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## Literacy Uses and Practices of Schoolchildren Living in a Contemporary Malaysian Context

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*Abstract: This paper reports the uses and practices of literacy in English of primary schoolchildren in Malaysia. Data was gathered from two children, their parents and the English subject teacher. The results reveal four major findings. First, the results reveal that the students' experience with out-of-school literacies in English were largely afforded by new technologies. Second, popular culture played a considerable role in the students' out-of-school lives. Third, the students' engagement with out-of-school texts was influenced by cultural artefacts and social discourses, and fourth, there were also complementing and contrasting literacy practices reflected in both environments. This paper argues that awareness of the students' uses and practices of English as they participated in different communities may enable teachers to incorporate aspects of out-of-school literacy into the school to facilitate the students' learning. Additionally, it may also help teachers prepare the students to face the growing challenges of using English in the 21st century.*

**Keywords:** ESL, Literacy, Malaysia, Multiliteracies, Out-of-school, Translanguaging

### Introduction

The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 reported that Malaysian primary schoolchildren perform poorly in international standard assessments when compared with their peers from neighbouring countries (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). The students' steady decline in levels of English proficiency signals a need to investigate the ways in which literacy in English may be supported in their classrooms within the Malaysian education system.

Previous investigations on language learning in Malaysia found that there is a mismatch between language policy and practice (Hazita, 2016; Musa, Khoo, & Hazita, 2012). The language policy that aims to enable learners to acquire English language for use in their everyday lives cannot be fully implemented in schools because the emphasis is placed on mastering specific language skills such as grammar (Musa et al., 2012). The studies recommended re-examination of how English language is taught in Malaysia and suggested that an understanding of children's out-of-school literacies might provide a way of raising achievement in English literacy (Musa et al., 2012). This requires an investigation of students' uses and practices of literacy in English in meaningful out-of-school contexts. Understanding and valuing these concepts could enable teachers to make relevant connections between out-of-school literacies

and their teaching approaches in the classroom, which, in turn, may make the children's learning more meaningful and relevant to their lives (Singal & Swann, 2011). Furthermore, by considering the children's literacy practices both in school and out-of-school, teachers and parents may be able to support the students' learning.

A study conducted in New Zealand with Pasifika children revealed that out-of-school literacies may be strengths that are not assessed in the classroom (Dickie, 2008). This investigation provides insight into ways of supporting the students' literacies by revealing the mediators of the students' learning which include the people and the types of texts as well as contrasting and complementary uses and practices in teaching English literacy. The study explores children's in and out-of-school literacies from a sociocultural perspective using a framework proposed by the New London Group's (1996) concept of multiliteracies. Wenger's (2011, 1999) Communities of Practice (CoP), which regard literacy as always embedded within social and cultural practices with different meanings for different groups of people in society was also addressed.

Central to this study is the recognition that texts play an important role in everyday life and that engagement with texts helps structure people's lives. This conception of a textually mediated social world (Barton, 2009) is compelling particularly in the present, digitally-connected, media-rich world. The advancement of technology created new types of literacy activities (for example, email, online chat, and social media) which are likely to play a role in students' lives. In addition to that, the linguistic landscape of Malaysia requires students to deal with multiple sets of literacy in their home-language and the language of instruction in school. Thus, researchers in the literacy field such as Gee (2013) argue for plurality of literacies, creating the new term "multiliteracies" (New London Group, 1996, p.63).

### **Linguistic Landscape of Malaysia**

The linguistic landscape of Malaysia is composed of the multi-ethnic, multilingual and multiracial identities within the population. The local languages of Malaysia's diverse ethnic groups include the following: Standard Malay and other Malay dialects; English; Mandarin and other Chinese languages; Tamil and other Indian languages, as well as indigenous and non-Malaysian languages. The status and role of the English language in Malaysia is perceived differently by different groups of people (Musa et al., 2012). The English language first gained status in Malaysia during British colonisation and subsequent occupation (Yamat, Fisher, & Rich, 2014). During the period of nationalism in the late 1970s, the Malay language was emphasised as the main language of instruction and the English language was taught as a Second Language. English was also used in international relations, business and corporate sectors. Currently, English is used for legislature and in the court system (Azmi, 2013). The Malay language on the other hand holds the status of the common language that unites the multi-ethnic and multi-religious people of Malaysia. Yamat, Fisher and Rich (2014) wrote that the changing National Language Policy may be one of the contributing factors in the decline of students' proficiency in English. While the policy makers perceive the status of English as the Second Language, in reality there is a marked difference in the roles and uses of the English language within and between the rural, semi-urban and urban areas. English is widely used in the urban areas in social and economic contexts (Hazita, 2016). Conversely, learners in rural areas may experience contact with the English language only during their English classes (Musa et al., 2012). The different levels of English proficiency among the social classes in Malaysia proved

problematic when schools adopted a *one-size-fits-all* policy. In 2003, English was reinstated as the medium of instruction for Mathematics and Science (ETeMs). With the increasing economic competition in the global environment, English was seen as a tool to gain knowledge particularly in the fields of science and technology (Rashid, Abdul Rahman & Yunus, 2017). In July 2009, the government decided to revert to teaching Mathematics and Science in Malay in all schools (Rashid, Abdul Rahman & Yunus, 2017). The reversal of policy received mixed responses from the public. The government responded to those opposing the reversal of the policy by introducing the *Memertabatkan Bahasa Melayu Memperkukuhkan Bahasa Inggeris* policy that aimed to strengthen English language teaching (Badri, 2010) so that students could to communicate in English which is regarded as the lingua franca of the world and so that they could explore various fields and compete globally (Yamat et al., 2014).

### **A Social Practices Approach to Literacy**

A social practices approach to literacy (Musa et al., 2012) was selected as a framework for this study because it considers the practices of English literacy outside the school setting in Malaysia. The interpretation of literacy as the acquisition of reading and writing skills as “a set of skills that can be broken apart and taught and tested” (Barton, 1994, p. 162) has dominated how English language has been taught in Malaysian schools for many years (Musa et al., 2012). This pedagogical approach is problematic because it focuses only on scoring good grades and memorising what is taught in the classroom (Siong, Azman & Lee, 2010) without making connections to how it is used in real communicative events. One common suggestion that emerges from previous studies is to incorporate out-of-school practices into the learning as well as to consider social and cultural influences on English literacy learning (Musa et al., 2012). The rationale for this suggestion is that by incorporating out-of-school practices, teachers get to expand ways to validate students’ literacies, cultures, and identities. In turn, the students are motivated to learn because such activities are likely to be engaging and supportive of English language learning in the classroom. Furthermore, previous studies argued that schools would do well to link students’ expertise in outside-school literacies with the in-school literacy instruction (Murnane, Sawhill & Snow, 2012). The use of social and cultural theory in this study is based on the following contentions. First, second language children do not learn in isolation. Their language learning is constantly mediated by their social and cultural environment. The way that the environment mediates learning differs for each child (Norton, 2014; Wenger, 2011, 1999). Second, children may experience contact with English as an additional language (Knowles, 2010) not only as skills taught in the classroom, but also as literary practices that are relevant to their everyday lives. Their experience can be extensive and includes various modes, artefacts and different community members.

### ***Multiliteracies***

In 1996, the New London Group (NLG) introduced the term multiliteracies to define what it means to be literate. The NLG is a collaboration of scholars who came together to help address issues relating to literacy pedagogy and how it might address the rapid change in literacy due to globalisation, technology and increasing cultural and social diversity (Cope & Kalantzis, 2005). The pedagogy associated with multiliteracies challenged the traditional theories that

shaped literacy pedagogy by shifting the focus of literacy from dominantly written print text to acknowledge the many varied ways that literacy is practised in present times (Cope & Kalantzis, 2005; Tan, 2008). The authors emphasise that literacy not only involves comprehension of written text, but also includes visual, audio, gestural, spatial and multimodal meanings.

Although scholars in the area of sociocultural interpretation of literacy emphasised the different uses and functions of literacy within diverse social and cultural contexts, the focus of their investigations was within a first language (L1) environment (Yi, 2005). Yi further argued that the functions and uses of literacy in non-English-speaking or bilingual communities are lesser known than the monolingual English-speaking communities. One of the authors involved in the New London Group, Gee (1991) defined literacy by distinguishing primary and secondary discourse. Gee explained that when the children's learning is too different from their school's Discourse, it will affect their learning, particularly children from non-mainstream homes as they "often do not get the opportunities to acquire the dominant secondary discourses" (Gee, 1991, p.4). This in turn may lead students to resist or reject schooling, because they see few opportunities afforded by schooling. Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, and Cammack (2004) wrote that graduates experience literacies in school using traditional tools such as paper, pencil and books. By contrast, their out-of-school experience with literacy is complex and diverse as they engage in information and communication technologies which may include "Web logs (blogs), word processors, video editors, World Wide Web browsers, Web editors, e-mail, spreadsheets, presentation software, instant messaging, plug-ins for Web resources, bulletin boards, avatars, virtual worlds, and many others" (p. 1571). Accessing information from these media types requires a knowledge of multiple literacies. The New London Group's (1996) concept of multiliteracies made the case for literacy pedagogy to capitalise on new media which offer greater potential to develop autonomy in different spheres of children's lives.

### *Communities of Practice (CoP)*

Although the theory of CoP and the study of literacy as social practice developed in different fields, they have common roots. Both advocate a social approach to learning which according to Barton and Hamilton (2005) can be traced to the work of Scribner and Cole in 1981. CoP developed the notion of apprenticeship which was derived from the way learning was accomplished in communities where no formal schooling existed. Apprenticeship was used to describe how knowledge was transmitted and shared between the expert and novice members of a field of practice (Wenger, 2011). By adapting an apprenticeship model for literacy learning, the processes of thinking can be made visible to learners (Wenger, 2011). Both the CoP theory and literacy as social practice studies are framed within a sociocultural concept of learning being "situated in practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 35) and support the argument that what is vital is not the decontextualisation of literacy skills but the practices to which people put the skills. The link between Wenger's (1999) CoP theory and theory in situated literacies was made explicit by Barton and Hamilton (2005) who argue that theories of language, literacy, discourse and power are central to understanding of an individual's socialisation into a community. By using Wenger's (1999) CoP theory to seek understanding of people's engagement with literacy in their everyday lives, we would be able to identify what mediates their social interaction. This may add to our understanding about the social factors that shape the uses of literacy for individuals.

### *Multimodal and Digital Literacy*

In a multilingual environment in which the uses and practices of literacy in English are limited, the children's learning may also be mediated by artefacts, in which they make links and draw inferences from one resource to another. Previous studies showed that multimodal elements of texts facilitated students' meaning-making. This is reflected in the work of Strømman (2021) which found that game-based literacy practices could be transferred into academic settings. Shariman et.al (2012) studied digital literacy competence of a group of Malaysian students and discovered that English language proficiency was one of the factors that affect the students' competency in digital literacy.

### **Methodology**

For this research, a case study approach was chosen because it helps to illustrate student's unique ways of using and practising literacy in English in classroom and out-of-classroom environments. The students are viewed as a case within their social and cultural context. Qualitative data were gathered in order to answer the following research questions:

1. What uses and practices in English literacy do students report as classroom practices compared to those they experience out-of-school?
2. How do the students' uses and practices of English in the two environments complement or contrast with each other?

It is important to note that the term schoolchildren and students are used interchangeably throughout this paper.

### **The Process**

The data presented in this paper were gathered from two primary schoolchildren, the students' family members and their English subject teacher. The students were deidentified by allowing them to select their own pseudonyms which reflected pop culture, personal interest and identity. All of the utterances were translated into English and where necessary, they were grammatically adjusted. The table below summarizes the students' profile.

**The Participants**

Profile	Case Study 1: Naruto	Case Study 2: Barbie
Age	10	10
Gender	M	F
Family structure	Two older siblings	One older sibling
Personality	The English teacher described Naruto as “an obedient student”.	The English teacher described Barbie as a student with a lot of potentials but did not take her English classes seriously
Language 1	Standard Malay	Standard Malay
Other languages spoken at home	Local dialect	English
Location	Semi-urban	Semi-urban

**Table 1: Profile of the Students**

***Cultural, Linguistic and Family Background of the Participants***  
***Case Study 1: Naruto***

Naruto is a ten-year-old boy from a semi-urban area in Malaysia. Naruto is quiet in the classroom compared to the other students in the class. The teacher described as [translation] “the-one-who-listens”, to mean in context, an obedient student. Building rapport with Naruto took much longer than the other participant. This influenced the amount of information he shared in the interviews.

Naruto is from the middle income group. His parents were retired from the public service. Naruto described his mother as a housewife. Naruto has two older siblings who were no longer living with the family and were pursuing careers and university studies. Naruto described how he used Malay and the local dialect at home.

***Case Study 2: Barbie***

Barbie is a ten-year-old girl living in a semi-urban area in Malaysia. She lived in the city prior to moving to the semi-urban area, which is the site of the research. Barbie is the younger of two siblings. She said that she was closest to her elder brother who is in the secondary school. Barbie’s mother is a school teacher at the same school as Barbie, while her father is a lecturer at one of the colleges. Barbie’s mother explained that the family decided to move and live in the area to be close to her father’s job. Barbie speaks Malay at home, and occasionally her parents and her brother speak to her in English too.

### **The Instruments Used**

This research sought to empower students to document their own literacy uses and practices in English so that they could provide an insider view of their out-of-school learning. The idea of Photovoice is like Freire's concept of conscientisation which aims to empower individuals and marginalised groups that may have been excluded from decision-making processes within society.

#### *Photovoice*

In this investigation, the students were assigned to use a digital camera to record their own uses and practices of literacy in English and to represent how literacy fits within their lives. The photos students captured prompted English dialogue because they were required to explain what the photos represented.

This investigative approach is known as Photovoice, a type of qualitative inquiry that employs documentary photography, dialogue and storytelling through dialogue (Strawn & Monama, 2012). The techniques through Photovoice are relevant to this study because they enable the students to capture their voices about their lives (Strawn & Monama, 2012).

There are three reasons to choose Photovoice as the major source of information in this study. First, the study aimed to provide an opportunity for students to visually communicate their uses and practices of literacy in English and to engage in dialogue, instead of through interview only. Photography offers the potential to document everyday processes that otherwise may have been overlooked. A seminal study that used photography to encourage participants to document their literacy events is that of Barton and Hamilton (1999). Barton and Hamilton's work documented the reading and writing which people undertake in their everyday lives in England. Their work paved the way for a growing body of research that uses photography to investigate how people use literacy in their homes.

Second, this study sought to understand the students' social and cultural uses of literacy in English in their everyday lives and within their communities thus making them the focal point of investigation. Photovoice helps to address any power imbalance that could exist between an outsider adult researcher and the students. This is because the students are free to "choose and control what they wanted to depict" (Morrow, 2001, p. 258).

Third, Photovoice shifts the focus from what students lack in their literacy skills to what they have attained. It shows the different ways that people engage with literacy and how the uses and practices of literacy are valued within different communities. The main data source was the interview centred on the children's photos. This method of investigation is particularly powerful in a Malaysian context where literacy and language teaching methods continue to be controversial. Through Photovoice, the uses and practices of literacy journey experienced by the two Malaysian students has been brought to the fore as they participated in local and global multiliteracies.



## **Summary of Findings**

### **Student 1: Naruto**

Naruto's out-of-school literacy in English in the home and neighbourhood reflected the less traditional forms of literacy. The type of texts that he chose to represent his home literacy practices were representative of more mature themes such as violence. As Naruto explained, his older siblings had given him story books, DVDs, CDs and comic books and these were reflected in the images he chose to represent. They also signalled the influence his siblings had on his literacy practice. Most of Naruto's experience in English was through popular culture texts, in particular comic books. He also gave examples of utilising new media technology and social media sites to access the popular culture texts that he liked. Naruto gave examples of how his engagement with one type of text linked to another: for example, reading a comic book and watching it on TV. The variety of multimodal texts that he engaged with every day may have facilitated his meaning-making. Although Naruto's father was cautious of Naruto's out-of-school literacy practices, he was open to the idea of reconciling some aspects of it, but explained that it needed to be monitored. The following chart summarises Naruto's literacy practices both in the school and out-of-school contexts (as represented in the two circles). There were contrasting as well as complementary relationships between the two contexts.

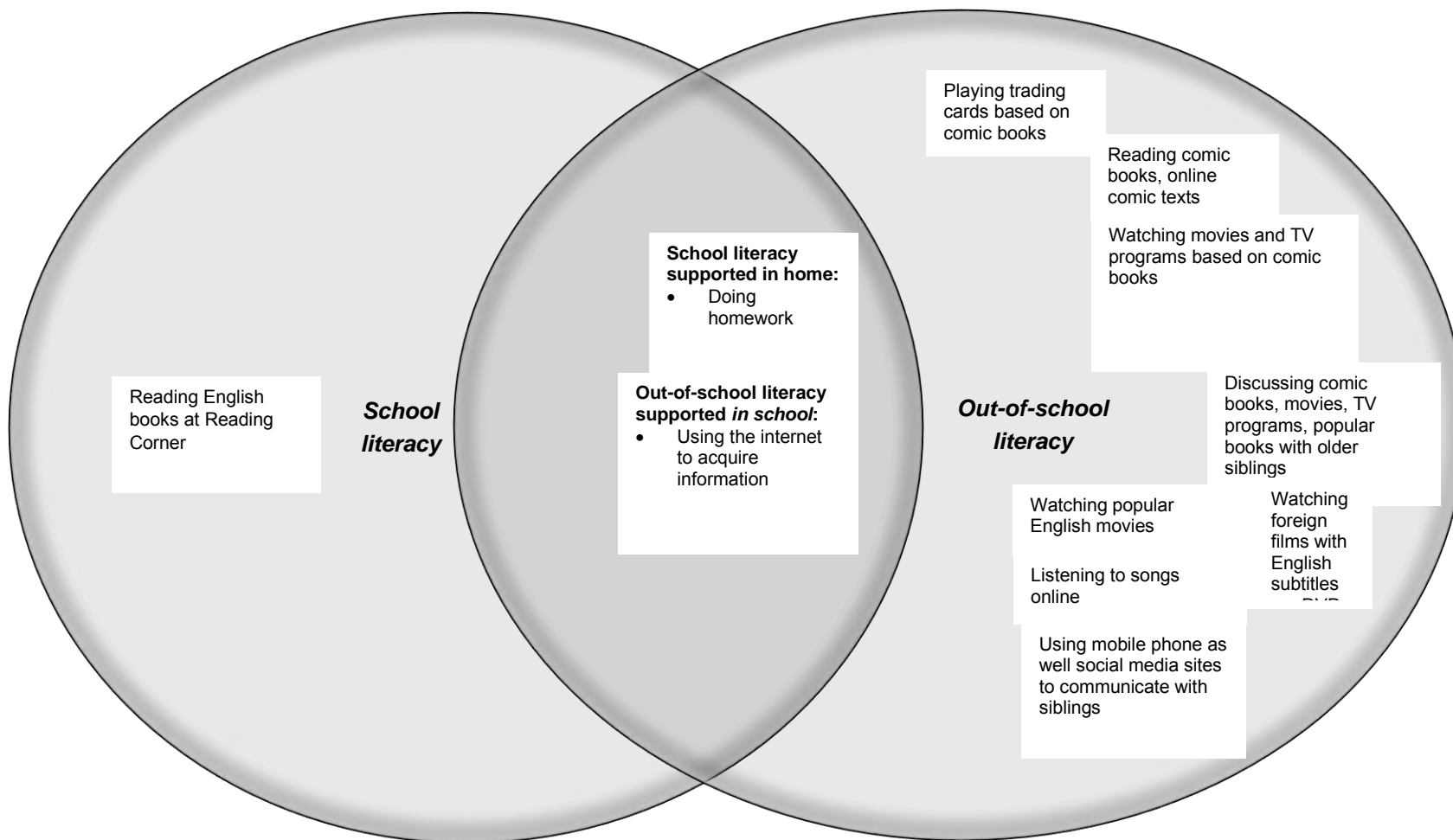


Figure 1: Summary of Naruto’s Uses and Practices of School and Out-of-School English Literacy

**Student 2: Barbie**

The images in Barbie's home revealed that the family was exposed to an extensive amount of English through various media. The type of texts that Barbie chose to represent are not conventional school literacy. Barbie reported that she used English the most with her English subject teacher and with other English teachers in a formal English learning situation. Barbie participated in a story-telling competition and she described how she used English with the teacher who trained her for the competition. Barbie revealed examples of her everyday literacy practices in the school with her peers. She talked about how she made meaning through engaging with new media technology and popular culture texts. During the period of investigation, Barbie explained that she and her friends learned the Cup Song, a popular song in their homes and came to school to share and practise what they had learned. The majority of Barbie's literacy in the home and the neighbourhood reflected her engagement with the new media technology and popular culture texts rather than school literacy. Barbie's out-of-school social partners for literacy practices in English included her parents, older brother and peers at immediate and online settings. Barbie explained that her favourite pastime is singing and this was reflected in the images she shared about her literacy practices.

Barbie's uses and practices of literacy in English in the out-of-school environment were diverse, and a majority of her experience in English appeared to be replete with media technology, social media sites and popular culture texts. Barbie's everyday uses and practices of English in out-of-school school situations revealed a strong focus towards multimodal texts which may have facilitated her meaning-making. Therefore, Barbie's participation in different activities in the school and outside of school reflected diverse social aspects of learning. Barbie's social partners in her everyday literacy practices included both real-time and virtual members belonging to a variety of communities of practice. Barbie's parents were conflicted about allowing her to engage with out-of-school literacy practices as they were concerned that some popular culture themes appeared to be inappropriate for students from a conservative background. Barbie on the other hand did not appear to be concerned and seemed able to reconcile this with her upbringing. The following chart summarises Barbie's literacy practices both in the school and out-of-school contexts as well as the complementary relationships between the two contexts.

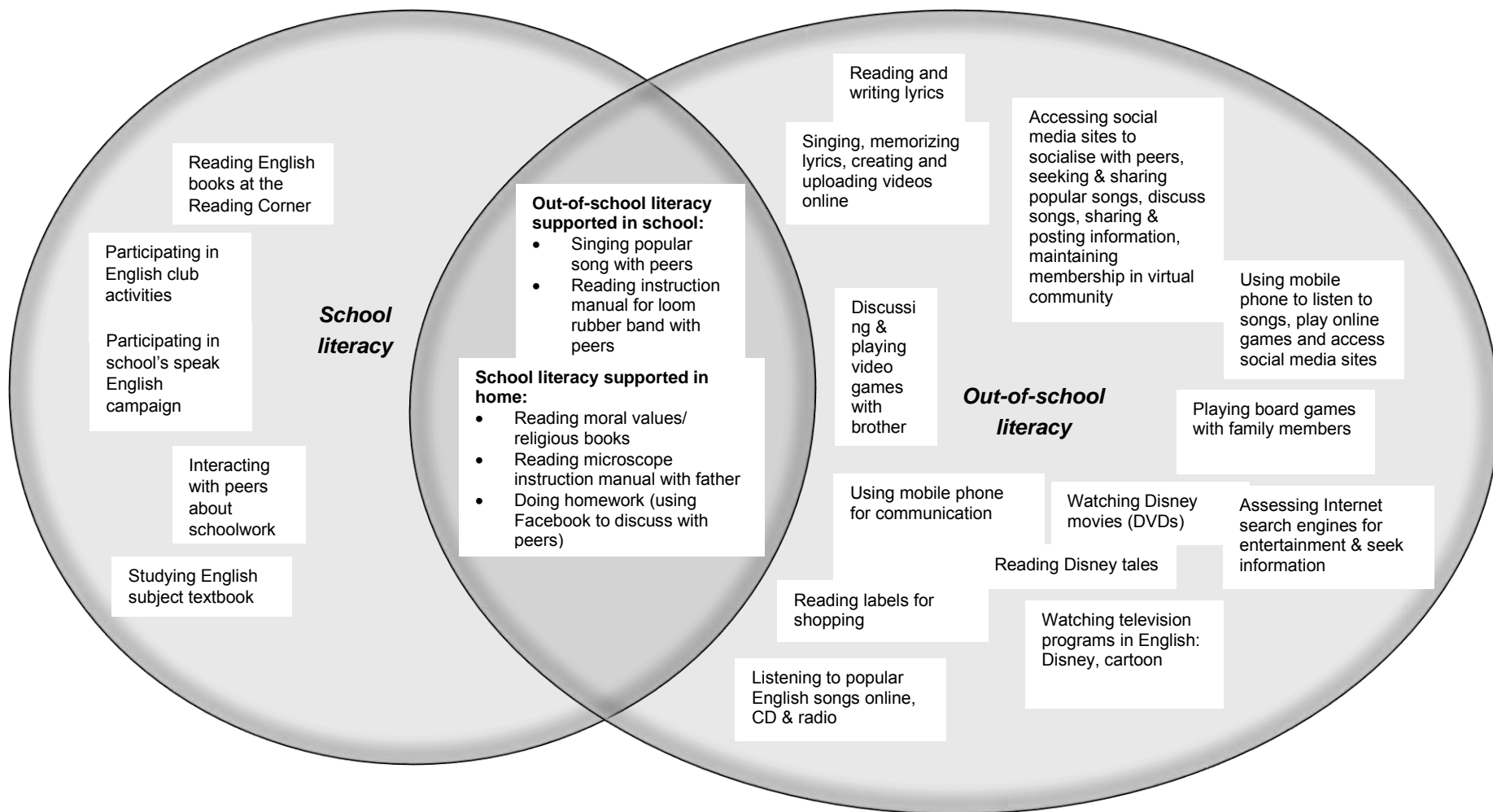


Figure 2: Summary of Barbie's Uses and Practices of School and Out-of-School English Literacy

## Discussion

An insider's view of the diverse literacy practices in school and out-of-school contexts can contribute towards an understanding of how student learning was mediated. The findings suggest that the majority of views held by parents focused on their children succeeding at school and in examinations. Although the majority of the children's literacy practices in English appeared to be for entertainment and leisure, there was an amount of useful crossover between the literacies. The students' uses and practices of literacy in English within and across each environment complement and contrast in several ways as will be discussed in the following section.

### Complementary Relationships

The data from the study revealed that the parents were more supportive of school literacy practices than the students' out-of-school literacy experiences. One of the contributing factors for this support was the conservative view that places importance on learning so that school aims are met and students succeed in examinations (Musa et al., 2012). All participants including the students, the teacher, and the parents, highlighted the importance of reading books set by the school, revising lessons taught in the classroom and reading books related to examination information.

The teacher noted in the interview that her teaching was directed towards getting her students to achieve passing marks in national and school examinations. In order to meet the demands of the curriculum, the school's aspirations and examination success, the English subject explained that giving homework was necessary.

The parents shared similar opinions to those of the teacher regarding the importance of homework. They stated it was necessary for students to master reading and writing as taught in the classroom so that the students could pass examination. The parents indicated they fostered school literacy by guiding their children towards acquiring the discourses similar to those expected by school. This finding reflected Heath's (1982) and Gee's (1990) studies that argued that when similarities exist between the students' home discourse and their school's discourse, the learning of the secondary discourse is more attainable. The parents were aware of the type of literacy their children needed to succeed in the education system and in society; however, it did not reflect the interests of the majority of children.

Using Photovoice, the children recorded and described to their peers creative ways that their out-of-school literacy practices could apply to school practices. The data revealed that the school made some connection to the students' out-of-school literacy practices through its library resources, the school's English activities, and co-curricular clubs. The school's library resources, such as DVDs of English movies, and popular book series for children had been purchased to reflect children's interests. Although the school made some connections to the children's out-of-school literacy, the examples that the students described as school media activities proved limited compared to their practices outside of school. This paper argues for more in-class opportunities to build on the students' existing knowledge and as a bridge to what they already know and what they need to know in the classroom as it provides the students with the opportunity to find their own voice in making meanings (New London Group, 1996). This may be particularly useful as a strategy to motivate and engage those children who do not value learning English with paper-based materials.

### **Contrasting Relationships**

While there were complementary relationships between the students' literacy uses and practices both in their school and out-of-school environments, there were also areas where the relationships were in contrast to each other. The contrasting relationships between and within the environments, and how the literacy practices were perceived and valued by the students, the parents, the teacher and the school, may be a cause for conflict that hinders students from learning English in the classroom.

The interviews with the students and the images they shared showed that they engaged with more literacy practice afforded by the new media technology in their out-of-school literacy than in the school. The students' out-of-school literacy practices appeared to align with one of the aims of the national curriculum that related to preparing students for the language of Information Communication Technology (ICT) (KPM 2012, 2014). In their out-of-school literacy context, the students had acquired expert knowledge for navigating sources on the internet and using technological devices. One of the ways schools can achieve this aim is to allow the students to find their own voices through the new multimedia and hypermedia channels, virtual communities and other subcultures (New London Group, 1996). The data also revealed a conflict of values between their parents and the students over the students' engagement with literacy afforded by the technology and the internet in their out-of-school literacy contexts. Conflict arose because parents viewed student engagement with technology and the internet as pointless entertainment and socialising rather than useful activities that facilitate learning English. Instead, they viewed it as a hindrance to students achieving good grades in their literacy examinations.

The contrasting relationships between how the resources with the internet and the computer were utilised in the English classroom and their out-of-school literacy contexts were exemplified during one of the classroom observations in which the teacher incorporated ICT into the classroom. However, the approach used replicated the standard way chalkboards have been used in schools for decades. The students were asked to face the front of the class and watch a video on a relatively small-sized projector screen in the classroom.

The teacher struggled with making the classroom learning interesting for the children and meeting the expectations of the assessment. The teacher explained that she had many ideas and additional materials to teach the English lessons to her students but it was difficult for her to bring those ideas and materials into the classroom as she had to meet the expectations of the curriculum that demands consistent delivery and meeting the standards expected of the curriculum. In addition, the school and the parents expected teachers to prepare students for examinations, thus making any ideas and materials that do not facilitate their learning for examination purpose appear superfluous to the curriculum.

The students' photos and interviews revealed that the majority of texts that they valued and engaged with in their everyday lives were in English. However, when they were asked about the conversations that took place with their social partners relating to their literacy practices, the students revealed that the conversations involved both Malay and English. The conclusion that can be drawn from this finding is two-fold. The students' interactions with their social partners are examples of Barton (2009) concept of a textually-mediated social world. For these students the topic of talk in their world was made in the presence of a text and the discussion about the text was mainly in English. The students' engagement with literacy practices in English with their social partners also reflects Wenger's (n.d.) concept of apprenticeship within which the students acquired skills and knowledge of the new media technology and popular culture. The

translanguaging strategy that was used in their interactions about the texts reflects the different roles languages play for bilingual and multilingual speakers which could explain how it facilitated their negotiation of meaning of an English text (Creese & Blackledge, 2015). In a multilingual society such as Malaysia where there is complexity of language crossing and mixing the term translanguaging is useful. Translanguaging is a relatively new term in the ESL field and refers to multilingual speakers moving between languages in their natural setting (Park, 2013). In the Asia Pacific region, English often plays a role in knowledge production but the meaning-making is often in other Asian languages (Singh, Kell, & Pandian, 2002). The data suggested that school learning is firmly located in the children's lives; however, the home-school boundary appears to be a site of struggle for the children as their parents have different ideas about what counts as appropriate language and literacy instruction. The majority of the children's parents viewed literacy practices associated with print-based academic English to be more prestigious than the children's out-of-school literacy relating to new media technology and popular culture texts.

The students in this study aspired to acquire skills and knowledge for wider education rather than focusing on literacy for schooling only. They valued literacy practices relating to popular culture texts and new media technology and described how their engagement with out-of-school literacy supported their school literacy and English language learning. However, the data revealed that due to their cultural and social perspectives the parents may be conflicted about the value of the popular culture texts with which children engaged. This is exemplified by Naruto's father who expressed concern about Naruto's interest in reading comic books as the content of comic texts often includes provocative images. Similarly, Barbie's father was concerned about the explicit content in some of the popular songs which referred to consumption of alcohol, and illicit relationships both of which contradict the teachings of Islam and are forbidden by the religion. Naruto's father cautioned that the children's activities with popular culture texts need to be monitored. While the parents value their religious cultural values, they are prepared to allow some aspects of out-of-school literacy to help motivate and engage the children in literacy practices in which English is involved. However, the children did not appear to be concerned and seemed able to reconcile this with their upbringing. The children valued literacy practices with popular culture texts and the new media technology as it represented their identity. Additionally, the children's out-of-school literacy reflected how through the Western media, they experienced contact with authentic use of English. The contrasting views of the parents and the children relating to popular culture texts and the new media technology reveal the power dynamics of family relationships, in which the parents' had certain ideas of literacy which they found to be more acceptable, and those ideas were emphasised at home.

Figure 3 summarises the ways that the children's learning was mediated through their participation in two broad categories of communities of practice. The centre of the chart focuses on the student as an apprentice within two broad categories of communities of practice identified in this research as school literacy and out-of-school literacy. On the left side of the chart are the lists of children's social partners who mediated their learning and uses of English. The chart also illustrates other mediators of the children's learning which are artefacts and translanguaging as a strategy which facilitates their meaning-making. The chart includes dual membership as they participate in the two communities of practice with the expert as well as the novice members.

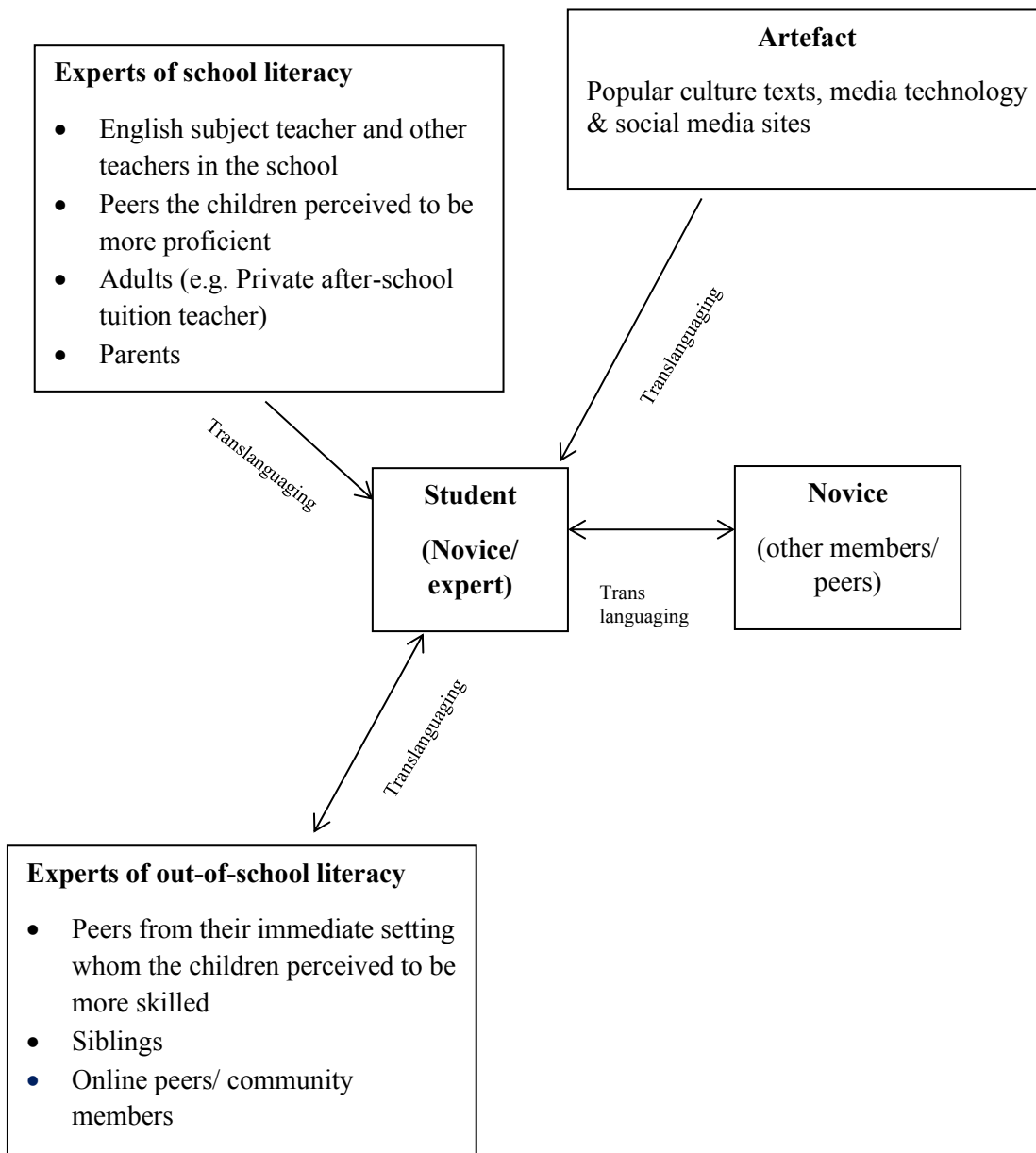


Figure 3: Categories of Mediation



## Conclusion

As revealed in this study, the diversity of technology available to students and the increasing number of textual forms provided by various multimedia in English outside of school, calls for an examination of the relevance of the types of literacy approved by schools. This paper argues that schools could consider broader and more complex dimensions of multiliteracies in English to prepare the children for the skills they need to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While some connections were made by the school to involve children to participate in activities in English, this study argues that the school could provide children with more opportunities to use English by building on the resources that reflect the students' out-of-school literacy. The implication is that, if students were given more opportunities to engage with literacy they value while making connections to school literacy, the more effectively they would be able demonstrate their ideas, learning and knowledge. Schools can build on current practices to include the popular cultural interests of students.

As teachers are given greater responsibility in designing instructional strategies that align with the students' learning outcome in the KSSR curriculum, the implications of this study are significant. The findings of this investigation could improve teachers' understandings of the types of literacy that engage children in out-of-school literacy practices and how this learning is mediated. It may be useful for teachers to consider translanguaging as an aspect of their teaching strategy which allows children to draw on their linguistic resources to negotiate meaning with the English language.

The findings of this study indicated that through apprenticeship, peer-mediation and social participation in communities of practice, children can engage with diverse practices of literacy in English thus acquiring skills and knowledge in the community. Therefore, one of the ways for teachers to promote student acquisition of English literacy is to acknowledge them as coproducers in acquiring language skills and knowledge and by making effective use of collaborative learning and working in groups. The incorporation of student out-of-school literacy would provide opportunities to build upon their existing strengths and participate in an activity that is meaningful in their everyday lives and assist them to learn English. This may allow the children to gain confidence as their expertise in technology is acknowledged.

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