Their literacy practices were social and cultural, reflecting their understanding about the stones and buttons they had as well as their cultural understanding of shapes such as the circle, which signifies harmony. There was no teacher involvement, nor detailed step-by-step instructions on how to make Wh-questions using Wh-words. However, the children formed their Wh-questions to find out what they wanted to know. In short, their meaning making was based on interests, getting to know the texts (stones and buttons), designing new texts with available resources, and telling others about their design and ideas. Their practices reflected social, cultural, artifactual, and syncretic literacies.

Besides recess, daily routines such as getting changed in the hallway provided opportunities for the children to engage in multimodal literacy practices to express their understanding and make meaning of the texts around them. In the vignette below Jiajia gave Shasha a secret friendship card when they were in the hallway trying to get ready to go to the classroom. Brian was talking with his peer about a hero robot toy/Spiderman™ toy that he brought from home for *Show and Tell* at the public school.

Vignette 5: It was a sunny spring morning. As usual, the children arrived at school, walked into the hallway, and got ready to go into their classrooms. Jiajia put her backpack on the hook, carefully opened her bag, and took out a piece of paper. She used her right hand to hold the paper and hid it behind her back. She went to find Shasha who was trying to find her planner in her backpack. Jiajia tapped Shasha's shoulder. Shasha turned to Jiajia and smiled, asked, "What's up? 干什么?"



Jiajia brought the paper and gave it to Shasha. Shasha was surprised, she held it in her hand and asked Jiajia, “What is it? 这是什 么 ？”

Jiajia said, “It’s a card. I made it for you. 我给你做的卡。”

Shasha gave Jiajia a hug. They hugged for at least for 10 seconds. Shasha said, “Thanks! 谢谢!”

Jiajia said, “We are good friends. 我们是好朋友 。”

Shasha’s eyes were on this piece of red paper. On it was her name and a drawing of a heart. Shasha looked up at Jiajia and told her, “You are my best friend! 你是我最好的朋友!” Shasha also asked Jiajia, “Can I open it right now? 我可以打开么?”

Jiajia smiled and answered, “Of course. 当然可以呀。”

Shasha gently took off the red wrapping paper and inside she found a card that said, “Friends 朋友”and that contained drawings of hearts and girls playing. Shasha was about to say something to Jiajia when she was stopped by the teachers who reminded the children that they needed to hurry up and to not forget their planners. Shasha quickly put this friendship card in her backpack and Jiajia told Shasha that it was a secret friendship card. They quickly gathered their things and went back to their classrooms. I watched these two happy and good friends. I knew that what Jiajia did not tell Shasha at this moment was that she was going to go back to China to visit her father and she did not know whether she would be back to Canada or not. Later that summer, Shasha learnt that her father had landed a job in Toronto and she would move to Toronto by the end of the summer.

The children drew on a variety of meaning making resources to make an artifact to express their friendship. They also helped each other to understand the texts around them. Later that afternoon, Shasha used the *Word Work* time to colour rainbows. She showed her colouring to Jiajia and asked Jiajia to keep it. The two good friends used art work to express their feelings for each other. Jiajia made a card on which she wrote down “Friends 朋友” and put the shape of hearts around the word, as well as drew herself and Shasha playing together. Shasha coloured a piece of rainbow for Jiajia. The friendship between the two girls began a few months earlier. In September, when Shasha came to school, she cried every day. She was sad since she could not understand much English. She got to know Jiajia and they played games together at school and outside of school, and they soon became good friends. Jiajia certainly had some magic to cheer Shasha up and make her happy. Jiajia was like a rainbow to Shasha, since she had brought fun into Shasha’s life at school. The above literacy event was about Shasha and Jiajia sharing their artwork with each other to express feelings through the friendship card and the rainbow picture. The girls’ literacy practices included reading the card, figuring out the meaning of the card, colouring and writing their names. These literacy practices were social and cultural in that they represented Shasha’s and Jiajia’s understanding of being friends. They reflect the concept of *artifactual literacy* (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010), since the secret friendship card and the rainbow colouring are artifacts made by children that held shared meanings. The friendship card meant a lot to Jiajia and Shasha, who did not know that next year they might not be seeing each other. The artifact itself can be considered as a symbol of friendship. There was no teacher involved in the events and the children just explored what they wanted to know and expressed what they wanted to say in their own unique ways. Another demonstration of artifactual literacy (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010) and syncretic literacy (Gregory, Long & Volk, 2004) was shown by Brian when

he took his hero toy with him to the public school. Brian was able to share with his peers his understanding of the hero toy and the concept of being a hero or a helper based on his understanding and experiences at home and at school.

Vignette 6: It was a Friday afternoon. Children came in from outside and stood in the hallway to get ready for the afternoon class. Brian went directly to his backpack and quickly got his Spiderman™ robot toy that he had brought from home for the Show and Tell. E, a boy, was standing next to Brian. When E saw the Spiderman™ figure, his eyes lit up, and he commented that it was very cool.

Brian happily showed him that this toy can also move its arms and legs. Brian excitedly told E, “Check this.” At the same time he moved the Spiderman’s arms up and down, and also made noises.

E looked eager to know more about this toy.

While this exchange was going on, Ms. K was standing near the classroom door. She asked everyone who was still in the hallway to quickly go to the carpet. When she saw Brian was holding his Spiderman™ toy, she kindly reminded him to bring the toy to the classroom so that he could talk about it with his classmates.

Brian quickly took off his outdoor shoes, grabbed his indoor shoes, and walked into the classroom. He sat at the end of the first row which was not his usual spot. He quickly put on his indoor shoes while carefully putting his toy on the carpet. Ms. K pulled out a classroom list, and told Brian that he was the first one up for the Show and Tell. Brian stood next to Ms. K facing his classmates. He held his Spiderman™ toy.

Ms. K asked, “What did you bring today?”

Brain answered loudly, “Spiderman.”

Ms. K told Brian, “Tell us more about it.”

Brian stated, “I got this toy from my friend, John. When he moved away, he gave it to me. I like it. Spiderman is a hero. He saves people. He fights evils. It’s a cool toy. It can move.”

Ms. K summarized what Brian had said. “Spiderman is a superhero and he helps people.” Ms. K asked Brian to hold his Spiderman™ toy close to his peers so that they could all take a good look at it. Then she asked the students if anyone had any questions for Brian about this toy.

Some students raised their hands, Brian chose a boy who asked what the toy could do. Brian showed his peers how Spiderman’s head, arms, and legs could move in different directions. He also showed his classmates that the eyes of the spider could light up, and it made sounds when he pressed the round button in front of the toy. A girl asked Brian why he liked this toy. Brian answered, “Spiderman is a hero. He has super power.”

After the question period, it was the next person’s turn. Brian was still excited about his Spiderman™ toy, and he seemed to feel proud of himself for doing a good job with the *Show and Tell*. His classmates were interested in his toy and Ms. K commented, “Well done.” Next, Ms. K asked Brian to put his toy back in his backpack. His classmates still wanted to touch it and try the lights, but Ms. K explained that did not want them to break it so they could play with it during recess if they wanted with Brian’s permission. Brian reluctantly put his toy back in his backpack and sat on the carpet to listen to others’ *Show and Tell*...

Children make sense of the texts around them using what they have and what they know. If they are given opportunities to engage in literacy exploration based on their interests, they will grasp opportunities to demonstrate what they have found. The above vignette describes a literacy event in which Brian was eager to participate and did fairly well. Brian was very confident and gave a short description of his toy. He certainly did his homework. In the above literacy event, there was no written text involved but Brian's toy can be considered an artifact that is a text with particular meanings embedded in a particular context (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010), because this toy provoked Brian to think and talk about experiences in ways that reflected who he was, including his desire to be a hero who can help people. Brian talked about how he got the toy and why he liked it; he showed his classmates what his toy could do, and he answered the questions from his classmates. Once he was given enough time to do something he was interested in, Brian could certainly describe something in detail, explain why he chose the toy, and respond to peers' questions and comments. In short, Brian's literacy practices included reading/studying his Spiderman™ toy, listening to his classmates, describing his toy, demonstrating special features of his toy, and answering questions from his classmates. He drew upon what he knew about heroes to help him to answer questions. This toy was important to Brian because it provided him an opportunity to redefine his identity as a capable learner.

#### 4.3.1.2 At the Chinese heritage language school (The Chinese school)

The focal children practiced Chinese print literacy during formal literacy instruction sessions. They also engaged in multimodal literacy practices at recess and during teacher-designed informal literacy events.

#### 4.3.1.2.1 Teacher-organized literacy events

There were literacy lessons when the focal children were expected to learn and practice Chinese with a focus on reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Next I describe a literacy event that involved formal literacy instruction on the topic of "My family 我的家." Please note that only Eric, Samantha, Brian and Jiajia went to the Chinese school. Eric, Samantha and Brian were in the same beginner to medium levelled class and Jiajia was in the advanced level of Chinese class.

Vignette 7: It was a nice afternoon in the middle of May. Since the Chinese school rented the rooms in a heritage building, teachers and children needed to set up the tables every afternoon and when the class was over, they needed to tidy up. The classroom was a big room with a red carpet. During recess, Ms. Q set up the tables and chairs, brought a box of paper, pencils, and erasers, and put them in the middle of the table. Ms. Q also set up a whiteboard on a table against the wall. The second session started at 4:55 PM and ended at 5:30 PM.

When it was time for the class to begin, Ms. Q simply called out to all the children, "Okay, get ready for class! 好了, 准备上课!" The children brought their textbooks and exercise books and found a spot to sit. Eric sat on the left side of the whiteboard and Brian sat on the right side. When Ms. Q saw all the children had found a spot to sit, she asked them to open their Chinese textbook 中文书. Brian had left his book in his backpack, so he hurried to get it and then came back to the table. Ms. Q asked the children to read the textbook together from the first lesson 第一课, which was about fingers, numbers, body parts, and months: "小手指, 一二三四五六七八九十百...人头手足大小多少...一月大二月小七月大八月小..." Ms. Q led the whole class in a reading

of the text. Next they did the exercise that focused on recognizing the Chinese characters as they appear in the text. Eric read clearly. Brian read clearly and loudly at the beginning about fingers and numbers, but he stopped reading when it was the text about months. He started to participate again when it was time for the riddle 猜谜语：嘴巴尖，身子长，写字时，它最忙. The answer was *pencil* 铅笔. The whole class continued to read a text about weather and seasons, and they finished up their reading with a text about celebrating Chinese New Year.

Ms. Q told everyone, "Today we are going to learn the reading passage on 'My family.' 今天我们要学下我的家这篇课文。" Ms. Q wrote the title down on the white board and then she read the whole text slowly: "我的家：这是我的家，我家有五口人，爷爷，奶奶，爸爸，妈妈和我。我爱我的家。"

Then Ms. Q explained a little bit about this text. The above text was written in the first person and was about family. It told readers that there were five people in the family including a grandfather, a grandmother, a father, a mother and the writer. At the end it said "I love my family." Ms. Q read one sentence of the text each time and then asked the children to repeat after her. After they had read it three times, Ms. Q encouraged the students to read it by themselves. She then asked them to read in front of the class. At first, they were hesitant, so Ms. Q said she would help. One girl put her hand up and read the passage well. Eric put his hand up and read it well. Ms. Q encouraged Samantha to give it a try, she read it slowly and deliberately.

After three children had finished reading the text, Ms. Q spent time on teaching the new words as listed in the textbook: 家 (family), 爷 (grandfather), 奶

(grandmother), 爸 (father), 妈 (mother), 爱 (love). Ms. Q first led children in reading these new words in the textbook, and then she wrote the Chinese characters in Pinyin on the whiteboard. She showed the children in detail how to write the first three words: 家 (family), 爷 (grandfather), 奶 (grandmother). Ms. Q then led the children in rereading all the new words as well as the whole text. After this, she asked the children to write the three Chinese characters with Pinyin in their exercise book 田格本. The children were required to write each word 10 times with Pinyin. When the children started to write, Eric quietly picked up a pencil from his pencil case and opened up his green covered exercise book. He started his writing by putting down the Pinyin first for 家, and then he wrote 家 step by step. He also referenced his textbook to check what the next step and see if he had got it right. Brian first exchanged his pencil for a longer one, looked at this textbook to make sure it was the right page, opened up his exercise book, and found a page with some white space left. He started to write the Pinyin for 家. Then he observed the Chinese character for a moment and wrote it down step by step. This Chinese character is not easy for young children to write because it contains more than 8 steps. 家 looks like many people living under the same roof. There are many lines pointing to different directions within one Chinese character. It was a bit complicated, but Eric and Brian both managed to write it. Their attempt was to write down the Chinese character for *family* based on what they know. Their writing of the Chinese character was not exactly centred and some of the lines were longer and others were shorter. But they did finish up writing the Chinese character with the exact number of lines required. As they continued to write, their character formation improved. During the period of writing, Ms. Q walked around



the table and checked each child's writing. She put her hand over theirs to model line formation and pointed to the lines that needed to be longer or shorter.

The children wrote quietly. Brian wrote, and then he stopped, and looked for an eraser to fix his writing of the Chinese character 家. He asked others about where the eraser was.

Samantha who sat next to Brian asked, "Who is the quiet police (a person to make sure that the classroom is quiet)?"

Brian said to her, "I needed the eraser."

Samantha looked up at him and then returned to her own writing. She wrote the Chinese character 家 first and then wrote the Pinyin. There were two erasers on the table but they were used by others, one girl passed an eraser down to Brian from the other side of the table. Brian erased part of the 家 and rewrote the part until he decided it was good. When they finished writing, Ms. Q gave their writing a check mark.

Ms. Q told children, "When you finished writing the words, you can try to write a text about My family on a piece of paper, and then draw a picture and colour it. 写完生字后, 可以试着去写课文, 配上画, 涂上颜色。"

Ms. Q continued working with children on their writing. When Eric finished, he put his left hand straight up in the air, and quietly waited for the teacher to come and check his work. Ms. Q came by, checked his writing and praised his good work. Eric was very happy. He went to the stationary box near the whiteboard to pick up a white piece of paper to write the text, draw a picture of his family and then do the colouring.

When Brian saw the other children had started the drawing and colouring, he hurried to finish his last Chinese character and showed it to Ms. Q. Then he went to get

the paper to do the drawing. Brian started by drawing a house rather than writing. At the end of class, the children were still busy with their drawings and colouring. Ms. Q told them they could continue tomorrow. Ms. Q collected the children's unfinished work, so that they would not forget to return it tomorrow and they could work on it at school.

Brian was not yet willing to give his work back to Ms. Q. He quickly picked up the red marker and coloured the wall of his house.

Ms. Q told him, "You can do it tomorrow. Do not forget to write the text down. 你可以明天再画。不要忘了把课文写上。"

Brian hesitantly gave it to Ms. Q. At this time Brian's mother came in and asked him why it took him longer to tidy up, "You are the last one again. 你这 又是最后。"

Ms. Q told her in Chinese, "Brian did well today. He was drawing the picture for the text we learnt. Brian 今天变现得不错，他在画画，我们今天学习我的家。"

Brian's mother was happy to hear that he had done well and thanked Ms. Q but she seemed somewhat incredulous when she asked Brian in Chinese, "Really? You made progress today! 真的 ？ Brian, 你今天有进 呀！"

Brian did not say a word. I confirmed Ms. Q's comment by telling Brian's mother in Chinese, "Today he read with his classmates and wrote the assigned Chinese characters. Brian 今天读了课文，还写字了。"

Brian was happy to hear what I said. He went to pick up his backpack, came back to the table, and tidied up.

Before they went home, Brian's mother shared with me, "Brian can at least learn some Chinese here. 在这还能学点东西。"

Later, when I helped Ms. Q to tidy up the classroom, I learnt that when Brian first came to the Chinese school, he did not want to read or speak. He had certainly made a lot of progress. In the next class, Brian finished up his work on My family (See Figure 4 below).

Figure 4: Brian's literacy sample titled My family



*My family*

*This is my family. There are three people in my family:*

*father, mother, and I. I love my family.*

The formal instruction sessions in Chinese focused on print literacy. And when there was time left, the teacher allowed the children to do their drawings. For example, Brian participated in reviewing the previous texts, trying to read the new text and writing the new Chinese characters and finishing up his own "My Family" writing, drawing and colouring. The teacher

was in charge of organizing the lesson and delivering the lesson. The formal literacy instruction session began with reviewing the previous lessons by reading the textbook together; then the children learnt the new text. This was followed by the writing exercise. When it came to learning a new text, its focus was on reading the text and writing the new words. In summary, the children's literacy practices included reading, writing, and drawing. As the teacher, Ms. Q organized the literacy event, delivered the instructions, supervised the children's writing, and checked their final work. The teacher supported children's print literacy learning through teaching, supervising, and reviewing their work.

Within the teacher's literacy lessons, there were also multimodal teacher-organized literacy events such as singing songs, doing oral presentations and making paper puppets to facilitate the focal children's Chinese literacy learning and to enhance their interests in learning Chinese in an English dominant environment. Each Chinese school day started with an informal literacy activity in a big room where there were two chairs and a long table with green plants. Since it was a heritage building, children were not supposed to touch the furniture in the room. They started their class with sitting in a circle on a red flowered carpet. Ms. Q would tell children what they would do for the day. The following vignette illustrates an informal session held in May, 2011.

Vignette 8: As usual, Ms. Q and the other teacher were waiting near the gate of the public school to gather the children and bring them into the Chinese school. When the bell rang, the children came out. The Chinese school teachers waited until they had collected every child. They walked together to the heritage building where they held the Chinese school. Ms. Q was in the front, leading the single file line while holding Brian's hand. The rest of the children were walking with a partner, and the other teacher was walking at the end of

the line to supervise. I was situated toward the middle of the line. I heard the children discussing in English what had happened at school that day. It was about a 10-minute walk and we needed to cross one traffic light.

When we arrived, I saw the heritage building that had a big front yard and lots of trees. The advanced classes went in first and the young children went into the building later. We all needed to take off our shoes and leave our backpacks in the hall. The children quickly took off their shoes and went to a big room on the right.

Ms. Q went to the storage area first to get the literacy materials which were kept in a clear plastic box. She joined the children who were sitting in a circle on the red carpet. She explained to the children, “Today we will read a story and learn the Chinese school song. 今天我们先读一个故事，然后学习中文学校的校歌。”

Ms. Q picked up a picture book, and started to read out the title of book *The Screaming Donkey* 爱叫的驴子, which is a Chinese folk tale. Then, she moved on to reading the story page by page. When she finished reading one page, she would hold the book high facing the children so that they could see the picture. Brian sat next to Ms. Q on the left with his legs crossed. He leaned toward Ms. Q so that he could look at the pictures in the book. Eric was sitting on the right side of Ms. Q about three children away. The children all sat attentively and listened to the story.

When she finished reading the story, Ms. Q asked the children, “Think about it. What happened to the donkey when he did not listen to his friend camel? 想一想，爱叫的驴子不听骆驼的话，发生了什么事情？”

One girl said, “Dead. 死了”

Ms. Q continued to ask the class, “How many characters are there in the story and who are they? 故事里都有哪些动物?” She looked at Brian and asked, “Do you know, Brian? 你知道么?”

Brian answered in English, “Two.”

Ms. Q asked, “Who are they? 有什么?”

Brian answered, “Camel and the donkey.”

Ms. Q said, “Yes, that’s correct: camel and donkey. 对的, 是骆驼和驴子。”

After hearing Ms. Q confirm his answer, Brian immediately sat up straight. He appeared happy and proud of himself for getting the right answer.

Ms. Q asked the whole class, “What do we learn from the story? 这个故事告诉我们什么?”

Eric put up his hand and said, “Listen to your friends. 听朋友的话。”

Ms. Q agreed with Eric’s answer. She went on to make a short summary of the story by saying that in the donkey’s case, it was helpful and important to listen to his friends.

After the story, Ms. Q told the class that the Parents’ Council and teachers had worked together to write a song for the Chinese school. Today they were going to learn how to sing it. She distributed the one-page lyrics (see Figure 5 below) to every child, and then she sang the song for them. All the children were listening carefully. Ms. Q said they first needed to know the lyrics and then the tones so that they would sing it together. Ms. Q read the lyrics aloud, sentence by sentence. The children read after her. They read twice. On the third time, Ms. Q sang each sentence and the children followed her and tried to sing along. The children were still learning the song, so their voices were a bit

quiet. Ms. Q led the children in the song twice in which her voice was louder than students', and then she asked the children to sing by themselves. The children sang the song with Ms. Q and then Ms. Q asked the children to sing louder this time while she lowered her voice. Eric looked carefully at the lyrics and followed Ms. Q to sing the song in a loud voice. Brian started with a quiet, hesitant voice and then with Ms. Q's support, he tried to sing the song with the rest of the class. The class finished the first session by singing the Chinese school song together.

Figure 5: The Chinese school song

### 中文学校校歌

中文学校 快乐学习 你我祥和 聚一起 You and I happily study at the Chinese school  
 我们怀着 火热的心 来到这个 大家庭 We come to this big family with warm hearts  
 你的教导 能使我们 目标更远 向前进 Your teaching can guide us to make progress  
 你的慈祥 怀抱培育 小树苗长 成大树 Your guidance helps us to grow stronger

In the above vignette, the children participated in teacher-designed literacy events to make meaning of the texts with certain degrees of teacher support through listening, singing and reading based on their social, cultural and linguistic understanding. This was one of the many literacy events in which the children participated at the Chinese school. Ms. Q shared that she wanted the children to get interested in learning Chinese through stories and music. Ms. Q said, "Children can learn a lot of things from stories. Music is just beautiful in getting children to appreciate the Chinese language. 孩子们可以从故事里学到很多东西。音乐很美，可以让孩

子们感受中文。” According to the Chinese teachers, asking questions after reading a story can help teachers to check whether children understand the stories. In summary, in the above literacy session, the children’s literacy practices included listening to a story, sharing their ideas about the story, learning the Chinese school song by reading the lyrics and singing together. Ms. Q had provided literacy support in teaching the Chinese language, including reading and singing as well as understanding the role of teachers through lyrics. The children drew upon the Chinese words that they had learnt to help them to read the lyrics with the support of Ms. Q. The Chinese school song also reflected certain Chinese values. For example, people learn together; teachers should guide their students, children can grow up to be “big and tall trees” if they listen to their teachers. The Chinese school song celebrated the collective value of learning together and the role of education in children’s success, as well as the important role of teachers.

With teachers’ encouragement and support, children could form positive attitudes toward themselves and learning. Teachers could also help children to feel comfortable and confident in the classroom. In the following vignette I describe a literacy event in which the Chinese teacher supported children’s literacy practices with encouragement and guidance. Brian was a focal child who needed more time at the public school to complete the literacy tasks assigned by his teachers. The vignette describes a Monday literacy event in which Brian could demonstrate what he knew with the support and continuous encouragement from Ms. Q at the Chinese school.

Vignette 9: On Monday afternoon, children sat in a circle, Ms. Q talked about her weekend with her family, and then she asked the children to share about their weekends. After three children (including Eric) finished sharing about their weekends, Ms. Q looked at Brian who sat right beside her on the left and gently asked “Could you please tell us about your weekend? 你能给大家讲一讲你的周末吗？” Brian did not answer



immediately. He looked up at Ms. Q and then looked down, using both of his hands to hold his head up. Ms. Q asked “Did you stay at home? 你待在家里么?”

Brian answered, “No, I went to Nick’s place. 没有，我去 Nick 家。”

“Who is Nick? 谁是 Nick? ”Ms. Q asked. “Did you play games together? 你们一起玩么?”

“Nick is my neighbour. Nick 是我的 neighbour。”Brian said, "He invited me to his birthday party." He stopped for a moment, sat up and then said, "We had cakes and played games. His mother turned off the light, Batman showed up, we all laughed and played. 他请我去他的 birthday party 我们吃蛋糕，一起玩。他妈妈关灯，Batman 来了，我们都笑了，我们一起玩。”

Ms. Q commented, “On the weekend, you went to a birthday party and had a good time. 你周末参加了一个生日聚会，很开心。” Brian said happily, “Yes, it’s fun”, then he added in Chinese “It’s really fun! 很好玩!”

“Good for you. 不错。”

Ms. Q praised Brian, “Well done! Thanks for sharing. 你讲得很好。谢谢你。”

Brian smiled. Ms. Q smiled back at him to confirm his good job. The sharing session continued...

The teachers’ positive attitudes toward multilingualism and their encouragement helped the children to engage in multiliteracies. In the above literacy event, the teacher’s support for Brian helped him to tell his peers about his weekend using both English and Chinese. Ms. Q did not correct him for using English since she believed that

“It is very important to keep children’s interest in Chinese, since interests can help and motivate children continue to learn the language and culture. I encouraged children to speak Chinese all the time when they were here at the Chinese school, while sometimes they spoke English when they were at the Chinese school, I did not criticize children for doing that since they are still learning the language which takes time. 让孩子对中文感兴趣很重要，兴趣可以帮助他们继续学习中国的语言和文化。我鼓励学生在中文学校的时候都说中文，但是他们有时候说英文，还中英文一起用。我不会直接去批评孩子们，他们正在学习中文的过程中。学习语言是要花时间的。”

Teachers’ attitudes toward multiliteracies can affect their ways of teaching and supporting students (Schechter & Cummins, 2003; Houk, 2005; Gibbons, 2002). There is evidence that teachers’ encouragement and scaffolding have a positive effect on children’s learning (Goldstein, 2003). Brian did not feel confident at first but with the support of his teacher and patience from his peers, he was able to express what he had in mind. In summary, the supportive role of teachers is important in learning and it takes some time and support for children to feel comfortable enough to share their ideas. Teachers’ encouragement and scaffolding can boost children’s confidence and further support them to continue to participate in class using Mandarin Chinese.

#### 4.3.1.2.2 Children-initiated literacy events

In addition to the teacher-organized literacy events, recess provided the children opportunities to engage with multimodal resources based on their own interests. The children could choose to have their recess either inside or outside in the backyard where there was a garden. The following vignette describes an indoor recess, during which Eric, Brian and Jiajia made personal choices based on their interests: drawing the imagined animals (Eric), making and colouring a

paper airplane (Brian), and writing/designing and colouring a Yard Sale poster with others (Jiajia).

Vignette 10: It was a late spring afternoon. When the children had finished their first session in the big room, they went to the hallway, picked up their backpacks, and brought them to the other room across the hall where there were tables and chairs. When they came in, some of the advanced level students were still there doing some work.

When I got closer, I saw that three girls (including Jiajia) and one boy were making a poster for a yard sale. The concept of yard sale was certainly not familiar within the Chinese context. I heard one girl explain to Jiajia what yard sale was about, while she was doing the drawing for the poster. Jiajia was very interested in making a poster for the Yard sale.

She asked the girl, “Yard sale is about bringing the things you do not need for sale, right? Yard sale 就是把你不需要的东西拿出来卖，对么？”

The girl confirmed Jiajia’s idea and told her that other people may be interested in buying the things you did not need and you can earn money.

Jiajia asked, “What should we write on the poster? Poster 上都写什么呀？”

The girl replied in Chinese that they needed to put on the date and time. They could also draw pictures of the things they wanted to sell. The girl told Jiajia that she could help with the colouring of posters. Jiajia picked up one besides the girl and read “Yard sale, Saturday morning. May 21, 2011.”

Jiajia took a look at the drawings of the poster and asked if she could colour the teddy bear brown, “我能把这个熊涂成棕色么？”

The girl agreed and asked her not to forget to colour the doll pink. Jiajia went to the box of markers, tried to find what she needed, and then came back to the table.

While Jiajia was colouring, I checked on Eric and Brian. Eric was sitting quietly at the table, drawing on a piece of paper. I looked at his drawing over his shoulder and could not figure out what he had drawn, so I asked Eric, “What are you drawing? 你在画什么?”

He replied, “The monster that was in the video game. A monster, 就是电子游戏里的那个。”

I did not know this game so I asked, “What kind of monster is it? What does it do? 是什么样的怪物, 它能做什么?”

He explained to me in English and Chinese, “It’s a sea monster. It can fight and find treasures. It’s a sea monster. 它可以战斗 fight, 找 treasures.”

Brian was eating his sandwiches when he heard us talking about the sea monster. He quickly finished his sandwich and came over. He commented, “Cool!”

Eric pointed to the claws of the sea monster and told Brian, “See sharp claws.”

Brian looked at it and decided he wanted to draw one. Brian went to see Ms. Q for paper. Ms. Q found some paper that was good on one side. She explained to me in Chinese that she brought her children’s used paper to school for students here to use.

“If we throw the one-sided paper away,” she said, “that’s a waste. Children can use the other side to write and draw. 纸要是扔了, 多浪费呀。这面还能用, 孩子们可以画画。”

Brian got his paper. On his way back to the table he saw an older boy who was flying a paper airplane. Brian went back to his table, changed his plans and used the paper to fold an airplane. He carefully picked up the long side of the paper, folded two triangles inside, and then folded a tiny triangle toward the other side to make the head of the airplane. He continued to fold and tried to make the wings of the airplane. After it was done, Brian picked it up in his right hand, held it up high, took a good look at his airplane, watched the older boy flying his airplane, and looked back at his airplane. It seemed that something was missing. Brian went to the marker box and picked out a few colours. He coloured the head blue and drew some red lines on the wings. Now he was satisfied with his airplane. He stood up from his seat, went up to see the older boy, and started to fly his airplane. He gave it a big toss up in the air and watched it go. He was not happy when it first did not go very far and landed on the floor shortly after taking off. With the older boy's encouragement, he tried a few times while observing how that boy was flying his airplane. Brian noticed that the angles mattered, so he adjusted his take off angle. Brian got very excited when he saw his airplane could fly quite high.

He smiled at the older boy and told him, "Did you just see how high and how far it went?"

The boy was happy for Brian. Brian began to fly his airplane in the middle of the classroom and made a big engine sound. His peers were not happy when his airplane landed on the table where they were doing their work. This did not bother Brian at all. Eric was working on his drawing at the table. When he heard the laughing and the "engine" sounds, Eric looked up, saw Brian and the older boy were playing the paper airplane. He looked at them and went back to colour his sea monster. Brian came to Eric

and circled around the table while holding his airplane. Eric was annoyed and asked Brian to stop because he wanted to finish his colouring. When Eric finished his art work, he quickly went to get a piece of paper and tried to make a paper airplane. Brian noticed that Eric was making an airplane and checked in with Eric. Eric took a look at Brian's airplane, and said that he wanted his airplane to be different from Brian's.

He told Brian in Chinese, "I will make the head/front of my airplane pointy, so that it can fly higher. I will also colour the tail. 飞机的头要尖才能飞得高, 我要把 tail 也涂上颜色。"

Brian asked Eric, "What about the wings?"

Eric answered in English, "I will colour that, too."

When Eric finished up folding his airplane, he gave it a try to see if it could fly up high. Brian watched Eric's test fly. It went OK.

Eric told Brian in Chinese, "Told you, the pointy front is helpful. 尖尖的头好用吧!"

Brian simply said, "Kind of" and then he asked if Eric wanted to fly the airplanes with him. Eric wanted to colour his airplane first, so Brian left Eric and continued to fly his paper airplane. Shortly after Ms. Q told the children that recess was over and asked children to tidy up and get ready for the next session.

In the literacy events described above, children's literacy-related practices included poster making, reading the poster, drawing and colouring, and making and designing paper airplanes. Children used the available resources to make new literacy texts and at the same time they had fun. The child-initiated literacy events such as drawing, colouring, and making texts or

artifacts as well as the oral communication around doing these things are the informal ways that children practice meaning making. In these examples, the children had opportunities to explore what they could do with literacy and how literacies could be helpful for achieving what they wanted to accomplish. There was no teacher supervision in the above events. The teacher just provided the resources such as paper and makers for children to explore literacy. The notion of *artifactual literacies* (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010) is relevant. The artifacts had particular meanings for the children. My observations of the children making the artifacts demonstrate the children's meaning making adventures and experiments and show how they used multiple modes (such as gestures, eye contact, writing, etc.) to make meaning of different things and explore places and spaces. My observations support the view that children are capable knowledge constructors (Vygotsky, 1978) who find ways to understand the world around them with support from capable peers and resources as well as adults.

#### 4.3.2 At home

Under their parents' supervision, the focal children practiced print literacy in Chinese and English. They also engaged in multimodal literacy, especially in their free time at home.

##### 4.3.2.1 At Shasha's home

The literacy events that took place at home reflected different family literacy practices. I next discuss both parent-organized literacy events with a focus on print literacy and child-initiated literacy events reflecting multiliteracies.

###### 4.3.2.1.1 Parent-organized literacy events

According to Shasha's mother, she and Shasha had daily reading sessions in which she wanted to help Shasha to learn English vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. Shasha also practiced printing English letters and Chinese characters with parental guidance. During my visit, Shasha's

mother helped Shasha with math, Chinese, and English. The next vignette describes how Shasha's home literacy practices were directed to print literacy in parent-organized literacy event and parental literacy support was influenced by parental understanding of school literacy and parental education background.

Vignette 11: On a hot summer afternoon, I visited Shasha's home, a two-bedroom apartment in a building near the public school. Shasha was sitting in the sofa and watching the Treehouse Channel on the television. (The *Treehouse* Channel belongs to Treehouse TV, a Canadian English language cable channel that provides children's programming.) Shasha's mother told Shasha that when the *Dora* show was over, she had to turn off the television and it was time for her to do school work.

“When this is done, we need to turn off the television and start to study. Shasha 这个演完，我们就把电视关了。该学习了！”

Shasha's mother turned to me and showed me a place to sit at the big table in the living room. She also explained to me in Chinese, “It is summer. She got up late. After breakfast, she likes to watch television. I will let her watch a little bit; you know it is summer holidays. We also review the school work every day so that she will not forget what she has learnt when the school begins in September. 现在是夏天放假，她早晨起得晚，吃完饭，她都会看一会儿电视，放假么。我们每天下午都复习功课，这样对孩子九月开学有好处。”

I agreed with Shasha's mother by responding in Chinese that “Since it is summer holidays, children need to have time to do the things they like. There is nothing wrong with watching television. 既然是夏天放假么，孩子做点自己喜欢的事。看点电视很正常。”



While Shasha was watching TV, I asked Shasha's mother some questions in Chinese about her understanding of Shasha's literacy practices. Shasha's mother told me that she began to read with Shasha at a very young age. They had many books in China. When they came to Canada, they could not bring all that many books, so they chose to bring the classic stories and several Chinese text books. They do not buy books in Canada, because they can borrow the books they need from the public library. Shasha's mother also registered Shasha for the summer reading program at the public library. Shasha's mother shared that even though she paid a lot to send Shasha to a bilingual pre-school in the big city where they used to live in China, Shasha still had difficulty in English communication when they first arrived in Canada. So Shasha's mother had been working hard with Shasha every day to work on English reading and writing. She said since she never knew what text books the teacher used at school, she could not know what to do to help Shasha's school work other than the reading and spelling work sent home by the school teacher. Now that school was over, Shasha had brought all of her school work back and Shasha's mother had finally got hold of all the school texts. Shasha's mother was determined to finish reviewing all the math and literacy texts before September when school started again.

We talked for about thirty minutes, and then Shasha's mother went to tell Shasha that she needed to turn off the television. I told Shasha's mother it was okay if Shasha just wanted to watch the television and I was here to observe a regular day at home. Shasha's mother told me that Shasha had been watching for more than an hour and it was time to stop. I smiled and observed Shasha's mother call Shasha to the big table. Shasha's mother

went to another table to get some text books, folders and exercise books. I was sitting on the sofa, observing the following events.

Shasha's mother began with the math work. She first asked Shasha in Chinese, "Can we do some math? 我们先作数学好么?"

Shasha nodded her head. Shasha's mother opened up a Chinese math textbook (See Appendix L). She asked Shasha to do the addition and subtraction exercises. Shasha quickly finished them and told her mother in English, "It's easy."

Shasha's mother looked at Shasha and responded in Chinese, "Give it to me, let me check. 给我看看, 我来检查一下。" Shasha's mother used a pen to check Shasha's work and Shasha did get all the answers right. Shasha was very happy to see that she did well. Since the work on the text book was easy for Shasha, her mother decided to make up some more addition and subtraction examples for her to practice. She wrote down 10 additions and 10 subtractions using numbers from 0 to 50.

When Shasha was doing the math work, Shasha's mother picked up Shasha's Chinese exercise book (See Appendix M) and showed me Shasha's Chinese writing. She explained that it was important to learn to write in Chinese. She needed to do this at home with Shasha and hoped she would learn to write at the same level as other children of the same age back in China. Then she picked up a few words: 牛 (cow), 羊 (sheep), 小 (small), 少 (few) from the Chinese textbook for Shasha to copy into her Chinese writing exercise book (See Appendix M). Shasha spent a little bit more time on the math work. When Shasha finished up, she gave the paper to her mother. Shasha watched her mother check her answers, she got almost all the answers right. Shasha's mother pointed out two mistakes for Shasha to fix and asked her to be more careful next time.

After the math was done, Shasha's mother passed the Chinese exercise book to Shasha and asked her to write the four Chinese characters she had chosen. Shasha's mother asked Shasha if she still remembered those Chinese characters, Shasha nodded her head and read to her mother: 牛 (cow), 羊 (sheep), 小 (small), 少 (few). Shasha's mother was very happy that Shasha still remembered all the sounds of the words, and she asked Shasha to practice writing these words in her Chinese exercise book. Shasha's mother told me that she spent lots of time reading the English books with Shasha during school days and during the summer she had time to help Shasha to review the Chinese that Shasha had learnt in China.

When Shasha was writing Chinese characters, her mother pulled a thick green folder from the pile, opened it up and found the page she wanted. She used an eraser to erase certain parts of the page. I asked her why she wanted to erase some parts of the page in Chinese.

She answered in Chinese, "Let Shasha do it again and see if she can still do it right. If not, we need to work on this. 让孩子把一些题目重新做, 看看她还能做对么。要是做得不对, 我们就得多练习。"

I asked Shasha's mother in Chinese, "How many pages did Shasha need to do each day? Shasha 每天要做几页?"

She answered in Chinese, "It depends, usually three-five pages. If it goes well, we will do more. 不一定, 大概 3 - 5 页。看孩子, 做得好就多做点。"

She also shared with me that the math tasks here in Canada were different from the ones in China. Here they tried to teach children to solve the math problem in a context, rather than just do the skills exercise. She gave me an example by showing me

one page from Shasha's school math book (See Appendix N). It was about counting the fruits in your daily life. I commented that Shasha did very well in the earlier subtraction exercise. Shasha's mother shared that Shasha learnt math from her preschool in China and that math was her best subject.

Furthermore, she continued to tell me in Chinese that, "Shasha went to the bilingual preschool. She learnt English but the focus was on spelling, knowing words, singing some songs. Here in Canada, she learns practical English that she can use in daily life. It was my fault that when I read with her, I only focused on reading each word, getting the meaning of each word, grammar, and did not pay attention to the whole passage meaning. At the end of the school year, her teacher told me we needed to work on comprehension. 在中国去的是双语幼儿园，她学了点英语，不过都是拼写，单词，唱儿歌。来了之后，她学的都是实用英语。是我的错，就关注读单词，会读了，明白了就过，忽略了大意。后来老师告诉我要注意阅读理解。”

I shared with Shasha's mom in Chinese that it was not easy for Shasha to move to a new country and learn a new language. "It was not your fault, when we talked about reading English in China, we always started with learning the new words first. Now we know that understanding the meanings is also very important. You have been working so hard to support Shasha and she has made great progress. 她已经不容易了，来到新的地方，学习新的语言。不是您的错，我们在国内学英语的时候，都是先学习生词。现在知道了理解也很重要。您已经很用心了，她进步很大呀。”

When Shasha finished writing the Chinese characters, she gave the book to her mother to check. Shasha's mother pointed to the ones that were well-written and the ones could be written better next time. Then they turned to the math work. Shasha's mother

read the questions and asked Shasha to do the math. Since Shasha had learnt the material before, she quickly finished the page without making a mistake. They finished five pages and then Shasha wanted to have a break. Shasha's mother agreed by saying she just needed to do one page of English spelling (See Appendix O). Shasha's face showed she did not really want to do it, but her mother had said so and promised it would be just one more page. Shasha followed her mother's order and wrote a page of English printing...

Shasha's home literacy practices were guided and supervised by her mother who wanted her to be successful at school. Shasha's mother had her own understanding of what school literacy should entail. Math and English were emphasized at home and regarded as the most important subjects. They did a lot of reviewing math and English spelling using materials that Shasha brought back from the public school and they also practiced Chinese character writing. Shasha's literacy practices focused on doing math and writing English and Chinese words. Shasha was confident in her math and spelling at home, a contrast with her demeanor at public school where she was quiet. Shasha's mother provided a considerable amount of supervision or support for Shasha's math, English, and Chinese learning at home. She had high parental expectations and was aware that if they would continue to live in Canada, doing well in Canadian schools would be important. In addition, Shasha's mother's pedagogical style reflected certain Chinese cultural values including highly valuing school especially children's academic performances at school. The above literacy events also show how parents are influenced by their own education backgrounds and experiences: that is, they used to do a lot of school work at home to achieve a good score and do well on the exams so that they could go to university.

Chinese parents create a school-like home learning environment based on what they know about school and school literacies with the hope that their children could do well at school.

#### 4.3.2.1.2 Children-initiated literacy events

There were opportunities for children to explore multiliteracies at home, for example in literacy-related pretend-play. Below I describe a pretend-play session in which Shasha taught me her Chinese name at her school and how to make a Lily pad as a bridge to school. The vignette describes multiliteracy practices through pretend-play and sign-making, which can help the researcher to understand Shasha's meaning making processes, the resources she has drawn on and her identity choices.

Vignette 12: I visited Shasha's home one late summer afternoon three weeks before her family moved to Toronto. I asked Shasha's mother if they had found a place in Toronto. She told me that she was still looking for places where Shasha could be enrolled in a "good" elementary school based on school rankings. I agreed that moving was never easy and it was certainly important to find a good school for Shasha. I also shared with Shasha's mother that it may take time for Shasha to get to know and make friends in a new place, but I assured her that Shasha would do well with the support from home and school.

When we were talking, Shasha was in her room. Shasha's mother called her and told her that I was here. Part of Chinese culture is the requirement for children to come and greet guests.

Shasha came out and said in Chinese "Hello, Ms. Du. 杜老师好." I said hello in Mandarin Chinese and asked if she was excited to move to Toronto. She hesitantly said,

“Y-es.” Shasha’s mother told me that Shasha had already started to miss her friends, Jiajia was in China, and so Shasha just played games with the girl who lived downstairs.

Shasha’s mother asked her to show me the sign she had made for the school. I inferred that this was a way to redirect our topic and talk about something related to literacy and learning. Shasha showed me the two school signs she made for her school (See Figure 6 and Figure 7 below).

Figure 6: Chinese school sign made by Shasha



Figure 7: Bilingual school sign made by Shasha



One sign was written in Chinese posted on the living room wall. It said 金葵花优秀学校 which means "Sunflower excellent school," and it showed two arrows pointing the way to school. The other was a bilingual school sign. It was posted on Shasha's room door. The sign contained Chinese characters with Pinyin as well as English. It said, “金葵花学校 jin kui hua xue xiao Sunflower School. If you want to go to my school. You have to knock at the door.” There was also a drawing of what looked like a flower around the word sunflower and a heart around the word school. I was impressed by these two well-designed signs. I told Shasha in Chinese, “You did a great job. You used English and Chinese. The arrows were nice and clear. 你自己做的这个很好，有英语还有中文，这个指示的箭头很清楚。”

Shasha smiled and told me in Chinese, “Here is a flower and that's a heart. 那还有花和心形呢。”

I said in Chinese, “Yes. 是的。”



Shasha led me to her room which was also her pretend school. Since I saw the message about knocking on the door, I asked her if I needed to knock on the door, Shasha said I was fine since she was with me. I asked her in Chinese, why did you write it down using both English and Chinese? Shasha said in Chinese, “School has rules. Some of my friends do not understand Chinese. They speak English. 学校都有 rules. 我的朋友不懂中文, 她们讲英文” I said in Chinese, “Okay. May I come in and take a look at your school? 是这样呀。我可以进你的学校看看么。”

Shasha said in Chinese, “Come on in. 进来吧。”

Shasha showed me around her school, in which there were several drawings and colourings on the wall, some books, a desk, and a chair (Appendix P). Shasha was working on creating her castle and princess party before I came.

I said to Shasha in Chinese, “You like drawings and colouring. It was beautiful and colourful. 你喜欢画画, 这个画得很好, 颜色很鲜艳。”

Shasha nodded her head and pointed to her drawings and told me in Chinese that the top one was her school, she liked spring and summer. Shasha also showed me the library of her school which was the family’s living room.

Shasha’s mother suggested that Shasha show us her teaching. Shasha agreed. She went up to the wall where there was a small white board and stood up straight, holding a black marker in her hand. Shasha announced in Chinese that the class would begin. “Let’s start the class. 开始上课。”

I said in Chinese, “Good afternoon, teacher. 老师好。”

Shasha smiled and said in Chinese, “I will teach you how to write my name in Chinese. 我来教你写我的名字吧 ”

I said in Chinese, “Okay. 好的。”

Shasha used the black marker to carefully write her Chinese name on the white board. There were three Chinese characters. The first character was her last name, the next two were her first names which were complicated for a young child to write. When Shasha finished writing, she pointed at each Chinese character and I read after her. She taught me how to say her Chinese names using Pinyin and taught me how to write her name step by step. She was a great teacher in that she paid attention to details of writing a Chinese character and checked with me to see if I got it right. When I finished writing, she told me that it was time for recess and time to play, “下课了.”

Then Shasha took a look at the coloured three-ring folders on the table in the living room. She suggested we would build a bridge together because the bridge to her school was broken. We first collected the coloured folders. She told me to put them on the floor in the blue and red pattern shown in Figure 8. After it was completed, she told me that we could hop on it like the frogs, so we hopped on the “lily pad” in the pond (See Figure 8).

Figure 8: Shasha’s bridge made of “lily pads”



I had to learn about balancing from Shasha. She showed me how to hold my arms like a bird, telling me in Chinese, “Just imagine. The bridge was broken. Here is the lily pad we could use as a bridge in order to get to the other side. Open your arms, jump like a frog. 想象一下，桥坏了，用这荷叶当桥，手伸开，向青蛙一样跳。”

When we arrived to the other side, we entered Shasha’s room/school. Then she shared with me in Chinese that she was doing the colouring and drawing of a castle and she also wanted to draw a princess on it. Shasha showed me the pink bag and some jewelry. She wanted to draw a princess. I pointed to the Cinderella colouring book page on the wall and asked in Chinese, “Is this the Cinderella? 这张画是灰姑娘吧？”

Shasha answered in Chinese that “Yes, her hair is blond, I want to draw a princess with black hair. 是的，她是黄头发，我要画一个黑头发的公主。”

I nodded and thought that yes –there were not many Asian princesses in the Disney world and we were Chinese. We needed something different.

When we were talking about what jewelry to put on the princess (See Figure 9 below), someone knocked on the door.

Figure 9: Shasha’s princess drawing in progress



It was an Asian-looking girl from downstairs, I came out and said hello in Chinese. Shasha told me the girl did not understand Chinese. Later, I learnt from Shasha's mother that the girl's mother was Korean and her father was Canadian and they only spoke English at home. Shasha was happy to see her friend and the two girls immediately went to Shasha's room. I heard Shasha talking about drawing a princess and the girl suggested they would find some Asian princesses on-line. When we went to check, they were using the laptop to find the princess they liked.

Shasha's informal literacy practices included making the Chinese school signs, teaching literacy, making a bridge with a friend, drawing, and colouring. Shasha drew on what she knew about princesses and what she knew about the Internet to design an Asian princess. Informal social spaces can provide children with opportunities to pursue interests. I was impressed by the two school signs made by Shasha, who was a girl newly arrived in Canada yet one who was able to use both English and Chinese print literacy in a strategic way. Shasha was also using the

mathematical concept of pattern to build a colourful bridge which I called “lily pads”. She transformed resources from her world at the public school to support her play at home (Genishi & Dyson, 2009) and give new meanings to familiar texts.

In summary, Shasha’s literacy practices included reading, writing, drawing, colouring, designing, and teaching at home. In addition, television programs introduced new vocabulary and provided opportunities to broaden social and cultural understanding of Canada and the world. Shasha’s mother commented that Shasha had learnt about the Canadian context and she had learnt many English words from watching television programs, especially from the children’s shows on channels such as *Treehouse* and *TVO kids*.

#### 4.3.2.2 At Brian’s home

Both print and multimodal literacy practices were observed at Brian's home.

##### 4.3.2.2.1 Parent-initiated literacy events

Some print-focused and multimodal literacy events were organized by the parents. Brian’s mother told me that she regularly read with Brian and supervised his writing/printing at home; and Brian also read books by himself. When I visited Brian’s house, Brian’s mother showed me the books they had at home (See Appendix Q). In particular, she chose to show me one picture dictionary from the bookshelf in the living room and one English workbook in Brian’s room. Here I report on literacy events between Brian’s mother and Brian at home including reading and playing on the computer.

Vignette 13: One evening, I walked to Brian’s place. When I arrived at the apartment building, I looked up and saw Brian smiling at me from the third floor. I quickly walked up the stairs. Brian’s mother had already opened the door and was waiting for me. She told me that when Brian knew I was coming for a visit, he became very excited. I said

hello in Mandarin Chinese to Brian and asked if he had a good summer. Brian smiled and nodded his head. It was seven o'clock and Brian had not had dinner yet. Brian's mother put the food on the dining table in the living room and asked him to have his supper at the table.

Brian's mother and I sat on the sofa next to the dining table. Brian's mother told me that she read to Brian at home and he did well. She did not understand why Brian got a C in literacy on his report card. She showed me the books she owned about learning English. She took out one picture dictionary book to show me the way she worked on learning new words with Brian. She opened up a page with animals. There were colourful pictures and a short descriptions of 100 words or so. I was surprised she did not pick up the Chinese and English bilingual dictionary but chose instead this English picture dictionary from the bookshelf.

Brian's mother turned to Brian to check if he was eating his food. Brian had eaten a little bit and did not want to finish. Brian's mother did not push him to finish the stir-fried rice in the rectangle container but blamed herself for being too busy with work and not preparing a good meal for Brian. She called Brian over to the desk near the bookshelf and said to him in Chinese, "God gives us this book. We need to cherish it. Brian, can you read this to Ms. Du? You can read this book. You read it very well at home.这本书是GOD给的，我们得好好珍惜。Brian，你给杜老师读一读，这个你不是都会么。平时在家读的可好了。”

With his mother's encouragement, Brian came closer to the picture dictionary. He was not interested in the page about animals, but his mother asked him to read. Brian just read a few words: "Ladybug, Lemur, Leopard, Lion, Lizard." I was going to ask Brian if

there was a particular animal he liked when Brian's mother directed Brian to go to his room to find the English workbook that she had bought for Brian to improve his English during the summer. We followed Brian to his room. Brian put a thick, red workbook on his table. Brian's mother opened up the book and told me that she asked Brian to do one page in the morning and one page in the afternoon each day. She would also check the answers and work on mistakes with Brian. I told Brian's mother that it was great that they were working on literacy while I was there to learn about Brian's literacy practices. I said I was interested to learn what he did during a regular day at home. Brian's mother pointed to the pencil drawing on the wall (See Appendix R) and said Brian liked to draw.

I asked Brian why he chose to draw the bank, but before Brian could say anything, his mother shared in Chinese that "He has poor parents, so he is interested in banking, money, and numbers. 父母穷, 他喜欢银行, 钱, 数字。"

I followed him to his room and found there were many colourful sticky notes in this room. He threw them in the air and they fell everywhere on the floor and on his bed. I wondered if that was the way for him to get my attention. Brian's mother told me that Brian used different colour sticky notes to represent different paper bills. She also shared that Brian also liked to play the game Monopoly.

I asked in Chinese, "Besides reading books, writing and drawing, what else did you do at home? 除了读书, 写字和画画, 你平时在家还做什么?"

Brian's mother immediately shared that "He also played on the computer. The ESL teacher gave him a website to improve his reading. 他还在家打电脑, ESL 老师给他一个学习的网站用来提高英语。"

She asked Brian to show me about this website called Raz Kids. Brian went to his father's room where the computer was located. He found the website of Raz Kids using *Baidu* which is a search engine often used in China. He chose to play with the robot (Appendix S). I observed Brian doing some sorting and collecting in the robot game as well as listening to a story. He finished by reading the comprehension questions.

At the same time, I was listening to his mother who talked to me about her ideas about education in Canada and China. Brian's mother shared that it was very competitive for children to go to a good school and university in China and most parents spend huge amounts of time and money on the tutoring to support their children's academic success. But in Canada, there is no homework pressure and not that much competition and children enjoy going to school and learning different things.

Based on my observations of the literacy events which took place at Brian's place, I was able to ascertain how Brian's mother organized literacy practices at home. Brian's mother was in charge of Brian's study at home in that she decided what to do and how to do it. Her pedagogical style reflects a traditional role for parents in Chinese culture. Based on what Brian's mother told me the formal literacy practices at home were reading with a parent and writing under the parent's supervision. English literacy was the focus at home. Brian's mother did not mention supporting Brian to learn Mandarin Chinese at home except for sharing that they spoke Mandarin at home and sent Brian to the Chinese school.

#### 4.3.2.2.2 Multimodal literacy practices in the parent-initiated literacy events

Based on what I observed and what Brian's mother told me, Brian practiced English on the computer in his father's room, watched children's television programs, and used the computer to



search and watch Chinese television programs of interest, for example job search shows and talk shows. There were also pretend-play events at Brian's home. I next describe the pretend-play of Brian being a teacher teaching his mother English, which can help us to understand Brian's schooling experiences. Watching Brian at home convinced me that when Brian was given time and opportunity, he could make meaning of texts and literacy environments.

Vignette14: This was my fourth visit to Brian's home which took place in the summer of 2012. I knew that Brian's mother loved sharing her ideas and experiences in education. I first gave her time to tell me what she planned to tell me. Brian's mother started by telling me about their winter trip to China.

She expressed the usefulness of learning Mandarin Chinese at the heritage language school by saying in Chinese, "Learning Chinese is really useful. This last time we went back, he made use of all the Chinese he learnt. I would continue to send him to Chinese school. Children learn a lot by travelling, seeing all the buildings in Beijing, visiting the museums; now he is different. 你说，学中文有用么，真有用。回国这回，他这中文都用上了，这中文学校还得去。孩子回去一次长了不少见识。看北京的建筑，去博物馆。这回孩子不一样了。"

I tried to direct the conversation to relate to Brian's literacy practices. I asked how Brian was doing at school and at home. Brian's mother shared two of her thoughts about Brian. One was that he had learnt some new words and improved his reading a little bit; the other was that he had learnt that if he did something wrong at school, his parents would be called to school. She called Brian, who was playing on the computer in his father's room, and they created the following pretend play event together.

“We are at school,” said Brian’s mom. She told me that she used this to find out what happens at school. Brian was the teacher holding a marker in his hand. His mother (Ms. Z) was the student sitting at the table.

Brian’s mother asked in Chinese “B, what did you learn at school today? B, 你今天在学校学什么了?”

Brian said in English, “Mum, I am the teacher.”

Ms. Z spoke in Chinese, but used one English word. “Oh, yes. What are we going to learn today, teacher? 哦, 对. Teacher, 我们今天学什么?”

Brian smiled, cleared his throat, and then spoke in an articulate, loud voice, “Look up here and tell me how to spell the word interesting?”

Ms. Z pretended to think about it and answered slowly, “I-n-t-e-r-s-t-i-n-g”.

Brian wrote down the letters on the white board which was on the living room wall. When he finished writing the word, he looked at the word, looked back at his student, looked at the word again, and spoke to his student with a frustrated expression, “No, that’s not the word *interesting*. Think about it and try again.”

Ms. Z put on a sad face, pretended to think for a moment, and then told the teacher, “Okay. I-n-t-e-r-e-s-t-i-n-g 这回对么? Is it right this time?”

Brian looked closely at the word he had written down and turned to his student saying in both Chinese and English “对了。Correct.”

Ms. Z was happy about getting it right while her teacher directed her to listen carefully. Brian told Ms. Z to pick up a pencil and write a story using the word *interesting*.

She asked in Chinese, “Where is my notebook? 我的本子在哪?”

Brian answered in English and Chinese, “Over there. 在那。”

Ms. Z asked again in Chinese, What should I write about? How should I start? 我写什么呀? 怎么开头呀?”

Brian answered the questions using a teacher’s tone, “Just write! You can write anything you want. Remember: you need to use the word I-N-T-E-R-E-S-T-I-N-G. And you can start with I...” Ms. Z nodded, picked up a pencil and pretended to write. Brian walked around Ms. Z’s table to check if she was doing okay. Then he went up and made some loud sounds, telling his student, “It’s time for recess. Tidy up and go outside.”

Ms. Z looked up at her teacher. It seemed that she was trying to say it was quick, she did not finish writing. Brian, the teacher, told his student, “You did not finish the writing. I need to call your parents.”

In the above pretend-play event, Brian the teacher showed his mother and me what school looked like to him. Brian demonstrated his understanding of the role of a teacher. Brian’s informal literacy practices include talking/speaking/communicating, teaching, and playing on the computer. Brian drew upon his own school experience which emphasized the restrictions placed on meaning making by an inflexible classroom schedule.

#### 4.3.3 In the community

In this section, I will discuss the participating children’s multimodal literacy practices in community spaces such as the public park and the public library.

##### 4.3.3.1 On the play ground

The playground was a place for the children to play and it provided an open place for children to practice multimodal literacy. Here I describe a literacy event in which Jiajia and Shasha played at

a local playground. The vignette expresses the ways in which the children perform literacies for different audiences and in different contexts, and the ways in which they syncretized different resources to make meaning and decisions about what to do in particular contexts.

Vignette15: One spring evening, I took my children to the playground. I saw Jiajia and Shasha were riding bicycles around the apartment buildings. Later, they came to the playground where there were about 10 children of different ages playing. They parked their bikes near the Canada Post mailboxes, and then went up to the slides. There were several girls playing on the slide. Shasha and Jiajia went up and said "Hi" to the other children. I supposed they knew each other from school.

Jiajia asked a tall girl, "What are you playing?"

The girl explained that they were trying to stay together like a train on the slide, they took turns to be the bottom person who was supposed to hold the train, and they were trying to see who could hold the train for the longest time. Jiajia asked if she and Shasha could play the game with them. The girl asked the other girls and they all agreed. The tall girl seemed to be the leader of the team. She told all the girls to begin a new round with Jiajia and Shasha. All the girls came down the slide, stood in circles, put hands behind their backs, and played *Rock-paper-scissors* 石头-剪刀-布 to decide who would be the first one to be bottom person.

Jiajia asked if she could use her index figure as a bradawl in English, "How about a bradawl? A bradawl is similar to scissors that can beat paper. Rock can beat scissors, scissors can beat paper, and the paper can cover up the rock." The leader explained that there was no bradawl, just scissors, rock and paper.

Shasha told Jiajia in Chinese, “This was different from the one we had in China. Let’s just listen to her since we are in Canada. 这个和中国的不一样。不是我么的那个剪刀，石头，布。我们就听她的吧，我们现在不是在加拿大么。”

Jiajia said to Shasha in Chinese, “Yes, it’s different. Ours is better. 是，有点不一样。我们的多好呀。”

The leader asked what Shasha was saying and Jiajia answered that “We were talking about the differences between your game and ours in China. And we will do your way. It’s Canada.”

After three rounds, one girl became the bottom person. All the other girls ran up to the yellow slide. Some took turns to take the steps and went up the longer yellow slide, others used the sided climber to go up the yellow slide. The bottom person got to slide down first, and she managed to stop in the middle of the slide. The other girls began to slide down, Jiajia was in the middle, and Shasha was not sure about this “squeezing together” game.

Jiajia called Shasha and said in Chinese, “It’s Ok, just for fun. 没事的，玩么。”

All the other girls were also calling Shasha to join the “train”. Shasha decided to join in by sliding down slowly.

She yelled in Chinese, “Ach! 啊~!”

When the bottom person could not hold up, they all slid down quickly and squeezed together. The bottom two people landed on the ground covered with small-sized stones. It was not easy to hold the train with all that weight. [...] When it was Jiajia’s turn, she told all the girls that they needed to slide slowly. Jiajia first went up the yellow slide, slid down slowly, controlling her speed to stop above the middle bump.

Then she called the next girl, saying “It’s your turn now, remember to slow down.”

The second person tried to be slow. Jiajia moved a little bit down. She smiled to the second girl and said, “Told you. Slow will work.”

After a few times, Shasha started to like this game. This time, she was not hesitant at all. She waved to Jiajia and said, “Here I come.”

She quickly slid down. Jiajia moved down again and she told Shasha, “You need to slow down.”

Shasha said, “Sorry, I forgot. Next time.”

Jiajia asked the others on top, “Who’s next?”

The girls up on the slide asked Jiajia if they could go together.

Jiajia said, “No. One by one. Nice and slow!”

One girl said, “All right!” and came down.

By the time, the last girl slid down, it was too much for Jiajia to hold. She used her hands to support, tried not to fall down the bottom, and asked all the girls to hold on tight. After about two minutes, Jiajia could not hold any more. The girls slid down together and some landed on the ground. Jiajia laughed and told the girls they were too heavy.

In the above events on the playground, Jiajia and Shasha used oral language and gestures to express their ideas. Shasha chose to use Mandarin Chinese to communicate with Jiajia when it was something different about the ways to decide who would start the game. Jiajia chose to use Mandarin Chinese to convince Shasha that it was okay to join the “train” ride. They used English

with the other girls to communicate about the game. Based on my observations, the participating children chose which language to use based on audience, context, and feelings. Jiajia and Shasha negotiated between two cultures at the beginning to decide who would go first as the bottom person to lead the train. Shasha talked Jiajia through and they decided to go with the rules here. Jiajia also drew upon her knowledge and experience to help her to try to hold the "train" longer. Shasha began to enjoy the new game after she tried and got comfortable with the game and the players. They not only had fun but also got to know a new game and reconnected with their friends outside of school. Play had provided a space for Jiajia and Shasha to explore relationships and learn new games. They remade the meaning of the slide by joining the other girls on a "train ride". They lived in two cultural worlds simultaneously (Kenner, 2004) and negotiated between them. In summary, Jiajia and Shasha's meaning making included expressing ideas using different languages based on the audience, text, and needs, using sounds, facial expressions and gestures to express their understanding and emotions, reading the context of the play, following the rules after negotiating cultural differences, and designing plans to hold the train together for as long as possible.

#### 4.3.3.2 In the park

Public parks were public places that allowed the children to explore multimodal literacies. Here I share a vignette about Eric and his literacy practices in the local park which can help us to understand Eric's literacy practices. For example, Eric used different languages, gestures and intonations to communicate with different people in the park. He also drew on his family values and cultural traditions to show that he was a respectful son and a responsible brother.

Vignette16: When I took my children to the *Kid Explore* festival in a public park, I met Eric, his sister, his father, and his grandmother. I greeted Eric and his family in Chinese,

introduced myself, and asked Eric's father for permission to observe Eric while he was playing in the park. Eric's father agreed. It was a hot summer day. There were many children in the park.

Eric's grandmother told Eric in Chinese to watch his little sister. "Take care of your sister. There are too many people here. 看着点妹妹，这里人多。"

Eric happily agreed and said in Chinese, "I will, grandma. 放心吧，姥姥，我会的。"

They first went to the boat area. It was a circle area similar to the size of a medium-sized family swimming pool with shallow water. There were colourful plastic boats floating on the water. The children were paddling around in the shallow water and there was a line up. Eric held his sister's hand and told her to line up.

When he saw the other children had left their shoes near the gate after they went in for the boat ride, he told his sister in Chinese, "Let's take off our shoes. We cannot wear sandals when we are in the boats. 我们的把鞋脱了，上那个船不能穿鞋。"

His sister said that was okay. They sat on the grass and took off their shoes. Eric asked his sister to wait while he went to the gate and put their shoes along with other children's shoes.

He told his sister to wait in Chinese and English "等一下。I will be right back." Eric carefully put the shoes on the grass beside the fences and made sure their shoes were together. Then he waved to his sister to make sure he could see her and she was fine waiting in line. His sister stood in the line, smiled at him and waited for him to come back.



When he came back to his sister, he did not see his grandmother. So he asked his sister in Chinese, “Where is grandma? 姥姥在哪?”

His sister said in Chinese, “I do not know. 我不知道。”

Eric looked around and saw his grandmother was resting under a big tree nearby. He waved to his grandmother and smiled. I supposed he was trying to tell his grandmother where he was and that he was fine.

His father saw him looking around, went up to him and asked him in Chinese, "E, what's up? You can wait here with your sister. Soon it will be your turn. E 有事么，你和妹妹在这等一会，一会儿就到你们了。”

Eric told his father in Chinese, “Yes, I know. I was trying to find grandmother and I do not want her to get lost. And can I go to the berry ride after this? 我知道了。我找姥姥呢，怕她丢了。爸爸，我一会儿可以去坐那个 berry ride 么？”

His father smiled and patted Eric's head. He also agreed with his next choice of ride.

As they got closer to the gate. Eric told his sister that they needed to show their bracelets to the gate person. When it was their turn, Eric made sure his sister first sat safely in the boat, then he got into the boat.

He told his sister to paddle. “Paddle, paddle! Let's go!” “Watch that blue one. We can go faster. Turn! Turn! Straight. Not that way. Over here. Watch out! It's okay. I am right behind you.”

They certainly had fun in this boat ride. When they came out of the boat, Eric went to pick up the shoes, handed them to his sister, and told her, “Let's run to the berry-go-around ride!” They held their shoes in their hands, and ran to the next ride...

In the above park event, Eric used words, gestures, and facial expressions. For example, he talked with his grandmother in Chinese and assured her that he would take care of his sister. He asked his father whether he could take the berry ride and he talked with his sister while waiting for the boat. He waved to his grandmother and sister when he was not close to them. Eric chose to speak Mandarin Chinese when he was with his family. This may be because he knew that his grandmother could not understand English. When he got into the boat where there were other children, he chose to speak English. This may have been because he needed to communicate with other children who did not necessarily understand Chinese in order to safely move his boat in the shallow water. My observations suggest that the participating children chose to use one or the other of their languages to suit audience, context, and their own needs. Eric's informal literacy practices also reflected that he used his cultural background as a kind of resource for him to communicate and make meaning of the different contexts. For example, he drew upon certain values in Chinese culture such as respecting seniors, listen to your parents, taking care of younger ones as the responsibility of the oldest boy in the family and embedded this in his actions and literacy practices to communicate with his family.

#### 4.3.3.3 At the public library

The public library provided opportunities for the children to play at and with literacy. The focal children found opportunities to practice print and multimodal literacies. Here I report a literacy event from Brian's library visit to illustrate his out-of-school literacy practices.

Vignette17: On a summer day afternoon, I met Brian and his mother (Ms. Z) at the nearby public library. I went up to Ms. Z who was sitting at the desk in the study area. She was working on her accounting textbook.

I greeted her in Mandarin Chinese and she told me in Chinese, “On the weekend, I take B to library where I can study and he can read or play. 周末了，领孩子来图书，我可以学习，他可以看书呀，玩呀。”

I asked if I could observe Brian’s literacy practices, and she agreed. She pointed to the table near the children’s librarian and said she had set up a board game on the table for Brian to play. Ms. Z led me to see Brian who was sitting at the table. At this time, a girl who looked older than Brian came to the board game table and stood next to him. Ms. Z asked the girl in English if she wanted to play. She nodded her head.

Ms. Z told Brian in Chinese, “Brian, it is great that she will play the game with you. You two play the game together. I will be there if you need me. B, 多好呀，有人和你一起玩。你俩好好玩。我在那面，有事找我。”

Ms. Z left and went back to her study. Brian asked the girl if she knew how to play the game. She did. Brian said, “Okay.”

Brian gave the dice to the girl and set the cards aside. The girl rolled the dice and took five steps further, and then it was Brian’s turn. He rolled the dice, took a look at it, and he was not happy about the number: it was three. He moved one square and landed on a slide, so he had moved back rather than forward. They continued to play. It seemed that Brian was not winning. At one point, the girl mentioned to Brian that he forgot to pick up the card. She pointed to the cards and told Brian that the game was not supposed to be played like this. Brian was not happy about the girl telling him that he was wrong and he needed to follow her. He put both of his hands up, shook his head while shrugging his shoulders.

He said to the girl, “It’s all yours.”

He left the table and went to the computer station. The girl was confused by Brian's actions. She left the board game table and went to the bookshelves in the children's area.

I followed Brian to the computer station. He sat in the chair, picked up the mouse, and used it to choose the program that he wanted to play. The computer was set up for children's use and there were literacy programs available. Brian started with reading stories and it was the Dr. Seuss series. And then he chose to play a computer game. It was like a shooting game where the player was supposed to shoot bees. Brian used the mouse to shoot the bees and he got excited when his score went up. When he was playing the game, a boy came over and saw Brian was playing this game. He was interested in the game. He watched Brian play and then commented to Brian that he was good at the game. Brian was happy to hear the positive comment.

He turned to the boy and asked in English, "Do you like this game?"

The boy nodded and told Brian it was fun. Brian agreed with the boy and continued to play the game. The boy told Brian where the big bees were using his figures to point out the bees on the screen. He also told Brian to watch out when the bees were coming.

Brian said, "I saw that. Got it! Oh, that's a big one. Look at the one on the top! Let's get it. More are coming. Let's get them... Oh, no time left. Yeah, see that. That's my score. I win!" Brian was busy with the computer game and he was very happy about his performance.

In the above event, Brian's literacy practices included reading the board game, playing the board game, expressing his unhappiness using gestures, playing the computer game, and communicating with a boy who was also interested in the game. Regarding playing on the computer, Brian was trying to shoot all the bees coming from different directions. He needed to "read" the screen and figure out where to start first and at the same stay alert to the other directions, as well as the bigger bees. He kept good control of the central area by taking those bees down first, then monitoring the other directions, and shooting the bigger bees first for get more scores and then took care of the rest of the bees. To sum up, Brian used his sense of direction, predictions, and observations from his "reading" strategies to play the computer game. In the end he got a good score that he was happy with. In addition, Brian decided what he wanted to do and how he wanted to do. At the public library, he was in charge of his own activities. He was his own leader. He did not want to follow others in this one setting where there were no rules requiring him to listen to others. In contrast, when he was in the *Daily Five* at the public school, he had to follow a particular schedule and order in the literacy centres. For example, at the public school he needed listen to his teachers, his reading partners and peers, and at home his mother arranged his learning activities and his schedules. Brian's literacy practices reflected some of his schooling experiences and this also indicates that literacy environments have a great effect on children's perceptions and understanding of what counts as being literate (Kenner, 2004; Li, 2006).

#### 4.4 Closing remarks

In this chapter, I have introduced the seven Chinese families in the study as well as the participating research site including homes, schools and the community. I have described the participating children's multiliteracies practices in 17 vignettes. The data indicate that at school

and home the focal children were directed to practice print literacy, yet still found opportunities to explore literacies including viewing, understanding, discussing, and designing in their own ways. In the community, children had opportunities to explore multimodal literacy and they chose their uses of language based on audience, context, their needs and feelings. The focal children drew upon their *funds of knowledge* such as their sociocultural background and family culture to help their English and Mandarin Chinese literacy meaning making. Adults, including teachers and parents, provided certain degrees of support for the focal children to make sense of the English and Mandarin Chinese literacies. In the next chapter, I will discuss the major findings in light of the literature and draw implications of the study for future research and practice.

## Chapter 5

### 5 Discussions, Recommendations, and Conclusions

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter takes a closer look at the data presented in the previous chapter and discusses how the data respond to the research questions in light of the literature. The main research question asked by this study was: What are the literacy practices at school, at home, and in the community of children who are learning English and Chinese? The sub-questions were: What (linguistic and sociocultural) resources do these children draw upon in their literacy practices? and In what ways (if any) do classroom teachers, parents, and communities support the children's literacy practices?

Through the study I identified three major themes: First, children's literacy practices were social, cultural, and multimodal reflecting global, historical and political contexts as well as their own identity options (Cummins & Early, 2011). For example, children practiced mostly print literacy in adult-organized literacy events, yet they found numerous opportunities to practice multimodal literacies in events they initiated themselves. These findings resonate with concepts presented in *Artifactual literacies* (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010), *Syncretic literacies* (Gregory, Long & Volk, 2004), and *Play as a literacy* (Wohlwend, 2011). Second, children drew upon their *funds of knowledge* (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005) in different literacy events to make meaning of various texts and to explore literacies through diverse modes, media, and materials based on their interests and needs. Third, adults such as teachers, parents, and grandparents provided different degrees of support for children's literacy acquisition and practices through instruction, supervision, tutoring, guidance, encouragement, and *scaffolding* (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) based on their understanding of literacy and their own backgrounds, including, but not limited to,

education, work experience, and family contexts. They also provided places, materials or resources, and opportunities for children to engage in literacy practices in different domains. In discussing the three themes in the following section, I link them to the existing body of knowledge about the literacy practices of CLD children, especially children who are learning Chinese and English at the same time.

## 5.2 Responding to the main research question

In terms of the question, What are the literacy practices at school, home, and in the community of children who are learning English and Chinese? The data indicate that children practiced literacies that were print-focused in adult-organized literacy events at school and home, and they found a greater number of opportunities for the practice of multimodal literacies in child-initiated literacy events at school, at home, and in the community.

Print literacy was the focus of instruction at the public and Chinese school. At the public school, for instance, the teachers organized the Quick-Write session in the morning for students to practice writing. They also organized learning centres in the afternoon for children to practice reading and writing. At the Chinese school, the teachers taught children the Chinese language with a focus on reading and writing. For example, the Chinese teachers used reading of selected texts as a strategy to help students understand and review the content. They also read with children to help them understand the content in the textbook and asked children to practice writing Chinese characters. At home, parents spent time reading aloud to and with their children as part of their daily literacy routine. Shasha's mother, for example, also supervised Shasha's writing in Chinese and English. For example, she helped Shasha to redo and review the school work on writing and printing in English. She also tutored Shasha in Chinese character writing



using the Chinese texts books. Brian's mother shared that she read with Brian at home every week.

The focal children found opportunities to engage in multimodal literacy practices across domains. At the public school, for instance, Jiajia and Shasha examined and made meaning out of the stones and buttons during recess. Jiajia gave Shasha a secret friendship card when they were in the hallway before going into the classroom. Brian spoke with his peers about a hero robot toy that he had brought from home for the Show and Tell at school. At the Chinese school, Jiajia wrote, designed, and coloured the Yard Sale poster with others. Eric drew an imagined creature from the video games. Brian made, colored, and then flew a paper airplane during indoor recess. At home, Shasha taught me her Chinese name, and we used folders to make "lily pads" as a bridge to her school in a pretend-play session. Brian pretended to be a teacher teaching his mother English at home. In the community, Jiajia and Shasha played with other children in a game of "train ride" on the playground. In the park, Eric and his sister used multiple modes (words, actions and sounds) to explore the kids' festival. At the public library, Brian played a board game with a girl and he also played a video game with another boy.

My findings confirm previous claims that print literacy is emphasized at school (e.g., Heydon & Iannacci, 2008; Purcell-Gates et al., 2004). The data also indicate that children draw on their own social and cultural resources in multimodal literacy practices (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005).

### 5.2.1 Print literacy practices at school and home

Since its beginnings in the early twentieth century, the literacy field has gone through numerous changes and meanings of literacy have changed from writing one's name and reading a simple passage to expanded views that consider literacy as social and cultural practices (Gillen & Hall,

2013). However, at school, the definition of literacy seems to have remained relatively narrow and primarily focused on print literacy. My data also suggest that learning to read and write print was treated through an *autonomous model* of literacy (Street, 1984), in which literacy is viewed as discrete skills which can be learnt in a linear way and measured using certain universally agreed standards. For example, recall the print focused events designed by teachers at the public school where print was a neutral, technical skill. Recall too how assessment of reading was predominantly done through pre-packaged materials with the assignment of levels where children's reading was decontextualized. Similarly, this autonomous model of literacy as it pertained to the teaching of reading and writing was equally present at the Chinese school.

Similarly, parents tended to conceptualize literacy as solely reading and writing print and directed their efforts towards supporting the literacy work sanctioned by the school. For example, Brian's mother shared with me in Chinese, "We often read at home. B always brought books from school. His teacher assigned him particular levelled books. We read all the levelled books carefully at home. 我们在家也读书，孩子经常从学校拿书回来，老师给他指定等级的书，我们很认真地把老师发的书都读了。" The participating parents also shared that they highly valued school work or messages and comments from the teachers. Shasha's mother, like Brian's, shared that she worked on reading the levelled books that Shasha brought home. In Chinese, she told me:

I have paid great attention to school books. Each time S brought books from school, we would read them carefully. I need to make sure that she knows how to read every single word in the books. If there is a word that I do not know how to pronounce, I would look it up in the on-line dictionary. 很重视学校的作业。她每次从学校拿书回来，我们都认真读，每一个单词都要读正确了，要是我不会读，我就上网去查字典。

A further example of the children's parents' privileging of school literacy is when Shasha's mother pointed out that reading comprehension was also very important and her daughter's teacher would assess her for that, “阅读很重要，老师还要测试的。” This reading assessment signaled to Shasha's mother that she needed to work hard with Shasha on English reading.

As for the parents' priorities when their children were learning Chinese, print literacy was a high priority. For example, Shasha's mother taught Shasha to read and write using Chinese textbooks at home. Eric's and Brian's parents said they sent their sons to the Chinese school specifically to learn to read and write in Chinese. Yet with Chinese, unlike with English, the parents were more explicit about the importance of oral language too. When I asked the participating parents about Chinese and English learning, they all talked about reading and writing as well as listening and speaking. Also, in contrast to the monolingual commitments of the school, at home parents were adamant about the importance of their children being able to function in *both* English and Chinese. For example, Shasha's mother told me that she would like Shasha to communicate in both Chinese and English, that is, she would like Shasha to be able to understand, speak, read and write in both languages. She expressed high language and literacy expectations in Chinese, saying,

Since she studies in Canada, she must learn the English language very well. And we are Chinese. Learning the Chinese language is also very important. She needs to understand well, speak fluently, and write well. 她在这里读书，英文一定要学好，我们是中国人，中文也要学好。孩子要能听得懂，说得清楚，写得流利。

Supporting their children in their English literacy acquisition did mean parents trying to understand the school and help their children negotiate more than one language at a time which was sometimes worrisome and difficult for them. Brian's mother, for instance, was at once

concerned about her son's English language performance at school while she also expressed concern for his Chinese literacy while in Canada. She told me in Chinese,

I hope B can learn both English and Chinese well in Canada. I have sent him to Chinese school because I want him to learn some Chinese, not forget it, and learn to read and write. I really hope he can learn English well at the public school. At home he reads English well. I do not understand why he has not done well during the assessments at the public school. 我是希望孩子把中文和英文都学好的。

送他去中文学校就是想让他学点中文，不要忘了中文，学着读和写。在学校里，希望他把英文学好，在家里读得很好，不知道问什么在学校测试，他就总是不行。

Though the parents paid great attention to what the teachers said and taught at the public school, and they tried to follow the teachers' models at home, they also seemed to be confused about their children's literacy performance in relation to the public school's expectations. Brian's mother complained that Brian could read well at home and did not understand why he was still in the same level for the whole school year. Similarly, Shasha could read all the words in the books. Why, then, her parents wondered, could Shasha not move up a reading level? There appeared to be a lack of communication and understanding of what literacy meant across domains. For example, the parents shared with me in our interviews and informal conversations that they did not know how teachers assessed children's reading ability at the public school. They wished they could know so they could further support their children at home. Shasha's mother, for example, told me that Shasha brought easy books from school. These books had only one sentence on each page and Shasha could read them easily. According to Shasha's mother, Shasha could do better than that at home with the library books they borrowed. Shasha's mother could not understand

the reading assessment used at school. She tried to tackle this with Shasha's teacher by asking the teacher to reassess Shasha's reading, a request that was not well received by the teacher. Based on the teacher's conversation with me, she thought this Chinese parent did not understand how busy she was during the school day and that she had to follow an order in regard to reading assessment. This finding corroborates Li's (2006a) finding that immigrant parents often experience confusion about how Canadian schools work and may even have *conflict* with teachers regarding what teaching is like at schools (Li, 2006a). For example, parents considered school as a place for their children to learn knowledge and they wanted to support their children's learning at school but they did not know how and what to do. In addition, the participating parents' emphasis on their children's academic performance reflected their experiences of education in China, where academic success was measured entirely by test scores and rankings in exams, as well as their earlier job seeking experiences and life adjustment in Canada. Parents wanted to support their children to do well at school so that they could do well later in their careers rather than going through a challenging adjustment period in Canada. The parents had some knowledge of how schools operate in Canada; they reflected on their experiences and used this knowledge to support children's learning at home. To sum up, there was a lack of communication between teachers and parents regarding literacy teaching and learning at the public school and in what ways parents could support their children's English literacy learning at home.

School literacy can be understood as the literacy that is taught by teachers, assessed by teachers, and emphasized in the curriculum distributed by the school board (Purcell-Gates et al., 2004). In Ontario, the effects of standardized testing to assess students' reading, writing, and mathematics at the elementary and secondary school level is well documented (e.g. Crocker,

2013; Hayden, 2011; Hewson, & Parsons, 2013; Kearns, 2011). School boards in Ontario stress reading, writing, and mathematics (Crocker, 2013) and teachers organize instruction around reading and writing in the classroom (Hewson, & Parsons, 2013). It is not surprising that students feel the pressure to succeed in mathematics and print literacy and that some CLD students even feel “shamed” and marginalized when they don’t live up to the expectations (Kearns, 2011). The Ontario context reflects the global picture (Au, & Gourd, 2013; Lipman, 2004; Menken, 2008; Onosko, 2011; Purcell-Gates, 2009; Stiggins, 2007), in which print literacy is highly emphasized and ambitious parents work on skills with their children in order to support school success. In summary, print literacy (reading and writing) dominates the adult-organized literacy events at school and home. Learning to read and write is certainly important. However, effort and attention needs to be put into the pedagogical considerations with regard to how reading and writing can be taught responsively in the context of increasingly diverse classrooms and the ever-changing global demands. Moreover, the interrelatedness of the various modes and languages (Jewitt & Kress, 2003) need to be taken into account, as well as the socially and culturally responsive ways teachers can scaffold children’s meaning making and communication across domains. Teachers need to work together with parents to support students’ learning and print literacy is just one part of it.

### 5.2.2 Multimodal literacies at school, at home and in the community

The literature is replete with empirically-based reasons to promote a multimodal approach to literacy education and the calls are perhaps louder than ever for schools to explicitly “take seriously and attend to the whole range of modes involved in representation and communication” (Jewitt & Kress, 2003, p. 1). In the relative absence of teacher-initiated literacy events inviting children to explicitly engage with multimodal literacy, children created their own such events

outside of instructional time. When given opportunity to do what they wanted, the children in the study engaged in a range of multimodal meaning making and this meaning making demonstrated the children as capable, creative communicators. The foremost example is of Brian, the child whom the teacher constructed as struggling with his print literacy. Within the multimodal literacy events he created, Brian could no longer be seen as a struggling communicator. Recall that when he took his hero robot to the public school he used facial expressions to express his excitement. He used gestures to show what the hero robot toy could do. He used sound effects to tell his friends about its particular features. He also used speech to tell his friends about the robot toy. At home, Brian used socio-dramatic, pretend-play to tell his mother what he had learnt at school. Brian made meaning of school through observing and reflecting on literacy practices at school, and then he put all the information in a performance that narrated his school day and his feelings about the day. In his re-enactment, he used speech to demonstrate what the teacher had presented about school learning. He used the sounds of a bell to express the limited time he had to work on a task, and he used facial expressions to show his mother the message he got when he made a mistake in a task at school. Brian expressed that he did not have time to finish his tasks at school nor did he have an opportunity to demonstrate what he knew and what he could do at school. He used pretend play to share his learning experiences, especially his frustration with the limited time at school.

Based on his report card, Brian was not considered to be a good writer or reader by his public school teachers. However, when literacy is viewed beyond reading and writing and focuses on meaning making, Brian is a much more capable communicator. He tried to figure out the words in the books assigned to him. He could write down his ideas. He presented his hero toy to his classmates and answered their questions. He also shared his school experiences with his

parents in an interactive multimodal way. Brian's actions indicate that children's multimodal literacy practices can help them to explore the world, how to make meaning of it, and how to share their understanding with an authentic audience if there are resources and opportunities in a positive learning space. Teachers who take such multimodal meaning making seriously are well positioned to support children's learning and to view all children as competent communicators.

#### 5.2.2.1 *Artifactual literacies* at school and home

The children in the study made and used artifacts to express their understanding of the world and to explore and develop knowledge. Pahl and Rowsell (2010) employ the term "*artifactual literacy*" to examine materials and children's engagement with material culture. Pahl and Rowsell situate children's text making in social and cultural contexts and work from the premise that artifacts can tell stories about ways in which meaning is being made.

The children connected artifacts with their daily lives, and in so doing provided understanding of their culture. Recall the bug house made of grey stones and the stones with stripes found by Jiajia in the community playground. Pahl and Rowsell (2010) state that "[a]rtifacts bring in everyday life. They are material, and they represent culture" (p. 2). When making the bug house Jiajia and Shasha designed it in the shape of a circle which signals harmony in Chinese culture. Jiajia insisted that the house could be for any bugs who wanted to come in. This resonates with my experiences of collectivism in Chinese culture.

Artifacts provided a way for the children to explore and understand the world around them as well as to create new artifacts based on their own interests and ideas. "Artifacts provide the connecting piece—they move, travel, across home and school and these movements provide power to students" (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010, p. 3). Jiajia and Shasha made use of everyday objects (stones) to create the bug house. They made meaning of the stones and transformed the stones



into a valued artifact. “Artifacts open up worlds for meaning makers, worlds that are frequently, if not always, silent in formal, institutional settings like schooling” (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010, p. 3). Indeed, Shasha was usually shy in class, but she was an active participant during recess. She explored the stones and buttons, and she contributed her ideas to the process of building the bug house. For example, Shasha asked many questions to Jiajia such as where had Jiajia found the buttons? Shasha and Jiajia also examined the differences among the buttons and they made comments on the sizes and colors of the buttons. When they were building the bug house, Shasha and Jiajia worked together to design the window and the door. Although stones and buttons are ordinary day-to-day objects, Jiajia and Shasha linked them to their cultural histories. The focal children drew upon what they had at home (e.g. the buttons), what they found on the playground (e.g. the stones), and what they knew about their family cultural values (e.g. collectivism) to make new artifacts (e.g. the bug house) to express their understanding of literacies.

The participating children engaged in meaningful conversations when making artifacts. “Artifacts come alive in interaction” (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010, p. 55). An artifact such as Jiajia and Shasha’s bug house gives children the information source to talk about what they know and what matters to them. Jiajia brought the buttons from her mother’s sewing box to school. Together Jiajia and Shasha explored the buttons during recess and they found that some buttons could reflect sunshine and other buttons could be used to see things through. Buttons provided an opportunity for Jiajia and Shasha to talk with each other and listen to each other’s ideas. Buttons can also be seen as tools with which children can see the world they know from a slightly different angle. In addition, these events illustrate that literacies are indeed dialogic through which friendships are founded.

Artifacts also provided opportunities to “create a pedagogical space that invites sustained meaning making, a web of activities includes talking, listening, crafting, cutting, drawing, and gluing” (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010, p. 55). Recall Brian’s and Jiajia’s experiences at the Chinese school. Brian made a paper airplane and Jiajia helped to colour and write the Yard Sale poster during indoor recess at the Chinese school. Brian made a paper airplane, coloured the airplane, gave it a test fly which did not go well and then he talked with the older boy from another class to figure out the particular angle and the degree of power he needed in order to get a good flight. As an artifact, the paper airplane provided an opportunity for Brian to interact with the other boy using Chinese and English. The same artifact also created the space for Brian to continue to make meaning of the airplane, particularly in terms of how high it could fly. The airplane provided an authentic space for Brian to make meaning of the artifact and interact with another person to explore literacies associated with flying an airplane. At the same time, Jiajia was busy making a Yard Sale poster which involved drawing, coloring and writing. The concept of Yard Sale was new to Jiajia. The poster making activity created an opportunity for Jiajia to understand a Canadian cultural artifact by talking with another Chinese girl. Jiajia also negotiated with the other Chinese girl about what to draw and which colours to use. The poster as an artifact allowed sustained literacy inquiry (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010).

In the study the children’s literacies, when viewed through an artifactual literacies lens are seen to reflect their identity options. Pahl and Rowsell (2010) argue that “identity is a key aspect of the work in artifactual literacies, in that artifacts and identities are intertwined” (p. 8). Meaning makers’ experiences influenced their ways of making texts, which in turn reflect who they are. They “infuse the texts” with their ideas and interests (p. 9). Rowsell and Pahl (2007) call this “infusion” and introduce the concept of *sedimented identities in texts*. Pahl and Rowsell

(2010) explain this further in their work with artifactual literacies and argue that sedimented texts can help students “to describe how students bring their own ways of being, doing and feeling—their acquired dispositions—into writing” (p. 9). In my study, Shasha made two signs for her school. On one school sign, she used only Chinese and one arrow to tell people the way to school. This can suggest that she felt strong about her Chinese heritage including her pride in the Chinese language. On the other school sign, Shasha used two languages including Chinese with Pinyin and English as well as the heart shape and the symbol of the sunflower. The school signs are texts that express her feelings and identity. Shasha *infused* her linguistic background of English and Chinese into the writing of the text. She expressed her feelings about her school using the heart shape that signals that she loved her school. She also infused her personal understanding of her school into the drawing of a sunflower. The particular feature of the sunflower is that it stands up straight toward the sun, which might also indicate Shasha’s positive attitude toward schooling. She often cried when she started Canadian school and then she tried to understand and engage with the school with the support from home and school. This sunflower could also signify her persistence to keep trying to enjoy and learn at school and to be optimistic in a new environment. Shasha also included English words saying “Do not enter” and “Knock on the door” on the school posters. This suggests that a Chinese girl living in Canada had learnt the concept of privacy and that, whether in her room or at school, other people needed to respect her personal space. This could also indicate how Shasha negotiated between collectivism and individualism. She respected her parents and in turn she asked her parents to respect her. When I was visiting her, I asked if I needed to knock on the door first and then enter her school. Shasha replied I did not need to since she knew me and she was walking with me. To some degree, her actions also reflect a power shift. Rather than the adults, it was Shasha who was in charge at the

school she had created. At home, children need to listen to parents and at school they need to listen to teachers. But at her own school, Shasha was the person with power to make decisions. In brief, writing and designing school signs offered Shasha a way to express her feelings and to recognize her personal value, experience, and *funds of knowledge*. Artifactual literacies opened a world for Shasha to do what she wanted to and be/become who she wanted to be.

#### 5.2.2.2 Play as a literacy

The children found opportunities to play at school, home, and in the community. Wohlwend (2011) challenges educators to rethink the relationships between play and literacy. She regards “play as a literacy for creating and coordinating a live-action among multiple players that invests materials with pretended meaning and slips the constraints of here-and-now realities” (p. 2). The children made use of available materials and resources, gave them new meanings, transformed them into different artifacts to be used in their play, interacted with other children to design their play scene, pretended to be the characters they imagined, and created new stories. Play provides opportunities for educators to recognize children as capable and literate meaning makers who draw on what they know to do what they intend to do and become who they want to be. In a word, play allows children to explore literacies in their own ways.

Play also offered a space for the focal children to create new identity options. For example, when Brian’s mother asked him about his school day, he chose to present his school day in the form of a drama rather than simply tell his mother about his school day. In the pretend play, Brian chose to be a teacher and asked his mother to be a student in his class. He demonstrated teaching skills as he had experienced them and organized his class based on his own school experiences. He made it clear to his mother that there was limited time to complete work at school and that students needed to know how to perform tasks such as writing a journal.

Brian took the opportunity to switch from the role of a student who had to obey a teacher to a teacher who was in charge of the classroom. His smile showed his satisfaction at being a powerful person while his mother, who used to be the person with power at home, turned into a student in his classroom. Being a teacher gave Brian a different role and a chance to divulge his day or frustrations about school in a way that his mother could understand him. In another short pretend play session at Brian's home, Brian took his Spiderman toy and showed me how it could do all the cool moves, echoing his turn at Show-and Tell at school. Brian chose a superhero toy to play with and told me how much he loved the idea of being a super hero who could help people and save the day. I could sense his worries about not being recognized as a capable learner at school where he needed help with reading and writing and where it took him longer than others to finish school tasks. He wanted to be recognized as a useful person, rather than the one who always needed extra time and support. It was play that enabled him to forget about undesirable realities and to escape from his frustrations to a world where he was literate and helpful. In other words, play can help children to empower themselves and realize their potential.

Play might also be enlisted by educators to help children to enhance other literacies including print literacy. For example, when Eric and his family went to the local city park for the children's festival, he read the facial expression of his grandmother and assured her that he could take care of his little sister. He read the sign regarding height and made sure his little sister reached the height requirement before they went for the boat ride. He read the audience around him and realized that speaking Chinese could not help him on the boat ride. By choosing to communicate in English, Eric let the other children know where he and his sister would go, and so avoided confusion. When it was time to talk with his father and grandmother, he automatically

switched to Chinese for communication. Reading the audience, the context, and the purpose helped Eric to decide which language to use for communication.

Play meant more than exploration to the participating children. It was also about friendship and identity negotiation. When Shasha and Jiajia were playing the train ride with other girls on the community playground, they used the game of "rock, paper, scissors" to determine the order of people to go on the slide. Jiajia realized the same game was played differently in Canada and they were trying to explain the differences to the other girls. Shasha talked with Jiajia in Chinese and mentioned that they were in Canada and they needed to play the Canadian way. The girls were navigating two different linguistic and cultural worlds. In another example, Shasha tried to design her own princess that could reflect who she was rather than the Disney version of a princess. She put her pink purse on the table along with the jewelry that she wanted to use. She shared with me about not seeing a Chinese princess in the media and about her plan to design a princess that reflected her Chinese appearance, such as eye and hair colour. Even though I did not have a chance to see the final design, I did catch Shasha's critical examination of the princess drawing scenario from Shasha and her desire to create something that could better represent girls like her who had trouble finding the images in the media to represent who she was. As Wohlwend (2011) puts it, "play allows children to draw upon their imaginations and their lived experience and to tap into their passions and experience" (pp. 2-3). It is play that provides the place and space for children to examine the daily texts from a different perspective and to bring in their own voices.

### 5.3 Responding to sub-research questions

In this section I respond to the sub-research questions using the data from the study and discuss the findings in relation to the existing theoretical perspectives and the literature review.

### 5.3.1 Sub-research question 1

#### **What resources do children draw upon in their literacy practices?**

The children drew upon their knowledge of linguistic systems, social and cultural values, as well as material resources such as those I described in the previous chapter. For example, at school, when the children tried to figure out the pronunciation or spelling of the English words, they drew upon what they knew about Pinyin (the phonetic system of Mandarin Chinese) from their experiences of learning to read in Chinese. Vanessa used what she knew about Pinyin to help her with the English spelling in her Quick-Write. Jiajia also drew upon what she knew about Pinyin to help her with spelling in her journal writing for Mrs. G.

As an educator who grew up in China, I inferred that the focal children were drawing on similar social and cultural beliefs that I had acquired during my own childhood. For example, they put great effort into their work, respected adults and willingly accepted family responsibilities. At the public school, Vanessa proofread to make sure she had the right spelling before she handed it in to the teachers. She also worked on her own first before she went to ask for help. At home, Shasha followed her mother's suggestion to do one more task before she took a break. In the park, Eric promised his grandmother he would take good care of his little sister. He tried his best to keep his promise and to make sure his grandmother was fine in a busy park.

The children also drew upon what was available in different domains. For example, Jiajia made use of the buttons she found at home and the stones she found in the community playground to help her to explore these texts and to design new texts (e.g. the home for bugs made of stones). Brian made use of the books and toys that he got from neighbours and friends to explore literacies based on his own interests. Shasha made use of the folders to design her lily-pad bridge so that she could get to her school. In addition, the focal children also used the

available literacy resources including books, paper, markers, and crayons to help with literacy exploration. Recall, for example, the secret friendship card Jiajia made at home for Shasha. Also, Shasha taught me her names using the black marker and white board and she also used her collection of purses and jewelry to help her with the drawing of a Chinese princess. She also used the laptop to research what the existing princess looked like. Brian used the colorful sticky notes to play with financial ideas at the bank. He also used the hero robot toy to express his feelings and willingness to be a helper. At the Chinese school, Eric used markers and paper to draw the imagined creature in the video game. Brian made a paper airplane, performed a test flight, and discussed how to make his paper airplane fly higher and further with an older Chinese boy. Jiajia discussed the concept of the yard sale with the other Chinese girl. She also coloured and wrote on the Yard Sale poster. In the community, Jiajia and Shasha made use of the playground by joining the other girls who were playing the train ride game. Eric went to the public park to explore the fun rides and to engage in print literacy, such as reading signs. Brian went to the public library, played the board game with another girl, and had fun playing a computer game while discussing the game with a boy.

Time was an important resource for children to explore literacies, but time for exploration was often limited. Recess was the time when children could choose what they wanted to explore. However, recess was only 15 to 20 minutes long. Jiajia and Shasha explored the reflections on one button and used the other button to see the world from a new perspective. They also made their bug house of stones from the school and wider community. If they had had more time, they would have been able to observe more about their buttons and to wait for any bugs to come to their bug house. They would have also had time to interact with others, including the bugs, as



well as to make their own stories based on what they had done and seen and what they might observe.

Time sometimes worked against the children in the classroom. Brian needed more time to complete the assigned literacy tasks in the afternoon literacy centres and Leno was not sure about the timing of his task. Time limits did not help the children. Furthermore, there were times at home when parents took control of children's use of time by assigning specific school-like print literacy events. However, when children were at home and in the community, they did have more free time to explore the literacies around them using diverse forms of texts available. There were dramatic differences in children's literacy practices at different times due to the fact that time was structured by the content and process of what children were interested in doing, as opposed to structured by other people's interests and demands.

The concept of *Syncretic Literacy* (Gregory, Long & Volk, 2004) can illuminate the focal children's literacy practices that reflect "the fluid and creative interaction of words, ideas, and practices to create a dynamic, fruitful and positive whole" (p. 4). Syncretic Literacy views literacy from a perspective that values children's *funds of knowledge* and looks at the ways children make use of their knowledge, values, and beliefs to go into to a new community and make sense of a new context.

When viewed through the notion of syncretic literacy the data can illuminate that the participating children lived in more than one cultural and linguistic world and that they constantly negotiated among different cultures and languages to create their own ways to understand, participate, and make sense of the domain. To elaborate, in the following I discuss the ways that the focal children syncretized different cultural values and family beliefs at home and school.

A closer look at Shasha's literacy practice and Brian's pretend play reveals that they drew upon what they knew across domains to make meaning. Shasha's school signs included Chinese characters, Chinese Pinyin system, English letters and drawings in the shapes of a sunflower and a heart. Shasha syncretized what she knew from the Chinese and English languages to create her school sign. The selection of the word sunflower for part of her school's name was not random. Shasha explained to me that the sunflower is tall and straight, and it faces the sun at all times. For Shasha, that symbolized her positive attitude toward schooling. She also chose the Chinese word for *excellent* to use in her school's name. Shasha told me in Chinese that her school is a very good school and children would be happy at her school. Shasha's attempt to draw a princess provides another example. She was not sure about what to draw because she did not really like the blond haired princess in the Disney world, to whom she could not relate. She wanted to draw a princess that could reflect or relate to her. In this literacy event, Shasha syncretized the existing westernized images of princesses, her own experiences and racialized identity, and then tried to figure out something that could speak to her and be meaningful to her. "Children do not remain in separate worlds", however, they draw upon their *funds of knowledge* to live in the world on their own terms (Gregory, Long & Volk, 2004, p. 5). Another example is Brian's pretend-play of a school day at home with his mother. He demonstrated his understanding of school using speech, sound-effects, written script, intonation, gestures, and gaze. He vividly expressed his feelings of the intense literacy sessions at school, in particular his frustrations about not having enough time to finish the assigned print literacy tasks. CLD children use multiple modes to syncretize home and school learning contexts (Drury, 2004). Brian was seen as a capable meaning maker by his parents at home, but he did not demonstrate his literacy competence in the required print literacy events at school. This speaks to the gap between school literacy practices

and home literacy practices, as well as to the issue of CLD children's out-of school literacies not being recognized nor valued at school (Genishi & Dyson, 2009).

### 5.3.2 Sub-research question 2

#### **In what ways (if any) do teachers, parents, and the community support children's literacy practices?**

Adults provided opportunities, resources, and support for children's literacy practices though not always in their ZPD. Teachers had different ways to support the focal children's literacy practices based on their ideas of what was important for children's literacy learning as well as their funds of knowledge in English literacy education. Different parents had different ways to support their children, which were related to their own educational backgrounds, their understanding of school literacy, and their future plans about whether or not to stay in Canada. For example, at school, the teachers organized literacy activities that provided opportunities for children to practice English and Chinese with a focus on reading and writing. Teachers at the public school provided some scaffolding in the Quick-Write sessions by asking children to watch the video carefully, reminding students of the journal format and of words to be used in the journal. The teachers at the Chinese school designed reading, writing, and informal literacy activities for children to practice Chinese. At home, parents tried to support their children's English and Chinese by reading with them, assisting in their writing process, and supervising their homework.

Adults also provided resources for children's literacy practices such as paper, markers, glue, pencils, rulers, stickers, books and posters. However, the degree and type of scaffolding varied among teachers and parents based on their opinions and background such as educational history and culture traditions. For example, at the public school, teachers organized literacy

centres for students to independently practice reading and writing that would be assessed later in Grade 3 and Grade 6 based on the standardized EQAO test and the curriculum requirements at the local school board. EQAO stands for Education Quality and Accountability Office, which is a provincial agency in charge of designing tests to test Grade 3 and Grade 6 students' literacy and mathematics in Ontario primary schools. Children in Grade 1 are expected to be ready to work independently in a classroom by the classroom teachers as well as to fulfill the demands in the curriculum (Boushey & Moser, 2006). For CLD children, especially Leno, it was not the learning and teaching organization he had known, so he had trouble following the flow of the five literacy centres and he frequently got lost. In addition, there was a tension between administration and literacy teaching in the classroom. For example, Leno was called to see Mrs. G because he was wandering in the classroom and Mrs. G taught him about the organization of the literacy centers and showed him the way to get to the right center rather than checked Leno's literacy learning. Jiajia was also called to see Mrs. G because she was loud in her reading. Mrs. G did not help her with reading but focused on teaching her the rules of being quiet in classroom. In other words, children's daily classroom routines were organized around print literacy and behaviour management. Leveled books were chosen to use in the classroom to measure the reading progress of the children. At the Chinese school, the teachers stated that there was no testing pressure, so they could organize their literacy instruction and literacy activities based on what they believed could help children living in Canada to learn Mandarin Chinese and to maintain the Chinese culture. They spent time teaching children to read and write, and they also spent time doing informal literacy activities to help children to understand and practice Mandarin Chinese such as singing Chinese songs, watching Chinese movies, and folding paper animals. At home, parents spent a large amount of time tutoring their children in English so that they could do well

at school. They read with and to their children as well as supervised their printing and spelling because they thought school literacy was very important, especially reading and writing in English. Their tutoring styles reflected their expectations for their children's literacy education and their own educational backgrounds.

The parents' migrant status affected the amount of support they could provide and their expectations for children's literacy learning in English. For Leno, whether he would stay in Canada played a role in his mother's actions to support his English literacy learning in Canada. Leno's mother was a visiting scholar at the local university and she shared with me that she wanted Leno to have a Canadian learning experience and to enjoy his stay in Canada. She did not worry about reading levels since she told me that Leno would start Grade 1 when he returned to China. He was in Canada to experience the culture, learn English, and to get a sense of what studying abroad looks like. She asked that Leno have fun and do his best. There was no pressure on Leno to achieve any particular level in English reading at the public school.

Parental expectation was another influential factor on how parents supported their children's literacy practices. For Shasha, her mother expected her do well at school and to succeed in the Canadian education system. This was partially because Shasha's mother had sacrificed her own career as a medical doctor in China and had chosen to come to Canada to support Shasha and Shasha's father's study and future career. She put high expectations on Shasha and she wanted to see Shasha make progress and succeed at school. Shasha's mother also stressed the notion that Chinese people needed to learn the Chinese language well and maintain Chinese culture even though they lived in Canada. In contrast, Brian's mother just hoped he would learn some Chinese at the Chinese school and that he would not forget the language. If he could learn to read and write in Chinese, she reasoned that this could be helpful in the long run.

In reflecting on the kinds of support made available to the participating children, there are several issues that should be critically examined. Focusing on print literacy is one aspect of the limitation but how print literacy is taught warrants further discussions. In this section, I discuss two issues: commodification of literacy instruction (Hibbert & Iannacci, 2005) and procedural display (Iannacci, 2006).

Commodification of literacy pedagogies in packaged programs cannot support CLD children's literacy learning responsively. The packaged programs (e.g. *Daily Five*) consider literacy learning as autonomous (Street, 1984). They ignored the specific classroom's context and students' diverse needs and interests. The packages positioned teachers as deliverers, not creators of literacy program, and the children were positioned as literacy program followers and receivers. The *Daily Five* specified the time allowed at particular literacy centres and for the focal children it was not always enough time for children to engage in meaningful practice. Leno constantly got lost during the *Daily Five* literacy centres. From the teacher's perspective he did not know what to do at what time. Once he was called to the teacher who directed him to see the classroom helper Eric to "supervise" him and direct him to the right centre, but he was still confused about the structure of the *Daily Five* as well as how he needed to complete the required task in the centre. Leno who was one of the newly arrived CLD students in the classroom relied on teachers to teach him the English literacy. He had no opportunities to draw upon his funds of knowledge. Take Brian as another example. Even though he was born in Canada and attended the kindergarten at the same public school, Brian could not follow the *Daily Five* literacy centres. The structure worked against Brian, especially the limited time in each *Daily Five* centre which did not allow enough time for him to complete the activity. It is worth noting that the *Daily Five* is one of many marketed literacy programs. Hibbert and Iannacci (2005) critically examined

several commercial literacy programs and argued that “[the] imposed blocks of time are pedagogically limiting and make teachers and students prisoners of time” (p. 721). If students need to learn and improve their reading and writing, they need substantive time and opportunities to engage in reading and writing (Allington, 1998). Like the 4-Blocks program, the 15-minute *Daily Five* centres “limit the ability for comprehensive engaging connections with that text to occur” (Hibbert & Iannacci, 2005, p. 721). Further, literacy curricula cannot be responsive to the interests, knowledge, and desires of the children. In brief, the commodification of literacy pedagogies in packaged programs cannot provide CLD children with meaningful literacy engagement but makes them “prisoner[s] of time” (Hibbert & Iannacci, 2005), task doers, and rule followers.

The *Daily Five* also created opportunities to perform “procedural display” (Rymes & Pash, 2001) to fit in among their peers at the public school (Iannacci, 2006). Iannacci (2006) interprets procedural display as “a [CLD] learner’s need to pass by echoing, mirroring and complying with peer and teacher accepted responses and behaviours” (p. 57). Rather than being provided with opportunities to engage in authentic meaning making, during the *Daily Five*, the focal children were focused on completing assigned literacy tasks and seemed to be attempting to accomplish the assigned task in an effort to please or fit in. Leno was copying words to complete his Word Work. Brian was reading the assigned levelled book with Emily to complete *Read with Someone*. Jiajia wrote down “On the weekend, I ...” to complete her journal writing. The focal children did what they were required to do in *Daily Five*, but Leno and Shasha did not understand why they needed to do the task and Brian did not have a chance to finish reading to get to know the full story in the book. Basically, they all did what they were told. Procedural display or copying and following what others were doing in the classroom “limit students’

academic achievement and cause them to suppress their backgrounds in order to facilitate their classroom social identity as the good student” (Iannacci, 2006, pp. 57-58). In order to be “the good student”, the focal children had to do the *Daily Five* in the right order within the assigned time limit. It was challenging for the focal children to follow the rules in the *Daily Five*. For example, Leno, who did not know what to do, was called to see the teacher. Jiajia was called to see the teacher because she was reading too loud. Brian was reminded by others because he took more time to finish the tasks and move on to the next centre.

The data suggest that while there was evidence of procedural display, the children were not all always passively following rules. Shasha is a case in point. Shasha learnt to follow the rules of the *Daily Five* by quietly moving from one centre to another but she did not enjoy doing the centre. When she was supposed to work on the *Word Work*, she followed other children in the classroom to get the white board and black marker. But she did not write any English words down, she worked on mathematics by writing down the additions between 0-20. When she saw me look at her, her face turned red and she hid her white board. I inferred that she knew she was supposed to practice writing the words from the word wall and it was not right to do the mathematics during the block time of *Word Work*. Shasha navigated the *Daily Five* and made use of the time to do the task she liked rather than what was assigned. Shasha’s negotiations with the *Daily Five* could be strategies that CLD children used to be recognized as a “good student” who listened to teachers, followed rules and worked on assigned task. At the same time, in his own study involving procedural display, Iannacci found that “CLD students were proficient in developing strategies that allowed them to assert their autonomy and minimize the extent to which they played at being the good student” (Iannacci, 2006, p. 67). Even though the *Daily Five* prevented the focal children from choosing what they would like to do, they still managed to find



ways to fulfill their interests. In summary, Daily Five as one example of the packed literacy programs “reinforced an internal passivity” (Prensky & Bailey, 2003, p. 378) among learners and misled them about what literacy learning was. But the children were capable learners who still found ways to navigate among the assigned literacy centres.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

Children’s literacy practices were directed to print literacy in adult-organized literacy events and children’s literacy practices were more oriented toward multimodality in child-initiated literacy events. The focal children drew upon their cultural and linguistic knowledge to help them with school-related literacy. They also drew upon the available resources, their past experiences, their linguistic and cultural backgrounds to explore the texts during their free time such as recess at school and play time at home. Teachers and parents provided opportunities and certain degrees of support on their children’s reading and writing at school and home. Their support varied because of their different understanding of what literacy is and what is important for their children’s literacy learning as well as their teaching and working schedules.

In a nutshell, the focal children learnt English at the public school, they learnt Chinese at the community heritage language school, and they practiced their English and Chinese at home. At school, reading and writing were highly emphasized. At home, the parents followed the teacher’s suggestions and helped with their children’s English reading. The parents also tried to help their children with their Chinese learning but their support varied due to their different expectations, future family plans, and work schedules. To some degree, it was the children’s home languages that were in danger. The participating children lived in an English-dominant environment where they learnt and used English on a daily basis. Parents tried to help their children with their Chinese by sending them to the Chinese school or by spending time working

on using Chinese-only when the English homework was finished. But the dominant status of the English language affected parental attitudes toward Chinese and toward supporting their children's Chinese learning in Canada. Moreover, there was a lack of resources available for parents to further support their children's Chinese learning. As Cummins and Danesi (1990) put it, "Maintenance of the first language is extremely problematic" (pp. 105-106). It is not straightforward or easy for children to become multilingual and multicultural in Canada. Educators and parents, as well as policy-makers, need to work together toward multilingualism and multiculturalism by providing diverse forms of resources, continuous support, and a positive language learning environment so that CLD children can become multilingual and multicultural in Canada.

### 5.5 Implications and Recommendations

The implications of the study can provide some direction for educators and parents to support CLD children.

First, it is important for parents and educators to recognize children as capable knowledge constructors (Vygotsky, 1978) and to understand that different children have different interests and *funds of knowledge*. These understandings will greatly affect teachers' and parents' attitudes toward language and literacy as well as the kinds of support they provide. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. Each student brings his or her own background to the learning experience. Adults can provide resources, opportunities, guidance, and support to scaffold children's meaning making. This includes learning new knowledge, rather than just telling children what they think children need to do in order to achieve a certain kind of success as defined by parents and teachers. Success can be defined differently by different people across domains, such as getting a good score on a reading assessment or a nice letter in the annual report cards could be

considered as academically successful at school. For example, in this study, children were not really perceived as the active meaning makers by teachers. During the afternoon *Daily Five* literacy centres, children were told what and how to read, what and how to write, as well as when to stop, move on and begin a new task. Children were required to read levelled books chosen for them based on their reading assessments. By the end of the school year, children would receive different letter grades to tell them how they did at school. The data in my study indicate that these grades cannot fully represent a child's potential, or what they have achieved at school. The *Daily Five* did not provide an opportunity for the participating teachers to get to know the focal children's literacy learning experience but prescribed a way for children to do literacy in a limited way.

Educators need to know children as competent and confident learners so that their interests and funds of knowledge can inform the curriculum. All students bring funds of knowledge with them to school, they all have the potential to be successful in their own way at school. Reading well is just one part of school performance. There are many other aspects of school life in which the CLD children participated and demonstrated their capabilities. They engaged in sports events, helped other classmates and teachers, made sense of various texts and contexts, created new ways of understanding the environment around them, and made use of the available resources to explore their potentials. Teachers and parents should provide guidance based on students' needs and interests with patience and encouragement.

Second, because different students bring different sets of *funds of knowledge* to school, both teachers and parents need to not only value but also take children's *funds of knowledge* into consideration when designing lessons and activities across subject areas and in different domains. There are many things that can be known about CLD children in the classrooms such as

home languages, their cultural traditions, and their education experience. There are also many ways to get to know these children such as doing a short survey, talking with students and their parents, asking volunteers who share a similar background to help, and asking learning support teachers to help. However, teachers need to decide what pedagogical decisions and instructional strategies would be appropriate for their students. For example, it is certainly important for teachers to know about students' linguistic backgrounds, such as whether their students speak other languages at home, what the languages are, how long they have learnt these languages, and if they go to language schools to learn these languages. In my Master's thesis, the participating teachers used the posters of *All about Me* and *Star of the Week* to get to know their students. In this study, the participating teachers asked me, given that I shared the same cultural and linguistic background as many of their students, to have informal conversations about the students' linguistic background when we were doing one-on-one literacy journal writing in the library after the students had been at school for two weeks. A one-time conversation can help a teacher, but it is important to note that this may not work for another teacher at another time in another context. Indeed, ongoing efforts are needed to get to know students and to incorporate students' funds of knowledge into daily school life such as teachers' lesson planning and school events planning. The literature indicates that teachers and schools can help to celebrate and capitalize on students' funds of knowledge by building them into the routine pedagogical decisions and hosting school-wide events, like creating identity texts (e.g. bilingual books), and inviting community members to school to share their funds of knowledge with school members (e.g. Cummins & Early, 2011).

Third, it is critical for parents to be consistent in their support, especially for the home languages learning or heritage language development. The realities of living in Canada make

most parents value the significance of learning English (Du, 2008; Li, 2006). My Master's thesis and studies in bilingual education (Baker, 2000; Cummins, 2001; Kenner, 2004) support my conclusion that home languages need more attention and support in order to be maintained. Sending children to different types of heritage language schools can help children to learn their home languages and appreciate their cultures, but this does not replace the role of the parents (Wang, 2011). Parents are role models for their children. If they do not speak in Chinese, how can their children be expected to communicate in Chinese? It is useful for parents to speak their home languages on a daily basis to help their children to build their pride in the languages, as well as to help their children's listening, speaking and understanding. Reading stories in Chinese can familiarize the children with their home country and their parents' cultural and historical backgrounds, as well encourage children to learn to write in Chinese. There is no short cut or easy way, but the obstacle may be one of awareness rather than time. If parents can spend hours with their children reading assigned English books, they can spend some time with their children on interesting Chinese readings, drawings and writings. With the rapid development of technology, it is no longer difficult to find Chinese educational programs online so children can learn to read and write in Chinese. For example, there are certain computer programs and smartphone applications designed for younger children to learn the complicated Chinese characters in a fun way. Brian used Baidu (a popular search engine in China) to find the Chinese shows he wanted to watch and, in so doing, learnt about the Chinese language and culture. Parents need to consistently put time and effort into supporting their children's multicultural and multilingual learning in Canada where English is the dominant language. In the end, what is significant is not the particular kind of literacy activities parents do with their children but what parents believe about language and literacy, as well as how they demonstrate what they believe

in on a daily basis. As Cummins (1981) in his early work argues, "languages exist for communicating meaning, and are therefore best learnt in situations where meanings are being communicated and learners are interested in what is being communicated" (p. 43). If parents practice multiliteracies with their children out of mutual interest with authentic purposes and in meaningful contexts, children will be motivated to explore multiliteracies by themselves or with their friends and parents across various subject areas and in different domains.

Fourth, it is important for parents and educators to communicate with each other about a child's overall experience at school. In the study, Shasha's mother expressed that she wanted to know more about school including the daily routines and different ways of teaching and learning. However, she did not know the best way to talk with Canadian teachers. When she was concerned about Shasha's reading performance, she asked Ms. G to conduct a reading test for Shasha so she could know whether Shasha had improved. This was overwhelming for Ms. G, since she had over 20 students in the classroom and she could only test one student once per term. Information sessions at different times of the school year could be helpful to encourage discussion between parents and teachers about the general aspects of school life. Parent-teacher meetings can be set up for reasons beyond children's report cards and reading levels. Parents should be encouraged to meet with their children's teachers if they feel there is a need. Written communication between parents and teachers can also be encouraged through journals or communication books. Furthermore, academic skills, such as reading and writing, are constantly tested at school, which sends the message to parents that academics are really important. Educators and parents need to have a dialogue to get to know each other's background and expectations so that the communication gap can be narrowed. Classroom teachers also need to try to understand CLD children's background and to support their learning needs. Willingness,

openness, time, efforts, and trust are needed for successful parent-teacher communication, which takes courage and time to build. If teachers and parents work together for the good of children, they need to be willing to communicate with each other including exchanging their ideas and sharing understanding in order to further support children's meaning making.

Children have different interests, needs and practices, and they use literacies differently for different purposes across different domains or in different contexts. As the meanings of literacy evolve and expand, parents' and educators' pedagogies will also need to change. Both groups need support in order to support children's literacy. If early childhood literacy is considered to be multiple and dynamic by educators, then children need to be considered as active and capable meaning-makers who have diverse ways to make sense of the world. Teachers and parents can and should provide resources and scaffolding for children to explore literacies from different perspectives and to make meaning of literacies using children's *funds of knowledge* in different places and spaces (Cummins & Early, 2011). Furthermore diverse literacies should be integrated into the classrooms, homes, and communities with meaningful purposes based on mutual interests. Reading and writing are certainly important, but art, music, and drama are also helpful to enhance children's literacies learning and comprehension (Kendrick, Jones, Mutonyi, & Norton, 2010; Landay & Wootton, 2012; Lewis & Wamsley, 2006). Educators, researchers, and families can work together to encourage and support children to explore literacies in different ways across different domains, including but not limited to pretend play, puppet shows, storytelling and story sharing, outdoor learning, making texts, singing and dancing, reading aloud in a meaningful way, composing multiple texts, using multiple modes and media, writing together, preparing for and performing in talent show and literacy nights with community members, celebrating festivals with community members, going

to school and community concerts and drama shows, going on field trips, and doing sports. Each school, each family, and each community has its own interests, needs and practices as well as funds of knowledge. There is no fixed set of rules or events to follow. What needs to be remembered clearly is that children are active meaning makers and “literacy is a global, social, historical, cultural, and political construct” (Larson & Marsh, 2013, p. 6). As adults, we need to work together to support children’s needs and interests. We can start by providing opportunities, places, spaces, support, and resources for children to make sense of the world around them in their ways and then go beyond this to allow children to explore and to have adventures among literacies.

Fifth, teachers need to critically examine the literacy programs promoted by the market and recommended by the local school boards. They should draw upon their own *funds of knowledge* to develop responsive literacy curricula for their students. The *Daily Five* program was developed by authors in the United States and claimed to help students to develop their literacy. However, the *Daily Five* did not provide the focal children with meaningful literacy engagement and the *Daily Five* did not provide teachers’ autonomy to design their own literacy activities based on students’ needs in the classroom but pushed teachers to adopt the program by following what was designed for students in another country. Like the programs they investigated, in my study the *Daily Five* “restrict[ed] educator’s abilities to compose student-informed curricula.” It “limit[ed] educational autonomy and scripted teachers’ working lives from them” (Hibbert & Iannacci, 2005, p. 723). In addition, the focal children performed procedural displays to manage the *Daily Five* rather than interact with each other to engage in authentic meaning making.



## 5.6 Future research directions

The study suggests a need for further explorations of children's meaning making practices across different domains with a focus on their informal learning. Informal learning can be understood as "any activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge or skill which occurs without the presence of externally imposed curricular criteria" (Livingstone, 2001, p. 4). Many studies have examined children's literacy learning at home and school from different perspectives (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Dickinson, 2001; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Dunsmore & Fisher, 2010; Foster, Lambert, Abbott-Shim, McCarty, & Franze, 2005; Hull & Schultz, 2002; Li, 2007, 2010; Li & Edwards, 2010; Manolitsis, Georgiou, & Tziraki, 2013; Levey & Polirstok, 2011; Kenner, 2004; Weinberger, 1996; Wells, 2009), and some studies have examined children's literacy practices in the communities, but less is known about children's ways of meaning making across domains with a focus on children's self-directed inquiry in relation to informal learning from a multiliteracies perspective (Heydon, 2013; Gregory, Long & Volk, 2004; Kenner, 1997; Kendrick, 2003; Rashid & Gregory, 1997).

The study also suggests that a more concentrated investigation into young children's self-directed literacy practices in formal domains such as schools. How do teachers view informal learning in relation to formal instructions in their classrooms? What are teachers' attitudes toward informal learning at school? Why do teachers have certain attitudes toward children's informal learning? If teachers have positive attitudes toward informal learning at school, how will teachers manage, or scaffold children's informal learning inside and outside classrooms at school?

Studies investigating children's meaning making as part of their informal learning at home could help to narrow the practice gap across domains. In particular, I have identified a

need to examine CLD children's multiple literacy practices at home from children's perspectives and from adults' and caretakers' perspectives. For example, an inquiry that takes a closer look at the concept of play as a literacy (Wohlwend, 2011) at home would be fruitful. In particular, there is a need to examine parents' understanding toward their children's play and their role in their children's play such as the way parents view play in relation to their children's literacies practices and the way they support or manage their children's' play in different places at home. Also useful would be to investigate children's play in relation to their self-initiated literacy practices, literacy choices, and identity construction such as the reasons they choose to play with certain texts, the way they construct their play, and the ways play can afford, support, or constrain children's identity options.

Further research is needed to examine the role of community in children's literacies learning: for example an exploration of the ways children communicate or interact with community members in different events at different times in different places; children's play on the playground; children's meaning making in the public library; and children's literacy practices in supermarkets or grocery stores.

My future research program will include additional case studies using ethnographic methods. My immediate plan is to conduct longitudinal ethnographic case studies to investigate children's literacy practices in various informal domains with a view to understanding children's self-initiated making meaning and informal literacy practices in relation to formal school literacy practices.

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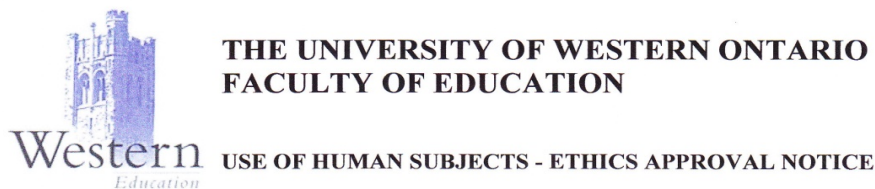
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## Appendices

## Appendix A: Ethics Approval




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Review Number: 1103-4  
 Principal Investigator: Rachel Heydon/Rosamund Stooke  
 Student Name: Xiaoxiao Du  
 Title: *Chinese Immigrant Children's Literacy Practices in Canada: A Case Study Approach Using Ethnographic Methods*  
 Expiry Date: August 31, 2011  
 Type: Ph.D. Thesis  
 Ethics Approval Date: April 12, 2011  
 Revision #:  
 Documents Reviewed &  
 Approved: UWO Protocol, Letters of Information & Consent

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This is to notify you that the Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board (REB), which operates under the authority of The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects, according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the date noted above. The approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the REB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

During the course of the research, no deviations from, or changes to, the study or information/consent documents may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB, except for minor administrative aspects. Participants must receive a copy of the signed information/consent documentation. Investigators must promptly report to the Chair of the Faculty Sub-REB any adverse or unexpected experiences or events that are both serious and unexpected, and any new information which may adversely affect the safety of the subjects or the conduct of the study. In the event that any changes require a change in the information/consent documentation and/or recruitment advertisement, newly revised documents must be submitted to the Sub-REB for approval.

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Dr. Alan Edmunds (Chair)

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*2010-2011 Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board*

<b>Dr. Alan Edmunds</b>	<b>Faculty of Education (Chair)</b>
<b>Dr. John Barnett</b>	<b>Faculty of Education</b>
<b>Dr. Jacqueline Specht</b>	<b>Faculty of Education</b>
<b>Dr. Farahnaz Faez</b>	<b>Faculty of Education</b>
<b>Dr. Wayne Martino</b>	<b>Faculty of Education</b>
<b>Dr. George Gadanidis</b>	<b>Faculty of Education</b>
<b>Dr. Immaculate Namukasa</b>	<b>Faculty of Education</b>
<b>Dr. Kari Veblen</b>	<b>Faculty of Music</b>
<b>Dr. Ruth Wright</b>	<b>Faculty of Music</b>
<b>Dr. Robert Macmillan</b>	<b>Faculty of Education, Associate Dean, Graduate Programs &amp; Research (<i>ex officio</i>)</b>
<b>Dr. Susan Rodger</b>	<b>Faculty of Education, UWO Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (<i>ex officio</i>)</b>

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Copy: Office of Research Ethics

## Appendix B: Interview Topics and questions

### I. Interviews with teachers on Chinese children's literacy practices at school

Interview notebook

Interview Date\_\_\_\_\_ Place\_\_\_\_\_ Time: from\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Teacher #\_\_\_\_\_ Grade\_\_\_\_\_

1. Teaching experience
2. Academic education background
3. Attitude toward minority languages and cultures
4. Pedagogy
5. Philosophy in teaching designs and plans
6. Teaching strategies in a multilingual and multicultural classroom
7. Impression of different Chinese children's literacy learning
8. Evaluation of Chinese children's literacy learning practices
9. Communications with parents (why, what, when and how)
10. Recommendations for Chinese children's (English) literacy learning

### II. Interviews with parents on their children's literacy practices at home

Interview Date\_\_\_\_\_ Place\_\_\_\_\_ Time: from\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Participant #\_\_\_\_\_ Grade\_\_\_\_\_ Parents\_\_\_\_\_ Teacher\_\_\_\_\_

Interview Questions

(In English and/or in Chinese depend on the English proficiency of parents and parents' choice)

1. Demographic questions such as education background and perspectives about multilingualism.
2. How many books (English and Chinese) at home?

3. What kind of books do you have at home (Books for Children and books for parents)?

1) Do you have literacy reference books (English or Chinese or both) at home?

Such as Dictionary, Map, Encyclopedia, Manual books (cooking, repairing).

2) Are there any extracurricular books at home?

Texts books, Story books, Novels, Comic strip books

4. Do you buy newspapers and magazines (English and Chinese)? If so, How often? And do you read newspapers and magazines with or to your children at home?

5. Are there some supplies for children to practice their literacy at home?

Such as Computer, Small board and makers, Pencil and paper, Books for coloring,

6. How much time do you spend with your children on reading at home weekly?

7. In What ways do you read to your children at home?

Parents read, Read together with children and Children ask questions, Read together with children and Parents ask children questions, Children read by themselves

8. How much time do you spend with your children on writing at home weekly?

9. What about other literacy activities you do with your children (such as play and drawing)?

10. Do you take your children to library or bookstores? If so, how often? How do your children respond to trips to library?

11. Do you teach your children Chinese or English at home?

If so, how much time do you spend on teaching the language weekly?

What kind of books or texts do you use? How do you teach?

12. Do you spend time doing literacy related activities with your children at home?

Such as Word card, Word toy, Word guess, Doggerel, and Conundrum.

13. If you buy books for your children, what kind of books do you buy and what kind of books do they prefer?
14. Do your children often read books at home? What do they read?
15. Do your children like to write at home? If so, what do they write (e.g. names, simple words or phrases, simple journal, letters or short paragraphs, and etc.)
16. How much time do your children spend on watching TV every day?
17. How much time do your children spend on playing computer games every day?
18. What do your children do when surfing on the Internet except playing games?
19. What's your understandings of your children's literacy practices at home?
20. Do you think home literacy practices are different from school literacy practices?

Topics for informal conversation with Chinese children at home

1. Demographic questions such as age, birth place, schooling in China and Canada
2. Literacy learning in China
3. Literacy learning in Canada
4. Similarities and differences of literacy learning in China and Canada
3. Attitude toward learning first language (Chinese) and culture
4. Attitude toward learning English and Canadian culture
5. Impression of learning Chinese in Canada
6. Impression of learning English in Canada
7. Parents' support on English and Chinese literacy learning in Canada
8. Teachers' support on English literacy learning in Canada
9. Learning Chinese and English in Canada

(Adapted from Xiaoxiao Du's Master's thesis Interview questions)

**THE CHINESE VERSION IS BELOW.**

## 附录 B

## 采访主题

**I. 采访教师以了解中国移民儿童在学校的语言文字学习情况。**

采访日期：\_\_\_\_\_ 地点：\_\_\_\_\_ 时间：\_\_\_\_\_ 至\_\_\_\_\_

采访对象教师 编号\_\_\_\_\_ 年级\_\_\_\_\_

1. 教学经验
2. 教育学历背景
3. 对少数民族语言与文化的看法
4. 教学方法
5. 教学设计和教学策略的思想体系
6. 在多语言和多文化课堂中的教学策略
7. 对不同的中国儿童语言文字学习的印象
8. 对中国儿童的语言文字学习情况的评估
9. 与中国儿童家长的交流 (原因, 内容, 时间和方式)
10. 对中国儿童英文语言文字学习的建议

**II. 采访家长以了解他们的孩子在家时的语言文字学习情况**

采访日期：\_\_\_\_\_ 地点：\_\_\_\_\_ 时间：\_\_\_\_\_ 至\_\_\_\_\_

采访对象编号\_\_\_\_\_ 年级\_\_\_\_\_ 家长\_\_\_\_\_ 教师\_\_\_\_\_

## 采访的问题

(采访时用英语或者汉语由家长决定, 基于家长的语言熟练程度和偏好)

1. 基本统计取样问题。例如教育背景和多语言的使用情况。
2. 在家里有多少书（英语和汉语）？
3. 在家里有什么种类的书（儿童书籍和家长书籍）？
  - a) 在家里有没有读写方面的参考书（英语，汉语，或者双语）例如：字典，地图，百科全书，说明书（烹饪，修理）？
  - b) 在家里有没有学校课程以外的书籍？例如：识字书，故事书，小说，卡通书。
4. 有没有买报纸和杂志（英文或中文）？如果有，购买的频率？是否会和孩子一起看或者读给孩子听？
5. 在家里有没有日常用具来支持孩子练习语言文字能力？  
例如电脑，小的写字板和记事笔，铅笔和纸，涂画书和蜡笔。
6. 每周在家里有多少时间和孩子一起读书？
7. 在家里用什么方式和孩子一起读书？  
家长读、一起读同时孩子提问题、一起读同时家长问孩子问题、孩子自己独立读。
8. 每周在家里有多少时间和孩子一起写？
9. 有没有和孩子做其他的练习语言文字能力的活动（例如玩画图）？
10. 有没有带孩子去图书馆和书店？如果有，多长时间去一次？孩子对去这些地方反响如何？
11. 你是否有在家里教孩子汉语或者英语？  
如果有，你每周花多少时间教孩子语言？使用什么种类的书或者课本？怎样教？
12. 是否在家里花时间和孩子一起做有关提高语言文字能力的活动？  
例如识字卡片、练习识字的玩具、猜字游戏、顺口溜 和猜谜语。

13. 如果你买书给孩子，你买什么种类的书，孩子喜欢什么种类的书？
14. 在家里孩子是否经常读书？读什么样的书？
15. 在家里孩子是否写东西？如果是的孩子写什么(例如名字、简单的词或者短语、简单的记事、短信或者短的段落等等)
16. 每天孩子花多少时间看电视？
17. 每天孩子花多少时间玩电子游戏？
18. 你的孩子在上网时除了玩游戏做什么？
19. 您怎样看待您孩子在家的语言文字学习情况？
20. 您认为学习和家庭的语言文字学习情况有什么不同？

#### **在做中国移民孩子家访时可能谈到的话题**

1. 统计分析问题，例如年龄、出生地、在中国和加拿大就读的学校。
2. 在中国时的语言文字学习
3. 在加拿大的语言文字学习
4. 在中国和加拿大语言文字学习的相似之处与不同点
3. 对学习第一语言中文与中国文化的态度
4. 对学习英语和加拿大文化的态度
5. 在加拿大学中文的印象
6. 在加拿大学英语的印象
7. 在加拿大父母对学习英语和汉语语言文字的支持
8. 在加拿大教师对学习英语语言文字的支持
9. 怎样看待在加拿大学习中文和英文。

## Appendix C: LETTER OF INFORMATION (For Parents and children)

### Introduction

My name is Xiaoxiao Du and I am a Ph.D. student at the Faculty of Education at The University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research into Chinese children's literacy practices at home, school and in the community; and I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

### Purpose of the study

The aims of this study are to have an in-depth understanding of Chinese children's literacy practices in different literacy environments and produce rich descriptions of Chinese immigrant children's literacy practices.

### If you agree to participate

If you agree to participate in this study, you (the parent) will be asked to participate in a 45-minute semi-structured interview about your understandings of your child's literacy practices.

The interview will be audio-recorded and will be transcribed into written format, and you will be provided with a copy of the interview transcript so that you can make changes if you want. It may take you 10 minutes to check the interview transcript. Copies or photographs of your child's literacy work samples will be also collected by the researcher to help understand your child's literacy practices; and some of your child's literacy work samples may be used to present the results of the study but all identifying data will be removed from the collected literacy work samples. You are also asked to allow the researcher to observe your child (ren)'s literacy practices at school, at home and in the community on a weekly basis from April to August, 2011.



At your home, the researcher will observe your child's literacy practices and have information conversations with your child(ren) about their literacy practices. If you are involved in your children's literacy practices, your literacy practices or support will be also observed and written in the researcher's field notes.

### Confidentiality

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. No real names will be used in the study and all participants will be given pseudonyms based on participants' choice. All electronic information collected for the study will be stored in a password protected computer and other forms of data will be stored in a locked cabinet. All the collected data will be destroyed five years after the study is finished.

### Risks & Benefits

There are no known risks to participating in this study. The study may help educators better understand Chinese children's literacy practices at different settings and effectively support their literacy learning at schools. The study may also help parents to better understand their children's literacy practices so as to better support their children's literacy learning at home.

### Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You or your child may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your child's grades or academic status.

### Questions

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario. If you have any questions about this study, please contact Xiaoxiao Du OR Professor. Rachel Heydon OR Professor. Rosamund Stooke.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Thank you,

Xiaoxiao Du

### **CHINESE VERSION IS BELOW.**

#### 附录 C

#### **加拿大中国儿童的语言文字学习：个案研究的方法**

研究课题的招募信(父母与子女)

#### **介绍**

我的名字是杜肖潇。我是西安大略大学教育系的博士生。我目前正在研究中国儿童在家庭、学校和社区的语言文字学习情况。我想邀请您参加这项研究。

#### **目的**

我博士论文的研究目的是深入地了解中国儿童在不同语言文化环境中的语言文字学习情况，并对此话题写出详细的论文。

### **如果您同意参加**

如果您同意参与这项研究中，我会邀请您参与一个大约 45 分钟的采访，请您谈谈有关您孩子语言文字学习的情况和您对此的见解。我会把这次采访的语音录下来，然后翻译成书面文字。我会给您提供一份采访的书面文字，供您检查，如果有必要，您可以进行改动。检查采访的书面文字大约会需要 10 分钟。此外，您还将允许我每周一次地观察您孩子在学校、家庭和社区的语言文字学习情况。我会观察您和您孩子在家里的语言学习相关活动，并写在我的观察日记里。我还会和您孩子谈谈他/她的语言学习情况，并收集您孩子的语言文字作品来帮我了解您孩子的语言文化学习情况，有一部分语言文字作品可能会用于到我博士论文的写作中，您孩子的名字不会出现在我的论文中。这项研究可能从 2011 年 4 月开始并在 2011 年 8 月结束。

### **收集的信息的机密性**

所有采集的数据将只用于研究目的，您的名字和相关信息将不会用于任何出版物或讲。为研究收集的所有信息将被都严格保密。研究中不会采用您的真实姓名，您可以根据自己的喜好选择一个假名字。所有的电子文件都会保存在有密码保护的电脑里，其它数据会锁在文件柜里。研究结束五年后，所有收集的数据将被销毁。

### **风险和益处**

参与这项研究不会给您带来害处。此项研究可能帮助教育工作者更好地了解中国儿童在不同的环境下的语言文字学习情况，从而有效地支持中国移民孩子在学校语言文字学习。

此项研究还可以帮助家长更好地了解子女的语言文字学习情况，从而更好地支持孩子在家里的语言文字学习。

### **自愿参与参与**

参与这项研究是自愿的。您或您的孩子可以拒绝参加，拒绝回答任何问题，或在任何时候退出研究，绝对不会影响您孩子在学校的成績。

### **问题**

如果您对这项研究有任何疑问，或对您作为研究参与者的权利有任何疑问，您可以联系西安大略大学研究道德办公室。如果您对这项研究有任何问题，请联系杜肖潇或 Rachel Heydon 教授 或 Rosamund Stooke 教授。

请您保留这封信以供将来参考。

十分感谢，

杜肖潇

## Appendix D: LETTER OF INFORMATION (For Grandparents)

### Introduction

My name is Xiaoxiao Du and I am a Ph.D. student at the Faculty of Education at The University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research into Chinese children's literacy practices at home, school and in the community; and I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

### Purpose of the study

The aims of this study are to have an in-depth understanding of Chinese immigrant children's literacy practices in different literacy environments and produce rich descriptions of Chinese immigrant children's literacy practices.

### If you agree to participate

If you agree to participate in this study, you are asked to allow the researcher to observe the literacy practices between you and your grandchild (ren) at home and in the community on a weekly basis from April to August, 2011. And the researcher will have informal conversations with you about your grandchild(ren)'s literacy practices which will be written in the researcher's field notes.

### Confidentiality

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. No real names will be

used in the study and all participants will be given pseudonyms based on participants' choice. All electronic information collected for the study will be stored in a password protected computer and other forms of data will be stored in a locked cabinet. All the collected data will be destroyed five years after the study is finished.

#### Risks & Benefits

There are no known risks to participating in this study. The study may help educators better understand Chinese children's literacy practices at different settings and effectively support their literacy learning at schools. The study may also help parents to better understand their children's literacy practices so as to better support their children's literacy learning at home.

#### Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You or your child may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your grandchild's grades or academic status.

#### Questions

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario. If you have any questions about this study, please contact Xiaoxiao Du OR Professor. Rachel Heydon OR Professor. Rosamund Stooke.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Thank you,

Xiaoxiao Du

**CHINESE VERSION IS BELOW.**

附录 D

**加拿大中国儿童的语言文字学习：个案研究的方法**

研究课题的招募信(祖父母)

**介绍**

我的名字是杜肖潇。我是西安大略大学教育系的博士生。我目前正在研究中国儿童在家庭、学校和社区的语言文字学习情况。我想邀请您参加这项研究。

**目的**

我博士论文的研究目的是深入地了解中国儿童在不同语言文化环境中的语言文字学习情况，并对此话题写出详细的论文。

**如果您同意参加**

如果您同意参与这项研究中，我会请您谈谈有关您孩子语言文字学习的情况和您对此的见解。此外，您还将允许我每周一次地观察您和您孙子/孙女在家庭和社区的语言文字学习情况，我会把我观察的情况写在我的观察记录里。这项研究可能从 2011 年 4 月开始并在 2011 年 8 月结束。

**收集的信息的机密性**

所有采集的数据将只用于研究目的，您的名字和相关信息将不会用于任何出版物或讲。

为研究收集的所有信息将被都严格保密。研究中不会采用您的真实姓名，您可以根据自己的喜好选择一个假名字。所有的电子文件都会保存在有密码保护的电脑里，其它数据会锁在文件柜里。研究结束五年后，所有收集的数据将被销毁。

### **风险和益处**

参与这项研究不会给您带来害处。此项研究可能帮助教育工作者更好地了解中国移民儿童在不同的环境下的语言文字学习情况，从而有效地支持中国孩子在学校的语言文字学习。此项研究还可以帮助家长更好地了解子女的语言文字学习情况，从而更好地支持孩子在家里的语言文字学习。

### **自愿参与参与**

参与这项研究是自愿的。你可以拒绝参加，拒绝回答任何问题，或在任何时候退出研究，绝对不会影响您孙子/孙女在学校的成绩。

### **问题**

如果您对这项研究有任何疑问，或对您作为研究参与者的权利有任何疑问，您可以联系西安大略大学研究道德办公室。如果您对这项研究有任何问题，请联系杜肖潇或 Rachel Heydon 教授 或 Rosamund Stooke 教授。

请您保留这封信以供将来参考。

十分感谢，

杜肖潇



## Appendix E: LETTER OF INFORMATION (For principal)

### Introduction

My name is Xiaoxiao Du and I am a Ph.D. candidate at the Faculty of Education at The University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research into Chinese children's literacy practices at home, school and in the community.

### Purpose of the study

The aims of this study are to have an in-depth understanding of Chinese children's literacy practices in different literacy environments and produce rich descriptions of Chinese immigrant children's literacy practices.

I am asking your permission to allow me (the researcher) to come to your school and observe participating children's literacy practices at school on a weekly basis from April to June, 2011.

### Confidentiality

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither the name of the school or the researcher participants will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. No real names will be used in the study and all participants will be given pseudonyms based on participants' choice. All the collected data will be kept safely in a locked desk. The researcher is the only one who has access to the desk. All the collected data will be destroyed five years after the study is finished.

## Questions

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study, you may contact the Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario. If you have any questions about this study, please contact Xiaoxiao Du OR Professor. Rachel Heydon OR Professor. Rosamund Stooke.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Thank you,

Xiaoxiao Du

## Appendix F: LETTER OF INFORMATION (For teachers)

### Introduction

My name is Xiaoxiao Du and I am a Ph.D. candidate at the Faculty of Education at The University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research into Chinese children's literacy practices at home, school and in the community; and I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

### Purpose of the study

The aims of this study are to have an in-depth understanding of Chinese children's literacy practices in different literacy environments and produce rich descriptions of Chinese immigrant children's literacy practices.

### If you agree to participate

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a 30-minute semi-structured interview about your understandings of participating children's literacy practices at school. The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed into written format; and you will be provided with a copy of the transcript so that you can make changes if you wish. It may take about 10 minutes for you to check the transcript. You will also allow the researcher to observe participating children's literacy practices in your class at school on a weekly basis from April to June, 2011. The researcher will also collect the participating children's literacy work samples based on children and parents' agreements.

### Confidentiality

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. No real names will be used in the study and all participants will be given pseudonyms based on participants' choice. All the collected data will be kept safely in a locked desk. The researcher is the only one who has access to the desk. All electronic information collected for the study will be stored in a password protected computer. All the collected data will be destroyed five years after the study is finished.

#### Risks & Benefits

There are no known risks to participating in this study. The study may help educators better understand Chinese children's literacy practices at different settings and effectively support their literacy learning at schools. The study may also help parents to better understand their children's literacy practices so as to better support their children's literacy learning at home.

#### Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your employment status.

#### Questions

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario. If you have

any questions about this study, please contact Xiaoxiao Du OR Professor. Rachel Heydon OR Professor. Rosamund Stooke.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Thank you,

Xiaoxiao Du

Appendix G: CONSENT FORM (For parents and children)

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

Name of child (please print):

Signature of Child:

Name of Parent/Guardian (please print):

Signature:

Date:

附录 G

**加拿大中国儿童的语言文字学习：个案研究的方法**

知情同意书（父母与子女）

我已经看过研究课题的招募信，我清楚地了解了研究的性质，我同意我和我的孩子参加此项研究。我对所有问题的回答满意。

儿童的名称（请书写）:

儿童的签名:

家长 / 监护人的名称（请书写）:

签名:

日期:

Appendix H: CONSENT FORM (For grandparents)

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

Name of Grandparents (please print):

Signature:

Date:

附录 H

**加拿大中国儿童的语言文字学习：个案研究的方法**

知情同意书（祖父母）

我已经看过研究课题的招募信，我清楚地了解了研究的性质，我同意我和我的孩子参加此项研究。我对所有问题的回答满意。

祖父母的名称（请书写）:

签名:

日期:

## Appendix I: CONSENT FORM (For teachers)

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

Name (please print):

Signature:

Date:

Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent: \_\_\_\_\_

Date



Appendix J: Reading corner in Mrs. G's classroom



## Appendix K: Leno's Quick write samples

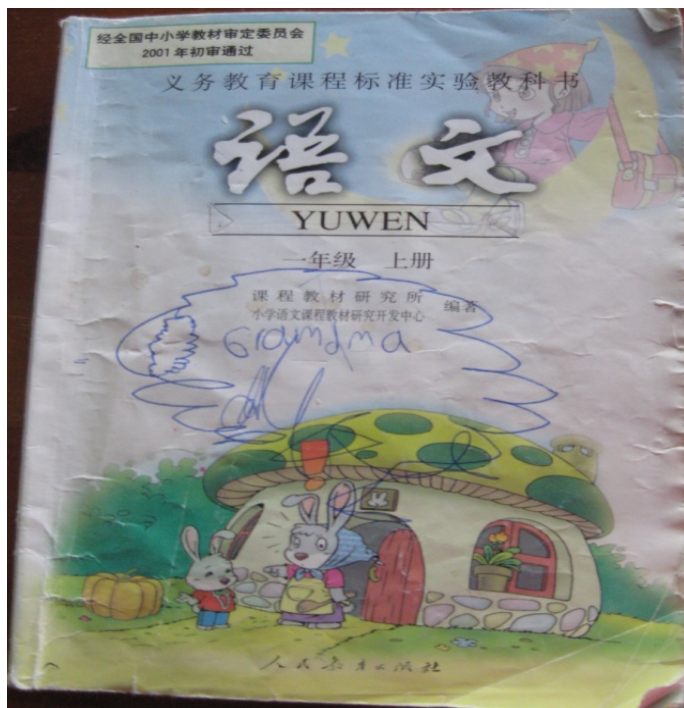
Jan Feb 3, 2011  
 A Wild Cat Feb 5, 2011 Wild cat  
 I help my mom  
 sometimes.

MARCH 22, 2011  
 I read the cat in the hot  
 and go to S

June 6, 2011  
 I like it a lot because this then



Appendix L: Shasha's Chinese and Mathematics textbooks



Appendix M: Shasha's Chinese writing exercise book


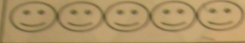

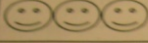

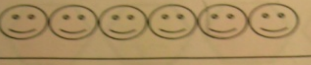





Appendix N: Shasha's Math book from the public school




**FRIDAY Data Management**




Use the pictograph to answer the questions.



**Favourite Fruit**


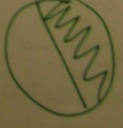
	
	
	

How many?  5  3  6

Circle the most popular fruit.    2

Circle the least popular fruit.    ✓

**RAIN STRETCH**  

our  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the circle.    $5 + 3$

Chalkboard Publishing © 2007



Appendix O: Shasha's English Spelling exercise book

(27)


Spelling Words	Class Words	My Words
at	duck	
orse	dog	
ow	frog	

**Words**

cat	6.	frog
cat		frog
cat		frog
horse	7.	
horse		
horse		
cow	8.	
cow		
cow		
duck	9.	
duck		
duck		
dog	10.	
dog		
dog		

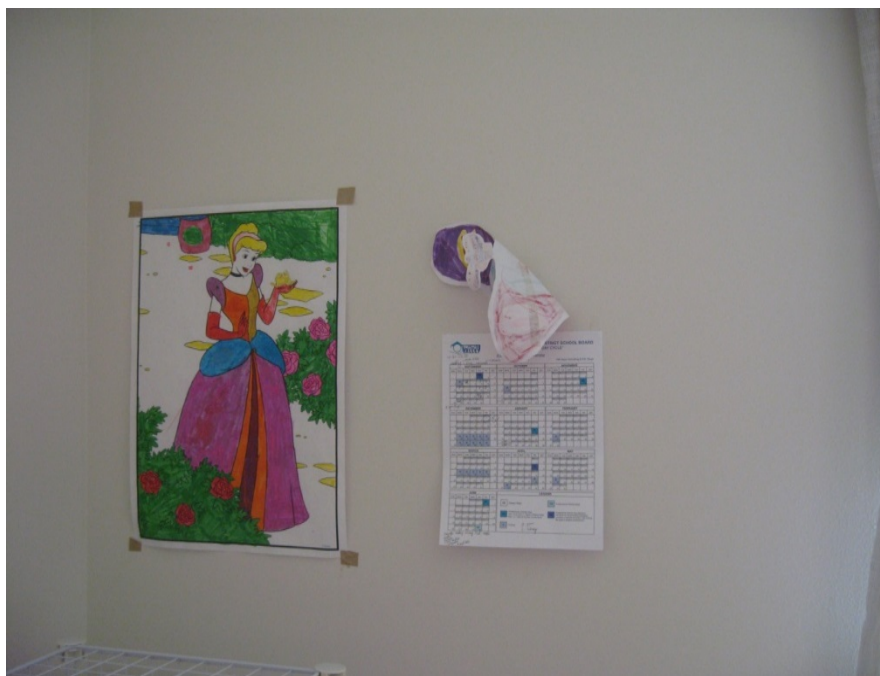
**ABC Order**

1. cat
2. cow
3. dog
4. duck
5. frog
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix P: Shasha's drawings and colourings in her room







Appendix Q: Books at Brian's home

Parents references books

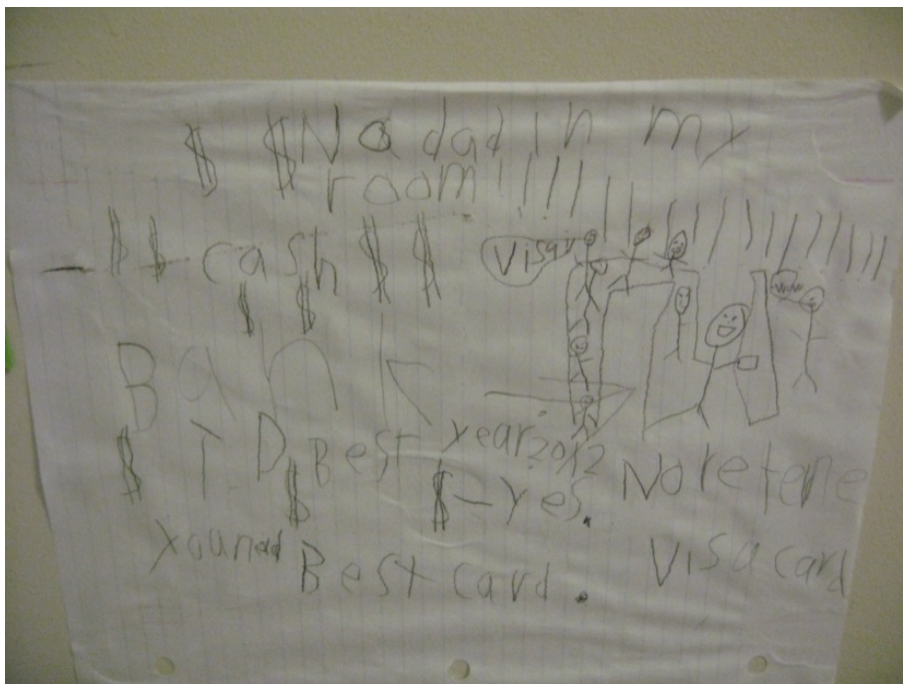


Brian's summer workbook

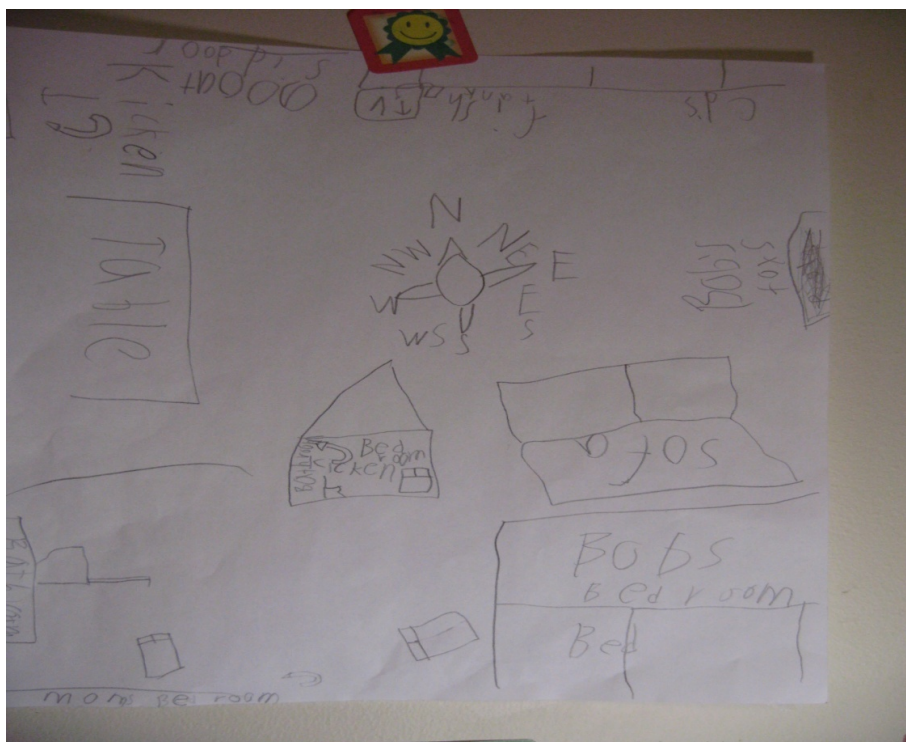


Appendix R: Brian's drawings in his room

Banking

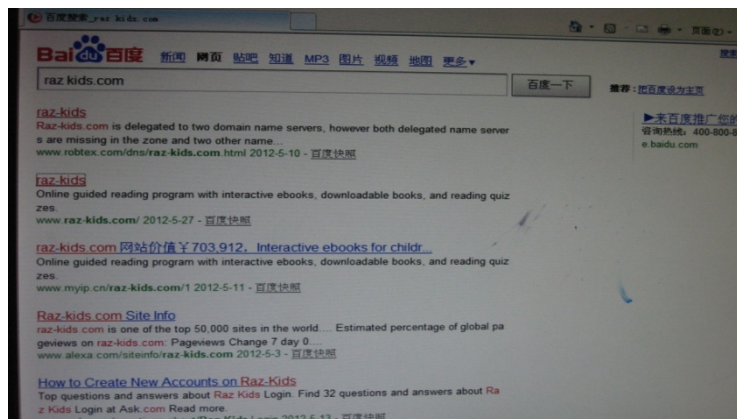


Map of Brian's place





## Appendix S: Brian played on the computer



## Curriculum Vitae

Name: Xiaoxiao Du

Post-secondary Education and Degrees:

Shenyang Normal University  
Shenyang, Liaoning, P.R. China  
2000-2004 B.A. With Distinction

Laurentian University  
Sudbury, Ontario, Canada  
2005-2006 M.A. (Interdisciplinary Humanities)

The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2006-2008 M.Ed. (Curriculum Studies)

The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2008-2014 Ph.D. (Educational Studies)

Honours and Awards:

Joan Pedersen Memorial Graduate Award  
Faculty of Education, The University of Western Ontario  
2008

Province of Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS)  
2009-2010; 2010-2011; 2011-2012 deferred to 2012-2013;

The LANCHAT Center Doctoral Fellowship  
University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark  
2010

The INSPiRE Doctoral Fellowship  
The University of Western Ontario  
2010

John Dearness Memorial Graduate Award  
Faculty of Education, The University of Western Ontario  
2012-2013

Related Work Experience:

Public School Teacher  
Anshan No. 1 Senior Middle School  
2004-2005

Graduate Teaching Assistant

Department of English, Laurentian University  
2005-2006

Graduate Research Assistant  
Faculty of Education, The University of Western Ontario  
2007; 2008-2009; 2011, 2013

Graduate Teaching Assistant  
Faculty of Education, The University of Western Ontario  
2010-2011; 2012

International Language Instructor  
London International Academy  
2012

Curriculum Developer  
The English Language Centre at Western  
2013

Publications:

- Du, X. (2013). On their way to become multilingual and multicultural: The case of immigrant children in Canada. *Proceedings of the Inaugural European Conference on Education (ECE)*, Brighton, England, United Kingdom.
- Du, X. (2012). Chinese children's literacy learning in different environments in Canada. *Proceedings of the annual conference of the American Educational Research Association (AERA)*, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.
- Du, X. (2010). Book review of Edwards, Viv. (2009). *Learning to be literate: Multilingual perspectives*, *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 7(3). 275-278.
- Du, X. (2010). Book review of Li, G. (2006). Culturally contested pedagogy: Battles of literacy and schooling between mainstream teachers and Asian immigrant parents, *Hong Kong Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 12(2), 111-112.
- Du, X. (2008). Parental influences on Chinese children's biliteracy development. *Bilingual Basics*, 10(2).