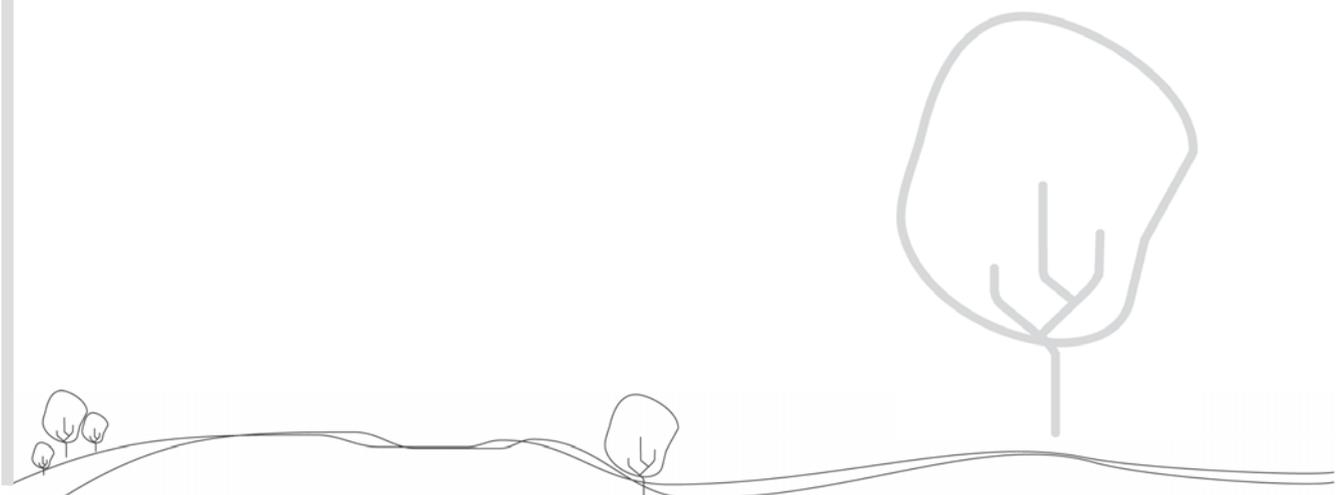




Teaching Literature in the Multicultural Classroom

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1. Introduction

This Teaching and Learning Initiative (TLRI) research project explored ways of teaching literature effectively in multicultural and multilingual classrooms. It involved primary and secondary school teacher-researchers working in partnership with university-based researchers over two years on a series of case studies, within an action research framework. The case studies involved classroom-based interventions carried out by individual teachers and developed collaboratively with the larger project group.

1.1 The project context

The project took as its starting point two contextual factors:

- The New Zealand classroom, at primary and secondary levels, is becoming more multicultural and multilingual. In a number of ways schools and teachers are under increased pressure to find constructive and productive ways of responding to this increased multiculturalism and multilingualism (see May, 2002).
- While the curriculum, assessment and qualifications reforms in New Zealand in the past 20 years have “reoriented” the national English curriculum and made it a more “language-centred” document, the privileged status of the study of literary texts remains. One of the six basic outcomes of the New Zealand national English curriculum is that students “respond personally to and think critically about a range of texts, including literary texts” (Ministry of Education 1994, **page ref**). More recently, *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) has stated that “The study of New Zealand and world literature contributes to students’ developing sense of identity, their awareness of New Zealand’s bicultural heritage, and their understanding of the world” (p. 18).

Related to these two factors are two linked problematics.

The first of these focuses on the situation of the student in New Zealand classrooms for whom English is an additional language (EAL) or whose culture is not represented in certain constructions of the “literary canon”. (In broad terms, we view the existence of a literary canon as a given in any literate society, and would see such a canon as the collection of texts regarded widely as of value in the society for both style and content. By extension, a canon is a historically situated and socially constructed thing, and inextricably linked to the power of certain groups.) As Locke and May (2004) have argued, at secondary level, students with an interest in literature, for whom English is a second or additional language, have two options. They “do” it in English, or (at least at senior levels) they do not do it at all. For such students, “doing it” means:

- a reading diet of texts in English, mostly composed in English and written for audiences for whom English is a first language
- English language as the default language of instruction
- assessment events in English language (occasionally oral but usually written).

As an option for doing literature, this hardly represents an opportunity to develop and use one's first language as an integral part of one's schooling. Indeed, what is being fostered and perpetuated by this arrangement is both discouragement in respect of a curriculum entitlement and, in situations where EAL students brave this barrier, the construction of English as a hegemonic language (and conversely, the construction of non-English languages (including sign languages) as second-class "literary" languages).

The second of these problematics focuses on the status of the "literary". Despite the apparently assured place of literature in most mother-tongue (L1) curriculums, there are a number of reasons why "literature" must be viewed as a shifting target. On the one hand, its status as a category has been affected by the attack on traditional constructions of the literary canon (for example, on the basis of sexism, Eurocentricism and so on). Questions such as "What should be categorised as literature?" are not settled ones. On the other hand, changes in critical theory have meant the proliferation of approaches to literary study. Putting it bluntly, there is no simple answer to the question, "What constitutes literature-related literacy?" Indeed, some theorists would challenge the validity of such a construction. Nevertheless, as will be explained, project researchers *did* articulate and apply a "working definition" of literature in the second year of the project.

Moreover, there are two ways in which the rise of digital technologies (information and communications technologies, or ICTs) are complicating issues around the "literary". Firstly, because literature has always been technologised, the current revolutionary changes in technology are having an effect on textual practices related to literature; that is, to their reception, composition and dissemination. Secondly, new technologies offer the opportunity for new ways of engaging in the reading and composition of literary texts (see, for example, Unsworth, Thomas, Simpson, & Asha, 2005).

Questions also need to be raised about just how *assured* the place of literary study actually is, both in the New Zealand context and in the Anglophonic world generally.

As Locke (2008b) has argued, there are a number of factors that can potentially contribute to a "squeeze" on literary engagement in English/literacy classrooms. One of these is an increasingly crowded curriculum. In the New Zealand setting, technology was introduced as a distinct curriculum learning area in 1991 rather than viewed as a transdisciplinary dimension of teaching and learning. While different subjects or disciplines fight it out for timetable space, the subject English itself has also become more crowded as it has expanded, with some variations depending on setting, to accommodate emphases on oracy, popular culture and the reading and production of visual and multimodal texts. While a curriculum document may call for a focus on literary texts, the reality at school and classroom level may be a kind of tired and perfunctory coverage, while the reasons for "doing" literature remain vague, dubious and unquestioned.

In a number of settings, poetry particularly seems to be in rather a bad way. American Poet Laureate, Billy Collins, has described “high schools are places where poetry goes to die” (Cahnmann, 2003, p. 29). Australian teacher/poets, Jeri Kroll and Steven Evans state that: “The tragic truth is that poetry, through neglect by teachers, is terminally ill in the majority of Victorian schools” (Bantick, 2004, p. 11 as cited in Kroll & Evans, 2008, p. 36). Benton’s two-part report on the Poetry Research Project 1998 analysed the practices of 170 secondary school teachers in a reasonably typical Local Education Authority (LEA) in respect of the teaching of poetry and their attitudes towards it. What concerned teachers in this 1998 study in England were examinations, time pressures and syllabus content (Benton, 1999, p. 529). More teachers felt negative rather than positive about their new (1995) curriculum, with negative reasons including prescriptiveness, pressure of time and dissatisfaction with the way the curriculum was being mediated via the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) syllabuses and the perceived requirements of Standard Achievements Tests (SATs) (Benton, 2000, p. 84). According to Benton, “Sixty-five percent of teachers surveyed would agree with the proposition that ‘I feel constrained by the examinations to spoon-feed my classes rather than letting them develop their own views about poems’” (1999, p. 530). In year 11, 67 percent of teachers “rarely” or “never” asked pupils to write a poem (2000, p. 89). Compared to a similar 1982 survey, the numbers of teachers citing “pleasure” or “enjoyment” as reasons for responding to poetry actually fell from 31 percent to 21 percent.

A comparable situation has occurred at secondary level in New Zealand, where syllabuses have been replaced by a qualifications system based on discrete standards. (Locke, 2007). Because the syllabus has been replaced by a cluster of separate standards, there is nothing to stop an assessment-driven school from removing poetry and short stories from their classroom programme and drilling students in essay writing based on the study of a couple of feature articles (Locke, 2008a). As Helen O’Neill’s (2006) research has shown, given this kind of qualifications-driven choice, teachers are abandoning poetry in droves in favour of so-called safer options.

In broad terms, the current TLRI research project engaged eight New Zealand teachers, at primary and secondary level (one withdrew in 2008), as researchers exploring ways of fostering the productive teaching and learning of literature in multicultural classrooms. One assumption was that there is no single pedagogy for the reading and production of literary texts. We were aware of the TLRI pilot study of Sandretto and colleagues (see Sandretto et al., 2006) on the development of critical literary practices in primary schools and were interested in their identification of a problem in measuring student growth in reading comprehension constructed in critical literacy terms. However, unlike this project, their work was concerned with a single approach to reading, had a primary-only focus and was concerned with a broad range of text types.

McNaughton, Lai, MacDonald, and Farry (2004) highlighted in the initial observations and achievement data of their research that the identification and use of cultural and linguistic resources needed to be increased to raise the reading comprehension achievement for culturally and linguistically diverse students in middle and upper levels of lower decile primary and secondary schools. They stated:

Specifically, there was a need to understand better the children's complex thinking in familiar everyday activities and finding ways to bridge from these capabilities into the less familiar classroom texts and activities. (p. 191)

At a literacy symposium in Hamilton, for primary school preservice and inservice educators (16 August 2006), another report was presented, which focused on the continuing work of these researchers. While the effects of interventions, which took place over three years, highlighted high gains in the instructional focus of the teachers, the concern in terms of teacher use of cultural and linguistic resources was again mentioned. In other words, despite increases in the focus of teacher instruction in reading comprehension, which had resulted in maintaining previous gains of achievement for Māori and Pasifika students, the incorporation of cultural and linguistic resources was still at a "low level".

In terms of the current project, we began by viewing the teaching and learning of literature in the multicultural classroom as characterised by:

- respect for and use of the languages of the students who comprise a particular classroom
- where practicable, some provision being made for one or more of study, instruction and assessment to occur in more than one language in a particular classroom.

This would lead to such outcomes as:

- an appreciation of the different meanings social groups bring to the idea of literature
- an understanding of some of the patterns of production, consumption and dissemination characterising literature in society
- a realisation that there are different ways to read literature and that the experience of reading literature differs between individual persons and social groups
- an engagement with and appreciation of the shaping power of the verbal imagination
- an understanding of the connection between oral tradition and literary textuality
- a developed understanding of "the other" through encounters with texts from unfamiliar cultures and traditions
- an engagement with "the other" through texts leading to a deepened understanding of one's own position(s) in the world
- an enhanced understanding of how language works through encounters with other language traditions and by reflecting on problems posed by acts of "translation"
- an enhanced appreciation of similarity and difference as a result of the study of texts from a range of cultural traditions dealing with a particular theme or topic
- an understanding of ways in which literary texts are technologically mediated and are being re-mediated under the pressure of new digital technologies.

Needless to say, this set of outcomes is hugely idealistic. The extent to which they might be realised in a selection of New Zealand classrooms and the *how* of this realisation was what the project was aimed at finding out.

2. Aims, objectives and research questions

The overall aim of this project was to find effective ways of teaching literature in multicultural and multilingual classrooms at primary and secondary level. In doing so, the aim was to develop a range of effective classroom approaches and practices for the teaching of literature in such settings. A subsidiary aim was to link the research associated with this project with research being done in relation to other L1 (mother-tongue) curriculums. A further subsidiary aim was the eventual production of at least one teaching resource on the subject of teaching literature in the multicultural classroom.

Objectives

In order to achieve these aims, University of Waikato researchers, in conjunction with the project's teacher-researchers, sought to:

- review a range of approaches to the reading and composition of literary texts in primary and secondary classrooms
- review a range of pedagogical (including questioning) strategies aimed at motivating students and enhancing the teaching and learning of literature in primary and secondary classrooms
- develop, trial and evaluate a range of strategies or interventions for achieving cultural and linguistic inclusiveness in the teaching and learning of literature.

Research questions

In order to achieve these objectives, the following research questions guided the project:

1. What discourses currently shape teacher understandings of “literature teaching” and “cultural and linguistic inclusiveness”? How do these discourses relate to each other and to the larger context of the national policy environment?
2. What features characterise the successful classroom practices/processes of a sample of teachers engaging students in activities aimed at fostering their ability to engage in the reading and composition of literary texts?
3. In particular, what aspects of pedagogy have been successful in developing a culturally and linguistically inclusive classroom for the teaching and learning of literature? (These aspects may include programme design, resourcing, activity design and formative assessment.)

4. In what ways can information and communications technologies (ICTs) be integrated productively in a culturally and linguistically inclusive classroom for the teaching and learning of literature?

3. Research design and methodologies

This research project drew on the case study (including self-study), action research, ethnographic and critical discourse analytical traditions of educational research. Over two years, three university researchers worked with teachers at primary and secondary level who had an interest in the teaching and learning of literature in multicultural and multilingual classrooms. The teachers involved were based in schools with a high degree of cultural and linguistic diversity. At secondary level, the English teachers were subject specialists and heads of their respective departments (HODs). They were given the opportunity to work with students at one or more levels of the secondary school in addressing the requirements of the English curriculum and, perhaps, National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) assessment standards. At primary level, generalist teachers within the Years 3–8 range were given the opportunity to facilitate “literature-related literacies” (Locke & Andrews, 2004) within their overall literacy programmes.

At the proposal stage, a number of teachers based in South and West Auckland schools expressed interest in exploring ways of enhancing the teaching and learning of literature in their classrooms. Most teachers were known to the university researchers though some were contacted via recommendations from subject specialists at the teacher advisory service Team Solutions. All teachers were based in multicultural or multilingual schools, many with numbers of Māori and Pasifika students. Others had large numbers of new immigrants, including Asian students. All of the principals of these schools indicated a willingness to have staff involved as teacher-researchers in the proposed project.

The research partnership, therefore, met the needs of both schools’ and TLRI goals in that the inquiry was focused on questions of practice of importance to teachers and the profession.

3.1 University of Waikato researchers and practitioners

University of Waikato researchers and practitioners involved in the project were:

Project director: Associate Professor Terry Locke

Project researcher: Gail Cawkwell

Project researcher: Emilie Sila’ila’i

Consultative reference group members: The project team made use of a School of Education consultative team with expertise in researching in multicultural settings and researching approaches to teaching literature. The team was assisted by Professor Stephen May, Professor

Noeline Alcorn, Dr Rosemary De Luca, Associate Professor Deborah Fraser and Nepia Mahuik (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences).

3.2 Teacher-researchers/participating teachers

Partnerships were at the heart of this project, the major relationship being that between researchers based at the University of Waikato and the teacher-researchers. Teachers participating in this project (see Table 1) had clearly indicated an interest in the research topic and had a proven record of reflective practice.

Of the secondary participants, Alison Cleary (HOD English, Tuakau College) had taught in South Auckland secondary schools with large multicultural populations for more than 20 years and was already engaged in postgraduate study at the University of Waikato. She was motivated to participate in this project by the sense that for a large number of students, mainly “literary” texts were beyond their realm of experience and understanding. She believed that while many teachers sought texts that related to the “worlds of the learners” and engaged them in the classroom, they were doing this from an “outside viewpoint”. She had also become increasingly interested in the effect of the “new technologies” on what is literature and literacy.

David Riley (HOD English, Tangaroa College) brought an interest in how to improve students’ enjoyment and success in the study of literature written in English and also how to incorporate students’ mother tongues in this. Janet Sturgess had been HOD English at a new school, Botany Downs Secondary College, since it opened in 2005. With a background in primary teaching and second-language teaching (in addition to English), she was keen to find ways of teaching that addressed the multicultural and multilingual composition of her classes (including numbers of Asian immigrants). Sandy Harris had been teaching at Mangere College, a decile 1 South Auckland multicultural secondary school, for the previous 13 years. She was HOD English and had been a dean and media studies teacher. She was totally committed to finding ways of helping her students engage with relevant literary texts and raising their literacy levels.

Of the primary participants, Julie-Ann Thumath and Shelley Mohi came from Henderson Intermediate, a school with more than 52 nationalities. Within their own classes, they catered for 13 nationalities and 21 students for whom the home language was not English. The majority of these students were below their chronological ages academically, most working at curriculum levels 1 and 2 (when working in English). Both teachers were passionate about their students’ achievement and what they could do to improve their level of attainment. They saw the proposed project as facilitating working with other like-minded educators to find solutions to common problems. Elizabeth Lumby, a Year 8 teacher at Somerville Intermediate, joined the project because she was looking for ways to make reading more enjoyable for her class, especially boys who could read but would not. She wanted to find ways for her class to use their imaginations and express themselves better as writers, and to become more engaged with processes of reading and writing. Willem de Beer, also a teacher at Somerville Intermediate, had been trained in South

Africa, and was interested in finding ways of working more effectively with culturally diverse students, building on the knowledge he brought from South Africa.¹

¹ Table 1 indicates teachers who “stayed the distance” of the project or made a significant contribution to it. One of these teachers, Shelley Mohi from Henderson Intermediate, resigned from her school in April 2008 to go overseas to teach. Some teachers in the original proposal did not in fact become involved in the project at all for a variety of reasons. These were Lesley Shepherd and Robyn Restieaux from Macleans College (replaced by Janet Sturgess), Lonaye King (Somerville Intermediate, and replaced by Willem de Beer) and Steffan Minton and Shanan Prasad (Wymondley Rd Primary School). At the beginning of 2008, Elizabeth Lumby moved to Oranga Primary, and it was decided not to attempt to recruit an additional primary school to the project.

Table 1 **Participating schools**

| School | Participating teacher(s) | Class taught | Location/size | Decile | Ethnicity |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|---------------------------------------|--------|---|
| Tuakau College | Alison Cleary | Y12 (2007) Y13 (2008) | Rural (South Auckland) | 4 | 35% Māori 2% Asian 63% Pākehā |
| Tangaroa College | David Riley | Y10 (2007) Y11 (2008) | Urban (South Auckland) | 1B | 43% Samoan 19% Cook Island Māori 11% Tongan 10% NZ Māori 3% Niuean 1% Pākehā 13% Other |
| Botany Downs Secondary College | Janet Sturgess | Y9 (2007) Y13 (2008) | Urban (South-East Auckland) | 10 | 35% Pākehā 14% Korean 13% Chinese 10% Indian 7% European (incl. UK) 6% Other Asian 3% African 3% Māori 2% Other |
| Mangere College | Sandy Harris | Y11 (2007) Y11 (2008) | Urban (South Auckland) | 1B | 19% Māori 1% Pākehā 30% Samoan 19% Cook Island 17% Tongan 8% Niuean 6% Other |
| Henderson Intermediate School | Julie-Ann Thumath Shelley Mohi (2007) only | | Urban (West Auckland) | 3 | 27% Pākehā 26% Māori 11% Samoan 9% Other Pasifika 14% Asian 13% Other |
| Somerville Intermediate | Willem de Beer | Y7 (2007–8) | Urban (South- East Auckland) | 10 | 46% Pākehā 15% Chinese 13% Korean 8% Indian 5% Māori 8% South African 5% Other |
| Oranga Primary | Elizabeth Lumby | Y8 (2007) (at Somerville Intermediate) Y5–6 (2008) | Urban (South- Central Auckland) | 3 | 24% Tongan 18% NZ Pākehā 16% Samoan 15% Māori 9% Cook Island Māori 4% Niuean 4% Indian 2% Chinese 1% Korean 7% Other |

Teacher-researchers had input into finalising the broad aims and objectives as outlined in this proposal. It was made clear that the project was about university-based researchers doing *with* and not *to* practitioners and that teacher-researchers would have a major role to play in determining such research aspects as data gathering, data analysis, the refinement of situation-specific research questions and the planning and evaluation of interventions. We hoped that teacher-researchers would have a major role in the dissemination of the project's findings and that this role would extend to small-scale professional development initiatives where successfully trialled interventions would be offered to other teachers as worthy of replication.

3.3 Project phases

For planning purposes, the project was broken down into the following phases:

- Phase 1—collaborative literature review and mapping of the territory
- Phase 2—initial baseline data collection, including student attitudes, some achievement data, profiling current practices
- Phase 3—collaborative analysis and evaluation of baseline data (with critical discourse analysis techniques applied collaboratively at times; for example, to teacher reflective profiles, and by university researchers to documents in the wider milieu)
- Phase 4—development and trial of interventions and collection of intervention-related data (with teachers working collaboratively with fellow members of the team to plan and implement these, with a smaller cycle in late 2007 and a larger one in 2008)
- Phase 5—analysis of intervention data and evaluation of interventions
- Phase 6—reporting and dissemination of project findings and conclusions.

Table 2 shows how these phases were incorporated into the two-year timetable for the project. ("M" designates due date of a milestone report.)

3.4 Methodology

The project used an eclectic research methodology, tailored to address the four research questions listed in Section 2. The methodologies included action research, self-study, case study, ethnography and critical discourse analysis, each of which is discussed briefly.

Action research

The project can be described as using an action research framework. Action research is adaptive, tentative and evolutionary (Burns, 1994). As Burns (1994) further states:

Action-research is a total process in which a ‘problem situation’ is diagnosed, remedial action planned and implemented, and its effect monitored, if improvements are to get underway. It is both an approach to problem solving and a problem-solving process. (p. 294)

Implicit in action research methodology is the notion of a cycle of problem definition, data collection, reflective analysis and planning, monitored action, reflection leading to a phase of redefinition that restarts the cycle. Such a cycle was admirably suited to the exploratory nature of this project and its essential open-endedness.

Table 2 **Project timetable**

| Phases 1 & 2 | |
|---|--|
| December 2006 | <i>Initial research team round-table meeting:</i> To initiate discussion cycle surrounding problem definition and to plan initial data collection. Begin collaborative literature review and mapping of the territory |
| February–May 2007 M.1: 31 March 2007 | Initial data collection round in schools by teacher-researchers and University of Waikato researchers |
| Phase 3 | |
| June 2007 M.2: 30 June 2007 | <i>Second research team round-table meeting:</i> Collaborative analysis of initial baseline data collection and identification of possible points of interest for second round of observations Initial discussion of anticipated interventions Initial dissemination period |
| Phase 4 | |
| July–August 2007 M.3: 30 September 2007 | <i>Third research team round-table:</i> Initial development of small-scale interventions. Teacher-researchers working in their own schools, with University of Waikato researchers, to develop interventions |
| August–November 2007 | Trialling small-scale interventions in schools and collection of intervention-related data |
| December 2007 M.4: 31 December 2007 | <i>Fourth research team round-table meeting (including the quality assurance reference group):</i> Report-back of intervention-related data. Analysis, evaluation, refinement and/or further development of interventions to be trialled in 2008 |
| February–July 2008 M.5: 31 March 2008 | Trialling interventions in schools and collection of intervention-related data by teacher-researchers and University of Waikato researchers Second dissemination period |
| April 2008 | <i>Fifth research team round-table meeting:</i> Mid-intervention stocktake discussion |
| Phase 5 | |
| August 2008 M.6: 30 June 2008 | <i>Final research team round-table meeting (including quality assurance reference group):</i> Initial analysis of intervention data and evaluation of interventions |
| September–October 2008 | University of Waikato researchers working with teacher-researchers to analyse individual interventions |
| Phase 6 | |
| M.7: 30 September 2008 November–December 2008 | Final analysis, conclusions and report writing by University of Waikato researchers |
| Final report 31 December 2008 | Third dissemination period of project findings and conclusions |

Another characteristic of action research, highlighted by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), is its participatory and collaborative aspect. These authors distinguish three types of changes in relation to the work of individual teachers and the culture of groups:

- changes in discourse: ways in which teachers “word” or “story” their identities, knowledges and pedagogical practices
- changes in “activities and practices”—what teachers actually do in their work and continuing learning
- changes in “social relationships and organizations”—the ways in which teachers relate with students, parents and the wider community, and with colleagues at a departmental, school and general professional level. (pp. 14–15)

This is not to take away from the individual focus of action research. The adoption of an action research framework in this project as methodology for all research questions was in keeping with a desire to enhance teacher professionalism by according participating teachers the role of reflective and collaborative generators of their own professional knowledge. According to Jean McNiff (2002), “Action research is an enquiry by the self into the self, undertaken in company with others acting as research participants and critical learning partners” (p. 15).

Self-study

The project had a self-study dimension. In this respect, McNiff’s statement above is most pertinent. As Carr and Kemmis observe, “practices are changed by changing the ways in which they are understood” (1986, p. 91). Self-study encompasses a belief that who one is, is significant both in the teaching and researching process (Loughran, 1999). The fact that the assumptions that support and/or constrain one’s practice and experience are examined within the educator’s work context is an important facet of self-study. Such an approach clearly positions the researcher as part of the social world at the heart of the study and leads to a focus on the “researcher-self” (Alvesson, 2002, p. 171) and to varying degrees either the researcher’s personal experience, or explorations of the experiences of those with whom the researcher is involved in a day-to-day basis, are placed at the centre of the study. Self-study was a key ingredient in the critically reflexive orientation this project incorporated and was central to Phase 1.

Case study

Within this action research framework, we effectively set up a series of case studies. Case studies allow for an in-depth investigation into specific instances with a view to developing or illustrating general instances. In the case of this project, the specific instances were particular teachers working with particular classes. As Yin (1989) points out, case study research can be (a) exploratory (description and analysis leading to the development of hypotheses), (b) descriptive (providing narrative accounts and rich vignettes of practice) and (c) explanatory (offering causal

explanations of the effect of various interventions). Case study methodology was particularly pertinent to research questions 2, 3 and 4.

Ethnography

In certain respects, also, the project drew on ethnographic research, though not in a full-scale way. All teachers were committed to developing a detailed cultural, linguistic and, to some extent, technological profile of their students and this involved them in a good deal of investigation into various aspects of home literacy practices. According to Fetterman (1998), “ethnographic study allows multiple interpretations of reality and alternative interpretations of data through the study. The ethnographer is interested in understanding and describing a social and cultural scene from the emic, or insider’s, perspective. The ethnographer is both storyteller and scientist” (p. 2). Fetterman’s reference to insiders is pertinent here, in that methodology in the current project sought to collaborate with children and teachers in ways that would collapse the insider/outsider distinction that characterises “them/us” research. Ethnographic methodology was particularly pertinent to all of the research questions.

Critical discourse analysis

One of the founders of critical discourse analysis, Norman Fairclough (1992), has described it as aiming to “systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power” (p. 132). Critical discourse analysis was seen as particularly pertinent to research question 1.

3.5 Data collection methods

There was no simple relationship between the data to be collected and the various research methodological aspects described above (see Table 4). These were some of the sources of data collected during particular phases.

Baseline data (Phase 2)

A variety of baseline data was collected, including:

- individual questionnaires and semistructured group interviews to gather before-views of various participants (including students)

- forums and an annotated bibliography on the project wiki²
- classroom observations including processes, activities, communicative practices—small group, one-to-one and whole class
- work samples and assessment data (where relevant)
- documentary evidence, including policy documents; school-wide curriculum statements; planning, programming and assessment documents; textual resources
- teacher reflective profiles.

Initial analysis-related data (Phase 3)

Data related to the initial analysis included group discussions and evaluations among all staff based upon baseline data, as these operated to interrogate practice and began to give shape to the form, timing and focus of anticipated interventions.

Intervention-related data (Phase 4)

These data included:

- classroom observations and teacher reflections related to the interventions including processes, activities and communicative practices—small group, one-to-one and whole class
- collections of relevant work samples and assessment task products (where relevant)
- pre- and post-intervention data related to one or more objectives
- student questionnaires and/or interviews immediately following a particular intervention.

Intervention-related analysis (Phase 5)

Intervention-related analysis included group discussions and evaluations among all staff based upon intervention data, as these served to interpret, interrogate and evaluate intervention-related practice and began to give shape to conclusions to be drawn in relation to the interventions themselves.

Both university- and school-based researchers spent a considerable amount of time during Phase 4 (in both 2007 and 2008) completing the various sections of each teacher's research planning template (see Appendix A). Step 7 of this relates to data. Some of this work was done at round-table meetings, some was done in onsite meetings with one or more teacher-researchers and some was done individually by teacher-researchers and shared with the appropriate university-based researcher. (In this respect, Terry Locke worked with secondary teachers, Gail Cawkwell with Elizabeth Lumby and Willem de Beer and Emilie Sila'ila'i with Julie-Ann Thumath.)

² See <http://education.waikato.ac.nz/contracts/english/wiki/tiki-index.php>

Table 3 shows the template used by teachers in the latter part of the project as they began addressing the task of organising data with a view to (a) analysis and (b) the writing of their individual reports.

Table 3 **Template for organising data in relationship to objectives**

| Objective | Tasks/activities (intervention-related) | Relevant data |
|-----------|---|---------------|
| 1. | | |
| 2. | | |

Using the format shown in Table 3 for organising data allowed an easy overview of data available for triangulation purposes and also allowed for the monitoring of “how much” data. From the start of the project, it was emphasised that one can overestimate the *amount* of data required to produce a valid and interesting finding. Table 4, based on a handout given to teachers in the very first round-table meeting, provides an overview of the connection between research questions, method, data and researcher role.

3.6 Analysis

In keeping with the action research model adopted as an “envelope” for this project, the analysis that occurred was both formative and summative.

By *formative* analysis, we refer to the following:

- those multifarious acts of reflection which occur when teachers reflect consciously or intuitively on the various sources of feedback—student activity, response, product and so on—as a way of gauging the effect of an activity
- the more sustained acts of reflection, performed alone or collegially, where a range of data is considered with a view of evaluating the success of an activity or task with a view to mapping a way forward, by either modifying interventions, tasks and activities already planned or designing new ones.

It is clear that formative analysis is integral to the action research cycle as described above.

By *summative* analysis, we mean the formal process which occurs at or near the completion of a sustained intervention cycle, where a range of data is assembled that pertains to a particular objective/intervention linkage and which, analysed and triangulated, illuminates the success or otherwise of a particular intervention. An action research, case study model allows for a range of data to be collected, some quantitative (for example, assessment scores), some qualitative (for example, teacher reflections and student interviews). Some data collection instruments allow for both quantitative and qualitative analysis (for example, a questionnaire that allows space for

comment). In this project, teacher-researchers worked with university researchers to engage in both quantitative analysis (using simple statistical procedures) and qualitative analysis (for example, by examining a range of student responses in order to identify emergent themes and commonalities).

Table 4 **Teaching literature in the multicultural classroom: Questions, methods, relevant data, roles and responsibilities**

| Research question | Method | Relevant data | Roles and responsibilities |
|---|---|---|---|
| What discourses currently shape teacher understandings of “literature teaching” and “cultural and linguistic inclusiveness”? How do these discourses relate to each other and to the larger context of the national policy environment? | Self-study Critical discourse analysis | Reflective journals/profiles Questionnaires Interviews (including focus groups) Policy documents, school schemes, teaching resources, assessment technologies | Teacher-researchers (TRs) and university researchers (URs) reflect in a collegial way on current and developing views (discourses) relevant to the topic TRs collaborate with URs in analysing school-based documents URs focus on national documentation |
| What features characterise the successful classroom practices/processes of a sample of teachers engaging students in activities aimed at fostering their ability to engage in the reading and composition of literary texts? | Case study/ethnographic research | Questionnaires Semistructured group interviews or focus groups Classroom observations and teacher reflections Student work samples Test results and assessment task products Pre- and post-intervention data | TRs and URs work collaboratively in questionnaire design and the design of interventions URs and TRs can plan group processes as appropriate Classroom observations are conducted by URs by invitation and optionally by colleagues in support Test design may be collaborative or individual The development of evaluative criteria is a task for URs and TRs collectively and can be thought of as an intervention in itself Systems of check-making will be developed collaboratively, optionally with colleagues in support TRs and URs work collaboratively in analysing data and in developing specific time frames for data collection and analysis within the broad time frame of the project |
| In particular, what aspects of pedagogy have been successful in developing a culturally and linguistically inclusive classroom for the teaching and learning of literature? (These aspects may include programme design, resourcing, activity design and formative assessment.) | Case study/ethnographic research | As row 2 | As row 2 |
| In what ways can ICTs be integrated productively in a culturally and linguistically inclusive classroom for the teaching and learning of literature? | Case study/ethnographic research | As row 2 | As row 2 |

3.7 Ethical considerations

Justification

New Zealand classrooms, at both primary and secondary level, are becoming increasingly multicultural and multilingual. Schools and teachers are therefore finding themselves in need of approaches that take cognisance of and indeed celebrate this diversity. In addition, literary texts, despite challenges to the term “literary” and the increased digitisation of text-related practices, continue to have a central place in the primary and secondary English classroom. This project was premised on a need to develop effective classroom practices that lead to the enhanced reading, composition and enjoyment of literary texts, in a “digital age”, for all students, but especially for students who have sometimes felt alienated in New Zealand classrooms because of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Access to participants

Discussions over a period of time between university-based researchers on the team and colleagues in primary and secondary schools and in teacher advisory services identified teachers who had a keen interest in reflecting on their own classroom practices in respect of literature teaching and expressed their desire to participate in this project. The Waikato University’s School of Education’s relationship with a number of schools and teachers laid a sound foundation for the further development of collegial relationships around the research process. A partnership agreement was discussed and signed by those involved who confirmed involvement.

Access to schools and classrooms was confirmed officially through principals and the boards of trustees of the schools involved. The teachers on the research team assisted with this process, and contributed to the full ethics proposal required by the School of Education’s Ethics Committee at the University of Waikato. The teacher-researchers were also responsible for ensuring that the ethical guidelines of their particular schools were adhered to.

In the first instance, the children concerned were those taught by the teacher-researchers. However, through introductory letters to parents/caregivers (via the boards of trustees of each school), it was emphasised that children were not obliged to provide data in any form if for any reason they did not wish to be involved. Since the data collection was viewed as complemented by the classroom programme, there was seen to be little cause for concern. However, some parents/caregivers specifically requested that data not be collected about their child/ren and this was respected.

For those parents/caregivers for whom English was not a first language, and for whom written letters might be an obstacle for clarity, the school was consulted with regard to alternative and culturally appropriate means of communication, preferably in parents’/caregivers’ first language.

Informed consent

The introductory letter that outlined the purpose of the study included a consent form that all participants were asked to sign and return. This form explained what the collected data might be used for in terms of milestones, publications and presentations. It was emphasised that care would be taken to ensure that in published material names of schools, teachers and children would be kept anonymous in order to protect identity and that pseudonyms would be used. However, the project team was also keen to involve participating teacher-researchers in co-publication, with teacher-researchers publishing under their own name.

Care was taken during all preliminary stages that teachers and schools were fully aware of the commitment involved so that expectations would be shared. On the basis of this, a number of teacher-researchers left the project, some of whom were replaced. The issue of common expectations was addressed to a considerable extent by the teachers' involvement in planning some of the specifics and the ongoing evolution of the project as a result of joint symposia, research analyses and the action research cycle of plan-evaluate-plan. Care was taken to time research activities so that teachers would not be caught up in conflicts of interest with curricular, cocurricula and extracurricular activities at their respective schools.

Potential harm to participants

It was important to the team that no participant felt that they were being judged on their efficacy as a literacy or English teacher. The aim of this project was to identify the current situation in the teaching and learning of literary texts and then to collaboratively plan interventions to meet the needs of a particular teacher-researcher's class. The early commitment and interest of the project's teacher-researchers indicated that they were unlikely to be offended by the research process and what it might reveal. Nevertheless, care was taken to ensure that teacher-researchers recognised that issues that arose would be viewed as of direct interest and importance to the project, and *not* a problem or criticism of any person.

Other

Quality assurance was ongoing through consultation with the consultative reference group of experts based at the University of Waikato and with members of the quality assurance reference group. During Phase 6 of the project, teacher-researchers were provided with a number of teacher release days to allow them to have the time, energy and focus to discuss data collection processes, analyse this data, scrutinise and comment on emerging findings and work on their individual reports. (See Appendix B for the template provided to teacher-researchers to assist them in the development of their individual reports.)

4. Findings in relation to issues of discourse (research question 1)

The first of the project's four research questions was:

1. What discourses currently shape teacher understandings of “literature teaching” and “cultural and linguistic inclusiveness”? How do these discourses relate to each other and to the larger context of the national policy environment?

In reporting findings in relation to this question, we propose to start with considerations of discourses operating in the larger context and national policy environment and then discuss the relationship between these and the discourses shaping our teacher-researchers' views of “literature” and “cultural and linguistic inclusiveness”. Discourse analytical work of the wider, educational milieu was undertaken by university-based researchers, but done collaboratively as a team with respect to teacher-researchers' own theoretical underpinnings and practices.

One of the assumptions underpinning this project is that all teachers (and researchers for that matter) operate out of sets of assumptions that are discursively constructed and complex both in their nature and in their origin. Another assumption is that “descriptions” of discourses themselves are not neutral and are simply ways of reading the world and making it meaningful. These assumptions underpin the theoretical and analytical work in what follows.

4.1 Discourses around literature: The big picture

The classic 20th-century study on the nature of literature is Wellek and Warren's *Theory of Literature* which went through a series of editions and is still available in a 1984 edition. In the chapter they devote to “The Nature of Literature”, the authors begin with an idea that reflects what primary teachers in this project had to say (see below); that is, “One way is to define ‘literature’ as everything in print” (p. 20). However, the authors move beyond this, and also reject an attempt to define literature as “great” books. It is also noteworthy that, in their attempt to define literature, they include “oral literature” (p. 22) and that while their focus is on particular uses of language, they view language as “itself a creation of man [sic] and ... thus charged with the cultural heritage of a linguistic group” (p. 22).

Their opening gesture towards definition is a focus on its artfulness, to imaginative literature and a particular non-scientific and non-everyday use of language. In distinguishing literary language from scientific language, Wellek and Warren suggest that:

- scientific language tends to the denotative while literary language tends to the connotative
- “literary language is far from merely referential. It has its expressive side; it conveys the tone, and attitude of the speaker or writer”
- “it does not merely state and express what it says; it also wants to influence the attitude of the reader, persuade him, and ultimately change him”
- literary language draws attention to its own artfulness and artifice in its use of sound symbolism (“metre, alliteration, and patterns of sound”) (p. 23).

Distinguishing literary language from everyday language is a great challenge (see Carter, 2004, for reasons this might be the case). Wellek and Warren’s solution is to make the difference quantitative rather than qualitative: “The resources of language are exploited much more deliberately and systematically” (p. 24).

What about pragmatic concerns; that is, the rhetorical element where texts are viewed as aimed at bringing about a “definite outward action”? Wellek and Warren reject as “poetry” any text that does this overtly. However, their stance is not hard line: “It seems, however, best to consider as literature only works in which the aesthetic function is dominant, while we can recognize that there are aesthetic elements, such as style and composition, in works which have a completely different, non-aesthetic purpose ...” (p. 25). Such a view might be compared to that of Eagleton (2007) who notes that “A poem ... is a rhetorical performance, but (unlike most rhetorical exercises) not typically an instrumental one. It does things to us, though not usually so that we can get something done” (p. 89).

Finally, for Wellek and Warren, the “nature of literature emerges most clearly under the referential aspects” (p. 25). By this they mean that literary works (“the lyric, the epic, the drama”) refer to “a world of fiction, or imagination” (p. 25) To sum up, Wellek and Warren produce a multifaceted definition involving: personal expressiveness; coherence (or unity or organisation); “realization and exploitation of the medium, lack of practical purpose” (the focus on the aesthetic); and “fictionality” (p. 27). While Wellek and Warren were products of their time—few would subscribe to the point of difference between scientific and literary uses of language suggested in the third bullet-point above—we would argue that there is some value in the inclusive approach taken here, as discussed below.

Since the time of Wellek and Warren’s attempt at a synthesis, it has become clear that there is a range of discourses related to both literary study and literary criticism, all of which have the potential to affect teacher thinking about the teaching of literature and how literature should be evaluated. These literature-related discourses tend to shape and be shaped by broader discourses related to constructions of the subject English or, more currently, that omnipresent, catch-all word, “literacy”. These general constructions, or models, or paradigms can be distinguished according to varying emphases. Here is a possible categorisation (Locke, 2007):

- *Cultural heritage*: There is a traditional body of knowledge (including a canon of precious texts and specialist literary knowledge) which is to be valued and inculcated as a means of “rounding out” learners so that they become fully participating and discriminating members

of a society or culture. In their classic “New Criticism” text,³ *Understanding Poetry*, Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren (1976) asserted that “literature is the most sophisticated example of the process by which we come to grasp our own environment, especially our human environment, with its complex and ambiguous values” (p. 9). In simple terms, this view suggests that the poetic genius puts meanings into poems which well trained readers then explicate. There is little suggestion that the ordinary reader herself might produce literature.

- *Personal growth*: Sometimes called “progressive” English, this model argues that it is valuable to engage with literary (canonical *and* popular) texts because this facilitates the personal, individual growth of learners, for whom the acquisition of certain cultural and linguistic competencies will play a central role in their ongoing task of making sense of their world. This model has an affinity with reader-response criticism, whose key theorists include Louise Rosenblatt (1978) and Wolfgang Iser (1978). In this model, there is an emphasis on individual creativity. Hence it is appropriate for students to be encouraged to write poems and other “creative” genres in class.
- *Rhetorical or textual competence*: At its worst, this version promotes decontextualised skills acquisition. At its best, however, the model puts a value on the mastery of the forms and conventions of a range of textual practices or genres, including the genres of poetry. Pedagogically, it can be connected with the Australian “genre” school (see, for example, Cope & Kalantzis, 1993) and with rhetorical framings of the subject (see, for example, Andrews, 1992). An associated literary theorist is Mikhail Bakhtin (1986), whose key concepts include genre, intertextuality and heteroglossia. While Bakhtin puts an emphasis on the individual human being as creative agent, there is a major shift to meaning as socially constructed and context-bound.
- *Critical practice*: Often called “critical literacy”, this model puts a value on encouraging language-users to see themselves as engaged in textual acts which are part of a wider set of discursive practices that actively produce and sustain patterns of dominance and subordination in the wider society and offer members of society prescribed ways of being particular sorts of people. Critical literacy and critical language awareness can be thought of as pedagogical applications of critical discourse analysis and various kinds of critical theory (e.g., poststructuralism) (see Morgan, 1997). In this model, a literary text can be thought of as a space within which a play of meaning might be enacted by the deconstructive, “writerly” reader. Meaning becomes a function of discourse and individual texts lose their discreteness

³ The term “New Criticism” comes from the title of a book by American writer and critic John Crowe Ransom, *The New Criticism* (1941). Drawing on the work of I. A. Richards in England and the critical essays of T. S. Eliot, it represented a reaction away from an emphasis on author biography and literary history. Notable critics identified with this tradition were Allen Tate and R. P. Blackmur in the United States and the Englishman, F. R. Leavis. *Understanding Poetry* by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, first published in 1938, was a landmark text in this tradition. This book, which is still in print, was one of the instruments which made the New Criticism the critical orthodoxy in universities and schools in English-speaking parts of the world right up until the 1970s.

and became meaningful only in an infinitely complex network of intertextual relationships between utterances. The cultural context has become pre-eminent.

Each of these emphases offers teachers of English/literacy a particular position or stance in respect of what the study of literature is all about. These positions (set out in Table 5), to the extent that they reveal themselves in the practices encouraged by educational policy initiatives and are adopted by teachers, will affect both understandings of what literature is (or should be) and how to teach it.

Table 5 **Versions of English and textual orientation**

| Cultural heritage | Personal growth |
|--|---|
| <i>Textual orientation:</i> Appreciation and emulation | <i>Textual orientation:</i> |
| Deference | Self-realisation through meaning making |
| Acculturation | Creative exploration |
| | Personal integration |
| Skills acquisition | Critical literacy |
| <i>Textual orientation:</i> | <i>Textual orientation:</i> |
| Formal mastery of textual practices | Critical linguistic analysis |
| Pragmatic competence | Detachment |
| Social adeptness | Social transformation |

In what follows, we elaborate, in respect of each of these orientations, a description of textual practice around the reading, composition of literary texts.

Cultural heritage

As noted above, in *Understanding Poetry*, Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren (1976) asserted that “literature is the most sophisticated example of the process by which we come to grasp our own environment, especially our human environment, with its complex and ambiguous values” **page(s)**. There is an enormous focus on the author, who is heroised as a kind of Everyman meaning maker. There is a humanistic emphasis on the cultural heritage of literature, because therein lies the record of our best minds “grasping” our environment on our behalf. Readers, linked to writers through their common humanity, are called upon to participate in an act of imaginative identification with the drama of meaning making that the text enacts:

If we find the poem coherent—that is, dramatically significant—we tend to take the leap of sympathetic imagination. We can appreciate it for the sense of the conquest over disorder and meaninglessness that it gives us. Perhaps this sense may be the very basis of the exhilaration we find in poetry—just as it may be the basis for the pleasure we take in watching the clean drive of an expert golfer or the swoop of a hawk, as contrasted with the accidental tumbling of a stone downhill. The sense of order and control in the vital act—that is what in a successful poem confirms us in the faith that experience itself may be made

meaningful. A poem is, in this sense, an image of our life process—and in being that, an enlightening image of ourselves”. (Brooks & Warren, 1976, p. 270)

The text is everything, in that it is the embodiment of individual meaning making for the writer and the object of close attention on the part of the reader. In respect of meaning, “*The meaning is the special import of the dramatisation of a situation*. In sum, a poem, being a kind of drama that embodies a human situation, implies an attitudes toward that situation In short, poems do not so much ‘state’ themes as ‘test’ ideas and attitudes by putting those ideas and attitudes into dramatic situations, by dramatising human concerns and interests” (Brooks & Warren, 1976, p. 267).

For the New Criticism, literature uses language in a special way and thereby produces a special kind of knowledge. It is a powerful means of embodying both the dramatisation of a creative mind responding to a situation (hence the centrality of attitude or tone) and that situation itself. The capacity of language to reference reality is not questioned. Indeed, the resources of literary language (rhythm, imagery and so on) are seen as designed to embody tone. “Language did not develop in a mechanically ‘pure’ form without the contamination of emotion, but in a form that embodied and expressed the density of experience—the interpenetration of stimulus and response, of object and perception, of idea and emotion” (Brooks & Warren, 1976, p. 4).

Such statements, in harmony with a cultural heritage view of English, explain why for years writing was the poor cousin of reading (especially literary reading) in the English/literacy classroom. In a cultural heritage model, literature was the product of the best human minds (usually male) putting the best words in the best order. How could merely mortal school pupils ever hope to emulate the feats of the great writers! It also explains the nonvaluation by this paradigm of oral language.

Personal growth (progressive English)

The discourses that underpin the progressive English classroom are not a radical departure from those underpinning the cultural heritage model of English. In a telling phrase in his book *Growth Through English*, John Dixon (1975) referred to “the acceptance of pupils’ work as embryonic literature” (p. 55). Literature has not been knocked off its pedestal. Rather the category has been enlarged to encompass the capability of all human beings to create meaning through language in their engagement with experience. The meaning-making mind is still an individual one; creative genius has simply become democratised.

In the reader response tradition of criticism, which naturally aligns itself with this particular paradigm of English as a subject, the focus moves from the author and text as object to the reader and the reading process. Its key theorists include Louise Rosenblatt and Wolfgang Iser. In this tradition, reading can be thought of as a performative act, which brings a literary work (indeed, any work) into existence through a transaction between reader and text.

Here is Iser’s description of the reading process:

A reality [the text] that has no existence of its own can only come into being by way of ideation, and so the structure of a text sets off a sequence of mental images which lead to the text translating itself into the reader's consciousness. The actual content of these mental images will be coloured by the reader's existing stock of experience, which acts as a referential background against which the unfamiliar can be conceived and processed. (1978, p. 38)

Iser's work draws attention to the ways in which readers go through various stages in their response to a text from initial bewilderment, to layers of interpretation, to considerations of the work as generating an aesthetic experience.

Both Iser and Rosenblatt view the text as exercising a control over the production of meaningfulness. For Rosenblatt (1978), whose book *The Reader, The Text, The Poem* was introduced by Professor Roger Robinson to English teachers in New Zealand at the very first New Zealand Association for the Teaching of English (NZATE) conference in 1982, the text is both "stimulus" and "blueprint":

First, the text is a stimulus activating elements of the reader's past experience—his experience both with literature and with life. Second, the text serves as blueprint, a guide for the selecting, rejecting, and ordering of what has been called forth; the text regulates what shall be held in the forefront of the reader's attention . . . The finding of meanings involves both the author's text and what the reader brings to it. (1978, p. 11)

For Iser, the text, through a range of stylistic features, serves to constrain and produce what he calls the "implied reader", but also contains gaps which are filled creatively by the reader.

Compared with the New Criticism, a shift can be seen in the way the various elements mentioned above are constructed in the reader-response tradition. The writer is still important and actual. One can still talk about high-quality literature, for example, but the stage is now very much to be shared by both writer and reader. While the reader is constrained by the text as a purposeful act, the text does not become a literary work until it is read.

While the writer may well be a meaning maker (as a reader of his or her own text), meaning is very much viewed as transactional or dialogic—the dialectical product of a reader/text interaction. There is not the same tendency to think of meanings as inhering *in* texts as one finds among the New Critics. Having said that, there is also a reluctance in reader-response approaches to allow an unlicensed approach to meaning making. In varying ways, the text is seen as productively shaping a reader's response. It may, for example, contain images and symbols which connect with elements in a reader's unconscious or nonverbal reservoir of images and symbols. Or it may be seen as reflecting assumptions about the world which stand in contradistinction to a reader's own stance and thereby produce a critical reading. Whatever, the text is viewed as a stable object, however variable the readings it can engender, while the reader tends to be an individual, unitary, sense-making self.

One can see why this paradigm of English favoured a view of writing as a process, as in the expression "process writing", and why Donald Graves' approach, with its emphasis on

“conferencing” dovetailed with the discourses of personal growth.⁴ Teachers of writing, in terms of this discourse, were constructed as sympathetic listeners and facilitators. Indeed, classrooms themselves became viewed as “talky” places where meanings around texts were to be negotiated as much by talking as by writing. As with the cultural heritage model, language was seen as a means whereby inner meanings were communicated—a medium providing a clear window to the world and the possibility of shared meanings between human beings.

English as rhetorical or textual competence

In terms of the textual and subtextual skills model of English, the classroom textual focus switches to the achievement of a range of textual competencies, at word, sentence, paragraph and whole-text level—and sometimes beyond. At its worst, this model offers a field day for skills acquisition advocates, for framers and fixers of discrete and often decontextualised learning outcomes, which are nonproblematically describable and measurable. If literature has a place here, it is simply to illustrate a number of skills to be inculcated—the literary text as comprehension exercise.

At its best, however, this model recognises the socially constructed demands for “literacy” of a particular sort in a range of contexts. Australian genre theorists, for example, take this approach.⁵ So do proponents of the “new” rhetoric, who look to the wider social stage and associate writing mastery with the ability to use knowingly and cunningly the language necessary to achieve a desired effect in a particular social context with a particular audience. Arguments about genre are central to this paradigm for English. But proponents of it would agree with Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis (1993) that any definition of genre entails a recognition that textual form varies according to social purpose. “Texts are different because they do different things. So, any literacy pedagogy has to be concerned, not just with the formalities of how texts work, but also with the living social reality of texts-in-use. How a text works is a function of what it is for” (p. 7). In this instance, the model does not devalue literary study but rather revalues it, drawing attention to the social functions and rhetorical purposes of literary texts.

English as critical literacy

While the genre school put the focus back on the production of texts, it is arguable that critical literacy put the focus back on reading and away from writing. The reader who took centre stage, however, was a somewhat different sort from the relatively stable entity of the other three models described. This reader was to be viewed as a cultural product, “inscribed” by a range of discourses (not necessarily compatible with one another) and positioned by his/her discursive frames to

⁴ See Graves (1983). Graves’ approach to writing, among other things, emphasised the child’s creativity and their agency; for example, it deciding on topics for writing.

⁵ See B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.). (1993). *The Powers of Literacy: A genre approach to teaching writing*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

respond in one way or another to the “preferred” position offered by a text. The literary text was also destabilised. It was no longer a container of meaning (as per the New Criticism), nor a constrainer of meaning (as per the progressive model), but rather a space within which a play of meaning might be enacted by the deconstructive, “writerly” reader. Meaning became a function of discourse and individual texts lost their discreteness and became meaningful only in an infinitely complex network of intertextual relationships between utterances. The cultural context had become pre-eminent. So, increasingly, had technological mediation. The notion that “literacy is a social practice” became a slogan, and then a mantra. And with the increased presence of ICTs as mediating textual practices, a growing emphasis was put on literacy, in all its forms, as technologised.

Poststructuralism, as a particular “take” on the world, was the natural bedfellow for critical literacy, with *discourse* as a central concept. According to Ray Misson:

The idea of ‘discourse’ as developed by Michel Foucault is crucial here. A discourse in this tradition is a formation of textual practices activated in a particular social/personal arena which brings with it particular ways of being, ways of doing and ways of thinking. There is a discourse that we use with the family; there is a technical discourse we might use in our work; there are discourses of law, religion, and so on. The idea that we talk in different registers in different situations is an old one. However, rather than conceiving us as putting these different ways of talking on as a covering to a stable essential self, rather like putting on clothes to dress ourselves appropriately for particular situations, poststructuralism radically argues that there is no self apart from these ways of talking. The discourses we partake in are what constitute the self. Therefore the self is a social construct (the constructivist position), rather than being a given essence of a person (the essentialist belief). (1998. p. 148)

Such an approach tends to replace the unitary self with the notion of multiple selves, each the product of discourse. Discourses are socially constructed ways of thinking about and being in the world reflected in language and other sign systems. The originary (i.e., capable of originating) self as source or maker of meaning—the meaning-making mind of the cultural heritage and personal growth paradigms—is replaced by human subjectivity/ies as produced by culture. Displaced here is a belief in some kind of core (essential) autobiographical self. We no longer tell stories; stories tell us.

Key concepts in a critical literacy pedagogy are “ideology” and “hegemony”—both contested terms. An ideology might be thought of as an elaborate story told about the ideal conduct of some aspect of human affairs. Its power lies in its “truth” value, which is determined by the size and nature of its subscription base as much as by some notion of “explanatory force”. In short, the truth of an ideology is determined by the number of people subscribing to it. The related term, “hegemony”, can consequently be defined as the state of affairs which exists when the subscription base of an ideology is broad enough for it to achieve widespread dominance.

One aspect of the job of the English teacher in the critical literacy classroom is to draw students’ attention to the social consequences of the privileging, in their own writing and others’, of

particular discourses or “stories” (ways some aspect of the word has been storied). A resistant reader⁶ is one who is enabled to contest the preferred reading of the world offered by a text, and to challenge that reading with their own. Just as the critically literate reader is also a writer, so the critically literate writer is also a self-reflexive reader of the position(s) he/she is offering a prospective reader to take up.

A point that needs to be made here is that while it is possible to envisage classrooms whose practices might reflect, in some “pure” way, one of these paradigms of English, the reality is generally far more complex. A range of factors contributes to the formation of an English teacher’s professional knowledge and classroom practice. These include the critical orientation of their various degree courses, emphases in their initial teacher education programme, their history of professional development, the theoretical underpinnings of official curriculum and assessment documentation, the modelling of other teachers, the pedagogies embedded in textbook and other resources and last, but not least, understandings related to the production, consumption and dissemination of texts developed in the wider social context. No one teacher of literature operates out of the same combination of discursive frames.

4.2 Policy “constructions” of literature in the New Zealand educational setting

It must be emphasised again that the above mapping of discourses about English in relationship to literature is an heuristic; as map it should not be confused with the territory. Further, just as an English/literacy teacher is unlikely to reflect one of the above in a “pure” form but rather a complex mix of paradigms, so policy documents (such as curriculum statements) are likely to reflect a complex mix of paradigms.

While some commentators (Brown, 1998) viewed *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1994) as a personal growth model, a close examination of the document suggests that it reflects a mix of discourses. While the introductory section, “Learning and Teaching in English” (pp. 10–12), provides ample discursive evidence for a “personal growth” reading of the document, there are traces of other discourses in the introduction which serve to modify and even challenge such a reading.

A cultural heritage discourse is present, though somewhat muted. Students *should* read “literary texts with established critical reputations” **Page ref** and “Teachers must ensure that there is a balance between the reading and study of local literature and the wider heritage of English literature and world literature in English. **Page ref**” The emphasis given to Māori writing is also couched in terms of its heritage value. However, in keeping with the personal growth model, a

⁶ In this report, the word “resistant” will be used in the sense defined here and distinguished from “reluctant” readers, that is, students who dislike reading as an activity.

subtle shift occurs in the document's implicit definition of the term "literary" away from the canonically sanctioned towards the relevant as facilitating literacy development, imaginative development and the development of personal, social, cultural, historical and national awareness and identity (p. 16).

A critical practice focus in English was virtually absent from *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* in its final form, and this lack was in marked contrast with its Australian counterpart of the time. There is no equivalent in *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* to the Australian curriculum profile's "contextual understanding" strand organiser, focusing as it does on "students' learning about the ways in which people's interpretation and use of the English language varies according to the socio-cultural context and the situation in which it is being used" **Page ref (or full ref?)**. The concept of "sociocultural knowledge" is largely absent from *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Curriculum Corporation, 1994, p. 2). In fact, the only sentence in the surviving document which can be related unambiguously to a critical practice discourse is found in a paragraph which states that "Thinking critically is important for learning and language development" (one of the "Characteristics of Learning and Teaching in English") and contains the sentence: "They [students] should reflect on the different social assumptions, judgments, and beliefs which are embodied in texts, and which different people bring to language and learning" (p. 12).

If one looks beyond the first 18 pages of *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* to the ladders of achievement objectives, another English/literacy discourse emerges: the discourse of English as skills. While the *language* of the achievement objectives (words such as "respond", for example) might tempt one to view them as reflecting a personal growth model, their *structure* can be read very differently as embodying a totally different, and even antithetical, discursive paradigm. Peters and Marshall (1996), for example, have argued that New Zealand's national curriculum is a sociocultural construction reflective of presuppositions underlying what they term "enterprise culture and competition" and that *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (and other New Zealand curriculum documents of the 1990s), despite the traces of other discourses, is a document constructed around a narrow skills-based view of English literacy serving an economic rationalist agenda. Overall, it is a document curiously lacking in content, confident in its ability to define learning outcomes without grappling with the frames of cultural and subject-specific knowledge which necessarily contextualise language events. Rather it presents English as a ladder of defined competencies, which the learner will mount step by step, to the reassuring sound of credentialising boxes being ticked, on their way to this or that level of accomplishment and its related qualification.

To underline this *content-less* quality of the document that has defined English teaching since 1994, we can address to *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* the same questions that teacher-researcher participants in this project were asked as members of a focus group in their first round-table meeting in December 2006 (see below). Teachers were asked: "What is literature? List literary types. What makes these text-types 'literary'? Why teach literature?" The document might have responded as follows:

- **What is literature?** The term cannot be glossed, nor defined.
- **List literary types:** Literature can include “popular literature, traditional stories, children’s literature”, and also “drama, fiction and poetry” (Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 16).
- **What makes these text-types “literary”?** We cannot say. However, there *is* such a thing as literary criticism.
- **Why teach literature?** Literature is important “for literacy development, for imaginative development, and for developing personal, social, cultural, historical, and national awareness and identity” (Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 16).

What is clear here is that the soon-to-be-superseded English curriculum has very little to say about these focus group questions. In terms of underlying discourses, we can see that the document is inviting its readers (including teachers) to see literature as having an important role in personal development, the construction of identity and the transmission of heritage values.

In *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007), the evacuation of curriculum content has accelerated. Eighteen pages on the nature of English as a subject (including literature) have shrunk to one. Literature is mentioned as something to be studied, used and enjoyed. With clear reference to cultural heritage and personal growth discourses, the claim is made that “The study of New Zealand and world literature contributes to students’ developing sense of identity, their awareness of New Zealand’s bicultural heritage, and their understanding of the world” (p. 18). However, unlike its predecessor, this document *does* contain a major statement derived from an “English as critical practice” discourse: “Students learn to deconstruct and critically interrogate texts in order to understand the power of language to enrich and shape their own and others’ lives” (p. 18).⁷

The picture that is emerging here is that recent curriculum documents are limited in their potential to inform the literature-related professional content knowledge of English/literacy teachers. There are other sources of such knowledge, of course. An obvious source is preservice teacher education. One can speculate, however, that the widespread takeup of three-year degrees in teacher education, with a reduction in what used to be called “general” papers, has reduced the numbers of preservice teachers able to develop an expertise in teaching literature.

Another factor in the policy environment pertinent to this question has been the increased focus on “literacy”. Of central importance here is the Government’s Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, based on *Report of the Literacy Taskforce* (Ministry of Education, 1999), which co-ordinates a range of policies, projects and programmes aimed at improving achievement in literacy and numeracy by learners at every level of New Zealand’s education system. According to the Ministry of Education’s website, “Three key themes have been used as an organising framework. They are:

- raising expectations for learners’ progress and achievement

⁷ Unfortunately, this powerful objective is lost sight of in the woolly and repetitive use of the words “discriminating” and “insightful” in the document’s achievement objectives.

- lifting professional capability throughout the system so that everyone plays their part in ensuring that the interaction between teacher and learner is as effective as possible
- developing community capability—encouraging and supporting family, whānau, and others to help learners.

In recent years, the focus has shifted from Years 1–4 to Years 7–8 and into secondary schools.

“Lifting professional capability” is a laudable aim, but might be viewed as begging a number of questions in respect of teacher professional content knowledge. It is arguable that a focus on “literacy” in a number of paradigms of English has been accompanied and abetted by the widespread take-up of metalanguages drawn from the discipline of linguistics. There is no doubt that teaching and learning around literacy in the New Zealand context have been heavily influenced by trends in Australia. For example, the work of Australian genre theorists is used extensively in the 1996 Ministry of Education publication, *Exploring Language*. Many primary schools structure their literacy programmes around “genre” concepts such as recount, explanation and report, as invented by Jim Martin and others in New South Wales in the early 1990s and which have received widespread critique. The Australian genre school derived its metalanguage, not from literary criticism, but from systemic functional linguistics (developed by Michael Halliday and others).

Another influential literacy model imported from Australia was the *four resources* model of literacy, developed by Peter Freebody and Allan Luke (Freebody & Luke, 1990):

The model posits four necessary but not sufficient ‘roles’ for the reader in a postmodern, text-based culture:

- Code breaker (coding competence);
- Meaning maker (semantic competence);
- Text user (pragmatic competence); and
- Text critic (critical competence)”. (Luke & Freebody, 1999, paragraph 1)

The above quotation comes from an online discussion, where Luke and Freebody inform readers what their original intention was: “It was our position that determining how to teach literacy could not be simply ‘scientific’, but rather had to involve a moral, political, and cultural decision about the kind of literate practices needed to enhance both peoples’ agency over their life trajectories and communities’ intellectual, cultural, and semiotic resources in multimediated economies” (paragraph 8). The piece is a powerful reminder of the role human agents can have in the production of discourses, in this case of literacy and education, since the model was widely taken up following an address by Luke to the New Zealand Reading Association in 1992 (see also Luke, 1992). The associated emphasis on a linguistically-derived metalanguage in teacher education is illustrated by Luke, as he outlines changes in the teacher education curriculum at his then institution, the University of Queensland:

We require that all teacher-trainees (in maths, sciences, economics, all areas): learn functional grammar, critical discourse analysis, how to analyse and teach genres of a range of popular and academic texts, and related teaching/learning theory. This includes theories of discourse and ideology. In other words, all our students learn to ‘do’ grammar—but in relation to issues of how discourse constructs and shapes identity, difference and educational relations of power. p.s. the students really enjoy it, because it’s extremely hands on. (Luke & Freebody, 1999, Transcript of the discussion forum, Reply 1a).

If the “it” that students enjoy includes the literary, it is not mentioned.

For primary teachers in New Zealand at the moment, the key literacy-related “instructional manuals” are *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1–4* (Ministry of Education, 2003) and *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5–8* (Ministry of Education, 2006). The only mention of *literature* or *literary* to be found in the index of either is “literature circles”. Poetry is missing. So is readers’ theatre. While there are lots of references to metacognition, there are none to metaphor. What appears to be happening here is that effective literacy practice is being constructed with virtually no reference to the “literary”. Or putting it another way, in today’s policy environment, with its heavy emphasis on literacy, the literary (and the role it might play, ironically, in *literacy* development) is suffering a process of erasure (see Locke, 2008b).

4.3 Primary teachers and the discourses of literature

At the first meeting of the project team in December 2006, we had focus groups by sector (primary, secondary and tertiary) looking at four literature-related questions. Here are the questions and what our primary teacher-researchers wrote:

1. **What is literature?** Primary teachers summarised their ideas in a series of words: “Language”; “Using language to express thoughts, feelings, ideas”; “Words”; “Text”, “Voices”.
2. **List literary text-types:** “Movies, music, cellphones—digital, newspapers, poetry, art—cartoons, books, magazines, signs, instructions on boxes, phone books, diaries, email, SMS, posters, novels, short stories, levels.”
3. **What makes these text-types “literary”?** “Anywhere where the printed word appears. How we use it to communicate thoughts, ideas, feelings.”
4. **Why teach literature?** “To interpret and communicate with the world and for the world to communicate with you!! THEREFORE: Increase your opportunities to survive, live and learn.”

The first thing to note here is the use of the words “express” and “voices”. “Express” is the only verb and suggests a function of *expressiveness* as a hallmark of literature. The word “voice” carries a hint that this expressiveness has a personal dimension to it; that is, that the function of expressiveness is related to some kind of personal voice. The list of text-types begins by confusing genres (or text-types) with media (such as film, music, cellphones). Only two items are traditional literary text-types (i.e., novels, short stories). It is clear that there is not only a

confusion in respect of genre/medium, but also around what texts merit being categorised as “literary”. Indeed, on the basis of question 3, the salient identifying features are (a) print (that is, related to a medium), and (b) communicative intent. The latter relates to the expressive function mentioned previously, especially with the mention of feeling. This notion of the centrality of communication is taken up again in the answer to the fourth question, which also goes on to suggest additional functions for literary study, all of which might be related to the idea of “personal growth”.

During the first two phases of the project, discussion on “What is literature?” was hosted on the project wiki, but no primary teacher contributed to this discussion. However, like their secondary counterparts, all primary teachers completed a reflective profile at this time. They were offered a set of prompts to help with this task (see Appendix C) and provided with an example of a reflective profile written by one of the university researchers (Terry Locke). One of the teachers fashioned her reflective profiles in accordance with these prompts.

For two teachers, there was notable lack of what we will term a *literary metalanguage* in their profiles. For one, pedagogical practices around reading and writing were couched in terms of textual study in general with comments such as the following as typical: “Set questions to stimulate students’ interest in text”; “Students write down feelings and ideas immediately after reading the texts”; “Use guided questions to keep the focus”; “Discuss the conventions, structure and language of texts” (reflective profile). For a second, who taught a learning support class, the major focus of the reflective profile was on the special qualities of her students and the attitudes she hoped she was able to convey to them: “I hope I am a teacher who has compassion for and respects the dignity of each of my students” (reflective profile).

A third teacher’s reflective profile stated that: “I have a deep knowledge of children’s literature.” This teacher had been a children’s librarian for more than 20 years and felt that this enabled her to share a wide range of literature with her pupils. Apart from this one comment, she also tended to view herself primarily as a teacher of reading and writing, identifying such practices as reading aloud, encouraging children to read for pleasure, putting an emphasis on writing and linking processes of reading and writing.

The fourth reflective profile was a substantial document modelled on the questions in Appendix C. However, this teacher did not discuss any of her practices in terms of categories such as “cultural heritage”, “personal growth”, “textual and subtextual skills” or “critical literacy”, despite the availability of professional development reading that explained these approaches. References to a literary metalanguage are missing in her discussion of choice of texts for reading and writing: “Writing is based on the school’s overview. Writing is then introduced to the children with their needs in mind, e.g. visual, different genres, children’s individual experiences, etc” (reflective profile). In discussing the understandings, skills and activities typical of her approach to reading, this teacher provided a thoughtful and comprehensive list; for example, “understand that texts have a relationship to their context”; “be able to gain meaning from texts, e.g. inferring, asking questions, and seeking clarification, identifying and summarising, visualising, identifying the

author's purpose and point of view, forming and testing hypotheses"; using activities such as "teacher modelling". Her discussion of writing pedagogy followed a similar tack, and was additionally influenced by the asTTle emphasis on "deep" and "surface" features.⁸ However, in her section of classroom discourse or talk, this teacher drew extensively, perhaps drawing on the model made available to her, on a wide range of literary linguistic terms; for example, poem, fairy tales, short stories, dilemma, turning point, first person, metaphor and so on.

The conclusion we would draw is that our primary teacher-researchers were first and foremost teachers of reading and writing who were passionately committed to developing relevant literacy programmes tailored to the needs of their students. When offered an example of a reflective profile using literary metalanguage, one teacher was prepared to use this language in reflecting on her own practice. That is, she was able to talk about a literary dimension to her practice as a teacher of reading and writing. However, overall, the primary teacher-researchers in this project did not readily think of themselves as teachers of literature, and for three of them, the kind of literary metalanguage that secondary English teachers appear to use as part of their subject discourse (see next section) was something they were unfamiliar and even uncomfortable with.

4.4 Secondary teachers and the discourses of literature

At the first round-table meeting, the four secondary teacher-researchers responded in the following way to the focus group questions on literature.

- ***What is literature?*** "It may be a text that reflects time, place, values or voice. It could be in written/oral/visual or interactive forms. It may have a common theme or issue but could be read with different interpretations. It may create awareness and provoke thought.
- ***List literary types:*** "Written: non-fiction (news/mag reports/investigative articles; fiction (novels, short stories, poems)"; "Oral: poems/radio/lyrics/drama"; "Visual: static images/TV/film/cartoons"; "Technology: web/games/blogs".
- ***What makes these text-types "literary"?*** "They use language to communicate to an audience. It might involve a critical reading of the text. They could be accepted by an audience as a literary text. They last and are valued."
- ***Why teach literature?*** "It gives readers a different world view, points of view and a look into popular culture. It offers a foundation/context to make comparisons. We can see historically what has changed. It reflects how society has changed. It offers an escape to another world/time/place/culture."

In their response to the question "What is literature?", these teachers focused on thematic content as a stimulus to thinking and awareness, and susceptibility to a range of interpretations. In this respect, one might say that they were inclining towards a personal growth/reader response

⁸ AsTTle is a system of diagnostic testing for a range of competencies, including reading comprehension.

discourse of literature. They also highlighted the text/context relationship and the multimodal potential of literature. In listing literary text-types, like their primary colleagues, they spread the net wide to include investigative nonfiction and blogs. They also confused genre with medium; for example, by listing media rather than genres under their “visual” category for “What makes a text literary?” Their response appears to draw on at least two paradigms of English. There is a cultural heritage emphasis on the valuing of “literary” texts and the existence of a tradition. The reader is also centre-stage here, with readers called upon to engage in critique and even to determine whether a text is literary or not. The justification for teaching literature tends to focus on its ability to provide some kind of insight into society through immersion (“escape”) into a different, fictive world. There is something of a New Criticism (cultural heritage) flavour here, with literature holding up a mirror to society.

Between January and May 2006, three of the secondary teacher-researchers continued their discussion (in response to a forum posted by Terry Locke) on the project wiki. One teacher made the point that popular culture texts could be literary texts (for example, song lyrics) as well as digital texts such as computer games. She also noted that “The term (wrongly or rightly) has an element of merit inherent in it—What makes one (or [sic]) literary text better or of more merit than another one?” (wiki forum posting, 25 January 2007). Later, the same teacher, noting that she taught little that would be considered part of the “traditional canon”, commented: “I guess merit is a pretty fluid term—has someone ‘told us’ a text is of merit ... OR is it enough that we think the text is of value/merit because it reflects the social and cultural concerns of the students, is relevant and will interest the students?” (wiki forum posting, 16 February 2007).

Two days later, a second teacher agreed that while the traditional canon was important (“another tool in allowing them to be able to hold their own in the big wide world with their non-decile one peers”), she tried to include new types of literature (“blogs, computer games”) but retained the emphasis on “critical reputation”. She addressed the question of the basis for literary reputation this way: “Maybe the type of literature has a critical rep because a certain group in society respects and gives value to it, therefore they enjoy it and it makes them think about the issues it discusses or the style it uses. This way the audience decides on its merits and reputation and the audience may grow as it becomes more popular ... isn’t this how movements and traditional forms of literature and art developed?” (wiki forum posting, 18 February 2007). Somewhat later, a third teacher joined the discussion, remarking that “when I confront students with ‘literature’ it could be in any format—visual, aural, oral—that I think stimulates the senses and makes students appreciate its form as well as its content. The stimulus could be multiple or only one thing they particularly respond to” (wiki forum posting, 30 May 2007).

In one respect, there is a kind of consensus emerging here. While referencing a cultural heritage model of literature teaching, the emphasis is on an *expanded* canon (in terms of text-types) and a *dynamic* canon in terms of the process whereby texts become valued as part of a cultural group’s heritage. However, while two teachers comment on extrinsic measures of merit (what a particular group decides in relation to its own criteria), one teacher draws attention to formal aspects of the text as having a bearing on merit and enjoyment. This form/content distinction was seldom

highlighted in teacher discourse in the course of this project and this aspect will be discussed further in Section 6 of this report.

All four secondary teacher-researchers completed detailed reflective profiles, varying in size from six to 13 pages of close type, during the first two phases of this project. All modelled their profile on Appendix C and all related their profiles to four discourses of English: “cultural heritage”; “personal growth”; “textual and subtextual skills”; and “critical literacy”.

All four secondary teacher-researchers drew on a *cultural heritage model* but with differing emphases. All would sympathise with the statement made by one teacher: “The idea that the learned author knows best or that contemporary or real world texts are unworthy I disagree with.” All were determined to expose their students to a range of literature, with so-called “canonical” texts being chosen alongside popular titles. One wrote: “I look as much as possible for texts students can relate to, whether they are part of a ‘canon’ or not. I do believe in promoting some of the ‘classics’ and I definitely use Shakespeare. I often ask the question, ‘What can we in Otago, 2007, mainly Polynesians, gain from reading texts by this white guy that lived across the other side of the world 500 years ago?!’” Another noted: “I try to incorporate NZ authors into all level programmes—Pākehā, Māori and Pasifika authors.” A third deliberately maximised the range of cultural backgrounds she drew her texts from, writing: “I am sympathetic to any cultural heritage where we can learn about cultural identity.” Underpinning these comments about this paradigm is a focus on the role cultural heritage (properly defined) places in identity formation.

All four secondary teacher-researchers saw a personal growth aspect to the study of literature. One saw this in terms of cognitive development, and preferred to use texts to make her students think and push them out of their comfort zones. Another chose texts and topic that would help “pass on values, ethics, life skills” to students. A third wrote: “I agree with the idea that readers create meaning through language when they engage with different types of text and information and do think when readers bring their prior knowledge to the text they come up with different meanings and this engagement and analysis does help them to make more sense of their own world.” The other realised an emphasis on personal growth by using “personal response via journal writing” and also commented that: “NCEA focuses on literary essay writing for a large part of the course. However, where possible I use real-life writing situations—e.g. at Level 2 and 3 I use the College Herald writing programme for a formal writing task.”

In reflecting on textual (rhetorical) or subtextual skills discourses, teachers brought somewhat contrasting emphases. One’s emphasis was on the dynamic nature of genre in the wider context, and referred to her desire to have students draw on contemporary genre types in exploring textual practice and noted that this was a change from her previous practice. Two teachers showed contrasting responses to a similar situation; that is, addressing the needs of low-decile students who tended to have problems producing conventionally error-free writing. One teacher’s response was to limit the range of text-types attempted as writing tasks: “Many of our students start secondary school with lower literacy levels than other schools and so we have a first job to prepare them for assessments in Year 11 for which they earn qualifications. So we have to take

seriously the limited time we have to spend on various topics and think carefully about how much 'new' they do." The second suggested that an overemphasis on mechanical skills can be to the detriment of effective teaching: "These skills may help the reader and writer to clarify meaning but I don't believe it should be a dominant aspect when looking at the value of a text. I see some very creative and thoughtful pieces of writing coming from my students but the work may be weak mechanically. As long as it is coherent, the errors are not intrusive and the meaning is clear then it needs to be valued for its strengths." It may be that both teachers share this latter attitude, with the former coming up with a strategy to address the NCEA assessment emphasis on freedom from intrusive, mechanical errors.

All teachers wrote strongly of the value of critical literacy as a part of their repertoire of teaching approaches, despite (as one teacher put it) "Critical thinking doesn't appear in the English document until levels 7/8." All defined their understanding of critical literacy in ways that complemented the understanding of the other teachers. One saw a critical literacy approach as including "investigating the way that language choices are made and why; how language is used in different contexts to create power" and recognising "that there is no one single reading or meaning of any given text". A second had recently learnt about critical literacy, commenting that: "Representations can be very powerful, they can influence how we see the world, they can promote ideas. I want students to be able to look at advertisements for a 'White Sunday Loan' and be able to question it. It may help their families in some way." A third wrote: "I want students to be prepared to understand what is really happening in the world and that written and spoken words always come from a power-base. I want them to be able to make intelligent judgments from reading whatever they are presented with—the weather, body language, propaganda, etc. . . . Sometimes I tell students that reading is a life-skill because it involves reading more than just print." A fourth wrote: "I am sympathetic to the critical literacy view that literature is ideological, maintains social structures, and empowers certain groups, and that there needs to be new discourses to have a more just society. I agree [with] the view that we should be encouraging students to be resistant readers and be empowered language users." Two of these teachers were working with students from poor areas, but all four shared a similar social agenda, and from different perspectives shared a view of the relationship between language-in-use and power operates in society.

By the time they were preparing their initial (2007) interventions, secondary teacher-researchers in this project were clearly operating out of what might be called a "critically eclectic" approach to English (Locke, 2003). That is, they were drawing on a range of discourses in constructing their English teaching practice (including their approach to teaching literature) and were doing so knowingly. As one teacher put it: "I believe that despite the constraints of NCEA, English programmes can and should be a melding of all these four views of English—though not necessarily equally. The current English curriculum focuses on a skills based, functional discourse—but I personally am a bit of an eclectic when it comes to theories and discourses." The others would have agreed.

4.5 Discourses around cultural and linguistic inclusiveness: The big picture

The title of this research project is Teaching Literature in the Multicultural Classroom. At a simple level, it set out to address the needs of students in classrooms that are characterised by cultural and linguistic diversity; that is, classrooms where pupils, individually and collectively, identified themselves in terms of a range of ethnically-based identities and spoke or understood a range of languages. In this sense, the word “multicultural” was being used denotatively as an adjective, pointing to a particular aspect of a class’s makeup.

In the current environment, however, the addition of *-ism* to *multicultural* produces the term *multiculturalism*. Value-ladenness and ideology have entered the picture. Too easily, one can slip into talking about “multiculturalism” and the “multicultural classroom”, not just as descriptors, but as ideals—as signals for technologies that might lead to a more tolerant, equitable and just society.

In reality, multiculturalism as a concept is devoid of meaning until it is constructed in certain ways, and there are a number of ways in which it *can* be constructed. Not all of these are conducive to tolerance, equitability and social justice. Multicultural education had its origins in protest movements in the United States in the 1960s which challenged racism in education (Sleeter & Bernal, 2004). As Volk (1998) points out, there is a range of approaches to multicultural education and a number of researchers have attempted to map these (for example, Gibson, 1976; Grant & Sleeter, 2003⁹). Sleeter and Grant (2003, 2005), for example, identify five approaches to (or discourses around) multicultural education which they define as “educational practices directed toward race, culture, language, social class, gender, sexuality, and disability” (2003, p. 31):

1. *teaching the exceptional and culturally different*—adapts instruction to student difference in order to prepare them to enter mainstream society
2. *human relations approach*—prepares students to live and work together by fostering cross-cultural understanding
3. *single-group studies*—in-depth study of a single group (for example, ethnic studies, women’s studies) aimed at raising awareness of a group’s oppression with some emphasis on empowering that group
4. *multicultural education*—attempts to redesign the educational program so it reflects the concerns of all diverse groups and thereby produce an affirmation of that diversity
5. *multicultural and social reconstructionist education*—extends the definition of multicultural education to include education toward social action challenging social structures which produce inequities. (Sleeter & Grant, 2003, p. 33)

⁹ Volk was referring to an earlier edition of this book.

According to Volk (1998), the first two of these tended towards effects of assimilation and amalgamation, whereas only the last two involved advocacy for education reform so as to enable all students to function productively in multicultural contexts.

As Stephen May (2003) explains, critical multiculturalism can be seen as a response to essentialising tendencies (for example, to view culture in simplistic terms by viewing individuals as manifesting, say, core “Māoriness” or “Britishness”) in multicultural discourses and a failure in these discourses to address power-grounded relationships in respect of identity formation, social inequality and cultural representation itself. Critical multiculturalism is an example of the fifth type of multicultural education discourse identified by Sleeter and Grant (2003). May identifies four characteristics of a critical multicultural paradigm:

- acknowledging the importance of ethnicity and culture in the identity formation of certain individuals and groups *without* essentialising them
- recognising unequal power relations as a part of life for most people and that “individual and collective choices are circumscribed by the ethnic categories available at any given time and place” (2003, p. 209)
- recognising the ways in which certain cultural knowledges can become marginalised and misrepresented by more privileged discourses
- recognising “that all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture, *without being contained by that position*” (Hall, 1992, as cited in May, 2003, p. 211 [May’s emphasis]).

In the discussion that follows, we will be using Sleeter and Grant’s (2003) set of categories as a way of considering discourses of multicultural education, and cultural and linguistic inclusiveness in the New Zealand educational policy context, with particular reference to practices in relation to the teaching of literacy and literature.

4.6 Policy “constructions” of multicultural education in the New Zealand educational setting

A history of education in New Zealand has to begin with the fact that an indigenous people was colonised by English-speaking power, and that some sense of nationhood is tied up in a Treaty—a kind of foundational document—signed in 1840, between the British Crown and representatives of the tangata whenua which accorded rights and responsibilities to both partners. New Zealand’s history as a bicultural nation has been marred by successive treaty violations and characterised in more recent times by attempts at both redress and positive attempts to find ways of addressing the needs of Māori as a sovereign people to exercise self-determination in a range of spheres, including education. How successful these attempts have been is a matter of current debate (see May, 2002, for a discussion of indigenous rights in respect of education).

In terms of the education system, it is fair to say that New Zealand's discursive history in some ways mirrors that of the United States. Until Māori themselves challenged the status quo, discourses of assimilation and integration (or amalgamation) were the norm—reflected most starkly in the suppression of te reo in the majority of classrooms. Such discourses were based in a “subtractive” view of student bilingualism; that is, they saw a student's first language as an obstacle to be overcome rather than a resource to be valued (May, 2002, p. 7). Since the 1960s, however, the discursive terrain at policy level has changed, with both biculturalism and multiculturalism adopted as ideals of sorts.

In relation to biculturalism, a number of initiatives have occurred to help realise the bicultural ideal in concrete ways. The first of these was the development of bilingual schools in the late 1970s, a move which affirmed the value of Māori language. The second was the development of an alternative system of Māori-medium (immersion) schools: Te kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa Māori (see May & Hill, 2005). A more recent initiative has been the Te Kotahitanga programme, which grew out of research conducted by Russell Bishop and others in 2001 on the causes of Māori failure in mainstream classrooms. Te Kotahitanga might be described as a transformative approach to teacher professional development, which focuses on the agency of the culturally sensitive teacher who has rejected deficit theories as causing the nonachievement of Māori students in the school system. However, it is not without its critics (see Black, 2008).

However, as May (2002) has explained, from the 1980s onwards, multicultural education in New Zealand “has not been actively or consistently pursued . . . in theory, policy, or practice, except at localised school level” (p. 8). He cites two reasons for this. One relates to the educational shortcomings of a “taha Māori” approach¹⁰ to multicultural education, which he views as an example of “benevolent” multiculturalism, underpinned by a kind of “cultural pluralism” which “amounted to the idea of including, recognising, and valuing the different cultural heritages of all students within the classroom” (p. 10). The second relates to a suspicion that multicultural education was perceived as subverting “prior bicultural commitments to Māori education, and Māori language education in particular” (p. 8). In May's view, “an assimilationist imperative and a subtractive view of bilingualism are clearly apparent in the majority of language policies, and language education policies, aimed at ethnic minority groups” (2004, p. 35).

One place to start in terms of considering the extent to which the last two of Sleeter and Grant's categories have been realised or are realisable in the current New Zealand educational policy context is to visit Bhabha's (1994) distinction between cultural *diversity* and cultural *difference*. Summed up by May (2003):

¹⁰ “Taha Māori”, literally “things Māori”, was an approach taken to encourage teachers to incorporate Māori texts, language and protocols in their classrooms. By extension, a multicultural approach would incorporate texts, language and protocols from nonmainstream cultures in classrooms.

The former treats culture as an *object* of empirical knowledge—as static, totalized and historically bounded, as something to be valued but not necessarily *live*. The latter is the process of the *enunciation* of culture as ‘knowledgeable’ as adequate to the construction of systems of cultural identification. This involves a dynamic conception of culture—one that recognizes and incorporates the ongoing fluidity and constant change that attends its articulation in the modern world. (pp. 210–211)

It is arguable that the central preoccupation with “outcomes” that has characterised educational policy in New Zealand since the National Party’s Achievement Initiative of 1991 has led to a situation where cultural diversity has been rhetorically affirmed while cultural difference has been erased.

Two of the structural parameters the Achievement Initiative rested on included: “1. the establishing of clear achievement standards for all levels of compulsory schooling, first in the basic subjects of English, mathematics, science and technology, and later in other subjects; and 2. the developing of national assessment procedures at key stages of schooling, by which the learning progress of all students can be monitored in those basic subjects” (Ministry of Education, 1991, p. 1). Among other things, what this policy announcement signalled was:

- a massive shift from a curriculum oriented to the needs of individual learners to a system describing student learning as measurable against pre-established “clear objective standards” and state-dictated educational priorities
- a reiteration of the notion that assessment is about measuring students against sets of external and predetermined measures of performance, with a concomitant shift away from programme assessment to the assessment of individual learners.

According to Peters and Marshall (1996), *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993) ignored questions about the nature and structure of knowledge and instead emphasised skills:

...by reducing knowledge to skills, the designers of the National Curriculum have achieved a number of ‘political’ purposes. First, ‘skills’ can be more easily related to individual performance and thus are more easily measured than ‘knowledge’ and ‘understanding’. In this sense, ‘skills’ lead themselves to packaging and to commodification. Second, a skill is like a technique; it is a performance, an action, a doing. Like a technique, like technology more generally, ‘skills’ are often seen as neutral or as value-free. ‘Skills’ are, therefore, considered to be generic, separable from their learning contexts, transferable or transportable from one context to another. (p. 34)

While the introductory sections of various curriculum documents might make laudatory statements about the value of cultural diversity and the recognition of cultural difference, the structuring of curriculum documents into sequences of achievement objectives—later mirrored in the competence progressions of the NCEA—actually imposed a one-size-fits-all assessment

regime on students and teachers. Difference of any kind was marginalised.¹¹ Recent initiatives such as the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (discussed previously) have tended to advance the skills discourse, push a functional literacy agenda and foster diagnostic testing regimes which elide cultural difference. As Sleeter and Grant (2003) suggest, based in human capital theory, these technologies are fundamentally assimilationist (pp. 40–41).

Regardless of the goals and aspirations of curriculum statements, it is the levelling discourse of skills and competencies that powerfully determines classroom practice vis-à-vis cultural difference. By way of a single and salutary example of this, one of the secondary school HODs in this project, from a predominantly Pacific Island school, had decided not to have any students in Years 11–13 enrol in NCEA creative writing standards, because he saw these students (many of them EAL) as penalised by the criteria for creative writing which penalises “intrusive errors”. As we shall see, all secondary teacher-researchers in this project saw themselves as caught in a dilemma between addressing the “credentialing” needs of their students and their desire to design classroom programmes that were responsive to student difference.

We now turn to multicultural discourses in respect of *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1994). The first point to note is the problem of naming. The history of English as a subject is inextricably tied to the history of English as a global language and the language of the coloniser. In the New Zealand context, discourses of assimilation and integration have the privileging of English as language as their cornerstone. *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993) offered two learning areas where English as a subject might find a home, “Language and Languages” and “The Arts”. However, as it transpired, subject English became a stand-alone learning area (and continues to be so in the latest curriculum document). This placement reinforced the hegemonic status of English as language.

The New Zealand Curriculum Framework entitled students to “learning . . . in literature” (2003, p. 15) and to mother tongue use:

Students whose mother tongue is a Pacific Islands language or another community language will have the opportunity to develop and use their own language as an integral part of their schooling. (2003, p. 10)

However, as mentioned earlier (p. 8) the reality for EAL students studying English meant a reading diet of texts in English, instruction in English and assessment in (usually written) English. Not only was the use of one’s own language discouraged in the English/literacy classroom; English itself was constructed as the privileged, and other languages as rather second-class languages for literary writing (Locke & May, 2004). As Elizabeth Gordon has also shown, the hegemonic insistence on English also operated in relation to the study of language use in subject English, with the National Government of the early 1990s actively suppressing moves to

¹¹ The latest curriculum document (Ministry of Education, 2007) continues this trend. While its principles include *cultural diversity* (p. 9), and its values include “diversity as found in our different cultures, languages, and heritages” (page), it is still dominated by the discourses of skills (“key competencies”) and by eight-level ladders of achievement objectives which are likely to drive classroom practice.

encourage a bicultural approach to language and literature (Gordon, 2005). In discourse terms, what was operating here was a kind of assimilation.

The levelling tendency of an emphasis on skills/competencies/outcomes, as previously discussed, has affected subject English also (see Pooley, 2005, for a discussion of the NCEA as embodying a skills discourse). In Section 4.2 we discussed the 1994 English curriculum in terms of its underpinning discourses and the dominance of English as discrete skills discourse. While there is evidence of a cultural heritage discourse operating, the hegemonic status of English as language (discussed above) militates against the transformation of this discourse of subject English into one which values the heritages (literary and linguistic) of all students. (Despite this, as we shall see, teachers in this project in differing ways engaged in attempts at this transformation.) There is also evidence of a discourse of personal growth in the 1994 statement, but we would argue that this discourse is likely in practice to support the fourth of Sleeter and Grant's approaches to multicultural education—a kind of benevolent or “feel-good” approach to multiculturalism which does not engage with power structures in society at large. Ironically, the discourse of English least evident in the 1994 statement, critical literacy, is the one most likely to conduce to the most critical approach to multicultural education, that is, critical multiculturalism.

4.7 Primary teachers and discourses around cultural and linguistic inclusiveness

Primary teacher-researchers reflected on their own practices in relation to their culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms during the first two phases of the project in their teacher profiles, in a focus group conducted at a round-table meeting in June 2007 and in a subsequent wiki-based forum. Most of these teachers lived in or close to the communities they served. One teacher stated in her reflective profile that she hoped to be “a teacher who has compassion for and respects the dignity of each of my students”—a statement that reflected the ethos of this group.

All teachers believed strongly in knowing the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their students. One teacher wrote: “I always learn my class's cultural and linguistic backgrounds” (reflective profile). As primary or intermediate teachers, they had far more frequent access to their students than their secondary counterparts, and therefore more opportunities to deepen their knowledge of their students. Teacher profiles reflected the depth and breadth of knowledge these teachers had of their students' cultural backgrounds. Another teacher wrote: “I have three boys who were born in Samoa and came to New Zealand early in their schooling. I also have another young man who is of Tuvaluan/Samoan heritage, born in Tuvalu but who also speaks Samoan. In total I have five students who speak fluent Samoan, including a boy born in New Zealand but who has NESB [non-English speaking background]” (reflective profile). This kind of detail appeared to come effortlessly from the primary teacher-researchers in this project.

In their focus group discussion on the multicultural classroom (June 2007), the primary teachers collectively identified a range of things a teacher in such a classroom should know:

- a general knowledge of the home background, including knowledge of caregivers' and parents' school levels
- the languages spoken at home and the extent of linguistic competence in these languages
- family practices and customs (including literacy practices)
- any physical and intellectual disabling conditions
- a child's linguistic history in English acquisition (including attendance at preschool).

In their focus group, these teachers agreed that a knowledge of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students affected their choice of reading/viewing/listening materials in a number of ways. These included an attention to vocabulary and prior student knowledge and how this might be built on through the scaffolding of new learning. Teachers collectively advocated a balance between a focus on pupils' backgrounds and interests and a focus which allowed for children's views, knowledge, understanding and vocabulary to be broadened. One teacher wrote in her reflective profile that "The children are exposed to stories from a wide range of cultures which hopefully encourages them to look at the world from different points of view" and indicated that she attempted to keep a wide range of books in the class library and for us as "read-to's". Another's focus was on attention to the child's independent reading age. This teacher also emphasised the importance of having a variety of books available. Another focus group emphasis was on giving students the opportunity to share their cultural knowledge, but the proviso was added that care needed to be taken to ensure that they were comfortable in doing so.

In their focus group report, these teachers identified a number ways in which their management of classroom interaction was affected by the knowledge they had of their students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. These included using topics that catered for students' interests and experiences; encouraging contributions; teaching effective communication skills; modelling respect; and using one-on-one communication with students to elicit the sharing of these students' cultural "funds of knowledge".

One teacher saw her role as deriving from the careful choice of textual material and viewed herself as "a guide/facilitator to help clarify or put them on the right track" (reflective profile). A second focused on a practice of selecting groups according to ability as leading to cultural mix in groups: "This leads to a better understanding of different cultures as they are able to explain to one another the content of text when the topic is relating to culture, e.g. myths and legends, festivals. The knowledge of the others' culture leads to accepting differences, and negative comments regarding culture and habits are minimal" (reflective profile). A third teacher reflected on her own linguistic heritage and abilities and the way she transformed her sense of limitation into a strength: "I am totally monolingual with only a high school knowledge of French and Latin. The class knows this and they also know I envy anyone who can speak two or more languages. My ESOL [English for speakers of other languages] kids are often proud that they know more than me! Not being a New Zealander myself is often very useful in moderating the NZ-born children's attitude to recent arrivals too" (reflective profile).

In their reflective profiles, teachers commented on how knowledge of the cultural and linguistic qualities of students influenced choices around the design of learning activities and processes. One teacher commented on the way she made cultural festivals a classroom focus: “In the past, we have celebrated different events in class, such [as] Lantern Festival, Chinese New Year, Eid-ul-Fitr and Diwali. This year we celebrated Matariki. What we celebrate depends very much on the composition of the class at the time. I always talk to the children whose celebration we are looking at first to see if they are comfortable with it. I do this before mentioning anything to the rest of the class. Usually the children are happy, but occasionally this has not happened. Then I did not proceed” (reflective profile).

Noteworthy here is a determination to be sensitive to a child’s discomfort at having their culture put on show. A second teacher referred to an Action Learning unit with different groups studying the sun as a symbol in various civilisations, and students drawing on their own cultural backgrounds for information: “They were also able to interview parents, grandparents and other family to gather information not easily found in books . . . It has been interesting to note that, although all group members participated in the presentation [using PowerPoint, Keynote or IMovie] it was quite often the student who was from that culture, that was the main presenter” (reflective profile). A third teacher’s focus was on activities that used a range of textual choices (atlases, the Internet, the library and peers) so that pupils could “make meaning of increasingly complex text, by identifying language in them, recognise text forms, organisation of sentences, paragraphs, images contributing to text meaning” (reflective profile).

Only two of the primary teacher-researchers contributed to the wiki-based forum on what makes for a multicultural classroom. However, one of these teachers initiated a discussion that steered the discussion towards a conclusion that the term “culture” needs to be scrutinised and not be viewed in naïve or simplistic way. (The discussion ended up suggesting that cultural identity formation was a complex business and not helped by a tendency to “essentialise” culture in ethnic terms.) This teacher wrote: “I would have to agree, mine too is a classroom housing a wide assortment of nationalities. We try to include a wide range of viewpoints, ideas and value traditions and different ways of looking at the world. It can get challenging at times, but the class is getting to realise that their way of viewing the world can be challenged and they’re usually fascinated by the ‘different’” (wiki forum posting, 6 June 2007). The value of sharing was reinforced by another primary teacher: “I think a multicultural classroom is much like mine where there are eight different nationalities amongst the students and an ex-South African as a teacher! However, to make it truly multicultural I think there must be a lot of sharing of cultural ideas and traditions” (wiki forum posting, 7 June 2007). In the focus group discussion, these teachers also cautioned against simplistic, ethnicity-based concepts of cultural homogeneity. In their report they wrote: “Multiple cultures, most students identify with more than one culture (not just ethnically). When you ask our students which culture they most identify with they will often answer with ‘I can’t choose one Miss, I’m all of them’” (focus group report).

In summary, primary teacher-researchers rejected discourses of multicultural education that were either assimilationist or integrationist. They could be broadly described as subscribing to a

discourse of multicultural education. A focus on cultural and linguistic difference influenced their programme design and the pedagogical practices they adopted. Their programmes tended to mirror the description Sleeter and Grant (2003) offer related to multicultural education:

Organise concepts around contributions and perspectives of several different groups; teach critical thinking, analysis of alternative viewpoints; make curriculum relevant to students' experiential backgrounds; promote use of more than one language. (p. 159)

In one respect, they reflected a discourse of multicultural and social reconstructionist education; that is, they resisted simplistic constructions of culture and ethnicity, recognising that identity formation and group identity were based in factors other than ethnicity and that many of their students saw themselves as having multiple ethnic affiliations.

4.8 Secondary teachers and discourses around cultural and linguistic inclusiveness

Like their primary counterparts, secondary teacher-researchers reflected on their own practices in relation to their culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms during the first two phases of the project in their teacher profiles, in a focus group conducted at a round-table meeting in June 2007 and in a subsequent wiki-based forum. All were HODs and tended to have knowledge of students beyond those in their own classes. Three of the four lived in or grew up in the communities they served and had close friendships with members of these communities from a range of cultural groups. One had a conversational knowledge of Samoan and two had visited a number of Pacific Islands.

All secondary teacher-researchers placed a high value on knowing their students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In their focus group discussion, these teachers believed that it was desirable for teachers to know about: the first language spoken; the home language; students' first linguistic patterns; cultural customs and behaviours; trends and popular youth culture; home/personal background; parents' attitudes towards responsibilities of school/parents (that is, homework expectations); any tensions created by cultural differences; knowledge of hearing disability/deaf language; and literary ability in students' own language. One wrote: "I think I've always made it a priority to first of all get to know my students on an individual basis—and this naturally includes their cultural/linguistic backgrounds" (reflective profile). Teachers used a range of strategies to enable them to develop a knowledge of their students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. These included:

- journal writing
- a Year 9 unit looking at where students come from: "It incorporates a speech which requests students to interview parents/grandparents to find out about and then to talk about their cultural backgrounds" (reflective profile)
- a Year 11 unit using short texts on the theme of identity/stereotyping/racial prejudice.

As has been shown in Section 4.4, all teachers, in discussing their attitude to the cultural heritage paradigm of English, showed a willingness to challenge traditional versions of the “canon” and espoused the idea of a canon that was dynamic and responsive to the heritages of their students. For these teachers, a knowledge of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students very much affected their choice or reading/viewing material. All referred to the criterion of *relevance*. One teacher talked about drawing “on their cultural backgrounds, especially New Zealand born Pacific experiences. I talk with the students and take note of their interests [rugby league, gang culture, experiences of Pacific youth in New Zealand, church/Christianity, family] then try to find texts that can link in with that” (reflective profile). Another focused on Māori writers, especially in the junior school. A third referred to the school’s wide reading programme and the fact that there was an emphasis on providing texts from a variety of cultural perspectives. All four would have concurred with the broad principles encapsulated in the following reflective profile statement:

I source as many texts as possible by NZ, Māori and Pacific authors/directors/artists, use articles from weekend and local newspapers for wide reading and NZ film and art for viewing. I also keep in mind that it is important to supplement this with other world view texts so I can expand their knowledge so select other texts but these would have **to?** (**or [sic]**) have themes/characters they can relate to.

The statement was reinforced in their focus group discussion, which referred to a balance between texts from the students’ “world” and texts which would take them out of their “comfort zone” and the desirability of making available texts from a variety of cultural settings (including translated texts).

In their reflective profiles, all teachers indicated that the way they conducted classroom interaction was affected by the knowledge they had of their students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This was reinforced by the focus group discussion which recognised that learning styles could be culturally determined. This discussion also advocated an attitude of recognising students as experts in respect of their own cultural and linguistic knowledge. A number of common themes or strategies emerged:

- There was an emphasis on group-centred learning and co-operative learning activities. One teacher referred to changing group compositions according to varying bases (social or free-choice; shared interest; common ability; linguistically mixed; linguistically homogeneous). For example, a group of students with the same language (additional to English) might be set up so that they might more successfully discuss a concept. Another teacher also encouraged the use of first languages if doing group work but not in reporting back to the class in general. One teacher put a lot of emphasis on the word “our”, referring to the classroom as “our class” not “my class” and the resources in it as “our glue” or “our scissors”.
- As indicated in this first bullet point, finding a place for the student’s first languages was a key emphasis, with the focus group summary calling on teachers to use languages of other cultures when possible and appropriate. One teacher wrote: “Speak in students’ ‘first language’ if I can, just small things like see you tomorrow, do you understand, and made a practice of using students’ ‘first language’ whenever possible for the learning of new

concepts, and having concepts in the class ‘Academic Word List’ in other languages than English.” Another teacher wrote: “I often invite students to tell the rest of us about customs in their culture—and about phrases. Sometimes we’ve looked at similarities/differences between languages. I try as often as possible to utter the odd phrase in their language.” One teacher referred to keeping dictionaries in Pacific Island languages in the classroom.

- There was an emphasis on multiple modes of communication. One teacher wrote: “Instructions are always given orally and visually. Follow-up work is often available on the intranet and sometimes there is a discussion forum created, wherever appropriate.”
- There was a focus on the oral. One teacher wrote: “I usually read texts aloud to assist with pronunciation and clarify new vocabulary—there may be discussion around these. Our students enjoy being read to and this keeps them on task and ensures those who don’t want to read or face barriers at home, keep up.” This focus related to a focus group emphasis on linguistic modelling.
- There was an emphasis on cultural sensitivity. For one teacher this included such things as never sitting on tables and speaking privately about sensitive matters.

Just as interactive processes were affected by the knowledge of the cultural and linguistic qualities of students, so were choices around the design of learning activities and processes. A few examples from different teachers are mentioned here to illustrate the general point:

- linking the teaching of writing process to the television programme *Pimp my ride*
- co-operative learning activities such as folded line-ups for group variety (this teacher was drawing on experience in the Te Kotahitanga project)
- having students design their own questions to encourage high-level thinking
- using templates and scaffolds.

One teacher wrote in detail about ways of approaching the specific literacy needs of decile 1 students, largely from EAL backgrounds. The self-direction was: “Try to build background knowledge about content and structure of texts and ensure that students are aware of how specific types of texts are organised and teach the features of these, anticipate vocab and grammar difficulties, implement teaching strategies and activities learnt in literacy and AIMHI professional development, for example, 3-level guides, matching, sequencing tasks” (reflective profile).

As mentioned in Section 4.4, these teachers also strongly espoused a critical literacy aspect to their teaching and were acutely aware of its role in alerting students to the relationship between text, discourse/representation and power. Two of these teachers taught in decile 1 schools, and both were aware that by introducing critical literacy into their classrooms they were potentially empowering their students to resist ways others might represent the cultural groups they belonged to. One teacher wrote: “The media represents South Auckland and Otara in particular ways and I want students to be able to be aware of that and question it and reject it if necessary” (reflective profile). In this respect, they were reflecting a critically multicultural discourse (see May, 2003). The critical literacy emphasis was reinforced by the focus group summary which advocated a

critical literacy approach which places the cultural background and social context at the foreground of textual study.

An additional and important theme that emerged, particularly in the wiki-based forum, was the idea of hybridity in relation to cultural identity formation. This is in line with a characteristic of critical multiculturalism as acknowledging the importance of ethnicity and culture in the identity formation of individuals and groups *without* essentialising them (May, 2003). Secondary (and primary) teachers in this forum in different ways elaborated on the meaning of *culture* as a component of *multicultural* and resisted essentialising understandings of culture. One wrote that “it’s not just the different nationalities and cultural backgrounds that make up a multicultural classroom, but the comparing and contrasting of each other’s background/beliefs/ attitudes/values. The realisation that cultural values could change because of an integration with other cultures through marriage or just through living in a place which is different” (wiki forum posting, 6 June 2007). Another commented: “I mean is anyone purely from one cultural heritage? I myself am half British and half Greek Cypriot, and have lived in NZ for 35 years” (wiki forum posting, 7 June 2007). A third commented: “A Samoan born and raised in Samoa or in a home which is strong in ‘tradition’—*and this term is not static*—will be very different from a Samoan student growing up in say Otara with one parent, who themselves does not know how to speak Samoan or much of Samoan ‘tradition’. So the notion of culture to me is kind of problematic because how can you define what a culture is? That’s why I say hiphop, or the rugby league club, or church or the gang/crew may be cultures some students may feel a closer affiliation to” (wiki forum posting, 8 June 2007).

We quote here, slightly edited, the closing discussion, which was responding to the question: “What makes a classroom truly multicultural?”:

I guess to me a multicultural classroom is one that is rich in a variety of cultural backgrounds and identities and that within these there is also a lot of cross-pollination. A student in a multicultural classroom can bring with them a different ethnic background but they may also have strong regional affiliations or subcultural identities that cross over ethnicity. All of these things may influence their way of thinking and behaviour towards learning. They may come from a similar cultural background but belong to a specific ethnic group that has its own specific beliefs or behaviours, e.g. Samoan vs Tongan, NZ-born vs Island-born, or new immigrants like refugees and bring with them traumatic experiences. They may identify with certain clothing like hip hop or Goth or religious requirements like the burqa. Accents may vary between different cultural groups but they may also identify with regional accents like those of South Auckland. There may also be a culture of food identities, e.g. they may be PI and see corned beef as being a food of choice but they may also be PI and be Seventh Day Adventists and be vegetarian. The multicultural mix may also be socioeconomic, i.e. many families from a decile 1 area may be on some form of assistance which cuts across ethnic backgrounds so they share the cultural struggle of trying to make ends meet and the impression others have towards their suburb. So I suppose I see a multicultural class as being one that is really diverse in many aspects, from what they bring with them from their family and socioeconomic background to what they may identify with among themselves. (Wiki forum posting, 10 June 2007)

It should be pointed out that these secondary teacher-researchers were not denying the importance of ethnicity as a cultural group identity marker. Rather they were highlighting the fluidity and complexity in identity formation for both themselves and their students.

In summary, secondary teacher-researchers rejected discourses of multicultural education that were either assimilationist or integrationist. They were committed as a bottom line to a discourse of multicultural education and were committed to designing their programmes and adopting pedagogical practices that reflected a concern for the diverse groups of students in their classrooms and which positively affirmed the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of these students. In two crucial respects also, they reflected a discourse of multicultural and social reconstructionist education (for example, critical multiculturalism). Sleeter and Grant (2003) describe a curriculum associated with such a discourse as follows:

Organize content around current social issues involving racism, classism, sexism, sexuality, disability; organise concepts around experiences and perspectives of several different American groups; use students' life experiences as starting point for analysing oppression; teach critical thinking skills, analysis of alternative viewpoints; teach social action skills, empowerment skills. (*p. 196*)

In favouring a critical literacy focus in textual study and in organising units of work around relevant and contentious themes, these teachers were seeking to empower students by having them explore the relationship between language, power and social structures. Secondly, they resisted naïve and essentialising concepts of culture, viewing identity formation as a discursively complex enterprise for both themselves and their students.

5. Findings in respect of the effective teaching of literature in multicultural classrooms (research questions 2, 3, 4)

As outlined in Section 2, the following were the last three of the four questions driving this research project.

- What features characterise the successful classroom practices/processes of a sample of teachers engaging students in activities aimed at fostering their ability to engage in the reading and composition of literary texts? (research question 2)
- In particular, what aspects of pedagogy have been successful in developing a culturally and linguistically inclusive classroom for the teaching and learning of literature? (These aspects may include programme design, resourcing, activity design and formative assessment.) (research question 3)
- In what ways can information and communications technologies (ICTs) be integrated productively in a culturally and linguistically inclusive classroom for the teaching and learning of literature? (research question 4).

As explained in Section 3, while conceived of in action research terms overall, this project consists of a number of case studies, each one related to a series of classroom-based interventions undertaken by each teacher-as-researcher and developed collaboratively with the larger project group. Significant aspects of the profiles of teacher-researchers have been detailed in Section 4 and will not be reiterated here. Suffice it to say that teachers operated out of a range of discursive positions in respect of the meanings they attached to concepts such as “literacy”, “literary study” and “culturally inclusive teaching”.

In this section, the findings emerging from the interventions trialled by primary and secondary teachers will be summarised separately. These summaries will draw for the most part on two kinds of documentation produced by the teacher-researchers themselves working collaboratively with university-based researchers: (a) the research templates as completed in accordance with the interventions trialled in a particular year (Appendix A) and (b) the final reports on these interventions written in Phase 5 of the project by teacher-researchers with the assistance of university-based researchers (Appendix B). In places, they also draw on works already completed for publication: Cleary (2008) and Sturgess and Locke (in press) (see Section 9).

Each of Sections 5.1 (Findings by primary school teacher-researchers) and 5.2 (Findings by secondary school teacher-researchers) will adopt the same structure and use the following subheadings:

- *Key learning objectives*—these will be grouped across case studies.
- *Intervention summaries*—the nature of interventions as related to particular learning objectives will be summarised across case studies.
- *Summary of findings*—the outcomes of various interventions will be discussed here, in particular relation to research questions 2 and 3.
- *The place of ICTs*—this section will discuss the place of ICTs in relation to interventions deemed to be successful (research question 4).

5.1 Findings by primary school teacher-researchers

Key learning objectives

Over the two years, the primary teacher-researchers developed a range of learning objectives, which informed their planning, teaching and evaluation. Most objectives were informed by a constant focus on developing or extending meanings within a literacy programme that included a range of tasks and activities or approaches. This was perhaps best encapsulated by the following objective:

Through participating in a balanced programme, students develop strategies to help them gain more meaning from texts. (Teacher B)

The objectives also reflected primary teachers' concern with the interrelationship of tasks/activities and pupil understanding/enjoyment. In this report, we group teachers' objectives (primary and secondary) under the following categories:

- responding to texts/attitudes to reading
- the form/content relationship
- understanding text/context relationships
- the constructedness¹² of texts
- composing literary texts.

Attitudes to reading/responding to texts

In their efforts to enhance their students' enjoyment of literary reading, all primary teachers focused their emphasis on their students' listening to and understanding literary texts while the teacher read them to the students. Typical objectives related to responding by *listening to literary texts* read:

¹² The word "constructedness" here involves two related senses: texts are deliberate "constructions", that is, they are the product of conscious and unconscious choices; texts position readers to view the world in certain ways, i.e. readers are offered by texts "constructions" of reality (as per a critical literacy view of reading).

- students will develop better listening skills (Teacher C)
- students are able to listen effectively and considerately (Teacher B)
- students can spontaneously and purposely record mental images in personal graffiti journals while listening to the teacher read (Teacher A)
- students realise that there are particular pleasures associated with the oral rendering of a literary text (Teacher C).

A key focus of students reading literary texts themselves or through listening to the teacher reading literary texts was to develop a love and enjoyment of literary texts. Objectives related to the *enjoyment of literary texts* included:

- students read for enjoyment (Teacher A)
- students become independent readers by developing a love of reading (Teacher B)
- students become more enthusiastic about reading (Teacher C)
- students become active rather than passive readers (Teacher A).

Primary teachers were concerned to develop a range of strategies to assist students with their responses to and understanding of literature. These responses often led to the development of other texts by the students. This text production by students would allow the teacher to monitor understandings and to consider these as a basis for further development. A range of objectives related to helping students *read to understand literary texts and develop a personal response*:

- students use cognitive and graphic organisers to help them make meaning as they read and write in personal graffiti journals (Teacher A)
- students compare and contrast their own drawings and organisers with the movie of the “reading to and talking with” text (Teacher A)
- students realise that engagement with literary characters provides opportunities for higher level thinking (problem solving, ethical dilemma management) (Teacher C).

The form/content relationship

The teachers did not initially state in their objectives that formal aspects of texts would be a focus (with the aim of helping students to appreciate the ways in which formal aspects contribute to a text’s effectiveness with particular readers). However, as a result of testing and the lack of specific understanding by students, one primary teacher in particular included the following objectives in his planning:

- students develop an understanding of character (what type of character, his/her personality, how his/her actions influenced the plot, good or bad choices) (Teacher B)
- students explore the development of the plot and the use of imagery in novels (Teacher B).

Other primary teacher-researchers were concerned in various ways to enable their students to identify personal responses to various themes in literary texts and to share these with others. Teaching in terms of themes (content) was a key aspect of primary teachers’ pedagogies and this

affected the focus of their teaching of literature. However, this was not identified as an objective specifically in terms of objectives, but rather as “a way of teaching”.

Understanding text/context relationships

No primary teacher-researchers actually formulated an objective that fitted this category.

The constructedness of text

Some time had been spent during the professional development phases of the project to consider the constructedness of a text and the versions of meaning that a reader can construct. For the primary teacher-researchers, this dealt in part with the “versions” of reality that the text might offer, but mainly with the way that different readers, depending on their experiences, particularly cultural experiences and knowledge, might construct meaning on the basis of textual cues. This was examined at both word level and textual level in literary texts, including visual and oral texts. This then became a focus of some of the teacher-researchers’ objectives. For example:

- students think critically about the meanings and analyse the effects produced by verbal and visual messages in moving and still images (Teacher B)
- students understand that complex fictional texts represent a range of viewpoints on issues (Teacher C)
- students think critically about the “reading-to-talking-with” (RTTW) text (Teacher A)
- students begin to appreciate that texts position readers/viewers to see things in a certain way (Teacher A)
- students understand the idea of point of view (Teacher C)
- students understand that the “factual” information contained in a literary text can be contested (Teacher C).

Composing literary texts

Primary teacher-researchers tended to teach thematically or within a specific themed context. Generally they tended to use a literary text as a model for other forms of text; for example, with a narrative being used as a model for plot of narratives. The following objectives reflect a focus on *using literary reading as a prompt for creative writing*:

- students examine, discuss and write using powerful visual images (Teacher A)
- students spontaneously and purposely record in personal graffiti journals, mental images whilst listening to the teacher read (Teacher A)
- students use technology to read and write collaboratively (Teacher A).

One primary teacher-researcher encouraged creative writing on the basis of models studied, though students wrote *from their own personal experiences*. Objectives included:

- students write and model their work on a variety of genres, making use of their knowledge acquired after reading different types of text (Teacher B)
- students view and present language in different forms (Teacher B)
- students are creative and take pride in well-presented work (Teacher B).

During the second year of the project, another focus that was explored was the use of students' first language (L1) to write bilingual texts, *using translation as a writing activity*, involving parents or other family members as helpers. This focus was developed from the research work of Feuerverger (1994). One of the primary teachers was able to incorporate this as an objective:

- students translate simple English texts into students' L1 (ESL students only) (Teacher A).

All primary teacher-researchers agreed that the reading of texts was important in all curriculum areas; that is, *reading was viewed as learning*. However, only one teacher reflected this in the writing of objectives:

- by improving basic reading skill, students improve skills to assist their overall learning in all curriculum areas (Teacher B)
- students develop the ability to understand, appreciate literature and use oral language effectively in a range of contexts in order to develop the verbal skills necessary to confidently and effectively communicate in a variety of formal and informal situations (Teacher B).

Intervention summaries

Over the last 18 months of the project, the three primary teacher-researchers developed a range of interventions linked to the learning objectives they had formulated with particular reference to this project. These interventions varied in scale, but operated as tasks or activities within the context of units of work.

Primary teachers tended to work in an integrated way when focusing on the development of their literacy programmes and to consider literature in this broader way. There were a number of reasons for this. Firstly, primary teachers often integrate their teaching so that the strands of the English curriculum can inform one another. Secondly, this allows primary teachers to include a thematic focus and connect to other areas of the curriculum. While pedagogically this is an exciting and relevant way to teach, developing and examining specific aspects of literary focuses and their objectives has been challenging.

Another aspect that was frequently raised during workshops with primary teachers was the lack of time allowed in the school programme for literacy/literature in what appeared to be a very full programme that was specifically timetabled. Two of the teachers (B and C) stated that when time was needed for any number of reasons, it was often the literacy/literature programme in the school that was sacrificed.

As with the objectives, these interventions will be summarised under five categories:

1. attitudes to reading/responding to texts
2. the form/content relationship
3. understanding text/context relationships
4. the constructedness of text
5. composing literary texts.

Attitudes to reading/responding to texts

All three teachers were committed to developing positive attitudes to reading with their students, especially those students who were identified as “low progress” reluctant, or not interested in reading. All three teachers viewed *listening to* literary texts as key to students engaging positively and productively with literary texts. Each teacher’s respective interventions focused on developing their students’ listening skills in order to further foster their love and enjoyment of literary texts.

“Reading to and talking with” is a term used by primary teachers to describe teachers reading to their students and engaging their students in discussion centred on the focus for the reading. This “approach” can be used at any level of the school for a variety of purposes. As part of *responding to* texts, all teachers placed value on discussion to clarify ideas and saw *reading to students and reading by students to understand literary texts and develop a personal response* as fundamental to enjoying literary texts in a productive manner.

Teacher A was working with a composite Year 7/8, multicultural, special needs class in the first year of the project (2007) and then with a multicultural, mainstream Year 7 class in the second year of the project, within a decile 3 school in West Auckland.

In 2008, a variety of interventions were trialled with the mainstream Year 7 class. Of 26 students, 13 were female and 13 were male. The class was ethnically and linguistically diverse, with four identifying themselves as New Zealand Māori or part-Māori, three of Asian descent, eight identifying themselves as New Zealand Europeans, 10 identifying themselves as Pasifika and one as Pasifika/Asian. All 26 students were fluent in verbal English. Fourteen students could understand and speak a language other than English, eight students could understand but not speak a language other than English, while five of the group did not speak English at home.

The motive for involvement in this project was anecdotal evidence arising from informal conversations with the students, observations of students’ reading habits and choice of texts and evaluating formative and summative results of various reading and writing activities. From these observations, Teacher A stated that:

The ability to respond to literature, the meanings it might convey, the emotions it may stir and the ability to enjoy literature is a learned skill. I believe my students have become passive readers. They are so used to being visually bombarded with digital images that they are no longer active readers. They don't visualise the world they are reading about. I want their imaginations to be stirred!

Coupled with the observations above, further motivation for involvement in this project was the teacher's desire for her students to enjoy literature, as is evident in this statement:

What do I want my students to know about literature that they didn't know before? I want them to know they can enjoy it! Those of us who enjoy reading have developed our own skills for enjoying literature, simply by reading a lot. For our students who have read less we need to encourage them to learn the skills of literature enjoyment; to voluntarily pick up a book and not want to put it down.

The teacher began the year by reading short passages such as: "That very night in Max's room a forest grew and grew and grew until his ceiling hung with vines and the walls became the world all around", from picture books such as *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963). The teacher read short descriptive and imaginative passages so that the students would be able to listen for a focused and manageable period of time. She then shared orally with the class the images she visualised and invited their responses as well. She then supplied each student with an exercise book, to record his or her mental images. This book became known as their "graffiti journal". She found that it was more beneficial for the students to record their own mental images as she read the short passages to them. The teacher and the students would then share their recorded visual images with each other after the reading and then a class discussion would follow, comparing and contrasting their own images with those of the illustrator and those within their class.

This worked well to engage the often disengaged and disruptive students during the "reading to and talking with" daily session. The teacher was well aware that the majority of her students were visually responsive and avid readers of electronic and digital texts, and so she used this ability of her students to make connections to understanding literature.

After a few weeks of this kind of activity, she introduced the use of graphic and cognitive organisers as a further tool for her students to use if they wanted to. The organisers were introduced and modelled by the teacher as another way to record the images they imagined and to also record the key events and their order while the students listened to the teacher read to them a novel. At this time, Teacher A had a student teacher within her class who was able to read a chapter from the novel, *Stormbreaker* (Horowitz, 2000) as Teacher A modelled on the electronic Smartboard the use of her selected graphic and cognitive organiser. Her students watched as she drew and wrote on the Smartboard. At the end of the chapter reading, the class would then recap the chapter with the use of the teacher's Smartboard graphic. During the subsequent chapter readings, each student completed their own recording of what they were hearing and understanding, followed by pair discussions, recapping the chapter they had just finished listening to. As further motivation for her students, Teacher A had also promised her class at the start of this particular intervention that they would, at the completion of the "reading-to-talking-with" novel, watch the DVD of the same title. Most students' attention was captured and maintained throughout the "reading-to-talking-with" sessions.

However, it did not take long for Teacher A to realise that not all students would respond positively and productively all of the time to one, single intervention for the whole class. In Teacher A's own words:

I became aware that even though this intervention was successful for many students I still had three boys in particular who were not engaged for most of the time. All three of these boys came to our school this year with records of behavioural and learning problems. I quickly discovered these boys all had excellent general knowledge and oral language skills but found **any** form of handwritten work extremely difficult.

I talked to them about things that interested them and decided to let them work independently on a topic of their own choice. During reading the boys worked on independent research assignments on the classroom computers. They were focused and productive, creating various PowerPoints on a varying range of topics. Recently they began working together as they had discovered a mutual liking for a particular computer game and its history.

All of these boys have subsequently made huge gains in their reading ages. I have noticed they are more readily able to retrieve specific information from text. I fully believe these are three very capable young men who simply learn differently and are another example of why one intervention will not be successful for a whole class of students.

Teacher A also discovered very early on in the reading-to-talking-with sessions that another group of students was struggling to engage with the novel *Stormbreaker* being read to them. Although this small group of students was fluent in verbal English, this fluency had not yet transferred to listening:

I also had a small group of non-English speaking background (NESB) students for whom *Stormbreaker* was too difficult. I chose to work with them in a different way. They can all decode effectively but struggled with vocabulary. I had these three students reading simple English picture books, which they then translated into their own language by writing on stickers on the books themselves. The students particularly enjoyed reading the books back to me in their own language and taking them home to share with their parents.

As is evident in the interventions discussed above, Teacher A was committed to having students respond to literary texts. Implicit within her stated objective "Students to become active rather than passive readers" was the notion that active involvement adds to enjoyment.

Teacher A's specific intervention employed in her reading-to-talking-with sessions demonstrated the benefit of a teacher modelling various tools that a listener can use to listen effectively to a literary text. Teacher A also allowed the students the option of using or not using these tools. She found that when she introduced, modelled and then gave the students freedom to choose whether or not to use the tools, they were more willing to engage with and therefore respond to texts. Teacher A found that if the teacher and students learn to listen effectively to each other, then they become better listeners to literary texts. She believed that:

... the need for teachers to ‘listen’ to their students, to ‘listen’ to what they’re saying works for them and then to ‘act’ on what we’ve heard and discovered. It’s also important for us as teachers to teach our students explicitly how to ‘listen’ to the texts they’re working with and how to ‘listen’ to each other.

Teacher A started with where her students were at in terms of their attitudes towards reading, prior knowledge about literature and with the skills and understandings they brought with them to their learning about literature. Her stated specific learning outcomes reflected not only her desire for the students to develop a love for reading but also to make meaning as they read and write, thus requiring the students to personally respond to various literary texts. What is important to note here is that with the various interventions Teacher A implemented, she allowed the students the time and space (which was challenging yet possible in a crowded intermediate school curriculum with its often fragmented timetable) to select the ways in which they wanted to respond to the literary texts. This occurred through continual observations, formative assessment, discussion and negotiation between the teacher and her students.

Teacher A was also quick to point out that central to her role in helping her students to read to understand literary texts and subsequently develop a personal response, was the awareness that her own personal response to her students throughout their learning needed to be positive, challenging and affirming. In another one of her interventions, where the focus was on developing and extending her students’ vocabulary, she and her students experienced first hand what it was like when the teacher chose not to “dumb down” the language used, but instead welcome with enthusiasm the richness of such language found in various literary texts. Teacher A explained:

I found vocabulary not only an issue with my NESB students but with my whole class in general. This was especially reflected in their writing. I found a series of guided short narratives, which were aimed above my students’ reading ages and I used these for another one of our interventions. Decoding was not going to be an issue, it was only the vocabulary. I began using these for my guided reading group lessons and quickly found the students enjoyed the challenge of the new language. The language evoked some very long discussions about word origin and how we could use the language ourselves. Once we had discussed any new vocabulary, they had no qualms about using it. This vocabulary began to quickly flow into their writing and I even started to hear them use it when they were talking to each other. This worked especially well for my students who were already working at or above their chronological reading ages.

This highlighted to me the importance of introducing, explaining and discussing new and challenging vocabulary with my students. I don’t believe in dumbing down the language used with any of my students. I have found that they readily and really enjoy rising to the challenge of more difficult language as long as we discuss and clarify the meaning(s) together as a group/class. I’ve seen my students’ confidence grow in extending and using new vocabulary in their written and oral daily communications.

What is very evident in the teaching of literature in a multicultural classroom is the active role of the teacher in guiding her students to respond to texts. Teacher A’s relationship with her students was a mutually beneficial and reciprocal one. Where she stated that she wanted her students to

become active rather than passive readers, she found that she, too, needed to be an active facilitator of the reading and writing programme within her class:

Throughout this research project, one thing in particular was confirmed and clarified for me about myself as a teacher and about my practice. It is evident to me that I could never allow one student to be disengaged in my class. I will not be satisfied until each student is actively engaged with their learning.

Teacher B taught in a multicultural decile 10 intermediate school in the eastern suburbs of Auckland. During the first year of the project, Teacher B taught a Year 7 class of 32 students of European/Pākehā, Asian, Middle Eastern, European, South African, Indian and Māori descent. In 2008, Teacher B again taught Year 7 and the students ranged in age from 10 to 11 years of age with 15 boys and 16 girls. The class was again ethnically diverse, consisting of children who identified as New Zealand Pākehā (15), Chinese (5), Indian (1), Korean (4), South African (1), Māori (1), German (1) and Iraqi (1). All children spoke English and none of the students was identified as ESOL (English for speakers of other languages). In terms of specific needs, three children were viewed as requiring remedial reading while three attended high-ability extension classes.

Teacher B described his students' strategy for understanding texts and literature as "search and destroy"; that is, that they read to find the answers explicitly in the text or to "fill in the gaps" during guided reading. He also described the students' reading as "fluent but they lacked understanding".

In both years, Teacher B focused the development of his literacy programme to meet the students' needs. He based these on his anecdotal observation and the findings of asTTle and PAT¹³ tests that were taken by all the students at the school. As a result of the asTTle tests, the focus for the whole school was increased reading mileage using whole stories/novels. To meet the specific needs of his students, Teacher B would withdraw groups to focus on these, usually in the form of "guided reading" or writers' conferences.

Another consideration for Teacher B, again as a result of asTTle findings, which Teacher B claimed "showed that the students had very low levels of descriptive writing", was that they tended to just retell and were not able to describe feelings. While this aspect of the findings focuses on students' writing, Teacher B, like other primary teachers, attended to this as part of his broader reading programme by using literature to explain and explore how writing works and then expecting his students to model and develop these further in their own writing. In short, the findings of asTTle tests informed the overall focus of Teacher B's literacy programme, while anecdotal and professional observations and interactions provided the adjustments that were required to meet either individual or group needs.

¹³ PATs are Progress Achievement Tests which show a reading age.

As stated previously, all primary teachers placed a high emphasis on enhancing their students' enjoyment of literary reading. This is often developed through teachers reading to and discussing books with their students. This in turn encourages their students' listening to and understanding literary texts. Teacher B stated that his objective was "to develop the students' ability to *listen effectively* and considerately".

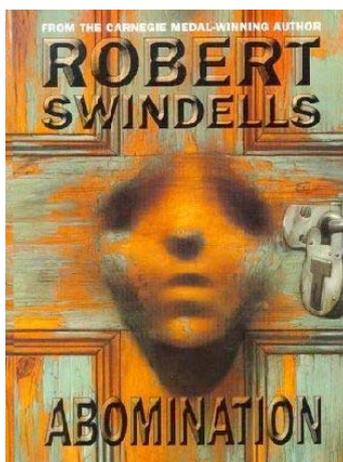
Selecting appropriate texts is a key aspect of developing students' listening to and enjoyment of literature. Teacher B decided on his choice of the book to read to his class by considering the types of age-appropriate issues that his class would be familiar with but also be concerned and perhaps challenged by, and to also link these with the focus of other areas of the curriculum. The book that Teacher B selected to read to his class was *Abomination*, by the Carnegie Medal-winning author Robert Swindells (2000) (see Figure 1). Teacher B stated:

I read the book *Abomination* written by Robert Swindells to the class. This book deals with bullying, peer pressure, first love, abuse and extremism. I linked the book to the health unit on bullying.

Discussion of the ideas/themes, plot, characters and the challenges that the book dealt with were a key aspect of reading and responding to texts. These were then linked to the health unit on bullying, which this book was viewed as expanding on and leading to greater understanding of. As Teacher B explained in his reflections:

During this unit I made constant reference to the book and the students were asked to provide examples from the book and from their own experiences linked to this unit. It made the understanding of concepts much easier.

Figure 1 ***Abomination*: Cover page**



While a key focus of students listening to the teacher reading literary texts was to make the reading of literature enjoyable, primary teachers such as Teacher B also expected students to enjoy literature by reading and engaging with literature themselves. To facilitate this, Teacher B encouraged the students to read independently and he used a number of approaches to the reading of a range of texts by the students. While developing a love for reading was the main aim, an

important aspect of this intervention was to select a range of relevant texts, which were interesting but challenging. The focus was for the students to read these themselves and to discuss and explore their understandings and vocabulary within their groups and with the teacher. As a result, Teacher B expected the students to become “independent readers”. However, Teacher B also expected the students to respond to these texts in a variety of ways by directing their understandings and ways of consulting with each other in their groups.

Each term had a different focus. In the first term Teacher B selected short stories from the *School Journals*, which the students read and responded to. The selection of these stories was matched to the students in terms of interest and reading ages. The reading of short stories in the first term was followed in the second term with the students reading novels. Again these were matched to the students in terms of reading ages and interests. Different ability groups read different books. The main focus was a character study (what type of character, their personality, how their actions influenced the plot and whether the character made good or bad choices). A subgoal was exploring the development of the plot and the use of imagery in the novels. The three novels studied in 2008 were: *Ride of the Katipo* by Stu Duval (2007), *When the Angels Came* by Glenda Millard (2003) and *Toad Rage* by Morris Gleitzman (1999).

Teacher C taught a Year 7 class in a multicultural decile 10 school in the eastern suburbs of Auckland during 2007. During this year, Teacher C reflected on her literacy programme to consider her interventions for this project. Teacher C enjoyed and frequently read picture books to her students. As she stated: “Reading aloud: I do this a lot. The classes I have taught have all enjoyed being read to, even my year 8’s . . . I find reading to the class is a very calming and friendly time.” Teacher C had been a librarian before becoming a teacher and she stated that:

I have a deep knowledge of children’s literature. I was a children’s librarian for over 20 years in a previous life. This enables me to share a wide range of literature with children. It has also allowed me to learn about the reading process and reading difficulties from another perspective. This is quite different from a teacher’s perspective.

Teacher C described herself as an enthusiastic reader who tried “to share my passion for the written word” with her class. As a result, Teacher C stated that she loved “it when the children share books they have enjoyed with me and the rest of the class”.

“Reading for pleasure” was encouraged by Teacher C:

I always try to encourage the children to read for pleasure, anything at all to start with. Once they have the idea, I try to do some subtle guiding of their choices.

Teacher C also worked hard to “persevere . . . in [her] efforts to engage children in the reading process”.

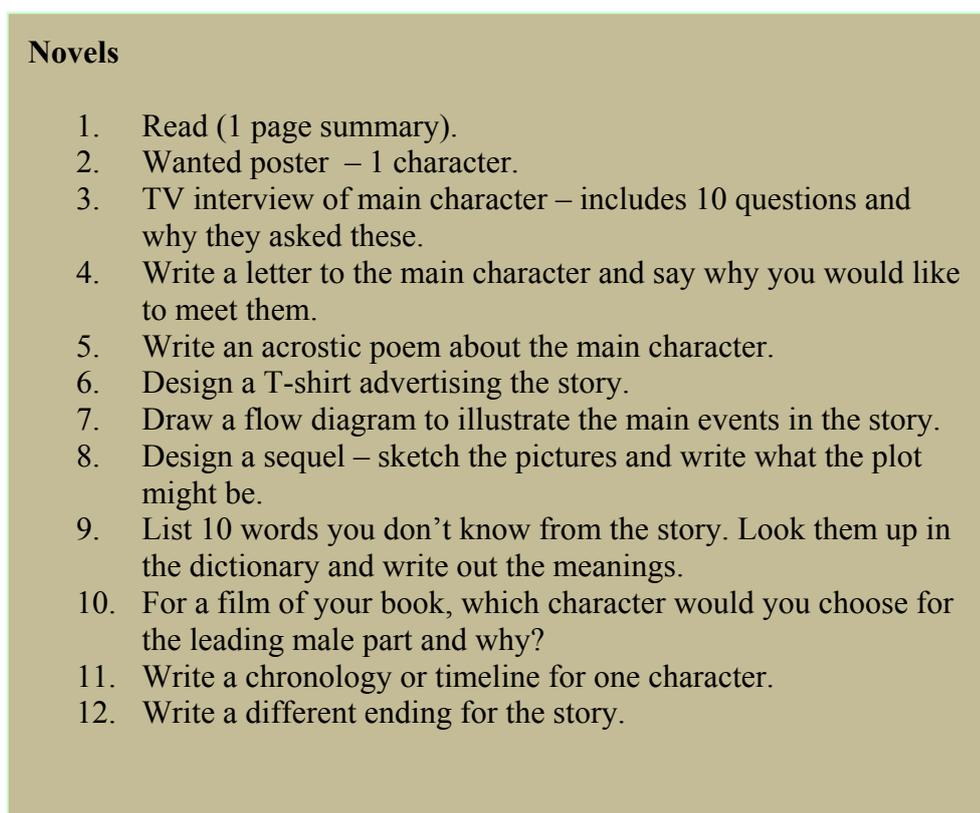
As part of her classroom programme she, too, focused on reading to students to extend their understandings of literature. One strategy that she trialled during 2007 was to ask the children to imagine “pictures their heads” as she read to them. To do this she asked the students to listen to her reading a “ghost story”. They were asked to draw on their previous experiences, remembering

back to when they were on school camp and what it was like when the lights were out. “Were they scared?”

Following listening to stories being read and discussed, the students would take part in a range of “reading activities”. At times they were able to select what they focused on while at other times they were directed to specific activities. Teacher C provided choice for these tasks. She stated that: “I feel that reading in schools has often become so task-oriented that the children regard it as a mind-numbing chore.”

Following the imagining of their ghost story, some were able to move to writing their ghost stories. Some were able to browse in the library area, while other students worked independently on their novel studies. To facilitate the latter, Teacher C had a tasksheet that provided the focus for children who were able to work at that level (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 **Teacher C’s tasksheet**



As part of the project, Teacher C considered the possibility of the students “keeping scrapbooks with examples of each child’s writing over a period of time. This would be valuable to use in individual conferencing and during assessments of an individual’s progress.”

At the end of 2007, Teacher C changed schools. She moved to a primary school and taught a composite Years 5 and 6 class of 25 students in a decile 3 school. There were 10 girls and 15 boys, with eight of the students in Year 5 and 17 in Year 6. The class comprised students from a

range of ethnic/cultural groups, including Tongan, Samoan, Māori, New Zealand Pākehā, Cook Islands, Indian, Bosnian and Niuean. Many of the students were bilingual, with English as their second language and other languages spoken at home. Teacher C described many of the students as having short attention spans and found that there were several boys who found it difficult to contain and manage their anger. The school to which she moved had a “relatively transient population” and this manifested itself in terms of the students in her class either leaving (four) or joining (six).

The issue of “short attention spans” together with “8 boys with serious anger management issues” became of increasing concern for Teacher C. She stated that:

A trigger for anger is often being asked to do something they do not wish to do. A number of students have poor self-esteem and approached any new or different task with fear and negativity. As a whole the class did not react well to change, often reacting with anger or withdrawal.

Teacher C also read to her students with the purpose of extending the students’ understandings and to develop a personal response. She found that many of her students were not able to respond or offer their understandings of what they had been read. Linked to the above concerns expressed by Teacher C, “they found it difficult to sit and listen and to follow the key ideas”. It was these aspects that Teacher C wanted to work on as part of her intervention.

The form/content relationship

All three primary teachers explored formal aspects of texts. The dominant form was narrative and each teacher used a range of these from simple to complex “sophisticated” picture books, those published in the *School Journals*, short stories, teen novels and popular fiction. Other forms of text were being used in other areas of the curriculum such as science or social studies. However, for primary teachers, the study of literary texts occurred during their literacy times, and the form of the literature studied was narrative.

The three teachers focused on specific aspects of narrative; for example, imagery (Teacher C), the development of character (Teacher B) and the use of vocabulary to enhance the development of narrative (Teacher A). What is interesting is that all three teachers also used the close reading of narrative texts to inform their students’ written language, again highlighting the integration of approaches as part of their literacy programmes. This has tended to blur the findings in terms of the five categories of objectives.

Although only one primary teacher, Teacher B, stated an objective broadly aimed at helping students appreciate the ways in which the formal aspects of texts contribute to their effectiveness with particular readers, a second teacher, **Teacher A**, in actual practice guided her students, through two of her interventions, to use their developing understanding of the form/content relationship as *part* of the process in meeting the students’ more urgent need at that time; that is, the need to develop and widen the students’ range of vocabulary. Teacher A explained:

I found vocabulary not only an issue with my NESB students but with my whole class in general. This was especially reflected in their writing. I found a series of guided short narratives, which were aimed above my students' reading ages. Decoding was not going to be an issue. . . it was only the vocabulary. I began using these for my guided reading group lessons and quickly found the students enjoyed the challenge of the new language. The language evoked some very long discussions about word origin and how we could use the language ourselves. Once we had discussed any new vocabulary, they had no qualms about using it. This vocabulary began to quickly flow into their writing and I even started to hear them use it when they were talking to each other. This worked especially well for my students who were already working at or above their chronological reading ages.

In the course of the above intervention, Teacher A instinctively revised and reinforced the narrative form and content of the short narratives as part of guiding her students to not only use and understand new and exciting vocabulary, but also to consider the type of appropriate vocabulary used in the various parts of a narrative (orientation, conflict and resolution). Because Teacher A and her class had worked on narratives earlier in the year, there was no need for sustained discussion of the form/content relationships in the context of this particular intervention.

Another example of incidental learning and teaching around the form/content relationships occurred when the students were watching the DVD version of *Stormbreaker*, which Teacher A had promised them as an incentive to respond to this particular "reading-to-talking-with" text. She explains:

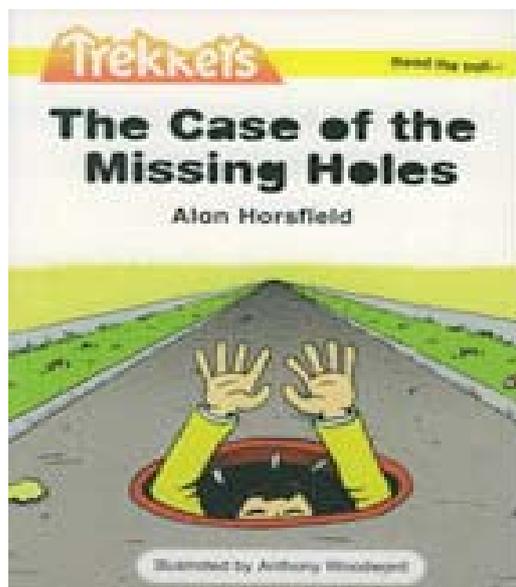
During the watching of the video students began referring back to their graffiti journals. They were immediately noticing differences between the two. It created a lot of discussion and use of the pause button throughout the DVD. There were discussions about why the changes were made and whether it made a difference to the story.

Some, if not most, of the students had not given much thought as to how written texts transpose into movies and that some movies are based on novels. This was evident when the teacher asked the class if they had watched any movies that were also in novel or book form. Only the *Harry Potter* series was familiar to the students. The discussion that followed in relation to why the changes were made in the *Stormbreaker* movie and whether they made a difference was engaging and relevant to the students who participated eagerly.

Teacher B claimed that: "At the beginning of 2007, the asTTle results of the creative writing test indicated that few students made use of literary devices." Drawing further on his own observations of his students' lack of understanding of literary terms and devices contributed to Teacher B's intervention design. An example cited by Teacher B was when "the lower ability group" read a novel from the Trekkers series called *The Case of the Missing Holes* by Alan Horsfield (2005) (Figure 3). At this point, Teacher B became aware that some of the students did not understand idiom during the reading of the novel. Teacher B stated:

Most of the students enjoyed the novels. However, some found it difficult to understand how a person could steal holes. One of them said, 'Sir, how can you steal a hole?' so some explaining was necessary.

Figure 3 *The Case of the Missing Holes: Cover page*

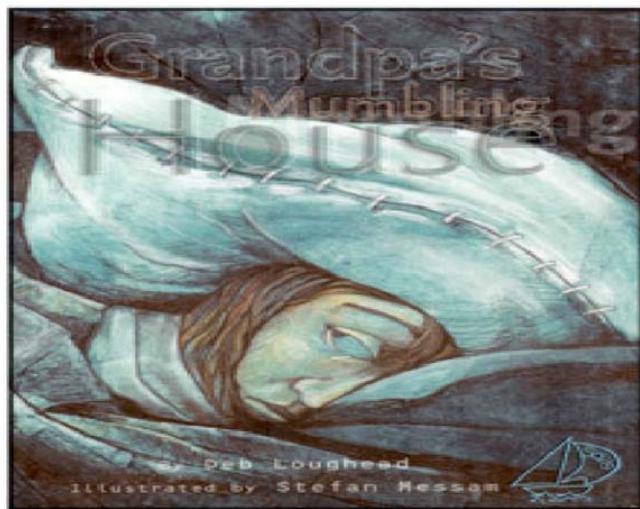


This led Teacher B to consider the use of idiom for children, particularly those from different cultures and how literary devices and vocabulary can be misunderstood as a result. Such deeper understanding was challenging for children, particularly those from diverse backgrounds. Teacher B decided to further explore students' understanding of literary devices.

What follows is one session that Teacher B took with a group of what were considered to be advanced readers. The rest of the class was working, reading their novels, while the teacher worked with this group at the front of the room. Taking the group for a guided reading session Teacher B asked the children to read the story *Grandpa's Mumbling House* by Deb Loughhead (2006) (illustrated by Stefan Messam). This book is published as part of the Sails collection (Thomas Nelson, Canada) of reading material for this age group and this story has an approximate reading age of 11 years (Figure 4). On discussing the book with the group after a first reading, Teacher B noticed that the students had difficulty understanding the link between the illustrator's use of colour and the author's use of mood and character development and the relationship of these to the development of plot.

The main focus and discussion point was the colour and effect of the illustrations. After introducing the book and reading the story with the students, they were asked what they thought. Very few linked the girl's sombre mood with the dark colours of the illustrations, leading to the brighter pictures, as she grew more familiar with her grandpa and her new surroundings and lightening of her mood. Once this was pointed out the rest of the group "got" it.

Figure 4 **Grandpa's Mumbling House: Cover page**



So Teacher B decided to read the story through with the group and to discuss the features and the devices used by the author and illustrator to develop meaning. As the group read to the end of each page the teacher asked the students to reflect on their understandings and observations of the illustrations, language and feelings of the characters, especially the main character. At other times he would ask them to anticipate, to predict what was going to happen next and then, after having read, to consider their ideas. During the session the teacher asked the group to pay attention to the setting and asked questions about the devices used by the author. A special focus was on inference and the students were asked to make deductions and to give reasons for their answers. Attention was also given to imagery, alliteration, analogy, metaphor, simile and personification. The teacher highlighted examples and students were also asked to give their examples.

This session was observed as part of this project and the following transcription is a small part of the whole lesson. Here we see the teacher drawing the reader's attention to the aspects of the text that he wanted them to focus on. (T = teacher; C = child)

Teacher B begins by referring to the lesson the day before:

T: *What do colours tell you—look at the colours (on the page of the book that has been given out to the group. The teacher acknowledges the children's responses.)*

Night? ... could be ...

Nice and bright?

Dark ...—at night?

(Here the teacher is drawing attention to the illustrations and the colours used and asking the students to associate these with meaning.)

(Indicates for a child to read. Child reads while the rest of the group follow the reading with their copies of the book. In the middle of the reading Teacher B directs the focus of the reading.) *Think about the words.*

C: (Continues to read.)

T: *O.K. Close your books. Who can think of words to describe the grandfather?*

C1 *Old.*

C2 *Whi ...*

C3 *His hair like seaweed.*

T: *Right let's stop there.* (The teacher draws the students' attention to think critically about the meanings and analyse the effects produced by verbal and visual elements.)

C: (Reads.)

T: *OK?* (This OK is asking whether the students have made the connection between the colour's use, the sombre mood and the character descriptions in the text.)

C: (Responds—describes each character looking at the book. This student attempts to understand what the teacher is asking. She describes the characters but does not link these with the colours.)

C: (Reads. Then carries on reading.)

T: *... food when miserable. Again look at the description of the house—unhappy colours ...?* (Again the teacher tries to help the students make the connection with the mood of the character and the setting and the use of colour by the illustrator.) *Look at the first picture—light or dark?* (Teacher B becomes more directive.)

C: (Reads.)

T: *Once again—not in a good mood ... Not nice and warm.* (Pause. By this time the students have got the idea and are nodding, but the teacher moves on to explore another literary device—personification—which he wants the group to be aware of.) *Can a house really do this—the old house ... mumble—grumbling? What is the writer using there? ... people?* (Repeats a child's response perhaps in the hope it might be helpful.) *What is the author using there?*

C: *... a person ...*

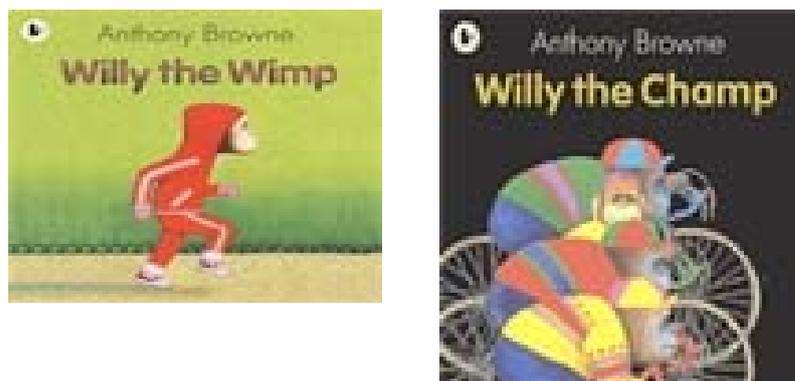
T: *Yes, personification. What's grandpa's voice like?*

This type of interaction around literature is usually developed during guided reading where the text is matched to the child/ren's reading ages but which presents challenges particularly at this level in terms of the purpose for reading and understanding the text. In this case, the teacher was exploring aspects of the form/context relationship.

Teacher C used a series of picture books, which she read to her students for enjoyment and to encourage discussion. She reread these books so that the children became familiar with them and were keen to read them as part of their "free reading". The focus during these reading and discussion sessions was the sequence of events in the plot and to encourage the students to talk about the characters in the stories read.

Teacher C found that books by Anthony Browne, especially *Willy the Wimp* (year) and other stories about Anthony Browne’s favourite characters, were particularly popular with the children (Figure 5). Teacher C was aware that many of the students had not experienced “traditional” or so-called “universal” stories. She chose, she reported, a “variety of these fairy tales with a range of different styles of illustration, as well as variants of the tales. Jan Scieszka’s *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* (Penguin, 1989) was very much enjoyed on the first reading.” Teacher C challenged her students to consider which story was really the true one. Teacher C also asked her students to examine the different stories that were visible in the illustrations of Anthony Browne, while the discussions of illustrations such as those of Anthony Browne and Graham Base allowed the students to slowly expand their “attention spans” and develop their interest in books. The rereading of stories and reading variations of previously known stories helped the students to develop their knowledge of character, humour and to begin to realise that there could be different versions of the same story. In this way Teacher C aimed to “not only improve the class’s enthusiasm about books and reading, but ... to broaden the children’s view of the world”.

Figure 5 ***Willy the Wimp and Willy the Champ: Cover pages***



Understanding text/context relationships

The sequence of a child or children reading and the teacher asking the readers to think about aspects of understanding, vocabulary and description is a common occurrence in New Zealand primary classrooms. There are a number of ways of analysing such sequences. However, for the purposes of this study, it can be viewed as a way for the teacher to draw attention to the text and to teach the readers particular ways of *taking meaning* (Heath, 1986) or of students learning the resources (Freebody & Luke, 1990) for school-based literate practices.

One aspect of the text/context relationship is to call the audience of the text into question, to question who might read a text and for what purposes. In her 2008 intervention based around the use of graffiti journals to facilitate response to and discussion around selected “reading-to-talking-with” texts, **Teacher A** introduced the students to and started to move them towards a critical literacy approach to textual study. This will be discussed later in this section of the report. The first critical literacy-type question that was posed to the students was particularly related to rhetorical purpose: “Who would be most likely to read and/or view this text and why?”

Because this was a new approach and line of questioning for both the teacher and the students, the teacher (a) planned for and implemented this approach at the *end* of the graffiti journal intervention, after the students had completed listening to the “reading-to-talking-with” text *Stormbreaker* and had watched the DVD of the same novel and all the related activities and discussions and (b) planned for and implemented this approach to occur with the *whole* class, so that each student including the teacher would benefit from listening to one another’s responses.

The teacher noted that the students struggled at first to articulate their responses to the first question posed above. Teacher A decided that she then needed to scaffold and guide them better into understanding what was asked of them. Hence the questions then became: “Did you like reading and listening to *Stormbreaker*?”, “Why did you?”, “Do you think your friends would like to read this book?” and “Why?” The students were able to respond to these questions and in effect respond to the initial question posed.

While considering who might read or view a text is one way to help students begin to call a text into question, **Teacher B** asked his students to begin to consider an author’s purpose in writing. Teacher B also worked to assist his students to discuss their responses and understandings of the books read. The class worked in their groups to read novels that were suitable in terms of reading ages and interest levels. The students were asked to consider aspects of these readings and to discuss these independently in their reading/discussion groups. This could be considered as a form of scaffolding, working towards developing literature circles. The reading guide (Figure 6) assisted the group members to think about their understandings and their discussions. A key question was, “What is the author’s purpose in writing this story? What is his/her message?”

Figure 6 **Teacher B's reading guide**

Shared Novel

Read at least a chapter each evening of your novel. You must be prepared to discuss what you have read with a group.

Read the following:

Title: The name of the book
Author: Who wrote the book?
Illustrator: who drew the pictures - cover included (if there are any)

Characters: The ones who do things
Write at least one paragraph describing at least two of the main characters.

Setting: Where did the story take place? countryside? City? Future? Past? Etc.
Write a paragraph describing this, if there is a lot of information in your novel describing this then this should help with your description.

Theme: What is the author's purpose in writing the story? What is his/her message?

Plot:
Describe what happened in the story as an episode
The format for an episode is:

Problem -----> How does the episode start? What is the problem?

Response -----> How do the characters feel about it?

Action -----> What do the characters do about the problem?

Outcome -----> What happens at the end of the episode? How does it or could it lead onto another part of the story?

The students were to work through this guide and to discuss their findings with their discussion group. The novel study included three different books for each of the three reading groups:

- *The Ride of the Katipo* by Stu Duval (2007). The main character, Jack, lives in the shadows, trying to avoid bullies, when he witnesses a murder.
- *When the Angels Came* by Glenda Millard (2003), which explores the relationship and feelings of a young boy for his aged grandfather.
- *Toad Rage* by Morris Gleitzman (1999). This is a story about a cane toad called Limpy who wants to fight back against the killing of cane toads and sets off to the Olympic Games in Sydney to do something about it.

The constructedness of text

One aspect of the text/context relationship is the recognition that texts are written or constructed to represent particular views and to influence readers' or viewers' understandings. Reading or viewing a text with a teacher constructs authorial readings. The teacher uses his or her authority "to ask questions and to determine meanings and thus set up (their) interpretations . . . as telling the truth about the real world" (Davies, 1993, p. 154). The teacher's purpose, then, is usually to reinforce this "obvious" meaning of the text. And yet, for culturally diverse students, meanings and interpretations are not obvious, as Teachers A and B have shown in relation to misunderstandings about vocabulary and language devices such as idiom. The primary teachers often reported at round-table meetings how cultural diversity allowed for other meanings and interpretations of texts. An example that made sense was the use of the word "benefit", that is used in the STAR test¹⁴ of vocabulary and for which students are asked to select another word that means the same. The teachers said that for many of the students they taught "benefit" meant "the benefit". As a result, none of the words offered in the test made sense and so they either ignored the item or substituted another that reflected this meaning such as "pay", "eftpos", "bank".

Some teacher-researchers wondered if this diversity and multiple understandings of word meanings could be used in the adoption of some aspects of critical literacy in their classrooms. As a result of these discussions and after consideration of some strategies, the primary teacher-researchers in this project were keen to draw on critical literacy approaches to literary study to help their students understand that texts offer "versions" of reality and use language to position readers to view reality in some ways and not in others. In light of the above, the primary teacher-researchers were also keen to consider how the students themselves construct meanings within texts, based on their own backgrounds.

For **Teacher A**, this was a new way of looking at texts and she saw the merits of inviting the students in a considered and deliberate manner to also construct textual meaning, thus validating their own backgrounds and experiences. This willingness to draw on critical literacy approaches came about as a result of ongoing discussions among all involved in this project and during the professional development phases of the project. Teacher A shares her first attempt at implementing a critical literacy approach:

On completion of the DVD [Stormbreaker] we began discussions around the following questions:

- Who would be most likely to read and/or view this text and why?
- How are teenagers portrayed in Stormbreaker?
- How are adults portrayed in Stormbreaker?
- Who is missing from the text?
- What has been left out of the text?

¹⁴ The Star Reading Test (Supplementary Test of Achievement in Reading) has a number of subtests, one of which measures vocabulary.

- What view of the world is the text presenting?

This was the first time I made an attempt at posing critical literacy questions with my students so we carried this out as a whole class exercise. To begin with they struggled with the deep thinking involved but after a few examples picked it up quickly. In hindsight though I think it would have been more beneficial to undertake these questions prior to watching the DVD as some students began to confuse the book and DVD and were offering answers referring to the DVD. Overall, what was highlighted to me as areas of weakness in my students' reading of texts is the ability to think deeply and critically about the texts and the way texts position the readers.

The above trialled intervention pointed out clearly to Teacher A that the ability of her students to think deeply and critically about texts and the way that texts position readers were areas that needed to be developed. The preintervention asTTle test also indicated that the area of critical thinking was weak for all of the students. Consequently, two of Teacher A's project objectives were specifically that:

- students think critically about the "reading-to-talking-with" text
- students begin to appreciate that texts position readers and viewers to see things in a certain way.

It is interesting to note, with regard to the second objective, that the intervention involving the use of Rob Gonsalves's visual images (discussed later) inadvertently addressed this objective, when Teacher A discussed with the class how certain visual features position readers and viewers to see things in a certain way. Her focus for this particular intervention was to increase and develop the students' vocabulary and to stir their imagination.

After the students had completed their thinking around the "reading-to-talking-with" text *Stormbreaker*, Teacher A then introduced the next "reading-to-talking-with" text, *Point Blanc*, by the same author, Anthony Horowitz (2005), as (a) the students enjoyed this author and genre; (b) *Point Blanc* was also available in movie form; and (c) Teacher A wanted to refine some of the associated learning and teaching activities. She explains:

After viewing the students' graffiti journals I decided that prior to beginning the next book in the series I would refine the way I had them record. Although the majority of students kept quite detailed journals some needed more focus. I created the following reading guided sheet for students to use before and during the reading of our next reading-to-talking-with novel called *Point Blanc* by Anthony Horowitz.

With regard to the constructedness of text, Teacher A wanted to focus on inviting and encouraging the students to personally respond and construct their own meanings of the "reading-to-talking-with" text in a considered and deliberate manner, but still allowing them to respond in ways they were comfortable with and which made sense for them. The analysis and interpretation section of the teacher-created, guided-reading sheet provided for this aim. Teacher A wrote:

In the analysis and interpretation section, the students could choose HOW (in what form) they would personally respond to the text as I read to them. The students could analyse and interpret in whichever way they felt comfortable. They continued to draw, write specific key

words or summarise in their own words. Some students also chose to write some key words in their first language (L1).

After each chapter had been read to the class, Teacher A would allow time for the students to firstly discuss in pairs *how* they responded to the chapter read and *why* they responded in that way. She encouraged the students to consistently make links between what they heard and with their own lives. For example, when one of the main characters was faced with a dilemma within the story, the teacher asked them to consider any personal and relevant experiences or those of others they knew, and then *how* and *why* they felt and dealt with the similar situation. Following this paired discussion, the students were then asked to discuss, as a class: “How was it similar or different to that of the main character and why?” Teacher A found this worked very well in helping students to develop their understanding of the constructedness of texts.

She also found that it was necessary to allow time for the students to think and discuss their ideas. This also highlighted and reinforced further for Teacher A the need for the teacher to carefully scaffold and guide the students to understand what the questions are actually asking them to think about. Further to this, Teacher A also stated the following:

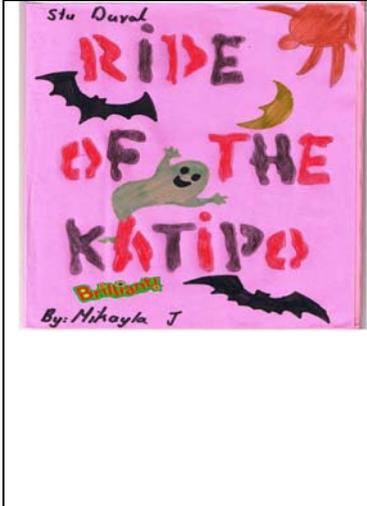
For future planning, I will continue with class discussions around critical literacy ideas and questions so that the students can listen to each other’s viewpoints towards ideas in texts and thereby learn from each other how texts can influence and position them as readers. I will also ask at least one critical literacy type question for students to respond to in their graffiti journals. Because the area of critical literacy is new to me, and because I have begun to see how beneficial it is to my students, in terms of them growing to understand how the written word has power to influence their thinking, I will continue to implement critical literacy, in small steps as I grow in confidence and as my students grow too.

Figure 7 **Teacher A's chapter analysis tasksheet**

| |
|--|
| <p>MY READING JOURNAL "POINT BLANC" By Anthony Horowitz</p> <p>CHAPTER _____ DATE _____</p> |
| <p>L Prior knowledge: What happened in the last chapter? What do you know about...? I T Key events: How might the story continue? What are the clues? E R Brief summary: Main points, only important/new facts, plot development. A L</p> |
| <p>ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION Personal Response: reactions, predictions, judgements, comparisons, questions, wonderings, sketches, illustrations, diagrams, mind maps, interesting vocabulary or images, cause and effect.</p> |

Teacher B also encouraged his students to recognise the constructedness of texts. He felt that this could be developed through beginning with the students considering their likes and dislikes about what they read. These were the beginnings of children understanding that they did not have to agree with an author's view or the construction of narrative elements such as plot and character. The responses here were discussed in a group and argued about before the children responded briefly in their written statements for display in the classroom.

Figure 8 **Teacher B: Constructing responses to the novel**¹⁵

| | |
|---|---|
|  | <p>Things we liked:</p> <p>Anna—That you didn't know what would happen next</p> <p>Teresa: Thrilling and awesome title page</p> <p>Anastasia: Very interesting and exciting</p> <p>Bella: Liked the mystery</p> <p>Rose: It all added up</p> <p>Gemma: Liked the dead bodies and tunnels</p> <p>Richard: Liked when Jack blew up the rider</p> <p>Pedro: Exciting and mysterious</p> <p>Bernie: Dark and stormy instead of bright and sunny</p> <p>Kim: The motor bike</p> <p>Mike: The action</p> <p>William: Idea of signal island</p> |
|---|---|

The same group also reflected on what they disliked about their novel:

Things we disliked:

- Anna: Didn't like the dead bodies
- Teresa: Didn't like how it jumped from place to place
- Anastasia: Didn't like how Jack was alone in the tunnels
- Bella: Didn't like how there was no pictures
- Rose: Didn't like the pirate language
- Gemma: Didn't like how Jack Tanner died and how Judason dug up the katipo's grave
- Richard: Didn't like how the book took too long to enjoy
- Pedro: Didn't like how they explained what the dead bodies looked like
- Bernie: Thought the chapters were too short
- Kim: Said the story was too long
- Mike: Thought it was boring
- William: Thought there was scary spiders

As discussed previously, **Teacher C** highlighted the constructedness of texts with her students by introducing them to “alternative” versions of the “same” story; for example, *The Three Little Pigs*. She also read to her class other versions of books that reconstructed stereotypes, such as *Prince Cinders* by Babette Cole (1995). This book in particular was read after Teacher C's class had taken part in a play that a student teacher had developed called “Sioniella”, which challenged the European princess stories and incorporated the students' cultural knowledge enabling them to play a Samoan princess.

¹⁵ Children's names have been changed.

Composing literary texts

As stated earlier, reading and writing frequently inform each other in the primary classroom. In the interventions discussed here, the reciprocity of reading informing writing was a key aspect of the primary teachers' teaching of literature.

Following on from the students' vocabulary intervention outlined earlier, **Teacher A** quickly found that although students were now experimenting with new vocabulary (gleaned from their guided-reading sessions and use of thesauri), some students were still struggling to write vividly and imaginatively. Teacher A introduced pictures, as another optional tool, to use as cues for prompting narratives. Teacher A explains:

I used a variety of cartoon pictures. I displayed these on the Smartboard and we brainstormed together ideas for stories by closely examining what was going on in the pictures. I used the standard 5 W's and H questions to stimulate discussion. Another colleague then suggested pictures by artist Rob Gonsalves. These were extremely effective. The initial discussions which developed from them created language and ideas which flowed over into their written work.

Figure 9 **Rob Gonsalves' pictorial stimuli**



As a way of learning and teaching literature in a multicultural classroom, with the particular focus of enhancing the students' quality of descriptive and imaginative narrative writing, Teacher A discussed the form and content relationships evident within visual literary texts. For example, Teacher A, together with her class, identified and discussed the images in the foreground and background and their relationships (for example, light and dark shades and dramatic depth), the size of images and what that might mean (for example, large size conveys sense of importance), the shapes within the picture and what they might mean (for example, square might mean dull, stable), the textures evident (for example, harsh/soft) and the directions of the images and what that might mean also (for example, certain directions convey different emotional states). The

result of such discussions was a much-improved quality of imaginative and descriptive language used by the students.

All three primary teachers used literature to develop students' writing.

Teacher C asked the children to use the “pictures in their mind” while listening to ghost stories being read. She suggested to the students that when they wrote, as an optional follow-up task, they could use these pictures to make their ghost stories more interesting.

Another consideration for **Teacher B** was asTTle findings which, he claimed, “showed that the students had very low levels of descriptive writing”. They tended to just retell and were not able to describe feelings. While the focus here was on students' writing, Teacher B, like other primary teachers, attended to this as part of his broader reading programme by using literature to explain and explore how writing works and then in turn expecting his students to model and develop these further in their own writing.

For example, in the earlier instance of Teacher B exploring the use of colour illustrations in the novel *Grandpa's Mumbling House* by Deb Loughead (2006) (illustrated by Stefan Messam), the focus was on the descriptive aspects of the narrative. Later on in the transcript, the teacher focuses on words and images:

T: *Focus on the words that change things again. What about the image of the fog? 'Ghostly schooner'. (Teacher B explains the 'ghostly schooner'—fog and being scared.) 'Slithers'—what slithers? . . . Fog horns, light houses (explains further).*

C: (Reads.)

T: *What did the song do to her now? (Asking the children to compare to an earlier section, so he goes back to a previous section and reads it so that the children can compare.) 'Phantom'?*

C: Ghost.

T: (Reads on emphasising key words that link to the focus.) *Look at her face. (Asks the children to compare before and now in terms of the illustrations and the text.) 'Home was a welcome house—safer, smiling. I smiled back.' What does this say about her mum? (Concludes.) You have seen these images and words used—have a look when you are reading . . . Use when you are doing your recounts and in your writing.*

As one can see, the novel study was also focused on providing students with examples of how to improve their own writing of recounts. Teacher B states: “The final message to the class was that my expectation from then on was that I wanted to see examples of the literary devices being adopted in their own personal recounts. This was attempted, some with more success than others.”

Summary of findings

In the previous section, we summarised project-related interventions conducted by primary teacher-researchers, mainly in 2008. In this section, we proceed from these descriptions to an analysis of what we consider worked. Findings will be summarised, using the same subheadings as the discussion above:

- attitudes to reading/responding to texts
- the form/content relationship
- understanding text/context relationships
- the constructedness of text
- composing literary texts.

At this point, however, let us remind readers of the contexts within which these three teachers worked:

- Teacher A worked with a multicultural Year 7 class in a decile 3 school in 2008. The class was ethnically diverse with a strong representation from Pasifika cultures. Five out of 26 students came from homes where English was not spoken.
- Teacher B, in contrast to Teacher A, worked in a decile 10 intermediate school. While his class was ethnically diverse, all children spoke English. About half the class were Pākehā New Zealanders, while the remainder were made up of Asian, Middle-Eastern and South African ethnicities.
- In 2007, Teacher C taught in the same school as Teacher B and with a class with a similar makeup. However, in 2008, she taught a composite Years 5 and 6 class of 25 in a decile 3 school. Ethnically, her class was dominated by Pasifika students, many of whom were bilingual and from homes where English was a second language.

The intervention descriptions highlight ways in which these three teachers adjusted their teaching and expectations to the students they taught.

Attitudes to reading/responding to texts

All three teachers found that listening to literary texts was a key to enjoyment and understanding:

- Teacher A was motivated to find ways of enabling her students to tune in to their visual imaginations as they read and saw this as a key to enjoyment and stimulation. What worked for her was the use of a “graffiti journal” by students to record responses to (initially) short, manageable, carefully chosen extracts read by the teacher and to share these responses with others. As a further “reading-to-talking-with” strategy, Teacher A introduced her students to the use of graphic organisers which she modelled via Smartboard.
- Teacher A also found that not all students were able to engage in the above listening activity and used computer-based, high-interest, independent research assignments to motivate some students in their reading.

- For some EAL students with limited English vocabulary, Teacher A replaced the listening activity with a translation activity with simple English picture books which she found engaged these particular students. In all of these instances, success factors were clearly teacher modelling and the availability of activity options for students.
- Teacher B also aimed at developing his students' ability to listen effectively by using the strategy of choosing texts dealing with highly relevant issues (for example, bullying, peer pressure, first love, abuse) and reading them to his class.
- Teacher C, like Teacher A, found that it was valuable to have students imagine "pictures in their heads" when she read aloud to them and would also draw on this visualising facility when engaging them in creative writing. For her less able students, Teacher C found that rereading books to enhance their familiarity to students was a way of providing a bridge to "free reading".

Primary teacher-researchers found that whole-class and group discussion had a role to play in helping students respond to literary texts and that quality of response had a direct bearing on student enjoyment:

- Teacher A found that having students share responses (based on listening to literary texts) with one another improved their ability to listen to literary texts. Listening in general became a key to effective response. Teacher A also found that whole-class discussion based on challenging but short guided narratives had positive spin-offs for student vocabulary acquisition and strengthened her belief in introducing, explaining and discussing new and challenging vocabulary with her students.
- Teacher B found that carefully selected guided-reading questions (sometimes linked to other curriculum areas), which were also modelled to the students, was a key to facilitating discussion as a whole class or in a group. Teacher B used the learning derived from the shared reading of a text to help students to become independent readers of literary texts. He found that making available a careful selection of interesting and relevant texts was a key in achieving this aim. However, even with independent reading, he maintained an emphasis on students sharing textual responses in groups and on guiding students in exploring such narrative elements as character, plot, choice and imagery.
- Teacher C found that choice of activity in responding to literary texts was a key to avoiding the sense of "chore". In her design of study task sheets for reading a novel, her emphasis was on variety of activity.

The form/content relationship

While narrative was the dominant mode, a variety of prose fiction genres was used for literary study. In general, primary teachers used the exploration of the form/content relationship as much to foster writing as to enhance reading:

- Further to Teacher A's focus on vocabulary acquisition (outlined above) was the way she successfully linked vocabulary with plot elements, thus helping students understanding the role of vocabulary choice (form) at different junctures of a narrative.
- Teacher A also found that comparing versions of a story across mediums (print and film) successfully engaged students and enhanced their understanding of various aspects of narrative form.
- Teacher A used a range of powerful graphic images to enhance her students' understanding of the function of such formal features as imagery, depth, size, shape, texture and directionality.
- Teacher B, realising that his class had difficulties with literary idiom, successfully used guided-reading questioning to develop his students' understanding of literary devices (imagery, alliteration, figures of speech but also the way in which illustrated picture books use visual devices to produce particular effects in readers).
- In reading aloud to her students, Teacher C also found that illustrated picture books were a successful key to enabling her students to understand form/content relationships by focusing on the function served by a book's illustrations.

Understanding text/context relationships

As noted earlier, no teacher articulated an objective which matched this category. However, in our opinion, teaching and learning *did* occur (that is, students were engaged in activities which addressed their exploration of this relationship). One aspect of the text/context relationship is the context of reception; that is, how different readers *receive* texts and why one reader might be different from another and also how writers tend to pitch their texts to particular kinds of audience:

- Teacher A used carefully scaffolded questioning to guide her students into understanding why different readers might respond in varying ways to the same text. She found that this also *empowered* students to value their *own* response to a text. In their "reading-to-talking-with" novel study, Teacher A successfully used a guided-reading sheet which gives students choices in respect of *how* they responded to the text (including the right to respond in their own languages). Again, students were encouraged to share responses in pairs and to find points of connection with their own lives.
- Teacher B also used scaffolded questioning and literature circles (where students read texts appropriate to their reading age and interests) to focus students' attention on authorial purpose.

The constructedness of text

In general, primary teacher-researchers in this study used the cultural and linguistic diversity in their classrooms to help highlight ways in which textual meanings are culturally bound. One way of doing this was to adopt a critical literacy approach in the study of literary texts:

- For Teacher A, the first step in helping students appreciate the constructedness of texts was to introduce the concept of *representation* in her use of the word “portray” and to encourage her students to identify gaps and silences in texts. For Teacher A, adopting this approach reinforced for her the need in her students to become more critical readers. She found that using visual texts with her students was a useful way of having them understand how texts *position* readers to view the world in certain ways.
- For Teacher B, a powerful way of helping students understand the constructedness of texts was giving them permission to disagree with an author’s stance as communicated in some aspect of a narrative.
- For Teacher C, the reading of a variety of texts, each of which told the same event as different versions, called into question which version might be the “real” one. In addition, Teacher C assisted students to examine picture books where the pictures “told other stories” from that depicted in the written text.

Composing literary texts

Primary teachers generally used a focus on the form/content relationship as a springboard for writing and used literary texts to do this:

- Teacher A found that for students who struggled to write vividly, the use of graphic images was helpful as an imaginative springboard.
- Teacher B used literary models to help students developing successfully their descriptive skills.
- Teacher C drew on mental pictures formed in response to ghost stories (heard) to facilitate children’s creative writing.

The bullet-points below distil the above findings:

- Stimulating the visual imagination through listening is a key way of enhancing the enjoyment of literary texts.
- The careful scaffolding of guided reading questions and the use of organisers can facilitate literary response.
- The sharing of responses with others through whole-class and small-group discussion forums enhances the enjoyment of literary texts.
- The availability of a choice of activities related to the reading and composition of literary texts enhances student engagement.
- The modelling of textual response by teachers facilitates literary reading.
- A valuation of mother-tongue competence through the use of translation activities can enhance the motivation to read literary and other texts.
- A literary reading programme is enhanced through a careful selection of texts which recognises the interests of pupils.
- The use of literary texts that engage students is a powerful way of facilitating vocabulary acquisition and stimulating an interest in language.

- The shared reading of a literary text is a useful bridge to independent reading.
- A carefully scaffolded focus on formal literary elements (including aspects of visual design) in conjunction with discussion enhances students' understanding of the form/content relationship and feeds writing ability.
- Students respond well when offered a choice of literary textual material addressed to their needs and interests.
- Student engagement with literary texts is enhanced when what they bring to the act of textual reception is valued (including culturally determined aspects of literary response).
- A focus on authorial purpose fosters an appreciation of the text/context relationship.
- A critical literacy approach introduces students to an appreciation of the constructedness of texts and the ways different texts construct versions of reality.

The place of ICTs

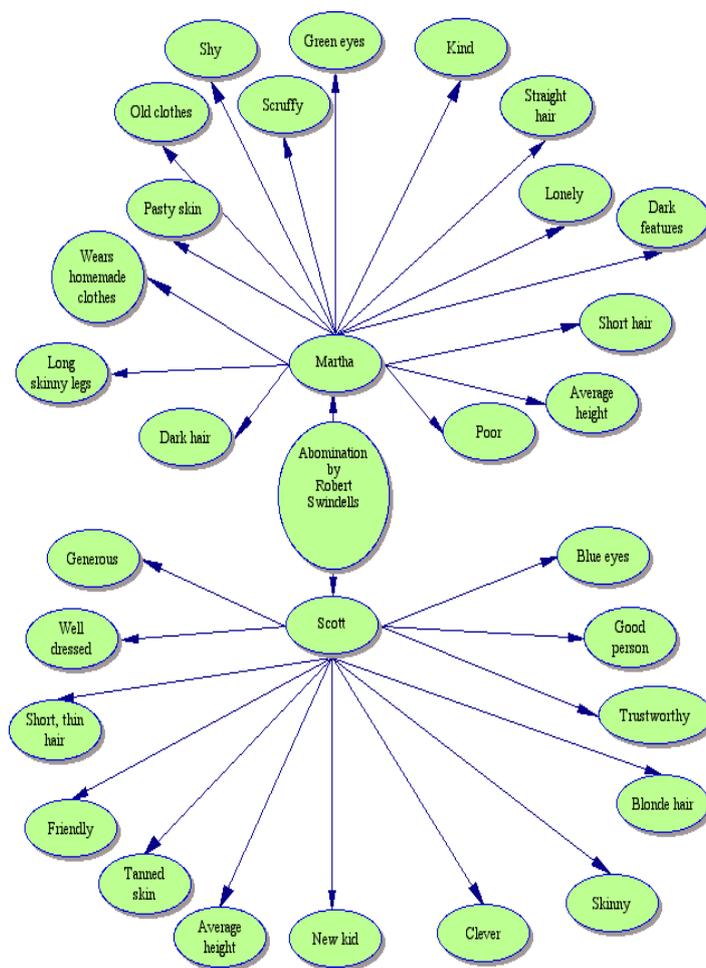
The fourth research question for this project was:

- In what ways can information communications technologies (ICTs) be integrated productively in a culturally and linguistically inclusive classroom for the teaching and learning of literature?

Findings in relation to ICTs are incorporated in the previous section. However, a number of points can be made here in relation to these findings:

1. Teacher A's use of her Smartboard (electronic whiteboard) to model the use of graphic and cognitive organisers in the literary response process is an excellent example of the integration of a relatively recent ICT tool. Her students saw this demonstration and were able to utilise it for their own graffiti recordings.
2. Teacher A also made use of classroom-based computers to increase the range of reading-related task options available to her students and by doing so facilitated the engagement of her students in the reading process.
3. Teacher B used the potential of ICTs to enable students to graphically represent their responses to literary texts, in this case their responses to two characters from Swindells' (2000) novel *Abomination* (Scott and Marsha) (see Figure 10).

Figure 10 Using a graphic organiser for character representation



5.2 Findings by secondary school teacher-researchers

Key learning objectives

Over two years, the four secondary teacher-researchers developed a range of key learning objectives which they built into their unit planning and in relation to which they designed a range of tasks and activities. As with the primary teacher-researchers, these objectives were linked to five categories (while recognising that there is a degree of overlap):

- attitudes to reading/responding to texts
- the form/content relationship
- understanding text/context relationships
- the constructedness of text
- composing literary texts.

Attitudes to reading/responding to texts

Two teachers specifically spelt out a desire to enhance their students' enjoyment of literary reading, with one teacher concerned to have her students reflect at some depth on the attitudes they brought to their reading. The relevant objectives read:

- students are willing to reflect on their personal reading practices—what motivates them and what barriers they face in reading and enjoying texts (Teacher 2, 2008)
- students realise that personal reading can be enjoyable (Teacher 1, 2008).

All teacher-researchers were concerned in various ways to enable their students to identify personal responses to various themes in literary texts and to share these with others. In this respect, they were operating out of a personal growth model of English, with the implication that this kind of personal engagement would develop students' enjoyment of literary texts. The following typify the objectives in this category:

- students are prepared to reflect on their own views about the role of fate in their lives (Teacher 3, 2007)
- students can acknowledge the timelessness of certain themes and relate them to their own lives (Teacher 3, 2008)
- students can appreciate thematic links across texts (Teacher 4, 2008)
- students reflect on their own dreams and ambitions in life and the barriers they face in achieving them (Teacher 2, 2007)
- students are able to appreciate that there are issues and challenges characters in a text face; and enjoy writing a personal response about one of these issues using supporting evidence from the text (Teacher 2, 2008)
- students can relate the theme of choices to the play (Teacher 1, 2008)
- students appreciate the worth/value of reading Shakespeare's plays (Teacher 1, 2008).

Two teacher-researchers specifically drew on selected ICTs in order to enable the sharing of responses in ways other than through face-to-face, in-class discussion, with the following objectives:

- students can use one or both of a print journal and Web 2.0 technologies to develop a personal and critical response to a complex fictional narrative (Teacher 3, 2007)
- students are able to reflect electronically through a shared class space, on their dreams and ambitions, how they may change over the year and what barriers they face to their fulfilment (Teacher 2, 2007)
- students are willing to reflect on personal responses to texts and discuss these with others orally or electronically (Teacher 2, 2008).

All teachers used cultural and linguistic differences in their classrooms by setting out to enable students to realise and appreciate the ways in which different cultural groups respond to the thematic content of texts. The following are examples of ways in which objectives were formulated:

- students recognise and acknowledge that different groups (cultural, religious and so on) view fate in different ways (Teacher 3, 2007)
- students enjoy comparing the ways in which different (cultural) groups view a text (Teacher 4, 2007)
- students compare the dreams and barriers that young people from different cultural and religious settings face to their own (Teacher 2, 2007)
- students are prepared to compare their own viewpoints towards ideas in texts to that of other young people from different cultural and religious settings (Teacher 2, 2008)
- students can find parallels in their own cultures (and subcultures) to themes in a Shakespearean play (for example, forbidden love, conflict between groups (Teacher 1, 2008).

The form/content relationship

Two teachers in the first year of the project came up with objectives aimed at helping students appreciate the ways in which the formal aspects of texts contribute to their effectiveness with particular readers. However, objectives such as those below were not a notable feature of the interventions planned for 2008, the major year of the project in terms of the extent of the interventions trialled. Typical objectives were:

- students can identify thematic issues in a film and novel and relate these to a range of narrative features such as character, plot/structure and setting (Teacher 3, 2007)
- texts use various “language” techniques to achieve their purpose (Teacher 1, 2007).

Understanding text/context relationships

Understandably, the focus of this research project and the informal professional development that occurred during Phases 1 and 2 prompted teachers to put a good deal of focus on text/context relationships, both in terms of response to text and composition objectives. Some teachers, for example, brought a rhetorical dimension into the writing of response-to-text objectives, using objectives such as the following which aimed at enabling students to appreciate ways in which texts seek to affect particular audiences:

- students can identify the narrative point of view in a film and novel and discuss its effect(iveness) in relation to authorial purpose where this can be ascertained (Teacher 3, 2007)
- students can identify, discuss and support with evidence, the point of view and purpose of an author or director and their targeted audience (Teacher 2, 2007, 2008).

Other teacher-researchers were concerned to facilitate students’ understanding of the “situatedness” of texts, and that in complex ways, texts are the product of a time and a place:

- students understand that social (cultural) and historical (time periods) contexts impact on texts (Teacher 3, 2008)

- students can understand that the time and place of birth in the world can affect a point of view, a belief and behaviour (Teacher 4, 2008).

The constructedness of texts

As discussed in Section 4, all secondary teacher-researchers in this project were keen to bring a critical literacy aspect to the teaching of literary texts. A critical literacy approach aims at helping students to understand that texts offer “versions” of reality and use language to position readers to view reality in some ways and not in others. The objectives below are typical of the ways teachers articulated objectives related to this approach:

- students can identify the ways in which texts construct (represent) different viewpoints on topics such as discrimination (Teacher 3, 2008)
- students are aware that language is not a neutral medium and that the way language is used affects the way in which something is seen; for example, scientific or technological intervention into human life and discrimination (Teacher 3, 2008)
- students can identify value judgements and bias and can reflect on their own value judgements and bias (Teacher 3, 2008)
- students understand that texts offer “versions of reality” that can be contested (Teacher 4, 2007, 2008)
- students can identify ways in which texts construct these “versions of reality” (Teacher 4, 2007, 2008)
- students can reflect critically on the way texts position readers/viewers to see particular dreams as desirable and worth pursuing (Teacher 2, 2007)
- students are able to appreciate that texts position readers/viewers to see things in a particular way (Teacher 2, 2008)
- texts aim to influence audiences in certain ways (Teacher 1, 2007).

Composing literary texts

All secondary teacher-researchers involved their students in some kind of literary composition, but with different emphases and with a variety of tasks. One teacher, concerned with process, wanted students to appreciate the value of talk as a way into writing texts:

- students can use oral discussion as a base on which to build formal writing (Teacher 3, 2008).

Two teacher-researchers focused on helping students develop technical mastery in respect of literary composition, with a particular emphasis on narrative structure:

- students can develop narratives using a range of elements (Teacher 4, 2007)
- students can identify the narrative structure of a text and use this as a model for a piece of writing or speech of their own based around an idea in a text they have read (Teacher 2, 2007, 2008).

Another, building on her students' personal responses to teachers, wanted to help them develop technical mastery in respect of a multimodal composition which would link to their thematic exploration of literary text they had read:

- students can produce a media or dramatic presentation using verbal and visual features based around the idea of dreams and ambitions (i.e., static image role play or monologue) (Teacher 2, 2007).

Three secondary-teacher researchers built on the work students had done in respect of responding to texts critically by helping them develop a critical understanding of the choices they make in composing literary texts themselves. Sometimes the objectives focused on a critical awareness of language choice, building on students' understandings of ways in which language constructs reality:

- students can apply the above awareness in the production of their own texts by being critically aware of their language choices (Teacher 3, 2008).

Two teachers adopted the critical literacy strategy of having their students "write back" to a text by constructing an alternative version of a similar theme. Such an approach is typified by the following objectives:

- students appreciate that the "same" story can have different "treatments" (depending on form, genre and mode) (Teacher 4, 2007)
- students can develop narratives based on a different point of view from the text (Teacher 4, 2008)
- students understand that the same "story" can have different "treatments" with different effects (Teacher 1, 2008)
- students can "talk back" to a literary text by generating texts [plays] of their own which deal with a theme in that text by locating it in contemporary cultural contexts (Teacher 1, 2008).

Intervention summaries

Over the last 18 months of the project, the four secondary teacher-researchers developed a range of interventions linked to the learning objectives they had formulated with particular reference to this project. These interventions varied in scale, but operated as tasks or activities within the context of units of work. As with the objectives, these interventions will be summarised under five overlapping categories:

- attitudes to reading/responding to texts
- the form/content relationship
- understanding text/context relationships
- the constructedness of text
- composing literary texts.

Attitudes to reading/responding to texts

All teachers were committed to fostering positive attitudes to reading in their students, especially in readers who lacked interest or confidence in reading. Two teachers trialled contrasting interventions as a way of encouraging students to read literary texts more widely. Both were working with multicultural Year 11 classes in decile 1 schools in South Auckland.

Teacher 1: 2008 was the second year this teacher had taught the majority of students in this Year 11 class. Of 25 students, 18 were female and seven were male. The class was ethnically and linguistically diverse, with six identifying themselves as New Zealand Māori or part Māori, three of Asian descent and 17 identifying themselves as Pacific Island New Zealanders. Seven students could understand and speak a language other than English, 14 could understand but not speak a language other than English, while four of the group could understand and speak only English.

A vocabulary test given to the class by the school's Learning Support Department at the beginning of 2008 indicated that about five (20 percent) were operating at a 10,000 word level, 15 (60 percent) at a 5,000 word level and two (8 percent) at a 3,000 word level. In the previous year, Year 10, most students were reading below their chronological age (41 percent at 12–13, 17 percent at 11–12 or below). A quarter of this class had a reading age of 13–15 or above in Year 10.

The motive for this intervention was a feeling and anecdotal evidence that most students were not doing a lot of personal reading. In February, Teacher 1 gave a reading attitude survey to his students. A total of 21 students participated in the survey. Of these, 11 students (53 percent) thought reading could be enjoyable, seven (33 percent) said “maybe” while three (14 percent) did not think it could be enjoyable. Asked how many “long” books they had read for enjoyment in the previous month, six (29 percent) students indicated they had read more than one, four (19 percent) said they had read one book while a majority of 11 (52 percent) had not read a book. Eight students were able to name the last long book they had read for enjoyment. As to whether they wanted to read more books for enjoyment, 15 (71 percent) said yes, four (19 percent) said maybe and two (10 percent) said no. One student commented: “I know I need to be able to read better because it will help me in school.”

The teacher began the year by using a Literature Circle¹⁶ approach to get students doing personal reading. He had selected eight texts and bought four copies of each. Students would select one they wanted to read and with three other students would set reading goals for each week, have a weekly meeting to discuss the reading and do other activities to assist with the reading. As he saw it, the Literature Circle approach would introduce the element of group accountability, support and achievement, in keeping with the preferred learning styles of his students. The personal reading would also contribute three credits for Unit Standard 8808.

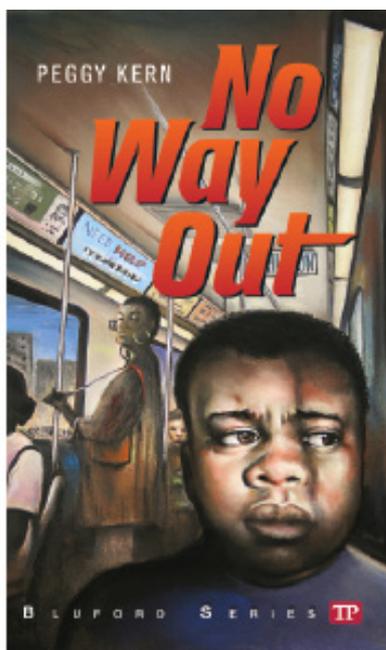
¹⁶ See <http://www.litecircles.org/>

As it turned out, the teacher abandoned the Literature Circle approach because it was not working with the class, for two main reasons:

- The Literature Circle relied on the consistent attendance of group members. There were many absences which made it difficult for groups to discuss issues in a text and to fulfil the roles that had been assigned (summariser, vocabulary finder, question writer and story mapper).
- Students in the group would set reading targets but other students would become so engaged with a book that they would not want to stop at the target and would continue reading.

Towards the end of Term 2, the shape of the intervention changed when the school librarian introduced Teacher 1 to 10 titles from the Bluford High series, which she had ordered from the United States.¹⁷ The covers and stories (Figure 11 is an example) were appealing to this school's students and were an instant hit with this Year 11 class who took them, read them avidly and passed them on to their friends.

Figure 11 **No Way Out: Cover page**



One student read a novel called *Shattered*, dealing with the issue of attempted rape. The same thing had happened to her and she had told no one about it. According to Teacher 1, reading the novel was therapeutic for her in a number of ways. She used this event as the basis for a speech to the class. The discovery of this series was a bonus for Teacher 1, who found it an effective way of increasing reading.

The Literature Circle was replaced by a customised class library of around 30–40 books, with texts selected by Teacher 1, with suggestions from class members and the youth librarian (based

¹⁷ See <http://www.townsendpress.com/catalog/tplibraryandblufordseries.aspx>

at Tupu Library in Otara). The library consisted of novels, plays, some nonfiction and some poetry. Teacher 1 dedicated one period a week for reading after students indicated they were prepared to handle a full 50 minutes of personal reading time.

At the end of the year, students were invited to write an honest, personal reflection about whether they felt their attitudes towards reading had changed during the year. Of the 19 students who wrote a reflection, two indicated that there was no change and they were reading only to gain credits. One student indicated that the amount of reading had decreased. The remaining students reported a positive change, citing the following habits and attitudes:

- read in spare time now (5)
- learnt that it is possible to relate to characters (6)
- seen how it helps with learning new vocabulary (3)
- learnt that it is possible to find books that are interesting (7)
- became interested in reading books recommended by friends (3)
- learnt new things while reading (5).

A number of students offered more than one type of comment. One student wrote: “One book that I’ve really enjoyed this year is *Diary of a Crush*. It’s about how a teenage girl goes through boy troubles. Which every girl in this world goes through. Which is cool because you know that your [sic] not the only one going through that challenge. Since I’ve read that book more of my friends have read it which is great because we can talk about it and relate to it.” In relation to NCEA and Unit Standard 8808 (Personal Reading), 19 out of the 20 students who attempted this standard achieved it (95 percent).

Teacher 2: The 21 students participating in 2008 were in Year 11 and studying towards their NCEA Level 1 Certificate. There were 15 girls and five boys in the class and all students were under 16. The class was a mix of the top two classes from the 2007 Year 10 cohort and two students were new to the school. The gender mix reflected the usual profile of students who scored well enough to be doing a full Level 1 NCEA course, mostly made up of achievement standards. Six of the girls had achieved Unit Standard 8808 (Wide Reading) as an extension task when in Year 10.

All students in the class were from either Māori or Pasifika ethnic backgrounds (Table 6):

Table 6 Ethnicities most identified with (*n* = 21)

| Ethnicity most identified with | Number (<i>n</i> = 21) | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|------|-------|
| | Girls | Boys | Total |
| Samoaan | 5 | 2 | 7 |
| Tongan | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Māori | | 1 | 1 |
| Cook Island | 5 | 1 | 6 |
| Nuiean | 3 | | 3 |
| Tukelauan | 1 | | 1 |

Thirteen students also identified with two or more ethnic backgrounds, including “Other”, which included Tahitian and Pakistani.

Apart from two students, English and their Pacific language/s were spoken at home. All students were fluent in English and eight out of 20 (40 percent) were fluent in at least one other Pacific language. The home backgrounds of these students were characterised by high levels of bilingualism (and sometimes multilingualism). About 80 percent of students described themselves as feeling confident in reading and writing in English. Only four students were confident in reading and writing in other languages, seven students said they could understand but not speak other languages and 16 students could understand a few words of other languages.

One of Teacher 2’s objectives was that students be willing to reflect on their personal reading practices—what motivates them and what barriers they face in reading and enjoying texts. This led to a range of surveys and questionnaires being administered at the start of 2008.

Eighteen students (14 girls and four boys) completed a preintervention questionnaire surveying their reading and response practices, with seven (39 percent) students indicating that they found reading “really enjoyable”. Students were also offered a range of prompts exploring their school-based practices around texts. A number of factors emerged. This group had greater experience of stories than either poems or plays. A significant number of students had never borrowed a book from the school library. While a majority indicated that they talked about books with friends, only a small minority (around 20 percent) talked about books with important adults. Almost half of the class, however, claimed to read more than one book per week. Overall, this class might be described as shy about reading aloud in class, offering to answer questions, sharing their opinions with the whole class. However, most students liked to share their opinions with a group.

A survey of 19 students (16 girls and three boys) showed very low library usage in previous years. In Year 9, only one girl took out more than three books and in Year 10, four girls did. No males took *any* books out in Year 10. When the students were asked what their Years 9 and 10 library use statistics indicated and meant to them, three who did not use the library did not see it as

important as they obtained their books from elsewhere. Six thought it showed their record of use as disappointing or they had poor reading habits. Those who *did* use the library mostly used it to work on assignments and research projects. Only two students said they used it to get books out that they liked to read and they had good reading skills because they did use the library more than their friends.

Students said they would have used the library more if their teacher had booked specific periods, if their friends were also into reading and if it were more interesting in the library. All students said they would like to improve their library use and thought this could happen if books were recommended to them, if they made more time to go themselves, especially at lunchtimes, or if teachers made more bookings during class time. Of the 19 students, nine at some stage used the library during break time. A few students mentioned they would like to use the library more as it would help them with NCEA and this was important. Most of the students enjoyed the library when they went there because it was a quiet and comfortable place and they had a choice of books to choose from.

Seventeen girls and five boys were surveyed in order to ascertain a range of home reading practices. At home the students read the paper, magazines, school texts, novels and the Bible. The survey revealed a rich range of home reading practices, with texts being exchanged and family members reading to one another in both English and Pasifika languages. Of the 22 students surveyed here, a large majority (about 90 percent: 15 girls and five boys) preferred reading a text in English with a Pacific Island or Māori setting and characters.

A survey of 21 students (16 girls and five boys) indicated that most were confident in a range of ICT-based practices (with the exception of Web-page creation). However, some interesting gender-related preferences emerged, with girls showing a preference for participating in online forums, creating Web pages and using mobile phone technologies, with boys appearing to be more regular players of computer games.

As part of a strategy of having students develop a stake in the development of their own reading practices, 119 completed a diagnostic (asTTle) reading test on understanding and critical thinking as a preintervention test (see Table 7). According to the test results, the students were at the following curriculum levels for understanding and critical thinking-focused questions (A = advanced, B = basic, P = proficient).

Table 7 **asTTle diagnostic reading test: Understanding and critical thinking**

| Understanding | | Critical thinking | |
|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Curriculum level | No. of students | Curriculum level | No. of students |
| 5A | 1 | 5A | 2 |
| 5P | 2 | 5P | 3 |
| 5B | 7 | 5B | 4 |
| 4A | 7 | 4A | 6 |
| 4P | 1 | 4P | 1 |
| 3P | 1 | 3A | 3 |

Students at Year 11 are normally expected to be working around curriculum level 7. Results from this type of test indicated that the students in this class were below national cohort expectations for reading comprehension and critical thinking.

As an intervention, five students (three girls and two boys) were given their asTTle reading profiles and met with the literacy co-ordinator who explained in depth what their results meant in terms of their reading ability. All students found this intervention helpful, with the following comments typifying their responses:

I think that this was good because it can give us the chance to correct our weaknesses. This showed me where I am and where the other students are in NZ. This also shows me that I am just below the NZ average. I think teachers should show students their strengths and weaknesses so we can work on what we need to. (Male student)

I find it interesting to find out how good I am in English, showing us our strengths and weaknesses and it gives us an opportunity to improve. I feel down with my results but I know that I can improve. The results can tell us how good we are in different areas of English. I think that it would be great if you could print one for everybody to show together with their reports to show their parents how good they are. (Female student)

As mentioned previously, all secondary teacher-researchers were committed to having students *respond to* literary texts and saw “personal connectedness” as the key to having students engage with literary texts and find such engagement enjoyable and productive.

Teacher 2, whose work is discussed above, used a wide range of diagnostic tools to school *herself* on her students’ reading practices and levels of enjoyment and also *used* this information to increase the metacognition of her students; that is, to have them become aware of their own practices and attitudes. In 2008, she was keen to build on work done in 2007 encouraging students to identify issues in literary texts and respond to them in writing. In keeping with her view of her students, she tended to select texts where characters faced a range of challenges in reaching a particular goal (for example, the film *Bend It Like Beckham*.) In 2008, she added an ICT dimension to her intervention (see below).

The relevant intervention was a wide reading unit called “For the love of reading”. Her aim was to motivate her students to read more, encourage them to see that reading can be an enjoyable experience and to improve their independent and critical thinking skills. The unit contained a number of linked activities which build on one another. However, for the first 10 weeks, one period was set aside per week when students were given a collection of reading texts in two specific areas: hard copy by way of a resource box and on an electronic shared space. The latter was an online/intranet class forum where students could respond to texts and discuss with others the texts they had read. Teacher 2 hoped that by tapping into technology she might be able to motivate students to read, reflect and be willing to share their own ideas and understand the ideas of others about texts. (Sustained silent reading [SSR] had been discontinued in her school.)

The following three categories of texts were available in the collection:

- texts in Pacific Island/Māori languages
- texts in English but with Pacific Island/Māori settings/characters
- texts in English but in other settings.

In addition to the two customised text sources mentioned above, students were given the opportunity to go to the library during the weekly reading periods if they wanted to choose texts from there. They were encouraged to read a text, then share and compare their own viewpoints with other young people via the forum or with friends in person. The students were also asked to keep a log sheet outlining what text they chose, where they accessed it and where they responded to it. If they chose to not use the forum, they had a discussion response sheet they could complete. On this they noted the text title, whom they discussed it with and any points they wanted to make from their discussion.

Fourteen girls and three boys were surveyed at the end of the reading and response task to gain information on choice of text and location (class box or online space). The most popular short story choices (out of 39 readings) in relation to cultural setting from the class box were Samoan (“The Streets of Apia” [12], “Village in Savaii” [5] and “A Descendent of the Mountain” [4]), followed by Māori (“Ka Kite Bro” [5]) and Tongan (“The Journey of Kae” [5]). With one exception, boys who read short stories from the box chose Samoan stories. Overall, about 70 percent of the readings were of Samoan stories which made up 50 percent of the selection overall (reflecting, perhaps, the fact that seven of the 21 students in the class identified as Samoan). No one chose to read a story in a Pasifika L1 (Nuiean or Samoan).

On the electronic shared space, five stories were made available, two Māori, two English and one South African. In total, these stories were read 53 times, with the two Māori stories read 21 times (40 percent), English stories 24 times (45 percent) and the South African story eight times (15 percent). It is notable that the smaller range of stories made available on the electronic shared space was read more than the wider range of stories in the class box (i.e., 53 readings compared to 39). The English setting of two of the stories was clearly not a deterrent to their being read. There were 12 instances of stories being read online by boys compared with seven instances by boys for the class box.

As for the class box of poems, there were fewer readings than for short stories (27 compared with 39). Six of the 12 poems were in Māori L1, but there was only one reading of such a poem. The popular cultural settings for poems read were Samoan (9 readings), Jamaican (7) and Nuiean (5). Proportionate to their numbers in class, boys did not read poems less than girls. The 12 poems in the electronic shared space enjoyed more than twice the number of readings as those in the class box (56 compared with 27). Moreover, the one L1 poem in Tongan was read on five occasions by girls and boys. Two poems dominated the popularity stakes, a Māori/Pasifika poem “Bred in South Auckland” which was read 14 times and a New Zealand poem “Say Thank You” was read 16 times.

In some respects, the above data reflect the stated preferences of the 17 students surveyed, of whom 12 indicated a preference for texts in English in other settings, five for texts in English with Pacific Island/Māori settings and none for texts in Pacific Island/Māori languages. Students were also asked about their preferences in respect of source or location of text. Of those expressing a very strong preference (“Choice!”), five preferred the class box, four the electronic space and eight the library. If one combines strong preference with mild preference, 12 (37.5 percent) opted for the classbox, eight (25 percent) for the electronic space and 12 for the library (37.5 percent). There was no gender factor in these expressed preferences.

Despite the above results, student comments about the electronic source showed a good deal of enthusiasm for a variety of reasons: “I could go to the forum and express my thoughts as soon as I had read the text”; “I enjoyed reading ones on the computer more”; “Awesome as I could work with classmates on reading, people could tell you about it and then I wanted to read it”; “Fast and easy to find a good text”; “Interesting poems and can read better on the computer”; “There were different types of stories and in other cultures and languages”; “It has encouraged me to take more books out of the library and read”. For some students, reading online facilitated their ability to find texts they liked quickly, and to respond and share their responses with others. Students also expressed a liking for the availability of the class box (“Gave me time to read more stories and always there when you needed it”) and the range of stories it contained. Comments about the school library favoured it for the range of genres available and the availability of books by a favourite author.

Looking back, Teacher 2 confirmed that texts selected for the collection were all short stories or poems to enable the students to read and respond quickly. Some were in a first language and there was a range of difficulty—some were above the curriculum level of these students. However, some of the more able readers preferred longer texts and genres and as a result did not click with those they selected from the collection. The students had the opportunity to self-select from the library or another source and contribute to the forum when they felt like doing this.

All of the students indicated in their logs that they used the forum at some stage to discuss texts. Apart from one boy, all said they also discussed a text they had read verbally with a friend, a group of friends or with the teacher. Eleven of the class held a real conversation more than once in the forum. Students mainly used the forum to ask other students if they had read a text, asked

others if they understood it, offered their opinions, suggested a good text choice from the collection or the library and occasionally attempted to think critically about the text in their response. Most students used the forum to have fun, interact and engage with each other on the texts, especially in a text language form. Four students cut and pasted some stories they had collected onto the forum for others to read.

A large number of comments from the forum indicated deeper thinking on texts read (semitranslated from txt language). The following are indicative:

- Are there any similarities to life in New Zealand in this story?
- I think many of our Pacific Island people are starting to join gangs at this age. This story had a good moral behind it . . . I think it was trying to bring across the idea that we shouldn't join gangs to fit into the crowd and to feel like we belong when we should just be who we are and not what others want us to be.
- I just read this awesome text called "student in a coma after binge drinking". . . scary this dude was 17 and drank mixed alks for 4 days straight and now in a coma . . . how stupid!
- In 1995, 26 people were killed in Columbia by a bomb blast that was blamed on drug traffickers . . . now that's why you don't do drugs.
- Shooting his friend was an act of love, to which he would have spent the rest of his life regretting.
- Made me think about race and how unfair it is for those being called negroes and blackies . . . I mean skin colour shouldn't matter because we are all equal.
- This poem showed it is quite hard adapting to another country.

Similar comments could be found in students' discussion sheets, for example:

Wonder what the girl in the story's father thought of Australia compared to Italy?

Pasifika people should never forget where they are from and who they are.

We experience the same things this girl experienced while growing up.

I like this story because it is about a boy who is from South Auckland who tells us about his life . . . and our territory.

It was great it makes me think about my own culture and it's importance.

We translated Samoan words we didn't know.

The students were also surveyed on what they thought about using the online forum to discuss the texts they had read with others in the class. All of the students said they would use the forum in the future in their own time, for another subject or interest group. Comments included:

This forum was the bomb . . . it helped me to read more with others telling me how interesting the book was . . . this will encourage me to participate in other forums as well.

This was the first time I've ever talked about stories and poems with people so yeah it was on to it!

I enjoyed it, it's kind [of] like Bebo.

I think the forum is helping us understand the meaning of reading.

I do feel encouraged to read and discuss more ... would like to visit other forums especially if you can talk around the world ... has been worthwhile.

I've read heaps lately and I never used to read a lot just the Sunday News.

I reckon it helped me 'read between the lines' not just discussing the obvious.

Teacher 3: Like Teacher 2, Teacher 3 was keen to use Web-based technologies to facilitate responses to texts in her Year 12 class of 2007. (Her success here encouraged Teacher 2 to try the above intervention with her class in 2008.) She wanted her students to reflect on their own views about the role of fate and acknowledge the timelessness of certain themes in relation to their own lives. She wanted students to be able to use one or both of a print journal and Web 2.0 technologies to develop a personal and critical response to a complex fictional narrative (the film *Run Lola Run* and the novel *5 People You Meet in Heaven*), and reflect electronically through a shared class space, on their dreams and ambitions, how they may change over the year and what barriers they face to their fulfilment.

The class began 2007 as a class of 35 students but by the end of the year numbers had dropped to 24. On average, class members had achieved 15 credits or more in Level 2 English the previous year, though there were a number of students who were in the class because of option clashes, without the required credit allocation. The class was largely made up of New Zealand European/Pākehā (15), with a lesser number of Māori (6), South African (2) and "Other" (1) students.

This intervention described here was part of a research study (see Cleary, 2008 for a full account) investigating how collaborative Web 2.0 applications such as "blogs" and "skrb1 boards"¹⁸ can be incorporated into classroom practice as an example of popular culture, and how they can be used as a motivational, active and critical learning tool in an English classroom. Teacher 3 hypothesised that the use of online, collaborative, Web 2.0 applications as texts in an English classroom would engage students and provide a variety of literacy tasks and challenges that would be valid in terms of the new English curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) and assessable in terms of the current NCEA qualifications framework.

Teacher 3 identified the blog as a Web 2.0 application ideally suited to the facilitation of student response to text, where they would log on and engage regularly in discussion with her as teacher and with one another. Choosing blogger.com, a free blog-hosting site that provided clear and simple instructions for new "bloggers" as a platform, Teacher C instigated the intervention in February 2007 by creating her own blog (see Figure 12). The blog became available for anyone to see and comment on and also allowed anonymous comments. Teacher 3's first step towards personalising her blog was to add elements such as the animated avatar of herself created at

¹⁸ *Skrbl*—a neologism for a Web 2.0 application which allows users to write and draw collaboratively.

another free site (www.meez.com). In doing so she was modelling in a powerful way the affordance¹⁹ of the blog for individual ownership and statement. In the following few weeks she added links to other sites, lists of favourite websites, study sites and notes on what she had been reading.

Her first posting included a set of questions that she wanted the class to respond to, which were focused on the first texts the class had studied—short stories and poetry. Contrary to her expectations, this supposedly Web-savvy class (all but one having Internet access at home and using it regularly) ignored her blog until she managed to book them as a class on a weekly basis in the one computer room in the school that was fast enough to run Web 2.0 applications. Belatedly she posted two more sets of questions for the class to respond to on *The Taming of the Shrew*, asking the class to respond to as many of the questions as they could. Consequently, the general engagement level of the class was high, and the rich comments on both the tasks and activities she had used in class provided her with invaluable feedback for future teaching and learning experiences.

Figure 12 Mrs C's blog

Mrs C
Hiya English students!! Welcome to my blog. But really it is your blog. A place to discuss the texts that we are studying in class and the texts you are reading independently. Enjoy the discussions.

Monday, October 22
Practice Essays
Any of you that don't have your own 'blog' can post your essays here - just cut and paste them into the comment box - BUT remember to add your name to them!!!!
Posted by Mrs C at Monday, October 22, 2007 0 comments
Labels: exams

Tuesday, August 7
Blogging/Logging....
Which type of viewing/reading log did you choose and why did you choose it?
Do you think your choice affected what you wrote and how you wrote it? Explain.
Posted by Mrs C at Tuesday, August 07, 2007 23 comments

Thursday, June 21
Bye bye Shrew (for a while)
We have completed most of our work on Taming of the Shrew.
Which of the three assessment tasks did you find the most difficult? Why?
Which of the three assessment tasks did you find the most straightforward? Why?
Posted by Mrs C at Thursday, June 21, 2007 29 comments

Tuesday, May 22
Close Reading
Hi all
We have been linking our close reading and formal writing activities to themes and ideas generated by the Taming of the Shrew.
When we 'close read' unfamiliar texts in class such as newspaper or magazine articles, what do you find easy or difficult to do? Do you feel confident when you are asked to analyse a text? Can you easily identify language features or techniques? How do you know if a text is formal or informal?
Posted by Mrs C at Tuesday, May 22, 2007 3 comments

I belong to
I'm a member of:
Classroom 2.0

The Library Blog
◆ <http://tuakaucollegelibrary.blogspot.com/>
◆ <http://parentscount.blogspot.com/>

My Bookshelf
◆ <http://www.shelfari.com/mrs-c/shelf>

mrs-c

meez.com

Study Links
◆ [Understanding Exam Words](#)
◆ [Run Lola Run - Director's Site](#)

¹⁹ An “affordance” is a quality of something that allows for it to be used in a particular way.

Teacher 3 was encouraged by the number of students with strong opinions on the text who could make connections between a text written over 400 years ago and their own lives. Figure 13 shows what one student wrote.

Figure 13 **Student opinion via blog**



Teacher 3 wondered if the student would have put forward this point of view in an oral classroom discussion. As a triangulation strategy, Teacher 3 had the school's ICT manager observe her blog lessons. Her colleague noted how students were "stimulated by the interactive nature of the Web". She continued:

Sharing the opinions and considerations of a large class was very effective via this medium. Attempting to do the same on a traditional verbal level, I feel would not be so effective for at least four reasons:

- People tend to develop and edit their thoughts more thoroughly when writing.
- The spoken word is transitory and readily forgotten, written can be re-read.
- No-one has to 'wait their turn' to air an opinion. In verbal situations there are always some who are reluctant to offer an opinion.
- The anonymity allows participants to be courageous, outrageous or divergent without fear of ridicule.

For Teacher 3, it was exciting to see the students engaging in relatively open and honest discussion.

It was always Teacher 3's intention for the students to create their own blogs. While the prestudy technology questionnaire showed that a high percentage of the students (16 of 24) had their own Web page on Bebo, Myspace or the like, very few (five of 24) had ever created their own blog. However, most of the group (15 of 24) said that they felt confident with using a blog, an indication perhaps of their familiarity with social software in general and the belief that the skills are transferable between applications.

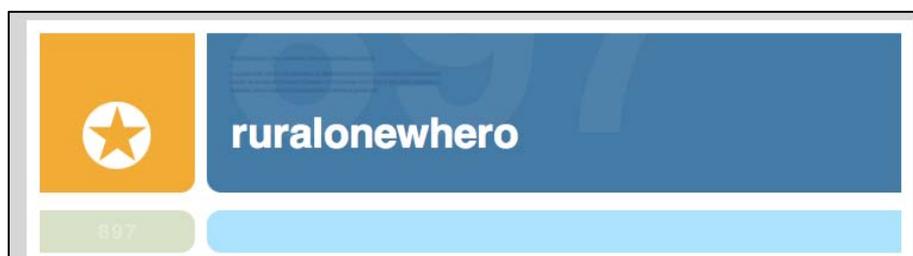
Teacher 3 generally asked students to keep viewing response logs when studying film and other extended texts, and the idea of having them create a blog was an extension of this practice. For her, logs gave students an opportunity to reflect on what has been read or seen, to formulate ideas

around key features of each text and voice their opinions in their own way. After introducing the idea and rationale of the response log to the class, she gave the students the choice as to whether they would “blog or log”; that is, whether they would keep an online blog, or a paper response log. To her initial surprise, only half of the class (12 out of 24) chose to create a blog. (Most students who chose the paper log had a low opinion of the school’s technology.)

A poststudy questionnaire and online blog feedback showed that the 12 students who chose to blog did so for a variety of reasons. Two felt that their notes would be easier to keep. Two thought that it would be more interesting and different; three preferred typing to writing or found it easier to type than write; two felt typing was easier to read than writing; two felt it would be easier to write more on a blog than on paper. Most focused on writing as a process and believed that the quality and the quantity of their work would be improved. To Teacher 3’s surprise, only two stated that they would be more likely to finish the work at home because they were always on the computer.

According to Teacher 3, 12 students created their own blogs on 27 July 2007 during a remarkably smooth and “hassle-free”, 15-minute session in the computer room. The blogging platform *blogger.com* provides users with a selection of templates. Students used a range of templates, creating their blogs independently and choosing blog names and formats including colour and layout (for example, see Figure 14).

Figure 14 **Ruralonewhero’s blog**



Ruralonewhero’s descriptor (including the use of lower case) proudly states his place in the world (see Figure 14). At Teacher 3’s school, students from rural Onewhero had a definite and recognisable identity and “subculture” that they were incredibly proud of. This student chose to emphasise their identity through their blog name.

In designing her response prompts, Teacher 3 used a carefully thought through progression. She started with an affective prompt, asking students what they thought of the text and why. The students would then be asked specific questions that relate to the narrative structure, techniques and character development. (Students are expected to be able to discuss these aspects of texts in their NCEA external examinations.) Teacher 3 did not see herself as assessment-driven and generally encouraged students to a further level of response by asking them to look for connections between the text and other texts they may have read or seen, hence creating a link to wider reading and viewing and moving the students into higher level thinking. The students were

also directed to give their views on the author's purpose and the different levels of meaning that can be identified. This form of questioning moves the response log from being purely a description of what they thought of a particular text, to a more critical view of the text being studied.

For this teacher, the most exciting and rewarding aspect of the intervention was that one of the 12 students who used a blog for their response journal engaged in an ongoing dialogue over at least one aspect of the work being studied. In comparison, not one of the students who used a written or paper response log responded to or developed any of the questions that Teacher 3 posed to them in their written record. "Blogger" posts tended to be longer, more detailed and more structured than the written responses of the paper "loggers". The average blog posting was 100 words. On paper, the responses ranged from a list of six words to one that was 150. However, not one of the 12 students who wrote on paper responded or replied to any of the questions Teacher 3 asked on their logs after their first post. This was in direct contrast to the bloggers. All bloggers replied to questions posed in the teacher's comments, and some conversations continued over a number of postings.

The experience confirmed Teacher 3's belief that in many classrooms, students find it hard to hold an opinion that differs from those of their peers. This view was supported by a number of the student responses to a questionnaire prompt asking them what they thought were the benefits of anonymous blogging in the English classroom. Comments included:

... you could write what you thought as you know no one else will no who it was from.
(Student 5)

With the anonymous blog, if your opinion is different to others you can still express your views without other people making you feel wrong. (Student 10)

I wouldn't have explained all my ideas to the whole class. (Student 13)

For Teacher 3, blogging provided an opportunity for some students to have a voice, when otherwise they might not have one. Of the 12 students who chose to blog, the teacher saw seven as being reluctant participants in class discussion; that is, they rarely contributed to any form of whole-class discussion or to teacher questioning. One in particular had a specific aversion to any form of participation, whether in a small- or large-group situation.

The conversations that were generated via student blogs enabled them to share their points of view and opinions to an extent that Teacher 3 had not seen before. In a short questionnaire, only seven of the 24 students felt that using the blog made no difference as to how they responded to the questions. The remainder all felt that the availability of the blog affected the way in which they responded. One wrote:

we could be as honest as we wanted because it was anonymous [student spelling] because some people aren't exactly nice you can't always express *true* opinions [student underlining] in a class situation. (Student 16)

For some students the classroom may never be a truly safe environment, no matter how hard teachers try to make it safe. In addition, 13 of the students commented in their poststudy questionnaire on the value of being able to read the views of others, in particular to see if their friends' or peers' opinions were the same as their own. Comments included:

... we could gather each other's points of view. (Student 17)

... to get ideas and see people's opinions. (Student 7)

... to see how others responded and if they had the same opinion as me. (Student 10)

Overall, these students viewed the blog activities as an enjoyable and fun way to learn. In the poststudy questionnaire, students commented on their level of interest and enjoyment:

... it was interesting—so many varied [student spelling] comments were made. (Student 8)

... it was good and perhaps a fun way of finding the answers to the questions. (Student 18)

... it was a different way of expressing your opinions [student spelling] about stuff and you could do it comfortably. (Student 20)

For all that, two students stated in their poststudy questionnaire that they found the blogging tasks “boring”.

Teacher 1, whose class we met above, set himself the goal of having his Year 11 students appreciate the value of reading Shakespeare's plays and to relate the class theme of “choices” to the play *Romeo and Juliet*. He also wanted students to find parallels in their own cultures (and subcultures) to themes in a Shakespearean play (for example, forbidden love, conflict between groups).

Before the unit started, 17 students completed a questionnaire on how they felt about studying a Shakespearean play. The results indicated, perhaps surprisingly, that they thought positively about studying *Romeo and Juliet*, offering such reasons as: stories are classics (3); something new (7); because of the author (6). Two offered negative reasons such as boredom and the difficulty of the language. Students knew something already about the play: 14 knew it was a love story of some kind; five knew that the lovers die; two knew it contained a family conflict; while two knew nothing at all about it. A minority of students knew of other versions of the play, mostly the Baz Lurhmann version. Eight students thought the play would have some relevance in their lives, while the rest hedged their bets.

At the start of the unit, Teacher 1 made four different versions of the play available and encouraged students to select the one they wanted to and read with others:

- Young Reader's Shakespeare—a retelling in story form with pictures.
- Manga [Japanese comic style] version set in modern Japan but uses selected quotes from the original Shakespearean text.
- Penguin Reader version classified Pre-Intermediate [1200 words].
- Oxford School version (basically the original text with a glossary on each page).

He began the unit by spending eight periods reading and discussing selected portions of a standard version of the play, alerting students to certain issues that were coming up, so they could anticipate finding these in their copy of the play. He also wanted to expose them to Shakespeare's language, so he modelled to them how he himself would go about understanding the play. At points students would read the play themselves. (One day, having to stop a fight outside his room, he left his class to return 15 minutes later and finding students in a circle taking turns to read the play.)

Half of the class had attended a Black Friars (a Polynesian theatre company) performance of *Othello* before the intervention began, so they had already seen how Shakespeare can be interpreted and translated for modern audiences. In May, the class watched an Ugly Shakespeare Company performance of *Romeo and Juliet* which they loved for its wackiness and visual nature.

The theme of "Choices" was chosen for the *Romeo and Juliet* unit because Teacher 1 and others saw a lot of students making poor choices in the community and wanted to help teach them about decision making and thinking before acting. At the beginning of the unit, students were told that they were to research a forbidden love story in another culture and to present the information that they found. Students shared what they found in groups, using such modes as oral recount, comic, Venn diagram, written summary and opinion. As a result of this activity, one student learnt a story from her own Tongan culture that she had not known before. A Samoan student had the same experience. Both of these students had talked with cultural elders.

After the class had read the original play together, Teacher 1 exposed the students to other versions of the story; for example, the musical *West Side Story* (play script), the Oscar Kightley play *Romeo and Tusi*, the Manga version and the Penguin Easy Reader version. They were asked to read the version they selected themselves. About five students chose the standard Oxford version. In reading the selected version, they were to investigate the theme of "choices", as evident in the plot of the story. On the basis of their reading, they had to write a letter to a character, expressing their thoughts about choices that character made. This letter was one of their pieces of formal writing for US 8812 (Produce transactional writing in simple forms). While this is a transactional writing standard, it was used here to support response to a literary text. Eighteen out of the 19 students who attempted this standard achieved it (95 percent).

After reading their selected version of the play, students were given a post-Shakespeare questionnaire, aimed at finding out how they felt about studying Shakespeare and differences they perceived between the two versions studied. Asked what they thought about William Shakespeare, the students were invariably positive, with 16 citing his greatness as a writer, 15 indicating a general positive response and two citing contemporary relevance. All students enjoyed reading and studying *Romeo and Juliet*. Table 8 indicates the range of reasons and numbers citing each.

Table 8 **Reasons for enjoying Shakespeare**

| Reason for enjoying Shakespeare | Number |
|--|--------|
| The nature of the story | 4 |
| The family rivalry theme | 1 |
| Contemporary relevance | 9 |
| Lessons to be drawn from it | 2 |
| Story as romance | 4 |
| Old-fashioned language | 1 |
| Study as leading to understanding (a sense of mastery) | 2 |
| Its tragic-comic elements | 1 |
| The novelty of the experience | 1 |

One student wrote: “I loved reading and studying *Romeo and Juliet* because I was really touched by this story and it really does tell me about a lot of challenges and difficulties that happen in the lives of young people and youths that are in love and are committed but can’t be together because it is forbidden and so they always have to risk something from their lives to gain freedom.”

Students read or viewed a wide range of versions of the story, with largest numbers reading *Romeo and Tusi* (5) or the Manga version of the play (4). Four students also read *Othello* as an “extra”. While a small number of students (3) did not like the changes made to the original in the version they read, most cited a range of reasons for liking the alternative: seven liked the modern setting; five liked the story when it was re-set in their own culture; three liked the fact that their version was easier to understand; and two liked the humour of their versions.

All bar one student saw the *Romeo and Juliet* story as having relevance to their lives. Fourteen students mentioned comparable life situations. One such student wrote: “I knew someone who got pregnant at the age of 13 and her father abandoned her.” Another wrote: “Yes, because most love relationships are difficult. Most people are banned from falling in love with particular people and it becomes very difficult in our personal lives.” Four students felt that there were lessons to be learnt from the play and one noted that the play had had an influence, indicating that it had “taught me to stand up for what I believe in”.

As a research task, students were asked to research a theme in literature for Achievement Standard 1.9. This task required them to find a range of pieces of literature dealing with the theme of “Choices” and including *Romeo and Juliet*. They were to write a report on their findings. All 19 students who attempted this standard achieved it (100 percent). In Term 3, students had an opportunity to respond to a theme addressed in the play through drama. Teacher 1 had incorporated the drama Achievement Standard 1.4 (Perform an acting role) into his Year 11 English programme for the following reasons:

- The school lacked a drama programme.
- It enabled the use of English Achievement Standard 1.8 for static image.
- It was fun and active.

Students shared stories of intergenerational conflict in groups and devised a play based on that topic. While not all groups stuck to the theme of intergenerational conflict, one group which had studied the Kightley version, adopted it for performance. While the students enjoyed the performance experience, only eight achieved the standard owing to a lack of background in drama and the amount of written work required for the standard to be completed.

As indicated above, in having students respond to literary texts, these secondary teacher-researchers used the cultural and linguistic differences in their classrooms to foster in their students an understanding and appreciation of the ways in which different cultural groups respond to the thematic content of texts. For example, in fostering a sharing of responses to text in paper and online forums, Teacher 2 (above) was giving her students the opportunity of comparing their own viewpoints towards ideas in texts to that of other young people from different cultural and religious settings.

In 2007, **Teacher 4** taught a multicultural and multilingual Year 9 class of mainly boys, with only 11 female students. Students' ethnic backgrounds were as follows: nine Chinese, one Chinese/Cook Islander, one half Filipino/Chinese, two Sri Lankan, five Indian, four European, three Malaysian, two Korean, one Taiwanese/Burmese, one European/Chinese. Collectively the 28 students spoke 14 different languages. The class had been put together purposely because they were students whose asTTle and PAT scores were consistently high in (firstly) mathematics, then in literacy. They were noticeably always present and always completed homework. They were motivated, disciplined and polite students whose parents had high expectations of them, as they did themselves.

Teacher 4 wanted her students to enjoy comparing the ways in which different (cultural) groups view a text. As part of a major unit on fairy tales, students were asked to complete a research and presentation task as follows:

- Choose a fairy tale from your own culture/a different culture to study and to compare with a "typical" fairy tale.
- Be prepared to retell the culturally different story to the class.
- Be able to talk to the class about the characters/settings and ideas in the story.
- Decide and talk about the similarities and differences between the story you have chosen and the "typical" fairy tale you chose to compare with.
- Find a translated version and compare the work in both languages, looking specifically at the words used in English and the original language.
- Make a generalisation about fairy tales worldwide (is there any commonality?) and discuss a particular aspect of fairy tales you find interesting. For example: What can you say about the way females are treated in fairy tales? Are there expectations of characters because of stereotyping?

Once the students had started on their research, they worked on a presentation of their findings to the class in whatever way they chose: either through PowerPoint/electronic means, or with manually/artistically made charts. They chose fairy tales from a range of cultures: Sri Lankan, Native American Indian, Japanese, Chinese, Indian, Kashmiri, Malaysian, Burmese, German, French, English and Irish. Some of them compared the traditional with a modern-day version (Cinderella) and one student compared a Greek myth with a Japanese myth. Most students created some form of Venn diagram to show similarities and differences. All students were able to retell the “unknown/culturally different” tale and verbalise aspects such as character and settings. No one opted to compare translated versions (partly because they proved hard to find). As one might expect, the research generated a range of findings, many of which moved their understanding of the genre beyond issues of stereotyping. Findings from the students’ own presentations included the following:

- Fairy tales universally have a problem to solve and a happy-ever-after ending.
- Plots usually involve some form of mischief, trickery or magic.
- Some cultures’ fairy tales involve animals.
- Some cultures told of the poor or thieves and some cultures included religion.

The research that students did that involved their choosing a fairy tale of their own culture or a different culture for comparison with a traditional story was very successful in creating discussion: there was a mutual, cultural exchange between students. It also generated discussion in the students’ homes with parents/grandparents over the stories that were read to them as a young child. Teacher 4 reflected:

There was informal time here when students were looking at books and sometimes waiting for more to arrive at the library, or waiting to go to the local library out of school, so there was time to talk with each other and me.

I got to know them better over this time because the teaching wasn’t so formal. (Reflective journal)

While students were looking for resources to use—some from a National Library set of books requested, and many of their own resources—Teacher 4 read them as many unusual fairy tales as possible (for example, Roald Dahl’s *Revolting Rhymes* and *Dirty Beasts*, and children’s stories, such as *The Paper Bag Princess*).²⁰ She wrote in her reflective journal:

I had no idea whether they would think these below their level of intellect so gauged their reactions and asked them often about what their parents may have read to them when they were young. (Reflective journal)

This led to a sharing/discussion of quite a personal nature. The presentations themselves were successful because they generated interest in each other’s cultures. Students consequently asked

²⁰ Dahl, R. (1982). *Revolting rhymes*. London: Puffin Books; Dahl, R. (1983). *Dirty beasts*. London: Puffin Books; Munsch, R. (1992). *The paper bag princess*. Toronto: Annick Press.

each other further questions about what they had had read to them as children and where they were at the time (in which country).

The form/content relationship

Eagleton (2006) usefully comments that:

Form concerns such aspects of the poem as tone, pitch, rhythm, diction, volume, metre, pace, mood, voice, address, texture, structure, quality, syntax, register, point of view, punctuation and the like, whereas content is a matter of meaning, character, idea, storyline, moral vision, argument and so on. (p. 66)

Appropriately modified, such a description can apply to other literary genres. As mentioned above, only two teachers in the first year of the project (2007) came up with objectives broadly aimed at helping students appreciate the ways in which the formal aspects of texts contribute to their effectiveness with particular readers. Cleary (2008), in her Master's dissertation, draws attention to instances of successful online discussion (via the medium of a student-produced blog) about narrative structure. However, there does not appear to have been sustained discussion of form/content relationships in the context of this intervention. In the same year, Teacher 1 engaged his students in a study of CD covers as a way of helping students understand that texts use various "language" techniques to achieve their purpose, but CD covers are hardly a literary text as conventionally understood. In short, then, the interventions designed in response to the project's terms of reference had very little focus on the relationship between meaning and elements of literary form. This absence will be commented on later.

Understanding text/context relationships

One aspect of the text/context relationship is rhetorical dimension which examines the ways particular texts are pitched (by their authors or producers) so as to have an effect on particular audiences.

In her 2007 intervention based around the use of Web 2.0 technologies to facilitate response to and discussion around texts, **Teacher 3** asked students to identify the narrative point of view in a film and novel and discuss its effectiveness in relation to authorial purpose where this can be ascertained. While there was a range of student responses to this task on their blogs, the focus of the intervention was more directed at student motivation and participation rates (as discussed elsewhere).

A major component of **Teacher 2's** 2008 unit, "For the love of reading", was a series of reading tasks and activities spread over four weeks where students responded to a literary text. The component included the following objectives:

- students can identify, discuss and support with evidence, the point of view and purpose of an author or director and their targeted audience

- students are able to appreciate that there are issues and challenges characters in a text face; and enjoy writing a personal response around one of these issues using supporting evidence from the text
- students are able to appreciate texts position readers/viewers to see things in a particular way.

The first of these was particularly related to point of view and rhetorical purpose. The third was moving students towards a critical literacy approach to textual study and will be the subject of more sustained comment later in this section of the report.

This component had three distinct, scaffolded stages based around three different stories:

- teacher modelling of responses to *The Geranium* by Patricia Grace
- students responding to *On the Sidewalk Bleeding* by Evan Hunter using questioning prompts designed by the teacher
- students developing their own discussion prompts for the story *I Am Brave for Tattooing* by J.D. Copp and Faafouina I. Pula and responding to a selection of their own prompts.

By scaffolding response to text in this way, Teacher 2 hoped to build up students' confidence and give them some strategies to be able to understand and respond in depth and critically to a literary text (and also improve their NCEA grades in the response to texts standards).

The Geranium by Patricia Grace is in English but with Pacific Island/Māori settings and characters. Teacher 2 introduced it and read it aloud to the class. (The students had a hard copy to follow but it was her regular practice to read new texts aloud for the first time so that students could hear the pronunciation and have new vocabulary clarified.) Teacher 2 and colleague then modelled to and discussed with the class how they might respond to a text and what questions they might ask. Because the way questions are framed is crucial in affecting/effecting student response, they are reproduced here:

Content

1. *Explain briefly in your own words the main events in this story. Through whose eyes are we told this?*
2. *Identify one issue this story makes you think about. Refer to details in the story to support your thought. Whose perspective do we get on this issue? Who else in this story might have a point of view on this issue? How do you feel about this issue?*
3. *Identify one thing the story reveals about Marney as a person? Describe what happens in the text which shows this. Do you feel sorry for Marney? Say why or why not.*
4. *Describe an important decision made by the main character and explain how making this decision affects her life? How did you feel about the character's decision?*

Tone

5. *What can you say about the writer of this story? Try and describe what her attitude might be to the events of the story? Find words/sentences in the story that might give us a clue as to her feelings about an issue or event?*

Structure

6. *This story can be broken up into sections. How many sections can you identify and what role does each part play to hold the story together?*
7. *What method is used to link each section? Find an example from each section to show this link.*

Selection of words

8. *Identify two sentences that you think work well in getting an idea across to the reader. Why have these sentences made an impact on you?*
9. *The geranium is a symbol used in the story. Describe what you think it symbolises and why.*
10. *A good deal of this story is taken up with a description of the content of a local newspaper. Why do you think the writer has done this?*

As can be seen, the questions made a variety of reading demands on students. Some asked them to find straightforward information from the text (for example, the first part of question 1). Some asked for a degree of interpretation or reading between the lines (for example, question 3). Others asked for a comment on formal aspects of the story (for example, question 6 on structure). Others invited students to respond personally (for example, question 4). Others asked students to read “against” the text in a critical way (for example, question 2 on point of view or perspective).

Following this activity, a focus group of six students (one from each group) met and they were asked what they had learnt and thought about the discussion. All students said they found the discussion helpful and gave the following reasons:

- The teachers described their answers in detail and made the questions sound easy to answer and it gave them ideas to think about.
- The teachers related the story to something they knew or experienced which helped because some of the things were everyday things.
- They found if you discuss with your friends you get more ideas and opinions when you get stuck.
- It is not so pressured as when discussing with a teacher.
- The teachers showed them some strategies that they could use to discuss questions and get better answers and this doesn't have to be formal.

Teacher 2 wrote in her report: “The activity was certainly fun and entertaining for them, watching the HOD English and a senior dean pretending to be back in Yr 11!”

A week later, students responded to *On the Sidewalk Bleeding* by Evan Hunter (in English, set in the United States) using prompts designed by Teacher 2, who again read the story aloud. The prompts followed a similar pattern to those used for *The Geranium*. The class worked in groups of four to five and were observed by a colleague after Teacher 2 left the room.

The teacher-observer noted that groups were generally clear about their task. One student would read out the prompt questions and another would act as recorder. However, as the discussion progressed, she noted that in most groups the same person took over being reader, director and recorder! Generally two or three members in each group were doing the most work, but there was an overall sense of wanting to complete the task. At the end, those who had participated more seemed to show a sense of pride in what they had completed—“Look we finished, Miss.” Those students who were fully engaged also achieved more and had a sense of ownership of the answers.

The teacher-observer made the following points in relation to the questions:

- Some students did not like questions with multiple parts since this was too confusing.
- One group was unsure what was meant by “through whose eyes”.
- Another group was unsure of the meaning of “perception”.
- Some students understood “theme” and “message of the story” as the moral of the story.
- The two questions on structure and the word “link” (question 9) provoked discussion.
- Several groups changed their minds as to the author/main character being male or female (the author was female but content would suggest the character was male).
- Some groups struggled finding words that showed how the author felt about the characters or events.

Three weeks later, the class was given a text in English but with Pacific Island/Māori settings/characters entitled *I Am Brave for Tattooing* by J.D. Copp and Faafouina I. Pula. Teacher 2 read the story aloud and the students this time were asked to generate a set of questions in their groups that could be asked about this story. A selection of 10 questions were then given back to each group to respond to:

1. What were the main events in the story?
2. Why you think it was so important to Loa to get a tattoo?
3. What does getting a tattoo symbolise to you?
4. From whose point of view is the story being told?
5. How do you think the writer feels about tattooing?
6. Why do you think Loa’s father was against him getting a tattoo?
7. How do you feel about Loa’s decision to get a tattoo?
8. In the text the author uses a selection of past and present tenses. Why do you think he does this?
9. Why do you think the author used Samoan words in the story?
10. What issues or ideas do you think the authors were trying to get the readers to think about?

These questions in most ways mirrored the prompts the students had already worked with, except for those with a critical literacy orientation.

The groups came up with the following responses:

- All five groups stated the main event of the story was the boy getting a tattoo; three groups, however, added at least one other event that led up to his decision, that is, seeing another man getting a tattoo, discussing staying with Tina, his girlfriend, or talking to his parents.
- When asked why they thought it was important for Loa to get a tattoo, all groups mentioned it was because he either wanted to feel like a warrior, show he was brave and loyal or because he didn't want to leave Tina. Two groups added it was because he wanted to be a serving man *taulealea* for his family.
- The students thought getting a tattoo symbolised bravery, leadership, maturity; and honour and commitment to one's family or culture.
- All five groups could identify from whose point of view the story was being told.
- They felt the character in the story was brave, grown up and honoured his family by getting a tattoo.
- When asked why they thought the boy's father was against his son getting a tattoo, all groups thought it was because his father thought he was too young and that he might not handle the pain. Two groups added that his father might have caused shame on the family, if the boy could not handle it.
- The students were then asked how they felt about the boy getting a tattoo. Two groups said they all believed it was a good decision because it proved people wrong and he got to stay with Tina his girlfriend, it enabled him to keep the family traditions or it showed he was brave because he could go through it.
- The students struggled to identify why the author used past and present tense in the story. No group indicated that it was to show English was not his first language. Most connected it to an idea that it was because it was based around an old Samoan tradition.
- They all recognised that some Samoan words were used in the text to indicate it was based in Samoa and around Samoan people and culture.
- The final question asked the students to identify some issues or ideas the text made them think about. Two groups said it made them think about strength and commitment to family or culture, another two said young people making the right decisions and one group focused on plot only.

Another aspect of the text/context relationship is the sense of texts being “situated”, as being in complex ways, products of a particular time and place.

Teacher 3, working with a Year 13 class in 2008, wanted her students to understand that social (cultural) and historical (time periods) contexts have an effect on texts. This class started as a group made up of eight Māori, one Argentinian, one Samoan/Māori and four New Zealand Pākehā, though the composition changed somewhat with arrivals and departures during the year. The class was affectionately known as the “United Nations” of the school. Most of the class had gained 11 or more credits in Level 2 English—gaining a mixture of both unit and achievement standards. Four had gained fewer than 10, but it was decided that they would be better off in this course than repeating Level 2. Four gained literacy in te reo. Seven of the class came from an alternative Level 2 programme.

Project-related interventions by Teacher 3 were in the context of a new Year 13 “English—Popular Culture” option she had developed. It was a course designed for students who were not going on to tertiary study in English, but who wished to continue some form of English study. She had planned for discussion to be a key focus of the year, and from this foundation intended to build written work. As a participant in the Te Kotahitanga project, Teacher 3 had been focusing on co-operative learning activities and working from students’ prior knowledge—both cultural and social. Her plan was to emphasise this prior knowledge when looking at cultural perspectives on a major theme in the course—intervening in human life.

The course was designed to be “high interest”. The texts were largely visual, but written texts such as poetry, song lyrics and extended magazine articles also figured. The course was organised thematically—with a critical literacy approach being used in Term 2 (see below) when the theme was “Technology—playing God or just playing?” The focus was on medical intervention to prolong human life. Texts included: *Frankenstein* (film and novel extracts), *The Island* (film), “*Te Manawa*” (short story), scientific journal and magazine articles on xenotransplantation and *Pig Heart Boy* (novel).

Teacher 3’s use of an “historical text”, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, was of particular pertinence to this objective. Before students studied the text, she offered the class three discussion statements:

1. Man should never play at being God.
2. Medical and scientific experimentation for ways of prolonging life are the only way to a better life for mankind.
3. Anything can be justified if it eventuates in prolonging human life.

The class answered these using a collaborative activity, where each group discussed and commented on the statement and the final group summarised all the groups’ responses. Their summaries were:

1. We could do more harm than good—but people have the right to do whatever they want with their body after they die—mankind will never live up to the expectations of God.
2. We were all doing fine before all these experiments came along. What about those who have a religious belief opposing this?
3. No (unanimous)—what about the consequences?

Before engaging in a close viewing of the 1994 film version of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, students received background information to the life of Mary Shelley, enabling the students to see the way in which an author’s life can be reflected in their work. The key ideas of “man playing God” and “man’s attempts to prolong and create life” were introduced. Extracts from Shelley’s novel were analysed using a critical literacy approach to questioning (see below) with the following questioning prompts:

Mary Shelley: *Frankenstein*. Chapter 4: Critical literacy questions

1. Who is speaking? Who is he speaking to? What do you think is the speaker's purpose? What method of narration is being used? What narrative structure is being used?
2. What are the main ideas or themes explored by the writer in this passage? How might these ideas have been influenced by what we know about the actual life of Mary Shelley?
3. How does the speaker justify his ideas or point of view?
4. How do you think the audience (readers) in 1818 might have viewed this justification?

The students discussed these questions in pairs or threes and then completed their own written response to the questions. All students were able to identify that the text was written using the first person narrative using flashbacks. Victor's purpose in telling his version of the events was also identified: "He's telling **his** story" (Student A). This was taken to mean *his* version of the story, as opposed to the creature's, or any of the other characters whose version of events and the purpose behind them would have been at variance with Victor's.

Students were clearly interested in biographical material related to Mary Shelley. Typical responses to question 2 included:

The main ideas explored by the writer are death and creating life or defying death, these ideas may have been influenced by Mary Shelley's life because she went through so much tragedy at such a young age e.g. her children dying, her husband dying. (Student B)

That Frankenstein created life from only the best body parts and it was a disaster. She had a dream about this in real life. Her family had died. (Student C)

The main idea is about creating life. She had lost her kid and her husband. I guess she thought about it a lot. (Student A)

The third question proved a little more difficult. Some students identified phrases such as the expansion of scientific knowledge as Victor's justification; that is, "the acquirement of knowledge" (Student B). A number identified the metaphor of the journey that Victor was "travelling" that needed to reach a conclusion. However, the archaic language and complex sentence structure tended to be wrongly identified as an answer for this question: "The text written in 1818 uses obsolete language 'nay' 'charnel houses' compared to the language of today which is like short-cuts" (Student C).

Getting into the mind of a 19th century audience proved challenging. The class had had some discussion about what the religious beliefs of the time would have been. None of them, however, had read the novel before, though most of them had seen at least one version of the film. The majority of them had no idea that the novel was written so long ago and were surprised by this. A number of them commented on the grotesqueness of the story; for example, "That's just gross Miss ... how did she think of that ... she must've been a freak" (Student D). Student D felt that if he felt like that now, people back then must have felt the same.

Teacher 4 also wanted her students to understand that the time and place of birth in the world can affect a point of view, a belief and behaviour. She began 2008 with 18 Year 13 students who

chose English because (unlike Teacher 3's students) they wanted to pursue it at university. The cultural makeup was, originally, New Zealand European, Korean, Chinese, Middle Eastern, South African, English and Indian. However, by the end of Term 1, the class had "settled" at only 10 students with the following cultural/linguistic backgrounds: NZ European (50 percent); Korean (30 percent); Chinese (10 percent); and Middle Eastern (10 percent).

Teacher 4's knowledge of their backgrounds affected her choice of reading/viewing material in a large way, since she believed that students progress better when they relate to texts chosen or they have a reason to look at the text and relate it back to themselves to highlight differences/similarities. She wanted them to look at themselves, who they are and where they fitted in the world, so chose texts from settings that differed from New Zealand. She also wanted them to question the world and why people do what they do—how people can be influenced by the surroundings they find themselves in (some were children of immigrant parents).

In her management of classroom interaction, Teacher 4 used a variety of group configurations such as:

- social (students choose their seating and grouping)
- interest (students go to the area that interests them)
- ability (students get a task according to what they can do)
- cross-group languages (a mix of language ability, particularly with ESOL students)
- languages different from English (so that students can more successfully discuss a concept).

The teacher made a practice of explaining the purpose of the grouping and the expected outcome. She played with the choice and design of learning activities and processes continuously and got some surprises when she invited students to ask *themselves* the questions. This particular group was assessment "mindful" rather than assessment "driven", so Teacher 4 sometimes invited students to plan the learning pathway with her.

In the first part of the year, the class engaged in a study of the novel *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini (2003). The novel includes the rape of a boy in Afghanistan. It is written in the first person, as the adult recounting his childhood. The author is Afghani but was brought up mainly in the United States. The voice of the child who was raped is absent from the story (a minority culture in Afghanistan). Teacher 4 chose *The Kite Runner* because she wanted to prompt these students to think about culturally different attitudes, values and beliefs, and how the difference can affect an entire life. With the widening of their cultural knowledge, she was hoping that a behavioural attitude would develop: that is, an understanding of different behaviours in other cultures and a curiosity for seeking further knowledge about these cultures; ultimately a value placed on different cultures as well as their own. At the same time, she knew the publicity about the rape scene in this text might raise some issues. Because this text was written from a male perspective, she followed it with a female narrative viewpoint, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, by the same author.

The students read *The Kite Runner* very quickly and engaged in interesting discussions on cultural clashes because some of them were experiencing differences within their own families. For example, a Middle Eastern family still expected their daughter (a student in the class) to marry someone of the same culture. She was not opposed to this, but did want to explore this as a cultural issue and briefly looked at how marriages of different cultures survive. These differences did not appear to present difficulties, but were acknowledged as part and parcel of being the son or daughter of immigrant parents. It was also accepted by these students that, when their parents did not speak English fluently, they relied on their children to translate in any given situation.

A group task was to list possible clashes for young people in New Zealand when parents were from a different country. The task was meant to distance themselves from their own differences, but inevitably, because the group was small, the personal information was raised, but never written down. The task was set originally as a lead in to thinking about cultures other than their own—knowing that they were going to be looking at a text based on a Middle-Eastern culture and containing ideas that they were unaware of. This led the class into writing a reflective piece entitled “Who Am I?” which had to encompass students’ values and beliefs.

In relation to having students develop an understanding that the time and place of birth in the world can affect a point of view, a belief and behaviour, students were set two tasks which were also designed to enable them to appreciate thematic links across texts.

The first of these had them develop oral presentations looking at a theme across texts by engaging in the following activity sequence:

1. Brainstorm “love” across texts (teacher driven).
2. Brainstorm themes they might want to explore across texts.
3. Divide into interest groups to take one theme and explore further across texts. Record a framework on paper. Report back (oral practice).
4. Divide again into pairs (interest only) and begin to look at what interests each student.
5. Begin individual work—having chosen a theme and characters/story aspects which demonstrate theme across texts.

Student presentations were recorded on camcorder and were used for the NCEA Level 3 internal assessment “Deliver an oral presentation”. According to Teacher 4, students generally did well on these presentations because the task helped them understand each text better and they worked on essay writing (practice for external assessments) more or less simultaneously. Two students opted to present presentations using a dramatic role-play. The remaining students chose to present seminars and included questioning skills that they had learnt and practised when completing a chapter grid activity. In terms of results, two students presented at excellence level, two at merit and five at achieved (the other student was absent through illness).

The second task was to write a report based on an inquiry about texts that students had chosen and which was to be based on a number of texts (using different genres). The reports related to the NCEA achievement standard, “Complete independent research on a language or literature topic

and present conclusions in writing” (English 3.7). According to Teacher 4, these reports made interesting reading and their chosen topics often included cultural aspects, prompted by the texts chosen at the beginning of the year. The nature of each report was influenced by the cluster of texts chosen for research purposes. For example, a Chinese student chose the theme that “People are influenced by changes in their current circumstances (time, society, relationships, setting, etc.)”, choosing a range of texts including *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Her research questions were:

1. To what extent are people influenced by changes in their current circumstances?
2. How do people cope with the changes in their current circumstances?
3. What do the changes in current circumstances of each text reveal about the people involved?

This student had received a grade of excellence for her oral presentation on the rebelliousness of women (using Mariam from *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and Desdemona and Emilia from *Othello*). With two other students she gained excellence for her research assignment. Three other students gained merit and two gained achieved.

The constructedness of text

In differing ways, all secondary teacher-researchers in this project were keen to draw on critical literacy approaches to literary study by helping their students to understand that texts offer “versions” of reality and use language to position readers to view reality in some ways and not in others.

Teacher 1, working with a multicultural, mostly Pasifika, Year 10 class in 2007 wanted his students to understand that texts aim to influence audiences in certain ways. In the course of a novel study based around *Gangsta Rap* (Zephaniah, 2004), he introduced critical literacy to his students in relation to the close viewing of hip hop music videos. Students were required to watch two teacher-selected groups of videos, offering broadly contrasting treatments. For each video, students were asked three questions: “How are men portrayed?” “How are women portrayed?” and “Who has the power?” Teacher 1 initially modelled ways of addressing these questions. The class then addressed a set of discussion prompts:

- Why are these videos created?
- Who would be most likely to view these videos?
- Who benefits from these videos?
- What kind of person created the videos?

In addition, they were asked to consider such issues as the possible effects of the image making in these videos on young people’s attitudes to females.

This lesson was observed by a university-based researcher who noted the high degree of engagement of students with the content of the lesson. At one point, the teacher was leading the class in a discussion of a video by international hip hop artist MIMS, “This is Why I’m Hot”. In writing up his observation, the researcher writes:

But it is a cultural world that they know very well and, as they make clear, they have opinions about. ‘How are men portrayed?’ There are a number of responses which come thick and fast and which are typically fed-back by Teacher 1, so that for an observer it can be hard to tell who the various comments and contributions actually belong to. ‘Acting staunch.’ ‘Using hand movements.’ ‘Driving cars.’ ‘Wearing jewelry.’ ‘Looking gangsta.’ ‘Nice glasses.’ ‘Expensive clothing.’ Teacher 1 uses a number of cueing questions, ‘Are they covered up?’ (Indeed, they are.) How are women portrayed? ‘Naughty.’ ‘Singlets.’ ‘Low-cut tops.’ Which gender has the power? There are a lot of comments, virtually in unison, confirming that indeed the men in this video do appear to hold the power.

Reflective comments on this lesson made subsequently by the class confirmed their involvement. Comments invariably testified to the high interest of the lesson and the approach. One student wrote:

Well that lesson was cool. I learnt the word portrayed and we had to seek [various portrayals] in video clips who out of women and men . . . It was also cool how this topic of hip-hop we all related to. When I did that activity I suddenly thought Oh I’ve [al]ready seen this, but when we had to find out who was in charge, I really understood the clip . . . I didn’t really know if women can be in charge, but I found out when we analysed.

In both 2007 and 2008, **Teacher 4** wanted her students to understand that texts offer “versions of reality” that can be contested and to be able to identify ways in which texts construct these “versions of reality”. In the context of her fairy tale unit with her Year 9 class, she introduced the notion of the constructedness of texts by building on the class’s interest in stereotypes. She began by having the class brainstorm a “typical” Prince Charming and his princess. Students came up with a set of qualities for each, which they identified as conforming broadly with the “prince” and “princess” stereotype (see Table 9).

Table 9 “Prince” and “princess” stereotypes

| Princes | Princesses |
|--|---|
| Are always good looking | Are always slim and beautiful |
| Usually tall, dark, handsome and have a deep clear voice | Usually have long hair with fair or tanned skin |
| Are always clean | Also always clean |
| Have accessories (horse) | Own nothing of their own |
| Are always charming | Know how to behave (demure) |
| Generally come from somewhere else | Are often victims in their own land |
| Have plenty of money | Money is never mentioned or she is poor, or has been disinherited |
| Eat roasts and/or other foods that cost heaps | Are never seen to eat anything |

In the follow-up discussion about appearance, there was lively discussion about cultural diversity and looks (for example, “Why should they be blonde and blue-eyed? Or only have white skin?”). Students discussed cultural representations in fairy tales, looking at ways in which characteristics of their own cultural groupings were present or absent.

The next activity was to list all the behaviours that princes and princesses supposedly engage in (Table 10).

Table 10 “Princely” and “princessly” behaviour

| Princes | Princesses |
|--|---|
| Always save the princess | Always need saving |
| Have to fight something terrible to prove bravery or worth | Fall in love with his bravery and him as a result |
| Easily run to mum/dad or someone with money | Love and worship their husband and let them be the boss |
| Usually have to kiss the princess | The kiss is the magical moment |

Having established their stereotypes, students were in a position to complete a compare-and-contrast chart, comparing Fiona and Shrek, two characters from *Shrek*, with the stereotype. This was done as a group activity (Table 11).

Table 11 Compare and contrast activity based on *Shrek*

| Shrek | Fiona |
|---|---|
| He is ugly from the start and an ogre | She is beautiful but changes at night to look like Shrek (an ogre) |
| He is cheerful and sad at times, so shows emotions | Fiona is fearless and quite independent—she does karate |
| He is brave but doesn’t think about it | She burps |
| He is not very charming—he throws Fiona over his shoulder when he “rescues” her | She eats almost anything—the water rat and enjoys it |
| He lives in a swamp and loves it—he wants to protect his home | She falls in love with Shrek but doesn’t admit it at first |
| He doesn’t actually kill anyone | Has a nice voice, but can’t sing that well |
| He takes things in and thinks about it, then gives an answer | She loves her husband (Shrek) but still asks him to do things and bosses him around a lot |

As a result of this activity, it was clear that students had become acutely aware of what a literary stereotype is, even though they had done this in the context of a study of a popular genre. In addition, through the study of *Shrek*, students were sensitised to potential forms which *divergence*

from a stereotype might take. That is, they had a heightened awareness of the *constructedness* of “princelike” and “princesslike” behaviour.

The following year, with her Year 13 class, **Teacher 4** had each student complete a time-line based on *The Kite Runner* (**Author, year**). However, to check the facticity of the novel, students compared their timelines with historical facts (gleaned from texts read, podcasts heard and downloaded historical facts from a BBC Internet site on Afghanistan). Students discussed among themselves when comparing historical facts and timelines, using the exercise to check with each other whether the novel kept to the historical facts or not. The purpose of this was for students to place the novel in its historical and social context and to highlight its constructedness.

To develop students’ understanding of how texts construct their versions of reality through language, students completed “chapter grids” (which included an emphasis on narrative point of view). For the first six chapters of *The Kite Runner*, Teacher 4 modelled the process of reading/questioning/analysis, asking students questions to develop critical thinking skills, and using the “chapter grid” headings (plot/characters, themes, narrative/structure, language/vocabulary, tone and mood) to prompt thinking and discussion. This modelling enabled students to then continue with the grid independently or in pairs, with individuals or pairs taking responsibility (jigsaw fashion) with designated chapters (see Table 12 for an example). Once the grid was complete, it was put on the school intranet for all students to share.

Table 12 “Grid” for Chapter 19 of *The Kite Runner*

| Plot/characters | Themes | Narrative/structure | Language | Tone and mood |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| <p>Amir is travelling to Afghanistan. New minor characters are introduced such as Farid, Wahid and Wahid’s family. Farid has a negative attitude towards Amir because he initially thinks that Amir is in Afghanistan for monetary reasons. However he later apologizes for his attitude after he learns that Amir is in Afghanistan to find Sohrab.</p> <p>Amir does not want to hide the truth. Not any more. “I too wanted to protect Baba’s secret. But there had been enough lies already.”</p> <p>P. 221 Amir is imagining Hassan, tied and being shot / he is dreaming?</p> | <p>Appearance shouldn’t determine what a person is. One can be a completely different person from what he/she looks or seems like.</p> <p>P. 221 – the past permeates our present.</p> | <p>Amir’s 1st person narrative.</p> <p>Also in the past tense.</p> <p>Dialogue important with Farid – note Farid’s attitude towards Amir</p> <p>“You’ve always been a tourist here, you just didn’t know it.”</p> <p>P. 214-215</p> <p>Italic insert from the past. Present tense but imagination. Nightmarish. Amir is 2 people (an observer and also the killer).</p> | <p>Begins with short sentences to create tension. Some dialogue with Farid, the driver.</p> <p>Many Afghan words/vocab—places the reader in the context and environment.</p> <p>Description of Farid via Rahim to Amir— gives Farid validation as a “good Afghani”.</p> <p>Repetition p. 213, “I was afraid I’d change my mind. Was afraid I’d deliberate, ruminate, agonise, rationalise, and talk myself into not going...” And rhyming, rhythm here. All meant to emphasise the process he was going through.</p> <p>p. 221. In italics to show the difference.</p> <p>Present tense, short sentences. Repetition of former phrase “for you a thousand times over”.</p> | <p>Farid contemptuous of Amir.</p> <p>(He “snickered”. “It’s not fancy like American medicine...”)</p> <p>Emphasise Amir’s fears and anxieties.</p> <p>Memories/ nightmares mind games.</p> <p>Amir sees himself as Hassan’s killer.</p> |

Teacher 2, working in 2008 with her mainly Pasifika Year 11 English class, also wanted students to appreciate that texts position readers/viewers to see things in a particular way. In order to see how her students would manage a reading task using a critical literacy approach, she gave 17 of her students the critical literacy pretest (Appendix D), developed by Moumou (2004) in order to establish their:

- knowledge of basic linguistic and literary features
- critical awareness of sociocultural context of texts

- ability to relate text to personal experience
- general understanding of text.

The first question, essentially a low-level comprehension question, asked students to write three sentences related to events described in the poem. Thirteen students managed to state three events, two students two events and two students only one event.

The second question, aimed at testing interpretive skills, asked students to describe how the speaker in the poem felt about his grandmother and give an example from the poem to back this up. Four students suggested that the writer had a negative experience and gave an example as supporting evidence. The remaining students focused only on how loving and kind she was, because she gave him treats. Overall, the response did not do justice to the complex mix of feelings encapsulated in the poem. In respect of the straightforward figure-of-speech identification questions, all but one student could distinguish a simile from a metaphor.

The last three questions had a critical literacy focus, testing whether students can identify a position the writer is inviting them to take and perhaps resist this invitation. When asked what opinion of grandmothers was the poem trying to get them to believe in, 12 said it was to tell them grandmothers were loving and caring and spoil their grandchildren and four argued that they were presented as grumpy or mean. The majority of students felt free to resist the poem's portrayal of grandmothers, with 16 disagreeing that all grandmothers were like this and two agreeing. They believed that grandmothers differed from the one in the poem, either because they looked different, that is, they "had her real teeth", or they did not spoil them with food as much as the writer's grandmother or give them sloppy kisses.

Generally, the diagnostic test results indicated that students could identify basic linguistic features, were limited in their critical awareness of other young people's experiences, but could easily identify a personal experience they could relate to in the text. In terms of textual understanding, they could identify factual aspects, but were limited in being able to read between or beyond the lines. Depths of thinking and critical awareness were highlighted as areas of weakness in their reading of this text.

As has already been discussed in this report, these students were exposed to questions with a critical literacy edge during the "Responding to literary text" component of their unit "For the love of reading". It has been noted that when they came to devise their own discussion prompts, these lacked a critical literacy edge.

Nineteen students sat a close reading postintervention test on a New Zealand short story "Kaha" loosely modelled on the Moumou pretest. Generally, the second test results confirmed that most student participants were able to successfully identify factual aspects and linguistic features in a text. Overall, the students did much better this time at interpreting the character's experiences, although this text may have been slightly easier for the students to understand and it was not a poem. Two students, however, were able to read between the lines. The students' use of supporting evidence to back up their thoughts was stronger and more relevant in the post-test. In

the preintervention diagnostic test, as mentioned above, students were somewhat weak in their depth of thinking and critical awareness and this still seemed to be the case despite the interventions. Students were able to identify clearly the view on dogs the writer was encouraging them to adopt and were prepared to contest this. However, the question deliberately asked them to do this, and it is hard to know if they would have done so without this prompt. There was little evidence that they were able to discuss *how* an author manipulates a reader's meaning making through particular devices, but then this absence may be a result of the way the questions were worded.

Teacher 3, working (as described above) with her Year 13 "United Nations" class in her new 13 English class on popular literature wanted students to identify the ways in which texts construct (represent) different viewpoints on topics, to be aware that language is not a neutral medium and that the way language is used affects the way in which something is seen, for example, scientific or technological intervention into human life and discrimination, and to be sensitive to their own and others' value judgements and bias.

During Term 1 of 2008, she introduced her class to the idea that different versions of reality (or the truth) are often presented via popular media. She emphasised that texts based in "popular culture" cannot be relied upon to be telling the "same truths". The vehicle for this was the story of Rubin Carter, the African American, world heavyweight contender of the 1960s. Rubin's story was immortalised by the Bob Dylan song "The Hurricane" and more recently by the popularity of a film version carrying the same name. Both of these texts, as well as Rubin Carter's "assisted" autobiography, use powerful language to persuade the viewer/listener/reader that Rubin was an innocent victim of a racist justice system. Here was a man, a successful "black man", wronged by the system. This view is clearly articulated in the words of Dylan's song:

The judge made Rubin's witnesses drunkards from the slums
To the white folks who watched he was a revolutionary bum
And to the black folks he was just a crazy nigger.
No one doubted that he pulled the trigger.
And though they could not produce the gun,
The D.A. said he was the one who did the deed
And the all-white jury agreed.

and

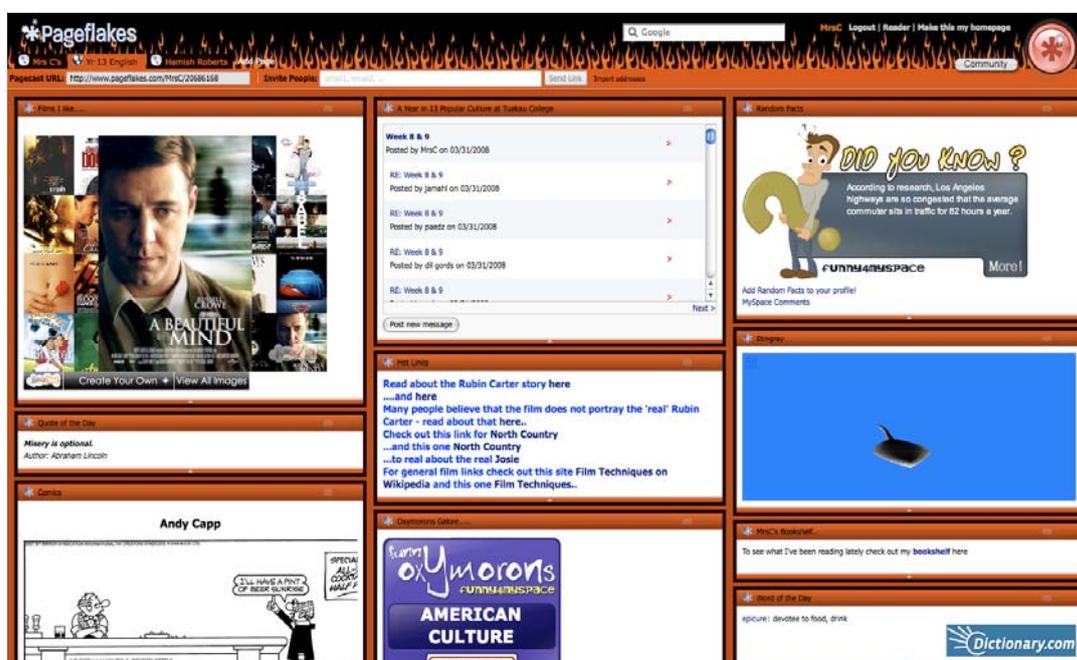
And the newspapers, they all went along for the ride.
How can the life of such a man
Be in the palm of some fool's hand?
To see him obviously framed
Couldn't help but make me feel ashamed to live in a land
Where justice is a game.

The class was strongly swayed by the writer's use of the words—*fool* and *framed* to describe the justice system. They clearly identified the phrases *crazy nigger*, *revolutionary bum* and *all-white*

jury as powerfully loaded words. They were unanimous in their belief that Rubin had been framed and that the system was wrong.

Building on her 2007 experimentation with social networking Web 2.0 applications for the English classroom (discussed above), Teacher 3 was keen to use a new application, Pageflakes, with this group. Pageflakes is an application where the author can “build” a page that “aggregates” or collects “feeds” that reflect his/her interests or the purpose that he/she is building the page for. The page that she built for her Year 13 class (Figure 15)²¹ included feeds that reflected the theme of popular culture: film and cartoons; interesting aspects of language (including fun links to online language games); daily quotations and links to the literature that we would be studying. For Teacher 3, Pageflakes as a Web 2.0 tool reflected both the nature of the course—popular culture—and her interest in the use of Web 2.0 applications as classroom tools.

Figure 15 Year 13 popular culture Pageflake

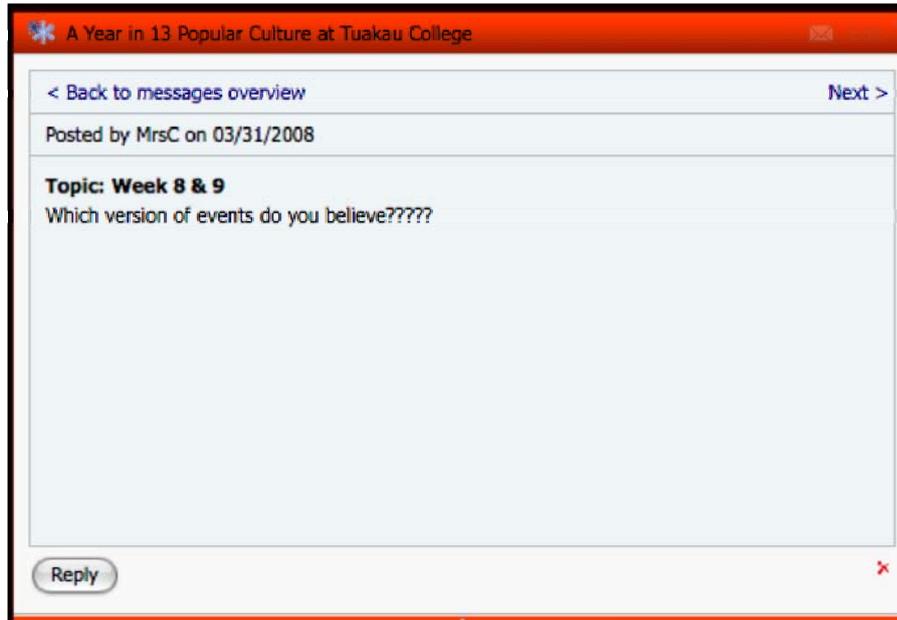


Despite problems with computer access and the unsuitability of two of the school’s computer labs, Teacher 3 persevered with this activity for the first term. However, the class’s comments regarding “Hurricane” Carter and his innocence (or guilt) were clearly articulated, with such Pageflake comments as “the hurricanes the man!!!!!!” and “I liked the film ‘The Hurricane’ it was an interesting movie and the story line was awesome.” Students were then introduced to two websites that show a very different version of “reality”. The first was entitled “The top ten myths

²¹ <http://www.pageflakes.com/MrsC/20686168>

about Rubin Carter”.²² The second allowed viewers to ride along the route that Rubin and his friends supposedly took on the fatal night.²³

Figure 16 **Which version of events?**



The class discussed these sites and the information found on them as they worked through an activity where they were to identify 10 “facts” that were *not* presented in the movie or were different from what they had been presented in the movie. The final task is posted above (Figure 16). In subsequent Pageflake postings, students were clearly influenced by these new “versions” of events: “He’s guiltyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy”; “I think he’s guilty ... his past and the way he lived (which we were not told about in the film) was of a wild nature, and that, one of a killer.” While the first term’s focus was the theme of discrimination—the study of the story of Rubin “Hurricane” Carter—the way in which the differing versions of his “reality” were presented created a springboard for further discussions around the issue of what we as viewers perceive to be true. Somewhat disillusioned, one student remarked:

Bob Dylan, he’s a ... like ... a legend, like. I always wondered what that song was about ... if he said he didn’t do it. I’d believe him.

The above comment was made in discussion after the class had looked at sites that contested the version of the story in Dylan’s lyrics.²⁴

²² <http://members.shaw.ca/cartermyths/>

²³ <http://www.graphicwitness.com/carter/>

²⁴ One website showed that Dylan stopped performing the song in the 1970s.

The Term 1 focus on the constructedness of meaning provided a springboard for Term 2's theme of the effect of technology in our lives, in particular the growing effect of technology in the prolonging of life or in transforming life in some way. The topic was launched with a pre-study, self-assessment questionnaire to ascertain the class's views on organ donation and cross-species genetic modification. Eleven students completed the survey, four Pākehā, one Argentinian and six Māori. Many of the students wanted more information in the questions regarding donating organs and using body parts to save a family member. Statements such as "it would depend on which body part" and "which brother" and "it would depend on how old they were" were included in a number of the responses. Two of the non-Māori students were vociferous in their support of donating organs to family members: "it's your family man!" (Student E) and "I reckon they'd do it for me" (Student F).

The questions regarding receiving a body part from an animal and cloning displayed the greatest divergence in responses between the Māori and non-Māori students. Five of the six Māori students clearly stated that they would not accept a body part from an animal, stating:

That's just wrong, Miss. (Student D)

... some things are just not normal. (Student G)

We have no idea what we'd be doing ... we could be stuffing things up for the future ... things don't always go according to plan (like Frankenstein)—not everyone wants to be Wolverine. (Student H)

Many of the students, regardless of race, felt that engaging in scientific experimentation to extend life was simply wrong:

[W]hen you're time is up, it's up ... make way for those being born before we run out of space. (Student F)

[W]e could do more harm than good. (Student C)

The close textual study started with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (see above). A succession of other texts followed, aimed at scaffolding students in a critical literacy approach to reading literary and nonliterary texts. The film *The Island* introduced the class to the idea of cloning to order and the commercial possibilities and corruptions that could develop from such a practice. The question "Does the end result of anything justify the way you get there?" led to a number of interesting reflections:

No, because if you stick to the way things are supposed to be, like it's OK but if you play dirty then it may come back and tap you on the shoulder. (Student A)

As long as you stick to your morals and don't break the law etc. (Student C)

If you believed that then you could justify doing anything. (Student J)

Interestingly, these girls believed that there was a fine line between what is ethical and what is not. A number of the boys had quite different points of view:

If it's good for you then do it. (Student K)

Depends if you can get away with it ... if you can then it's all good. (Student E)

The effects of organ donation were then investigated using two short texts, "Te Manawa", a short story by Briar Grace-Smith (**year**), and "Cellular Memory", a scientific journal article by Lesley Takeuchi (**year**). The following question prompts designed by Teacher 3 typify the approach taken with both texts to investigate the way in which language is used:

Leslie A. Takeuchi: Cellular memory in organ transplants

Questions with a critical literacy focus:

1. In one sentence, write down the main idea that Takeuchi is introducing in this article.
2. In your view, what is the main way that Takeuchi goes about convincing you that her idea has merit.
3. Come up with your own meaning for the word "sensational" as used to describe a news report. Identify details in this article that you consider to be "sensational".
4. Because Takeuchi wants her readers to take her seriously, she has taken care to establish her authority as a writer. How has she done this?
5. Come up with some reasons why a reader might distrust this article.
6. Visit the website for the Journal of Near-Death Studies at: <http://www.iands.org/pubs/jnds/>. How do you feel about this article after visiting this website?

The Takeuchi article sparked lively discussion and in the postclass survey on texts studied, nine of the 13 students identified this article as the most interesting text they had read in the unit. Reasons for this included:

It was interesting to read about other people's experiences and it made me think about whether to believe it or not. (Student C)

It showed some kind of proof that cellular memory can happen through a heart transplant. (Student A)

They were supposed to be real stories so that made me like them. (Student L)

Despite the high level of engagement, however, none of the group attempted the final question which had been set as an out-of-class task.

In relation to the questions with a predominantly critical literacy focus, students clearly saw the writer's use of "evidence" and in particular "scientific evidence" as the reason why we would believe the author. They also clearly identified what they thought was sensational in the article, citing "the amazing findings and evidence" and "the examples". However, one sceptic stated, "it almost seems believable". The students were swayed by the qualifications of the writer and the fact that there was "1st person evidence", and the fact that the writer provided examples of other articles that she had written. The discussion around question 5 led to the following reasons why the article might not be trusted:

That the evidence was ‘small scale’;

That they could be purely coincidental;

That they were too unbelievable to be true, in particular the chicken nugget anecdote;

They wanted more proof before they would believe it: ‘I mean no one puts chicken nuggets in their pockets.’ (Student C)

The second text, “Te Manawa”, by Briar Grace-Smith (**year**) and a recent New Zealand short story, also contained the idea of cellular memory. The main character, a Māori female, is a recipient of a heart transplant from a Samoan female donor and takes on some of the qualities of Mele, the female donor. Two questions had a particularly critical literacy emphasis:

This story uses the technique of the roving third person narrator. That means that we are offered different perspectives on the action at different times from the points of view of different characters. On p. 22 we get Spencer’s point of view of the surgeon who removes Mele’s heart. Notice carefully the way Spencer describes the surgeon. How does the language Spencer uses tell us what his attitude to the surgeon is?

On p. 24 we get a description of a scene where ‘the woman’s’ brother Tem offers a boar’s heart to a doctor for possible use as an organ for transplant. Why does he do this? On the basis of careful reading, what can you deduce about: a. the doctor’s attitude to Tem; b. the doctor’s attitude to using a pig’s heart in a human patient? What do you make of the doctor’s statement: ‘I’m talking science here.’ In what way does this tell us something about how the author of the story is encouraging us to think about this sort of doctor?

The students were also able to articulate the fact that Spencer felt that the surgeon treated his dead wife’s body insensitively:

He thinks the surgeon’s ruff [sic] and doesn’t care. (Student A)

The surgeon pulled the heart out of her chest like he was pulling something out of a car ... sounds bad. (Student L)

He (the surgeon) didn’t even care that it’s his wife. (Student M)

Both Tem and his offer of the boar’s heart were viewed as ridiculed by the doctor. This is clearly identified in the following responses:

The doctor thinks Tem is nuts and laughs at him. He’s stuck up and thinks he’s better than everyone else. He doesn’t come across very well. (Student C)

The doctor made it seem that Tem was dumb instead of being sympathetic to him for wanting to help his sister ... he thought it was funny. (Student A)

He (the doctor) is arrogant ... he doesn’t think about their feelings. (Student H)

Though one student took a different meaning from the passage:

The doctor's statement is the right one I think as it reinforced the fact that science has to be proven before medical theories can be used on humans. (Student M)²⁵

This text was very popular, particularly with Māori students in the class. "That's cool miss ... are there more like that ... you know with stories about our stuff in them" (Student D) . A positive aspect was that Student D took the short story collection to the Year 13 common room to read another story.

The final text studied was the novel *Pig-heart Boy* by Malorie Blackman (1997) which deals with the issue of xenotransplantation (cross-species). For many in the class there was "no way" that they would ever get a body part from another creature. A set of questions similar to those used with the shorter texts were discussed in small groups, responses shared with the class and a summary of discussion points made by each group collaboratively. This group of questions were handled the least well by the class, with some commenting negatively on the number of questions within questions. The last two questions were examples of this type of question:

- Is the question "Don't you think you're behaving like Dr Frankenstein and creating monsters?" about ends or means? How do you think this questioner wants people to think of Dr Bryce? Do you think the question was justified? Do you think Malorie Blackman would view Dr Bryce as like Dr Frankenstein? Give reasons for your responses.
- In the course of this book, readers are introduced to the views and actions of people and groups who believe that Cameron's operation should not have happened and that Dr Bryce's work was unethical. Choose one group or person and study the way the author Malorie Blackman represents them in the novel: How do these people act? What words do they say? Would you say that these people are presented sympathetically or unsympathetically? Overall, would you regard the way these people are represented as balanced or unbalanced?

In relation to these questions, all of the groups felt that the journalist's comparison of Dr Bryce to Frankenstein was unjustifiable and that the journalist was effectively "making Cameron [the recipient] seem like the monster":

The questioner wants people to think Dr Bryce is a mad doctor obsessed with doing something no-one else has done. That he really doesn't care about others ... he does care ... he's not like trying to cheat death like Frankenstein was, he's trying to extend a young boy's life (Student A, Student G, Student H)

No group believed that the author saw Dr Bryce as a Frankenstein figure but did not provide any evidence for this. In response to the last question, two groups focused on how Cameron was presented to the reader. They saw him as disagreeing with everyone's view of Dr Bryce and with the view that "pigs' hearts don't belong in humans", both quoting the phrase, "No, I wouldn't be here now". They also noted that Cameron is presented as sharp and quick and that, because he benefits the most from the operation, he has an unbalanced view.

²⁵ Interestingly the student concerned lives with a serious medical condition and so has a totally different "take" on medical intervention.

In Term 3, Teacher 3 decided to find out whether the students had a firm understanding of what was meant by a critical literacy approach to textual study. From a group of texts related to the theme of discrimination, Teacher 3 asked students in groups to choose one text and to write a series of questions, using the ones used in class as a model. The questions were to focus on the way in which language was used in the texts to create meaning. The most popular texts chosen were “White Comedy” by Benjamin Zephaniah and “Telephone Conversation” by Wole Soyinka (see Appendix E).

The class did not find this task an easy one, despite having the models. Their feedback responses to the task mainly focused on the fact that the task was not part of the assessment that they were working on and they saw it as an “extra” that was taking up time that they could have been spending on the theme study! Overall, students found “White Comedy” an easier proposition. The following questions show the beginnings of an understanding of a critical literacy approach to a text:

- What do you think the poet is trying to make you think about by using “white”?
- How could Benjamin Zephaniah’s life experiences have influenced the content of his poem?
- When you read the title what did you expect the poem to be about? Why did you think this?
- What image is Benjamin Zephaniah trying to get across by using words like “waz” and “wid” and “de”? Who would you expect to use these words?
- Why has the poet replaced the word black with white? What is the effect of this?
- Who might be offended by this poem and why?

Questions related to “Telephone Conversation” were more general, though some did draw attention to relevant language usages:

- Whose point of view is this poem written from? What impression do we get of them?
- Why are only certain sentences in capitals? What effect does this create?
- What do you think about the comparison of skin colour or hair colour to chocolate? Why do you think that chocolate is used for the comparison?

What is missing from both sets of questions is the sense in which the texts offer readers a particular reading position on an issue; that is, they invite readers to see the world in particular ways.

Composing literary texts

As indicated above, a number of teachers wrote key learning objectives related to the composing of literary texts. However, in practice, writing tended to take second place to reading.

Where a critical literacy approach is brought to the reading of texts, writing logically becomes an extension of the reading process, where readers use writing to “read *against*” the text. Such an approach was adopted by Teacher 4 over two successive years of the project.

Teacher 4 wanted her students to develop narratives using a range of elements, to appreciate that the “same” story can have different “treatments” (depending on form, genre and mode) and to develop narratives based on a different point of view from the text. It will be recalled that in her work on fairy tales with her Year 9 class in 2007, she used the film *Shrek* as an example of ways in which cultural stereotypes can be subverted. In their crosscultural research on fairy tales, students developed an understanding of various narrative elements—plot, character, setting—and a sense of how these are culturally constructed and able to be deviated from.

The students were provided with the following task instructions as they began their work on their own fairy tales:

Write your own fairy tale but with a difference—it can be original, or based on what you know and then altered. You need to create a plan for this and over the next few days we are going to be looking at good writing techniques in class.

Students were familiar with the marking rubric (Table 13) after lessons in previous units of work on using technique and exploring point of view. The main purpose was to give students an idea to explore and develop, building on what they had already learnt about crafting and structure.

Table 13 **Poetic writing rubric**

| Achieved | Merit | Excellence |
|--|---|---|
| Expresses ideas with some detail when producing creative writing | Develops ideas with detail when producing creative writing | Develops ideas convincingly with detail in a piece of creative writing |
| Uses stylistic conventions appropriate to the audience and text type | Demonstrates confident control of stylistic conventions of the text type | Demonstrates understanding of stylistic conventions and uses them with flair |
| Structures most material appropriately for the audience, purpose and text type | Structures material appropriately for the audience, purpose and text type | Structures material clearly and effectively, appropriate to audience, purpose and text type |
| Applies appropriate writing conventions without intrusive errors | Applies appropriate writing conventions without intrusive errors | Applies writing conventions accurately |

The constructing of their own fairy tales generated much interest, as they were keen to read each other’s stories and give feedback to each other. Students were keen to get started on the writing task. The enthusiasm for the task meant that students completed brainstorming ideas, creating a framework, writing the story and word processing in just four periods of class time and homework. All stories were worked on electronically and produced in Word format and uploaded on the school’s intranet system or handed in personally (word processed) within one week (100 percent completion). Students had learnt in previous formative writing exercises about technique (for example, to include features such as repetition, sound colouring and figures of speech) and

structure (for example, point of view and flashback) and a number of students incorporated these features into their story writing.

“In Search for a Prince” (Appendix F) was written by a student we will call Donna, who has mixed Cook Island Māori and Chinese ethnicity. Teacher 4 offered the following comments to Donna:

I enjoyed the rhythm and rhyme you incorporated in this story and the deliberate foreshadowing. You certainly broke away from the stereotyped idea of the Princess marrying the Prince and it was interesting how you didn't worry about creating a problem for the resolution (i.e. having to get divorced or the first marriage finished before embarking on the 2nd!). It was a very tidy finish. It also gave a message of how important direct communication is as all your characters appeared to have integrity and admitted their feelings clearly. Some of the names you gave places and people were humorous and I suspect your own sense of mischief and control over your writing. (I see I need to teach you the correct use of apostrophe.)

For Teacher 4, Donna had fulfilled the criteria for excellence on all aspects other than the accuracy. She was pleased to see the rhythm and rhyme incorporated because she had looked at this aspect with the class earlier in the year. The class had also looked very briefly at foreshadowing but Teacher 4 had not dwelt on it, but mentioned it as an extension possibility for good writers. Donna had also incorporated certain aspects of *Shrek*: the main characters were “sweating” at one point, as well as the growing friendship and the denial of the possibilities of a future with the “unsuitable” suitor.

Teacher 4 brought similar objectives to her 2008 Year 13 class, in this case related to their study of the novel *The Kite Runner*. It should be emphasised that it was Teacher 4's practice to encourage her students to experiment with writing throughout the year and to collect models of various genres (essays, columns, short stories and so on) as well as their own pieces. One day per week was used for writing (in addition to homework time). Teacher 4 developed a new assessment task related to the NCEA Level 3 achievement standard: “Produce an extended piece of writing in a selected style”. For this task, students were asked to rewrite Chapter 10 of *The Kite Runner* from a different perspective within the text.

According to Teacher 4, the writing experimentation was very worthwhile and students agonised over some styles before finding what they liked to do and what they did best. Eventually a range of writing styles was produced: Two students opted to try writing from a different perspective, using *The Kite Runner*, three wrote short stories, one a beginning chapter using a news story as a trigger and four wrote columns. No grouping was confined to gender or culture. All students finished at least two pieces of writing before settling on their choice of assessment piece and all of them experimented with different writing styles. Three students gained passes with excellence, four with merit and three with achieved. Appendix G is an example of one student's writing, a reworking of Chapter 10 from the point of view of Hassan at the time of the rape.

Summary of findings

In the last section we provided a summary of the project-related interventions conducted by secondary teacher-researchers, particularly in the second year of the project. In doing so, we aimed to provide an overview of the teaching/learning experiences they provided for their students and the sort of data that were generated in the process. These data were analysed by teacher-researchers collaboratively with university researchers in order to produce a set of findings. In simple terms, the theme of this section is “what worked and how do we know”. Findings will be summarised here, again using the following subheadings:

- responding to texts/attitudes to reading
- the form/content relationship
- understanding text/context relationships
- the constructedness of text
- composing literary texts.

However, before we do this, it is worth reminding readers of this report of the school and classroom contexts of these interventions:

- Teacher 1 taught in a predominantly Pacific Island decile 1 school in South Auckland with a 10 percent Māori minority of students and few Pākehā. In this Year 11 class, most students were reading below their chronological age in 2007.
- Teacher 2 also taught in a predominantly Pacific Island decile 1 school in South Auckland with a 20 percent minority of Māori students and a few Pākehā. Her 2007 Year 11 class was a composite of the school’s top Year 10 classes in 2006. Some had already gained Level 1 NCEA credits in wide reading.
- Teacher 3 taught in a decile 4, semirural school with 63 percent Pākehā, 35 percent Māori and a small number of Asian students. Her 2008 Year 13 class had achieved on average 15 or more credits in Level 2 English though some were in the class without the required credit allocation. This was a nonacademic English class.
- Teacher 4, in contrast to the other three, taught in a decile 10 school with a significant number of students originating from an Asian country (43 percent). A total of 35 percent of students identified as Pākehā and there was a small Māori minority (3 percent). Her 2007 Year 9 class was motivated and disciplined and had scored highly in standardised tests for mathematics and literacy. Her 2008 Year 13 class was also small and highly motivated and included a number of students who were leaders in the school.

As emphasised in the last section, interventions were tailored to very different classes and any sense of “value-addedness” needs to be viewed against a background of varying abilities and motivations.

Responding to texts/attitudes to reading

Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 were particularly concerned to foster an enjoyment of literary texts in their 2008 classes.

Teacher 1's initial strategy of using a Literature Circle to encourage personal reading and the sharing of responses was unsuccessful with this class because of inconsistent attendance and varying reading speeds and appetites in group members. What *did* work was the introduction of a customised class library using high-interest titles and with student input into text choice coupled with a regular reading period. In an end-of-year survey, 84 percent of class respondents reported a positive change in reading attitude. In respect of conventional measures, 19 out of 20 students (95 percent) who enrolled in an NCEA standard for personal reading (US 8808) achieved the standard.

Teacher 2's multiethnic, multilingual Year 11 class was relatively able: six girls had already gained US 8808 in Year 10, almost half the class reported reading more than one book per week and most students engaged in a rich range of home reading practices. However, a significant number had never borrowed a book from the school library. In asTTle terms, this class was below national cohort expectations for reading comprehension and critical thinking. The surveys reported on in the last section were designed as a way of enabling her students to reflect on their personal reading practices and abilities as was sharing with students their asTTle profiles and offering them the opportunity of discussing these with the schools' literacy co-ordinator in a focus group situation. All students reported finding the latter intervention helpful.

Overall, a range of strategies was trialled to encourage students to *respond* to literary texts and to share these responses with others with a view to increasing engagement and enjoyment.

Drawing on a large range of diagnostic data, **Teacher 2** designed a unit of work entitled "For the love of reading" which in relation to the above objective offered students the opportunity to read a customised range of texts from two sources: a hard copy source (a classroom red box) and an electronic shared space (intranet class forum). Students were able to articulate their responses either online or on discussion response sheets and to share their responses either online or in face-to-face situations.

Findings indicated that students chose to select short stories to read rather than poems, although there were two poems in the electronic selection that were popular and both were set in New Zealand. The spread between girls and boys in terms of genre and category appeared to be similar.

There were three categories in the collection of hard and electronic versions of texts to choose from: texts in English in other settings; texts in English with Māori/Pasifika settings; and texts in their ethnic languages. When asked which they preferred to read they overwhelmingly said a text in English and from settings other than Māori and Pasifika. No student preferred a story to read in their ethnic language despite some of them having the ability to read these. Teacher 2 was surprised that students did not prefer texts set in New Zealand and the Pacific since the received

wisdom suggests that these texts are more relevant. It appeared that many students choosing texts to read for enjoyment steered towards something *different* from what they knew.

Students were able to choose texts from the red box, the electronic shared space or self-select from the library. A subsequent survey showed that the library was the most preferred source for girls. The boys preferred the library or electronic selections the most. Teacher 2 was surprised at the library preference considering that the preintervention library survey did not indicate library use as being high at school. Student comments had led to an expectation that the electronic collection would come out on top as there were more positive comments and students said they found it easier, enjoyable and could work with others. Certainly, considerably more short stories were read from the electronic space than the red box. Students also appeared to choose to be in the computer room rather than the library during the designated reading period. Teacher 2 concluded that they may have preferred choosing their own texts but enjoyed being in the computer room and instantly being able to comment via the forum if they used the texts immediately available.

The students certainly appeared both from class observations and in their written feedback to have enjoyed the opportunity to discuss texts with others. They all regularly used the forum during the unit and for a variety of reasons. These ranged from giving opinions, advice on understanding a text, text suggestions and offering an analysis of a text. Four girls were even motivated enough to cut and paste stories they had collected for others in the class to read. Allowing the students to use text language on the forum, although difficult to interpret at times, kept the forum student-focused and seemed to encourage them to be involved. It also showed them that reading and responding to texts could be a fun activity. A postintervention student survey showed that the forum was overwhelmingly the most enjoyable activity with all but two girls of the 17 students surveyed.

Teacher 2 was surprised to note that all but one student (a boy who is a gamer and who finds it difficult to communicate with others) said they also discussed a text verbally with another person outside the forum during the reading unit. Students frequently took the time to summarise what they had verbally discussed outside the computer room and commented on a discussion summary sheet. Both forms of responses (forum and discussion sheet) showed some deeper thinking about texts was taking place at times. Students referred to other texts with similar themes, attempted to evaluate and a few students demonstrated some critical thinking.

Student feedback on the use of the forum as an intervention strategy was extremely positive (see comments in previous section). Teacher 2 described herself as observing a highly motivated class that arrived keen to get into the computer room, be on task and read or comment on texts because they had the chance to do so on the forum. This intervention strategy had a spin-off effect when they worked on the three-story reading activity (below), since they also used the forum to make comments on those. All of the students said they would use a forum in the future for school or for their own interests. The post-questionnaire asked students whether they were more motivated to read at the end of the unit than they were at the beginning. Eight out of 14 girls and two out of three boys said they were a lot more motivated. The remainder of the group said they were a bit more motivated. No students said their motivation had remained unchanged.

As outlined in Cleary (2008), **Teacher 3**'s major strategy for encouraging response to literary text with her 2007 Year 12 English class was to offer her students a choice of two vehicles, a print journal or a personalised blog. Her hope with the latter was that it would provide a motivational, engaging critical learning tool. A range of data—teacher observations, observations by colleagues, quality and amount of student response, student online blog feedback and a poststudy questionnaire—testified to the success of using a blog in this way. The 50 percent of the class who chose to blog did so for a variety of reasons: general interest, the ease of typing over writing and as facilitating the writing process. Students appeared proud of their personalised and individualised blogs and the ease with which they could be customised. Student bloggers engaged in ongoing dialogue with their teacher around text discussion prompts in a way that was not remotely matched by paper “loggers”. Blog postings were generally more substantial than paper entries. Where bloggers responded to feedback prompts, no paper loggers did so. Moreover, students endorsed the view that those who were inhibited in sharing responses in face-to-face situations could be “disinhibited” in an online situation. This view was borne out by Teacher 2's experience with her students. The majority of her students (71 percent) believed that using a blog made a difference to how they responded to discussion prompts. Overall, students viewed the blog activities as an enjoyable way to learn.

Teacher 1 set himself the task of having his Year 11 class engage with, appreciate and see the relevance of a Shakespearean play, namely *Romeo and Juliet*. Surprisingly, a preintervention questionnaire indicated that most felt positively about the prospect of studying Shakespeare. As discussed in the last section, this teacher adopted a multipronged teaching learning strategy involving: teacher-led, whole-class, close study of selected sections of the conventional text; exposure to actual theatrical performances of Shakespeare or “treatments” of Shakespeare; the opportunity to choose among and read alternative versions of the play or the play story; and the chance to make connections via research inquiry with stories with similar themes in a range of cultures. In a postintervention questionnaire, students were invariably positive about their Shakespearean study, citing a range of reasons. Students read and enjoyed a wide range of versions of the *Romeo and Juliet* story for a variety of reasons. The vast majority of students saw the study of *Romeo and Juliet* as relevant to their own lives. Study of the play in the way designed for them appeared to benefit their ability to research a theme in literature across a range of texts for NCEA Achievement Standard 1.9, with all students attempting this standard achieving it. The letters written by students to a character in the play as a piece of contributory writing to US 8812 (Produce transactional writing in simple forms) showed the degree of engagement and depth of response to this literary text. As mentioned previously, 18 out of the 19 students who attempted this standard achieved it (95 percent). For a variety of reasons, attempts to have students respond to a theme in the play through drama Achievement Standard 1.4 were less successful, with only eight students achieving the standard.

Teacher 4 used the cultural and linguistic diversity of her 2007 Year 9 class as a resource to highlight ways in which different cultural groups can respond differently to the thematic content of literary texts (a practice also consciously adopted by Teacher 2 with her 2008 Year 11 class).

Her rich and complex, crosscultural research task into fairy tales was described in the last section. All students were able to retell an unknown or culturally different tale and discuss aspects such as character and settings. Finding translated versions of fairy tales proved hard to find, and no student compared these. Findings from the students' own presentations indicated a deepened understanding of the genre. Comparing a fairy tale from their own or a different culture with a traditional story proved successful in generating class discussion (and also discussions in the home setting), often of a personal nature and generating interest in pupils' respective cultures. Beyond task design, what worked here was Teacher 4's disposition to view cultural and linguistic diversity as a resource. The class and group discussion described above maximised the cultural knowledges being drawn upon. While the class might be described as multicultural, the dialogue that was a feature of the pedagogy might best be described as *intercultural*.

The form/content relationship

As discussed in the previous section, project-related interventions had little focus on the relationship between textual meetings and elements of literary form.

Understanding text/context relationships

As discussed in the previous section, the second component of **Teacher 2's** "For the love of reading" unit was directed at enhancing students' close reading practices in relation to such things as point of view and thematic identification, with the focus on point of view as having both a rhetorical and critical dimension. The major strategy was a carefully scaffolded activity sequence around close reading involving:

- students viewing teachers model close reading in response to discussion prompts
- students working in groups with teacher-generated discussion prompts
- students developing discussion prompts of their own and responding to one another's prompts in groups.

What was being modelled overall was a particular model for engaging with and interrogating texts drawing on a range of close-reading discourses (see Section 4.1). Data included class teacher and other teacher observations, discussion summaries and focus group responses.

The focus group responses indicated that all students found the modelling discussion by teachers helpful for a range of reasons: they were exposed to readers giving detailed responses and appearing to do this effortlessly thus giving them the belief they could do it themselves; they were reassured that it was acceptable to couch responses in relation to everyday occurrences; they realised the value of collaborative meaning making; and they were shown reading strategies that they could use themselves.

The second was a group task where students discussed a short story using teacher-designed prompts without the teacher's presence but in the presence of an observer (another teacher). The subsequent observation indicated that the students enjoyed the group work and most appeared to

be motivated and willing to discuss the text in a critical way. There was a range of abilities and gender in each group. However, it appeared that the mix of personalities within a group can make a difference in terms of peer motivation and debate taking place. This activity highlighted the need for teachers, when doing formative work, to explain what questions are asking students to do and to clarify new vocabulary (especially related to metalanguage). It was clear that students are more confident if questions are scaffolded into clear and separate tasks. There appeared to be gaps in student understanding of the difference between *author* and *character*, and concepts such as *point of view*, *theme* and *issue*. Despite finding some questions difficult, however, the students willingly engaged in this activity and were prepared to share their opinions.

Before designing their own questions, students were asked to think about the modelling and prompt questions they had been given as exemplars in the previous two activities. The groups came up with a range of quality questions that covered content, structure, viewpoints and critical literacy elements. It was clear that the exemplars they had been looking at had influenced the type and style of questions they designed, with most groups coming up with similar questions. The students said they enjoyed designing their own questions because it made them feel more involved. However, in a postintervention survey, students rated this activity as the *least* enjoyable of those in the total unit. The students also appeared to be more engaged when they were asked to respond to one another's questions. The group responses indicated that the students were quite confident in answering Level 1 comprehension-type questions and identifying viewpoints. That the story was from a similar cultural background as their own certainly appeared to influence students' ability to answer certain questions and to bring their own cultural experience to bear on answering these questions. The area of weakness that was highlighted was explaining the use of certain language features.

Teacher 3's major strategy in her innovative Year 13 course "English—Popular Culture" was to carefully select a range of thematically linked texts including a classic text (Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*). Crucial in this strategy was a focus on co-operative learning activities (linked in Teacher 3's mind with her involvement in the Te Kotahitanga project), such as a bus stop activity used as a prereading task before engaging students with Mary Shelley's story. While students were highly engaged in the activity, they found some discussion questions more challenging than others. They were comfortable with questions around point of view and fascinated by the link between Mary Shelley's life and ideas in the novel. However, they were challenged by questions related to ways a character might justify his position on a theme and even more so by questions asking them to place a text in its historical context (especially when this is the early 19th century). More findings from this strategy will be discussed below.

Teacher 4's strategy with her multilingual, multicultural Year 13 class was to select a text (*The Kite Runner*) from an exotic setting (Afghanistan) with a view to encouraging students to reflect on cultural difference in terms of attitudes, values and beliefs. She used a range of group configurations to encourage discussion of the issues raised by this controversial novel and inevitably to have her students reflect on their own cultural identities. The cultural mix affected the way students wished to work. The Korean boys often wanted to work alone with notes,

ensuring that they had all the relevant information. The New Zealand European girls tended to work in groups—generally of two or three students. The one Chinese student (female) moved in and out of group work, but often completed work individually. Whole-class discussions were always inclusive (two factors here contributing: first, the group was small, and secondly, all these students saw the value in everyone’s contributions). There were times when they agreed to differ in opinion. These were informal and not recorded. When students differed in opinion, they happily agreed to differ. However, it should be noted that these students frequently worked together in “lead” situations in the school, so they were used to working alongside each other for the benefit of younger students, for parental and family visits to the school or outside the school as “ambassadors”.

Two tasks building on this discussion testified to the success of the strategy. The first was an oral presentation investigating a theme across a number of texts. All but one student (absent through illness) achieved the NCEA Level 3 standard “Deliver an oral presentation” (two with excellence). The second task was the writing of a report based on this investigation. These reports often included reference to cultural issues raised in the earlier discussion. Eight students achieved the standard, “Complete independent research on a language or literature topic and present conclusions in writing” (English 3.7), three with excellence.

The constructedness of text

The four secondary teacher-researchers tried a range of strategies based in a critical literacy approach to literary study in order to help students understand that texts offer “versions” of reality and that reality (the “truth” about something) can be thought of as a social construct and textually produced.

Teacher 1’s strategy with his predominantly Pasifika Year 10 class was to select two sets of hip hop videos, each of them offering contrasting constructions of male and female identity and male and female power. Students were highly engaged with the discussion task which accompanied their close viewing and commented on the way this lesson developed their understanding of such concepts as *representation*.

Teacher 4’s strategy was also to have students explore representations across a range of texts, beginning in her unit on fairy tales with a previewing task asking students to identify and describe stereotypical “versions” of a prince and princess and compare these with versions in the movie *Shrek*. This strategy successfully enabled students to understand the social and textual nature of stereotyping. Using the film *Shrek* was an important instance of modelling of textual subversion. In that sense, it offered a pathway for students to follow when they came to writing their own texts. Student evaluations of the whole year’s course showed very positive feedback towards to whole of the unit on *Shrek* (including learning about film technique). Students who wrote about *Shrek* in the examination at the end of the year (they only had to choose one literary response from the year’s literary texts) tended to write about character and stereotyping rather than any other aspect of the study.

In the following year, using *The Kite Runner* with her Year 13 class, Teacher 4 made use of multiple text sources to draw students' attention to the way in which a novelist constructs a version of history. In developing a timeline *from* the novel, students checked "facts" against other textual sources, both oral and written. Students then built on this work in completing chapter grids for the novel, using a jigsaw group task technique, having first had the process modelled for them by Teacher 4. While this work was not formally assessed, its success was foundational for other tasks which *were* assessed using NCEA measures.

Teacher 2 used a pretest post-test design to evaluate the success of her teaching of a critical literacy approach to texts as part of the close reading component of her unit, "For the love of reading". Generally, the second test results confirmed that most student participants were able to successfully identify factual aspects and linguistic features in a text. Overall, the students did much better in the post-test at interpreting the character's experiences, although this text may have been slightly easier for the students to understand and it was not a poem. Two students, however, were able to read between the lines. The students' use of supporting evidence to back up their thoughts was stronger and more relevant in the post-test. Students tended to remain weak in their depth of thinking and critical awareness despite the staged close-reading interventions. There was little evidence that they were able to discuss *how* an author manipulates a reader's meaning making through particular devices, but this absence could be attributed to the framing of the questions. Overall, when the students were asked in a postintervention survey which activities most helped them to think critically, 12 out of 14 girls thought it was the looking at short story questioning exemplars. All of the boys thought the forum and whole-class questioning and feedback were the most helpful.

Teacher 3's strategy with her modestly able Year 13 popular literature class was to use multiple texts on the subject of boxer Rubin Carter. These texts offered contrasting constructions of Carter's guilt/innocence, with student responses via Pageflakes indicating that they had successfully absorbed the lesson of textual constructedness. The same strategy of using multiple texts offering a range of "takes" on a similar theme was employed in the carefully modelled and scaffolded close-reading work using teacher-designed prompts and then moving to having them design the prompts themselves. For Teacher 3, a range of findings emerged from this sequence of tasks:

- Students take things they view at face value.
- Being presented with an alternative reality and having their initial viewpoint challenged presented a difficulty.
- Students can identify the ways in which language is used to create different versions of reality **but** find it difficult to adjudicate between these different versions constructed by different texts. As indicated by the Pageflakes discussion, a number of the students either changed their view of Rubin Carter's innocence or could not decide which version of events represented reality. The identification of key words (such as emotive words and words with obvious negative connotations) through close reading and discussion of the texts enabled the students to understand how these words impacted on the way that they read texts. This was particularly

evident with the texts dealing with the story of Rubin Carter and the texts that dealt with transferable cellular memory.

- The student's own background (social and cultural) affects how they read texts. The texts that created the most engagement and interest for Māori and Pasifika students in the class were the ones that they had a specific connection to. The poststudy questionnaire identified in particular "Te Manawa", "The Hurricane" and "Cellular Memory" as the texts that these students enjoyed the most. Calling on prior knowledge and putting the students in a position of "power"—that is, the idea that students have important knowledge to share—is a valuable teaching strategy. "Te Manawa", in particular, interested the class for this reason. The "true" story of "The Hurricane" was a popular text because it was perceived to be nonfiction. The link between "Te Manawa" and the article "Cellular Memory in Organ Transplants" and the "sensational" nature of the events recounted were given as reasons as to why the students enjoyed the latter text.
- Investigating how language works and understanding how language choices affect meaning is a challenging task and needs careful scaffolding. Close reading of texts using a critical literacy approach was an effective teaching intervention. The students' responses to the individual and group activities on *Frankenstein*, "Te Manawa", "Cellular Memory in Organ Transplants" and "Pig Heart Boy" showed a clear understanding of the way the authors used language to create effects. The intervention was successful because the questions that were used for both discussion and written response were carefully structured and explained. However, too many questions with multiple parts on "Pig Heart Boy" appeared to have a negative effect on this discussion.
- Not all students clearly or fully understood what was meant by the "crit lit" (critical literacy) approach to texts. The questions that the students devised for this poem were not as critically searching or reflective of a critical literacy approach as the questions devised for "White Comedy". The poststudy questionnaire clearly identified that some of the students did not have a clear understanding of what was meant by the "crit lit" approach to texts though they were getting there: "It means to analyse [*sic*] the texts and trying to figure out what the text is trying to say from that point of view" (Student L); "that not everything is as it seems and to look at more than one point of view" (Student J).
- Despite any lack of understanding of the "crit lit" approach, the students enjoyed that approach to texts, and the thematic approach—including the variety of texts used. The poststudy questionnaire, the level of work completion and the student assessment data suggested that the course had been successful as had been the adoption of a "crit lit" approach to reading texts. Of the initial 13 students that began the year, 10 remained at the end and two more had joined during the year. The students in the course gained between 10 and 21 Level 3 credits. The most successful standards were Level 3 Theme Study (US 8834: Investigate a theme across a range of selected texts and evaluate the outcomes of the investigation), Level 3 Close Reading Poetic Texts (US 12427: Read closely and evaluate the effectiveness of poetic written texts) and Level 3 Report Writing (US 3491: Write a report). The theme study and close reading in particular were directly linked to the texts studied during the year. All of the

students who remained at school for the entire year gained more credits than they had gained in Level 2. Four of the students completed the Level 2 literacy requirement.

Composing literary texts

As mentioned in the previous section, with one exception, literary writing tended to take second place to literary reading for three out of four secondary teacher-researchers.

Teacher 1's mostly Pasifika Year 11 students produced two pieces of transactional writing for US 8812 (Produce transactional written text in simple forms) both of which (a report on research findings and a letter to a character) related to their *reading* of literary texts. The former writing was the means of presenting information for English AS 1.9 (Research, organise and present information). As mentioned elsewhere in this report, this HOD English had a policy of *not* having students in the school do NCEA creative writing achievement standards.

Teacher 2's 2007 Pasifika students did creative writing for AS 90052 (English 1.1) but this writing was not related to the intervention. She used a national task, "Tough choices". She described the student writing as about predictable teenage issues and a little pedestrian with a relatively small number passing. "It was the mechanical issues that let them down in terms of intrusive errors on the assess schedule." Three students entered for and achieved US 8812 (Using research reports and examination essays from other tasks for the required writing).

Teacher 3's 2008 Year 13 students engaged in report writing related to US 3491 (Write a report); formal writing linked to seminars (either AS 90720: Produce an extended piece of writing in a selected style, or AS 90376: Produce crafted and developed formal transactional writing); or writing related to a theme study; that is, in response to literary and nonliterary reading using US 8834 (Investigate a theme across a range of selected texts and evaluate the outcomes of the investigation). The latter was directly related to the texts studied with a view to developing close critical reading skills.

A critical literacy approach to texts teaches that the "same" story can have a variety of treatments. The lesson lends itself to students themselves producing "deconstructive" readings of texts as literary texts of their own.

Teacher 4 adopted this latter strategy with her Year 9 class in 2007 and her Year 13 class in 2008. The Year 9 students approached the task of writing a deconstructive fairy tale with great enthusiasm. They word processed their stories in four periods plus homework with a 100 percent completion rate (see Appendix F). What worked here was the practice of empowering students. The initial impetus for the intervention itself stemmed from students' identified interest in the subject of bullying. In the deconstructive work with *Shrek*, they discovered a different kind of empowerment; that is, they were given permission to contest dominant modes of representation and assume agency for new versions of age-old stories. There is no doubt that this sense of agency was a powerful motivating factor in the enthusiasm shown by the students in their writing. The stories they wrote generally broke the fairy tale rules and indicated that most students had

understood the concept of stereotyping and were able to create texts which reflected this understanding. Seven students achieved excellence across the whole assessment rubric, while 15 students achieved merit.

What made the writing task particularly effective (and this was to be a feature of Teacher 4's teaching in 2008) was its placement as an element within task-based inquiry. This feature empowered students because, within a broad task, there was a range of options to choose from. Inquiry became a powerful means of developing an awareness of a generic literary form (the fairy tale) and ways in which conventions or norms differ or persist in a range of cultural settings. Through the research project, the notion of stereotyping in respect of character became extended to considerations of the stereotypical in respect of plot construction and setting. Furthermore, it became quickly apparent that task-based inquiry is a valuable antidote to simplistic and behavioural approaches to planning which are bent on determining learning outcomes *prior to* the development and provision of learning experiences to students.

In 2008, the notion of a rich task was taken over into the production of a folio of writing by students. This task encouraged both experimentation and the exercise of choice, as well as the exploration of genre models. The deconstructive writing of Chapter 10 of *The Kite Runner* was but one writing task students engaged with. As indicated previously, all 10 students in this class achieved the Level 3 standard AS 90720 (Produce an extended piece of writing in a selected style).

The following bullet points represent a broad-brush distillation of the above findings:

- The enjoyment of literary reading can be facilitated by the availability of customised, high-interest class libraries—hard copy or digital—into which students have had input and which offer them text choices.
- The enjoyment of literary reading is enhanced by opportunities to share responses with others.
- Motivation to read literary (and nonliterary) texts is increased when teachers trust students with a variety of diagnostic data relevant to their own reading dispositions, aptitudes and competences.
- Motivation to read literary texts is increased when students have opportunities to share their responses with others.
- The sharing of responses to literary texts is facilitated by a range of forum vehicles, from hard copy vehicles such as journals and response templates, to digital forums such as intranet class forums and blogs.
- The study of traditional (canonised) literary texts, such as Shakespearean plays, is facilitated by a multistrategy approach using teacher modelling, alternative text versions, discussion forums and inquiry.
- Responses to literary texts are facilitated when students are given opportunities for structured intercultural dialogue.
- When given a choice of literary reading, students opt for short stories over poems.

- Reasons for students' literary textual preferences are complex and may be more influenced by theme/topic than by the cultural setting of a text.
- In some instances, students opt *not* to read literary texts in their own L1.
- Close reading means a number of things and teachers draw on a range of discourses in designing discussion prompts.
- The scaffolding of activity sequences built around the careful formulation of discussion prompts with extensive teacher modelling enhances the close-reading ability of students and fosters the transition from dependence to independence as students learn to develop their own way of “questioning” texts.
- Close reading is enhanced in group learning situations which are organised and composed according to a defined purpose.
- There are a number of close reading concepts that some students find difficult, including the *author/character* distinction, *point of view* and *theme*.
- The cultural background of a student influences the way they read a text closely.
- Students enjoy critical literacy approaches to literary (and textual) study.
- A number of critical literacy concepts are best taught in a situation where students are exposed to a range of texts dealing with a similar subject or topic: *portray*, *representation*, *construction*, *version*.
- Students struggle to think, talk and write about the way in which language is used to *position* readers to read the world in particular ways.
- A good deal of the writing that occurs in secondary classrooms in response to literary reading is “transactional” rather than “literary” and related to NCEA credit accumulation.
- A critical literacy approach to reading invites and empowers students to construct their own versions of literary texts.
- The design of classroom programmes based around the integration of rich tasks encourages higher order thinking, connection making across texts and can enhance students' literary and nonliterary writing.

The place of ICTs

One of the research questions for this project was:

- In what ways can information communications technologies (ICTs) be integrated productively in a culturally and linguistically inclusive classroom for the teaching and learning of literature?

Findings in relation to this question have been listed in the previous section. However, a number of issues can be raised here as findings from this research:

- Access is still an issue and is affecting the degree and type of uptake of ICTs in teaching and learning (related to literary study). Teacher 1, though an adept user of ICTs himself, was unable to incorporate ICTs into his students' learning to any great extent. Teacher 3 wrote at length about her frustrations in attempting to use Web 2.0 technologies in her English

programme (see Cleary, 2008) and these frustrations continued for her in 2007. In her case, the major issue was one of speed. In contrast, Teacher 2, while working in a decile 1 school, had excellent support from her school's IT person and (taking her cue from Teacher 3), was able to experiment with ICTs. Teacher 4, teaching in a decile 10 school, had by far the most ICT options in respect of integration into the teaching/learning she designed.

- In many respects, present-day students have become, literally and metaphorically, a networked generation. Both Teacher 2 and Teacher 3, in varying ways, built on this by providing digital forums for the sharing of responses to and around texts. These forums included customised intranet forums on the school's server as well as open social-networking sites/engines such as blogs and Pageflakes. These forums proved immensely successful as intra- and intercultural communicative spaces around texts and probably built on the group-focused socialising habits of their school's respective clienteles.
- Networking was used in a different way by Teacher 4, who used the school's network regularly as a place to post and make available student work for others to enjoy and learn from—rather like a jigsaw approach to group work on a grand scale. For her students, the use of a range of ICTs to support learning (for example, word processing, desktop publishing and PowerPoint), had become a matter of course for her students (particularly for text production) and she consistently modelled their use as part of her teaching practice.

6. Conclusion and implications

6.1 Discourses around literature

In Section 4.3, reference was made to an emerging realisation at the end of 2007 that primary teacher-researchers involved in the project did not share with their secondary colleagues a developed literary metalanguage. During round-table meetings of the project team, primary teacher-researchers occasionally commented on feelings of inadequacy in this respect. We describe this as a tension within the team—a sense that one group felt itself to be on the outer in respect of a particular kind of discourse.

In his December 2007 report to the project team, quality assurance reference group member Dr Brian Finch, of Massey University, made the following observation:

Being an English teacher professional is more straightforward for secondary teachers because their ‘subject’ is part of their identity, and their daily tasks include dealing with achievement standards and how they can be met. Primary teachers are general practitioners (despite the efforts of some of us to promote English as a specialist area) who have been drawn into thinking and talking about ‘language’ and ‘literacy’ rather than ‘English’ as their area ... I think that the primary teachers need a clearer shared understanding of ‘literature’ for the purpose of the project. I wanted to distinguish between language teaching and that with a literature focus without resorting to notions of a canon. A definition of literature even in fairly general terms such as ‘rich texts’ could be helpful by narrowing the number of texts considered.

A decision was made in early 2008 to develop a shared definition of *literature* for the project, despite the problematics of such an enterprise (see Locke, 1998). Drawing on Wellek and Warren (1962) (see Section 4.1), the university-based researchers developed the following definition:

A literary text is characterised by the following qualities:

- the use of language to *please*, where the aesthetic function is primary and draws attention to itself
- a focus on formal organisation and coherence
- the evocation of a fictive or imaginary world which exists in a tangential relationship to the experiential world, *and about which the work constitutes a kind of moral statement*.

The linguistic mode for a literary text can be oral, verbal, visual or multimodal.

The following text-types (or genres) are straightforwardly literary: novel, lyric poem, narrative poem, folk-tale, parable, fable, tall story, mythic tale, stage play, song lyric, epic, film drama.

The following text-types (or genres) *can* be literary: diary, essay, travel story, “fictive” journalism (as in the new journalism of Truman Capote), feature articles, oratory.

This definition was shared with and accepted by teacher-researchers at a round-table meeting in April 2008—a meeting attended by Professor Dennis Sumara from the University of British Columbia (see Sumara, 2002).²⁶

This step was taken in response to what has become one of the broad conclusions of this project: that **in respect of teacher professional content (or disciplinary) knowledge in relation to literature and the teaching and learning of literature, there are gaps for many teachers, particularly at primary level.** We draw this conclusion in full knowledge that our sample of teachers was small, but atypical only in the sense that they were prepared to become involved in this project in the first place.

We suggest a number of possible contributing factors to this situation of gaps in knowledge:

- the disappearance of a focus on literary metalanguage from approaches to literacy instruction which have become increasingly reliant on functional linguistics for their metalanguage
- a decrease in the number of preservice teachers undertaking courses engaging them in literary study (literature-related literacies) in their teacher education (especially as three-year degree courses have become the norm)
- the way in which high-stakes testing at secondary levels (the NCEA) and diagnostic testing through standardised testing at other levels (for example, asTTle) are constructing reading and writing in ways which marginalise literature-based literacies, with the latter strongly emphasising personal response, the aesthetic, the idiosyncratic and the critical.

In discussing the implications of this state of affairs, we begin with the point that the engagement with and enjoyment of literary texts should not be viewed as an optional extra in our education system (while the *real* priority is student mastery of some version of literacy). There are two related justifications for prioritising literature:

- literary engagement as identify formation
- literary engagement as developing one’s meaning-making repertoire.

According to Sumara (2002), while we live in an information age, information does not necessarily lead to understanding. He argues that:

Understanding requires interpretation, and interpretation depends on learned practices. Reading literature in school still matters because it creates opportunities for such practices to be learned. (p. xiv)

Central to Sumara’s view of literary engagement is a theory of learning “that conceptualizes human identity as co-evolving with the production of knowledge” (page). “Identity,” he asserts, is

²⁶ The definition was amended slightly (the section in italics was added) later in 2008, drawing on the work of Eagleton (2007).

not some essential quality of the individual human subject. Identity emerges from relationships, including relationships people have with books and other communicative technologies based on language” (p. 9). Pedagogically, Sumara puts a big emphasis on textual engagement via writing in response to and against the text as a “thinking practice in itself” (p. 76). Going beyond Louise Rosenblatt, and with a glance in the direction of cultural studies models of English, he views readers’ identifications with texts as ...

Social and political events, which create opportunities for the pleasures associated with the development of critical insight. From this perspective, literary engagement can be (and usually are) sites for both aesthetic enjoyment, and creative and critical learning. (p. 93)

In this justification and conceptualisation of the place of the literary in education, pleasure has been allowed in and is related to a person’s sense of their own developing identities as critical sense makers.

Commenting on the state of English teaching in England and elsewhere, Eagleton (2006) asserts that quite a number of literature teachers do not practise literary criticism “since they were never taught to do so” (p. 1). Of particular relevance to the argument we are making here is a comment Eagleton makes about the *value* of poetry: “Poetry ... puts on show what is true about language anyway, but which goes generally unnoticed. In everyday language, too, ‘content’ is the product of ‘form’ . . . Meanings are a matter of how we use words, rather than words being a matter of conveying meanings which are formed independently of them” (p. 68). Putting this another way, poetry is the literary form *par excellence*, that highlights the role all language plays in human sense making. It is but a short step to make the sort of claim that Kroll and Evans (2008) do that poetry is “at the heart of the educational enterprise”, justified in its capacity to enhance thinking, word use and generate aesthetic pleasure (pp. 36–37). For Eagleton, a consequence of the disappearance of literary critical practices has been a classroom focus on content rather than form, with a corresponding disappearance of a critical understanding that textual meanings *are* form-dependent. (Mention was made in Section 4.4 of the rarity of mention among any teacher-researchers in this project of the form/content relationship.)

While systemic functional linguistics and other general language grammars have a role to play in explaining the operations of language in society, their uptake should not be at the expense of a grammar of the literary text or approaches to language that highlight the creative role users of language can play, even in casual conversation (cf. Carter, 2004). Eagleton’s (2006) book might be seen as an example of a grammar of the literary text. This kind of grammar or metalanguage needs to be made available in teacher education courses for all preservice teachers of English and literacy.

There needs to be a recognition at policy level that the study of literature is justified on the grounds that more than any textual category it “It is . . . always at some level language which is about language (Eagleton, 2007, p. 22) and thereby ideally suited to inducting students into a deep understanding of the role of language in human meaning making and identity formation. In this respect, it needs to be seen as totally central to two of the key competencies in *The New Zealand*

Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007): *thinking and using language, symbols, and texts*. Moreover, there is an argument for viewing poetry as the prime exemplar of “literariness”, concentrating as it does the formal qualities characteristic of other literary, as well as nonliterary, texts.

It needs to be recognised that there is also an argument for the primacy of literary writing over literary reading in classroom pedagogy and that wide literary reading may be more important than close literary reading. It may be that the most important influence on the child writer is the teacher-as-writer who writes alongside the child. The same goes for reading. However, if teachers are to believe in themselves as writers of literary (as well as nonliterary) texts, then some consideration needs to be given to the means of achieving this. One possible means is the development of a National Writing Project along the lines of the scheme that has been operating in the United States for about two decades.

Teachers in this project have shown that we need to move beyond the critique of the cultural heritage model of English that views it as canonising the utterances of dead, white males and recognise that all cultures have literary heritages (including oral ones) and that these have an important role in the way people identify. Moreover, regardless of what happens in schools, literature and poetry are still thriving in the real world and teachers need to ensure that students have opportunities to connect with this world, as Korina Jocson and others have done in the United States’ context (see Jocson, 2006).

Finally, we need to continue to scrutinise our assessment and pedagogical practices to ensure that we do not privilege practices that naively assume that drilling students in a knowledge of parts will lead to a deep understanding of the whole, as has happened in the National Literacy Strategy in England. It is important that we do not put summative and diagnostic assessment practices into the driving seat in such a way that literary engagement is constructed in ways that are fatuous, dubious and destructive of enjoyment.

6.2 Discourses around cultural and linguistic inclusiveness and multicultural education

As discussed in Section 4.5, there are a number of discourses associated with multicultural education and a number of ways of mapping these discourses. As researchers, we found it useful to adopt the map developed by Sleeter and Grant (2003) which distinguishes five approaches to multicultural education. We also drew attention to critical multiculturalism as a current discourse that relates to Sleeter and Grant’s fifth category, that is, “Multicultural and social reconstructionist education”.

As discussed in Section 4.6, while there has been progress in the implementation of a range of bicultural initiatives in New Zealand, progress in multicultural education has stagnated, in part because of a reaction to “benevolent multiculturalism” as characterised by the “taha Māori” model

of the 1980s and in part because of suspicion that multiculturalism was being used to undermine the bicultural agenda. Meanwhile, it is argued, the adoption of a skills- or outcomes-oriented curriculum structure from 1991 onwards, has led to a one-size-fits-all assessment regime which has elided cultural difference and which has, in effect if not in intent, reinforced an assimilationist multicultural discourse. In respect of subject English, a reluctance at policy level to use comparison with Māori and other languages as a means of developing linguistic understanding has hindered linguistically inclusive teaching at classroom level. In addition, the location of literary study as a component within subject English, and therefore subject to English language hegemony, has meant that EAL students with an interest in studying literature are subjected to an assimilationist discourse of multicultural education. That is, they are obliged to be taught literary study in English, read texts in English and be examined in English on their literary knowledge.

Both primary and secondary teacher-researchers in this project (see Sections 4.7 and 4.8) had thought long and hard about issues of cultural and linguistic inclusiveness in relation to their own classroom teaching. What primarily determined their classroom practice in this respect was active reflection on their relationship with their students and school communities. All of these teachers emphasised the importance of knowing the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students they taught and saw this knowledge as having an effect on their classroom management practices, choice of reading materials and design of learning activities and processes. All teachers rejected assimilationist or integrationist discourses of multicultural education, but were inevitably caught up in testing regimes which were underpinned by these discourses.

In broad terms, the practices of all teacher-researchers were characterised to a large extent by a discourse of multicultural education as defined by Sleeter and Grant (2003). They valued the contributions and perspectives of the different cultural groups in their classrooms, they put a value on critical thinking, they encouraged the expressions of alternative viewpoints on issues, they attempted to relate their classroom programmes to the backgrounds of their students and they promoted the use of more than one language in their classrooms. The secondary group in particular, and the primary group in part, also subscribed to a discourse of multicultural and social reconstructionist education. For secondary teacher-researchers this was very much related to their interest in and occasional adoption of a critical literacy approach to English as a subject and to literary study in particular. As discussed previously, this approach is ideologically consonant with critical multiculturalism.

These findings have implications at policy level in relation to curriculum design, high-stakes assessment (including diagnostic testing) and teacher education:

- In relation to curriculum design, a way needs to be found to promote literary study in the New Zealand curriculum, while at the same time reducing the hegemony of English as language. A short-term solution would be to encourage the use, at all levels and as appropriate to the cultural and linguistic composition of the class, of literary texts from a range of cultural settings, in languages other than English or in translation (cf. Feuerverger, 1994). In addition, to encourage the use of languages other than English in the literacy classroom as an adjunct to

- Ways need to be found to shift the assessment focus from standardised testing to ecologically valid testing (see Whitehead, 2007). The limitations of standardised testing instruments such as asTTle need to be recognised and other forms of diagnostic testing encouraged, including diagnostic tests developed at school and classroom level. In relation to high-stakes assessment regimes such as NCEA, standards need to be revisited with a view to evaluating their construct validity. One way of fostering a greater degree of internal assessment in the NCEA, thus allowing for testing with greater ecological validity, would be the use of external reference tests as moderation devices for comparable aspects in the literacy domain; for example, response to literary texts. (See Locke, 2007a, for a description of how this kind of system was developed in the English Study Design project.)
- While teacher education institutions in New Zealand offer courses aimed at preparing preservice teachers for increasingly multicultural and multilingual classrooms, more attention needs to be given to ensuring that teachers at all levels are equipped with approaches to literature teaching such as critical literacy which enable them to find ways of empowering their students to be critical analysts of the ways texts operate powerfully in society. This will also involve teachers in developing a critical metalanguage to enable them and their students to use such approaches.

6.3 Teaching literature in the multicultural classroom

A number of themes can be drawn from Section 5 of this report, where we identify findings related to effective practices around the study of literary texts in multicultural classrooms. We discuss briefly a number of these and their implications for teacher education, future research and government policy.

Text selection

As Teacher 3 remarked in the conclusion to her own research report, “Text selection is crucial.” Teacher-researchers in this project put a huge amount of thought and expertise into their selection of texts for their students, and this was a major project theme. It prompted lively discussion at project round-table meetings and a good deal of sharing, both informally and through the Wiki-based, annotated bibliography which was collaboratively developed by the project team and which will be part of the project’s dissemination effort. Recent research in the United States (Friese, Alvermann, Parkes, & Rezak, 2008) has highlighted the importance of text selection practices in English Language Arts classes, and the factors influencing them, including teacher

knowledge, access to texts and the part high-stakes assessment has in contributing to institutional constraints. They also note the under-researched nature of teacher text-selection processes.

Related to this theme is the issue of the *basis* for text selection, particularly in classes that are multilingual and multicultural in nature. For the teachers in this project, a range of factors influenced text selection, including the reading levels of their students, their cultural backgrounds and their interests. Some teachers looked to their students for input into the text-selection process. Most teachers aimed at a balance between texts which reflected the cultural backgrounds of their students and texts which exposed them to unfamiliar cultural settings, but with themes that they could relate to. This approach extended to canonical texts, including texts that the “received wisdom” would discourage the use of. Teacher 1’s comment about Shakespeare is pertinent here:

I was surprised at the pre-reading Shakespeare answers. I had assumed that most of the students would have negative thoughts about the prospect of reading Shakespeare when in fact the majority were very interested. They had heard of the author and saw his works as ‘classics’. They also considered it to be something new. What this tells me is that our students also want to be taken away from Otara and things in their own lives.

The conclusion we draw is that this *mix* of factors was a key to the success of a number of the interventions aimed at encouraging literary reading. We further conclude that encouraging students to read literary texts is facilitated by making texts available to students in a range of locales (including Web-based locations). There are implications here for teacher-educators, who need to raise with preservice teachers the importance of text selection and how it might be approached.

As a project team, we would have liked to have seen more use made of literary texts in the L1 of students. Certainly, students responded positively to texts related to cultural settings they were familiar with. However, in instances where texts were made available in the L1 of students, there was very little uptake and a strong indication that such texts were the ones *least* preferred by students. Such a finding was disappointing for a project team committed to finding ways of fostering L1 maintenance in New Zealand classrooms. We believe that further research needs to be undertaken to find out why it was that students such as those in Teacher 2’s classroom seemed reluctant to engage with literary texts in their own language. We suggest that ethnographic research along the lines of Feuerverger’s (1994) in Canada would be in order. We also believe that there are access issues and that Ministry of Education policy on the availability of “culturally based” texts in L1 and in translation should be reviewed with a view to improving access to such texts.

Of the literary genres selected for use by teachers in classrooms, prose narrative genres (short stories and novels) predominated. In the case of primary teacher-researchers, prose narrative dominated in all cases. None of these three teachers used poems or dramatic texts. Of secondary teacher-researchers, Teacher 4 and Teacher 1 did not use poems at all (unless one counts the lyrics of hip hop as poems). Teacher 2 made a range of poems available to her students, with some choices proving popular (depending on topic/theme). Teacher 3 used poems as texts for an

exercise where pupils drafted “crit lit” questions for one another in groups, again, with mixed success. As has been mentioned elsewhere in this report, there is a sense that poetry is somewhat under threat in the New Zealand schooling system and it would be good to know why and what might be done to make it a vital part of a student’s literary study. Clearly, there are implications here for preservice teacher education. However, there are also implications for the Ministry of Education, in light of the fact that the NCEA is functioning as a *de facto* shaper of secondary school curriculums in a way that appears to be marginalising poetry (and to some extent drama) as a genre (O’Neill, 2006). For primary teachers, it may be that the widespread uptake of asTTle is contributing to a focus on prose to the detriment of poetry.

Sharing responses to texts

There is a widespread cliché about “curling up with a good book”, which constructs reading literary texts as a private, somewhat solitary individual pursuit. While there is some truth in the cliché, that is, there *are* people who approach the reading of literary texts in this way, there are other types of social ritual around such texts. For example, book clubs are an example of a social ritual which puts a value on the sharing of responses to a (usually) literary text.

In this project, it was clear that the ability and opportunity to share responses to text was a motivating factor in the enjoyment of and engagement with literary texts. Teachers in this project used a range of forums for the sharing and exchange of responses, with particular success in the use of online spaces where students shared responses with the teacher, one another and even with complete strangers. It was also clear that these forums were valuable places for intercultural dialogue, where students from different cultures learnt more about issues from a range a cultural perspectives. All teachers in the project made skilled, strategic use of group-based learning, particularly in relationship to the facilitation of the sharing of responses to texts.

Clearly there are implications here for teacher-educators, who need to ensure that preservice teachers appreciate the different ways in which group-based learning and the tasks associated with this can be structured into the classroom programme. There are also implications for the Ministry of Education, which needs to ensure that schools are sufficiently funded so that all students have access to the kinds of digital networking opportunities that clearly benefited a number of participating students in this project.

The benefits of metacognition

With reference to metacognition, the writers of *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5–8* (Ministry of Education, 2006) state that “Articulating what they know and can do as readers and writers enables literacy learners to set themselves new goals and meet new challenges,” and also that “A metacognitive awareness also helps students to understand the reciprocal relationship between reading and writing” (p. 27). This project has discussed some outstanding examples of teachers in a sense drawing students into their confidence as partners reflecting on their learning.

In part, this was fired by the research project itself, with teachers using or developing (in the case of secondary teachers) a range of customised and standard diagnostic tests in ways that were not necessarily a part of their usual practice. In many cases, these tests were supplemented by surveys and questionnaires. What became clear was that students enjoyed and profited from this confidence vested in them as stakeholders in their learning and that this confidence encouraged them to enter into dialogue with teachers about their learning. Other strategies also helped develop metacognition. These included teacher modelling with metacognitive commentary (as per Teacher A's use of her Smartboard) and having students develop their own discussion prompts for their peers, having had this process modelled and explained to them. There are clearly implications here for teacher education providers to ensure that preservice teachers are able to develop a range of metacognitive strategies with their students. There are also gaps in the research here, with research into metacognition tending to concern itself with measures related to text passages related to a range of genres (for example, Allen & Hancock, 2008) rather than whole, literary texts (including poems).

Modelling and scaffolding the reading of literary texts

As discussed elsewhere in this report (see Sections 4.3 and 4.4) teachers in this project were eclectic in the approach they took to literary reading and writing; that is, they drew on a range of discourses of literary study. A corollary of this is that "response to text" is not a single thing, but varies according to a discourse of reading (Locke, 2003). Teacher-researchers in this project used a range of types of discussion prompt for close or guided reading, and for independent/personal reading. These prompts tended to be content focused (plot, character, setting and theme) and less focused on form (point of view, structure, image tone, rhythm, diction, metre, pace, voice, texture, syntax and so on), though point of view did get some focus.

The project reinforced the importance of modelling and scaffolding of response to and meaning making around literary texts, with a number of approaches to meaning making being taken. Some gaps were identified with implications for both teacher education and professional development. One of these relates to the broad question of a metalanguage suited to literary study, discussed previously in this report. Another related gap is concerned with the form/content connection. This kind of metalinguistic understanding is not developed easily and, as Teacher 3 intimated, needs to be carefully and systematically modelled by teachers using relatively straightforward texts (in terms of vocabulary level) and which still use sophisticated literary devices. Certainly, many students in this study struggled with concepts such as point of view and voice. As illustrated by Teachers A and B, the use of sophisticated picture books is a useful way of helping students explore the form/content relationship.

Students also struggled with critical literacy approaches to the study of literary texts and to some extent so also did teachers. Critical literacy requires a total reorientation in one's approach to reading and composing texts (see, for example, Morgan, 1997), where texts are no longer viewed as "transparent" windows on to reality, but rather as constructing reality *in and through* language.

A critical literacy approach requires a relatively sophisticated attention to the role language plays in positioning readers to view the world in particular ways. On the one hand, students were stimulated and empowered as readers by this approach to the study of literary texts. On the other hand, they were challenged and somewhat daunted by the demands it made on their metalinguistic abilities. This is clearly an area where further research needs to be done. Attention also needs to be paid by teacher-education providers to equipping teachers with the ability to model the kind of close textual reading that critical literacy requires and with the metalanguage appropriate to this task. The latter would include a top-down grammar of some kind (function or rhetorical) that attends to text/context relationships. A revision of *Exploring Language* (Ministry of Education, 1996) is way overdue!

Composing literary texts

Teacher-researchers in this study tended to be more focused on having students *read* literary texts rather than *write* them, or on using the reading of texts as stimulants for creative (literary) writing, though this was less accentuated in the project work of primary teachers who were more used to integrating writing with reading. Putting this another way, composing literary texts tended to be a secondary activity to reading and responding. This is not to say that excellent writing did not eventuate from this hierarchical arrangement. Nor is it to say that responses to literary texts are not *deepened* by the composition of “texts in response”. Moreover, as Teacher 4’s work with her students showed, a critical literacy approach to reading texts offers an excellent springboard for the composing of texts offering differing versions of the “same” reality.

Still, the idea of a writing-centred literacy (and literature) curriculum is something that should be entertained at policy level and by designers of teacher education programmes. This idea is advocated by Collom and Noethe’s (2005) radical educational agenda, which would want to “reverse the order in which language is taught” and to “include the poetic—as a *primary, hands-on writing activity*—from the beginning. We believe that poetry is at the core of language use” (p. xii, italics in original). While reading to learn is important, so is writing to learn and having processes of inquiry serve writing as much as reading. We would believe that such a “reversal” could play a role in addressing the decline of poetry in current literacy and English programmes.

Another gap revealed by this project was the use of ICTs in the composition of literary texts or creative writing. It may be that acronym ICT should be replaced by ICRT; that is, information, communication and *representational* technologies. Such a change would draw attention to the potential of digital, multimodal, authoring software programs to enable the production of literary texts exploring a range of representational, meaning-making resources. There is a clear need for research to be conducted which encourages this form of literary composition in classrooms, and which encourages experimental play. Such research, of course, depends on the availability of certain kinds of digital authoring software. In addition, it needs classrooms which are not dominated by high-stakes assessment regimes and where productive play has a place. It is to the topic of assessment that we now turn.

Assessment issues

Assessment had a number of distinct roles in this project. As has already been discussed, diagnostic assessment played a major and constructive role in a number of ways:

- It guided teacher-researchers in assessing their students' abilities in respect of their chosen learning objectives, in the selection of texts and in the design of learning tasks/activities.
- It fostered metacognition and “buy in” of student participants.

Diagnostic testing was used, not only to gauge various kinds of literary and literacy competence, but also to ascertain attitudes, since a large focus of the project was on motivation around responding to and composing literary texts.

The project team was aware of the widespread uptake of asTTle for diagnostic testing in a number of schools. Team members were also aware of a number of limitations in asTTle. These include:

- its being based on the 1994 English curriculum levels which have been patently shown as flawed in their model of progression (see, for example, Elley, 1996)
- problems with construct validity. Concepts such as “surface” and “deep” features are problematic and not recognised in systemic functional linguistics, where all language features have a discursive function. In addition, asTTle tests “construct” reading in questionable and noncontext-specific ways with insufficient recognition of such notions as “genre” and “rhetorical function”
- a resulting mismatch between ways asTTle test features “construct”, for example, response to text and how teachers envisage response to text in their own programmes. Primary teacher-researchers in this project were overly reliant on asTTle as an assessment tool and used it in preference to tests of their own design. As a result, they were compromised in their ability to test what they had actually taught.

However, asTTle testing was part of the mix for a number of teacher-researchers in the project and used: as a source of diagnostic data; as affording students opportunities for metacognition (see, for example, Teacher 2's intervention); and as a measure of progress against certain asTTle indicators.

A pleasing feature of the project, however, was the frequent use by secondary teacher-researchers of ecologically valid testing for diagnostic and summative purposes as a major aspect of data collection. Ecologically valid testing calls for the design of tests which reflect the teaching and learning that has occurred in the classroom (Whitehead, 2007, 2008). For this reason, these teacher-developed tests and rubrics reflected the “construction” of literary study apposite to a teacher's practice. Examples in this report include the close-reading tests used by Teachers 2 and 3 using a critical literacy approach, and Teacher 4's use of a specially designed rubric to assess her Year 9 students' fairy tales. For this teacher, this class's Year 9 asTTle scores were viewed by her as somewhat irrelevant to the progress she was particularly concerned to measure. Some of her misgivings are indicated in the following email:

My theory about asTTle is that I think the results will be flawed if the test is not an exact replica of the pretest—in terms of how many questions based on, say getting information, as opposed to making connections—the students will always appear to have a gap if they missed one question and there only was one (or [sic]) opportunity to get it right. Also, if the marker is not too intelligent and doesn't recognise 'processed vocabulary' (in other words a better answer) it might get marked wrong. Really, the whole idea is a research project in itself. (Received 16 December 2008)

With more time, it would have been an interesting research exercise to have compared asTTle measures of student progress in some aspect of reading or composing texts with ecologically valid measures.

Another research-related theme arising from this project was the effect of high-stakes, qualifications-oriented summative testing on teaching and learning. The emergence of this theme is hardly a surprise, given that it continues to be a global concern (Whitehead & Reed, 2008). Secondary teacher-researchers in this project were determined to design the best possible programmes for their students while making the most of their opportunities to gain credits in terms of an NCEA regime which was powerfully affecting what and how they taught (Locke, 2008a). A poignant and, we believe representative, example of this is the following statement, drawn from one of the teacher-researcher's final reports for the project:

In terms of the NCEA, I start with the questions: What are our students good at? What do they enjoy? and, What do they need? Those three questions determine the standards we will use in our course design. In terms of external standards, in 2008, we removed external standards for a number of reasons. We wanted to feel free to work with literature in more flexible ways in order to focus on student enjoyment rather than preparing for essays. In addition, very few of our students do English at tertiary level. The external standards appear to prepare students for English at tertiary level. Thirdly, our students enjoy and are more successful at internal forms of assessment, because the assessment can be designed in ways which are more communal and less individualistic. My reasons for not assessing creative writing using achievement standards were confirmed when I found myself being directed by the criteria to mark a student's work 'Not Achieved' when they had poured their heart into a story based on a family funeral. A second reason stems from the sense that few students carry on with creative writing after leaving school. A third reason is that I prefer to focus on transactional writing rather than creative writing since they have a greater need of this. We have to spend a lot of time with our students on their writing and we don't have time to cover both by way of preparing for assessment. (Teacher 1)

As has been argued exhaustively in a number of places, the flexibility afforded by NCEA can work both in and against the interests of students and their learning. The experience of this project suggests that teacher education programmes need to teach preservice teachers how to design ecologically valid tests. Though the current government seems determined to introduce some form of standardised assessment test (SAT) into New Zealand schools, the experience in Britain, which has just got rid of them, would suggest that this is not the way to go (see Marshall, 2008). Rather, a policy encouraging the widespread uptake of ecologically valid testing in the context of course-

based assessment (and course evaluation) may be a more productive avenue for policy development.

Work intensification and professional development

The last sentence in Teacher 1's statement above is a reminder of the way in which work has intensified for teachers in the current era of managerially driven reforms and extrinsic accountability "technologies", which began in New Zealand and other settings in the 1980s and 1990s (Apple, 1986). Teacher-researchers in this project frequently alluded to the value of participating in it and the opportunity it gave them to review teaching practices in ways they felt they had been unable to do since beginning teaching. As Teacher 3 remarked in her final report: "Self-reflection and student appraisal of courses and activities need to be embedded in teaching practice." Clearly the students participating in this project benefited from the opportunities the project gave their teachers for sustained reflection, professional reading and collegial conversations around effective teaching practices.

It is arguable that the professional development that has occurred during New Zealand's current era of "reform" (beginning around 1991 with the National Government's Achievement Initiative) has been oriented to reform implementation rather than wider questions of professional content (including disciplinary) and pedagogical knowledge. In our view, professional development in New Zealand needs a much greater thrust in this latter direction. Teacher unions, professional associations, the Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority all have a role to play in this. The literature suggests that the NCEA has imposed a crippling workload on teachers and needs to be reviewed on manageability grounds alone (notwithstanding other kinds of concern). In a recent letter to the new Minister of Education, Anne Tolley, Warwick Elley points out that in the 1970s and 1980s, New Zealand ran national examinations at three grade levels with only nine professional staff, whereas the current task under the NCEA requires a staff of 384. A major factor in this work intensification has been the proliferation of standards and the moderation procedures put in place to address (with dubious effect) reliability issues in a separate standards model of assessment. A number of qualifications models are on offer which solve these issues, including the New South Wales Higher School Certificate qualification (arguably the best on offer in Australasia) and the English Study Design, developed and trialled by the University of Waikato (see Locke, 2007a).

7. Limitations

In this section, we comment on the limitations of the project under the headings of design and participants; context; and focus.

Design- and participant-related limitations

A small number of nonrepresentative primary and secondary teachers participated as teacher-researchers in this project. For this reason, findings are indicative and context-specific rather than generalisable, and in accordance with Lomax's (1986) view that action research is not about ultimate and final answers but rather the determination to improve educational practice through practitioners' professional development. Teacher-researchers in this project utilised a range of measures to provide evidence of the extent to which their interventions had worked with their students. Nevertheless, given the small number of teachers involved, the validity of these findings will also be dependent to an extent on the resonance they have for teachers working in similar settings with similar educational ideals and goals. Nevertheless, it would have been desirable to have had a few more teacher-researchers from the primary sector.

Action research by definition is cyclical and recursive. In this project, the first year was somewhat exploratory with the second taken up with more substantial and, in some cases, ambitious interventions. However, in accordance with the discourse of action research, the findings generated at the end of the "second cycle" (2008) should be seen as generative of a further set of research questions. Indeed, this proved to be the case and most teachers articulated some of these in the concluding remarks of their final reports. The findings reported in this report, then, while authentic, would have generated further questions for investigation had the time frame for the research been longer.

Moreover, while this report can be viewed as dealing with a set of related case studies, the ethnographic dimension of each case study varied. While some teachers set themselves the task of investigating at some length the home and general out-of-school literacy practices of their students, others simply did not have the time or energy to develop this aspect of the research design. Yet the potential for this ethnographic dimension is clear (for example, in the work of Teacher 2).

Context-related limitations

As discussed elsewhere, the wider educational context of curriculum, assessment and qualifications reform had created a limitation for this project. This point will not be laboured here, but it is clear that this context affects, in all sorts of ways, classroom programme design, the design of school schemes and the tasks and activities that are used to foster learning in classrooms.

In varying ways, teacher-researchers in this project were limited as well as helped by the resources (human and material) available to them in their school settings. Mention has already been made of differential access to ICT resources and the effect of this on the design of classroom programmes and activities. Pointedly, while it was clear that the ability levels of student participants varied enormously across classes in this project (in terms of a range of conventional literacy measures), no teacher bemoaned this variability or took refuge in deficit models as explanations of student nonsuccess. Rather than seeing their students in terms of limitations, they invariably saw the diversity of their students as opportunities and challenges to their creativity as teachers. The most obvious context-related limitation for university-based and school-based researchers alike was work intensification. Teacher-researchers tended to see the project as paradoxically enforcing reflection, discussion and planning processes which they seldom saw themselves as having the “luxury” of engaging in, in their typically packed working days.

Focus-related limitations

As Section 5 has mentioned from time to time, teachers were selective in their construction of project-related objectives and the interventions they planned in relation to these objectives. Some of the more obvious gaps include:

- poetry and drama—the major literary focus was short stories and novels; that is, prose fiction
- digital and multimodal texts—the major focus of ICT use was information (related to inquiry) and communication; the representational dimension of ICTs tended to be ignored
- the relationship of form and function—reading activities tended to be content-focused and lacking an emphasis on the way meaning is form dependent
- literary writing—much of the writing at secondary level was undertaken as a way of accumulating credits via transactional “genres” related to the reading of texts; literary reading had primacy over literary writing.

As a general point, it would be interesting to find out what might happen in a classroom where the core activity in literary study was the writing of poetry (a double absence in this project), something recommended for a range of reasons in current research overseas, which offers tantalising glimpses into the potential of this unfashionable option (for example, Collins, 2001; Datta, 2000; Knapp, 2002; Kroll & Evans, 2008; Peskin, 2007).

8. Contribution to building research and practice capability

The TLRI project we have been describing involved seven (initially eight) teacher-researchers from seven schools with culturally diverse populations (four secondary, two intermediate and one primary in South and West Auckland) working with three university-based researchers, one of whose background was in secondary education, and the others in the primary service. All university researchers had been teachers themselves and had an insider's knowledge of the realities of classroom teaching.

Like all TLRI projects, this one aspired to be nonhierarchical; that is, it had at its core a collaborative and respectful relationship between university- and school-based researchers, all of whom were seen as bringing to the project complementary knowledges. Putting this another way, a foundational premise of the project was the concept of complementary expertise. Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1990) and others have noted how teachers' perspectives are often marginalised in research in favour of agendas developed and imposed by external (usually university-based) researchers. In this project, while the broad research questions were determined at the proposal stage, the specific teaching and learning objectives that were the cornerstone of the particular interventions were developed collaboratively and determined finally by the teacher-researcher him- or herself.

This relationship had a major bearing on the decision to frame the project methodologically as action research. As Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) have emphasised, action research is participatory and collaborative. As mentioned in the methodology section of this report (Section 3.4), these authors distinguish three types of changes in relation to the work of individual teachers and the culture of groups that might arise from an action research project:

- changes in discourse: ways in which teachers “word” or “story” their identities, knowledges and pedagogical practices
- changes in “activities and practices”—what teachers actually do in their work and continuing learning
- changes in “social relationships and organisations”—the ways in which teachers relate with students, parents and the wider community, and with colleagues at a departmental, school and general professional level (pp. 14–15).

Drawing on the comments of teacher-researchers themselves, we will use these “types” as headings for discussing how various capabilities of project participants were fostered and enhanced.

Changes in discourse: At the start of this project, participants completed reflective profiles where they deliberated at length on their practice and the discourses underpinning them. No participant in the project was untouched discursively by the experience of it. For all concerned, it was a powerful professional development exercise. The following are comments from teacher-researchers:

From participating in this research I have for the first time since Training College really reflected on who I am as a teacher and questioned myself about some of my beliefs and practices . . . had not been taught about critical literacy but learning about that has been very powerful for me. (Teacher 1)

I think the hardest task Terry asked me to do was at the beginning of the project when we had to reflect on our teaching practice and knowledge of our students in a written format. I thought this would be relatively easy but having to sift through all the information that was in my head, identify and question my practices and then present it in a summary to someone else was really challenging. I am glad we were asked to do this, though, as I would not have taken the time to do it and it was quite a powerful experience on a personal level. (Teacher 2)

This study made me think more about cultural and language issues. I always did believe that students who needed to voice high-level thinking should be able to do that in their own/first language if it helped them. I did ask two of the Korean boys if they were conscious of speaking English or Korean when they did speak in Korean (two Korean boys, particularly did and a third one rarely spoke in anything other than English). They said that although they were always conscious of it, it didn't really make much difference to them in lesson times . . . The study also made me think about trying new things. And being unafraid of trying something new. And that always leads me to think about encouraging other teachers to take a risk sometimes—use a different text—think about their students and get to know them before choosing a text. Also about encouraging teachers to facilitate so that students can learn about what's important, and manage assessment out of that, rather than fall into the trap of teaching specifically for assessment. (Teacher 4)

Changes in activities and practices: The project itself was a powerful incentive for teachers to try new things in their classrooms, invariably as a result of solid reflection and collegial discussion at project round-table days and one-off forums and meetings. In the first instance, however, the project introduced teachers to the practice of *formally* researching their own practice. In this respect, the project might be viewed as a research methods course in situ. In the very first meeting, teacher-researchers were introduced to a range of research concepts which they proceeded to enact over a two-year period. A number of appendices to this report provide evidence of the process whereby teachers were inducted into aspects of the research process (Appendices A, B and C). A number of quite distinct and important competencies can be listed in this regard:

- formulating clear learning objectives—teacher-researchers in this project found they needed to upskill in this respect, having become reliant on policy versions of these; for example, in ladders of achievement objectives
- tailoring learning activities to objectives

- designing data collection instruments, including a range of ecologically valid diagnostic and summative tests—there was a good deal of collaborative work in this regard, and a number of these instruments (for example, surveys and questionnaires) were shared
- matching data collection to objectives, tasks and activities
- analysing data—much of this was done collaboratively
- recording and reporting—the need to record and report represented for all teacher-researchers the challenge to master new professional genres, and all made progress in this respect, some outstandingly so.

One teacher-researcher used the project to frame her thesis for her Master of Education (Cleary, 2008) and graduated with honours in the second year of the project. For others, the project has proved a stimulus for further academic study which will hopefully culminate in classroom-based research. The one secondary teacher-researcher without a Master's degree began one in the course of the project.

One teacher, in the conclusion of her final report, highlighted the difference between a “reflective” teacher and one who has learnt what it means to formally research one's practice:

Being involved in this intervention project meant I needed to make time to survey closely a particular group of students on their reading and learning styles (not just the usual diagnostic data we collect as a department), develop and experiment with new teaching strategies and closely reflect on my own teaching practice. I have always considered myself to be a fairly reflective teacher, knowledgeable about my students' backgrounds and willing to try new things. The TLRI project, however, made me realise that in recent years I have not always made these aspects a priority in my teaching practice. As a HOD there never seems *to be enough time in the day as NCEA requirements, curriculum changes, administration and managing staff have tended to take over*. Working on the project has reminded me how valuable these tools can be when attempting to motivate and improve student learning. (Teacher 2)

All secondary teacher-researchers commented in their final reports on enduring changes to their classroom practices, or practices that they felt the project had reinforced:

I was very happy with the unit we did on analyzing music videos and CD covers. I felt the students gained what I was hoping they would—a way of viewing music videos with a critical mind. We had some good discussions about manipulation when we looked at Finance Company loans together. These are things I would like to do more of. (Teacher 1)

As a result of the work I did for this project, the first thing I will be doing with all my classes next year is give them the surveys I used for this unit and get to know what makes them tick. I will fine-tune some of the other strategies and give them another go. The collection of texts made available will expand and reflect what the students' interests are from the data collected. I will definitely be setting up the online forum at the beginning of next year and using it with my students as a discussion tool. Modelling critical thinking around a text with other colleagues and even with other students is something I wish to develop more. I guess you could say I am excited to build on what I have learnt from the project this year. (Teacher 2)

The classroom based research project has reinforced for me a number of key strategies that inform my classroom practice.

Firstly, that text selection is crucial, especially for students who are not traditionally ‘top performers’. Developing courses that use texts that reflect the interests of the students is the key to engagement and motivation. Māori and Pasifika students enjoyed and responded to texts that reflected their own life and culture or that reflected their interests. In this respect this course was very successful.

Secondly, self-reflection and student appraisal of courses and activities need to be embedded on teaching practice. How else do we know that what we are doing works? I was very lucky that with this group I had the opportunity to ‘experiment’ with a number of ideas and texts that I had been ‘bouncing around’ for quite a while. This has impacted on me in that next year I will develop units along similar lines for a Year 10 class of boys that I will be teaching.

Thirdly, that for students to be able to ‘critically read’ texts, they need to be ‘taught’ what to do. Unless students are made aware of how different texts present different views or versions of reality, they will continue to take the one version they see or read, at face value. A critical literacy approach to texts works towards empowering students to go beyond this first (and generally only) reading.

Lastly, that students appreciate choice and by being given ‘the choice’ to focus on specific texts or assessments, they take charge of their own learning, and can make informed decisions about the work they are embarking on. (Teacher 3)

I think grouping of students is important and although it was not an issue in this class because of its small size, it could be useful to pass this idea on to young teachers facing a multi-cultural and multi-linguistic classroom. Sometimes students need to be united through language and other times separated so that they use English as their medium. There needs to be a thought process in the nature of grouping for particular activities ... Knowing your students well really does matter. (Teacher 4)

Changes in social relationships and organisations: As indicated above, relationships here refer to students, parents and the wider community, and with colleagues at a departmental, school and general professional level. A *sine qua non* of this project was the centrality of the teacher–student relationship. The teacher-researchers in this project were strongly motivated by what Nel Noddings (1986) terms *fidelity*, not as

faithfulness to duty or to principle but as a direct response to individuals with whom one is in relation. Natural caring—the sort of response made when we want to care for another—establishes the ideal for ethical caring, and ethical caring imitates this ideal in its efforts to institute, maintain, or re-establish natural caring. From this perspective fidelity may be interpreted as a precondition for subjectively satisfying relations and a continuing condition for their maintenance. (p. 497)

According to Noddings, teachers guided by an ethic of caring ask questions such as “What effect will this have on the person I teach? What effect will it have on the caring community we are trying to build?” (p. 499).

For the teacher-researchers involved in this project, the experience reinforced and developed the importance they placed on *knowing* their students. As Teacher 4 said in the conclusion of her final report, “I think knowing students really well helps in learning situations in the classroom because you can also help them find a way of approaching a task, especially in writing.” The practice that developed out of the project, however, was the widespread use of diagnostic data, related not just to competence but to attitude. This practice itself proved to be beneficial to student learning and enhanced student motivation by according them the status of stakeholders in their own learning.

The project also strengthened the relationship between teacher-researchers and local communities, in part because of a project imperative to research the home literacy practices of these communities. We find this reflected in the following statements from teacher reports:

The parents of many of our students hope their children will be able to help them navigate their way through a Palagi system and I hope to be faithful to that wish but to take it even further than parents may have thought with this critical literacy approach. Education can be a powerful tool. (Teacher 1)

What did surprise me was how much my students read outside of school with their families and the variety of texts they read. They may not take out books from the school library but many use community libraries and read with family members. This is something that I could tap into more when working on Wide Reading. I will be passing on the reading and library use data to the school’s Library Manager. (Teacher 2)

All teacher-researchers in this project were in their own way professional leaders within their own schools. All secondary teacher-researchers were English HODs and began sharing findings from the project long before its completion. What the project *did* was strengthen the positions they adopted on one or other aspect of practice, since it provided them with evidence to back up what they shared with colleagues within departments and schools and beyond the school. This building of collegiality began in the network of relationships which was the project itself. As Teacher 2 wrote in her final report conclusion: “[Teacher 3’s] sharing of her knowledge of using IT in her teaching programmes gave me the idea to develop an online student forum and it was this intervention I consider the most successful in motivating my students to read.”

This growth in collegiality can be seen in relationship to professional identity formation, drawing on Hoyle’s (1975) model of “extended professionalism”. For Hoyle, the extended professional puts a value on professional collaboration, engages in collegial reflective practices, is involved in nonteaching professional activities and engages in a considerable amount of in-service development which addresses theoretical issues as well as matters of classroom practice. As Section 9 indicates, the completion of the project can be thought of as the start of an extended professional journey as these teacher-researchers find themselves sharing their experiences with their colleagues in print, oral and multimodal forums.

Some problematics of school–university collaboration

One such problematic is contained in the concepts of “representation” and “voice”. To put this in the form of a question: Who is the representer and who is the represented in this research account? Whose voice is being heard in this particular account? Ivor Goodson (1999) encapsulates this concern in what he terms a “representational crisis” related to a surge of interest in teacher narratives.²⁷ This arises “from the central dilemma of trying to capture the lived experience of scholars and of teachers within a text. The experience of other lives is, therefore, rendered textual by an author” (p. 123). He goes on to quote Denzin (1993):

If the text becomes the agency that records and re-presents the voices of the other, then the other becomes a person who is spoken for. They do not talk, the text talks for them. It is the agency that interprets their words, thoughts, intentions, and meanings. So a doubling of agency occurs, for behind the text as agent-for-the-other, is the author of the text doing the interpreting. (Cited in Goodson, 1999, p. 123)

He further suggests that Denzin (1993) is making a case of “academic colonization, or even cannibalization: ‘The other becomes an extension of the author’s voice. The authority of their “original” voice is now subsumed within the larger text and its double-agency”’ (reference and citation in Goodson, 1999, pp. 123–124).

There is no escaping the practical necessity of one person taking responsibility pulling together a major report such as this one into something (hopefully) seamless and coherent. However, in a real sense this report is multivocal. It is a stitching together (or bricolage) and refining of a large number of text extracts written by all members of the project team, sometimes sitting together in front of computer screens, sometimes via the passing to and fro of email attachments that went through countless versions before settling as “final” individual teacher accounts, or as self-contained texts for inclusion in this report. In a true sense, this report is multiauthorial.

A second problematic occurs in situations where university-based researchers work with a team of teacher-researchers drawn from both primary and secondary sectors. The point will be noted here in brief, since it is discussed elsewhere in this report (see Sections 4.3 and 4.4). In a domain as overarching as literacy, there is value in having representation across primary and secondary sectors. Certainly, in those round-table sessions when teachers shared vignettes from their own classrooms, a good deal of commonality of experience was evident as well as mutual learning. However, there were clear tensions also, deriving from the fact that primary and secondary schools are contrasting settings and “discourse communities”, with the latter dominated by concerns about academic literacy, qualifications and subject-specific or disciplinary content. There is an educational cliché that primary teachers teach children while secondary teachers teach subjects. While the secondary teacher researchers participating in this project would bridle at such a statement, one suspects that their primary teacher colleagues at times would have found

²⁷ A major concern of Goodson’s is with the potential for teacher narratives to be divorced from political and micropolitical perspectives, from theory, and from broader cognitive maps of influence and power” (**opening quote mark needed**) (1999, p. 122).

themselves agreeing with it. At times the contrast in discourse produced a creative tension, at other times an uncomfortable divide.

A third problematic might be termed the risk and trust paradox. This might be restated thus: A risk that pays off produces trust. The other potential tension in this project (and others like it) was between the university and the school, and the orders of discourse each represents. It was probably helpful to the success of this project that all university-based researchers had been practising teachers and were able to complete reflective profiles along with their teacher-researcher colleagues, imagining themselves back in their respective secondary or primary classrooms.

Still, each group brought to the project types of insecurity endemic to their respective settings. University researchers, familiar with the “ivory tower” epithet, ran the risk of having their theoretical and practical suggestions viewed by teacher-researchers as unworkable, out-of-touch or “pie-in-the-sky”. In retrospect, primary teacher-researchers would have benefited from more direction from their university co-researchers. However, the university researchers were aware of the constant demands that have in recent years been placed on primary teachers in culturally diverse schools located in lower socioeconomic areas, especially in terms of raising achievement levels in literacy, and the monitoring involved. Such projects tended to construct teachers as “other” and of needing further “development”, and led to teachers being reluctant to add more to their stretched timetables. Having been teachers themselves, the university researchers were aware of the demands of the teachers in the primary school and the tensions that these entailed. Rather than proclaiming the “good news” that “we had for them”, the university researchers sought to encourage lines of focus that could be relevant and interesting, arising from their own particular concerns or interests.

Another risk for university researchers was having their theorising and research efforts found wanting in the eyes of their own peers (represented by the consultative reference group and the quality assurance reference group and by less sympathetic forums in the global academic network). In their turn, teacher-researchers also ran a two-fold risk. The first is the daily fear all teachers face; that is, the fear of being found wanting by one’s students (and the families and communities whence they come). The additional risk these teacher-researchers bought into was being found wanting by peers in the project team. Given these risks, the degree of trust that built up over the two-year duration of the project was quite remarkable and really a stunning tribute to the teacher-researchers themselves who willingly and generously put their own practices on the line. No one balked and no one shirked.

9. Publications and dissemination

At the point of writing this report, the work of publication and dissemination is still a work in progress. Members of the project team are committed to the dissemination of project findings in a number of forums in 2009 and beyond. These include:

- conferences: New Zealand Reading Association, New Zealand Association for Researchers in Education (NZARE), International Association for the Improvement of Mother Tongue Education (IAIMTE) (see below under conference presentations), New Zealand Association for the Teaching of English (NZATE)
- journals: *Reading Forum*, *English in Aotearoa*, *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*
- making teacher reports available via the project wiki
- finding ways of developing resources for teachers based on the project interventions.

Published

Cleary, A. (2008). Keeping up with the “digital natives”: Integrating Web 2.0 technologies into classroom practice. Master’s of Education thesis, University of Waikato, Hamilton.

Conference presentations

Locke, T. (2007, December). *What happened to educational criticism? Engaging with a paradigm for observation*. Paper presented at the NZARE conference on “Education in the Pacific”, Christchurch.

Locke, T. (2008, October). *The disappearance of enjoyment: How literature went wandering in the literacy woods and good lost*. Keynote address presented at the conference on “Teaching English and the Arts in the 21st Century”, University of Sydney.

Locke, T. (2009, June). *Teachers as action researchers: Some reflections on what it takes*. Paper presented at the 7th IAIMTE international conference, “Learning and Teaching Language and Literature”, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Canada.

In press

Locke, T. (in press). Reading, writing and speaking poetry. In D. Wyse, R. Andrews, & J. Hoffman (Eds.), *The international handbook of English, language and literacy teaching*. London/New York: Routledge.

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Appendix A: Teaching literature in the multicultural classroom

A research planning template: 2008

This template is aimed at making it easier to plan, implement and document the interventions that are being trialled with participating classes in the first two terms of 2008. The steps in the template are based on the process modelled at the round-table meeting of the project team on July 2007.

This template does not include the first three steps of this process, that is:

Step 1: What kind of teacher am I and how could I be different?

Most 2008 teacher researchers completed reflective profiles in the beginning of 2007. However, if you are new to the project in 2008, you will need to complete this early this year. Terry will be collating this material on behalf of secondary teacher-researchers, and Gail for intermediate/primary teacher-researchers.

Step 2: Who are my students?

All teacher-researchers will need to collect ethnicity data for their students.

Step 3: What are my students good at? Where are there gaps? (Use performance data).

We expect teacher-researchers to collect and reflect on this kind of data from a range of sources.

The key thing is to ensure that this data is maintained and stored systematically, either in hard or soft copy form (preferably both).

Introduction

Use this section of the template to write a brief overview of what you are going to **do** with your students in your new or revised unit. In addition, provide a brief rationale say **why** you are going to do this.

Step 4: Identify some specific learning objectives that emerge from the preceding steps.

(Here are Terry's examples: Feel free to edit these out of your file at any time!

1. Students understand that texts offer "versions of reality" that can be contested.
2. Students can identify ways in which texts construct these "versions of reality".

3. Students enjoy comparing the ways in which different (cultural) groups view a text.
4. Students can develop narratives using a range of plot elements.
5. Students appreciate that the “same” story can have different “treatments” (depending on form, genre and mode.)

List your objectives below: Since these are likely to apply to a unit of work (i.e. a sequence of work of time), they may be quite broad. **NB: Make sure they are numbered. NBB: Ensure that at least ONE of your objectives refers to cultural and/or linguistic diversity.**

Step 5: Ascertaining diagnostically what my students can do in relation to my chosen objectives

Consider the following:

- Am I going to use a standardised test and/or a diagnostic test of some kind with my students before the unit of work begins? If so, what?
- Am I going to use a specially tailored test of my own design (see the example from Margaret Moumou) which is related to (at least some of) the objectives in Step 5. If yes, it would be good to insert it in this section of the template.
- Am I going to design a questionnaire that indicates student attitudes to certain tasks *before* my intervention?

NB: Data from this diagnostic test should be kept under Step 7 of this template.

Step 6: Designing learning tasks or activities to support objectives

This is in many ways the heart of what we are doing in this project! That is, we are designing learning activities which we believe will help our students achieve the learning objectives (or outcomes) we have identified in Step 4. In *may* be that certain activities will occur to us once the unit has started, or we will modify some of the activities we plan. However, it is important to have a sense of the *sorts* of activities we intend to engage our students in. Use this part of the template to:

1. Describe the activities you design and plan to use before the unit starts
2. Comment on how the design of any of these activities changes in the course of the unit
3. Describe activities developed in the course of the unit of work

It would be a good idea to make a clear link between an activity and an objective for the unit where this is relevant.

NB: Ensure that you incorporate tasks and activities that utilise cultural diversity as a resource, or address issues of cultural and linguistic diversity in some way.

(Here is Terry’s example. Again, feel free to remove this from your record at any time:

- Pre-reading task: Interview a family member who is knowledgeable in your culture. Who does this person regard as a hero in your culture (real or fictional)? What qualities makes this person a hero? [Obj 1]
- List the qualities *you* think a hero should have. [Obj 1]
- Over a range of texts, identify in groups (with teacher support and guidance) representations of heroes and some of the language uses (including visual language) associated with these heroes. List some of the ways these heroes act and suggest ways a *different* sort of hero might act in the same situation. [Obj 1])

Gail's example: This will depend on the focus of your unit/lesson series.

- Introduction: Discussion, visit, reading a story.
- List, or compose together, the key points of the story, account .. (authorised reading) [Obj 2]
- Consider alternative versions (another ending, different roles, other points of view) [Obj 1, 2, 4]

Over a range of texts related to the topic/unit consider a variety of texts (across the strands)

- Compare different accounts and views [Obj 1, 3]
- Re-write, reconstruct alternative re-presentations and language use [Obj 1, 3, 4])

Step 7: Identify and collect data that would indicate that the nominated learning is occurring and in what degree.

List your data sources below (remove any you won't be using and add items that are not included in this list):

- Pre-intervention diagnostic test
- Post-intervention test (paralleling pre-intervention diagnostic test)
- Questionnaire testing student attitudes to particular activities and learning achieved
- Observational data
- Interviews with students
- Focus groups
- Student work samples

You can use this part of the template to insert any data collection instruments you develop (e.g. tests, questionnaires, observation schedules, interview questions, and so on)

Timeline: When do you plan to collect this data? Use a table such as the following to plan this.

| Type of data | When to be collected (date)? How? By whom? etc. | Relevant objective (s) |
|---------------------|--|------------------------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Re data storage:

Clearly data needs to be stored carefully and be available for analysis. If data is in soft copy form, it could be stored in this part of the file template. (Just keep inserting!)

Step 8: Analysing my data

Different data require a different kind of analysis. Some kinds of analysis can be done in consultation with other team members. Other you might choose to do unassisted. Use this section of your template to insert the results of any analyses you do.

Appendix B: Teaching literature in the multicultural classroom

Teacher report template

The structure below is a suggestion only. It offers a reasonably standard sequence that one might follow in reporting on what happened when you tried something new in your classroom practice. The headings themselves can be reworded.

Introduction: The following report is based on a single case study that was part of a larger TLRI project on “Teaching literature in the multicultural classroom” that was managed by a research team from the University of Waikato’s School of Education.” Provide a brief overview of this project and your place in it. [This bit could easily be written by a member of the university team.]

Reflecting on my own practice: A possible opening sentence might be: “I brought to my involvement in this project a number of understandings about the place of literature in my classroom programme. However, I wanted to reflect on these, further my professional development and introduce some changes into my teaching practice.” [Here you talk about yourself as a teacher in a number of paragraphs, perhaps refer to ways some of your understandings were challenged through working with others, and spell out in broad terms what you wanted to do. This is where you should list your objectives (see the research template). *Don’t* describe your intervention in detail at this point.]

The teaching and learning context or My class: In this section tell us the important information about your class, e.g. ethnic composition, linguistic diversity, what they were good at (or not), management issues, special qualities. If you have *pre*-intervention data that is relevant, you could talk about it here.

Trying something new: In this section, describe in some detail your intervention, that is, what you did. This is also the place to discuss the data you collected. (If your data was corroborated by another person, this is the place to talk about this.)

What emerged? or Findings: In this section, tell us systematically what you found out through an analysis of the data. In particular, what did you students learn and what tasks/activities/approaches helped them (or not) in their learning?

Discussion and conclusion: In this section, there are a number of key things to talk about.

- What you learnt about yourself as a teacher and your practice
- What are your unanswered questions?
- What are the implications of your case study for yourself? for your teaching practice? for other teachers? for the education system?
- And so on

Appendix C: Questions for reflection

Me and my students

1. How well do I know my students' cultural/linguistic backgrounds?
2. To what extent does my knowledge of their backgrounds affect my choice of reading/viewing material?
3. To what extent does this knowledge affect the way I conduct classroom interaction?
4. To what extent does this knowledge affect my choice and design of learning activities and processes?

My view of English as a subject/how do I see such fundamental processes as “reading” and “writing”?

1. What aspects of a cultural heritage view of English/literacy am I sympathetic to?
2. What aspects of a personal view of English/literacy am I sympathetic to?
3. What aspects of a textual and sub-textual skills view of English/literacy am I sympathetic to?
4. What aspects of a critical literacy view of English/literacy am I sympathetic to?

Choosing “texts” for reading/viewing/listening

1. On what basis do I choose texts? What factors influence my choice (high interest? relevance to students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds? to widen their horizons? readability or accessibility? for a particular pedagogical purpose?)

The place of writing

1. How do I view the relationship between reading and writing (composing)?
2. What is the balance in my classroom between writing and reading?
3. What view do I have of the writing process?
4. Do I subscribe to a view of the “teacher-as-writer”? If so, how is this reflected in my teaching?
5. What types of texts do I get my students to write/compose? Why?

Pedagogy

1. What skills and understandings do I want my students to develop in relation to the reading of literary texts?
2. What sorts of activities do I use to help them develop these reading/viewing/listening?
3. What skills and understandings do I want my students to develop in relation to the composing of literary texts?
4. What sorts of activities do I use to help them develop these composing skills?
5. What place do inquiry skills have in my classroom, especially in relation to the reading and composing of literary texts?

Classroom discourse or talk

1. What words do I expect myself and my students to use in relation to the relationship between texts and their social context?
2. What words do I expect myself and my students to use in relation to the overall structure of texts?
3. What words do I expect myself and my students to use in relation to sentence-level structures?
4. What words do I expect myself and my students to use in relation to the words used in texts (diction)?
5. What words do I expect myself and my students to use in relation to the prosodic and kinesic (body language) features of oral or audio-visual texts?
6. What words do I expect myself and my students to use in relation to the visual/pictorial aspects of texts.
7. How confident do I feel about my own “technical” vocabulary?

The place of technology

1. What role does technology play in the communicative processes I encourage in my classroom (including presentation).
2. What role does technology play in the pedagogical processes I favour in my classroom?
3. Do I use digital texts for reading? In particular do I use the digital forms of “literary” texts for reading?
4. To what extent do my students use technology for composing (literary) texts?
5. To what extent do my students produce digital literary texts?

Appendix D: Critical literacy pretest

Seeing Granny

By James Berry

Toothless, she kisses
With fleshly lips
Rounded, like mouth
of a bottle, all wet.

She bruises your face
Almost, with two
Loving tree-root hands.

She makes you sit, fixed.
She then stuffs you
With boiled pudding and lemonade.

She watches you feed
on her food. She milks
you dry of answers
about the goat she gave you.

Read the poem entitled “**Seeing Granny**” by James Berry and answer as many of the questions below as you possibly can.

1. After reading this poem, write three sentences of the events this poem describes.
2. How do you think the speaker in the poem feel about his grandmother? What in the poem makes you think that?
3. The grandmother’s lips are compared to the mouth of a bottle: “*fleshy lips rounded like mouth of a bottle*”. Is that a metaphor or a simile?
4. What opinion of grandmothers is that poem trying to get you to believe in?
5. Do you agree that all grandmothers are like that?
6. How are grandmothers you know different to the one in the poem?

Appendix E: White comedy

White Comedy

(from "Propa Propaganda" by Benjamin Zephaniah)

"I waz whitemailed
By a white witch,
Wid white magic
An white lies,
Branded by a white sheep
I slaved as a whitesmith
Near a white spot
Where I suffered whitewater fever.
Whitelisted as a whiteleg
I waz in de white book
As a master of white art,
It waz like white death."

Telephone Conversation

by Wole Soyinka

The price seemed reasonable, location
Indifferent. The landlady swore she lived
Off premises. Nothing remained
But self-confession. "Madam," I warned,
"I hate a wasted journey - I am African."
Silence. Silenced transmission of
Pressurised good-breeding. Voice, when it came,
Lipstick coated, long gold-rolled
Cigarette holder pipped. Caught I was, foully.
"HOW DARK?" I had not misheard "ARE YOU LIGHT
OR VERY DARK?" Button B. Button A. Stench
Of rancid breath of public hide-and-speak.
Red booth. Red pillar-box. Red double-tiered
Omnibus squelching tar. It was real! Shamed
By ill-mannered silence, surrender
Pushed dumbfounded to beg simplification.
Considerate she was, varying the emphasis A
RE YOU DARK? OR VERY LIGHT?" Revelation came.
"You mean - like plain or milk chocolate?"
Her assent was clinical, crushing in its light
Impersonality. Rapidly, wave-length adjusted
I choose. "West African sepia"- and as an afterthought,
"Down in my passport."
Silence of spectroscopic Flight of fancy, till truthfulness clanged her accent
Hard on the mouthpiece. "WHAT'S THAT?" conceding
"DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT IS." "Like brunette."
"THAT'S DARK, ISN'T IT?" "Not altogether.
Facially, I am brunette, but madam, you should see
The rest of me. Palm of my hand, soles of my feet,

Are a peroxide blonde. Friction, caused -
Foolishly, madam - by sitting down, has turned
My bottom raven black - One moment madam!" sensing
Her receiver rearing on the thunderclap
About my ears - "Madam," I pleaded, "wouldn't you rather
See for yourself?"

Appendix F: “Donna”: In search for a prince

Once upon a time in a land where royalty ruled the land, a King was on his deathbed. The villagers were in mourning and everyone was wondering who was going to be the next King and Queen since the only child he and his wife had was a teenage girl by the name of Evangeline. He did not think she was ready to rule by herself yet.

One day the King asked of his beloved daughter,

*Search the lands far and wide,
Find a prince without a bride,
Bring him back and make him King
Of our precious land Trontenham.*

That same day marked the day of the King’s death. Days went by and Evangeline was too busy with her father’s death that she didn’t think about what he had said to her in his last moments. Then out of the blue her mother asked if she wanted to be Queen. She, of course, said yes but not too soon.

“The Kingdom needs its royal family,” her mother reminded her.

“But I can’t do it on my own,” she replied sadly. Then she remembered what her father had told her. She recited it to her mother:

*Search the lands far and wide,
Find a prince without a bride,
Bring him back and make him King,
Of our precious land of Trontenham.*

“I have to leave,” exclaimed Evangeline, “Mother, find a companion for me who will guide me through all royal lands and help me choose a King.”

“I will try,” her mother replied. The next day her mother held a request and trial for a guide for her daughter and by the end of the day a guide had been chosen for her. His name was Juan. He was from a French family and was a well respected member of the village. He was average looking but slightly ugly and was only a few years older than Evangeline.

After packing blankets, bread and other food, the two companions set out on their adventure leaving behind masses of hopeful cheering crowds. Two horses were handed to them and they thanked the owner as they rode off into the forest.

By nightfall the next day, Evangeline and Juan had come to a large kingdom with its name (Flatstone) written in stone on the gate. The castle in the centre was easily three times bigger than her castle with tall turrets and thick, stone walls. At the gate the princess introduced herself and Juan to the guard.

“Please,” she said politely, “I am princess Evangeline from Trontenham kingdom. My companion and I are seeking a place to stay and I am requesting a meeting with your royal family.”

“Come in, your highness,” the guard replied. As they walked through the village followed by the guard the people stopped and stared. They had never seen a princess other than their own before. When they got to the castle the guard told them to wait. The interior of the castle was clean, shining and spacious with marble floors and colourful, hand-made tapestries draped on every wall.

At last the guard came back.

“Follow me,” he said and led them to another room twice the size and even more spectacular. At the end of the room sat Flatstone’s royal family. At once Princess Evangeline saw she had a problem. The royal family did not consist of a prince.

“Hello,” said the Queen in a friendly way, “What brings you to our lovely kingdom?”

“Well, I am looking for a Prince to be my husband and rule Trontenham along side me but I see your family, like mine, does not have a royal son,” Evangeline explained.

“May we stay the night in your wonderful kingdom,” asked Juan.

“You are most welcome,” said the king cheerfully.

“I’m sorry we couldn’t help you,” said a tidily dressed young girl who Evangeline and Juan guessed was the princess of Flatstone.

Their stay in an immaculate room in the castle in Flatstone was most satisfactory. After a delicious breakfast and packing for another few days ride the two companions set out for their next destination. Luckily Juan knew the fastest routes between kingdoms.

“My father went on a great journey with his father. They visited a lot of kingdoms although we are only going to see a few of them,” Juan continued, “A lot of the ones far away from Trontenham do not have princes.”

“It was a pity you didn’t know that before we went to Flatstone.”

“Well my father unfortunately forgot to mention that in the stories he told me,” retorted Juan.

After the long ride they laughed and joked as they walked up to the next kingdom’s gates. It was around midday on a sunny day and Evangeline and Juan were sweating. No guard was at the gate and only a few villagers walked between the small houses. There wasn’t a castle in sight in the small village but there was an extra big house that stood out from the rest. Everything was painted bright colours. They walked through the gates towards the big house. After knocking on the door a short, elderly man opened it and asked of their business in Lancelof.

“My companion and I wish to visit your lovely royal family. You see I am Princess Evangeline of Trontenham and I am looking for a Prince to be my husband and rule as King with me as Queen,” said Evangeline. At hearing this, the man was delighted and let them into the house. Having lunch at a table was the royal family. At one end sat the Queen and at the other the King. Along the sides were an ugly Prince and an ogre-like Princess. As soon as Evangeline and Juan saw them they got a fright.

“What’s wrong with them,” whispered Evangeline.

“I don’t know but let’s get out of here,” Juan whispered back.

“I’m sorry,” Evangeline said out loud, “But I think we must have come to the wrong place. I know it is incredibly rude of us but we must leave immediately as we, um, have, um, a tight schedule.”

“Bye!” Juan said. They briskly walked out the door laughing softly, found their horses and once again set off for the next kingdom.

Because the companions were spending so much time together, Juan had become fond of Evangeline. Evangeline did not know this. As they rode through the forest day after day Juan wished he did not go on this adventure with her.

The next day they found another kingdom. It was equal in size to hers and just as equally beautiful. The guard at the iron gate of the stone wall was friendly and invited them in after a short introduction.

“Maybe this time we will be lucky,” Evangeline said hopefully.

“This kingdom is friends of yours and will probably gladly give you their prince,” Juan said with a tinge of sadness in his voice.

They met with the King and Queen and as Juan predicted they happily let Evangeline marry their handsome son. After grateful goodbyes and some happy tears, Princess Evangeline, Prince Goodwin and Juan set out for Trontenham.

At their arrival the Queen burst into tears and put on a pick feast and party. Everyone was so happy that the princess had found a prince. Evangeline wanted to get married as soon as possible as did the prince. So they scheduled the wedding to be two days from now.

The next day the Queen ordered the people to get the church ready for the ceremony. She also got new crowns made, dresses for the Princess and suits for the Prince, for their wedding was also going to be the day of their coronation.

Of course Juan was now madly in love with Evangeline and was wondering if she liked him. Being the smart person he is he decided to do the easy thing and asked her.

“Evangeline I know you are getting married and all but do you like me?” He asked awkwardly just hours before the wedding.

“Of course I do. Since going on that adventure you have become one of my best friends,” she replied sincerely, “I wish I could talk more but I have to get ready for the wedding and so do you, you are the best man remember.” And at that she walked away.

The wedding was beautiful and went smoothly. No one stood and objected to their marriage, including Juan and everyone enjoyed it and everyone lived happily ever after. Or so they should have.

But a few days went by and after opening presents and enjoying being married, Evangeline finally had time to think. She thought about Juan and what he had said to her before her wedding. Then it suddenly hit her Juan was in love with her and he was wondering if she was in love with him. Then she realised she was. Throughout their journey he had not just become her best friend but their friendship had transformed into love. She went and found Juan to see if it was true. He was sitting on the altar stairs in the church. All the decorations had been taken down. Evangeline walked up and sat down next to him.

“I should have known it sooner,” she said.

“Known what?” he asked.

“That you loved me and I loved you.” They smiled as they realised they had finally found their true love. Princess Evangeline was even happier because she had found someone worthy of ruling with her. Then simultaneously Evangeline and Juan remembered Prince Goodwin. Not knowing what to do they went and consulted the now former Queen.

“This has never happened before but I’m sure he will understand that you both have found true love,” she wisely said.

They sat in a room and discussed how they should tell Prince Goodwin. In the end they decided to just tell him straight out and hope for the best.

So the next morning they sat at a table with him and explained what had happened.

“We had no intention of hurting you but Juan and I have fallen in love,” she said anxiously. They sat quietly waiting for him to reply.

“Ok, ok, that is actually great,” said Goodwin with a sigh of relief.

“What?!” Evangeline and Juan said in unison.

“Yesterday I was just thinking about my old home and then a letter came from my family,” he explained, “They want me to come back and marry this princess so that our families will unite. I was wondering what was going to happen with you and me but now this has happened and I don’t need to worry about it anymore.”

“Well, I’d have to say we weren’t expecting this but good bye and we will miss you very much,” Evangeline said sincerely.

“When do leave?” Juan asked.

“Tomorrow morning,” Goodwin replied, “Good luck to the both of you.”

The next morning there was a small farewell breakfast as Prince Goodwin left.

Another wedding was planned for Juan and Queen Evangeline and also a coronation for Juan.

After the ceremony everyone wished them the well and bowed down to King Juan and Queen Evangeline. And of course this story is not complete without the famous last words, they lived happily ever after.

Appendix G: *The Kite Runner* (Chapter X)

The icy wind tiptoed into the dark blind end alley where I stood, clutching tightly onto the big blue kite. Three tall figures stood before me, arms crossed, blocking my only exit. Their shadows danced in the orange-pink sunset, and then suddenly one moved, shifting towards me until it was no more than an inch away. I curled my fists, bit my lip and felt every tissue in my body tense, ready to make a move at the slightest sound or action.

Assef, on the other hand, seemed, despite the revolting smirk on his face, totally relaxed and confident as he twirled his brass knuckles. Behind him, stood his faithful disciples, their heads down, murmuring cowardly behind his back. Assef's cold animal stare pierced me as if he had captured his most favourite prey, ready to be slaughtered and consumed.

"You're in luck today, Hazara, because it's not going to cost anything, but that blue kite you're holding. Hand it over and you'll be free to go back to that wimp master of yours. A generous deal, isn't it?" Assef suggested, narrowing his eyes and looking down at me.

"It's mine. Agha Amir has won it fair and square at the kite tournament and I've run it for him with honour. It's his kite." I said, my voice quivering. Fear crept through me as I stepped forward and before I could stop myself, I picked a rock from the littered alley and hurled it into Assef's face, striking his forehead so that a trace of blood trickled down his nose. In an instant I was pinned, chest down, to the snow, my arms spread-eagled and clamped by vice-like hands and Assef slithered his cold fingers around the back of my neck as he climbed on top of me.

The blue kite was thrown aside as I struggled, landed amongst the piles of scrap and rubble littering the alley. Its blue glow illuminated in the twilight of the early dusk, revealing its magnificence. Hot tears flooded into my eyeballs but I choked them back as I attempted to reach for the blue kite, my hand quivering. I must get that kite back to Agha Amir. I must! I must! I must!

He tried with his entire mite to win the tournament so he could prove to Agha Sahib that he is worthy of his attention. All those times we spent together practising cutting kites, making kites and plucking the strings with our fingers until they bleed. Agha Amir's skills were phenomenal. He was the most outstanding competitor of the tournament. But that was wasted because of me. I had failed him. I was a worthless, useless servant. The distance between Agha Amir and Agha Sahib was as great as ever.

I had once again angered agha Amir, like that day when he had written his personal short story. I was the first to listen to it as he acknowledged me as his most faithful and worthy audience, but his kindness was disrupted by my arrogant questioning and ignorant curiosity. What position am I to question his great work? I am ever regretful of what I had done. That night, father had called me to him. He lectured me the history of Hazaras and Pashtuns; we are, and forever will be in the control of the Peshtuns and we must always obey their orders. We do not have the right to question or protest against our position for we are made to serve. Father and I, were amongst the most fortunate Hazara servants as Agha Sahib was kind and generous to us. He never treated us like servants, but as his family. Therefore, we must repay them with our unwavering loyalty because we have nothing better to offer. Their doing or saying we must never question and be ever grateful. Father made me promised that I will never deceive, contradict nor fail an order by Agha Amir and I promised him with my heart. For that, I am willing to sacrifice everything I have, everything.

"I don't know." whispered one of Assef's followers. "My father said it's sinful."

"Your father wouldn't know. Besides it's only a Hazara." Assef said, looking at them from one to the other. "Fine. Just hold him down then you cowards." He snapped as he loosened his grip on my neck whilst unbuckling his belt and knelt behind me.

I stopped struggling and lay there still. At the far end of the alley I saw a face, a familiar face, but only for a second and then it was gone. Disappeared into thin air as Assef leant forward and his quick rhythmic grunts filled the air.