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Published

2020

Book Title

Literacies in early childhood: Foundations for equity and quality

Version

Accepted Manuscript (AM)

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Chapter 10

Diversity goes to school: Ways forward for literacy teaching in the early years

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CITATION: Exley, Beryl & Taylor-Leech, Kerry (2020) [Diversity goes to school: Ways forward for literacy teaching in the early years](#). In Woods, A & Exley, B (Eds.) *Literacies in early childhood: Foundations for equity and quality*. Oxford University Press, Australia, pp. 197-211.

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Abstract:

This chapter discusses some approaches for teaching children from diverse language groups in early education contexts. We commence by overviewing the multiple languages spoken in Australia to highlight the diversity that currently exists in many early years education contexts. Attention is drawn to the mainly monolingual Euro-Australian educators and the need for these educators to have approaches that (i) go beyond multiculturalism, and (ii) harness the affordances of multimodal texts. Two case studies that contrast discourses of deficit with discourses of resourcefulness are introduced, highlighting the need for educators to manage the effects of the former whilst working to adopt the latter. The chapter concludes by considering major policy directives in early years education and some specific accounts of

educators who have implemented literacy lessons that promote interculturalism and develop children's Standard Australian English and their facility with multimodal texts.

Keywords

multilingualism, multiculturalism, diversity, early years, multimodal text, disadvantage, deficit discourses, literacy, policy, Standard Australian English, LOTE

Multiple Languages in Australia

According to the *Australian Curriculum: English* (Australian, Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2018a) Standard Australian English (SAE) is given importance because of its role “in more formal settings such as for official or public purposes” and as the language “recorded in dictionaries, style guides and grammars”. Despite the priority given to SAE, Australia is also a multilingual country. There are many tangible benefits for individuals and society as a whole when multilingualism is supported in ways that don't essentialise specific groups of people.

In 2014, it was estimated that 120 Indigenous languages were still being spoken throughout Australia (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Studies, 2014). Whilst many of these languages were, and still are, at-risk of dying out, an active languages program in Australian schools is helping to preserve some of these languages. An earlier study by Purdie et al. (2008) identified that over 16,000 Indigenous children and 13,000 non-Indigenous children located in 260 Australian schools were undertaking one of 80 of the Aboriginal Language Programs or Torres Strait Islander Language Programs as a “Language Other Than English” (LOTE). Most of these children were attendees of State Government or Territorial schools located in the Northern Territory, Western Australia, New South Wales, and South Australia (Purdie, et al, 2008). From 2015, the Australian Curriculum Languages framework offered three pathways for children studying an Aboriginal language or a Torres Strait Islander language at school: First Language Learner

Pathway (L1), Language Revival Learner Pathway (LR) and Second Language Learner Pathway (L2). These multiple pathways are designed to “cater for differences between the ecologies of the languages and the communities who are owners and custodians of the languages” and to cater for those who come from a variety of language backgrounds (Australian, Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2018b).

Australia is also home to new arrivals, reportedly from every culture, every race, every faith and every nation (Australian Government, 2017, p. 3). The 2016 census confirmed “over 300 separately identified languages spoken in Australian homes” with just over one-fifth (21 per cent) of Australians speaking a LOTE at home (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Since the 2011 census, the percentage of monolingual English-speaking Australians dropped from 76.8% to 72.7% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017). After English, the next most common languages spoken at home in 2011 were Mandarin (1.6%), Italian (1.4%), Arabic (1.3%) and Cantonese (1.2%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017). In the 2016 census, Mandarin remained the most popular non-English language (2.5%), and Italian dropped out of the top five. In the 2017 census, the next most popular languages after Mandarin were Arabic (1.4%), Cantonese (1.2%) and Vietnamese (1.2%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017). The Australian-based Social Research Centre report (2017) found that 277, 611 (21.9 per cent) children attending child care services during a particular reference week in 2016 had a parent or guardian who spoke a LOTE at home.

The reality is that in Australia the children who come from language backgrounds other than English, or who have the capacity to either listen, speak, read or write in a LOTE, has burgeoned. We also know that for children from socially and culturally diverse community groups schooling is what McNaughton (2003) terms “risky business”. In other words, these are the children who will most likely be disengaged from the processes of schooling and, by virtue of these processes, most likely to be less well prepared to embrace

their life pathways and their myriad opportunities. This comment speaks to the challenges for early childhood settings and school systems, educators and the children themselves.

In addition, the profile of educators in schools has been and continues to be dominated by those who identify as non-Indigenous, middle class and of Euro-Australian backgrounds. According to a report published by Collins and Reid (2012), immigrant educators are three times less likely to be teaching in the early years of schooling than in the primary or secondary years of schooling. This means that there is a greater likelihood of a mismatch between the culture and expectations of schools and the home cultures of many children (Perso, 2012). In an attempt to bridge this mismatch, well intentioned early years educators adopt discourses of multiculturalism where cultural and linguistic diversity are celebrated on specially held multicultural days. Sometimes these multicultural days encourage national dress and/or the sharing of food. Such discourses, however, fail to address entrenched stereotypes about groups of people and limit the mainstream population to learning more about national dress and food types than about the contributions people from diverse cultures make to Australian society. Miller and Petriwskyj (2013), instead, argue for discourses of interculturalism, to “focus on deep engagement with diverse cultures and worldviews to enrich children and the society” (p. 254). “The prefix *inter* means ‘between’, ‘among’, ‘together’ and when used with culture, suggests a reciprocal exchange of knowledge across cultures” (Choy, Singh & Li, 2017, p. 2).

New Literacies Studies – The Multimodality of Language

Another facet of the new era that makes teaching diverse groups of children a challenge for educators is the growth in communication modes (New London Group, 1996). Becoming literate is not just about acquiring the vocabulary of another language and its peculiar grammatical structure. Communication is considered multimodal when the delivery of the message involves a combination of two or more modes, such as written, visual, audio,

gestural, spatial designs and touch (Mills, Unsworth & Exley, 2017). These intersections of modes, called intermodal coupling by Painter, Martin and Unsworth (2013), occur when multiple modes impact upon one another and must be understood together.

As example of intermodal coupling is the culturally specific way that spoken text is delivered when particular cultural habits are taken up. For example, Taylor-Leech (2011) recounts the time she assumed that Bernieⁱ, a Burundian refugee who was quietly spoken in interviews and avoided eye contact with his educators, was a passive learner and experiencing helplessness. However, as Taylor-Leech and her colleague came to know Bernie, they realised that he spoke five languages and that his quiet demeanour should have been understood as a demonstration of courtesy and respect. In Burundian society age seniority and gender dictate one's "right to speak" (Taylor-Leech & Yates, 2012, p. 139). "For a man to raise his voice is regarded as deeply demeaning and a sign of personal weakness" (Taylor-Leech, 2011, p. 119). In this example, Bernie was enacting the intermodal coupling of the audio and gestural literacies of his culture, but his Australian educators did not immediately recognise that his striking composure was evidence of his deeply embedded and executed linguistic and cultural knowledge.

In another example of the multimodality of language and cultural practices, two non-Indigenous educators recount their time working as volunteers at an Indigenous Homework Club called the *Dreaming Circle*. Held on a patio outside a classroom at a local school (Exley, Davis & Dooley, 2016), the *Dreaming Circle* session always commenced with the Indigenous children and Indigenous and non-Indigenous adults sitting in a yarning circle. The non-Indigenous volunteers have learnt that a circle does not have a head; in a circle everyone is equal. They have also learnt about the specificities of who can talk and when via the sharing of message sticks. The person who holds the message sticks is permitted to address the yarning circle. When someone wishes to talk, they must hold the message sticks. Another

literacy specific to a yarnning circle involves spatial literacies. The space within the yarnning circle “is sacred and must not be physically crossed whilst the circle is set. Movement, for example, arriving late and joining the circle, excusing oneself to go to the toilet and so forth, must occur outside of the set circle” (Exley, Davis & Dooley, 2016, p. 41).

An example of new understandings of communication practices is that of touch. For instance, touch is a specialised communication tool for using digital technologies. Precise touch practices are needed to operate an iPad, a mouse pad on a lap top or to use a mouse to drag and click items on a screen. Each of these digital touch functions require different pressure points, a different timing and a different physical action. For example, touch on an iPad involves pressure with the thumb and first finger in the same instance, followed by a thumb and finger split carried out at twitch speed. Touch on a laptop mouse pad involves a rubbing motion with the top of the thumb on the mouse pad, followed by a single tap with the top of the thumb on the mouse pad. Touch on a 3D mouse involves the whole hand embracing the mouse and swiping the mouse left, right, up or down, and then the side of the thumb clicking once on a tab on the body of the mouse. Merchant (2015) researched children as young as 14 months interacting with iPads through touch functions. He also documented how keen young children were to discover and persist with learning the necessary control movements.

Touch is also a culturally specific human-to-human communication practice. In some cultures, various forms of touch are both prescribed and proscribed. In the classroom, touch is a very subtle but powerful form of teaching strategy. For example, in classrooms, a drama educator might use a ‘tap in’ technique to bring a ‘frozen’ character to life during a process drama activity, and then ‘tap’ that character once again to return to the ‘frozen’ state (Exley & Dooley, 2015).

The Viewpoint of the Educator – Difference as Deficit

There are a number of viewpoints early years educators can adopt when thinking about the language use of young children from language backgrounds other than English. One viewpoint is to focus solely on the child's confidence and competence with speaking, reading and/or writing a particular literacy skill in the target language. Early years educators who consistently highlight what these young children cannot do as speakers, readers and/or writers of the target language are adopting a deficit discourse. A deficit discourse is reproduced when the educator only takes notice of what is missing in the child's language use. In his sociological analysis, Bernstein (2000, p. 48) contends that performance models can have a negative effect, such as when teaching is viewed as "a potential repair service". Performance models tend to objectify the child and the educators via the awarding of grades or allocation of performance levels. From this viewpoint, pedagogic relationships tend to position the educator as the more knowledgeable Other who, metaphorically speaking, has to fill the empty vessel of the child who does not know enough or cannot do enough. When these deficit discourses are dominant, the risk is that the educator will not 'see' the whole child and what the child can already 'do' as a language and literacy user.

An example of a teaching and learning sequence is included as Text 11.1. In this scenario, the educator is Marie. She is an experienced educator in a French early years learning program for young children who come from a range of social backgrounds. In the excerpt, Marie is working with Henri, a child in the *grande section* (third and last year) of an *école maternelle*ⁱⁱ for 5- 6 year olds (Exley & Richard-Bosse, 2012). He has been identified as being 'at-risk' of not achieving the set literacy standards for his age. He is a multilingual child, new to the target language of French and comes from a home environment where print based literacies were not encouraged. In this part of the lesson, Marie is trying to get Henri to complete a worksheet where he is required to translate lower case letters into the upper case equivalents. An alphabet table is included at the bottom of the worksheet but, as we will see,

the alphabet table uses a sans serif font that differs from the letters that the educator wants Henri to transcribe. The alphabet table on the worksheet seems to complicate rather than supports the task.

Text 11.1 – Assessment via a public performance

Marie called to Henri and explained, “this letter, it’s the (lower case) ‘n’, it’s here” (pointing to the table), “you must write the (upper case) letter that is underneath”. Henri completed the upper case ‘N’ successfully. Marie pointed to the lower case ‘t’, said the name of the letter, located it in the alphabet table and then asked Henri which letter he would write. Henri pointed to the upper case ‘T’ but said, “I don’t know how to write it”. Marie suggested, “a line down and a line across the top.” Henri completed this transcription successfully. The next letter was a lower case ‘a’. Marie asked Henri the name of the letter, prompting, “This one, you know it; it’s in your (family) name”. Henri answered correctly and wrote the upper case ‘A’. When transcribing the lower case ‘i’ to upper case ‘I’, he added the top and bottom serifs as shown in the alphabet table, but Marie sighed audibly and said, “You don’t need to do the lines. The (upper case) ‘I’ is just one line.” She said the letter name and again explained how to form the letter. For the upper case ‘N’, she demonstrated on the paper and Henri’s first attempt was not right. He grimaced and looked at Marie as she erased the letter. He tried again, this time with success. This triadic sequence was replicated as Henri transcribed the lower case ‘a’ and ‘k’ to upper case ‘A’ and ‘K’. By the end of the time allocated to the lesson, Henri still had not finished the worksheet. (Exley & Richard-Bosse, 2012, p. 354).

In Text 11.1, Marie maintained a focus on one specific learning outcome. She wanted Henri to complete the worksheet that his peers were completing relatively independently. Her persistence had some success in that Henri was able to complete a number of tasks, but he was not taught how to undertake the cognitive task associated with transforming lower case

letters into upper case letters (Exley & Richard-Bossez, 2012). The selection, sequencing, pacing and evaluative criteria of the lesson were not targeted towards Henri's existing knowledge and skills. The work was not within his zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1987) and there was no opportunity for Henri to tell Marie what he knew about letters and translating letters from lower case to upper case representations. Henri also had to guess which of the letters the educator wanted written differently to the alphabet table at the bottom of the worksheet. From Henri's point of view, Marie's demands seemed somewhat arbitrary. Instead, within the performance model of learning, the "emphasis was upon what is *missing* in the product" (Bernstein, 2000, p. 46, emphasis in the original). This part of the lesson confirmed Henri's identity and status as a struggling writer, not only for him, but also for the children who witnessed Marie's continual commentary. Some educators orientate to the performance model so as to make the evaluative criteria explicit: "the acquirer will be made aware of how to recognise and realise the legitimate text" (Bernstein, 2000, p. 47). But there is a price to be paid. Marie did not, in the words of Schraad-Tischler (2011), guarantee each individual "genuinely equal opportunities for self-realisation through the targeted investment in the development of individual 'capabilities'" (p. 11).

The Viewpoint of the Educator – Difference as a Resource

In contrast to the scenario described above, early years educators can focus on the child's confidence and competence as a language and literacy user, noting what the child can do. Early years educators can also be more mindful of the widening range of knowledges and skills young children need to demonstrate to be considered literate in today's world. The following case study introduces one multilingual child and his family, and notes the literacy practices being developed in the home. After the case study, we discuss the viewpoint that difference is a resource and note the implications of taking this view for this young child.

Text 11.2 - The little apprentice

Photo removed

The young boy in the picture, Kamal (pseudonym) is an Arabic and English speaking ‘new Australian’, a term commonly used to refer to recently arrived immigrants. A few years before this photograph was taken, Kamal and his family had moved to Australia, having been granted residence under its humanitarian programme. He was attending a state primary school in his local Queensland suburb, and was taking time out of school to accompany his father on a visit back to the family who had remained behind in their home country in the Middle East. Kamal was one of the youngest of ten children. It is expensive to fly almost anywhere overseas from Australia and his father could not possibly have afforded to take them all. Kamal was the lucky one. His father had chosen to take him on the trip because he was more independent than his younger siblings but still young enough to fly on a child’s fare. The photograph was taken as part of a study on the home literacy practices of bilingual new-Australian families, exploring in particular the role of ‘new’ literacies (i.e., digital and online literacies, mobile phone technologies and messaging) in the families’ lives. The aim was to explore the literacy traditions and resources the families brought to Australia, and how these might support second language literacy development and integration into the wider Australian community. The participating families were asked to contribute photographs showing themselves engaged in literacy activities, and this photograph provided particularly rich information. Examining the picture as a literacy event reveals a lot about the new literacy practices of immigrant families like Kamal’s.

Let us first consider the space and the objects in the photograph itself. The bare wall contrasts with the rich patterns of the carpet on the floor and the heavy curtain covering the window is drawn, lending the room a warm and cosy feel but also allowing good visibility of the laptop screen. In the background we see a desktop computer on a workstation. It is noticeable that the computer is not in a separate room but in the main family living area. It might well be that

the computer is well used and very much a part of everyday family interaction. Adjacent to the computer is a television, which is switched on and broadcasting in Arabic – but is ignored for the time being by the people in the picture, whose attention is fixed on the laptop computer. The focus of their attention is a skype call to the family back in Australia. Kamal's father is operating the laptop; his hand is relaxed and comfortably controlling the trackpad to set up and manage the call. His two brothers sit in close proximity to him, gathered around the laptop, one brother's hand gripping the other's arm in an unconscious show of excitement and pleasure. A blanket drapes the shoulders of two of the brothers, emphasising the intimacy of the literacy event. It is evident here that communication technology has reduced the tyranny of distance and brought the extended family together, virtually crossing physical borders that are otherwise costly and difficult to traverse. But it is human new literacies that mediate the connections between the family's new and former country of residence and sustain transnational family ties.

Clothing too conveys messages about transnational identity. The men are all wearing the traditional Arabic tunic. Kamal's father certainly does not dress like this in Australia, where he chooses to wear more westernised clothes. Here, he seems to have slipped comfortably back into his Arabic identity, seated cross-legged and shoulder-to-shoulder with his brothers on the carpet. Kamal, however, sports a football strip, an outfit universally loved by children of his age and a symbol of globalisation. His shirt displays the initials of UNICEF, another globalised institution. Transnational identities and literacies are thus reflected in the dress of the participants in this event.

Kamal is sitting slightly on the edge of the adult group but is nevertheless fully engaged in the interaction. He sits close to his father. Whereas the adults' gaze is focused on the laptop screen, the direction of Kamal's gaze is towards his father's hand on the trackpad. Kamal is clearly absorbing the sequences of commands and the meanings of the gestures needed to

operate the trackpad and make a skype call. In this sense, we can think of him as a literacy apprentice. Kamal moves frequently and easily between an Arabic-speaking environment and an English-speaking one. He is learning at a young age what it means to be a transnational citizen in a mobile world, and informally acquiring bilingual, digital, communication skills that go beyond what might be expected of him in a traditional primary school.

When educators orientate to Kamal's developing literacy knowledge and skills, the orientation is to competence. In the competence model, the "emphasis is upon what is *present* in the acquirer's product" (Bernstein, 2000, p. 46, emphasis in original). When educators adopt to the viewpoint that linguistic differences and cultural differences are a resource, they help to reduce prejudice, promote cross-cultural understanding, improve relations between different language and cultural groups and enhance the sense of belonging and trust between educators, children and their families (Miller & Petriwskyj, 2013). However, when educators adopt this viewpoint, the criteria for evaluating the child's literacy knowledge and skill are more likely to be "implicit and diffuse" (Bernstein, 2000, p. 46), thereby making it more difficult for some children to know what text to attempt or what to do or say. The challenge for educators who favour a competence model is to ensure that children are not disadvantaged by the implicit requirements.

Changes in the Policy Arena

Another significant aspect of this educational era is policy change. Policies exist in the early years education that push the "respect for diversity" and "intercultural" agendas (Miller & Petriwskyj, 2013) into learning and teaching spaces. By virtue of these policies, the early years educator is formally charged with the responsibility of promoting positive literacy learning experiences for all children from diverse linguistic backgrounds. For example, in Australia's first national Early Years Learning Framework (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009), a sub-component of Outcome 2 is that children "respond to diversity with respect" and

that educators promote this learning by “reflect[ing] on their own responses to diversity” and “expose children to different languages and dialects and encourage appreciation of linguistic diversity” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, p. 27). The Early Years Learning Framework (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009) focuses on diversity of experiences, recognising children’s and families’ different approaches through three elements that include (i) principles of respectful relations, high expectations and equity, (ii) learning practices that are responsive, play based, holistic and at times intentional, and (iii) learning outcomes that cover identities, wellbeing, connections, and communication (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009).

Whilst the Early Years Learning Framework recognises the ancestral relatedness of Indigenous people within the document, the more recently released Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (Department of Education and Training, Victoria, 2016) overtly draws on these worldviews as the centrepiece of the visual representation. For example, the visual representation of the framework places an Indigenous symbol for the child at the centre, “surrounded by family, kin and early childhood professionals” (Department of Education and Training, Victoria, 2016, p. 3). The three elements of (i) practice principles, (ii) transitions, and (iii) outcomes are represented in the concentric circle that envelops the child/family/kin centre. These three elements also are represented through carefully placed Indigenous symbols for people sitting, animal tracks, campsites, waterholes, woomeras, shields and digging sticks.

More recently, the “*Te Whāriki*” Early Childhood Curriculum (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017) links the Maori principles of empowerment, holistic development, family and community and relationships to its goals, strands, and learning outcomes. The focus is on the right of every child to protection, well-being and their own cultural language and cultural practices. These principles are central to the non-prescriptive pedagogical practices adopted by the educator. Assessment practices are informed by a range of formative, holistic, formal

and informal principles. Central to and recurrent throughout the document is the responsibility of the educator to ‘weave’ an intercultural teaching/learning journey for each child; educators must craft the pedagogical response to allow these principles to show through. The notion of weaving carries through to the visual of a “*kōwhiri whakapae whāriki*” (woven mat) that represents the “start of a journey that will take the traveller beyond the horizon” including “the realm of potential and the start of enlightenment...new life and growth” with the possibility of “differing cultural connotations” (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 11).

This changing Australian demography and newly introduced policy documents have changed the landscape of what it means to be an English and literacy educator. New emphases in the *Australian Curriculum: English* (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2018a) include a sub-strand focused on “Language Variation and Change”. In this sub-strand, all children learn that “languages and dialects are constantly evolving due to historical, social and cultural changes, demographic movements and technological innovations” (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2018a, p. 7).

An Evidence Base of Ways Forward

This section overviews some research studies that should be of interest to early years language and literacy educators. Research that investigated the disparate experiences of early years children from minority cultures in their formative years of schooling found these children fared better socially and academically when educators held high expectations of every child, offered praise, used gentle means to redirect inappropriate behaviours, replaced discourses of “deficit” with discourses of “resourcefulness”, and scaffolded tasks so children knew what they had to do to achieve success (Skinner, Bryant, Coffman & Campbell, 1998).

One innovative research project undertaken in Queensland schools that adopted the principles noted above involved the production of early years readers that were written and illustrated by Indigenous authors and illustrators. This research project involved 13 schools located in community, urban and remote settings, 17 Reading Recovery educators and 38 Indigenous children who were assigned to a Reading Recovery Program (Exley & Bliss, 2004). This project demonstrated how this learning community produced culturally relevant texts and employed a culturally relevant framework for interaction between Indigenous children and their non-Indigenous Reading Recovery educators that had measurable benefits for the children's literacy progress (Exley & Bliss, 2004). Changing the text is important for the way it set up Indigenous children as readers, thereby providing them with a knowledge and skill base for further learning. While this project does not suggest that Indigenous children should be given culturally relevant texts exclusively, it does suggest the need for educators working with culturally diverse children to be critical of the reading resources that are used.

Another innovative research project was undertaken by a Year 2 educator, Jessie. Jessie's class was made up of local middle-class Euro-Australian children as well as children from African refugee families. To create an intercultural experience, Jessie used inquiry questions to set up units of work. This time the enquiry question was: "Why are rainforests important and how do they operate?" To build the children's field knowledge, Jessie organised a whole class excursion to a local rainforest. She wanted to create a common experience for all the children to serve as a basis for shared conversations (Exley, 2007). In addition, Jessie provided multimodal learning experiences where the children could listen to "recordings of rainforest sounds (audio design), view colour plated images in books (visual design) and then use their bodies to mimic the characteristics of the rainforest fauna and flora (gestural design)" (Exley, 2007, p. 107). Digital photos were taken of the "body sculptures

(gestural and spatial design), and annotated with descriptive vocabulary and scientific terms (linguistic design)” (Exley, 2007, p. 107). In Jessie’s classroom, children who were not yet competent with SAE oral or written language were supported by the use of visuals, soundscapes and use of body gestures. In this way, multimodal texts were used by the children to show what they knew about the content. Jessie encouraged the children to work in cross-cultural groups so they could engage in discussion, question one another, and provide constructive criticism as they produced a group e-book about a character who lived in the rainforest. This community of learners approach necessitated a lot of shared talk and sharing of expertise, culminating in a community launch of their new multimodal texts. The children who struggled with reading and writing tasks brought their skills with “iconic codes, visual, verbal and gestural literacies to the meaning making task” (Exley, 2007, p. 110). Exley (2007, p. 110) noted that this is “demanding multiliteracies work” but also noted that the children embraced the challenges.

Concluding Comments

As the research work of Taylor-Leech and Yates (2012) shows, the strategies mentioned above focused on social integration, bringing new levels of motivation, new levels of language and literacy proficiency and thus a new sense of achievement, ownership and control. The two projects reported on in the last section were not innovative because they included new book resources or new forms of digital text production; rather, innovation was founded on the integration of content from multiple key learning areas and pedagogies that developed in response to the children’s linguistic and cultural diversity and the educators’ preparedness to value multiple ways of being alongside multiple ways of learning. These last two projects document some pedagogies that create space for the negotiation of a different social order, one where linguistically and culturally diverse children are repositioned as valuable contributors, and where their differences are actively recognised. These two projects

show the benefits that arise when educators consciously develop an epistemology of pluralism that provides access without culturally and linguistically minority children having to erase their different linguistic and cultural identities. The core message is not the verbatim adoption of these two research projects. These accounts should not be seen as a plan of what all early years educators should do. Rather, the overview of these two research projects is an opportunity for early years educators to better understand what a range of educators are doing in complex new times.

Acknowledgements

Ideas contained within this chapter recount professional discussions explored as part of Beryl Exley's research work supported by Australian Research Council Grant DP160102784 'Learning for Teaching in Disadvantaged Schools', awarded to Singh et al. from Griffith University.

Suggested further resources

Ponciano, L. & Shabazian, A. (2012). Interculturalism: Addressing diversity in early childhood. *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, 41, 1, 23-29.

This short article provides practical suggestions for implementing an intercultural approach in early years classrooms. The intercultural approach benefits all students. Queensland Department of Education. (nd). *Embedding culture in practice for kindergarten teaching and learning*. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJ_Ra8MnFe8

This short video shows demonstrations of classroom practice in Indigenous early years settings. The focus is on how the Indigenous early years educators use cultural knowledges to extend on children's use of literacy practices. An Indigenous 8 ways framework is shown that includes story sharing, community links, deconstruct/reconstruct, non-linear, land links, symbols and images, non-verbal and learning maps.

Grant, H. (2017). Imagining Action. *Practical Literacy: The early and primary years*. 22, 1, 15-19.

Helen Grant has taught in diverse communities for many years. In this article, she recounts multimodal activities undertaken with children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds where they explore their multiple literacy identities. Students use visual text and photographic text to communicate their knowledge about these topics. Examples of students' work are shown.

Reflection and follow up activities

1. If you have young children, or you're visiting a home with young children, identify the child's use of the multiple modes of communication. For example, identify when written, visual, audio, gestural, spatial designs and touch are used as a communication tool by the child or by the person with whom the young child is interacting.
2. A wordless children's picture book by Jeannie Baker (2010), "Mirror", is a special read. The book opens from the front and the back at the same time, with each section showing collaged images of a child's day in their homeland of Sydney, Australia (read from front) or Morocco, Northern Africa (read from back). The points of similarity are striking. Review each child's day and note the examples of interculturalism for each of the two families. What do these overt and subtle forms of interculturalism say about the lived experiences of the children entering our early childhood settings?
3. Locate a copy of the New Zealand Ministry of Education's (2017) "*Te Whāriki*" Early Childhood Curriculum. At the time of writing, it was available from <https://education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Early-Childhood/ELS-Te-Whariki-Early-Childhood-Curriculum-ENG-Web.pdf>. Identify the explicit references to

interculturalism in the curriculum document. Think about the way intercultural practices benefit both mainstream students and children from other backgrounds.

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ⁱ All names of people mentioned in the research studies in this chapter are pseudonyms.

ⁱⁱ The equivalent of a nursery school in the United Kingdom or a kindergarten in Australia.