UTS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

How can Aboriginal Teachers use culturally enhanced approaches when teaching foundational skills for reading and writing in the early years?

by Melissa Kirby

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education (Research)

under the supervision of Hilary Yerbury & Katherine Bates

University of Technology Sydney

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

July 2021

Certificate of Original Authorship

CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, Melissa Kirby declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of *Master of Education (Research)* in the *Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences* at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

Production Note:
Signature: Signature removed prior to publication.

Date: 06.07.2021

Contents

Abstract

This study, conducted by an Aboriginal teacher of foundational literacy, addresses the question of how Aboriginal teachers use culturally enhanced approaches when teaching foundational literacy skills. It used the Kapati method of data collection through yarning to gather descriptions of the pedagogical approaches and practices used in teaching literacy as well as insights into a range of related topics raised by the five Aboriginal teachers who agreed to take part in this study. The themes arising from the content analysis showed how they developed their own pedagogical approaches, complying with and subverting the mandated pedagogical approaches. It has also shown how they believe that while they may be valued for their cultural knowledge, it is more difficult to be recognised for their expertise in the teaching of literacy. The findings of the study hint at the challenges inherent in developing literacy in Standard English, in a context where this may be seen as the colonisers' language, the language which displaced traditional languages. This study could have far-reaching implications both for the practice of teaching foundational literacy and for scholarship and research. It has certainly been able to demonstrate how the use of a social pedagogy can be a subversive activity.

Acknowledgements

There are many people whose help and support in so many ways have been essential to me in this big undertaking, studying for a research degree. First and foremost, to my daughter, Sanaa, thank you for being patient and kind waiting for your mother to finish her research journey. And next to my mother, Missy, father, Stan and my brother David, thanks to you all for looking after my daughter throughout the research process so that I could concentrate on the books and writing.

Babaa, Gunii, ngaadhi gaga, ngindu yaadhumaadhuguuy, ngadhu gadharay ngindu gulibaa.

Dad, mum and my brother, you are really amazing, I respect you three!

Ngarragaa-ra giya=na ngurra-gu buwiy burraay research, ngilu gayaa gunii. Sanaa-ga dharrgi ngadhi, ngadhu gadharay ngadhi waruu madhanbu gadharay ngali barrima-li wandhalaa ngali yadama-li. During the research period I felt sad for my child, but she was happy for her mother. Sanaa kept me grounded, I respect my baby, we respect each other, we will pick up where we left off.

I am grateful to the five Aboriginal teachers who were enthusiastic participants in this research and who were generous and open in yarning about their expertise and experiences. Their willingness to share their experiences has led to interesting insights into the ways that Aboriginal teachers use culturally enhanced ways to teach foundational literacy.

I have had support from different parts of the university: – Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research gave me support as an Aboriginal student; Nick Hopwood gave me insights into research methods, an area that was completely new to me; my original supervisor, Wendy Holland, saw me through the early stages of my candidature, yarning with

me to help me get a sense of direction and Katherine Bates, who has been my co-supervisor throughout, has given advice on how to develop the skills of scholarship and feedback on my sections and chapters along the way. Hilary Yerbury, who was my principal supervisor for the last six months brought the best out of me, yarning with me to show me things I knew but could not articulate, and helping me to develop the confidence to write as a scholarly Aboriginal teacher and as a strong Aboriginal woman.

It is easy to see carrying out a research study as something separated from everyday life. It has not been like that for me. My close uncle John Guy passed away at the beginning of my research and it took me a while to recentre and gather my thoughts about where I wanted to start with this research; I thank Dr Wendy Holland for helping me to work through that difficult time.

Melissa Kirby, July 2021

Chapter 1 Introduction

My initial university training did not prepare me for the world of work, especially teaching students in rural schools. To be frank, some schools were not equipped to support beginning teachers twenty years ago. Teaching approaches do not come in pretty packages, although some teaching tools do. Apart from enjoying my time teaching on the Central Coast as a beginning teacher, most of my working life has been spent teaching and working in rural areas where the student population is 98 percent Aboriginal. I have been teaching back on familiar country. Over the years my interest in early years' literacy grew. I participated in various training programs with a phonics and a whole language focus. The regional reading recovery tutor digitally recorded me to model Clay's (1993) intensive reading and writing process for other practitioners to learn from. I witnessed the 'gap' our children were stuck in. A local metaphor might explain it like this: 'children often get stuck between the large stones in the Brewarrina Fish Traps, they would struggle to swim upstream- they weren't learning to swim with the rest of the class'. This meant that low level swimmers (readers) skipped important lessons and were not taught.

My interest and passion for the area of foundational literacy is reinforced when I constantly observe the increasing unemployment rate of Aboriginal people and school leavers in my home community. I have also witnessed a number of solutions implemented by government and non-government agencies for our local issues, with many of those programs and initiatives eventually being discontinued. Early education can be compromised if literacy is not cultural and contextual. I have observed and witnessed many students, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal descent, struggle to learn the basics in literacy, and when you are not a local, there may be no long-term investment in community aspirations; those teachers, government agencies and non-government agencies staff on short term appointments may be divorced from seeing the real consequences of poor literacy skills. In my view, communities must also

create a literacy space where children can develop a strong vocabulary through reading and discussion and not just have the opportunities for the oral exchanges where only instructions are heard. With a community focus, not just a school focus, for improved literacy results, struggling readers can be identified early without having to do further catch ups through remedial programs later down the track; this may take a significant communal effort.

I am one of those Aboriginal teachers willing to share my pedagogical approaches to literacy from a cultural perspective. This study draws on the experiences of five other Aboriginal teachers who were also willing to share their pedagogical approaches to answer the question of how Aboriginal teachers use culturally enhanced approaches when teaching foundational skills for reading and writing in the early years. My Indigenous standpoint (Moreton-Robinson, 2013) approach demands that I privilege Indigenous voices, but I acknowledge that there are many Aboriginal teachers in the NSW DoE system whose voice may not be heard and whose expertise may not, for many reasons, be shared.

Foundational literacy is used in this study to refer to as the process of acquiring emergent English language skills in the areas of reading, writing, oral vocabulary, comprehension and listening (Clay,1993). The term Foundational is used in the Australian Curriculum to identify students' first year in infants/primary schooling. Foundational literacy is important for all children in all societies and particularly important for Aboriginal communities as it provides the building blocks for the other skills important for life in the future and essential for employment.

The teaching of foundational literacy raises some key issues. One is that there is a stigma attached to the use of the English language in regional communities, because the 'English language' can be seen as the coloniser's language. As a consequence, some Aboriginal

people reject the use of English, even though they are aware that those who do not speak, read and write standard English, often find it difficult to find work. At the same time, many Aboriginal community members are struggling to learn their own traditional languages. Aboriginal teachers and their pedagogical approaches can pave the way for innovative approaches to an understanding of literacy, and the use of Aboriginal English and Standard English and perhaps even traditional language.

This study took place in a context where Aboriginal teachers have similar life-worlds to the students they are teaching in regional NSW Schools. Parents and grandparents may be discredited for their own literacy approaches to teaching their children in the home. My study seeks to find effective elements of Indigenised pedagogies emerging from the practice of local Indigenous teachers embedded in the life-worlds of their communities.

This study is significant. The literature to date has not captured the culturally enhanced literacy approaches taught in the early years by Aboriginal Teachers. The scholarly world has largely ignored the foundational literacy pedagogical approaches of Aboriginal teachers. This study will show the significant expertise that Aboriginal teachers have by exploring their pedagogies and may have a profound impact on the way Aboriginal teachers are valued not only for their cultural knowledge, but also for their curriculum knowledge, especially in the field of literacy.

This study is also significant for educational systems and for teachers. Aboriginal teachers are rare, and this study provides an opportunity to showcase their expertise. The valuing of the expertise of Aboriginal teachers as teachers of foundational literacy, as well as Aboriginal people, may be the catalyst for change. Through experiencing their knowledge and expertise, young children in the community can witness why the English language can be valued more especially for making a smooth transition to higher education and employment.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature outlining literacy learning in social contexts and in particular literacy learning within Aboriginal communities. It details the concept of social pedagogy which sets the framework for this thesis. Definitions of the key concepts of 'mainstream' education and culturally enhanced pedagogies are provided. The main aim of chapter 2 is providing the conceptual and cultural framework for the study.

Chapter 3 highlights the methodology framework through a narrative enquiry lens to privilege the voices of the Aboriginal school teachers from various traditional language groups for this study. Yarning in a group and individually was used to collect data, creating an environment of trust for Aboriginal teachers to willingly share their Aboriginal ways of being, doing and knowing as they described their involvement with foundational literacy.

Chapter 4 gives a detailed account of the findings; it showcases the five Aboriginal teachers sharing their literacy expertise and their pedagogical experiences which gave rise to their culturally enhanced ways of teaching literacy. This chapter presents the literacy experiences through the three identities these teachers used: the teacher in the education system; the Aboriginal teacher; and the Aboriginal person. The findings show Aboriginal teachers maintain professionalism in their teaching roles, yet teach literacy using pedagogical approaches that incorporate their Aboriginal ways of knowing. The chapter highlights a number of tensions that arise for these teachers. The findings in this study revealed areas for further scholarship.

Chapter 5 discusses the use and importance of culturally enhanced approaches to pedagogy in the foundational literacy space. Culturally enhanced approaches, which are implemented through the scaffolding approaches of the use of oral language and translanguaging, an

emphasis on Country and support from home culture, show how this study has extended understanding of the pedagogical approaches used as everyday practices by these Aboriginal teachers.

Chapter 6 concludes with a review of the key findings and implications for further scholarship; it also provides details of the implications of the findings for the education system as well as for the education of trainee teachers.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Literacy learning in a social context

To understand the significance of this study, it is important first to understand the position that literacy occupies in the context of Aboriginal people. Social negativity surrounds illiteracy, and, according to Kral and Schwab (2003), Indigenous people have not been inclined to self-identify as non-English literate, and further, they had very limited experience with what reading and writing in English could mean in their lives. Low socio-economic determinants impact on my study: high levels of contact with the criminal justice system; poor health and mental health outcomes; low education outcomes and levels of engagement with the education system; low levels of income and employment; intergenerational welfare dependency. It is clear that environmental factors can disrupt all children from achieving their full potential in literacy (Buckingham et al., 2013). Socioeconomic disadvantage is often referred to as a factor in poor reading ability within Indigenous populations, although individually, poverty has a small impact on literacy performance. Therefore, disadvantage will impact on some children more than others (Buckingham et al., 2013). While teacher quality may be improved to increase Indigenous literacy outcomes, there is no guarantee that this will produce increased outcomes in other interrelated social determinants.

This study is not directly about Aboriginal self-determination and governance. However, since literacy and language are intricately inter-related, and are fundamental in Australian culture for representing oneself and claiming one's position, it is relevant to introduce those ideas here. Generally, Aboriginal communities have not been governing the traditional language literacy space very well. For example, the Federal Government (Calma, 2010) led the approach of maintaining and reviving Traditional Aboriginal languages across Australia for a number of years, but the funding provided for Aboriginal languages is only available

through a competitive process. This means there are a number of communities attempting to revive and revitalise their language who will actually miss out on that for preserving language. Traditional Aboriginal languages centres which have been established are mostly not based on the country where the languages derive, therefore the local people do not have access to the resources. This is the case for the Ngemba speaking peoples; for us, the nearest Federal government language centre is based in Dubbo, a four-hour drive from Brewarrina. It is still a community aspiration to have Aboriginal language groups self-govern their own language preservation and language revitalisation, yet we rarely hear about the collective wisdom of the Elders making the decisions on language preservation, the Elders' responsibility has to some extent been overthrown by the Federal Government.

This research reveals ways that Aboriginal teachers can govern the English language space in their communities. Even though the English language is often seen as the Colonisers' language, it is still the dominant vernacular across Australia. Western codes currently support the semantic and cultural use of Indigenous languages and culture in Aboriginal communities. However, reclaiming traditional languages needs to be a focus and priority for Aboriginal governance in communities. Home grown literacy approaches will be imperative for Aboriginal communities to govern the literacy space. Moreover, home grown literacy approaches can improve and promote lifelong learning and training for local community work; however, the training and programs must be a cultural match for long term benefits in the community development, planning and strong Aboriginal governance.

Understanding pedagogies

A key concept underpinning this study is pedagogy. Pedagogy can be understood at two levels, both of which are important to this study. It is both an approach to teaching as well as the practice of teaching, including strategies and tactics. The classroom practices of teachers

are shaped by a number of factors, including the pedagogy inherent in the curriculum of a school system, the theoretical and conceptual approaches they have been exposed to in their professional education, their own interests, concerns and backgrounds and the social and cultural context of the students they are teaching.

Pedagogical approaches to teaching have significant differences, although some teaching strategies are found across different pedagogical approaches. Drawing on Bernstein, Martin and Rose (Bernstein, 1990, as cited in Martin & Rose, 2005) identified four categories of pedagogy; progressive pedagogy; behaviourist pedagogy; critical pedagogy and social/psychological pedagogy (Martin & Rose, 2005). Particularly relevant to this study is social pedagogy, which was significantly influenced by Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1962, as cited in Neff, 2019) who argued that culture is the determining factor for knowledge construction.

At this point, it is important to consider the meaning of culture. Williams distinguished three meanings of the concept, commonly used in scholarly work, two of which are relevant to this study. The first of these is culture as a way of life for a group, for example an ethnic minority, and the second is culture as the "practices of intellectual … activity" (Williams, 1983, p. 90). Whereas in the European context that Williams was focussed on, these two may easily be perceived as distinct, in Aboriginal culture, with its focus on process, it is harder to separate the way of life of Aboriginal people from the creation of knowledge.

This constructive/ social model of learning includes, but is not limited to, discovering facts which involve, problem solving, simulation-based learning, guided discovery and relational knowledge about oral and written texts (Martin & Rose, 2005). Social and psychological pedagogy theories are concerned with reducing the impact of inequality and addressing social problems through a social based in text (Martin & Rose, 2005). Social pedagogy is seen as a

subversive approach to learning literacy that aims to distribute power evenly across social groups and empower disenfranchised groups.

Behaviourist Pedagogy as noted by Bernstein (1990), is a conservative approach to learning literacy. This theory of behaviourism advocates for direct instruction lessons through a teacher-centred approach (Martin & Rose, 2005). This didactical teaching situates the teacher as the knowledge holder in which information is imparted to the students through rote learning methods. In the teaching of literacy, direct instruction and phonics is placed within traditional behaviourist pedagogy.

Progressive pedagogies view the "individual as the locus of change" (Rose, 2007) where the change of behaviours occurs in the individual through the teacher-student relationships. This liberal approach to learning literacy promotes an awareness of power and inequalities building up student agency in a participatory classroom (Martin & Rose, 2005). However, the literature does not discuss how or where Aboriginal regulative discourses, which involve yarning, are dominant ways of providing tools for the instructional discourses involved in reading in foundational years. This suggests that Aboriginal teachers modify their knowledge sharing pedagogy to fit with the invisible social order that is created by the dominant regulative discourses of the mandated curriculum.

Critical pedagogy is the fourth pedagogical frame discussed by Martin and Rose (2005). The focus is on an imaginative way of teaching and knowing through a radical approach to learning literacy (Martin & Rose, 2005). Through radical didactics, the teacher can be transformative by developing student's critically conscious voice by learning through regulative discourse to genuinely democratise the social order of the learning classroom and reduce the hidden oppressions of social groups (Martin & Rose, 2005).

These four pedagogical frames and the pedagogic relations between them acknowledge that teachers project knowledge in different ways. Relevant to this study is the way teachers use their voice. The literature speaks to the importance of the speakers' voice in sharing the instructional knowledge about texts from a social instructional discourse (Martin & Rose, 2005, p 19). However, it is relatively silent on how Aboriginal teachers can use their voice as the dominant regulatory discourse to share knowledge.

As can be seen from this overview of conceptual approaches to pedagogy, there is no single way of understanding pedagogy, and the views of the purpose of education and learning are diverse. Rose (2009) argued that pedagogy evolves with the teacher and student and will diversify in various contexts in which it is applied. In a cultural and linguistic pedagogy approach to teaching, each context will shape the design of theory and components of pedagogy. Importantly, two key, but different purposes of literacy pedagogy focus on "the transmission of textual performance (skills and knowledge), or on acquisition of competencies (personal, cultural and critical)" (Rose, 2009, p. 14).

A conceptual understanding of pedagogy underpins the approaches to teaching foundational literacy supported by school systems. In the past, the federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) in Australia defined pedagogy as "the art or science of teaching" (DEEWR, 2009, p. 42 in Fleet et al., 2011, p.1), and Learning and Teaching Scotland (2005, p.3 in Fleet et al., 2011, p.2) clarifies that pedagogy helps teachers to "develop a deeper understanding of what is informing our practice". In NSW and in Australia more broadly, governments have sought to determine the most suitable pedagogical approach and the best strategies for the teaching of literacy. An Inquiry (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2017) into the teaching of literacy found that teaching direct systematic instruction of phonics to students earlier attributed to increased literacy outcomes

in reading, writing, spelling and comprehension. This includes the critical sub-strand of phonemic awareness, a speaking and listening skill (ACARA, 2021; NSW DoE, 2021).

This study acknowledges that instructional discourses are generally projected through the voice of the speaker but are most successful when taught through oral language. Shanahan (2005, p.18) reported that oral- reading fluency had positive effects on reading achievement and in particular "decoding, word recognition, silent-reading comprehension". Oral reading includes the ability to read words and sentences aloud with fluency and accuracy, whereas students reading silently had less of an impact than oral reading (Shanahan, 2005). Oral reading fluency is one essential feature of reading achievement and allows students to hear their own sounds. This is where phonemic awareness is essential for reading and Shanahan (2005) suggests teachers can create this awareness through "language songs and games and other activities", blending sounds is encouraged in the early years which includes Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten and year one (Shanahan, 2005, p.10), hearing sounds have a positive effect on reading and spelling ability. Oral language is therefore a critical part of learning to read, and, as such highlights the importance of Indigenous ways of being as a regulative discourse to break the invisible social orders that can act as barriers to Indigenous learners.

The effective teaching of literacy to Indigenous children has been a government priority for a number of years, under annual evolving 'Closing the Gap' frameworks since 2012 (Closing the Gap, 2020). From the early days of the 'Closing the Gap' initiative, there have been attempts to bridge the existing gaps in literacy learning through a governance framework called the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (Closing the Gap, 2020, 2021; Koop & Rose, 2008) which financed the 'Reading to Learn' program to take place in rural NSW. According to Willis (2020), 'Closing the Gap' reading targets for Indigenous students reveal

improvement up to 11 percentage points over a 10-year period (Willis, 2020) and the gap has narrowed at a national level. However, despite the improvement, one in four Indigenous students is still below national minimum standards in year 3 and one in five students in years 5, 7 and 9.

This literature on pedagogical approaches has presented an overview of the extensive scholarly and practical writings on foundational literacy in the context of educating Indigenous and Aboriginal students. It shows that there is no one clear pedagogical approach, as Burgess et al. found (2019), nor is there one accepted set of strategies for teaching this crucially important subject. It demonstrates the importance of culture in developing skills of literacy in children; as well as the tensions that may exist in teaching literacy in English in post-colonial times. In doing this, it lays a foundation for the research question, which focuses on the relationship between mainstream approaches to foundational literacy and culturally enhanced approaches. The phrase "mainstream approaches" covers two aspects of pedagogy; first, it is used to refer to a mandated curriculum, an approach endorsed by a school system, usually supporting the position of a cultural or ethnic majority and second it is used to refer to those strategies for teaching literacy which are taught in pre-service programs of education and accepted by teachers as part of the repertoire of knowledge and skills. "Culturally enhanced" ways are those that bring the particular cultural knowledge of the students and/or the teacher into the pedagogical approach and strategies for the teaching of foundational literacy. Here, it is important to keep in mind the two elements in the meaning of culture introduced above.

To understand the approach of this study, it is important to highlight both Indigenous and non-Indigenous approaches to literacy learning. An analysis of the literature in the field of Indigenous literacy begins with an acknowledgement of the social determinants that impact on literacy in economically marginalised populations (Buckingham, 2013) and the interrelated forces and issues that impact our ability to access the various outcomes and benefits available to literate communities (Luke, 2010). Across the literature the outcomes gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students is noted (Closing the Gap, 2020; Buckingham et al., 2013). For Buckingham et al. (2013), this outcomes gap is a problem of human rights, potentially arising from discrimination of the kind that exists in the communities with which I am familiar. They argue that the silence in the literature about the impacts of ongoing colonisation and economic marginalisation of our Indigenous communities makes it difficult to address the issues impacting Indigenous literacy outcomes.

Globally, children are learning the English language without having to lose their traditional customary practices. This is partly due to new and exciting modern literacy approaches developed from a sociolinguistic theory which represent and value a diverse group of cultures. However, in Western NSW, Aboriginal children may not have access to fluent speakers of their traditional language, however, the English-speaking Aboriginal communities often maintain a connection with their immediate and extended families. The kinship knowledge system is passed down through a yarning modality (cf Frazer and Yunkaporta 2019). The local people know they cannot marry their close cousins as they see them as kin, cousins are like brothers and sisters, and it is frowned upon in the community when the lore is broken. Community members have a responsibility and moral obligation to "understand relationships within a specific ecological context" as emphasised in (Battiste, 2005), this customary practice is alive and practised in NSW, in my experience.

Post-colonisation practices such as forcing Aboriginal people onto Missions for the sole purpose to extinguish Aboriginal ways for western progress, where schools were set up on the missions and "used as a means to perpetuate damaging myths about Aboriginal cultures, languages, beliefs, and ways of life" (Battiste, 2005, p.9) have left a continuing legacy. The Brewarrina Mission in NSW was established in 1886 just up the road from where I was born, and the institution ran for eighty years until 1966 (Brewarrina Shire Council, 2021). By then, English was the only vernacular spoken in public. The Ngemba speaking peoples and the Wayilwan, Wongaibon, Murruwarri, Yuwaalaraay, Yuwaaliaay, Gamilaraay and Wangkumarra language groups were herded onto the mission like sheep and cattle and Aboriginal people were told they were not to engage in their customary practices. In 1966, the remaining ones walked off the mission with their families only speaking the English vernacular (Fink Latukefu, n.d.) and they moved close to the river and built humpies (houses made of corrugated iron). They were deemed fringe dwellers by the townsfolk and looked at as though they were outsiders. Language was not completely lost. In the words of my soft-spoken father whose ancestors are buried at the old Mission in Brewarrina, he explained:

> "In the early days, our people only spoke the language when they were intoxicated with alcohol, because it was then they had no fear, they broke the silence, and it was the only time us little ones could pick up what was originally spoken. The traditional languages were beautiful, and I still grieve for our traditional language, like I grieve for my parents who have passed".

Many Aboriginal families have been holding on to the old ways through their family stories, whether contemporary or traditional. These stories are sacred, they are a method of learning that can be considered sacred; it is a part of lore written on stone, written in the sand and written in the stars, but placed in our hearts to guide us the right way. Therefore, members of

the Aboriginal community have an obligation to pass on knowledge through talking and yarning, it has traditionally been our mode of communication (Frazer & Yunkaporta, 2019).

This brings me to the importance of modern literacy approaches, the approaches that Aboriginal teachers of literacy have worked with, and some of the issues that teachers confront in teaching literacy to Aboriginal children. Even if Aboriginal families do not practice customary ways, there will still be an important social and cultural context from their family ways. The Aboriginal ways are not often seen in print literacy, instead you have to feel them through deep listening, sensing the home talk (McKnight, 2016). Children can sometimes bring their home talk to school.

The literature reflects different approaches to teaching literacy in an Aboriginal context. Battiste (2005) argues that we should try and fix the current Indigenous Education system first, then construct new knowledge systems with the western system through a blended design. On the other hand, the Wik Mungkan methodology (Frazer & Yunkaporta, 2019) is a solid example of how traditional and western education systems can transform one another through borrowing. The literacy programs and strategies implemented within the New South Wales Department of Education, and in place when this study was carried out, include Best Start Kindergarten assessment, the 'Bump It Up Strategy' and Language, Learning & Literacy (L3) (NSW Government, n.d.). None of these specifically implement Aboriginal ways of knowing in their pedagogical approach. Another program used in developing literacy skills in public schools in NSW was Reading Recovery. The Reading Recovery literacy intervention approach was widely used to improve reading outcomes for the poorest performing students until they reached the required level for discontinuation being an achieved reading level (Clay, 1993). Reading Recovery was aimed at the bottom 20 percent of grade one (Hair et al., 2015). Findings from the Reading Recovery: A Sector-Wide

Analysis (Bradford & Wan, 2015) indicated that the reading recovery approach was most effective as a short-term intervention, improving reading text skills for low performing students in grade one (1), the benefits were found to be short lived, and the implementation of this program has recently been discontinued in NSW State schools (Bradford & Wan, 2015).

There is a sense that, in spite of efforts to introduce diversity and in particular to support Aboriginal students, the western system still dominates the education sphere in NSW schools and communities with very little input from Aboriginal teachers on how best to teacher literacy. There is a body of literature that includes pedagogical approaches proposed by several Indigenous scholars (McKnight, 2016; Frazer & Yunkaporta, 2019; Yunkaporta, 2010).

Yunkaporta (2009) found in order to address disadvantage in Australia, teachers must effectively use pedagogies which are culturally appropriate. He developed and designed the "8 ways" (Yunkaporta, 2009) of learning based on culturally relevant pedagogies for enhancing teaching practice. His research in this area showed that as early as the 1970s there had been attempts at developing Aboriginal pedagogies while working at the cultural interface (Harris, 1980 as cited in Yunkaporta, 2009, p.42) such as the development of "Two-Way" and "Both-Ways" schooling. These sought to bring together the mandated western approaches to learning with Aboriginal ways of knowing, setting up a system with these two parts to it. To find a way to create a bridge between these ways of knowing, Yunkaporta analysed the gaps in Aboriginal Pedagogy in Australia and found that the "connection between land and Pedagogy" was rarely a focus for educators (Yunkaporta, 2009, p.44). Therefore, he sought to develop a pedagogical model bringing together previous work, including Battiste's "model of Aboriginal Pedagogy "where she identifies an overlap in Aboriginal knowledge systems and Western systems" (Battiste, 2002 as cited in Yunkaporta,

2009, p.45) and Nakata's (2007, as cited in Yunkaporta, 2009, p.45) "cultural interface" model. Nakata's (2007) and Battiste's (2002) influential work was the catalyst for supporting Yunkaporta (2009) to develop the 8 ways interconnected pedagogies, which is aimed at learning through culture, in both sense of the word identified above (Williams, 1983, p. 90). Yunkaporta's (2009) model focuses on strategies for supporting the development of literacy; the 8 ways include story sharing, learning maps, non-verbal, symbols and images, land links, non-linear deconstruct/reconstruct, community links. The 8 ways framework integrate the way knowledge and practices are created and transmitted in everyday life. It was developed in Western regional NSW, an area I am familiar with.

Both Yunkaporta (2009) and McKnight (2016) focus on the importance of supporting non-Aboriginal teachers to understand the importance of Aboriginal culture in learning. McKnight (2016) deems it necessary to guide non-Aboriginal people to understand cultural concepts and values so they can support better outcomes for Aboriginal students and develop a cultural curriculum for all students. He argues that professional development for trainee teachers in Aboriginal culture is necessary. Many teachers may get their knowledge from being interested in Aboriginal culture and from sitting with the Elders and custodians of country, witnessing first-hand Aboriginal culture for its wisdom on core values and real meaning and purpose in life. According to McKnight (2016) the community can teach on country about culture through a legacy pedagogy approach, building on story with the Elders through yarns. He also showed that cultural education in cultural settings (on Country) in a cultural way will help grow strong healthy culture in schools, but he said this will take time. An example of this was the "Yuin localised approach" (McKnight, 2016, p.1). This community approach was aimed to go beyond the curriculum in an ontological way by "teaching with Country" (McKnight, 2016, p.121) and teaching on Country.

Another influential scholar in the field has been David Rose. Rose, (2016) identified two approaches to support student literacy development; the first approach, teaching by ability levels (psycholinguistic theory), draws on a constructivist approach where children use their prior knowledge to activate their memory for literacy-based tasks. The second approach, which is relevant to this study, draws on cultural knowledge from the student's context to make meaning of the text. The first literacy approach encourages children to steadily progress, however "less successful students are given lower-level activities than more successful students, and so progress more slowly" (Rose, 2016, p.4). The second literacy approach includes scaffolded learning which requires students to read higher level reading tasks on the premise of high challenge high support; however, there can be an issue with this approach as "weaker students often cannot keep up and fall further behind through the school years" (Rose, 2016, p.4).

Contemporary mandated literacy practices

To understand the complexity of this topic, it is important to highlight both Indigenous and non-Indigenous approaches to literacy learning. NSW Government (2020) details what teachers need to carry out in terms of compliance to meet the NSW DoE policy standards for "curriculum planning and programming" (NSW Government Education Standards Authority, n.d., p.1). Teacher programs have to be consistent with the "Education Act" and the NSW Education Standards Authority policies and procedures (NSW Government Education Standards Authority, n.d., p.1) to meet syllabus requirements.

In New South Wales [NSW] a literacy program called "Language, Learning and Literacy (L3)" was implemented from 2008 (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2020). The program's target groups were kindergarten, year one and year two students and their classroom teachers in metropolitan, regional and rural area. This is a supplementary program

to the daily literacy programs which targets reading and writing skills by targeting the development of informed systematic, explicit instruction such as a wholistic approach to literacy, using the whole parts and whole methods of teaching through texts. As part of this program, teachers learn targeted techniques and develop learning plans to focus on individual student learning needs. There is existing debate on the effectiveness of this program and claims about limited impartial data outside of the NSW Education Department (Neilson & Howell, 2015). It is hard to measure the effect of various professional learning and teaching methods, especially due to the lack of solid studies, studies focus more about the effect of teacher professional courses and the impact on learning ability of the students is approach to literacy and the use of phonics (Robinson, 2019).

However, literature that argues the reading wars are over supports the recent introduction of the NSW DoE year 1 Phonics screening check at the beginning of 2021 (NSW Government Education 2021b). In the past, teachers had more autonomy for deciding which literacy program or approach best suited the context of their classroom needs. A body of research into the critical elements for teaching reading has been a part of longitudinal debate with a stronger focus on teaching phonics, and proficiency in speaking English as primary factors influencing achievement (D'angiulli et al., 2012). In 2012, a study was conducted in New Zealand to investigate the effect of phonological-based assessment and teaching within a first-year reading program (Greaney & Arrow, 2012). Results of this study showed that when students were subject of an intervention program that involved explicit teaching of letter sound knowledge and introduced pseudo words, their performance improved, and they outperformed the control group who were predominantly Maori and Pasifika children.

There has been ongoing debate in the literature and in the media between the whole of language approach and the phonemic approach to learning literacy. Konza (2011) advocates

for explicit and systematic ways to crack the alphabetic code. She asserts, that “Phonics instruction is necessary but not sufficient” (Konza, 2011, p.5). Rather, Baker recommends phonics but with a caution that it should only be a small part of a rich literacy program, with equal time given to other crucial aspects such as oral language development. Hulme & Snowling (2013), also argued that to improve language and reading comprehension, activities such as reading aloud to children and creating a discussion, appear to be meaningful. They found decoding words using phonics was an essential feature for early reading instruction. Thwaite (2007) showcased the importance of scaffolding different spelling approaches to children in the classroom, with a particular focus on a method delivered by a teacher who demonstrated ways which encouraged increased spelling ability, making use of student visual memory and identifying the relationship between letter sounds was seen as crucial in learning to spell.

Influences from a child’s earlier experiences, pre-literacy, are noted as important as foundations for developing literacy. These experiences include “music, movement, dance, storytelling, visual arts, media and drama” (DEEWR, 2009, p.41). In addition, Baker and Wright (2017) refer to listening, speaking, reading and writing as language domains which then fit into the following categories of oracy/receptive (listening), oracy/productive (speaking), literacy/receptive (reading) and literacy/productive (writing). Similarly, Winch et al., (2019, p. 13-14) show that language develops through listening and talking where the learner can take in and express ideas though a receptive (listening) and expressive (talking) manner.

The centrality of print-based literacy can raise issues for teaching literacy to Aboriginal students. Mitchell (2018, p. 5) explained that Indigenous teaching “rises out of an oral tradition” where cultural lessons are passed down passed down orally rather than in print

form, a process that allows lessons and stories to continue (Mitchell, 2018, p. 193-194). Further, many Aboriginal students speak Aboriginal English (AE), rather than Standard Australian English, and yet they are required to become literate in SAE, both for their schooling, and also for engagement in society as adults, including getting a job. The NSW Department of Education recognises the challenges for all students who have English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) (NSW Government-Education, 2021). Most schools in each State and territory in Australia have an EAL/D support person or instructional literacy leader to guide the practitioner to plan and program language experiences for students whose first language acquisition (L1) is an Australian traditional language or a foreign language. Given that Australia is culturally and linguistically diverse, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (Australian Curriculum, n.d) have developed EAL/D resources to support classrooms teachers across Australia who teach children from more than 2000 different backgrounds. The resources vary, from professional learning EAL/D courses, planning tools and resources and engagement strategies (Harrington, 2008), all teachers have access to this site through their My Professional Learning (MyPL) intranet system. In each State and territory education system, teachers have access to a plethora of resources for EAL/D learners, this ensures programs for EAL/D learners are inclusive and "these students can and do achieve at the same level as their English-speaking peers" (De Courcy et al., 2012, p.8). In recently published reviews of the literature Gutierrez et al. (2021) and Trimmer et al. (2021) emphasise the importance of training and access to resources in the context of teaching Indigenous students. They highlighted the value of teachers developing pedagogical approaches that are culturally responsive (Guttierrez et al. 2021, pp 55-56).

Developing a repertoire for teaching literacy

Teachers learn a range of strategies for teaching literacy, in pre-service education and in ongoing development programs. These strategies become part of the accepted repertoire of both new and experienced teachers. There is an extensive literature, both scholarly and professional, describing these strategies. This section of the literature review identifies strategies which have been part of my development as a teacher of early literacy.

The Accelerated Literacy Program (Emmett, 2008), known otherwise as a scaffolding literacy approach developed Brian Gray and Wendy Cowey (Gray et al., 2003) is aimed at infant instruction level, kindergarten to year 2. It is suitable for early years centres and high school students who struggle with reading also, thus this approach is appropriate for the foundational reading level. A different approach, known as the Reading to Learn, has been implemented beyond the early years to incorporate developing literacy skills with older students. The delivery of instruction is a top-down approach starting with students reading large texts, which may be used for comprehension also; the next step is a whole class re-write followed by an independent re-write of the modelled text. For struggling readers, the text can be broken down even further into sentences, then words followed by individual sounds. This approach suited Indigenous students from north western NSW where it was trialled successfully (Koop & Rose, 2008). I had the privilege to train in this multidisciplinary literacy approach. A limitation to the Reading to Learn model is that each modelled text should vary to meet the needs of Indigenous students with varying levels; it is useful for teachers to include text that aligns with student passions, including movies and other examples of popular culture to signal interest. In an effort to support the growth in literacy levels from Indigenous communities, the Reading to Learn method was implemented in north western NSW over ten years ago; similarly, the Accelerated Literacy Program was implemented successfully across schools in the Northern Territory (Gray, 2007). The

Reading to Learn holistic method of learning literacy is highlighted in the literature (Koop & Rose, 2008).

Another influential approach is that of Emmett (2008) who advocated the need for improved literacy skills in Indigenous communities so that children can fully participate in the global community. This approach built on commonalities and trust, as can be found in the Accelerated Literacy approach where a piece of text is a focus for the week and is studied gradually at the pace of the students (Emmett, 2008). The teacher, who identified as 'Tracey', was organised and well prepared for the scaffolding lesson. Emmett (2008) notes that scaffolding literacy lessons require an extensive amount of time for preparations and planning, even asking the right question can have a positive impact. Emmett's (2008) study highlights the need for more Indigenous culture in the curriculum, where culture is seen as a strength due to students coming from rich oral backgrounds. This multifaceted literacy approach leaves space for teachers to draw on commonalities and strengths of the students and their families. An inconsistent approach to literacy would only use western examples and limit the activity to narratives students are not familiar with, whereas teachers who comes from sociocultural perspective is more of a cultural match and geographically relevant to students. Although it has been 12 years since the study by Emmett (2008), the findings remain relevant, and the use of multimedia and digital tools provides a scaffold which supports contextualised learning.

Ideas also come from studies conducted overseas. Wasik and Hindman (2011), researchers from USA, investigated the effect of two approaches to professional development for teachers in the Head Start program for at-risk pre-schoolers. They found that where an intensive approach to professional development had been employed, teachers used methodologies and conceptual knowledge and specific strategies provided to them to support

young children, with promising outcomes. This professional development program and supplements included methods of development of vocabulary, alphabet knowledge, and phonological sensitivity. Students who also participated in this program increased their language and literacy skills significantly compared to the control group. Moreover, these students demonstrated significant improvements on a standardised measure of vocabulary and on a frequently used assessment of phonological sensitivity over the course of a single year. Finally, Neumann, (2014) investigated the effect on the everyday text around them on the emerging literacy of children from low-SES communities. Results of this randomised control group of 3- and 4-year-old students indicate that when children were put in the group where they interacted with the text in their everyday environment, their performance significantly improved compared to the control group on print, sound or print awareness knowledge. Neumann (2014) concluded that using multisensory methods to interact with print in everyday life showed moderate to large positive effects.

In a document on effective reading (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2017), reading is referred to as a foundational and complex cognitive skill which may look easy for those who are good at it but it is not. Those who lack the reading ability and literacy skills may not be able to be a part of the workforce. There are five key elements identified in efficiency of reading programs which are critical in early stages of literacy learning and should be taught unambiguously, methodically and in sequence (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2017). These five elements are: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2017). It is noted that all teachers should have a great understanding of evidence-centred reading methodologies and instructions. Moreover, they should have the ability to execute the instructions and methods in the classroom. This research talks about why and how these elements are important and should be taught. However, researchers differ on what works, and

the teaching methodologies that strengthen learning programs. The importance of literacy to individuals and society is emphasised, as a skill that will affect employment and health outcomes, has economic and social impact, and will also affect involvement in crimes. The report (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2017) concludes that to improve literacy students should have clear and transparent learning goals at school. Moreover, professional learning of teachers should improve which, as a result, improves the teaching of both literacy and numeracy.

Scaffolding and the importance of culture

Vygotsky's view that the social and cultural environment in which a child lived was a significant influence of learning has informed pedagogies and teaching practices, especially those where students may be from an ethnic or cultural minority and therefore seen to be in some way disadvantaged. In the literature on foundational literacy, the phrase "culturally enhanced" is used to denote those teaching strategies that take account of the cultural background of a child or group of children. While culture is rarely defined in these contexts, it tends to focus of the first of the definitions from Williams (1983, p. 90), used above, that is, the way of life of an ethnic group. Many of the guides to culturally enhanced teaching (Yunkaporta, 2009) assume that the teacher is part of the mainstream or dominant culture and that the steps taken are add-ons, external to the teacher, that are necessary to support certain students. One of the key guides to the culturally enhanced teaching of Aboriginal students, Yunkaporta's 8 ways, was developed with non-Aboriginal teachers in mind (Yunkaporta, 2009).

Culturally enhanced strategies for teaching literacy are not limited to ways of teaching foundational literacy to Aboriginal students. According to the Department of Education, "culturally responsive classroom management is particularly important in NSW schools

because students come from a range of different cultural backgrounds" (NSW Department of Education, 2019 as cited in Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2020, p.32), but there is evidence that schools lack the knowledge of the 'how' to embed culturally responsive practices effectively (Llewellyn, Boon & Lewthwaite (2018) as cited in Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2020, p.32). From a sociocultural perspective, language and culture are closely interconnected (Cummins, 2005; 2000). As such, culturally inclusive strategies address the wide range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds of Australia's diverse school contexts (Dutton & Rushton, 2021). Scaffolding is another term most commonly used for supporting students in their learning, (Martin and Rose, 2005). These scaffolds may include literacy skills already developed, or elements of the student's skills and knowledge from outside the classroom, but they will always in some way draw on culture. In the context of cultural diversity, the scaffolds can include the use of the home culture and language. In the context of teaching Aboriginal students, in addition to the use of the home culture and language, they can include use of oral culture, translanguaging (Oliver et al., 2020) and identity texts, reference to community and the inclusion of Country through the environment (Dutton & Rushton, 2021). In other words, in the teaching of Aboriginal children, the second meaning of culture, as the practices of intellectual activity, or ways of knowing, become significant.

Scaffolding literacy support can be seen as collaborative, thus giving students the opportunity to energetically participate while reusing and reflecting on language from multiple contexts (De Courcy et al. 2012). At the same time, scaffolding may be incorporated with explicit and direct instruction to plan effectively in supporting students with EAL/D. De Courcy et al., (2012) explain it is vitally important to support the repertoire of language skills through scaffolds and metalanguage known to students, and it is important to remember to provide another level of complexity also, as these key words create a more elaborate understanding

than emerges from using vague vocabulary that is often used in high-level scaffolding approaches.

Cultural strategies and approaches for learning literacy

The literature contains a number of examples showing how a variety of cultural strategies were used in developing approaches for learning literacy. A key strategy was establishing school principals and others as leaders in support of literacy. One case study (Riley & Webster, 2016) focused on Indigenous student literacy accomplishments in schools that implemented the Principals as Literacy Leaders with Indigenous Communities (PALLIC) strategy. These schools were situated in the Northern Territory, South Australia and Queensland, but one school from a rural area was chosen for the case study. The findings from this case study demonstrated a positive change in school/ community partnerships with consistent collaboration between Indigenous Leadership Partners (ILP) and community which created a path for increasing the student achievement in literacy, while ILPs were looked up to as having expertise in literacy; the strong community partnerships were "reported to help in strengthening the literacy achievement of Indigenous students within the school" (Riley & Webster, 2016, p.30) not to mention the positive difference in student behaviour when the ILP met the families at the school gate in morning.

A comparative study by Riley & Webster, (2016) highlighted that meaningful partnerships established by the school from the beginning helped set the foundation for community involvement in school programs. Frazer and Yunkaporta (2019), in a comparable study, found that there was no attempt made by the school to build trust and respect with the local Wik Mungkan community. The participants involved in that project became aware of the deep knowledge embedded in Country; because the Direct Instruction literacy method was implemented in the local school of Aurukun, community members were reluctant to revive

their Wik literacy pedagogy in fear it would be neglected once again. Even though mainstream schools have regularly dismissed local cultural expressions, the local Aboriginal programs are still scrutinised and discontinued more often than western education approaches. Frazer & Yunkaporta stated "It is misleading … to binarise Indigenous and non-Indigenous cognition arbitrarily as high or low context, considering the variance within communities" (Frazer & Yunkaporta, 2019, p. 2), and argued the need for the change in reform to include local community ways in the school curriculum. They further add the need for parents and community to participate in local knowledge transmission to purposely revive relationally responsive practices similar to the Wik Mungkan methodology, despite, western mainstream practices at the school taking precedence over traditional Aboriginal ways of learning (Frazer & Yunkaporta, 2019). This study revealed there were local people with a significant amount of knowledge and expertise whose knowledge was overlooked and/or ignored.

The Principals involved in the PALLIC project understood the potential benefits of meeting the community halfway (Riley & Webster, 2016). However, a weakness in the PALLIC project was that families who lived in different areas, may not have had a close relationship with the ILP. This has been an ongoing issue in the Connected Communities (CC) Strategy (Griffiths et al., 2020). The CC strategy was implemented in 2013 across 15 sites in NSW, it is a strategy aimed at emphasising that local Indigenous knowledge can have a profound role in the development of mainstream education frameworks. It takes a similar approach to the PALLIC project that was implemented between 2011 and 2012. The CC strategy created two new positions in each CC school, the CC Executive Principal role and in addition to support this new role, a leader, aimed to establish community connections and partnerships is based in each school (NSW Department of Education and Communities, 2011, p.5). The Leader of engagement and community partnership's role is designed to establish connections between

the school and home; in addition to this, it helps to support the delivery of programs and initiatives and run workshops aimed at involving parents. One of the findings in this project was that engaging families and agencies has been a gradual process, with a number of barriers to overcome for improved partnerships built on respect and trust (Griffiths et al., 2020). The report of this study offers no solutions on how to strengthen the community/ school partnerships. This is disappointing considering eight years have passed since the 'seed' was planted. The deficit narrative created by western education systems allows for excuses to seep in, for example the author explains that Connected Communities are "contending with a unique range of contextual disadvantages" (Griffiths et al., 2020, P.67). This can be said about most schools across the state and this strategy could have a profound impact on increasing children's literacy achievements. However, there are many obstacles in implementing a large-scale strategy such as this. These include creating an environment that is advantageous for community aspirations as present and future goals, and aiming for a generational shift through improved literacy outcomes in each community. However, to be successful, it is suggested that such a strategy requires more than the creation of two positions. For example, if students have poor attendance, there may be a need for an attendance officer; if there is a lack of community and culture awareness, a need for a cultural officer; and if there is no support from staff, a need for staff who want to be there, but if there is no support from the community, it seems impossible to find a solution. Recent research has shown that large scale strategies such as Connected Communities have not, to date, reduced the outcome gap for Aboriginal communities (Griffiths et al., 2020).

In a study informed by an Aboriginal Pedagogy theory, an approach particularly relevant to this study, Frazer & Yunkaporta (2019) argued that local Indigenous epistemologies grounded in culture are deliberately ignored and diluted. They found that teachers and students were unable to access their Indigenous knowledge production deriving from

community. Instead, the localised Indigenous pedagogies developed from traditional Aboriginal culture were being turned into initiatives and programs with a western spin, meaning that the new 'culture programs' are separated from the cultural aspirations of the community. Frazer & Yunkaporta (2019) encouraged communities, schools included, to develop their own innovative culturally enhanced ways-of-knowing that is characteristic of the local culture. These culturally enhanced ways will draw on the integration of the two separate meanings of culture identified above.

There is currently a plethora of Aboriginal education curriculum focused resources in the New South Wales schools which expand on the most common cultural themes and cultural expressions that appear in Australian curricula about our First Peoples. However, the usual exotic but low-level cultural content presented in classrooms, such as making dot paintings, is opened up for high-level integration with other areas of the curriculum, especially for the area of literacy. Although, there has been some use of culture at the level of pedagogy, eg '8 Ways of Learning' (Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009), this is currently limited in the literacy space. However, there have been some examples of success. The NSW rural towns of Brewarrina, Wilcannia, Enngonia, Walgett and Boggabilla have successfully drawn on the innovative ground-breaking literacy approach (Literacy for Life) from Cuba (Boughton et al., 2013). The "Yes I Can" literacy campaign was designed to for its delivery to be at low cost. There is ongoing and consistent feedback about the Cuban "Yes I Can" literacy campaign being a 'cultural match' for our communities in western NSW. According to Boughton et al., (2013) over the duration of 15 years, 10 million people are now literate from 30 countries as a result of the "Yes I Can" literacy campaign. The communal literacy approach outlined by Boughton et al. (2013) is helpful in resolving some of the tensions raised in this study, in particular, this study can draw on the interventionist, individualised, decontextualised nature of literacy programs aimed at adults highlighted in the work of Boughton et al. (2013). In the approach

for the literacy campaign model, lessons are grounded in a generative theme connected to emancipation. This situates every word, sound and skill learned in a meaningful context linked to community aspirations. There are also intensive sessions drawing on local life worlds and connecting with the experiences of similar communities internationally, actively linking literacy with culture while connecting to the outside world and making literacy learning purposeful.

There have, thus, been a number of large-scale projects, but there is currently less research into smaller or local Australian approaches successful in lifting literacy among Indigenous children and adults. In particular, large-scale projects that overlook other social determinants and issues of access for Indigenous Peoples risk omitting critical Aboriginal ways of learning for improving literacy outcomes in marginalised communities.

One smaller scale project was reported by Rose (2016). The project focussed on a literacy approach which engaged Aboriginal parents. He recommended the use of photographing local Aboriginal community members cooking a traditional meal with the students, for example, Johnny cakes. This is a traditional damper made with flour, and the way it is prepared gives rise to the cultural process which encapsulates the student's local identity. The photography session was followed by a written overview of each step for future reading and writing activities. Rose gives advice on the development of the scaffold, saying: "Plan the lesson by writing the steps, then watch the video several times, using the words you have planned" (Rose, 2016, p.18). This example of culturally enhanced Aboriginal pedagogy has a significant part to play in an instructional literacy approach.

This sociolinguistic perspective (Rose, 2016) is similar to the cultural framework developed in Frazer & Yunkaporta's study, (2019) where an Elder or community member is encouraged to explain the social and cultural conditions at the start of the scaffolded literacy session.

Here, the Wik Mungkan method of "carving, weaving and yarning" (Frazer & Yunkaporta, 2019) is transferred to a print-based product. It may not be often that you see carving as knowledge transferred to a printed version, however, this does not imply that all the meaning and learning is tied up in print literacy. It should be noted that the process is equally important. For example, the yarning involved in carving can be transcribed to English print. Frazer and Yunkaporta (2019) explain that in using Aboriginal knowledge in this way, they are not taking one version of knowledge and turning it into another. Instead, they are concerned with taking a process of communicating knowledge from one culture and turning it into a product from the dominant culture. There are similarities in this approach to how teachers work with Aboriginal English (AE) in schools, AE is a valid language in Australia, yet children are still required to write in Standard Australian English (SAE). It is also the language for getting a job in any community. Therefore, a good pedagogy linked to a grounded theory will support EAL/D learners in code-switching (oral language to print literacy) from oral to print literacy.

Oral culture and its importance

In Aboriginal communities, the strong oral culture orientation is very important and will be a focus in my analysis of Indigenised approaches to literacy. It underpins the examples given above and is fundamental to Aboriginal epistemologies. We learn and pass on our knowledge through yarning. A considerable amount of literature has been published on local Aboriginal ontologies and epistemologies. For instance, in Arnhem Land the "Yolngu have often said: the land is made out of language, language comes out of the ground, and history stays in the place where it is made. Everything we can recognise is made out of language" (Christie, 2001, p.34). A significant limitation to the sharing of Aboriginal knowledge is that some Aboriginal ontologies and epistemologies are sacred and limited to where they can be shared,

including being restricted in the internet which is a public space. That is beyond the scope of this study. Yarning is so embedded in Aboriginal culture that it is taken for granted and may not be recognised outside of our culture as involving the transfer of key knowledge.

Oral language develops through listening and talking where the learner can take in and express ideas though a receptive (listening) and expressive (talking) manner (Winch et al., 2019, p.13-14). There are "differences in information processing" (Perso & Hayward, 2015, p.49) between western cultures and oral cultures. In oral cultures, this approach to understanding the world around us begins in early childhood and is intertwined with the ways we are brought up (Perso & Hayward, 2015, p.48). Although in both western and oral cultures, yarning or talking and listening allow the learner to make "meaning through the construction of spoken texts" (Winch et al., 2019, p.13-14), in oral cultures, there is no printed text to complement that meaning making.

Scaffolding with oral language skills

Oral language skills are important in developing vocabulary, which is essential to literacy. But the ability to move between oral expression and the printed word, and code-switching, can be extremely difficult, especially for EAL/D children. Some studies suggest scores on literacy tests in rural and remote communities are "consistently three to eight years behind national averages, according to national, state and territory assessments" (Rose, 2016).

Shannon (2014) describes an innovative project to address these low literacy outcomes. The project used iPads, which provided a platform for students to build their oral language skills and English language vocabulary. This meant that children could listen to the stories built into the app, play with the visual images that were aesthetically pleasing, and move their hands to various touchpoints as they would move their hands similar to how children engage in customary practices. The findings from this study also showed that parents visited the

classroom, witnessed the success of the iPad project and observed how this technology brought together oral and printed cultures, facilitating code-switching in a seamless way.

Another approach to scaffolding with language skills is translanguaging, where the teacher chooses the words or language that suit the context moving between two or more languages. Students have the opportunity to speak and learn English alongside the home language in the classroom. In school programs which are monolingual, often the diversity of how students use the language is ignored as well as students' home language. On the other hand, in bilingual programs, two or more languages are used for instructions, and they are kept separate (Baker and Wright 2017). However, approaches which support transglossia and dynamic bilingualism can lead to translanguaging. Translanguaging literacy approaches employed in classrooms strengthen both the home language and target language (Oliver et al., 2020). Students have opportunities to mix languages in a pedagogical translanguaging way rather than focusing on the target language which is English. Translanguaging as pedagogy can assist educators to educate profoundly by exploiting the increased linguistic variation of students (Yiakoumetti, 2012). However, translanguaging is still very new to Australia (Oliver et al., 2020).

Storytelling can be an important means of improving literacy, especially when students and teachers work together in this oral process (McKeough et al., 2008; Moore & Birrell, 2012). A Canadian study involving First Nations reserve communities (Hare, 2012), emphasised the importance of literacy activities within the family context, including storytelling.

Scaffolding through place

Country is an important element of Aboriginal knowledge and epistemology, as mentioned above. Yunkaporta and McGinty, (2009) explored the overlap where western knowledge and Indigenous knowledges meet up at the cultural interface and in this case- 'the river' – a

highly significant site. The findings of their study demonstrated that even though the knowledge itself did not come from the river; the use of the river inspired everyone by drawing on a cosmology central to them all. The enthusiasm generated in this way not only improved literacy, it also increased school attendance and led to better engagement.

The role of the teacher

The work of Yunkaporta (2009, Frazer and Yunkaporta, 2019) has highlighted the important role that teachers play in the implementation of culturally enhanced approaches to literacy. This work has been important because it documents rare instances of Indigenised approaches to engagement with learning, which have been limited and never included "home grown" models. For example, although the Cuban literacy approach outlined in this discussion (Boughton et al., 2013) was piloted successfully, it is not an Aboriginal teaching approach from Australia and results beyond the pilot stage have not been reported. In the project which Yunkaporta undertook with McGinty (2009), they found that early in the project, some teachers created barriers and conflict by making negative comments and displaying negative non-verbal language and had to learn how to teach socially challenged Indigenous students. However, by the end they made the connections.

Gay (2010, p. 26 as cited in Savage et al., 2011, p.184) identified the importance of teachers working with a culturally responsive pedagogy, which she defined as the ability to teach "to and through [students'] personal and cultural strengths, their intellectual capabilities, and their prior accomplishments". A study carried out by Savage et al., (2011) in 32 mainstream schools and with 214 Indigenous Maori students in New Zealand allowed Maori students an opportunity to provide descriptions and examples of how their teachers' teaching practice was culturally responsive in the classroom. This study found that Maori teachers were consistent in their approach to teaching culturally responsive pedagogies. The findings also

indicated that lessons which incorporated the local Maori language and cultural knowledge were rated highly effective.

Teachers have sometimes appeared reluctant to use new tools in challenging contexts. Harper (2012) found that teachers articulated that the literacy training they had received in the past did not guide them down the best path to teach children how to read, especially children in challenging contexts in remote Northern Territory. A sociocultural perspective was used in the case study to tap into the emotions of each teacher. Social determinants in these school communities include poor student attendance, a long drive to the largest town to buy supplies, otitis media, leading to deafness, and a lack of expertise to work with Indigenous students whose first language acquisition is their traditional languages mixed with Kriol and Aboriginal English. Harper's findings showed that teachers feel they are always under the spotlight, highly scrutinised, pressured and positioned as the problem in the media when it comes to students failing. The whole world is looking for a silver bullet to fast-track student literacy achievement. While Harper's objective was actually to introduce teachers to a literacy software package, his sociocultural approach created a space where teachers could air their frustrations on what irritated them, and collaboratively work towards the resolution of some of the issues they identified.

Support for teachers, both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal, is essential. One of the reasons claimed for the success of the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly project (Koop and Rose, 2008), was its emphasis on professional development for the teachers involved in it.

Conclusion

This chapter began by setting the teaching of literacy in Aboriginal communities in a social context, demonstrating some of the inherent detrimental outcomes of past practices, and some continuing ones. It continued with an overview of the key concept of pedagogy, with an

emphasis on social pedagogy and the importance of culture in teaching and learning. The research question of this study has used the term ‘mainstream’, which, it is acknowledged, it a problematic term. However, it is a term found in the literature and common in professional practice. Thus, to clarify the intentions behind the term ‘mainstream, the literature review set out material on the mandated curriculum, and on the accepted repertoire of strategies taught to and used by teachers in the teaching of literacy. The review then picked up on culture and its inclusion in literacy education in strategies for scaffolding. The final section briefly touches on the significant role that teachers play in the development of literacy.

The review has shown that there is a body of literature about the teaching of literacy and its societal importance. There have been a number of studies which explore projects and initiatives, supported by governments, bringing together Aboriginal epistemologies and western ways of teaching and learning (Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009, Yunkaporta, 2009; McKnight, 2019). A small number of projects focus on the efforts of individual teachers, through trial and error, to adapt their own locally relevant approaches to teaching. However, as Yunkaporta and McGinty (2009), observed, so far none of these studies has been concerned specifically with Aboriginal literacy in the early years. This is the gap which this study aimed to fill: it focused on the experiences of individual teachers, Aboriginal teachers, outside of any sponsored project, who are experienced in the teaching of foundational literacy, and it writes of their experiences, using their own voices in a yarning modality.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Introduction

The aim of this study is to explore how culturally enhanced literacy approaches are used by Aboriginal teachers in Department of Education schools in New South Wales. There is much that can be learned from the ways that teachers work, especially in foundational literacy. It is important to acknowledge local efforts through exploratory research in order to create a record of the work that might be built upon by future researchers and educators. This research investigates and identifies home-grown, context-based Indigenised approaches to literacy that ground literacy in the social and cultural practice of local Indigenous communities. My research seeks to find effective elements of Indigenised approaches emerging from the practice of local Indigenous teachers embedded in the life-worlds of their communities. The review of the literature in the previous chapter has shown that the research question in this study is based on the notion of social pedagogy and social pedagogy emphasises the relationships between learning and culture.

There is a personal need (O'Toole & Beckett, 2010) to develop a conceptual understanding of the study, to ground the way I understand how Aboriginal teachers can use culturally enhanced approaches when teaching foundational skills for reading and writing in the early years, however, the first step in this research study was to identify the methodological approach to be used in the study. The best choice in methodology is a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach enables the findings from the research question to be better understood so that Aboriginal teachers' knowledge and experience in foundational literacy can be documented. This is a step in a process that possibly can lead to social change in education.

Qualitative research builds on a constructivist worldview where people are making meaning from understanding different phenomena using various resources and tools for their enquiry

(Merriam, 2015, p.2). Qualitative methods are generally used widely in the area of education. The insights gained from both qualitative methods can have far-reaching implications. Qualitative methods seek to capture quality data through a narrative enquiry where data collection takes place in a naturalistic setting with individuals or groups. Through this enquiry, I will endeavour to use a qualitative method that will generally include the researcher taking a stance alongside the participants, enabling the research process to develop naturally within the social context. The researcher will generally approach this qualitative enquiry to form an understanding of the research question through individual interviews, group interviews, surveys, recording notes manually or digitally and observing participants in the natural setting. The shared assumptions will form shared meanings and the patterns from the data will support the researcher to recognise and prioritise the themes produced by participants in the research. This social constructionist approach to gathering knowledge in a qualitative way for this study I am conducting encourage improved interpretation of the findings and once the study is completed, it will enable scholars to discuss ideas important to them and teachers to consider other pedagogical approaches (O'Toole & Beckett, 2010).

Bruner (1990, as cited in O'Toole & Beckett, 2010) illustrates from a constructivist point of view that the experience and social context one encounters will shape their world view, therefore education research draws on the "whole-person" (O'Toole and Beckett, 2021, p.20), acknowledging pedagogy as the main tool for the development of ideas. O'Toole and Beckett (2010) reiterate that each participant in educational research is found "in their cultural context" (O'Toole and Beckett, 2010), and each participant will endeavour to express their ideologies based on their own personal experiences; this provides a certain element of agency where each participant has the power to articulate their own narratives and has a particular purpose and ownership of their involvement in the research.

Research of this kind can be confronting for Aboriginal teachers', and as it involves individuals and their work context, it could give rise to conflicts of interest. The approval processes for conducting research in the university required the researcher to ensure that participants are not directly affected by any conflicts of interest. The participants involved in this research are five Aboriginal teachers from Gamilaraay, Wiradjuri, Yuwaalaraay, Ngemba and the Apalech Clan in far North Queensland. In accordance with the requirements of the ethics approval process of the University, they have declared that there are no conflicts with their current positions nor with me, the researcher; the NSW DoE also reiterated that there were no existing conflicts while the Aboriginal teachers were interviewed in a community setting rather than in the school, and no further approvals were required from the DoE. The Human Research Ethics approval processes of the university acknowledge that research with indigenous people requires particular care and attention. This point is made by O'Toole and Beckett (2010, p.27) who explain that a researcher acquiring information for research from racial, political and social groups should consider a "willingness to verify this knowledge with cultural experts" to deem what appropriate steps to take.

The five Aboriginal teachers who took part in the study were from various Aboriginal Nation groups and it was beneficial to also explore whether any conflicts could arise from the varying cultural practices. Here, the researcher's position as an Aboriginal teacher was useful as it made me aware of the kinds of issues that could arise, for example over guardianship of Aboriginal knowledges.

Inside/Outsider Research

The absence of an Aboriginal teacher voice in the foundational literacy space prompted my willingness to be an insider educational researcher, however this style of research does not come without its challenges. First and foremost, this research project is about centring my

perspectives from within the Aboriginal community as an Aboriginal teacher, where I provide culturally based insights that would not be apparent to outsiders yet have "'privileged' access to particular kinds of knowledge" (Merton, 1972, p.11, as cited in Mercer, 2007, p.3). Labaree (2002, p.109 as cited in Mercer, 2007, p.2) states there are "hidden ethical and methodological dilemmas of insiderness" which are rarely homed in on by insider researchers, though one experiences these underlying issues regularly when researching in the workplace or their community; anecdotal descriptions of these experiences are rarely recorded for the benefit of future insider research (Mercer, 2007).

In saying that I am an insider it is important to remember that there are 250 different Aboriginal Nation groups across Australia and the culture and language within these groups varies and so will the protocol and ethics, so I must take this into account whilst collecting information in research. My role as an insider researcher is to examine any ethical issues and concerns that may have implications beyond the data collection. To 'keep in my place' and to stay 'centred' throughout this insider process I am aware the participants involved in this research study are from Five different nation groups (Ngemba, Yuwaalaraay, Gamilaraay, Wiradjuri, Apalech Clan) and strongly connected to others where they continue to reside off their Country (nation group). Tuhiwai Smith (2012, p.130) articulates that the "community has its own borders and negotiating entry can be every bit as complex as entering a local village". Consideration for each nations protocol and my own (Ngemba, Wayilwan, Paakantyi Maraura, Yuwaalaraay, Gamilaraay) will always be at the core and centre of making decisions about which method should be best practice (Mercer, 2007).

Mercer's (2007) work explains that to be an insider researcher your whole being must reflect the community epistemologies and ontologies, you will generally have first-hand knowledge and information of the lived realties of the group who reside in that community, the

familiarity will stem from growing up alongside the researched, this gives the researcher valuable inside information about the researched. To be an outsider researcher the message emerging from the data is clear-cut according to Mercer (2007), the researcher has a subjective view of whom and what is researched and have no association with the community and the researched and therefore may unaware of the nuances that are embedded in the data. However, as an Aboriginal researcher, I must also focus on what it means to be a researcher, and this makes me an outsider to the teachers who are participants in my study. From this perspective, as Merton indicated (19720, I have access to a different kind of knowledge. He refers to it as privileged, and it is the case that my involvement with research study in the university has given me access to knowledges and understandings I could not otherwise have gained. These "privileged knowledges" mark me as an outsider.

Every insider researcher must bring with them some aspect of the outsider. 'Insider' and 'outsider' ways to researching sit on a "continuum" (Mercer, 2007, p.1) where movement between the two is in a constant state of flow and there is no end, similar to the narrative approach, the story has no end point. Deutsch (1981, p.174 as cited in Mercer, 2007, p.4) explains this state of flow when he writes that "'multiple insiders and outsiders'" are shifting "'back and forth across different boundaries'" and Griffiths (1998, p.368, as cited in Mercer, 2007, p.4) gives a more detailed description, stating that "'as situations involving different values arise, different statuses are activated and the lines of separation shift'" (Merton, 1972, p. 28).

Being an insider researcher can be advantageous and rewarding, however, it would not take much for some imbalance to occur. Fleming's influential work (2018) there are several factors which can promote an imbalance (Fleming, 2018, p.311). The insider is known to the participants in the study and therefore the researcher's opinions and ideas will be known

beforehand; to the extent that the topic of the research focuses on these, it is possible that participants will slip out of an interaction designed to gather research data into a regular interaction, with responses that can create an imbalance. A second factor, and a key criticism of insider research, is that the shared culture and knowledge creates a hidden bias, as outsiders are not able to uncover these culturally based interpretations. Fleming's (2018) research found that insider researchers should not fear the developed rapport with their participants, because these potential biases can be addressed through transparency (Fleming, 2018); so that an emphasis on building relationships is maintained, established and can be strengthened even further through "asking questions or probing in interviews" (Fleming, 2018, p.319). This is how, for Fleming, the balance can be maintained – using the knowledge and skills of the outsider, the researcher, to ensure that the knowledges of the insider are validated. If the balance shifts too far away from the 'centred' approach I have aimed for, I will feel like an outsider, and I will lose the cultural links to my participants.

Reflexivity is important in all qualitative research, but particularly in insider research. It is a tool that enhances the trustworthiness of a study, and therefore its quality (Barrett et al. 2020). It is an ongoing process of considering the place of the researcher and the context of the research and calling into question the taken for granted social and cultural aspects of the context of the research. Reflexivity is clearly a process that the researcher engages in, but in a research study such as this, where as a research student I have worked closely with my supervisors, it is also one where I have engaged them in this critical process, as I mentioned above in my discussion of the challenges of insider-outsider research.

Being a reflexive researcher in this study is about following Indigenous protocols through Indigenous research. It was important to keep in mind that participants in this study did not

come from the same language group as I do, and therefore that they would have different cultural protocols from me.

Allowing reflexivity to guide the methodology process in this study will create a space for more collaboration through the Kapati method in the data collection process, as Kwame indicated (2017). The Kapati method required reflexivity from me as researcher because of the obligations of my heritage, which place an emphasis on yarning, talking through to achieve a level of shared understanding. The multiple realties at play in these interactions guided me to understand when "my position shifted" (cf Kwame, 2017, p. XX) from insider to outsider researcher. For example, when people were explaining the context of teaching foundational literacy in communities that may differ from my experience, I was aware of the importance of their own ways of being, knowing, valuing and doing in the yarning sessions.

Case Study Methods

This study uses a case study approach. A case study approach to research through qualitative methods can vary from simple to complex (Stake et al., 2003), it allows the researcher to choose a 'case', or a particular example of what is to be researched. Stake et al., (2003, p.136) definition of a case study is as follows "both a process of enquiry about the case and the product of that enquiry"; it is useful for this study, because, as shown below, if emphasises both the research process and, to a lesser extent, the outcome of the study. A "case study" is particularly useful in the educational context because it can home in on a particular phenomenon and also investigate students, teachers, schools, regions or particular demographics as a case (Stake et al., 2003). There are three types of case study, intrinsic, instrumental and collective (Stake et al., 2003). The researcher who undertakes an intrinsic case study approach is particularly interested in that specific 'case' and understands the

significant need for it to be explored further, whereas with an instrumental case study the researcher uses the case to understand issues beyond the particular case. (Stake et al., 2003). A collective case study approach is about studying several cases rather than homing in one intrinsic case, and Stake et al., (2003, p.138) articulates that the collective case is valuable in undertaking an instrumental study. This study, therefore, takes a collective instrumental approach, to understand the phenomenon of 'Aboriginal teachers' foundational literacy expertise', through Aboriginal teachers who 'taught foundational literacy in Western NSW Schools'. This research is not bounded by a single 'case'; and is only loosely bounded geographically. The case study approach is appropriate to this study; such an approach is generally taken up by "ethnographers, critical theorists, institutional demographers and many others" who seek to identify "conceptual and stylistic patterns" (Stake et al., 2003, p.139), and who are able to interpret these patterns to draw enough meaning from the case.

Stake et al., (2003, p.155) summarises a number of "conceptual responsibilities" in sequence for a researcher to follow while undertaking a case study approach in research and also emphasises that there are decisions for researchers to make (Stake, 2003, p.155). One of those areas is in analysis. "Each researcher needs, through experience and reflection, to find the forms of analysis that work for him or her" (Stake, 1995, as cited in Yazan, 2015, p.149-150). Stake et al., (2003) notes that it often seems that the case is chosen first and the phenomenon of interest emerges later, but that ideally, the "researcher examines various interests in the phenomenon, selecting a case of some typicality, but leaning toward those cases that seem to offer opportunity to learn". In this study, the concern was with the approaches used by Aboriginal teachers with experience in schools in Western NSW to teach foundational literacy. Five Aboriginal teachers were selected from the relatively small number of teachers who met the criteria for this study.

Narrative Enquiry

Narrative enquiry is widely used in research in education and its use in this study was one of the choices of options (Stake et al., 2003, p.155). Panday (2007) provides a reason for its use in education when she links Dewey's (1938, p.50, as cited in Panday, 2007, p.13) statement that "learners construct and reconstruct knowledge through the individually continuous and socially interactive nature of experience" to the "narrative perspective" found in curriculum, (Panday, 2007, p.13) Narrative enquiry is well suited to a constructivist approach to research because is based on the perceptions off the participants, expressed in interviews, discussions and other contexts.

Panday (2007, p.13) refers to the narrative enquiry method as "anything told or recounted" where participants in the research are given a set of "open-ended" (2007, p.13) questions to respond to from their perspective, thus becoming the narrator of their own story. The use of a narrative enquiry methodology is the most suitable method for attaining data for this research question. Aboriginal cultures are oral cultures, and Aboriginal people are used to creating and sharing knowledge through talking and storytelling. Stories and yarns might seem to belong to traditional culture, but they are not a thing of the past, they are still relevant today and will be well into the future (Panday, 2007) either through oral modalities or print modes. A new idea or a design might eventually become old over time, yet the longevity of stories and yarns can remain relevant for thousands of years. A strength of narrative enquiry is that it provides the researcher with insights into the context of the participants, revealing glimpses of their lives and experiences outside of the focus of the study. Narrative methods are applied in research to uncover many truths about past experiences, yet at the same time an emphasis is placed on cyclical reflections (Wang & Geale, 2015) as the telling of stories is not a linear process. From an Aboriginal point of view, this process of talking in circles and this creating

a perspective on continuous reflections is seen to mirror the image of a yarning circle and story spiral where there is no end point for a narrative (Yunkaporta, 2009).

Narratives in the form of oral and print mode represent a body of knowledge and understanding that grows with the everyday relationships we have with each other. This is fundamental to Aboriginal kinship systems with which I am familiar (cf Yunkaporta, 2010). To seek answers for this research question, it is imperative for the researcher to build on the participants' relationships with each other and build the stories with the participants as much as it is important to collect information and data from the participants. Panday argues (2007, p. 7) that well after the yarns take place in this research and the data is collected, the relationships built through "forming good relationships" will continue as an outcome for everyone involved. Although a network of Aboriginal teacher expertise in literacy might be established, and this newly created network could build the professional working relationships beyond the research, this was not an intention of this study, and it is not known whether such a network was an outcome of the narrative enquiry process used here.

Narratives create a foundation for building trust, and without trust among and between participants, problems may arise (Ober, 2017). It is essential that the researcher and participants are familiar with the narrative enquiry method, which can be explained in the invitation to take part in the study. It is also important for participants to know what the research questions are, allowing participant's time to build their own thought processes on the topic at hand and time to think about ways they can communicate and contribute to the story-telling, privileging their voice (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There should be opportunities for participants to actively interact in the research process using their professional and personal voice; this means they can participate from multiple perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Ober, 2017) In this study, narrative enquiry enabled participants to speak from the

'Aboriginal teacher' perspective, 'Aboriginal person' perspective and 'teacher' perspective. For the researcher this means valuing the experiences, ideas and beliefs of individuals as they gather their thoughts coming from various roles in their life. As well as being a teacher, participant might be a grandmother who plays a significant role in her grandchildren's lives when it comes to literacy. In narrative enquiry, the home world of participants is culturally relevant and culturally significant and, in this study, that has significant relevance, both because of the approach of social pedagogy that underpins this study conceptually, as well as from cultural perspective of the participants. The narrative method of enquiry, through the circular reflections referred to above, allows the researcher to seek a deeper understanding by co-constructing and re-positioning the questions with the participants as the stories build up. Panday (2007) described how this process, in her study, created a space for participants to feel valued enough to articulate their thoughts and passions as practitioners and community members about ways to improve literacy outcomes for the children in their school community.

Hunter's (2010, p.50) findings show that there can be a number of techniques "interwoven" though a narrative enquiry methodology. Hunter (2010) explored narratives though a social constructionist lens, highlighting those various scholars are using a narrative methodology more rigorously for the purpose of privileging the participants' voices in research. Through a narrative enquiry method, researchers apply their own strategies to ensure mutual respect and trust, which is an important part of the process. These strategies are generally carried out to gain an insight of the "social, cultural, and historical context from many different perspectives" (Hunter, 2010, p.47). It was Polkinghorne's (1988, as cited in Hunter, 2010, p. 46) theory which recognised the importance of culture and the constant influence culture has in one's "evolving sense of self" (Hunter, 2010, p.46). This theoretical approach allows us to see that an individual's identity, also emerges through narrative, and helps to detail the

personal story (Hunter, 2010). A person's identity and story are a growing body of knowledge, and through narrative enquiry the individual's biography is analysed at a much deeper level rather than at a surface level (Hunter, 2010, p.46) where it focuses only on the surface identity of an individual. There are various approaches to eliciting stories from participants; in this study, it will be important to position (Hunter, 2010, p.47) the participant in the centre. The data captured through a narrative enquiry approach allows the researcher to take small sections of the research and "ascertain the influences of social discourses as revealed in these texts" (Hunter, 2010, p.49). Different influences impact the personal story participants carry with them (Hunter, 2010); therefore, it is appropriate to understand which approach to narrative enquiry is suitable to the research, individual and cultural context.

Thus, narrative enquiry will provide opportunities for each participant to share their sociocultural experience in regard to foundational literacy. Each participant informed their decisions based on their own cultural experiences from their personal and professional lives.

A sociocultural approach in this research addressed the multi-layered narratives for each Aboriginal teacher as a participant, gaining many perspectives about social pedagogy in the space of foundational literacy. To capture this data, it is fundamental to understand that the qualitative research methods used must include an "appreciation for pedagogy" (Curtin and Hall, 2018, p. 367), building up the collection of data through relationships which are important to all diverse groups including various nations where Aboriginal teachers grew up in. Through a social pedagogy lens this qualitative research has been able to capture the very essence of how Aboriginal teachers become agentive learners in their own right to build the literacy experiences in their classroom and in their local community; the use of narrative enquiry in this socio-cultural space also captured the reasons why their pedagogical teaching approaches are rarely recognised. Thus, it is clear that data collection in this study should

take place through an approach to narrative enquiry where story and pedagogy is the foundation for establishing mutual respect. The participants and I learned from each other, this double hermeneutic showed that the participants were as both equal and agentive learners in this research process. Time and effort by the researcher is poured into the "relationships, action, place, participation, communities, identities, prior experiences" (Curtin and Hall, 2018, p.367) and adhering and following the ethical guidelines through these methodological principles.

I have chosen a narrative enquiry data collection approach informed by an Indigenous yarning methodology, the Kapati "Cup of tea" method (Ober, 2017) that draws on participants' stories and yarns to capture new knowledge. This qualitative method included unstructured interviews and yarns guided by the research questions and the themes generated by the literature review. Framing questions so that our community members can 'forge a critical standpoint' is explained by Nakata (2007) as follows: "Think of something like Indigenous humour— it emerges from this locale where we form a community around some shared inter-subjective understanding of our experience, where we can understand the jokes" (2007, p. 216).

The yarning sessions were aimed at gathering rich data alongside the challenges with working with a vulnerable population. Each participant was aware that consent to the study was a requirement of the university and essential prior to yarning sessions, however each participant was eager to participate and share their perspectives. In particular, each participant offered both diverse and rich accounts of their experiences teaching early years foundational literacy and provided important insights for this study.

Participant Selection

The inclusion criteria for this study included participants having more than five years of teaching experience in early years (foundational) literacy. The level of participation in this study was 100% from five participants. Crucially, each participant (teacher) was required to identify as Aboriginal (First Nations) in his or her community. The participants in this study were purposefully selected in order to collect the data most relevant to my research question from those who are closely linked to having early years literacy experience. In particular, I sought participants who enhanced culturally modified literacy approaches, as evidenced through their participation and significant contribution to teaching Aboriginal students in the early years from our shared community and professional networks. To facilitate this access to Aboriginal teachers who met these criteria, I sought assistance from existing contacts within the NSW Department of Education to act as a linkage between prospective participants and myself. Five participants were a manageable number for this study, allowing for both depth of perspective and intimacy in conversation, which enabled to me elicit rich data.

The Aboriginal teachers involved in this research are afforded the opportunity to elaborate on the social support mechanisms they use on an everyday basis in the classroom, this allows the teachers to feel ownership towards what they contribute individually for this.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study occurred over a period of 3 months, from early November 2019 to late January 2020. I conducted interviews with five Aboriginal teachers in New South Wales utilising yarning. “Yarning involves a purposeful sharing of stories” (Walker et.al, 2014, p.2). As a research data collection method, yarning is based on Aboriginal cultural traditions; all participants contribute to create a collaborative space where all voices are equally important (Dean, 2010). This study adapted the Kapati method (Ober, 2017). I

informed each participant that the research would involve up to approximately ten hours of their time. Specific details of each data collection method are provided below. According to Creswell & Poth (2018), there is not any specific answer to the number of participants for this study. However, the number of participants depends on the qualitative research approach. According to Creswell, W. & Creswell, D. (2018), Narrative includes 1-2, phenomenology includes 3-10, the grounded theory includes 20-30. ethnography includes one single culture sharing group and the case study includes five to six cases.

Kapati method

Merriam (2015) clarifies "Interviewing is the most frequently used data collection technique in qualitative research" and the qualitative design chosen for this study is in the form of unstructured/ informal Interviews, we call this style yarning in our Western NSW communities. An Indigenous Standpoint Theory informs this study, the work of Moreton-Robinson (2013) helps me to build on my own Wayilwan Ngiyambaa (language of Country) standpoint for research and practice. She helps me to understand compliance and resistance within the colony and inspires me to challenge more structural inequality. My inquiries in this field should, therefore, be grounded in a strong standpoint as an Indigenous female researcher, acknowledging the complexities of my compliance and resistance within colonial institutions situated on my ancestral lands (Moreton-Robinson, 2013). The Kapati method, this narrative enquiry style (Ober, 2017) of gathering rich data during the interview process informed the yarns for identifying successful models of literacy success practiced by five (5) Aboriginal teachers. It is with this idea in mind that the Kapati method would be the most appropriate data collection tool to support the five (5) Aboriginal teachers to move into a space where their knowledge is respected and valued. Within the Kapati space (Ober, 2017) participants will interact through a yarning modality that is culturally familiar and facilitated

by myself as a community insider. Ober herself had defining moments in the development of this method where she realised there were alternative research methodologies grounded in home cultures that were more suitable for Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people than western methods for data collection. Ober (2017) poses a recurrent problem for indigenous academic researchers where methodologies are contextually structured and measured by strict western criterions. Ober (2017) explores this paradox, drawing upon personal experience, reflecting upon her own indigeneity, suggesting research can satisfy a strict western approach where, 'diverse voices, realities, truths and perspectives [can be] shared in a culturally safe environment' for indigenous people participating in research projects. 'Kapati' or the 'cup of tea' approach is steeped in a socially familiar place where indigenous families and kin gather to 'yarn'; to share their stories, reflections of the past and present, their life experiences, cultural observance. Ober (2017) explains that this is a cultural norm that maintains and strengthens ties to each other. Yarning exposes the storytellers in the family, drawing upon humour to enrich the 'yarning' experience. Ober (2017) considers her own, and other academics' experience, where the narrative enquiry approach, or the Kapati 'cup of tea' approach has been harnessed to maximise respectful engagement and minimise frustration and discomfort for both participant and researcher. Ober (2017) recognises 'yarning' as a qualitative approach; threading an important imperative to her argument that Aboriginal English is distinctive, and that its use enriches the 'yarn' from that of an Australian English Standards perspective –indigeneity evokes more than language as a form of communication. The use of metaphor, verbal and non-verbal cues equally encompasses this discourse providing a symbolic illustration of mean making in the yarning experience for indigenous people.

Outside the realms of family and community the act of engaging with other communities, is not explored in this article in any great depth, however, Ober (2017) does provide a

fundamental, and thoughtful viewpoint, “I have decided that the common-sense approach is to be true to yourself, don’t forget who you are, bring your whole self into the research domain, to ensure you are working in an ethical, authentic, genuine and respectful way” (Ober, 2017, p.10).

Each one-to-one interview was no more than one hour in length. Each individual interview was audio-recorded and then transcribed. Each interviewee was issued with both a hard and electronic copy of their one-on-one interview transcript for their consideration/approval. Each interviewee had the right to delete anything they were not comfortable with before returning the edited transcript to me. Following the one-to-one interviews, each participant was invited to participate in a focus group or what many Indigenous Australians commonly refer to as a ‘yarning circle’. I facilitated an opportunity for participants to come together to discuss / yarn about a number of questions posed for this study and this provided some very rich data. The dialogues intersected with each other (Yunkaporta, 2009) and that is where I encompassed the themes anticipated from the literature review, and also where there was opportunity for the analysis of narrative enquiry. After I transcribed the participant’s yarns and stories, I proceeded to analyse the descriptive language using several approaches.

Data Analysis

Stemler’s (2000) overview of priori and emergent coding best describes the starting point for the data analysis process for this study. A priori coding is deductive; codes are generally developed by the researcher prior to the collection of data from participants (Stemler, 2000), from the theoretical framework and important concepts identified in the literature review. Emergent coding is an interpretive process, focussing on the themes that emerge from the data itself and, therefore, this approach is closer to the lived reality and experiences of the participants. Further, emergent coding is an iterative process, where the researcher

thoroughly examines the data and constantly revises the coding as new insights and understanding emerge.

In this study, the research question provided the researcher with key words that could form the basis of the a priori coding and the open-ended questions guided the participants to yarn about foundational literacy, allowing the researcher to identify themes that would be expected to emerge, so that again codes could be established a priori. As might be expected, however, a number of other themes emerged through the data collection processes. Thus, it was important to work through a second coding process, this time identifying the themes emerging from the data itself. Thus, at one level, Stemler's (2000) two approaches to coding, a priori and emergent coding, shape the initial and subsequent stages of coding that underpinned analysis in this study.

While Stemler's approach allowed me to bring my expertise as a scholar and researcher to the process of data analysis, I had to be aware that I was working with narrative enquiry, which makes its own demands on the data analysis process, and with Aboriginal participants, meaning that I had to be very aware of the processes of identifying themes and coding them. Merriam (2015) argues that data analysis begins in the field whist observing, collecting samples, asking questions and thinking about who will benefit from these findings. By utilising Mintos's (2009) pyramid principle approach I was able eliminate the irrelevant ideas that did not fit within the parameters on my research question. An example of something I eliminated is eliminating buzzwords and saving them for the literature review made the questions more relevant and explicit. Minto (2009, p. 35) explains that good writing structure comes from highlighting major points and reflecting on ideas rather than categories. From an indigenous standpoint categories and themes are more of a western way of looking at things.

From my point of view as an Indigenous researcher, by focusing on the core ideas, meanings are better aligned with my epistemology as an Aboriginal woman (Nakata, 2007).

Analysis in Narrative enquiry

In narrative enquiry, Polkinghorne (1995, p. 177) explains, "the goal of analysis is to uncover common themes or plots in the data. Analysis is carried out by hermeneutic techniques or noting underlying patterns across examples of stories". Polkinghorne (1995) allows us to understand the data as a lived phenomenon, urging the researcher to view it as a whole story. He maintains (1995 as cited in Kim, 2016, p.197) that "narrative analysis is not merely a transcription of the data but is a means of showing the significance of the lived experience in the final story". It is a process of what Polkinghorne (1995) refers to as "storytelling and restorying", which connects the themes and captures the story in the data in a whole part rather than in bits and pieces such as in categories. Narrative analysis endeavours to support the reader to "understand why and how things happened in the way they did" (Polkinghorne,1995, as cited in Kim, 2016, p.197).

Ober's approach (2017) to data analysis draws on the participants' strong oral language background, valuing each language equally, regardless of the variety of language creoles spoken in her community. She articulates the way data should be interpreted in Aboriginal communities, using as her entry point the knowledge of Elders in her family, because "there are underlying messages being shared with the family, sometimes directly but often indirectly where we are expected to read between the verbal lines, to understand the intended messages" (Ober, 2017, p.12). This approach (Ober, 2017) to analysing data means she is able to bring her Elders' knowledge into the study through (re)stories and through her own knowledge and understanding, to enable her own stories to support what she calls the

"untouched knowledge bases" (Ober, 2017, p. 14) of Aboriginal knowledge and experience so that new knowledge can be generated in the research space.

Data analysis in this study

This study used a mix of approaches to data analysis, as noted above. A priori coding (Stemler, 2000) was important; here the codes were selected aligning aspects of the literature with the research question. This approach to analysis left parts of both interview and focus group data uncoded. Thus, open coding was used to identify new themes. An important aspect of this process was that it revealed that each participant was using more than one 'voice' or 'persona' to respond, and it was clear that patterns were being established. As the researcher, I had assumed that I would be able to use a priori and open coding, even though I had used the Kapati approach to data collection. As these patterns based on different voices emerged, I began to see how underlying messages were there to be told, as Ober (2017) had described. An example of a pattern that emerged from the yarning modality was each participant were able to draw experiences from their traditional language group to retell their foundational pedagogical approaches. Thus, I drew on the work of Polkinghorne (1995) and Ober (2017) looking at the data as a 'story' that needs to be told and (re)told to answer the research question and privileges the voices of participants in an authentic and reliable way. Bringing all three approaches to data analysis together enabled me to capture the very essence of how Aboriginal teachers culturally enhance their foundational literacy approaches and to "restory" some of their stories using my knowledge as an Aboriginal researcher.

Ethical Implications and Risks

This study was guided by six core values as suggested by the National Health and Medical Research Council (Australia) (2018); "spirit and integrity, cultural continuity, equity, reciprocity, respect, and responsibility" (2018, p.2). As with ethical research, I informed my

participants that this study was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time and not be penalised any way. Consent was obtained prior to the yarning circle and individual yarns. Prior to starting the yarning session, I assured participants that they could take as many breaks from the one-to-one interview(s) and / or yarning circles / focus groups as they wanted because their comfort and safety is paramount.

Whilst all research contains ethical implications and risk, this thesis is researching Indigenous people who have historically been subjected to unethical research practices. As such, great care and consideration must be given to the ethics. However, it must also be recognised that this is insider research by an Indigenous scholar committed to community aspirations. At one level this does not carry the same risks and ethical concerns as non-Indigenous people researching Indigenous communities and customs. However, I must acknowledge customs and traditions will differ from community to community and within each community. The participants have chosen not to be identified, instead they have pseudonyms for this research, preferring to promote their work and ideas to a wider audience without direct acknowledgment. While there is a minimal risk of criticism and conflict from community members and outsiders, the potential benefits of recognition and career enhancement far outweigh these risks. Participants were informed they had the right to withdraw any or all of their data at any stage prior to submission of the dissertation or publication of the research and would be given copies of the final drafts for approval. No students, minors or community members other than the five teachers were observed or interviewed in this research.

It is important to point out that data collected was treated with the utmost respect and research; participants remained anonymous in this study and assigned a pseudonym for the purpose of this research. While there is a minimal risk of criticism and conflict from

community members and outsiders, the potential benefits of recognition and career enhancement far outweigh these risks.

All participants agreed at the outset on the ownership of research results, including institutional ownership of data, individual rights of researchers and Indigenous participants, and collective rights of Indigenous community groups, leaving ownership of the data with the researcher.

Writing up the Findings

The process of data analysis gave three perspectives on the interviews and focus group discussion content: the perspective from the a priori analysis, which showed that much of what participants described matched findings in the literature; the perspective of thematic analysis, through which different and sometimes conflicting findings emerged; and the stories emerging through the analysis of the narratives. In this context of potentially contradictory findings, I chose to write the findings chapter in a conventional way, setting out following the main themes from the literature and from the thematic analysis, but I added a section I have called 'Tensions', to report on those 'stories', told in the various voices, that reveal the conflicts expressed in various ways by participants and that emerge from the narrative enquiry.

Conclusion

This Chapter highlighted the methodological framework for exploring how culturally enhanced literacy approaches are used by Aboriginal teachers in Department of Education schools in New South Wales. To privilege the voices of Aboriginal teachers in this study, a social constructionist approach was employed; this was taken into account in the design of interview questions based on themes through a narrative enquiry lens. I used foresight to pre-empt how each participant would draw from their own social and cultural experiences that

has shaped their world view. This chapter illustrated the many ethical challenges that one can encounter as an insider researcher whose background context and cultural experiences are similar to the participants, however ways to overcomes these challenges are also illustrated in this chapter which draws on various scholars to gain furthers insights into insider/outsider research. The concept of a case study approach is mentioned in this chapter, the types of case study are explained for this educational research: here, a case study approach is about exploring the conceptual understandings of various phenomena which may emerge through the data analysis. Through a social pedagogy lens, I explained the impact of stories and yarns through a narrative enquiry method, ensuring a deep, rich analysis of participants data. The chapter also highlights why yarning is the preferred method of enquiry to gain an insight into the various roles, responsibilities and personas of Aboriginal teachers in the field of foundational literacy. A sociocultural approach has been employed though this narrative enquiry method, this fundamental approach captures Aboriginal teachers' cultural ways of being, knowing and doing, through the analysis the researcher will likely find data that is a cultural match for the initial research question.

Chapter 4 Findings

Introduction

This findings chapter provides insights into the pedagogical practices and the foundational literacy expertise of five Aboriginal teachers, showing how their extensive knowledge of literacy is applied in the classroom context through their culturally enhanced ways. It is through understanding their own cultural processes that they were able to bring together approaches to develop their own foundational literacy pedagogies for their students Prioritising the 'Aboriginal person' role in the school means that the Aboriginal community is at the heart of their decision making. At the same time, their responsibility to their Aboriginal community generally has little effect on how they perform and comply with their teaching responsibilities. The findings chapter illuminate the three identities at play for Aboriginal teachers within the education system. These three identities are: 'Aboriginal person', 'Aboriginal teacher' and 'teacher', and the findings show how they switch back and forth between these identities. This switching back and forth can give rise to tensions, especially in the teaching of literacy. Many of the tensions which occurs in the school and classroom context for Aboriginal teachers are unavoidable due to their obligation to community, culture and compliance with the requirements of the Department of Education, a factor that is highlighted in this chapter. After the Aboriginal teachers who took part in the study have been introduced, the findings of the study will be presented.

As already noted in the previous chapter, this study used yarning as a way to gather data. The yarning modality is also used in this chapter to present the findings. Yunkaporta in Lowe et.al. (2014) reiterates that a written yarning modality (Yunkaporta & Kirby, 2011 in Lowe et.al., 2014, p.54) allows the reader to understand knowledge grounded in land and place, this

communal dialogue establishes shared understandings in a group context while also allowing time for individual viewpoints to be shared to make up the one big yarn. The findings here, then, are presented through my voice, as "one big yarn", and from time to time, the words of individual teachers are used to reinforce a particular point. This also reflects the distinction in my methodology, which included both Individual and group interviews for data collection. Yunkaporta (2019) calls the yarning method an innovative practice (Lowe et.al., 2014) as it is relatively new in the scholarly space. I use it to emphasise the development and sharing of Aboriginal knowledge.

Participants in this Study

Aboriginal Teachers take on a number of Identities within the Department of Education (DoE) whilst working in various contexts such as the classroom, teaching literacy, staff meetings, community meetings, and playground duty. Most of the time, an "Aboriginal Teacher" will care about practices that are not in the DoE rules and procedures book, they often worry about the well-being of Aboriginal students who come from the same community, and they take these concerns home with them. They always feel obligated to build solid Aboriginal culture programs to complement every aspect of the curriculum and encourage the participation of Aboriginal families. The different 'voices' in this study are the identity markers such as "Aboriginal Teacher" "Teacher "and "Aboriginal person", emerging as they answered the questions in the interviews. The five (5) participants who volunteered for this study showed a strong sense of agency and self-worth in their own identity. They also understand the power relations that govern decision making in schools to better deal with issues if it does arise.

The “Teacher voice” can be defined as being compliant with DoE rules, policies, curriculum, and procedures, a linear way of teaching that often disregards holistic Aboriginal culture programs and is limited to an ‘Aboriginal perspective’ as mandated by policy (McKnight, 2016). The “Aboriginal Teacher” voice is similar in that it can be defined as being cognisant of DoE rules, policies, curriculum and procedures, programs but brings an Aboriginal cultural perspective to the practice of teaching. The “Aboriginal person” (Burgess, 2019) core beliefs centre around the community and family, particularly in community meetings. The “Aboriginal person” voice brings with it a multi-layered community identity that originally derives from the local culture and heritage. The “Aboriginal person” (Burgess, 2019) is obligated to Country, family and community aspirations and regularly switches back and forth with the “Aboriginal teacher” voice depending on the context and situation.

Each of the participants is introduced briefly, to give an overview of them as Aboriginal teachers, but in such a way that they are not identified. The names they are given here are pseudonyms.

Bradley is an Aboriginal teacher from Queensland. He is currently working as an academic. Bradley had extensive experience as an Education Officer in NSW supporting teachers to embed Aboriginal cultural processes within the classroom. Bradley also has more than five years teaching literacy to students who ranked highest in the state by the end of the semester in a low achieving rural school. During his time at this school, Bradley experienced exclusion. Moreover, speaking as an “Aboriginal teacher”, he said: “When a staff meeting was called, they use to separate the Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal staff members, but I wouldn’t stand for that...(and)... being Aboriginal in that school was a liability”.

David is from a rural town in NSW with strong ties to his Kamilaroi and Wiradjuri heritage. He completed his schooling in the rural town where he was born. Thereafter, he completed his apprenticeship in painting and decorating and then worked as an enrolled nurse. After he sustained an injury playing sport, he made the decision to study teaching. He studied Bachelor of Education in Primary teaching. David's first teaching appointment was in a small school where the students were predominantly Aboriginal. He is currently a Principal in a small school in NSW. Prior to his leadership role, David had extensive teaching experience. His commitment and passion for teaching in the early years were recognised by the principal who offered him leadership opportunities. During his many years in education, David has held various roles such as Aboriginal Education Assistant (AEO), Classroom Teacher, Senior Education officer, Assistant Principal, Deputy Principal, and Principal.

Delma is a Gamilaroi woman with strong ties to other language groups in Western NSW. Delma grew up in western Sydney working in a local pre-school as a bookkeeper during the day and working at a factory during the night. She also had a young daughter to care for while she studied full time at university. Delma's maternal side comes from Gamilaroi (Gamilaraay) country in Central West NSW; she makes it a regular ritual to connect with family and country often. Delma is currently the Learning support/language/culture educator in her school with a major focus on explicit literacy teaching. Delma attained her Bachelor of Education (Primary) more than twenty years ago, and since the late 90's she has had extensive experience teaching in the early years. Delma worked extensively in the area of English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D), supporting various DoE working groups in the area of visual literacy, engaging children with text, conversations, transferrable skills and decoding text to ensure Aboriginal students were supported using Aboriginal English.

Mary is a Gamilaraay woman from north western NSW, where she attended the local school up to grade ten. Thereafter, she pursued an apprenticeship in a larger town nearby. Even though she no longer resides in the town where she grew up, she makes regular visits to connect to her country with her own children. Mary's Principal encouraged her to apply for the Aboriginal Education Officer (AEO) position in the local school. Mary was successful in this role and remained in the position for two years until she completed teacher's college and was appointed to a school in the Sydney Region. It has been 30 years since she first started with the DoE, and she had a number of roles in the DoE before retirement. She was a classroom teacher with extensive foundational literacy expertise, Reading Recovery teacher, Assistant Principal, and Senior Education Officer (Early Years). After leaving DoE, Mary attained a postgraduate degree in the Arts and stated that she is "chipping away at reclaiming all the bits of my identity" and enrolled in a Traditional Gamilaraay Language course with her daughter.

Leanne identifies as a Ngemba woman, has strong ties to many language groups in the surrounding area and is married to a Ngemba Paakantyi Maraura man from the same community. Both Leanne's parents identify as Aboriginal and grew up on a reserve close to the riverbank before moving into town as a teenager with her parents. Leanne is an Aboriginal mother, grandmother, and Aunty. Leanne still resides in the rural community where she continues to support students with foundational literacy. Leanne was an Administration officer in her community and a Teacher's Aide at the local school before she entered the teaching profession. Leanne acquired a Bachelor of Education in Primary teaching and a diploma in Aboriginal studies. Leanne's first teaching position was at the local school where she also attended as a student. Leanne first taught the local heritage language to High School students, and then continued to teach in the infant's section of the primary school and that is where she developed her passion for early years literacy.

Factors influencing and shaping literacy teaching strategies

All participants had been influenced by the formalised literacy approaches and programs delivered through the NSW DoE. The NSW DoE has been through three cycles of English Syllabi in the last ten years. Delma suggests the newly designed version of the English curriculum should be infused with Aboriginal culture for teachers to "navigate" in a sociocultural linguistic paradigm". She also explained using a "sociocultural paradigm" has shaped her literacy teaching practice "as a linguist". Leanne responded that "the Reading Recovery (RR) strategies have influenced my teaching approach" even though this literacy pedagogy has been phased out of the DoE. She explained that the RR pedagogy helped her students to learn: "[the] routine method…set vocabulary for students to grasp". David stated that the key influence for him were the Literacy, Language, and Learning strategies (L3), which for him were "the most effective". Although L3 has recently been withdrawn from the DoE due to limited success, he explained this literacy approach "allows us to focus on individual students more readily…students' need explicit instruction".

The 8 ways learning Framework was developed by an Aboriginal Teacher Tyson Yunkaporta in the western region of NSW for all teachers, with the aim to work with Aboriginal culture through Aboriginal processes, rather than through Aboriginal content. This is an Aboriginal pedagogical framework that guides teachers through content using Aboriginal culture processes. The 8 ways has influenced Leanne and Delma's teaching practice. Delma spoke from a personal perspective and explained: "I was trained in 8 Ways learning and incorporated different ways to engage the students, this is helpful in learning how to teach". Leanne, on the other hand, took a normative approach, situating the framework in the practice of Aboriginal teachers in general. She noted: "It is important that Aboriginal teachers engage in training with the 8 ways of learning pedagogy framework".

Mary's concern for culture is an influencing factor in her literacy teaching practices. She yarns about the merging of the dominant language (English) with her home language (Aboriginal English) for traditional language reclamation purposes. Mary stated: "our home language mixed in with English become a part of us now and we are evolving and reclaiming our traditional languages". This may suggest that Mary's interest in conceptual approaches such as translanguaging is a determinant for learning the English language. Similarly, Delma explained that "Aboriginal people look at things in interconnected ways and this is a very big influence in my life". The teaching approach she has used to describe this is the "Winanga" approach where she further explained that "kids are still thinking about what is going on, don't go overboard with too many questions. In the Gamilaraay language, Winanga means to listen.

Leanne incorporates the deconstruct reconstruct pedagogy from the 8ways pedagogical framework to scaffold students through literacy patterns and codes in whole texts. This approach supports her students to recreate their own versions individually in the modern classroom. Leanne states, "the same ancient approach [deconstruct] was a method used for millennia in many ancient cultures including ours". It is evident Leanne's cognitive practices are shaped by her culture, similar to Delma's. Delma's humour shapes the literacy teaching practice in the classroom. She explained, "Aboriginal people would tell a joke to make others feel comfortable". For Aboriginal people, the humour (Yunkaporta, 2009) element shapes the atmosphere and is the entry point for opening dialogue based on trust, and for Delma, developing trust with her students was fundamental in her teaching practice.

Sociocultural factors shape the literacy strategies used. Family and social relationships are important for everyone, and it helps to build the "Identity kit". The "Identity kit" is shaped by social and cultural experiences and can also shape teaching practices. David made the point

that the home shapes his literacy teaching practice: “the importance of home-life, accepting and supporting reading in the home will enhance the learning in the classroom” and further explains “fishing or hunting…the child is engaged more in reading”. Bradley’s teaching practices are shaped by the home culture. He uses this as an entry point for creating Aboriginal pedagogy models. Bradley said he uses “the home culture as anchor points” which can also be an opportunity as a language tool for social understandings. Delma recognised that it is important to build on students’ prior knowledge as students are also shaped by various sociocultural factors. Her literacy teaching practice is shaped by students’ real-life experiences for example, “use the river or talk about the local pool that they know about”.

Taking a different approach, Bradley’s strong desire to equip his students with the necessary literacy skills required for employment influenced his teaching practice. He explained “literacy is seen as the universal good, it is about getting employment at the end of the day”.

Encouragement is a motivating factor in influencing a person or teachers’ performance. The parents of children in Mary’s class gave her positive feedback and this influenced Mary’s teaching practice and is evidenced when Mary stated, “They were saying amazing things because their child would go home talking about the Stolen Generation”. The same encouraging words came from her Highschool Principal, as a transference of knowledge from school to home and home to school.

Explaining her activities in retirement, Mary’s Aboriginal culture helps shape her ways of knowing, for example, “my themed art is centred on hats for grannies” and further explains “culture informs the story that goes with each granny hat”. A ‘granny’ is a prominent figure in Aboriginal families, a Granny also has Elder status and is well respected for her knowledge in the community. When a Granny takes her hat off, she takes on another role

within the family unit as the teller of stories and the giver of knowledge. Mary's art theme could also be shaped by family and the power relations that may exist under the Granny hat.

The most important literacy outcomes for Aboriginal educators

Four important literacy outcomes emerge from the data: proficiency in reading writing and oral ways; an authentic connection with culture and learning through culture, students being job-ready; and reaching their full potential and being able to contribute to their community.

Proficient reading, writing, and oral ways are cognitive skills that are relevant to everyone. All the participants understood the importance of reading and writing and explained their importance in classroom practices. This is evidenced when Leanne emphasised that she employed strategies to ensure her teaching practice follows the literacy routine and while this provides a consistent approach, teachers have the capacity to track literacy growth and outcomes on the "literacy continuum". Delma explained to "master the knowledge in reading", there must be an inclusion of various texts for students to develop their writing in a natural way. She also asserts the important role of a narrative and story in reading and writing for students to "associate their writing to direct meaning".

Among the cognitive skills identified in the report as being essential to learning to read are Attention, Visual Processing, Auditory Processing, Working, Short-Term and Long-Term Memory, and Sensory Integration. Reasoning skills are also identified in the Language and Literacy category.

Reading is a cognitive skill critical to economic development and productivity, Bradley explains that "industry has a huge interest in education", and it is essential for students to be "learning and earning". There are greater opportunities in the employment sector if you possess "job-ready" skills. The essential requirements for being "job-ready" include proficiency in reading, oral language, and written communications skills. Bradley said he

designed lessons centred around “business interests “and he deliberately reinforced the English language through teaching and learning content as “tools to hack the system”. Interestingly, in answer to this question about important outcomes of literacy, some participants spoke from personal experience, rather than from the perspective of a teacher. For Mary, her own job readiness skills helped her gain a local “apprenticeship” position in her local community after high school. Leanne taught her husband to read and write at home, and his literacy skills became proficient enough to gain “employment” in his local community. She explained that she had witnessed, first-hand, the positive impact of literacy campaigns in Aboriginal communities. Leanne talked passionately about the “literacy for life Campaign” which ran for several weeks in her community. The campaign created “increased enthusiasm” among the participants and the literacy, progress was evident such as welfare participants “transitioning to work, writing a resume” when Leanne explained the importance of students being proficient in reading and writing.

According to Bradley, the final outcome is for students to reach their full potential. Achieving proficiency in Standard Australian English is the beginning of mastering the codes of power. Teaching students to “Master the codes of English” allows them to be active citizens in their communities. Bradley explored the “living conditions” of children from other countries with a focus on agriculture and farming, a unit of study that captured the student’s interests and brought the “genius out of every student, cognitively and socially”. “They have to apply those skills in everyday life,” he said. The importance of reaching one’s full potential is further evidenced by Mary when she attained her “apprenticeship” through school leadership opportunities. She explained that she was the High school “prefect”, and in that role, she was asked by the Principal to be a change agent and make a difference in her community. Therefore, with the Principal’s support, she transitioned from High school to work successfully. Leanne’s husband achieved valuable literacy lessons at home because she

had equitable access to literacy at a young age. She kept on “mastering the code of English”, she states, “once you understand the code, you understand success I believe”.

To achieve these outcomes, teachers must plan lessons with a strong literacy focus. David explained the “home language” and “Aboriginal identity” must be factored into the morning literacy routine to improve literacy outcomes. Bradley explained that cultural context plays an important role in shaping children’s identities. This is evidenced where Bradley asserted that Aboriginal ways of teaching can be beneficial for the students “long term memory”. According to Mary, including symbols and images in the literacy lesson yields a powerful effect. Leanne noted that “the future” is helpful for learning literacy. Leanne allowed time in the literacy routine for students to engage with technology because students learn to “grasp” literacy concepts better and they are likely to retain the information in the “memory bank for later use”.

Leanne’s approach for acquiring the English language is straightforward. She explained that the best way to achieve the desired literacy outcomes is following the “literacy routine”, students are “eager to learn because it is a challenge”. Following a routine is essential for mastering foundational literacy concepts, however, Leanne suggested also to “create a space for flexible learning” if teachers want students to “fully grasp” the “literacy continuum”. Delma explains the best way for students to “master the knowledge” in reading is to build up their reading knowledge in “intense ways” using rich levelled texts.

Leanne highlighted the importance of a process approach to teaching, “If a child learns through the process, it doesn’t forget a step”. She also explained that the best way for marginalised community members to achieve proficiency in standard English is to develop “communal ways” for teaching and learning.

David mentioned the importance of home-school partnerships for literacy learning, and he explained this by saying, “effective communication between the home and school” is the best way to improve reading and writing outcomes. It is important for David to develop lessons around students “Aboriginal heritage and background”, but he also identified the significant benefits of employing “Aboriginal” people in the school to support students. Bradley said the best way for his students to maximise their learning potential in literacy is using Aboriginal culture as the entry point. He explained that a great example of this was at a school in Northern Queensland where the school created their own Aboriginal ways of learning using culture as an “anchor point”. According to Mary, Aboriginal Teachers are equipped for teaching both the heritage language and the English language. Moreover, she explained the best way to improve student literacy outcomes is “raising awareness” of the importance of languages. She said the best way to achieve literacy outcomes is by having the students create “mental maps”. However, it was also important for Mary to take the students on an excursion to a ‘significant place’, to link to culture. This multiliteracy cognitive experience connected learning to place through an “ancient history”, also connecting images, speaking, and writing in a holistic way. Leanne utilised a multimodal approach accessing the “Reading Eggs” software app to help students “reach their full potential in literacy”. She explained that when you “gamify literacy”, students are likely to enjoy the activity and remember relevant information.

Participants also said that there were problems and issues in working towards literacy outcomes from the perspective of Aboriginal teachers. Mary pointed out that the DoE needs to increase the number of Aboriginal voices in schools, more “local fullas” to teach both English and the heritage language/dialect ad cross-cultural approach.

The role of literacy in Aboriginal empowerment

Empowerment is a key ingredient in achieving success. In the context of this study, participants took several approaches to understanding empowerment and the role that literacy plays in it. Empowerment is acknowledged to promote citizenship and agency for individuals and the community. Individuals and groups experience various forms of empowerment to represent their interests toward self-determination and advocacy. Participants described how Aboriginal empowerment increases the participation of Aboriginal people in society, allowing them to exercise appropriate choices, to make decisions for themselves.

To some extent, participants answered the question about the role of literacy in Aboriginal empowerment in two ways. They referred to empowerment in a societal sense, as well as focussing more directly on empowerment through specific educational programs. In doing this, they sometimes relied on our shared experience as Aboriginal people and our common understanding of the topic. For example, Leanne referred to the Cuban literacy model, but without giving any details, assuming a common understanding. This model is grounded in an indigenous standpoint, which empowers individuals through a communal literacy campaign called the 'literacy for life' and has been linked to social, educational, and economic empowerment in Indigenous communities in several different countries. A starting point is the training of community members to help build trust in the model. Leanne described how in the community where she resides in remote NSW, job Seekers who identified as Aboriginal were empowered through this literacy campaign and that this went beyond addressing inequality in literacy, to address issues arising from inequality in educational, social, and political contexts. She emphasized that the "communal literacy approach has helped some of our Aboriginal community members develop enough foundational literacy skills".

‘Educational empowerment’ may be considered empowerment of an individual to achieve his or her potential. In the context described by Leanne, the focus was on bringing individuals together into a collective, where literacy led to ‘social empowerment’ as people learned together, as well as ‘political empowerment’, where individuals were able to develop agency collectively. However, for participants in this study, the empowering impact of education was not straightforward. The job seekers were self-empowered through this literacy model. Leanne explained; they had the “confidence to fill out an application form, write a resume and write a letter to a loved one”. She explained how the program created social change in the lives of the Aboriginal community and can lead to economic benefits. In summary, she said that ‘Literacy for life’ moves beyond the formalised curriculum seen in most schools; and in her experience, this campaign allows us to see the positive role of literacy in Aboriginal communities and how it can be driven through cultural and social factors. She concluded that this is a “decolonising literacy model” which is unlikely to be found in schools anytime soon.

The theme of colonisation through education and language was very important to Leanne and she spoke at length in discussing empowerment. Her first language is Aboriginal English (AE) which she was born into, and she believes that she was “denied most her heritage language” growing up due to “colonisation practices”. Looking back at two generations in her family, Leanne explained, “my grandmother’s eight children valued the English language “because it was an act of survival” and further explains that the “empowerment came from the struggle”. Thus, it is clear that her family learned the colonisers’ language (English) as a societal and political tool, in order to avoid the welfare, mission manager, and threats from the police. Speaking well in English made life easier for Aboriginal families.

Mary's community were also affected by government policy of the day, but her perspective is different from Leanne's. On the one hand, she accepted things as they were when she was growing up, to avoid conflict. This is evidenced when she stated the "closeness in my country town was affected by change and alcohol", "people taught things the way it was" and "there was segregation in our town where Aboriginal families could only use the back bar at the local pub". On the other hand, to empower her, the local school provided the social and cultural connections, she states: "school was a place of belonging to me". Speaking as a teacher, Mary thought that literacy "is about teaching the truth". For herself, being literate meant that she can be the agent of change that her community can benefit from. As an agent of change, Mary acts as a role model and empowers others, with a focus on family. She linked literacy and art. In Mary's "granny hat" workshops, she encourages individuals to use a wide range of natural and man-made materials to reflect their own unique life stories. Mary felt the "English language is important for mutual respect and culture which informs the story that goes with each Granny Hat". She emphasised that although each Granny Hat story will differ in terms of diversity in culture, the English language remains a commonality shared by workshop attendees.

David spoke from a teacher's perspective of empowering the younger ones to be future literacy leaders. He acknowledged the importance of role models drawn from the community when he said: "If we want to govern the literacy space, we have to stand up for what we believe in and more of our fullas are stepping up". English is the common language for Aboriginal people in Eastern Australia, but communities are slowly reclaiming their languages that were recorded by anthropologists or visiting explorers in the past. Aboriginal communities are currently governing the traditional language space, but David emphasised that there is time and room to govern the literacy space too, "our students have to be able to

use English across the country and indigenous languages have to be strengthened for a better understanding between Indigenous languages and English".

In his view, students who are high ability learners already have the backing of the family, so the role of literacy in Aboriginal empowerment is focusing on "Aboriginal students who are the middle of the road average ability learners with high attendance but are disadvantaged as a whole". He warns against forgetting about the 'average learner', they might be the "quiet ones", but they need the opportunity to build their advocacy and "independent skills".

Bradley was also concerned with those students who are not high achievers and suggested that poor literacy skills can lead to radicalisation because those students will not be able to discuss, reason, argue and campaign for change. He believed that the education system is not set up for low achievers because "the process of education is to rank students and a select few only have access to the codes of power". He explained that teachers focus on "students who aren't going to rock the boat, they will be the ones who get good marks and good positions". Both David and Bradley suggested that an educated person can offer more change through educational empowerment.

The success of students and their families in achieving significant levels of literacy can be empowering for a teacher. For David, strong connections with the community are vital. He stated that "reading in the home … enhances the learning in the classroom" so that students can bring their "experiences in their life" to literacy learning. Bradley was doing interesting things; he developed and designed an "agriculture" literacy program connecting the curriculum to children's community lives. Bradley empowered himself through his students and their achievements, but the students were self-empowered through the relevant learning content suitable for their context.

Indigenised approaches strengthening western teaching and assessment methods

Driving Indigenous content is important for Aboriginal teachers, they are advocates for culturally responsive schooling. The expertise of Aboriginal teachers is not limited to the teaching of Aboriginal culture; however, their cultural knowledge, systems, and practices are often reflected in their teaching and assessment approaches. The participants describe their indigenised teaching approaches to help strengthen western methods.

An Indigenised approach can be seen in someone who is completely immersed in an Aboriginal sociocultural paradigm to enhance understanding. Mary is an experienced teacher who was able to slide between Aboriginal ways and Western ways at school, in ways reminiscent of Papastergiadis's notion of cultural translation (2011) She states: "sometimes you do things in a blackfulla ways, and you don't even know it, it has to be pointed out to you by someone else" and "I know it's inherent, it's just a part of me".

Taking timeless Aboriginal ways of learning into modern westernised contexts consists of oral and visual modes transformed into the form of written language that is required by syllabus policy. Using a multiliteracy approaches is an Aboriginal way, Aboriginal teachers use holistic ways in general for communication purposes and use their observational skills regularly because this is the way they make sense of the environment and connect to their land. Aboriginal teachers do not just rely on written words or oral language in their teaching; they are authentically multimodal, using symbols and images which convey a rich cultural understanding. Symbols and images are drawn on regularly by Mary, Delma, and Leanne to teach western curricula. Leanne and Delma use the symbols and images from the 8 ways framework as a guide to "develop your own teaching approaches", Leanne said, and to "make the story, that will bring kids into the learning".

Delma gives an example about water hole trapping. She tells her students, that “animals can smell water from a distance, so how does the water hole trap them?” and a follow up activity is to build the yarn, “construct your own waterhole trap”. Delma understands the importance of building the story up for students through rich yarning, it helps to build comprehension and the big picture. In her teaching approach, she made the whole environment the character, the water was the character, and the animals were the character. None of this would make sense to students if they did not know about the land first. Mary directed the students to tap into their symbolic consciousness to search for patterns and meanings, and this is evidenced when she says, “look at those symbolic images and I ask was this a meeting place? and where are the water holes in the river?” In this example, she is asking the students to use their cultural knowledge to identify what is not in the picture, as a point for discussion. She shared with her students a photograph of a special place where land is central to connecting literacy: “I took photos of our country [Gamilaraay] and I showed the students in my class”.

Delma created what she called the “Winanga listening” pedagogy of yarning “she explained”, which allows students time to think before they dive into the lesson. Deep listening can take your mind to a holistic system of thought. Winanga is familiar to speakers of several languages and is a word for ear, listen and respect in Gamilaraay. The approach she developed allows the teacher to reflect on their own teaching approach. Delma describes the Winanga approach as rich yarns “circling the knowledge back and forth” without the teacher having to question the students too much but at the same time listening intently. Delma believed that “Aboriginal teachers come with an indigenised skillset”, and she refers to the strategies that should always be in the “back pocket” because there is “no one-way approach”. When a new student arrives in her class, Delma acts like an “aunt” to them because it “brings their identity” to the literacy space. Her indigenised approach is to be a “role model” that students can respect.

Bradley was respected by the community for placing “home” and “family” at the heart of teaching. He used the “home culture as anchor points” for designing his unit of work with the families and setting up “night school” under the streetlights” starting with the basics to high-level knowledge to create a challenge. He contextualised the “agriculture unit of work” making it a cultural match for his “marginalised students”. Delma and Bradley had a number of cultural anchors to draw from, it developed their indigenised approaches.

Aboriginal teachers have a role in the classroom, but they also have a place in the community. Leanne has developed her own kinship approaches to literacy, making early reading and writing an exercise based on relationship patterns known to children. As she explains, “the ‘family’ is at the centre of my worldview, and I develop my methods and approaches based on what I know best.” Using family as an anchor point, similar to the approaches described by Delma and Bradley, she said that in adopting the role of an aunt, it was her grandchildren that were the inspiration: “the first thing I thought of was my grandchildren and how they should learn from me as a grandparent and Elder”. This indigenised approach by Leanne can strengthen western teaching and assessment.

Both Delma and Mary highlighted the importance of creating cultural space for the students emphasising deep yarning and deep listening. Delma stated that other teachers asked her, “tell me what you do in your writing, your students are at a high level”, and she explained her teaching approach in her response, “the first step is about sentence construction, so I have rich yarns using the dialects of the students”. In her view, it is important to foster an environment where students speak up naturally without censoring their natural speech. Mary organised a time and space for Aboriginal students to meet as a collective, the time was specified for “yarning, troubleshooting and celebrating achievements”. Mary’s Principal wanted to create an agenda for the meeting. Mary was taken aback, knowing this idea went

against her Aboriginal ways, and so she said that she did not approve of that approach, explaining that her approach was to have “students speak up and feel comfortable”.

Culturally familiar oral ways of learning

The participants in this study incorporate their oral culture into the modern classroom. Traditionally, Aboriginals have shared their language through storytelling and yarns as a method of knowledge production and transmission (Frazer & Yunkaporta, 2019). This approach is quite different from what is found in the modern classroom, where the elements of oral instruction presented as comprising phonology, vocabulary, grammar, morphology, pragmatics, and discourse.

The use of oral culture is important to all the participants, although they express this importance in different ways. The power of language is inherent in all the examples given. Speaking from the perspective of an Aboriginal teacher, Bradley linked traditional Aboriginal oral ways to the development of their “long term memory” skills in the modern classroom. From this cognitive viewpoint, he suggested Aboriginal teachers can use their cultural “anchor points” for memorising complex concepts and information to store information. Mary, speaking from the perspective of an Aboriginal person, focused on the significance of relationships that transmit knowledge; for her, the stories of the older generation are still “valid and relevant”, because, in this way, stored information was “passed down orally” from her “grandparents and parents”. She also recognised the “power of oral stories” can lose its significance if the information is “inauthentic” and “irrelevant”. Her example of stories being inauthentic and subject to change is through the game of “Chinese Whispers”; she said she uses this to explain to the students how stories can be “altered” and when the “yarn returns” like a boomerang it has “already changed”. But she also explained to the students that stories can thrive if told in the right “context” and spoken “authentically”.

The importance of family in oral learning was emphasised especially by David and Mary. Mary valued the rich oral language from her “home”; she is also able to draw strength from it to “reclaim” her traditional heritage language. An example of this is when she mentioned a translanguaging approach, “our Aboriginal words go together with English... to teach Aboriginal languages”. David also embraced the “home language”, but from the perspective of an Aboriginal teacher, and validated this language as relevant by acknowledging the “oral learning” skills that “Aboriginal students predominantly bring with them” to school.

David knew from experience that “Aboriginal students bring a well-developed understanding of feelings and emotions” to class discussions due to regularly engaging in “traditional family yarns and conversations” in the home. This is evidenced by students' “active listening” and observing their “body language and facial expressions” that usually accompany oral ways. For him, students have already developed an oral language ability before they enter kindergarten. Mary’s experiences led her to explain that students in the early years can’t wait to start school. They already had the “big yarns” with mum and dad at home about “friends, shoes, uniform, lunch box, backpack, and pencil case”.

“Oral ways” are an important aspect of classroom practice. To “enhance learning”, David explained that he built on the student's “oral ways” as a pre-requisite for improved reading. He understands the physical book is a part of relationships and assigns a cultural value by ensuring parents yarn with their children during “home reading”. Leanne mentioned many of their lessons incorporated oral language activities, students were “engaging in discussions about family “and family was the anchor point for students to maximise their learning. Delma emphasised the importance of “pictures” to go with “oral stories” and use them as “tools” for later use. She explained that students would “revisit the pictures” again in a “hands-on way” before they “get to the writing part”. From her perspective, students can “miss the point” in

the lesson without that the “big proper yarn” at the beginning of a lesson, but this yarning has to be done well, avoiding “too much talk”, as this limits the effectiveness of the strategy.

David understands that getting “kids to talk a lot” is more than words on a page; even though “writing is a big part of learning” the yarns “speak to the writing” to support the final product. Leanne knows that oral language significantly impacts “story structure and reading development”. She understands that listening comprehension comes before reading comprehension in the reading recovery pedagogy because it is a “routine method and has a set vocabulary and language for students to grasp and learn”. Delma spoke at length about how “perfecting oral literacy outcomes” will predict improved reading accuracy and word recognition skills. Her focus on the “macro skills” such as “phonology “and “grammar”, in her view, will assist her students to successfully communicate in English. With a focus on pragmatics, she encouraged the social use of language and conversational turn-taking through open-ended yarns, where she “grows students vocabulary without correcting their Aboriginal English or their variation of it”. She was also mindful of the time spent on the oral literacy activities, for example, she kept the lessons “short sweet, straight to the point and on to the next macro-level”. Speaking from a technical literacy perspective, Delma suggests “phonics belong in comprehension” and before “transferring” this knowledge to “writing”, she would spend “50 percent of the time” concentrating on “listening and speaking” activities. She created a vocabulary list with the students using “tricky words”, she also used “Post-it notes” as “fancy wallpaper” for developing their oral language ability in the classroom. She preferred to “stretch the moment stuff”, building on students’ existing schema in “listening and speaking” activities by “tapping into what they know”.

On a similar note, David explained how as an education officer, he had asked an Aboriginal classroom teacher “what are you talking about this week?” After she replied “unsure”, he

suggested to her to yarn about the “big messy four trailer truck” that parked its trailer in close proximity to the school. The students were mesmerised with the “truck manoeuvring the trailer into the yard”, the topic was interesting and “relational” to the students’ lives.

Bradley suggested Aboriginal teachers can tap into their cultural “cognitive patterns” as a “strategy” rather than “leave oral cultural ways at the door”. He also explained the “current school system” is a roadblock for Aboriginal teachers to access their rich “oral ways”. This was the case for Delma who was the only Aboriginal teacher in her school. She felt it was important to “have that Aboriginal teacher there”, because Aboriginal people “value relationships”. Her “Aboriginal voice” did not change; she believed it actually “helped bring the parents into the school space”. In particular, she understood humour is an important element in gaining parents’ trust and has made an effort to create a space for a “good laugh” to make others feel comfortable. In Leanne’s school, there were four Aboriginal teachers who possessed “culturally familiar oral ways of teaching”. The Aboriginal teachers in Leanne’s school were comfortable in using the cultural metalanguage of the students even calling them “cuz” or using sayings such as “yarrmbuul’ (sorry for someone) and Ngarragarr (silly) in yarn ups. Leanne described the importance of using the same oral language as the students to “enhance kinship relationships”.

Whereas four of the participants provided examples of how they used oral ways of learning in their classroom practice, showing their ability to take an approach to their teaching that derived from their position as a teacher educated to understand a conceptual approach to literacy and trained to work as employees of the DoE, Bradley actively expressed concern that the structures of the DoE prevented them from “designing” their “own curricula”. Delma indicated that being the only Aboriginal teacher in the school made it harder for her to use

culturally familiar oral ways of learning; but for Leanne, there being four Aboriginal teachers made it easier to sustain culturally based ways of learning.

The early year's literacy approach and foundational learning

The answers participants gave to the question of why their early years' literacy approach influences foundational learning for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students suggest that their focus is on Aboriginal students and mostly on the processes of literacy teaching. It may be that the topic of the research study skewed their thoughts, or it may have been that they found the question difficult to answer. None answered it directly or completely.

Bradley and David, speaking from the perspective of Aboriginal people, both presented themselves as role models because having "literacy role models" is important for foundational literacy learning. Bradley explained that he "loves his literacy" and for students to love their literacy, they must learn literacy with a "real-life purpose" in a "real-life context". This links to what David explained about students watching him learning and "loving literacy", demonstrating that reading the writing can be a pleasurable activity.

Participants sensed that an Aboriginal teacher's specialist knowledge was not recognised and acknowledged by the DoE or by non-Aboriginal colleagues. For example, Delma stated that the only time she felt "visible" was when her colleagues asked for information about "Aboriginal culture". She felt valued more as an Aboriginal person rather than an Aboriginal teacher. The change occurred when Delma's colleagues witnessed the improved literacy results of the students in her class and asked her if they could be mentored by her. When she scaffolded her literacy approach to her colleagues, she felt more "visible" as a "teacher" in her school. Even though Bradley's student's literacy results topped the state, he thought he was still considered a "liability" in his school; the school "separated the Aboriginal Staff and Non-Aboriginal staff members" during staff meetings. Bradley never had the opportunity to

model his literacy teaching practices to his colleagues like Delma. Leanne created her own "Kinship approaches to literacy in her home", she has not taught this literacy approach in the school, knowing her expertise and knowledge in this area would not be valued in the DoE. Instead, Delma, Leanne, and Bradley appeared to minimise their expectations in order to meet the expectations of the DoE.

There was greater emphasis in the responses to the question of the pieces of knowledge used in the early years' literacy teaching. Delma said that she taught at the cultural interface, switching back and forth between Aboriginal and mainstream ways. She was conscious of the need to comply with the standards and practices of the department of education, and that is why is the reason why her literacy instruction often sits on a "western paradigm". Even though Delma is "forced" to comply with western ways at school, she ensures her content has "relevance to the community" and the foundational literacy matches the child's reality. For example, as noted above, she created the "Winanga" pedagogy based on deep listening. With listening as the primary mode of knowledge transmission in Delma's teaching approach, she views the "Winanga" pedagogy as a structured cultural activity utilised to improved reading and comprehension, whereas in mainstream teaching the "Winanga" pedagogy would be considered a multimodality approach used to support decoding and encoding texts. This links to what Leanne suggested about how the use of systemic patterns, concepts and skills come together with listening, learning, and memory and are cemented in students "memory bank" for later use. Bradley explained that cultural practices of knowledge influence students to retain information in their "long term memory", done by using community and cultural "anchor points".

From an Aboriginal perspective, Mary and Leanne each suggested translanguaging approaches would benefit students' foundational learning skills. Leanne used the local

traditional language alongside English to teach students to "code with the Alphabet symbols" at the same time teaching students to value the home language, "Aboriginal English". In Mary's case, she explained that translanguaging is a great skill for students to have, it allows students to strengthen their foundational literacy by learning both languages in different contexts. Although she was focussing on Aboriginal students, the skills would be relevant to any student whose home language is no English.

Due to the inadequate instruction of English literacy in the community and school, Leanne and Delma felt they had been forced to re-think their own foundational literacy practice and approaches. They both explained their approaches in detail. Delma's Indigenous "circular learning" practice is modelled through a scaffolding approach aimed at bringing the students into the "foundational space". For example, students begin at the "same pace", building up the auditory and oral language skills by 'reflecting" on their experiences from previous yarns and stories. This can be seen as a mixture of Multiliteracies (oral) and multimodality (auditory) approaches. Delma explained that there is a plethora of "commercial literacy products that are expensive", and it is more productive to create her own, as described above. Mary understands English is the "language of power" that can't be ignored. At the same time, she argued that her "ancient history and culture" influenced her foundational literacy practice, and influences her art in the community. She used a multiliteracy approach to teaching foundational literacy by embracing her rich oral ways. Her creative approach to literacy instruction included using semiotic resources such as "imagery, photographs and visual art" which have socio-cultural meanings for her. David's approach is similar to Mary's, with its emphasis on local culture and language to inform Indigenous knowledge production, although here, he took the perspective of an Aboriginal teacher. He described how he deconstructed a cultural lens in the modern classroom encouraging "hands-on learning and demonstrations" which opens up a space for yarning. Delma's approach also involved

students engaging in yarns and stories at the same pace. This was followed by students reflecting on their previous experiences through a “circular learning” practice.

Conclusion

The findings chapter identified that the five participants each developed their own pedagogy, using culturally enhanced literacy practices, and that they saw these pedagogies from three different perspectives, and that is the ‘Aboriginal teacher’, ‘Aboriginal person’ and ‘teacher’ personae. These three different identities taken on by Aboriginal teachers and their ability to switch back and forth between the identities depending on the contextual situation, can be understood variously as acts of survival, leadership and cultural translation. The findings showed how Aboriginal teacher’s literacy practices were governed by the mandated curriculum and this influenced and shaped their literacy teaching strategies. What emerged from the findings is the importance of literacy outcomes for Aboriginal teachers and it was evident that proficiency in reading writing and oral ways; an authentic connection with culture and learning through culture, students being job-ready; and all students reaching their full potential was very important to them. The findings concluded that literacy has a role in an Aboriginal educator’s life, literacy being about getting an education yet also representing ‘survival skills’ to empower the community. Therefore, the findings suggest Aboriginal teachers in this study strengthen their processes of literacy teaching in the area of foundational English through their own cultural knowledge, and this specialist knowledge ought to be shared with the world. The significance of these findings and their implications for scholarship and for educational practices will be addressed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 Discussion

The importance of culturally relevant pedagogies

This study privileges the voices of "Aboriginal teachers" in the literacy space. These voices are represented not in the Western scholarly way of quoting the words they have used, which would put the emphasis on content. Instead, they are represented in the yarning modality of the findings, which places greater emphasis on process. In order to discuss culturally relevant pedagogies, it is important to reconsider what culture is in the context of this study. This study draws on Williams's (1983, p.90) elaboration of the concept, but adapts two of the meanings he identifies: culture as a way of life and the "practices of intellectual … activity". The findings have demonstrated that in the context of Aboriginal pedagogy, culture clearly brings together the way of life with the creation of knowledge into a process.

The role of culturally relevant pedagogy in schools is vitally important for enhancing teacher practice for all students, even when teachers are seeking ways to cater for students from diverse backgrounds in the development of foundational literacy (Perso & Hayward, 2015). The Findings of this study demonstrated the range of pedagogies used by participants in this study, pedagogies that were created by individuals and which reflected the identities they brought to the study of Aboriginal person, Aboriginal teacher and employee of the Department of Education. Particularly important in their pedagogies is the role of oral culture (Dean, 2010). While this emphasis on culture could be seen to mirror the Vygotskian approach to pedagogy, exemplified by Martin and Rose (2005) or by Yunkaporta (2009), the findings of this study show oral culture is used differently in the pedagogies of these teachers. Literacy, in this study, is not developed by reference to culture (McKnight, 2016), nor by creating parallel learning cultures (Australian National University, n.d.), but by the individual teachers through the use of their Aboriginal cultures.

In this chapter, the significance of culture and of the culturally enhanced ways of teaching demonstrated by the participants in the study will be considered in the context of the literature and of the practices of teaching foundational literacy. The chapter will discuss key areas where tensions were apparent in the findings. These include the approaches to pedagogy; the purposes of literacy; the use of culturally enhanced approaches to the development of foundational literacy, including oral culture, scaffolding and translanguaging; and the tensions experienced by participants in their experiences of teaching.

Approaches to Pedagogy

Pedagogy refers to the method and how we teach; it is the theory and practice of educating and describes all the learning and teaching that takes place within a socio-cultural context of the school and its community (DEEWR, 2009, p. 42). From a social perspective, it is shaped by the teacher's own experiences. Pedagogy is the ideas, values and collective histories which inform, shape and explain the classroom practices. It is also, importantly about the relationship between the teacher, the student and the content (Child Australia, 2017).

Social pedagogy, as noted above, is a category identified by Bernstein (1990 as cited in Martin & Rose, 2005) and by Rose (2004), which is about education in its broadest sense and its relation to the social world. Vygotsky argued that culture is the determining factor for knowledge construction. A social pedagogical approach views literacy as a broader and more complex social construct. Scholars have focussed attention on the social dimension of literacy and on the importance of understanding the social context in which literacy was being used (e.g. Buckingham et al., 2013), factors which arose as points of concern for some participants in this study.

The phrases mainstream ways and culturally enhanced ways, in the research question, suggest that there is an understanding that the social pedagogy that underpins literacy

education in NSW does not fully account for the culture of teachers or students, in the way that Vygotsky argued for. The phrase “mainstream ways” indicates that teaching programs are grounded in a relatively homogenous set of ‘Western’ cultural values, even though their participants may come from a wide range of different cultural backgrounds. The phrase “culturally enhanced ways” suggests that cultural knowledge must in some way be added to the mainstream ways. This binary divide hides nuances apparent in these findings. The phrase “mainstream ways” covers two key aspects of pedagogy: it includes the mandated curriculum of the Department of Education as well as the strategies for implementing that curriculum which are accepted as part of the skills repertoire of all teachers and are taught in programs of teacher education.

At one level, this study is related to the work of Bernstein’s and Vygotsky (1978 as cited in Rose, 2009) draws on the social theory mentioned by Rose (2009) in the literature where the transmission of knowledge through text can empower social groups but the textual performances must be coupled with the cultural knowledge of students’ home-worlds (Rose, 2009, p 16). The conceptual approaches of Rose (2009) and Yunkaporta (2009) are both similar (both being social pedagogies) and different. Rose (2009) and Yunkaporta (2009) promote culturally relevant pedagogical practices though a both-ways approach (Australian National University, (n.d.), where Aboriginal knowledges are incorporated through strategies accepted as part of the repertoire of any teacher of foundational literacy and taught in programs of teacher education. Rose (2009) claims that his approach to scaffolding can be integrated into any cultural context whereas Yunkaporta (2009) operates within an Aboriginal pedagogy framework where two systems, Aboriginal knowledges and western knowledges, are integrated to include both the accepted repertoire of strategies and cultural enhanced strategies. The participants in the study were able to demonstrate how Yunkaporta (2009) and

Rose (2009) influenced their teaching practices and pedagogies, through their use of Aboriginal culture in practices of scaffolding.

The purpose of literacy

Literacy is the power to use language in written and verbal forms. Literacy in English require an understanding of the cultural context, colonisation, law, politics and economics.

Literacy is more than just the ability to understand basic reading and writing skills and being just proficient in standard Australian English. It is important for marginalised communities to understand how to respond strategically to systemic and structural biases, learning how to draw on their personal and cultural strengths and knowing what to do with it, as set out in the Closing the Gap project referred to below. Schools can engage with literacy pedagogy from a critical literacy perspective, drawing on the lived realties of students. Literacy has a different purpose for different communities. Literacy is the vehicle for taking action in the world that contributes to our meaning-making.

Competent reading and writing skills are fundamental for transforming student's lives. Literacy is a learning tool for western learning. The purpose of literacy as a tool is essential for students to access knowledge, skills and content in the Australian curriculum. Students will experience the curriculum differently to others because the pedagogies and assessment will differ from teacher to student. The Aboriginal teachers in this study were influenced by the mandated curriculum that included formalised literacy approaches and programs. One participant suggested the "newly designed version of the English curriculum" will allow teachers to have autonomy to plan pedagogical lessons through a "sociocultural linguistic paradigm". The new English Syllabus has potential to be a productive resource for teachers, teachers embrace the opportunity through an autonomous approach which will open up the English curriculum to accept diversity.

Being able to read and write in standard English, "master[ing] the codes of English", as one participant put it, is an important aspect of literacy, allowing students to be active citizens in their communities. This was seen as a significant factor in being "job ready", that is in having the knowledge and skills expected of a worker in Australian society. There is an additional challenge inherent in this for some Aboriginal teachers, as was evident from the Findings. Oral cultures became the minority language in the modern classroom whereas the English language is prioritised and valued more through print modes (Baker and Wright, 2017). The modern classroom values monolingualism and the preferred language in schools is standard 'English' language rather than the Aboriginal English or heritage language of oral cultures.

Luke (2013) and Boughton et al, (2013) argue that "literacy is one form of capital" which can change the social circumstances of individuals, although preparing workers for the contemporary world needs more than that. Luke (2013) suggests that a re-valuing of cultural capital, that is, an individual's knowledge base, will be important in this process. While Luke (2013) has not suggested how a "transformation of capital" through literacy can be achieved, the participants in this study offer brief examples of their own experiences of the transition to being "job ready". These examples show the importance of a mentor able to help navigate a system that extends beyond literacy. Another participant also indicated the importance of literacy as a starting point for engagement in the world of work when he described competence in the English language as "a tool to hack the system", teaching students to master the "codes of English" so that they can apply "those skills in everyday life".

The Use of culturally enhanced approaches

Understanding culture

In a cultural sense, Indigenous knowledge works differently from western knowledge. Western knowledge works on the premise that no knowledge exists until it is 'discovered' by

people. This leads to people claiming that knowledge is power. Aboriginal knowledge however is seen to start from the creator who is all knowing. In this view, there is no new knowledge, just different understandings on the creator's wisdom based on the different life experiences of individuals. Thus, in the Aboriginal context, the giving of cultural advice respects that the person asking for advice has their own truth, and that should be respected because it is another unique insight into Aboriginal knowledge (Jorgensen, 2007).

Culture, as set out above, enhances foundational literacy in many ways, and it is brought into the learning process in many ways and from many sources (Burgess, 2014; Frazer & Yunkaporta, 2019; Perso & Hayward, 2015). It is evident the participants in this study embraced a culturally responsive pedagogy to inform their teaching practice, including learning through oral, narrative, visual and relational ways; in addition, the teachers bring their personal Aboriginal cultural ways of knowing to their methods, similar to the work of Boughton et.al, (2013) where the Cuban Literacy for Life campaign was rolled out in "communities in interconnected ways". The application of culturally responsive pedagogies as a student-centred approach allows teachers to nurture the identity of students through various cultural needs allowing the teacher to approach knowledge through cultural angles (Savage et al., 2011).

Each participant brings his/her cultural heritage and cultural knowledge into the process; however, the process is different for all participants which means the outcomes, strategies and pedagogies are different. Each outcome, strategy and pedagogy has implications for the teaching of literacy, whether at a classroom level or at a conceptual level. Different cultures shape different learning styles, this was evident with the individual teacher's own heritage language and culture influencing their teaching approaches and practices. They understand the most important way of learning and working with Aboriginal knowledge is through

cultural ways of learning. There was a great variation in the way individual teachers designed their own relationally responsive practices for their classroom.

Individual teachers utilised their culture, heritage and identity to create their home-grown literacy approaches to be a cultural match for their students. These literacy pedagogies, approaches and practices were shaped by many factors; the heritage language and culture; home, family, kinship. Yunkaporta's (2009) 8 ways of learning was mentioned as a key influence for several participants. One teacher applied circular knowledge in her teacher practice similar to Yunkaporta's (2009, p.38) spiral that represents the image of the community where learning goes out and returns. Another introduced elements of culture by creating kinship approaches to literacy. Home cultures were used by some participants as a 'hook' or 'tool' (Yunkaporta, 2009, p.46) for social understandings (Martin and Rose, 2005). Country was also used as a significant aspect of culture and cultural knowledge, with the 'river' being used as a cultural metaphor which represented community and a sense of belonging and at times being linked to the real-life experiences of the students.

The participants in this study use both mainstream ways of learning and cultural ways of learning. That is to say, they use their own pedagogies and culturally informed strategies at the same time as they work with the mandated curriculum and the accepted repertoire of teaching strategies. It is the blending of the mandated curriculum with strategies that work across between and through Aboriginal knowledges that demonstrates how Aboriginal teachers bring a culturally enhanced approach to their teaching of literacy. This leads to a merging of practices appropriate for the particular context that is embedded with Aboriginal knowledges and ways of being that are universal and local at the same time.

Through the findings, participants viewed the mandated curriculum as relevant to the process of learning in the western education paradigm, however, depending on the context

participants were travelling “back and forth” to find common ground between mandated teaching requirements and their cultural markers, not to find points of difference but to identify the points of connection. In this way, they are making an integrated cultural practice. In the literature, Frazer and Yunkaporta (2019) state cultural ways of learning have a role alongside the mandated curriculum. Participants in this study were familiar with the work of Yunkaporta, and two expressed a sense of personal connection to one of the pedagogies in the “8 ways” learning frameworks (2009).

The participants in this study begin with “oral language” and talk their way into and through the learning. This approach differs from the mandated curriculum approach at a foundational level which introduces print from the first year with less or a more isolated oral language components as a sub-strand. That is to say, participants in this study show how it is possible to go beyond the approach that Yunkaporta advocated, demonstrating a seamless integration of Aboriginal cultural ways in the teaching of foundational literacy. In this way, they highlight the importance of oral culture.

This integration of cultures was not achieved without tensions. Although Bradley, David, Mary and Leanne enthusiastically described how they culturally enhance their classroom curriculum to suit contextual needs one of these participants acknowledged she was careful in the way she used her Aboriginal knowledge, not tell other teachers about it; in contrast, another participant found a way where ‘culture’ was used synergistically in her lesson within the mainstream ways of the mandated curriculum. The findings gave a sense that for these participants, everyone in the community is responsible for culture, and ‘home culture’ has a place in the classroom. One participant in this study did not consider that this integration of Aboriginal and Western ways was common, expressing the view that Aboriginal teachers leave their “oral cultural ways at the door”. Although this view was not shared by the other

four participants, it matches Yunkaporta's (2009, p.132) data which revealed that some Aboriginal participants "had difficulty" in coming to Aboriginal knowledge and some non-Aboriginal participants came to it with "ease".

Oral Culture

There is an expectation in the mandated curriculum that students understand concepts about print in texts and books to foster their language development (NSW Government Education .n.d). Print language is essential for foundational reading and students grow to understand that language in print mode carries important messages for the reader, however, literacy has the capacity to cover more than just concepts about print, different modes of literacy emphasises student's oral language skills where students can talk their way through the learning such as through "music, movement, dance, storytelling, visual arts, media and drama" (Council of Australian Governments, n.d, p.41).

Oral modes of communication are seen in the work of individuals drawing knowledge from their rich oral background to build the yarn at the beginning of a story. In this study, oral ways were incorporated into teaching approaches specifically to enhance student comprehension skills thus developing student's holistic system of thought. The 'Winanga' Pedagogy developed by Leanne which emphasises the explicit teaching of listening skills for phonological and word recognition skills. Individual teachers in this study drawn from the power of nature through symbols and images, often beginning with images of country. Mary used an image of the 'river' as a hook and place of familiarity where a student could access their long-term memory. As noted above, the work of Yunkaporta (2009) was drawn on by Leanne and Delma to build symbolic meaning in literacy through symbols and images and body gestures that were central to their own heritage and culture. Leanne, Mary and Delma understands how images and symbols carry the knowledge of processes or learning. Body

language plays an important role in Aboriginal pedagogy. Active listening is observing through student's body language and facial expressions. Cultural ways are matched to systemic patterns, concepts, and skills that come together with listening, learning, and memory. Using traditional storytelling and narrative links lessons to student's home language, the learning is also situated in the student's lived realities and experiences.

A key aspect of literacy teaching strategies is the use of oral traditions, it should be given an equal amount of time in the morning literacy session (Konza, 2011). The findings show that the relationship to story and the connection to oral language throughout the learning is vital. The participants in this study created a space for students to talk their way into and through the learning. They did this by drawing from their 'cultural schema', a term often used to describe the familiar knowledge of one's own culture that is needed to make sense of the language and social structures within which we live (Johnson, as cited in Winch et al., 2019). Teachers have the ability to act as agents within systems and beyond it.

Oral language develops through listening and talking where the learner can take in and express ideas though a receptive (listening) and expressive (talking) manner (Winch et al., 2019, p.13-14). There are "differences in information processing" (Perso & Hayward, 2015, p.49) between western cultures and oral cultures. Oral cultures are generally developed through "child-rearing practices" (Perso & Hayward, 2015, p.48). In both western and oral cultures, yarning or talking and listening allows the learner to make "meaning through the construction of spoken texts" (Winch et al., 2019, p.13-14). In oral cultures, language proficiency is learned through a yarning context, in western cultures yarning is often referred to as a conversation, an exchange building on the other persons spoken words for example where understanding is developed through the narrative rather than building on language. All participants in this study draw on the mode of communication of yarning as a trajectory to

engage the students at the beginning, middle and end of the literacy lesson. Mary and Delma merged the yarns into the whole lesson and not just at the beginning to give rise to the topic, this way reflected the pedagogies used in the context of traditional societies where immersion and oracy is valued equally when learning through language. The traditional classroom consisted of learning outdoors in nature where it provided the appropriate context for families to bond with their children developing wider vocabulary while learning the heritage language and culture. Where families learned together and interacted traditionally with one another out on country, it was through oracy that that the heritage language and stories were able to survive for so long (Baker, 2017).

The classroom practices described by individual teachers emphasised the importance of yarning, not only as a social practice to develop a relationship of trust with the students, but also as a cultural approach through which knowledge is transferred. These practices draw on an Aboriginal pedagogy theory where their pedagogy framework was developed to "retain the strengths" (Frazer and Yunkaporta, 2019) of the mandated curriculum but also build in the relational patterns that are grounded in local ontologies and methodologies relevant to students.

Translanguaging

Oral language develops in context of natural communications in learning and knowing. We use oral language when we engage in social situations of which spoken interaction is a part, and the forms of oral language we use are governed by our culturally accepted ways of using language. As children engage in these social situations, and begin to use spoken language in ways that are appropriate for each situation, they start to develop as language users within their social group.

The teachers in this study showed that yarning helped to create this support, not only extending the students' abilities to express themselves, developing approaches that are rooted in relation patterns and thinking used naturally by the local community (Battiste, 2005 and Yunkaporta, 2009). Individual teachers also understand the importance of reflecting the social and cultural context of the students engaged in modern literacy activities, especially bringing their home talk to into the classroom to convey their meaning, this process used in translanguaging (Hamman, 2018).

Translanguaging literacy approaches employed in classrooms strengthen both the home language and target language (Oliver et al., 2020). Students have opportunities to mix languages in a pedagogical translanguaging way rather than focusing on the target language which is English. Where Indigenous languages and Aboriginal English is valued and inclusive in school curriculum alongside English, student have choices to write a narrative in their home language and then retell it in English. When the teachers in this study talk about mixing traditional language words with English, they are saying that translanguaging approaches have significant benefits for the students; translanguaging builds the students "home language" repertoire and the "English language" repertoire at the same time and students are learning the conventions and rules of both languages in a classroom setting. The initial entry point for any lesson using translanguaging strategies is a focus on the students own epistemologies by identifying the student's own ways of learning so that they can create their own identities from the resources of their own culture. Through a translanguaging pedagogy model (Hamman, 2018), teachers will see their students learning language through their own cultural development. Students can be supported at the Zone of Proximal Development, teachers embracing Vygotsky's theory of social development (Martin and Rose, 2005) can provide the necessary scaffolds and teaching practices for student to move beyond their own existing levels in language. The instructional teaching methods from

translanguaging Pedagogies have implications for the classroom teacher, student and school policy.

Mixing languages in the classroom is critical in developing foundational skills in the early years, teaching both languages empower the students to comfortably use their own linguistic systems with ease. Teachers as social justice advocates can maximise the full repertoire of the students and empower their bilingual voice. Schools also have the opportunity to include design bilingualism/translanguaging models for diverse needs an example of this is fusing linguistic codes through two-way learning process where children can develop their full repertoires shifting between two or more dialects continuously. In a bilingualism/translanguaging model, schools must identify the professional learning that is required for translanguaging purposes, resulting in the teachers embracing two grammars in the classroom or even encouraging lexical code switching in texts and students learning the rules and conventions of both languages.

Scaffolding

Scaffolding opportunities allow students to learn to read and write through a particular discourse. Rose (2005) argues that scaffolding builds up students' knowledge and understanding of in a similar way that builders use for the temporary support until it is no longer needed and that the model he proposes (Rose et al., 2003) is relevant to all cultures including Aboriginal culture. In this study, Aboriginal teachers use a variety of approaches through which the "culture" and home-worlds of the students are supported, and inequity addressed by giving students the literacy tools to succeed (Koop & Rose, 2008).

The concept of instructional scaffolding, according to Vygotsky (1981, as cited in Martin and Rose, 2005) allows the learner to build connections based on social interactions. In reality, only some learning activities place an emphasis on language, while other skills are acquired

instead with hands-on practice and observation. Martin and Rose's (2005, p. 1) discourse is informed by "social class functions" which allows all learners to reach their full potential in reading, writing and spelling. The findings of this study echo Martin and Rose's (2005) idea about culture and context informing texts, which itself is similar to the work of Yunkaporta (2009) and Vygotsky (1981, as cited in Martin and Rose, 2005) where individuals are influenced by community and social interactions.

Scaffolding can be done in various ways. Three Aboriginal teachers in this study incorporate their epistemologies and ontologies at the beginning of the literacy lesson for students to acquire a cultural understanding of their own ways of being and valuing. The cultural support has to be scaffolded into the lesson, otherwise students are not able to answer the questions to communicate directly with the teacher. Culture is an important tool in teacher-student interactions, the teacher first builds the scaffold support using the home culture of the student which is evident by Aboriginal teachers in this study.

Scaffolding can be identified with different labels. The Aboriginal teachers in this study utilise Yunkaporta's (2009) term for scaffolding which is "deconstruct/reconstruct". In Yunkaporta's (2009) symbolic representation which symbolises taking whole parts, breaking it up and placing it back together. One Aboriginal teacher emphasised she is using multiple pedagogies in literacy, the "reading recovery" pedagogy developed by Clay (1993) and the "deconstruct/reconstruct" Aboriginal pedagogy developed by Yunkaporta (2009) to provide the temporary support for learning "literacy patterns and codes in whole texts".

The students' prior knowledge and "real world" knowledge were also used for scaffolding by Aboriginal teachers in this study, similar to strategies identified by Martin and Rose (2005), Yunkaporta (2009) and Vygotsky (1981, as cited in Martin and Rose, 2005) to give students the necessary understanding required in various discourses. The inclusion of real-world

knowledge took two forms for Aboriginal teachers in this study, with one teacher taking students out of the school into the community, to sit in a place associated with yarning and knowledge sharing and another teacher brings the community into the school, especially through the valuing of home culture.

Within the context of their families, children learn to use the basic structures of their home language before they go to school, and they gain control over almost all the sounds and many of the rules and principles related to the grammar of the language (although they are generally unable to talk about these grammatical features). As children hear stories and other texts read aloud, often several times, they gain extra language experience, especially of those language forms that are characteristic of written texts, for example: Once there was a big bad wolf. This literary language is a precursor to the types of language children will meet as they learn to read more complex texts at school.

The teachers in this study draw on the relationships in an Aboriginal way, embracing the language from the home which is essential for providing the oracy scaffold needed in foundational literacy learning for the modern classroom. Relationships which co-existed in traditional societies were the foundation for young children to draw on for cultural memory and developing stronger oracy skills (Mitchell, 2018, p.5); print words in the today's classroom is illustrated through oral stories similar to traditional societies (Mitchell, 2018), the teaching methods, and epistemes of participants in this study reflect Mitchell's indigenous ways of knowing (Mitchell, 2018).

Oral language is critical for decoding printed text, it is important for students foundational reading competence (Hulme and Snowling, 2013). At the same time as Aboriginal teachers in this study focused on the importance of oral culture, some teachers discussed a different approach to scaffolding: the importance of developing a student's oral language capabilities

through a conservative approach such as phonics which included practices such as letter recognition, segmenting words into sounds and phonemic awareness. This approach which draws on the established repertoire of strategies is emphasised in the pedagogical approaches of Buckingham et al. (2013) and Konza (2011).

Tensions

Needing to comply

This section sets out the tensions that emerged during the yarning. A tension was that felt around the need to comply with the requirements of the Department of Education policy. This was significant because it emphasised the potential for conflict between the three personae in each participant. A second group of tension emerges in the implementation of the Closing the Gap initiative, which aims to ensure that the academic achievements of Aboriginal children are on a par with their non-Aboriginal peers. One tension which emerges here is around the use of culturally enhanced approaches to teaching to meet an outcome which may be at odds with a community's cultural expectations. A second is around the loss of traditional languages and their subordination, even of Aboriginal English, to Standard Australian English (SAE), given that SAE is prioritised as the main focus in schools for improving literacy outcomes.

Aboriginal Teachers in this study have clearly demonstrated how their pedagogies are personal developed creatively from their own knowledge and skills, derived from their education, training and experience as a teacher and also from their knowledge as an Aboriginal teacher. In this process, they seem to act with autonomy. Yet, it was also clear that teachers felt that they had to be compliant, both with the policies of the Department of Education and with the expectations of other teachers in the school. This led to a series of tensions which they expressed through their "different voices". These tensions existed

between their self as a teacher in the Department and their self as an Aboriginal teacher. Sometimes, they expressed this need to be compliant, speaking as an "Aboriginal person.

The essence of compliance in schools is ensuring everyone does the right thing and can achieve the same learning outcomes from the same policies or pedagogical approaches. Training in compliance usually occurs when a teacher is first inducted into a school, from programming lessons aligned with NESA requirements to adhering to DoE policies and procedures at all times. Compliance in schools is also inculcated in teacher education as well through learning 'the standards' and passing the thresholds of knowledge. Compliance can imbue a sense of worthiness for teachers to achieve the desired outcomes, compliance also places teachers on a level playing field (NSW Government- Education, 2020).

However, the findings of this study suggest that the participants in this study did not experience a level playing field, nor did they always feel their knowledge and skills were valued equally with those of other teachers.

Many workplaces including government departments, require employees to comply with the policies and practices of the organisation and work groups have expectations and impose standards of behaviour. The compliance process in schools is generally submerged in policy and programs, and it is expected that all staff are invariably conscious of this so that they understand how to act and behave according to Policy. Policies include the pedagogical approaches set down by the Department. The findings of this study showed that all five participants in the study were very aware of the demands of these policies and therefore were conscious of the importance of compliance in order to be valued as a teacher. For example, David indicated that he followed the mandated curriculum; Delma spoke of the need for compliance. The challenges of compliance with the norms and standards of the work group were also evident, creating a tension that hindered Aboriginal teachers who sought to use

their cultural knowledge to support the development of literacy among their students. This challenge in being seen to comply with the norms and standards of the work group was a two-edged sword, with Aboriginal teachers being asked for their expertise in "culture" and "heritage language" rather than their expertise in the development of literacy. Any occasion where an Aboriginal teacher was asked to model literacy skills to other teachers was seen as very unusual.

Aboriginal teachers in the findings cared about practices that are not in the DoE rules and procedures book, such as visiting families in the community or taking the students on to Country. All participants gave examples of classroom practices that are not or are no longer included in literacy programs, yet these practices are effective in the context in which they work. There was evidence that the Aboriginal teachers' tapped into their own epistemologies and ontologies (Rose et al., 2003; Yunkaporta, 2009) to design their own ways for learning foundational literacy. Examples included Leanne's kinship approaches to literacy and Delma's Winanga literacy Pedagogy. In this way, they created their own space for innovation, outside of the accepted ways of the Department. Aboriginal pedagogies enhance teaching practices (Rose et al., 2003), but at the same time, the findings of this study showed that Aboriginal teachers also knew that to achieve compliance and meet outcomes following the standard approach to literacy, was possible through an indigenised skillset.

The sense that teachers express of being forced to value mainstream ways of teaching, for example being compliant with the NSW DoE policy is found in other studies, such as the one by Lopez (2011). In this context, Lopez (2011, p. 89) emphasises the value of "cross cultural learning" and the importance of teachers taking responsibility for their professional development in ways that enhance their teaching practice. This is important for basing an understanding of the epistemologies and ontologies of students from diverse cultural groups,

a point also made by Martin and Rose (2005). In this study, it seems that Aboriginal teachers needed skills and familiarity with a range of pedagogical practices, so that they could change their voice from that of the teacher in the Department of Education to that of the Aboriginal teacher or even Aboriginal person in order to reflect the complexity of a multi-layered community identity which could not easily be accommodated within the linear approach of the mandated curriculum.

Closing the gap

The findings of the study can be placed in the context of the Australian government's Closing the Gap policy, in operation for the past fourteen years, which had the intention of improving the outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in "health and wellbeing, education, employment, justice, safety, housing, land and waters, and languages" (Closing the Gap, 2020, p. 5). This "Closing the Gap" report revealed reading targets improved by at least 11 percent over a ten-year period.

Aboriginal teachers this study did not refer to the Closing the Gap initiative, but one of them had clearly been influenced by a program supported through that initiative. From the early days of the Closing the Gap initiative, there have been attempts to bridge the existing gaps in literacy learning through a governance framework called the "Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly" (Koop & Rose, 2008) which financed the "Reading to Learn" program to take place in rural NSW. The teaching methodology is based on a social pedagogy paradigm referred to as "Reading to Learn program" (Koop and Rose, 2008), which involves intensive "professional learning" where teachers are required to embrace a "teaching methodology" to scaffold literacy to students. This social pedagogy (Vygotsky 1981, as cited in Rose, 2005) framework was utilised by Leanne in this study who described how she incorporated "Reading to Learn" through an Aboriginal pedagogy approach (Yunkaporta, 2009) which

Leanne refers to as “deconstruct reconstruct”. In this approach, Leanne “scaffold[ed] students through literacy patterns and codes in whole texts”. It is interesting to note that the participant views scaffolding literacy as an Aboriginal learning style rather than defining it as a method used in the “Reading to Learn” program; Leanne does this to avoid assimilating to western ways of teaching for enhancing Aboriginal student outcomes.

Reclaiming Indigenous languages

Tensions are also apparent between claiming or reclaiming Indigenous language and developing literacy in standard English. Culturally enhanced ways of learning are important in developing literacy, as they are a reminder not to equate literacy with proficiency in the English language, but that literacy can be developed in Aboriginal English and in traditional languages too. The Australian English is a colonial language, and is also a language of power in contemporary society. The findings show that Aboriginal people can empower themselves through literacy, with the aim of governing our relationship with the literacy space. Scholars such as Buckingham et.al (2013) have shown how poor skills in literacy, including poor oral language skills in young children, disadvantage children and lead to continuing social inequality.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the importance of culturally relevant pedagogies for enhancing literacy practices and emphasised the importance of privileging Aboriginal voices. It demonstrated the significance of acknowledging a social pedagogical perspective and showed how the findings of this study confirm and extend previous scholarly work on culturally relevant pedagogies. Placed in the context of the Closing the Gap initiative, this chapter highlights that the purpose of literacy is a necessary tool for experiencing success in a school setting, but it goes beyond that, having implications for employment and success in the community. It

discussed the practices of teaching of literacy at a classroom and conceptual level, considering how the participants prioritised their cultural ways and their cultural heritage to enhance outcomes, strategies and pedagogies, identifying points of connection whilst balancing the mandated curriculum and cultural ways. The chapter concluded with a consideration of the tensions that became apparent through the use of the Kapati method and narrative analysis, emphasising the sense that Aboriginal teachers have of having to comply with DoE policies and practice while their own pedagogies are often unnoticed and the significance of the challenges of developing literacy in Standard English are largely unrecognised.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

Introduction

This final chapter of the thesis will review the findings of the study, consider some of its implications for scholarship including suggestions for further research and explore its implications for the practice of teaching foundational literacy, as well as for better understanding the knowledge and skills of Aboriginal teachers.

Review of the key findings

The findings from this study indicate that the participants responded from three different perspectives, as an employee of the DoE, as an Aboriginal teacher and as an Aboriginal person. The study provides a clear understanding of the ways in which Aboriginal teachers use culturally enhanced ways in teaching foundational literacy.

Aboriginal teachers were found to be using various scaffolding approaches that were developed by various scholars (Yunkaporta, 2010; Martin & Rose, 2005; Vygotsky, 1981 as cited in Martin & Rose, 2005) in the past and still relevant to the current curriculum and pedagogical practices used today in the modern classroom. Through a social pedagogy framework, the participants were able to weave their own culture into foundational reading and writing. The study also illustrated that Aboriginal teachers were confident and capable of drawing from their own cultural ways to design effective literacy pedagogies. At the same time, some participants described how they designed their own literacy pedagogies based on culturally enhancing NSW DoE literacy practices.

Speaking from the perspective of employees of the DoE, participants noted the importance of compliance and staying within the realms of the mandatory curriculum in the NSW DoE. At the same time, this caused conflict with the persona of the ‘Aboriginal teacher’, who

expressed the feeling of being forced to change their persona from that of Aboriginal teacher to that of 'employee of the DoE'. Participants indicated that the NSW DoE Policies and the mandatory curriculum influenced their need to make this change, which some expressed as 'compliance''. Aboriginal teachers withdraw from showcasing their conceptual approaches to literacy in the classroom due to NSW DoE compliance with current curriculum and programs and are reluctant to share their expertise in literacy development with other teachers. Aboriginal teachers will often take on the persona of the 'Aboriginal person' perspective to culturally enhance NSW DoE mandatory literacy practices. When one participant talks, he is clearly talking as an Aboriginal person, when he is talks about Aboriginal approaches, he is still seeing himself as an ordinary teacher using the cultural knowledge that he has which happens to be Aboriginal Culture. While one participant who expresses frustration about having to comply with DoE policies, another participant is comfortable with taking on the policies and teaching practices of the NSW DoE, finding ways to incorporate in the teaching of literacy an approach that the NSW DoE no longer endorses.

Literacy has the capacity to transform individuals and communities with reference to cultural capital. Building on communal processes through literacy allows individuals to value the knowledge and skills they have gained and then use it to get the certificates that can mean getting a good job; however, landing a good job from certification does not always occur in small communities. Certification for Aboriginal people will only be valued if it can transform the whole community and not just the individual. The anecdote of one participant, told from the Aboriginal person perspective indicated that empowering individuals through literacy can be more effective through communal ways. In this case, the 'Literacy for life' campaign empowered individuals through radical approaches to literacy, and despite the program being shut down and employment opportunities for local people were lost, community members employed through the literacy approach successfully transitioned to other employment.

Participants talk about the importance of literacy in the community from being an Australian citizen. Participants understand that the key to addressing low levels of reading and writing is to focus on the foundational area in literacy. Creating a sense of agency for individual will support families trying to break out of the poverty cycle in which they feel locked into. Mastering the codes of the English language empowers community members to address their own inequality. In a modern-day school environment, participants created agency by illustrating ways to literacy into the community. Participants set out to improve the cultural conditions between home and school through strengthening the communication through normal NSW DoE literacy practices.

Although the focus of the study was on pedagogy and classroom practices, participants often moved outside of this context. The methodological approach to yarning was important in allowing the different perspectives or personas to emerge as well as this linking of topics. Yarning, an intrinsic part of oral culture, enables people to express complex ideas at multiple levels, because of the ways of framing and restating ideas. In this study, the complexity of the yarns emerged from the content analysis which demonstrated how a response given at one point in the interview from one perspective contrasted or conflicted with a response given at another point in the interview from a different perspective.

Implications for scholarship

The findings of this study have implications for the literature. Martin and Rose (2005), following Bernstein, saw social pedagogy as a subversive approach. They do not explain what a subversive approach might really look like, but this study has been able to extend the idea, giving some clear examples, including taking students out of the classroom to immerse them in familiar cultural sites on country and using pedagogical approaches no longer endorsed by the Department of education because they are appropriate for the context of the

students. There is scope for research into the ways in which Aboriginal and indigenous teachers in other contexts work outside the norms set by the mandated curriculum and the established pedagogical practices.

This study builds on the various scaffolding approaches provided in the literature by Rose & Martin (2005), Rose (2009), Yunkaporta (2009) and Vygotsky (1981 in Martin & Rose, 2005) where an individual's culture and cultural ways are seen as the core ingredient for creating the foundation for learning. It has shown that Aboriginal teachers believe that culture embedded within scaffolds is vitally important when planning pedagogical approaches or experiences with students. Scaffolding approaches as suggested in the literature provide a base for appropriate social support required by students from diverse backgrounds in literacy learning and this study confirms that Martin and Rose (2005) advocate for Bernstein's principles on "pedagogic discourse" for literacy learning; while it is imperative for all teachers to develop the appropriate pedagogic tools for providing literacy support in schools, this study illustrated that Aboriginal teachers use various scaffolding approaches to suit their context and student backgrounds, emphasising the importance of pedagogic discourse. Teachers who are able to think innovatively and outside the box will often go beyond the curriculum expectations to provide the necessary literacy support, and this study has gone beyond the abstract principles, showing examples of Aboriginal teachers' innovative ways.

Yunkaporta's (2009) literature suggests all teachers could learn culture through Aboriginal pedagogy processes. This study was able to show that participants were selective about which cultural processes from the eight (8) ways were a match for their literacy lessons. Yunkaporta's (2009) deconstruct/reconstruct (drum) symbol was applied in various ways throughout this study. Yunkaporta 's (2009) main aim was to model ways that non-Aboriginal teachers could learn though Aboriginal processes; this has study privileged the

voices of Aboriginal teachers describing how their effective teaching practice in foundational literacy uses culturally enhanced ways. Further research of the practices of Aboriginal teachers and of non-Aboriginal teachers in Aboriginal communities may help these pedagogies become widely accepted.

The logic around scaffolding literacy support highlights the need for all classroom teachers to understand the importance of social pedagogies and their place in the curriculum but also, understand that it has a particular place in Aboriginal communities (Koop and Rose, 2008) to address inequality and to close the gap. This small study is not framed, conceptually, in terms of inequality, and it is not part of a Closing the Gap initiative, but the participants of the study all demonstrated their understanding of the consequences of Aboriginality and low levels of literacy. Literacy is fundamental to all Australians, and it is particularly important for Aboriginal and Indigenous students. It is surprising that there is little research into the teaching of foundational literacy to Aboriginal students and there is clearly a need for more work in this important area.

Both Yunkaporta (2010) and McKnight (2016) argue for the development of place-based pedagogies in conjunction with the community, the strategies and approaches developed on country provided a scaffold for educators to learn through culture). The pedagogical approaches described in this study demonstrate the importance of place-based pedagogies, suggesting that further research would be useful not just in extending scholarly knowledge, but in providing examples for teachers, a scaffold for them to develop new ways of teaching foundational literacy in particular. While this study can influence all teachers to understand their own methods and approach's to teaching literacy, building the curriculum from the inside rather than the outside, this study stands alongside the work of Martin & Rose (2005), Yunkaporta (2009), Vygotsky (1981 in Martin and Rose, 2005), Koop and Rose, (2008) and

Rose et.al (2003) in arguing the need for all teachers to develop conceptual approaches to literacy through a social pedagogy framework.

The literature shows that culture can shape the curriculum and shape various pedagogies and teaching practices (Yunkaporta, 2010; McKnight, 2016). Culture plays a significant role in the context of reading (Rose et al., 2003; Vygotsky, 1978 as cited in Martin & Rose, 2005), the home culture is influential to all students and this study has demonstrated the positive impact when the school and home literacy support is reciprocal. Boughton et al., (2013) stated that reading and writing should be a cultural match designed to reflect the diversity in the community. The question of how to do that, to make reading and writing a cultural match, is a huge challenge facing teachers of literacy in diverse classrooms, going well beyond the teaching of literacy to Aboriginal students. Schools in many parts of Australia have students from EAL/D backgrounds, many of whom come from oral cultures. Research into the notion of reading and writing and the cultural match would be of great practical benefit for practising teachers, as well as being a useful addition to the reading lists of student teachers.

This study has shown the value that teachers place on translanguaging. The literature shows that schools must understand the process of translanguaging (Oliver et al., 2020) and code-switching. Students communicating in both their home language and standard English can be better understood by teachers if the appropriate pre-service training is available to all staff, but before that is a viable strategy, research into translanguaging by teachers who are not bi-lingual or bi-cultural will be essential.

There is a recent body of literature which highlights the need for considering place-based pedagogies (Yunkaporta, 2009; McKnight, 2016), access to training, resources and agency for teachers and school leaders as decision makers (eg Gutierrez et al. 2021; Trimmer et al. 2021). This literature aligns with findings from this study which suggests you can take the

best from a number of commercial programs. However, underpinning these elements, is the overarching pedagogical approach needs to consider and authentically include connections to lived realities that create high quality high equity systems for diverse school contexts (Guttierrez et al. 2021, pp 55-56).

The data collection method of this study also has implications for scholarship. Its use of the Kapati method, based on yarning, encouraged Aboriginal participants to engage in discussions in a culturally familiar way. Although the interviews were designed with focus questions, the yarning approach meant that participants could return to points raised in response to earlier questions, sometimes speaking about those points in a different way. The yarning approach to data collection has implications for data analysis. Focussing one by one on the answers given to the interview questions provided a stereotypical set of responses which did not go beyond what is almost common knowledge about the use of culturally enhanced approaches to teaching. However, the analysis of the interviews as a whole showed how participants shifted in the persona they adopted from employee of the DoE, to Aboriginal teacher, to Aboriginal person and thus introduced complexity and conflict into these responses. This study has demonstrated the importance of the Kapati method with Aboriginal participants, and potentially with others from oral cultures, and the significance of taking the whole yarn as the entity to be analysed, rather than the responses to individual questions.

Implications for the education system and for teachers

The findings of the study have several implications for the education system and for teachers. These start and end with the importance of empowering all teachers, but especially Aboriginal teachers, to develop strategies appropriate for an approach which uses a framework of social pedagogy.

The findings have shown that Aboriginal teachers may not be recognised for their expertise in the teaching of literacy. Aboriginal teachers are seen as experts in dealing with particular behaviours; experts in traditional languages; and experts in culture and cultural practices. They are rarely asked to share their expertise in teaching literacy. The DoE holds many training sessions and a recommendation based on this study is that Aboriginal teachers are included in training session as experts in teaching literacy. That would help to develop the leadership potential of these teachers, Aboriginal teachers empowered through a professional learning model could create conditions to improve foundational literacy outcomes. They can be seen as foundational literacy experts by leading the facilitation of literacy sessions in the DoE at a school level, coupled with appropriate support and professional learning guided by the school principal. Since all teachers are engaged in professional development in the DoE on a yearly basis, this could give significant recognition to Aboriginal teachers and their expertise over time.

In the context of the school, two sets of implications arise. Following on from the consideration of professional development, Aboriginal teachers could be encouraged by the school principal to engage in professional learning in regard to learning new literacy approaches and pedagogies as a part of their professional learning to include in their mandatory yearly performance development plan. This would extend their experiences with the accepted ways of teaching literacy. The findings have shown that Aboriginal teachers go beyond the accepted repertoire of strategies for teaching literacy as they adapt their own pedagogical approach with culturally enhanced strategies. Through engaging with the expertise of Aboriginal staff, school principals could be encouraged to consider other approaches to developing literacy, not just for Aboriginal children, but across the school community; new pedagogies could be developed which are relevant to the context of the school. School principals could also consider the marginalisation of Aboriginal teachers, and

establish support mechanisms, including approaches to forms of collegial support. They could be more conscious that some Aboriginal teachers may have concerns about various factors in the school that goes beyond the scope of their responsibilities, because of their links to community. Oral culture is important in Aboriginal culture, and this can have implications for the way that school principals communicate with Aboriginal teachers. Regular yarns with Aboriginal teachers could support the emergence of their own cultural ways, encouraging Aboriginal teachers to see that their cultural methods and approaches are valid and accepted in the school context. This acknowledgement of Aboriginal teachers could emphasise two ways of teaching, Indigenous ways and western ways, both equally important and valued.

The findings of the study have shown the importance of codeswitching and translanguaging. A principal can support students' Aboriginal identity through support for code-switching and translanguaging approaches. In an agreement with all the teachers in the school, an Aboriginal teacher with language and knowledge of the local culture can be asked to lead and support the maintenance of identity and culture through language, modelling to students how they can bring their cultural ways into the English language to communicate with their peers at school. The findings also show the importance of bringing home culture and language into the classroom. When a Principal encourages Aboriginal teachers to provide their linguistic and cultural knowledge, explaining the distinction between the two varieties (local traditional language/s, English) to students as a pedagogical approach for nurturing student's cultural ways of knowing a starting point. This has implications for establishing stronger relationships with parents. Where parents speak Aboriginal English in the home to their children, Aboriginal teachers can provide opportunities to guide parents about supporting their children to write both in Aboriginal English and Standard Australian English, explaining the markers of identity that are not generally seen in the English language but rather in Aboriginal

English. The implications of this action could be far reaching, because if this approach is taken on by a school principal, it will indicate respect for cultural ways, potentially prompting other teachers to reconsider their teaching practices and mirror the respect of cultural ways shown by the school principal; this respect could then filter through to the students.

The findings of the study have significant implications for Aboriginal teachers of literacy. They show that in their capacity for developing their own pedagogies and calling for recognition of their skills in teaching literacy, they have the capacity to exercise leadership. However, this is a challenge that they must be willing to take on, as they are rarely invited to take on leadership roles. They are rarely invited to train other staff, except in what is considered their special areas of expertise, that is, cultural practices. This should not prevent them from finding ways to exercise leadership as teachers of literacy. Aboriginal teachers have certain patterns for language use from embracing their traditional language and Aboriginal English. Being grounded in Country and people, an Aboriginal teacher's familiar language pattern use and knowledge of culture means they have the capacity to develop their own approaches and pedagogies for literacy learning; schools could be flexible and create a space for pedagogical frameworks in literacy where Aboriginal teachers grow through their own innovative teaching practices in literacy. However, for this to happen, Aboriginal teachers of literacy have to be willing to put themselves forward and to share their teaching practices with others in a culturally safe way. Other teachers have to be aware of what the daily 'teaching practice' of a lesson looks like delivered by an Aboriginal teacher in literacy; this means visiting the classroom, watching the delivery of the lesson, paying particular attention to the relationships Aboriginal teachers create in that space. Aboriginal teachers generally utilise their Kinship knowledge and narrative-based pedagogies to ground the learner-centred literacy lessons, and this may be harder to share. However, as the findings

have shown, developing literacy lessons by taking a risk is nothing new for Aboriginal people and Aboriginal teachers. Aboriginal communities have many hybrid forms of English to accommodate their needs, including Aboriginal English and various Creoles. Working through Aboriginal knowledge processes and Aboriginal pedagogies are the preferred method of teaching for many Aboriginal teachers, and the design of their instructional literacy practices will always include Aboriginal patterns of creation. These pedagogical approaches all involve risk, and they all involve significant expertise, so that Aboriginal teachers can make the claim to be innovative alongside their non-Aboriginal colleagues deemed experts in the 'English' language.

For non-Aboriginal teachers, the implications of the study arise from social pedagogy, that a culturally enhanced approach to literacy is always significant. Taking such an approach to teaching literacy could enhance the outcomes for all students. Adopting a sociocultural lens is important for non-Aboriginal teachers, this creates a certain agency where non-Aboriginal teachers are responsible for teaching through culturally responsive pedagogies and accountable to the students and the community. Developing a cultural lens will depend on a teacher's knowledge of the local culture and Country, and schools must allow time for non-Aboriginal teachers to absorb, 'connect with' and 'connect through' the local Aboriginal culture. This will create a synergy of thoughts and mutual understanding between both non-Aboriginal teachers and Aboriginal teachers. Schools must provide opportunities for non-Aboriginal teachers to experience first-hand the intimate connection students have with Country and the first peoples, but non-Aboriginal teachers must be willing to take up the challenge of engaging fully with strategies for teaching literacy that are enhanced by Aboriginal culture. Non-Aboriginal teachers can act as an agent of change in the area of literacy; experienced teachers should be able to draw on the symbolic cultural tools available to them to support literacy learning. A challenge for non-Aboriginal teachers may be the

importance of oral culture, and the understanding that literacy in both oral and print modes is necessary to support the local, cultural knowledge of Aboriginal communities as it incorporates print literacy. Though the English language is seen as a cultural match for non-Aboriginal teachers and the non-Aboriginal community, literacy through a social pedagogy opens opportunities for English to be taught in communal ways. Although not a focus of this study, there was evidence in the findings of the significance of literacy for engagement in the wider Australian society, especially through employment. This has implications for non-Aboriginal teachers, who can be a significant force alongside their Aboriginal colleagues, in building a literate culture and economy through a social pedagogy approach to literacy.

Finally, the findings of this study have implications for pre-service education, that is, for the education and training of new teachers. This is probably the most significant and potentially the easiest of the implications to implement. The study has shown that there is an accepted repertoire of strategies for use in a classroom in the teaching of literacy. To a large extent, teachers learn these in their university studies and in subsequent professional development. University lecturers teach a repertoire of strategies for classroom practices, which becomes the accepted repertoire, the mainstream ways, of teaching strategies for the mandated curriculum in schools; these ways are tightly bound to the curricula of education systems, and demand compliance. The findings of this study suggest that the classroom strategies that every teacher is taught are not about changing the mainstream ways, they are about extending the mainstream curriculum; the use of culturally enhanced ways continues to be considered an add-on in programs of teacher education, and this way of doing things continues to inhibit the professional growth of teachers.

Realistically, it is unlikely that the findings of this study will be read outside of the scholarly community, so that its greatest impact will be in pre-service education; this is important

because through scholarship we can know and understand where the use of culturally enhanced pedagogies can lead to. Working with mandated curriculum and the accepted repertoire of strategies is one thing, but through following her or his own pedagogical approach, a teacher can bring something special to the teaching of literacy. Through these changes to pre-service education, it would be possible to change the fundamental understanding about what strategies are required for the development of literacy following a Vygotskian, sociocultural approach. Various creative strategies could be learned in universities and implemented into classroom practice by trainee teachers, where taking risks and being flexible with the curriculum is not about non-conforming, instead it is about the personalising mandated curriculum without changing the structure of curriculum. Pre-service education has the ability to shape and mould the teaching and learning practices that aim to support students in ways that are no longer traditional or conventional. Pre-service education and training open the possibility for teachers and students to solve problems in a space where innovation can occur. Giving new teachers to the opportunity to learn various literacy pedagogies that will lay the foundation for innovation to happen, will impact teaching practice and in turn help to build a school culture willing and flexible enough to accept change and diversity. Aboriginal pedagogies can prioritise disenfranchised communities though reflective, intellectual, relational and operational processes. This study has shown how a small group of teachers has already developed and shared their own best methods for teaching their students early reading, writing, comprehension and oracy.

Conclusion

This study, conducted by an Aboriginal teacher of foundational literacy, has presented an interesting and challenging perspective on the pedagogical approaches of a small groups of Aboriginal teachers. It has shown how they comply with and subvert the mandated and accepted pedagogical approaches to develop their own culturally enhanced approaches to

teaching foundational literacy. It has also shown how Aboriginal teachers believe that while they may be valued for their cultural knowledge, it is more difficult to be recognised for their expertise in the teaching of literacy. The findings of the study hint at the challenges inherent in developing literacy in Standard English, in a context where this may be seen as the colonisers' language, the language which displaced traditional languages. This study could have far-reaching implications both for the practice of teaching foundational literacy and for scholarship and research. It has certainly been able to demonstrate how the use of a social pedagogy can be a subversive activity.

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