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AN EXPLORATION OF CHILDREN'S PERSONAL LITERACIES

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We, Claudia Cañas Mejía and Angela Patricia Ocampo Castro, hereby declare that this master's thesis has not been previously presented as a degree requirement, either in the same style or with variations, in this or any other university (Article 92 Advanced Education Student Code, Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana)



CLAUDIA CAÑAS MEJÍA



ÁNGELA PATRICIA OCAMPO CASTRO

*To my mother: Who is the angel who has always been at my side
Who cheers me up every time I need it
Who always prays for me
Who has always worked hard for my welfare.*

*A mi madre: Quien es el ángel terrenal que ha estado siempre a mi lado
Quien me da ánimo a continuar cada vez que lo necesito
Quien reza por mí cada día
Quien ha luchado día a día por mi bienestar.*

***Your daughter,
Claudia***

*To Paulina, my lovely baby, the greatest gift I have ever received:
You are the touch of an angel that came from
heaven.
You are the happiness that invades my heart and
my soul.
You are the poem of love that inspires my
existence.
You are the reason that brings sense to my life.*

*A Paulina, mi adorable bebe, el regalo más grande que alguna vez recibí:
Eres la caricia de un ángel bajado del cielo.
Eres la felicidad que invade mi alma y mi
corazón.
Eres el poema de amor que inspira mi existencia.
Eres la razón que le da sentido a mi vivir.*

Your mom, Angela

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Abstract

This is a qualitative study with an ethnographic approach that explores children's personal literacies in two elementary schools in the city of Medellin, Colombia.

Children, parents and teachers participated in this study. Data instruments comprised interviews, class observations and children's artifacts. The conceptual framework is based on the idea that "Literacy is a social practice" (Street, 2003) and embraces concepts related with Multiliteracy, multimodality, literacy practices, literacy events and in- and out-of-school literacies which helped us construct our own understanding about personal literacy. One that takes into consideration that literacy can occur beyond the school walls and involves various ways of expression children use to convey meaning to themselves and to others.

Findings from this study confirm that children have different purposes to carry out their literacies. In their productions, children express their ideas and feelings, interact with others, learn new topics, and explore their interests. Along the analysis, we also observed common characteristics among children's literacies. Children receive influence from people around them; they find inspiration on their own experiences; they use different ways of expression; they change their literacies as they grow up; and they use in- and out-of-school resources to enrich their literacies.

Our study suggests teachers should use multimodal texts and include personal literacies to enhance children's learning experiences. The teachers' task is to transform their classes into spaces where students acquire the tools to deal with the new demands

of the world. Future research could include the characterization of children's personal literacies at different ages.

Key words: Literacy, literacy practices, literacy events, Multiliteracy, multimodality, in-school literacy, out-of-school literacy, personal literacy.

Chapter 1

Exploring Different Perspectives of Literacy

Literacy is a term that has been largely discussed and from these discussions many definitions and points of view have emerged. It has been traditionally seen as the simple process of learning how to read and write. Nowadays, there is a new conception that is broader and with a stronger impact not only for school but also for students' lives (Barton, Hamilton & Ivanic, 2000; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; New London Group, 1996; Street, 2003). The claim is to go beyond the basic definition and begin seeing literacy as a social practice (Street, 2003).

These scholars are working together to raise awareness of the importance of a wider definition about literacy. They are devoting their time to develop this new concept taking into consideration that learning is not always produced in the classroom; that learning may happen in any context (Harris, Trezise and Winsler, 2004; Street, 2003). Literacy is not restricted to the idea of learning how to read and write with conventional, traditional or more alternative methodologies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Mora Vélez, 2010). It is relevant in children's daily lives (Alvermann, Huddleston, & Hagood, 2004; Dyson, 1999; Knobel, 2001) and in their future lives as citizens, workers and individuals (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Street, 2003).

There is an interest for going beyond the words, beyond letters and sounds, beyond spelling and grammar and beyond the understanding of words. Learners need to develop the ability to know the world, not only in their immediate surroundings but the reality of different communities. Literacy should be a matter of understanding the text

and its context taking into account the underlying assumptions and threads that move below the explicit message. Literacy should help learners interpret, take positions and be critical towards the reality that is presented to them. Literacy should also deal with learning how to understand the world, discovering and unveiling social inequalities and the secret intentions hidden between lines (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

Statement of the Problem

Our research is based on the idea that “Literacy is a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill; that it is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles” (Street, 2003, p. 77-78). Our research study seeks to observe how children express themselves not only at school but also in their daily lives and to explore the characteristics of their personal literacies.

These new perceptions of literacy led us reflect on what is beyond our third and fifth graders’ performance, what they like to read, what motivates them to write and how they express themselves in- and out-of-school context. We noticed that children have their own voice and their own way to express. That is why, we decided to go deeper in the issues of literacy to explore how children convey meaning in and outside of school through their own productions.

All these ideas that emerged from the exploration of literature about literacy and from our very own experiences in the classroom made us come up with the following question that will guide our research: What are the characteristics of children’s personal literacies in two private schools in the metropolitan area of Medellín, Colombia?

We wonder about the performance of our students in the literacy field because we have seen that our students have various ways to express their ideas that have not been relevant, that have been invisible and have not been validated. We have noticed in our daily teaching practices that our students easily express their ideas not only in the written form but also in other formats which are part of the new vision of literacy and that are frequently more appealing to them (Cañas & Ocampo, 2013). Children spontaneously sing, write, draw, act out, use gestures, images and sounds to express their ideas; they convey meaning in different ways. Some authors refer to this multiplicity of ways of representation as multimodality (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Kress, 2010; Serafini, 2011).

Mora Vélez (2010) defined literacy “as the process of interpreting and creating text using multiple means and media, including technology, multiple languages, and diverse aesthetic forms of expression, in addition to the written and spoken word” (p. 1). Additionally, Pahl and Rowsell (2005) maintained, “If literacy is understood as a global and social practice, this helps understand why children need to communicate not only across different cultures, but also in relation to changing global communication” (p. 10). When conceiving literacy as a social practice, we can think of different kinds of literacies, depending on the contexts where literacy is carried out, being their home and school the first contexts and where they move interchangeably.

In Colombia, the concept of literacy as a social practice (Street, 2003) has not been widely recognized. However, our educational system has embraced this changing concept. According to the Basic Standards of Competence for Spanish subject, the Ministry of Education asks teachers to promote the interpretation and production of

different types of text. Similarly, the Ministry highlights the need of going beyond of decoding words developing in students the skills they require to “interact in the society and participate in the transformation of the world” (Estándares Básicos de Competencia para Lengua Castellana, 2015, p. 21).

Definition of Concepts

In this section of the chapter, we will show the concepts that underpin the development of our research study and that are the foundations to build up our understandings about children’s personal literacies. A better understanding of literacy today entails not only the management of reading and writing processes but also the development of more complex frameworks in the classroom. We decided to go deeper into the following concepts: Multiliteracies, which includes the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies, multimodality, literacy practices, literacy events, in-school literacies and out-of-school literacies.

Multiliteracies is a useful concept to understand the different teaching practices and multimodality opens a variety of opportunities to create texts. In addition, we need to clarify the terms of literacy practices and literacy events because some authors use them interchangeably. We also want to show how researchers have conceived the terms of in- and out-of-school literacies in children’s case. At the end of each concept, we will stand our position and at the end of the chapter we will present our definition about personal literacies which is the concept that will guide our research study.

Literacy. As we mentioned earlier, literacy is not a recent concept but along the time it has been gaining force around the world. Some scholars (Barton et al., 2000;

Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; New London Group, 1996; Street, 2003) have been working on it and they have already carried out some research. They have also proposed some ideas to develop a new form to work literacy at schools. The concept of literacy along this research will focus on the new approaches initially proposed by Street (2003) who stated that “Literacy is a social practice”.

Going beyond the concept of literacy as a social practice will allow us to be more inclusive in the data collection and also at the moment of the analysis. It will give us the opportunity to have a wider spectrum of the reality of children literacy performance not only in the school but also outside of it. Street (2003) remarked that literacy “is also a key aspect of everyday life” (p. 11). We are aware that literacy is not an exclusive process of the school; literacy is also developed at a personal level, however, within a social basis.

We conceive literacy as the acquisition of different elements, the recognition of different texts and the emergent ideas of transformation of the world. We conclude that literacy is a social activity where the person can communicate with others and interpret the world. In our research we are going to focus on the characteristics of different texts children use to express their ideas.

Multiliteracies. The New London Group (1996) coined the term Multiliteracies in order to influence teaching practices that would give students the skills they need to achieve their aspirations in this changing world and to cope with new ways of communication. We think that “Multiliteracies seek to transform the class into a space where students develop a deep understanding of the socio-cultural realities while developing the tools to transform the world” (Cañas & Ocampo, 2014). Furthermore,

Jewitt (2008) stated, “Multiliteracies sets out to stretch literacy beyond the constraints of official standard forms of written and spoken language to connect with the culturally and linguistically diverse landscapes and the multimodal texts that are mobilized and circulate across these landscapes” (p. 245).

The Pedagogy of Multiliteracies suggests that it is important to enrich the alphabetical literacy with the inclusion of the new forms of text that integrate the different modes of representation (images, sounds, gestures, etc.). This pedagogy recognizes students as active social agents responsible for their own learning process and able to contribute to their immediate context. In this pedagogy, the main objective is that students create their own text rather than reproduce others’ texts. Similarly, they must be meaning makers able to go beyond what is given to them; they also should be makers and remakers of signs and transformers of meaning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). The transformative Pedagogy of Multiliteracies identifies four major dimensions of pedagogical acts which we will explain later. These dimensions encourage students to transform and make new meanings out of the different texts and not just to reproduce what others have expressed.

Initially, the New London Group (1996) explained a theory about multimodality which presented six design elements in the meaning-making process (linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial meanings, and multimodal patterns of meaning which relate the first five modes of meaning to each other) and the four components of the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies (situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed practice). Later on, Cope and Kalantzis (2009) reshaped these initial ideas on how to transform the literacy class into a space where students develop a deep

understanding of the socio-cultural realities and provide them with the tools to be part of the transformation of the world. They expanded and redefined the modes for the meaning-making process and the components of the pedagogy. This new proposal intends to change the way students perceive learning and allows the development of students' higher thinking levels by providing them with different alternatives of engagement, different divergent orientations and different modalities in meaning-making (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

Pedagogy of Multiliteracies. Cope and Kalantzis (2009) affirmed, “[The] Pedagogy of Multiliteracies is characteristically transformative as it builds on notions of design and meaning-as-transformation” (p. 184). They also remarked, “The logic of Multiliteracies is one that recognizes that meaning making is an active, transformative process, and a pedagogy based on that recognition is more likely to open up viable life courses for a world of change and diversity” (p. 175). This pedagogy helps students experience and analyze what they know and also apply it in creative ways.

Cope and Kalantzis (2009) explained that this pedagogy identifies the following dimensions of pedagogical acts or “knowledge processes”, which we will briefly summarize.

Experiencing the known and the new: Students' previous experiences, knowledge and interests are taken into account. They are also exposed to new and meaningful types of texts.

Conceptualizing by naming and with theory. Students assign names to things and arrive at new concepts. They also construct mental models, frameworks and schemas; they move from the experience to the theories.

Analyzing functionally and critically. Students are able to establish cause and effect relationships; look for reasons and describe patterns in text. Students are also able to unveil the interests behind a text and question others' perspectives and purposes.

Applying appropriately and creatively. Students respond to real or simulated situations in an expected way and they use what they know to transform the world in a creative way.

We understand Multiliteracies as a class process where teachers must go beyond the basic practices of reading and writing helping students know the world and transform it. We think that this change in perspective makes the whole class different because students have the opportunity to get involved and engaged in their own learning process.

Multimodality. Cope and Kalantzis (2009) stated, "In the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies, all forms of representation, including language, should be regarded as dynamic processes of transformation rather than processes of reproduction" (p. 175). Multimodality (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Kress, 2010; Serafini, 2011) refers to the multiple modes of representation that students use to express themselves and understand the world. Cope and Kalantzis (2009) explained that there are seven modes of representation that help convey meaning for oneself and for the others. We present a short summary of the forms.

Written language. Writing and reading.

Oral language. Speech and listening.

Visual representation. Images.

Audio representation. Sounds.

Tactile representation. Bodily sensations and feelings.

Gestural representation. Movements and gestures.

Spatial representation. Location in the space.

Students can shift between modes and re-representing the same thing from one mode to another; this process is known as synaesthesia (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009), a pedagogic tool that improves learning in different ways. Some students feel more comfortable in one mode than another. It is easier for them to use the mode in which they best understand the world and in which they are able to convey meaning to the world (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Children are multimodal by nature, they freely move from one mode to another (Siegel, 2006).

We consider a multimodal text as any way that children use to express their ideas. Teachers can also use multimodality in their classes by including different ways to present the information.

Literacy practices. Barton et al. (2000) stated that, “Literacy practices are the general cultural ways of utilising written language which people draw upon in their lives. In the simplest sense literacy practices are what people do with literacy” (p. 7). In a wider definition, these practices are not only written, they are developed in different modes. Compton-Lilly (2009) asserted, “Literacy practices are linked to people’s lives, identities, and social affiliations” (p. 88). Literacy practices depend on the context where they are developed.

Education presents two types of practices, dominant and vernacular literacies. Barton et al. (2000) maintained that the first ones “[...] can be seen as part of whole discourse formations, institutionalized configurations of power and knowledge which are embodied in social relationships” (p. 12). The second type of literacies belongs to the

people's daily life without having a lot of visibility and support. Barton et al. (2000) indicated, "Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships; and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others" (p. 12). Wedin (2004) stressed, "It is important to suspend judgement and to value different literacies in their contexts without prejudices about what constitutes "good" or "bad" literacies" (p. 8). We consider that teachers should include both practices, dominant and vernacular, in their lessons; since they are important for students' lives.

For the purpose of our research, we define literacy practices as the actions people do with literacy in a social context rather than in an individual way. For example, writing poems, singing songs, acting out, etc; it is the activity in general terms, not what the person does to accomplish the activity. We will give more relevance to the second type of literacy practices (vernacular) presented by Barton et al. (2000) in our data collection, the ones related with children's daily lives.

Literacy events. Barton et al. (2000) remarked that literacy events are "activities where literacy has a role. [...] Events are observable episodes which arise from practices and are shaped by them" (p. 8). A literacy event is related strictly with the production that students do in any situation. Similarly, Pahl & Rowsell (2005) explained, "It is the observed event, often most easily spotted in the classroom. When your students write and read, they are engaged in a set of literacy events" (p. 12). They also asserted that in the development of a literacy event "each child could bring their experience and their identity to create meaning in and outside space" (p. 22). Literacy events are visible because they are what people produce.

Heath (as cited in Wedin, 2004, p. 7) defined literacy events as “Any action sequence, involving one or more persons, in which the production and/or comprehension of print plays a role”. People’s identity, culture and background shape literacy events and make them meaningful and functional (Street, 2013). According to Barton et al. (2000), “It is clear that in literacy events people use written language in an integrated way as part of a range of semiotic systems; these semiotic systems include mathematical systems, musical notation, maps and other non-text based images” (p. 9). The common literacy events are marked by a mixture of written and spoken language, but they can also include a variety of images, gestures, etc. Multimodality helps in the recognition of different kinds of literacy events; since it allows the use of any mode in order to communicate.

Our methodological approach involves the observation of children’s literacy events. We define them as any way of expression that children use to communicate their ideas. It is the materialization of the literacy practices; in other words, it is what can be observable.

In-school literacies. Knobel (2001) affirmed, “Focusing solely on school literacies at the expense of literacies that students practice out of school is for many students a grave injustice because it invalidates those literacies in which they are fluent and effective out of school” (p. 405). Dyson (1999) and Hull and Schultz (2001) have defended the idea that there should be continuity between home and school literacy because children use spontaneously the resources from both contexts in their literacy practices and events. Mahar (as cited in Schultz and Hull, 2008, p. 243) asserted that instead of separating in- and out-of-school literacy practices, teachers used in-school

tools to read out-of-school texts. She suggested that by learning about adolescents' worlds and popular cultures, teachers can become guides to help them develop critical strategies for reading and assessing the truth of what they read. Motivators for children learning process should be included in the school context.

Otherwise, Schultz and Hull (2008) affirmed, "New technologies make it possible for literacies to travel across space and time, complicating further the boundaries between school and out-of-school contexts" (p. 243). Nowadays, students continue some of their school duties at home because there is the possibility to exchange information with their classmates or teachers using technology (blogs, web pages, smartphones, etc.) or they bring to school those books, they read at home, in order to use them during their free time at school. In other words they go between both contexts (home and school) without letting one outside (Schultz & Hull, 2008) what explains the continuity of both, home and school literacies. This point of view proposes a new form to face the literacy in schools; in order to prepare students for the world and not just to mechanize some skills that are not focused on what they really need and live outside the classrooms.

We consider in-school literacies, the activities students perform by following the teachers' instructions. These literacies are completed in any setting; but children need to take into account the school parameters.

Out-of-school literacies. Dyson (1999) asserted that it is necessary "not only [to] create bridges between worlds, but to support children's own naming and manipulating of the dynamic relationships among worlds" (p. 28). It is important to connect school practices with students' lives where different kinds of texts are present in

everyday activities. Along the years, these literacies have been neglected in school because they have not been seen as a formal way of expression and communication of messages. These literacies are taking more impulse since this concept is going beyond the skills of reading and writing including interaction as an important component. Hull and Schultz (2001) stated that school and home “are not sealed tight or boarded off; rather, one should expect to find, and one should look to account for, the movement from one context to the other one” (p. 12). It is important to start connecting in- and out-of-school worlds because what is happening out-of-school is useful in the classroom and in the students’ lives.

We see out-of-school literacies as those productions children do when they have the willingness to express their ideas without any teacher instruction. Children may develop these literacies in any place.

Our Leading Concept: Personal Literacies

After reading and analyzing the literature that frames our study, we came up with our leading concept. We consider that personal literacies involve all the ways of expression that children use to convey meaning to themselves and to the others regardless of the setting where they are. We think they do not make any distinctions between their in- and out-of-school literacy practices, they intertwine them using the resources they get in both settings to enrich their personal literacies. They develop different literacy practices and events according to their interests. Through the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies, teachers can help children understand their world and guide them in the process of the design and redesign of different kinds of texts where they can express

their ideas of transformation. In the analysis, we will characterize these practices and we will reflect on how in- and out-of-school literacies intertwine to build children's personal literacies.

Chapter 2

Reviewing the Literature

The purpose of our study is to explore the characteristics of children's personal literacies; that is why, we went through the literature related with the topic. We found out that there are some researchers working on different aspects of literacy around the world. In this chapter, we will present the researchers' points of view about the concepts of Multiliteracies, multimodality, literacy practices, literacy events, and in- and out-of-school literacies. We will also explain how they carried out their studies and the common issues that researchers tackled from different perspectives. At the end of this chapter, we will present what we learned from all those studies.

We explored electronic databases such as EBSCO, JSTOR, DOAJ, JURN and the academic network academia.edu looking for studies about children's literacy. We found a few studies in the following journals: The Reading Teacher, Research in the Teaching of English, UKLA (United Kingdom Literacy Association), Journal of Reading, and the Journal of Literacy Research. We searched for peer-reviewed articles because experts in the field revise these publications and guarantee the quality of them. We also took into account two doctoral dissertations related with literacy.

The studies were mainly carried out in The United States, England and Australia and share some common characteristics. The majority are ethnographic studies that have been done with children, their families (specially their parents) and their teachers. The studies were based on both in-school and out-of-school contexts and the researchers frequently used interviews, participant observations, field notes and gathering of students' artifacts as instruments for data collection. The studies were held between

1991 and 2011 in English speaking countries and they lasted from one to two years. Most of the studies are based on the works of Heath, S. (1983), Street, B. (1984) and The New London Group (1996). Finally, most of the studies suggest that the research in the field is limited and they propose ideas for further research.

Researchers' Points of View

Our research is based on the concepts of Multiliteracies and multimodality, literacy events and practices, and in- and out-of-school literacies to explore the way children build their own personal literacies. It is in this order of ideas that we want to give an account of what different researchers stated in their studies about these concepts.

Multiliteracies and Multimodality. To start with, it is interesting to see a definition of literacy from another perspective. Wedin (2004) asserted, "Literacy is situated in time, place and discourse [...] is something that exists between the mind and the text" (p. 1) and depends on the interaction and on the context. She explained that literacy is "an irreducible whole" (p. 2) that includes social and culture making impossible to study it without taking into account the conditions of the settings where the practices are developed.

On the light of the new technologies, Mills (2006) suggested that the increasing changes in the globalization and the new emergent kind of texts make the implementation of a pedagogy that prepares students for the new competences they require necessary. Researchers, specially in Australia, are studying how the use of new media in the development of literacy enhances the learning experience. In one of these studies, the term multimodal literacy "indicate[s] the way processes of literacy– reading,

writing, talking, listening and viewing – are occurring within and around new communication media” (Walsh, 2010, p. 213). Similarly, multimodal literacy emphasizes the “meaning-making process that occurs through the reading, viewing, understanding, responding to and producing and interacting with multimedia and digital texts” (Walsh, 2010, p. 213). These modes, which can also include oral aspects of talking, can be simultaneous but some may dominate according to the type of activity.

Literacy events and practices. The concept of literacy events is rarely mentioned but the studies contain a lot of samples of events as part of their data collection. We found that the concept of literacy practices is more frequently mentioned and seems to be the universal concept that involves both literacy practices and events. None of the concepts is explicitly defined in the studies we read.

The studies we read were done in schools and their main objective was to search students’ in- and out-of-school literacy events and practices. For example, Pahl (2007) defined, “The literacy event as an observed event in which literacy has a role, such as the making of a text, with writing and drawing included within it ... [and] often involve[s] oral language” (p. 86). This conception of literacy event is related with multimodality which is a characteristic of children productions. Kajee (2011) who centered her studies in literacy practices affirmed, “Children go to school with different experiences of how to act during literacy events and may have different beliefs about the nature of literacy” (p. 436). For some children there is congruence between what they bring from home and the school practices but there are others, such as immigrant students, who do not find any relationship.

Zacher (2008) concluded that human interaction is also beyond the literacy events and that is why she decided to base her research also on sociocultural theories which allow teachers to observe the way children “use texts and events to mediate their representational work and their relationships with each other. Viewing such events in this way adds an element of agency, of individual choice and possibility, for which theories of social reproduction have little room” (p.16). Similarly, Perry (2009) remarked that social factors influence people’s literacy practices, which is more visible when there is a change in their contexts.

In- and out-of-school literacies. These are concepts that are not explicit in the research studies we read. They are continuously mentioned but there are no theories describing what they mean. Researchers characterized literacy events and practices according to the context where they occur classifying them into in- and out-of-school literacies. The most common setting for out-of-school literacy practices in the research about children is their home; while for adolescents, friends instead of family have a larger influence, so the range of settings for this group is wider.

Children use different modes to express outside school and as Burnett & Myers (2002) stated, “[They] constantly create and recreate literacy in ways that are meaningful to them” (p. 56). This is what is called out-of-school literacies, those practices that are not linked to the school assignments and that children use in their own world to communicate and express with those people around them. Additionally, Chandler-Olcott & Mahar (2003) conceived the concept of personal literacies as those literacies students perform outside of school just by their own interest which in many cases are not visible for the teachers.

Researchers' Methodologies

In the following paragraphs we will analyze the methodological design of the studies we read. We will describe them in terms of type of methodology, kind of population and the instruments they used during their data collection.

Type of methodology. The most common methodology used by the researchers was ethnography (Burnett & Myers, 2002; Li, 2007; McCarthey, 1997; Mills, 2006; Perry, 2009; Wedin, 2004; Zacher, 2008). This kind of study requires the researchers to do field work and to be active participants in the studies. There was also a small-scale case study that was embedded in a larger ethnographic study (Kajee, 2011). Similarly, Kitson, Fletcher and Kearney's article (2007) is part of an ethnographic action research. Their article describes the ethnographic phase of their study and reported only one case. Some of the articles we read presented the analysis of selected data extracted from bigger studies (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003; Pahl, 2007). Walsh (2010) incorporated professional learning and research in the qualitative design of her study. There is an exception in this part; Speaker and Speaker (1991) were the only ones who did not mention any methodology.

Population. The difference in the population is remarked by the number of participants and also by the types of families. Some research studies had a big population sample. For example, Wedin (2004) carried out her study in five rural villages in Karagwe district in Kagera, in the northwest of Tanzania. While Walsh (2010) conducted her study with sixteen teachers in nine primary classrooms (K-6) in the metropolitan area of the city of Sydney, Australia.

Other studies focused their attention on a teacher and a classroom. For instance, Mills (2006) conducted her study in Southeast Queensland, Australia. She selected a teacher, a year six classroom and the principal. Kitson et al (2007) included a year four teacher in Queensland, Australia. Pahl (2007) had a group of preschoolers, an architect, some artists, their teachers and their assistant teachers. Speaker and Speaker (1991) observed middle school students.

Some studies included not only children but also their families. McCarthy (1997) chose 15 fourth and fifth graders, the families of nine of them and some teachers. Three refugee families from Sudan, including four focal children (two boys and two girls) from kindergarten and first grade participated in Perry's (2009) study. Kajee (2011) carried out her study with two immigrant families in Johannesburg.

Other studies were very specific and directed their efforts to observe literacy events of small population samples. In Burnett and Myers' (2002) study, eight children from third and sixth grades were engaged in the research. Zacher (2008) studied the literacy events based on four fifth graders, three Afro-American and one Latino. Chandler-Olcott & Mahar (2003) had two adolescent girls involved in their study. Li (2007) had in her study two immigrant Chinese Canadian first graders who lived in a suburb in British Columbia, Canada.

Data collection. The instruments used for the data collection were appropriate for ethnographic studies. They vary depending on the size and kind of population included in each research; most of the studies collected information using observations, artifacts and interviews.

Researchers observed the population from different perspectives using field notes, photographs, audio recordings, transcriptions or videos to keep record of what they saw. Some researchers observed literacy practices, Wedin (2004) from children and community while Kajee (2011) and Perry (2009) from immigrant families. Burnett and Myers (2002), Li (2007), and Zacher (2008) focused on children's literacy events. Other researchers observed interactions in different places. For example, McCarthy (1997), Mills (2006), Pahl (2007) and Walsh (2010) looked at the classroom but McCarthy (1997) also went to the playground. However, Kitson et al (2007) centered on a teacher's beliefs and enactments in the classroom.

Students' literacy events and school documents were the most frequent artifacts among the studies. Burnett and Myers (2002), Chandler-Olcott and Mahar (2003), Li (2007), Mills (2006), Pahl (2007), Perry (2009), Speaker and Speaker (1991), Walsh (2010), Wedin (2004) and Zacher (2008) collected samples of students' work, such as maps, videos, audio-recordings of interactions, stories, written work, movies and photographs. Perry (2009) also considered textual artifacts such as religious texts or community bulletins. Kitson et al (2007), Mills (2006) and Walsh (2010) also reviewed teachers' documents such as school policies, lesson plans, diaries, programs, reports and journals.

Different population samples were part of interviews. Burnett and Myers (2002), McCarthy (1997), Mills (2006), Wedin (2004) Zacher (2008) personally talked with students. While Walsh (2010) considered student's comments about their literacy events. Li (2007), Mills (2006), Wedin (2004) and Zacher (2008) interviewed teachers. Kajee (2011), Li (2007), McCarthy (1997), Perry (2009) and Wedin (2004) got information

from parents. While Mills (2006) and Wedin (2004) also took into account other community people's voices. Researchers such as Chandler-Olcott and Mahar (2003), Kajee (2011), Li (2007) and Wedin (2004) had informal conversations with their participants. McCarthy (1997), Perry (2009), Zacher (2008) and Wedin (2004) not only talked with people but also visited their homes.

Researchers' Findings

In this section, we will present the findings of different researchers making connections between those studies that have similar outcomes or similar objectives. We will highlight the following topics: Pedagogy of Multiliteracies and multimodal texts, the connection between in- and out-of-school literacies, purposes for using literacy and factors influencing literacies. Even though, all the topics are relevant and support our study, some are more frequently mentioned in the studies we read; that is why, some categories are longer than the others.

Pedagogy of Multiliteracies and Multimodal texts. Some studies explored how students engage in their learning process when teachers present the information in different modes or with a new methodology. Walsh (2010) wanted to investigate the literacy strategies that students need for reading and writing with multimodal texts and to identify the most appropriate pedagogy for combining print-based with digital technologies. She recognized that there is an orchestration of the practices of talking, listening, reading, viewing and writing as one of them can lead to another when students enroll in interactions with their classmates through digital technologies to construct a product for an audience.

Walsh (2010) explained that each practice involves a variety of other practices. “Talking and listening also involve collaborating, investigating, negotiating, enacting, connecting, interacting, and networking” (p. 223). Reading and viewing include “analyzing, browsing, decoding, hyper linking, interpreting, navigating, responding and searching [...] [while] writing should incorporate composing, creating, designing, evaluating, planning, producing, and transforming” (p. 224). She concluded that there is “a richness of learning when literacy activities, modes and texts were connected in a meaningful way” (p. 222). She asserted that students engage enthusiastically in learning when the activities allow them for interaction and participation in digital ways. This study helped us clarify how multimodality works in the classroom and gave us lights about how to proceed in our analysis.

Mills (2006) investigated how a teacher put into practice the theory of the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies in the context of the design of Claymation movies in Australia where the implementation of this pedagogy became an educational policy. The teacher involved students in the analysis of the different elements of some popular Claymation movies in order to unveil the implicit ideologies, values and intentions. Mills (2006) found out that it was possible to implement the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies successfully.

Kitson et al (2007) wanted to understand how teaching practices in the classroom were congruent with the teacher’s beliefs about the implementation of a theory of Multiliteracies in Australia. They found that there was a lack of congruence between the teacher’s beliefs about the Multiliteracy theory and the classroom practices. The teacher used a variety of multimodal texts but she focused the understanding of them only on a

print-based approach; forgetting about the other semiotic symbols embedded in the texts. She did not show any evidence of the dimensions of cultural and linguistic diversity and critical literacy in her classes which are components of the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies.

Chandler-Olcott & Mahar (2003) realized that the fanfictions are complex texts that are worthy to be included in the school literacy practices. They noticed that some students who are considered as incompetent in the traditional definition of literacy can be successful in other ways of expressions. They suggested that students' personal literacies may provide important insights "to make the school literacy more meaningful and engaging" (p. 557). In our study we want to expand this research because we will ask children, their parents and teachers about children's literacies to find ways to incorporate them in our classes.

Speaker and Speaker (1991) presented the analysis of a literacy event in the classroom. They kept track of an authentic literacy event in the classroom which consisted in collecting some sentences from any kind of book that students had read; these sentences were posted in the classroom and the teacher devoted some time to analyze them with the students' help. This exercise encouraged students to improve their spelling and writing since they were interacting with meaningful and enjoyable literature instead of checking grammar and vocabulary as in typical exercises after finishing an assigned book. The authors found that "Sentence collecting helps foster the aesthetic side of literacy events in the classroom as well as higher level thinking skills and analysis" (p. 93). We think that well-planned literacy events can enrich learning and can make the class more meaningful for students.

Connection between in- and out-of-school literacies. According to the kind of population in their studies, researchers found continuities and discontinuities in the development of children's literacies between in- and out-of-school contexts. Kajee (2011) stated that there is no congruence between home and school literacy practices in immigrant family children because the first ones could vary depending on the family literacy practices, culture and identity among other reasons and school does not value those literacies that students bring to school. She suggested that school should create some strategies to help immigrant students to acquire at least the minimum of opportunities for children to develop the literacy practices in the new language. Similarly, Li (2007) found that the immigrant children's in- and out-of-school literacies do not intertwine because of their linguistic and cultural discontinuity. The parents and teachers handle different beliefs and perceptions around children's education. Additionally, the goals that parents and teachers have for children around some schooling topics are different. Children do not find a continuum between home and school because in each context they feel that they have different language and culture. There are mismatches between both contexts.

McCarthy (1997) centered her study on how teachers and students from diverse social levels and cultural backgrounds connect home and school literacies. She found that these contexts have a stronger connection among middle-class European-American children than among students of color or from the working class because the teachers selected readings where some students did not identify with the characters or plots of those stories. She suggested that teachers should know about students' lives; but she

emphasized that teachers should be careful not to invade families' privacy and to protect their own welfare.

On the other hand, Pahl (2007) wanted to understand the impact of the adults company in children text making and also how the text could be characterized as creative. She found that teachers can explore children's texts going beyond their productions and making connections between in- and out-of-school contexts. She proposed that the school curriculum should take into account students' voices about their own production. She suggested that teachers should use "the text as a space for 'possibility thinking'" (p. 91) where teachers and students could ask for the origin and purposes of their texts and develop ideas for writing and drawing connected to everyday activities in order to integrate more practices that are related with the students' interests. She made evident the link that exists between in- and out-of-school literacies.

Burnett and Myers (2002) analyzed that children use in- and out-of- school literacies interchangeably applying the skills learned in school for exploring their own interests and including in their school work elements that they bring from home. Children adapt those literacies to the other context. In her research about the roles and uses of literacy in rural Tanzania, Wedin (2004) suggested that the educative process will be better if language and interactions are similar in home and in school and if teachers take into account children's previous knowledge and experiences. This process is more relevant in students' life when what they learn is related with their needs and useful for accomplishing their life projects. Through the interview with children, parents and teachers, we want to find practical examples of how our own students establish consciously or unconsciously connections between their in- and out-of-school literacies.

Purposes for using literacy. Some researchers found that children and adolescents' literacies help them to accomplish different objectives. In their study, Burnett and Myers (2002) asked some children to participate actively in the development of their research. These children took photographs of their own literacy events and their voices were validated within the study. The researchers encountered that children's purposes in using literacy are related with social interactions, learning, identity, pleasure and organization. They found that children have copied adult's literacy practices and use these skills in their own literacy framework. Children also adapted their in-school literacies for out-of-school purposes; and they argue that children should make reflections around their own literacy practices.

Burnett and Myers (2002) also affirmed that school does not have to transfer out-of-school children's literacy practices to its context because they will be decontextualized. When teachers know about those practices they can help them "own and shape their literacy experiences in school" (p. 62) and they can also identify purposes and contexts that are meaningful for students.

Chandler-Olcott & Mahar (2003) wanted to see how two adolescent girls constructed meaning through fanfictions which are illustrated stories where they used the anime technique and dialogues to build a narrative. They discovered that adolescents' literacy helped them "have fun, exercise [...] imagination, avoid boredom [...] and solidify relationships with various friends, online or otherwise" (p. 560). These two studies are important because they are related to what we want to go deeper and expand in our research.

Factors influencing literacies. Some researchers found some factors that influence the development of literacies. They showed how socio-cultural aspects are present in their productions. Zacher (2008) analyzed how some children who wrote stories and shared them not only in their classroom but also in different places around school enriched their stories with their multiple identities. Perry (2009) presented an analysis of some genres, contexts, literacy practices and literacy brokering among refugee families. She found that culture and context play an important role in the literacies which implies that there should be an adaptation to the practices found in the new places where the person arrives, as a way to enroll in the new sociocultural environment. Kajee (2011) also aimed to explore family literacy practices. She suggested that “Immigrant children in particular bring their own language, literacy and cultural practices to the classroom, leaving teachers and schools wondering how to cope with their specific needs” (p. 434). In our study, we want to continue exploring the factors that influence children’s literacies from the perspectives of children themselves, parents and teachers.

Our Understandings

Along this journey exploring what researchers have done about literacy issues, we clarified and went beyond the concepts we learned when we were reading the authors that supported our conceptual framework. These concepts are the base of our study and will underpin our findings. What we learned will give us light to analyze our data and gave us ideas of what we were likely to find.

We learned that there are different purposes for using literacy that help the individuals go deeper in their interests and perform in different settings. Those settings and the person's culture exert a direct influence on the practices that can change according to the place where they are carried out. Additionally, children literacy is mainly influenced by the people who are around them, such as family and friends.

In the classroom, teachers can involve the use of multimodal texts and the practice of literacy process related with talking and listening, writing and reading and viewing as a way to enrich learning and make it more meaningful for students. The implementation of a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies can help teachers prepare their students to develop the competences they require in their lives.

In terms of literacy practices and events, we understood that literacy events can be as simple as the writing of short sentences or as complex as the creation of more elaborated pieces of texts. Literacy practices are not merely related with school matters, they make part of different social contexts. Children's literacy events are mainly multimodal in nature, they are related with any topic that is meaningful for them and children can work collaboratively to produce a single text and achieve a common goal. We noticed that the children who participated in the research studies described easily their literacy practices and could extensively explain their literacy events.

In sum, we recognized that knowing about our students' literacies can give us important insights about their interests which can be included in the class. It is the teachers' responsibility to connect the literacies children bring from home with what they live and produce at school. When there is continuity in both contexts, children's learning process is more engaging for them.

Chapter 3

A Qualitative Study About Personal Literacy Practices: Methodology

Along this chapter, we will present the methodological approach that guided our research study. First, we will explain the research question and the sub-questions that define the categories that we will analyze. Then, we will make a picture of the population and the profiles we kept in mind when we selected them. Next, we will describe the contexts from where we took the information. After that, we will list the data instruments and the procedures we followed to collect the information. Finally, we will explain how we organized the information to analyze the data.

Profiling our Approaches to Research

Our exploration about children's personal literacies is a qualitative study with an ethnographic approach. We say that it is qualitative because "it relies primarily on human perception and understanding" (Stake, 2010, p. 11). As Woods (2006) stated, "The qualitative researcher seeks to discover the meanings that participants attach to their behaviour, how they interpret situations, and what their perspectives are on particular issues". We also say that we have an ethnographic approach because we observed and analyzed what was happening in our field; which is characteristic of this kind of studies. Heath & Street (2008) stated, "Ethnography [...] is a theory- building enterprise constructed through detailed systematic observing, recording and analyzing of human behavior in specifiable spaces and interactions" (p. 29).

Ramírez and Mora (2014) reflected, “Ethnography creates the possibility of seeing the world from different perspectives, allowing researchers to pose different questions about the same event”. We questioned children, parents and teachers about their points of view around children’s personal literacy practices. We interacted with them and they gave us the insights that we will analyze in the following chapter.

Presenting the Research Question and Sub-questions

This is a qualitative study that explores children’s personal literacy practices in two different schools with the objective of answering the main question that drives our research. We first presented our research question in the conceptual framework. It took us some time to define it but when we finally did it we got enthusiastic because we really found what we wanted to search. After finishing the literature, we came up with the sub-questions to focus on the more specific issues we wanted to understand about the characteristics of the children’s personal literacies. Some readings (Burnett & Myers, 2002; Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003) gave us some perspectives that made us think deeper in what we wanted to obtain from the data collection. In the analysis, these sub-questions helped us construct our narratives which later guided us to answer the question.

Research question. What are the characteristics of children’s personal literacies in two private schools in the metropolitan area of Medellín, Colombia?.

Sub-questions.

1. What do the in-school literacy practices from a group of third and fifth graders look like?

2. What do the out-of-school literacy practices from a group of third and fifth graders look like?
3. How do their in- and out-of-school literacies intertwine?
4. How do teachers and parents perceive children's literacies?

Participants

We asked eight children from third and fifth grades, their parents and three Spanish and four English as a second language teachers in two schools in the metropolitan area of the city of Medellin to participate in our study. The students and the teachers were in the same grades we were attending at the moment and we could easily contact the parents and get their consents because they already knew us. This is what Suter (2012) called a “convenience sample”. According to him, this kind of sample will help us “maximize the value of the data” (p. 350). We selected these children because they liked to spend their time developing different kinds of literacies and they also showed interest in sharing with us their practices when we were asking the students in our groups about their literacies. On the other side, we decided to work with English and Spanish teachers because we considered that they were more aware of the kind of literacy practices they and their children developed.

Selection process. We decided to select the participants from the two institutions where we currently work. So we talked to the principals and they signed an informed consent letter¹ to accept the participation of the schools in the research. First, we observed which students demonstrate interest in using different kinds of literacy among

¹ See Appendix A for samples of the informed consent letters.

the groups we served classes. We contacted the eight students and the seven teachers directly. We told them about our research project and invited them to participate in the data collection process and they accepted.

In one of the schools, we initially contacted five students but just three families accepted the participation of their children. In light of this, we asked another two children to participate receiving their parents' approval. One of the children attended the interview but the audio did not work, so we did not take into account his artifacts and his parents' interview for the data analysis because we lost the evidences of the most important point of view.

In the other school, we sent a note telling the parents about our project and we also asked the students to tell them in their own words about it. When we received the positive answer from them and from the children, we sent parents the informed consent letter to accept their children's and their own participation in the study (Flick, 2009). During the interviews, there was a student who did not continue in the process because he did not want us to interview his parents; but we decided not to replace him. There was also a family who did not attend two appointments we sent them for the interview, but we included the child's data in the analysis considering that children are the center of this research.

Similarly, we contacted the teachers and they signed the informed consent letter to accept the interviews and the class observations. We could not interview one of the teachers because she quitted school, so we excluded her data from the analysis. The informed consent letter included a description of our project and our advisor's contact information; just in case, any of the participants wanted to have some extra information.

Ethical considerations and pseudonyms. The children who participated in the research were our students in different subjects. So, it was important to explain to them that their participation was just to collaborate; it did not represent a grade in the class or any academic reward. We used pseudonyms for all participants and schools to preserve their identity.

Profiling our participants. As we mentioned earlier, we worked with three groups of participants: students, their parents, and teachers. We will introduce each group below:

The students. The eight students were in third or fifth grade, we selected them because they showed interest in doing extra literacy activities such as drawing, reading, singing, role playing, and writing letters among others in their free time and they were eager to be in the study. It is important to state that we collected the data in Spanish, our native language, because the students are not advanced enough to answer the questions we had in the interviews in English. In addition, the choice of Spanish over English did not constitute a constraint for our study.

The parents. We considered the participation of children's parents in the research because they could provide us with relevant information about the literacy practices of their children. They accepted to have interviews with us when they signed the informed consent letters. We interviewed them in Spanish because most of them did not know how to speak English.

The teachers. Seven teachers helped us during the class observations and the interviews. Five of them had a long affiliation to the institutions and are experienced teachers not only in the schools but also in other institutions. The other two teachers

were new but they knew well the school and the students since it was the third or fourth term of the year. They teach Spanish or English and we decided to interview them in Spanish to have the same conditions for all the participants.

Two Contexts, Two Schools

We carried out this research in two private institutions in the metropolitan area of the city of Medellin. The schools shared some common aspects: English is not the students' native language; both are Catholic and belong to the Catholic school organization in the country and they have a remarkable interest in developing English language skills in students since their first years of schooling. Their students have access to technology at home and the opportunity to travel a lot. Many of them have relatives living in foreign countries, so they can practice their English skills from time to time.

Candelaria School. It is a bilingual school for boys and girls that offer courses from primary to high school. The pedagogical approach involves the use of knowledge in creative and flexible ways to show understanding. Every teacher can implement their own methodology as far as they follow the guidelines proposed by the framework of the approach. Every classroom is equipped with a CD-player, a projector, a sound system and access to Wi-Fi. Students at school tend to be very outgoing and like to participate in the school artistic events and in extra-curricular activities.

Metropolitan School. The school has two shifts; boys study in the morning and girls in the afternoon. It also offers courses from primary to high school. One of the most outstanding aspects of the school is the high performance of students in different sports and music events. Most of the students take advantage of their skills to participate in

different extra- curricular classes which allow them to improve their social relationships but also to become more independent, critical and advanced in their academic process.

Data Collection

We used different instruments that are typical of ethnographic studies to gather the data we needed for our research. We selected the data instruments and applied them to students, parents and teachers. In this section, we will describe each instrument, the reason we had to choose them and the procedures we followed to apply them.

Class observation and field notes. We observed classes because we wanted to see the interaction between teachers and students and literacy practices in action. After receiving the teachers' informed consent letters, we scheduled some of their classes for the observation. We observed nine English and Spanish classes in total. At the beginning of each class, we informed students about the reason of our presence. We took descriptive notes where we narrated teachers and students' activities, comments and behaviors related with literacy (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). We later typed this information to use it in the analysis. We took photos of some of the students' notebooks.

We did not include one of the observations in the analysis because the teacher renounced her employment before we interviewed her. Another teacher had two class observations because one of the activities focused on production lasted two classes.

Table 1

Dates of class observations

Teachers	Date
Clara	11/07/2014
Carmenza	10/31/2014
Camila	10/24/2014
Catalina	11/06/2014
David	02/11/2015
Javier	03/04/2015
Melissa	02/23/2015

Interviews. We chose to have interviews because we wanted the participants to tell us their stories and give us details about children’s literacy practices. We conducted semi-structured interviews with the students, their parents and the teachers guided by the questions we had prepared before the meetings (Seidman, 2005). The questions were planned to know their points of view around the research question and the sub-questions². We recorded the interviews using our smartphones or our laptops. We did the interviews in both schools during our in- or out-of-school available time.

² See Appendix B for the questions we asked children, parents and teachers during the interview process.

Table 2

Dates of participants' interviews

Children	Date	Parents	Date	Teachers	Date
Samuel	11/12/2014	Samuel's parents	04/20/2015	Clara	02/20/2015
Santiago	11/10/2014	Santiago's parents	04/16/2015	Carmenza	02/13/2015
Sebastian	11/10/2014	Sebastian's parents	04/17/2015	Camila	02/04/2015
Sergio	11/12/2015	N/A	N/A	Catalina	02/13/2015
Bianca	01/21/2015	Bianca's parents	01/23/2015	David	03/24/2015
Carolina	01/21/2015	Carolina's parents	01/23/2015	Javier	03/27/2015
Diana	01/21/2015	Diana's parents	01/23/2015	Melissa	03/25/2015
Elena	01/21/2015	Elena's parents	01/23/2015		

Students' interview process. As soon as we received the informed consent letters signed by the parents, we carried out the interviews. We scheduled the interviews with the students in our free time during the school shift. Children shared with us their own productions and they talked about their ways of expression. We asked them about their in- and out-of-school literacies and how they could intertwine them. These literacies mark children's lives; that is why it is easy for them to talk about this issue. Sometimes, we had to focus the attention of some children because they got passionate talking about

their interests and moved from one example to another or from a context to a different one losing the idea of what we were asking them.

Parents' interview process. We scheduled the interviews with the children's parents under different conditions in each institution. In one of the schools, we carried out the interviews during the open day, a meeting where parents receive their children's reports, because it was not easy for parents to get to school since it is in the surroundings of the city, and both father and mother were present in these interviews. In the other school, parents had individual appointments with one of the researchers during her available time out of school. During these interviews only mothers attended because they had no schedule conflicts. We conducted them following some predesigned questions that were different from those asked to the students but they were still focused on answering the research question and sub-questions. In other words, the interviews were mainly centered on children's in- and out-of-school ways of expression.

Teachers' interview process. We had interviews with the teachers some days after the class observations. We prepared some questions before the meeting in order to focus the interviews on their own ways to promote their students' expression and their perceptions about their students' literacies.

Artifacts. We chose to have artifacts in our research because we wanted to analyze students' literacy events. In the interviews, students brought the ones they wanted to share with us and explain how they produced them. What is remarkable here is that most of them showed us a few, one or none of them. The artifacts were lyrics, drawings, cartoons, letters, stories; among others. The artifacts were authentic because the children did them by their own. They had credibility and representativeness since in

most of the interviews children as well as their parents and teachers referred to what they produce. They also had meaning since they were a way of the children's expression (Flick, 1990).

Data Interpretation

After doing the interviews and the class observations, we started taking some notes about those ideas that came to our mind which were connected with the concepts and literature we had worked before in order to use them later in the analysis and the discussion.

Transcribing the interviews. We transcribed the interviews by ourselves using our laptops and after we discovered and used www.transcribe.com; which is a webpage that helped us control the audio. We transcribed them exactly as the participants expressed their ideas in order to avoid misunderstandings; mainly with children who in certain cases rambling around the answers. It is necessary to highlight again that the interviews were in Spanish which is the first language of all the participants and in this way they could express their thoughts in a more natural way.

Categories that guided our analysis. We defined the categories according to the sub-questions that will help us answer the research question. We arranged the information for each category by grouping the common ideas that appear when we were analyzing each instrument. We defined the categories in the following terms:

In-school literacies. In this category, we analyzed what each participant expressed about children's in-school literacies and we took some verbatim quotes to support the analysis. We commented about activities assigned in school that appeared in

the interviews, the field notes or the artifacts. We included information related with different kinds of school work; the participants' perception about it and we analyzed how the literacy events and practices related with multimodality.

Out-of-school literacies. We included any comments about activities that children perform by their own interest that could be carried out in any context. The artifacts played an important role in this category because they gave us information about children's ways of expression. Moreover, we analyzed each participant's ideas about how out-of-school literacies were related with what children feel, how they get their inspiration, what influences their productions, where they feel comfortable to carry them out, how they connect their literacies with their surroundings and how the different modes of representation are present in their practices. To validate participants' voices we included many verbatim quotes in the analysis.

Connection between in- and out-of-school literacies. The information for this category came only from the interviews. We analyzed how children use their out-of-school literacies to accomplish with school work; how school topics become personal interests, how children use what they learn in school to enrich their out-of-school literacies and how they relate what they learn in school with other contexts.

Parents' and teachers' perceptions The information to develop this category came from the parents' and teachers' interviews; in which we encountered some verbatim quotes to include in the narrative. This category is related with those perceptions that parents and teachers have around children's personal literacies.

Analyzing the data. The first step of this process started when we were doing the data collection. We wrote on a notebook some isolated thoughts that came to our

minds when we were sharing the data we collected in our schools. We did the complete analysis after finishing the data collection in both institutions. We began with the analysis of the interviews starting with the ones from the children, then the ones from their parents and at the end the teachers' interviews. As we read aloud to each other the transcripts, we described the gestures and tones of voice of the participants to give each other an idea of the non-verbal content of the interviews. When we finished the analysis of the interviews, we continued with the class observations and finally with the children's artifacts. During all of this process, we connected what we were discussing with the literature review and the conceptual framework to make sense of what we were finding.

Mapping out the information. At the beginning of the data collection, we did a chart (Miles & Huberman, 1994) where we related the sub-questions with the instruments that were going to answer them. We began to have some lights of those categories that would guide our analysis.

Coding. When we read the different transcripts and field notes; we used color coding in order to compare, contrast and classify the information (Murray, 2009). We used colors to code the information related with the sub-questions that guided our study. At the same time, we were finding ideas that will support our analysis.

Reducing the data to charts. While we were doing the coding, we decided to do a chart where we could write the main ideas presented by each participant about each category. This was a base for the analysis. When we were doing this chart we found out that some categories interrelate among them (Leavy, 2014).

Writing the narratives. When we were doing the chart and the color coding we began writing down ideas for our narratives. We grouped the information we were gathering according to the sub-questions. Then we noticed that there were some similar ideas from the different sources, so we decided to connect all those pieces and that was how we started answering our sub-questions which became our categories. To support these narratives, we used some verbatim quotes and we also paraphrased some statements. These narratives are connected with what we learned in the conceptual framework and the literature review.

Accuracy and Credibility.

In each category, we wrote the verbatim quotes that supported the narratives. We also decided to paraphrase some of the statements when they were long or when the ideas were not clearly expressed in only one sentence. We remarked that we collected the data in Spanish; so it was necessary to translate them into English³.

After having all the data collected and coded, we identified the participants' perspectives that could enrich the narratives and support each category. This gave validity to the study because the categories are supported from the different layers (Yin, 2011). Triangulation played an important role in the research because "In later stages of analysis and writing, meaning is attached to the data by theorizing the meaning of and relationships among categories" (Harklau, 2005, p. 180).

³ See Appendix C for the translation of the quotes from Spanish into English.

Role of the Researcher

We carried out the study in our own work places what implied that the participants (children, parents and teachers) already knew of us. Along the research, we were active participants since we collected the data and we also did the analysis by ourselves. We personally contacted the participants and we interpreted the information from the direct sources with the idea of understanding children's personal literacy practices by considering the meaning the different participants assigned to them. Moreover, we think that the participants play an important role because they provided all the information we needed for our study.

Chapter 4

Understanding Children's Personal Literacy Practices

In this study, we seek to explain the characteristics of children's personal literacies. We had the help of some children, their parents and their teachers who gave us light to support the narratives we will present in this chapter. In the data analysis, we came up with the following categories; children's in-school literacies, children's out-of-school literacies, connection between children's in- and out-of-school literacies and parents' and teachers' perceptions around children literacies. These categories are closely related with our research questions and we presented them in form of clusters that helped us join the information that was similar and relevant inside each category. We analyzed the data from the different perspectives of the population and we used some verbatim quotes as a way to value their voices. In the following table, we introduce the participants but we do not include the parents' names because they are related with their children's names in the narratives.

Table 3

Participants' names

Participants Summary Chart	
Students	Teachers
Bianca	Clara
Carolina	Carmenza
Diana	Camila
Elena	Catalina
Samuel	David
Santiago	Javier
Sebastian	Melissa
Sergio	

Children's In-school Literacies

We consider in-school literacies, all the activities teachers assign to students in school. These literacies are completed in any setting; but children have to follow the school parameters. Here, we will present the analysis about school literacies where children will express their ideas about how they perceive their process in school. Parents will illustrate what their children do to accomplish with school work and teachers will explain their teaching practices and beliefs.

Children's school work. The selected students for the research consider school work as a priority. In the interviews, they told us about the different activities they perform in and outside school. For example, Samuel pointed out, "I take time to do them [drawings] when I finish the homework" (Interview, 11/12/2014). Bianca said "I

sometimes do play” (Interview, 01/21/2015). She explained that she only plays when she has some available time because when she is in class, she focuses her attention on the class activities. During the interview, Bianca’s and Carolina’s parents expressed that their daughters have a high sense of responsibility with their homework doing it as soon as they arrive home. Sebastian’s parents commented that their son always takes initiative to do his homework. Similarly, Santiago’s parents mentioned that their son tries to go forward in his classes by reading in advance or practicing the topics for the next lessons; at home, he also enjoys exploring the websites the teachers suggest in class. In general, parents help their children to give priority to school work by providing them with a schedule, materials and a special place where they can do homework; as a result of this, children seem to develop good study habits and have good academic performance.

During the interviews with children, parents and teachers, we also found out that there are some common activities in the daily school work. Samuel, Santiago, Sebastian and Elena mentioned the readers which consist on assigned stories students read for their Spanish class. Two children said that the readers help them learn (Elena’s interview, 01/21/2015; Sebastian’s interview, 11/10/2014). In this task, children do independent reading and reports at home and group reading and activities to apply concepts on the books in school. Some of Carmenza’s students show comprehension of the readers by using drawings she has not assigned; some other students have a special notebook to draw about the readers (Interview, 02/13/2015).

Samuel identifies that he has to do different activities such as reading, drawing, and writing to accomplish with school work (Interview, 11/12/2014). Sergio commented that he creates new stories from the ones he reads and he is able to change ends or write

new versions of stories in Spanish or English classes (Interview, 11/12/2014). Children remarked that they make handcrafts to show comprehension of school subjects. Elena enjoys working on those handcrafts because she thinks that through these activities she can also express herself (Interview, 01/21/2015). Her parents expressed that she devotes more time doing homework assignments that help her develop her creativity while the ones she finds boring are the last ones in the list and deserve less attention (Interview, 01/23/2015). In addition to making handcrafts, children can also express their ideas in different ways. Carolina considers, “There are always questions about yourself and we can have the freedom to be ourselves” (Interview, 01/21/2015). She thinks that the most important part of school is the relationship she can establish with her classmates because she can express her ideas.

Children use different strategies to accomplish their homework assignments. For instance, Bianca, Carolina, Diana and Elena mentioned in their interviews that surfing the websites is a tool to do their homework. Bianca not only looks for information on the web but also in books; additionally, she has to translate it into English when the class instruction is in this language (Interview, 01/21/2015). As Carolina loves singing, she tries to find information in videos and songs to support her activities (Interview, 01/21/2015). Samuel’s parents narrated that their son likes to meet his classmates outside school to do his tasks (Interview, 04/20/2015).

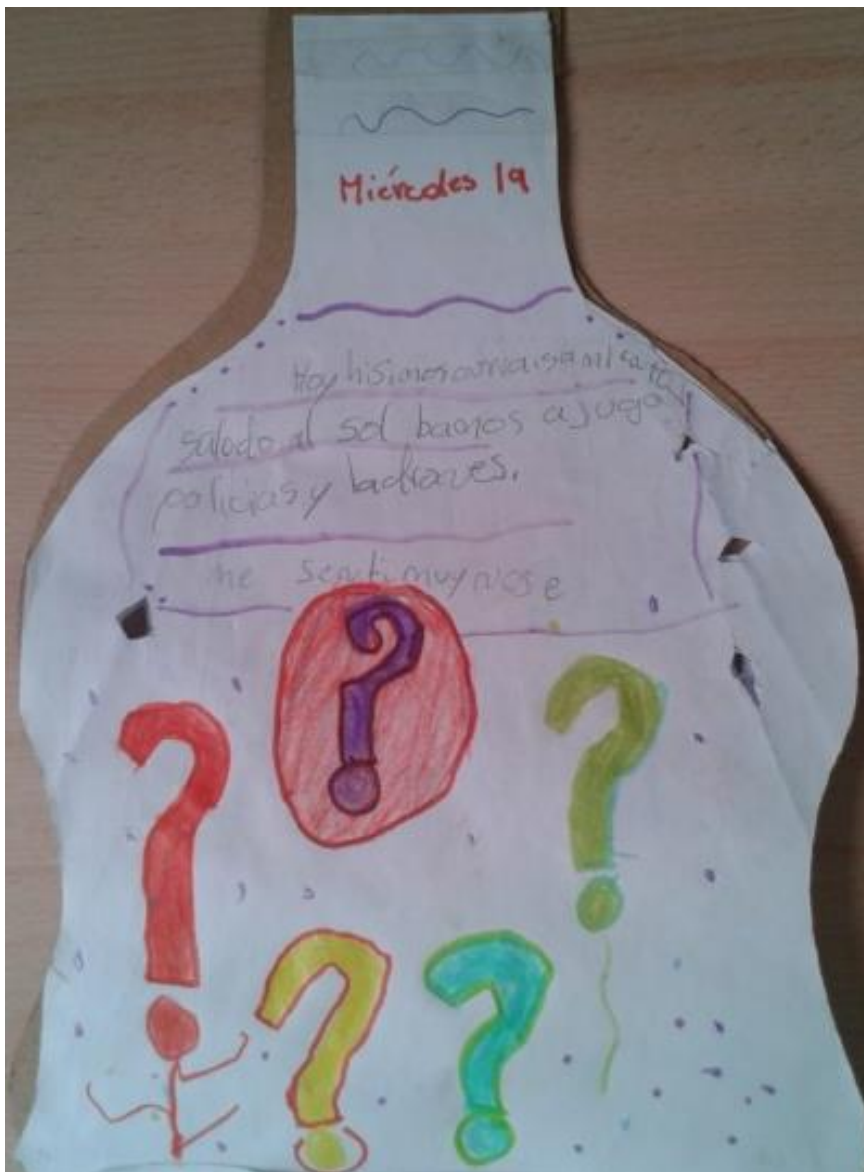


Figure 1. Diana uses multimodal texts to express her ideas in her theater class folder which has the shape of a guitar.

In the interviews, teachers, parents and students told us that children use multimodal texts as a way of expressing ideas, constructing knowledge and showing understandings about what they learn in school (See figure 1). Children develop a

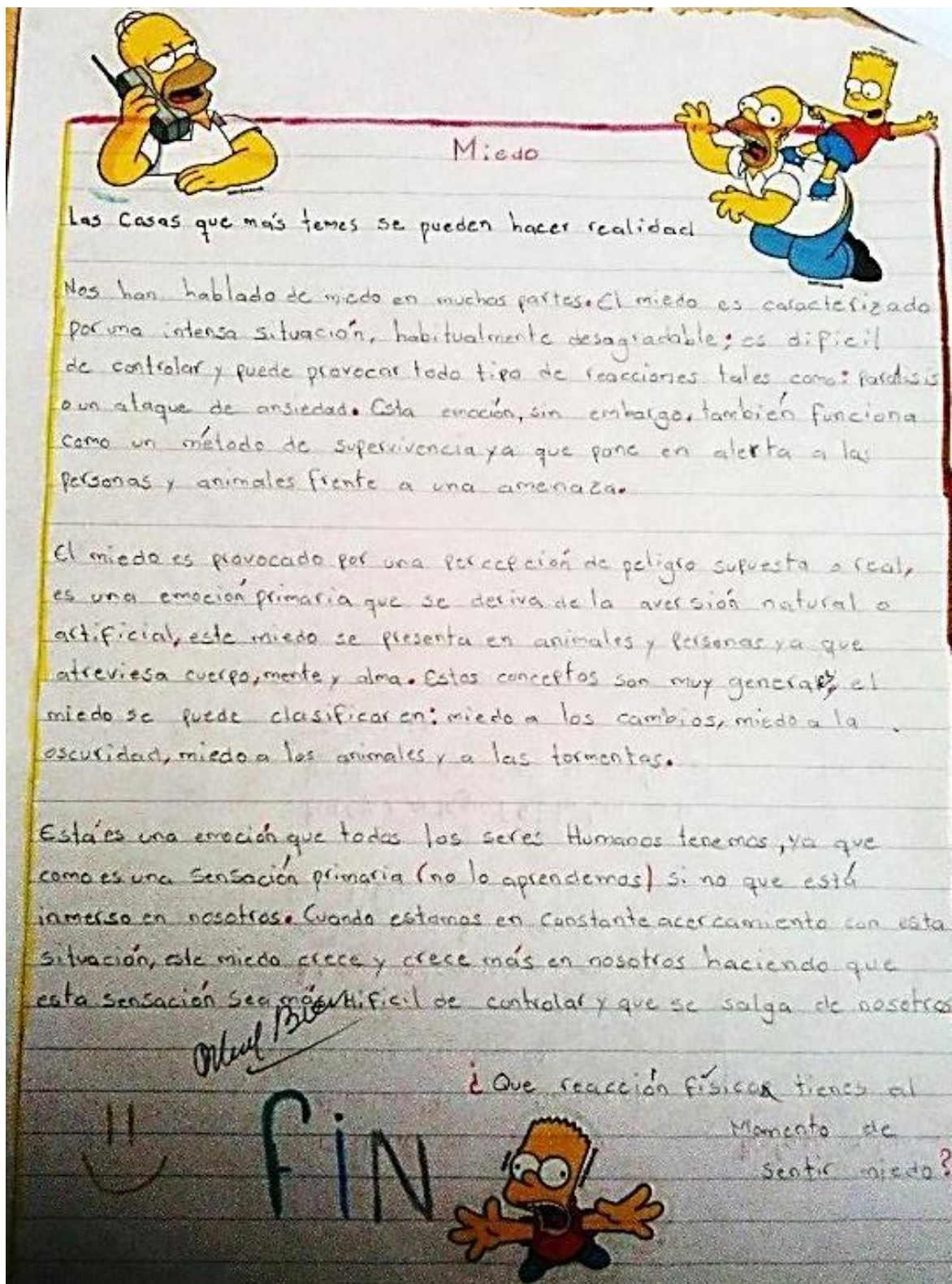


Figure 3. A student's speech for oratory.

Carmenza believes that some activities help her students not only develop their academic skills but also prepare them for life. The oratory (public speaking) is an important activity for her; this is a project from the Spanish subject in her school (See figure 3). In this activity, students go from one mode of representation to another. They begin by reading and choosing a topic from the reader that motivates them to go deeper. They discuss the topics in class and narrow them until every student gets the one for their papers. They investigate and then come up with a written text. She explained that teachers guide students in the process of writing to elaborate the speech; then they practice the management of voice, gestures, look and space previously to the presentation of the activity (Interview, 02/13/2015).

School topics' characteristics. In the interviews, teachers expressed that they think that school topics need to be contextualized and appealing for students allowing them to develop their critical thinking and creativity. Teachers pointed that motivation is an important issue for the learning process that is why they feel responsible not only to propose engaging topics for students but also to find strategies to motivate them to put into practice their knowledge in- and out-of-school. For example, Camila invites her students to play an online game that the textbook provides (Interview, 02/04/15). David proposes his students to share with their parents what they are working in school (Interview, 03/24/2015). Catalina told us how she guides her students to practice the foreign language by motivating them to express their ideas around the different topics developed in class (Interview, 02/13/2015). Clara talks and reads with her students about current issues to encourage them to get used to reading, sometimes she allows them to use their smartphones to read the news (Interview, 02/20/2015).

Teachers also like to give students the opportunity to propose their own activities in the classes (Camila's interview, 02/20/2015; David's interview, 03/24/2015). For instance, Melissa's students ask for activities where they can read, play or complete sentences (Interview, 03/25/2015). Javier's students suggest singing songs in class; so he always has a list of songs related with the topics he is working in class (Interview, 03/27/2015). Additionally, Catalina affirmed that some students who practice by themselves become enthusiastic about assignments to the extent that they go beyond her expectations (Interview, 02/13/2015).

Teachers also believe that it is important to contextualize the topics in order to make them meaningful for children. It is important to relate the topics with real situations (Camila's interview, 02/04/2015; Clara's interview, 02/20/2015). For instance, Carmenza emphasized, "Spanish class teaches us how to communicate" (Interview, 02/13/2015). She mentioned that the teaching of languages is a way to develop the communicative skills; it is just a matter of choosing topics or activities that are close to students' lives. She also highlighted that it is necessary to explain to students the usefulness of the topics worked in class and how they will use them in the future. Besides, Catalina explained that she proposes some topics for their writings but she also gives them the opportunity to select the ones they prefer related to their social, familiar and school context (Interview, 02/13/2015). And David proposes his students to write and talk about their experiences; where they can even practice what they are working in class using their favorite stories and characters (Interview, 03/24/2015).

Teachers manifested that children need to be critical towards their reality inviting them to have their own opinions, analyze their surroundings and express their ideas

about the topics worked in their classes. In Camila's case, students have the opportunity to express their points of view by pretending to be a character of a story and creating new ends and stories from the texts already read in the class (Class observation, 10/24/2014). Carmenza encourages her students to clarify their doubts by themselves; when they socialize ideas with their classmates, they can learn from their mistakes and construct new understandings (Interview, 02/13/2015). Additionally, Clara presents troublesome situations to their students for them to find possible solutions; she also allows students to bring new topics to discuss in class. She emphasized that students should be careful with the information they find, "Not all the information that the media shows us is useful; so it is important for them to be selective" (Interview, 02/20/2015). On the other hand, Melissa guides her students to be more critical; she asks them to observe their surroundings and make questions about them (Interview, 03/25/2015).

Teachers' practices in school. In both schools, there are guidelines for the academic work but at the same time teachers introduce their beliefs in their teaching practices. Teachers work with lesson plans that they design before the beginning of each term; these are focused on developing the specific competences for each subject and also include a variety of activities that lead students get the school achievements. English as a second language and Spanish teachers have different goals when students are expressing their ideas. The development of communicative skills and sub-skills is a priority in the English as second language classes (David's interview, 03/24/2015). So, they value every single word students say because children are in the process of learning a new language. These teachers are more focused on the textual comprehension while Spanish teachers are more centered on developing not only reading comprehension strategies that

help students go beyond the text but also competences to interpret different kinds of texts, give reasons, and propose ideas (Carmenza's interview, 02/13/2015).

Teachers feel that students need guidance in the development of their activities to not lose their motivation. Carmenza affirmed that if students choose unachievable topics, teachers need to help them choosing a more achievable task narrowing them keeping the academic and pedagogic sense and still being connected to their interest (Interview, 02/13/2015). Similarly, David suggests that when students do not have a good guidance, "They could feel a little bit lost [in the activities]." David guides his students in the written process by beginning from words, then to sentences and finally to texts. He also supports this process by asking his students to take notes about examples of the explanations (Interview, 03/24/2015). Clara always proposes oral activities before the written assignments for her students to have clear ideas about the topics and concepts to write about. She thinks that it is important to give clear instructions before carrying out the activities; so, she asks students to repeat or explain to her what she tells them in order to verify comprehension of class instructions (Interview, 02/20/2015). Besides, Catalina guides her students by encouraging them to construct models for the activities so everybody can understand what they have to do (Interview, 02/13/2015).

During the class observations, we noticed that teachers do activities which reflect their beliefs about their teaching practices. Teachers include different kinds of text to present the information, they move in different directions through the literacy practices of talking and listening, reading, writing and viewing (Walsh, 2010) and they use each practice to promote the other ones working on a variety of activities which keep the students' motivation and attention. In this section we want to move from the theory to

the practice so we will describe teachers' classes to see multimodal texts and teachers practices in their contexts.

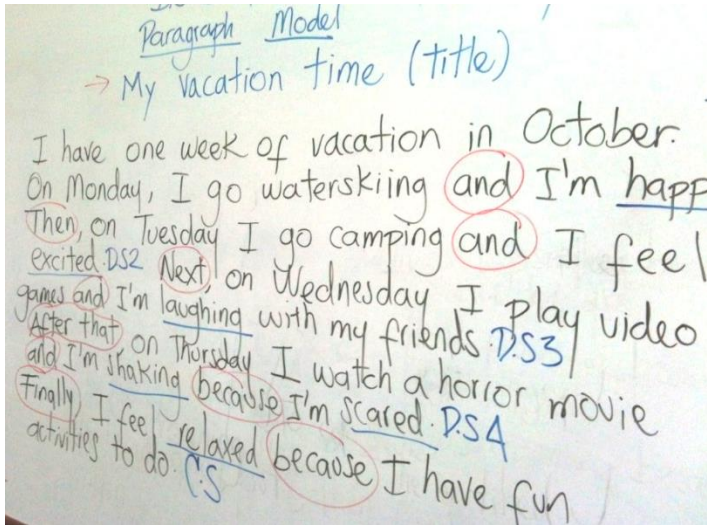


Figure 4. A paragraph model constructed with students.

Camila's students move from one mode to another to accomplish the activities with the teacher's guidance. They began listening to the teacher in order to complete a written song about feelings in their student book. Then they use talking to make examples about feelings, to practice spelling and to check their activities. After that, the teacher guided students to review the parts of the paragraph with the objective of constructing a written model of it on the board which will help them later to compose their own productions (See figure 4). At the same time, they were highlighting with different colors and shapes the connectors and the words related with feelings (Class observation, 10/24/2014).

In Catalina's class, students checked written homework and clarified previous concepts orally. Students worked collaboratively in the socialization of ideas to find the

right answers, helped each other correct their examples, made models for their activities and played games related to the topics of the class. Students went from talking to writing to make their own paragraphs which were also accompanied by pictures (See figure 5). She contextualized, monitored the activities and gave feedback to students (Class observation, 11/06/2014).

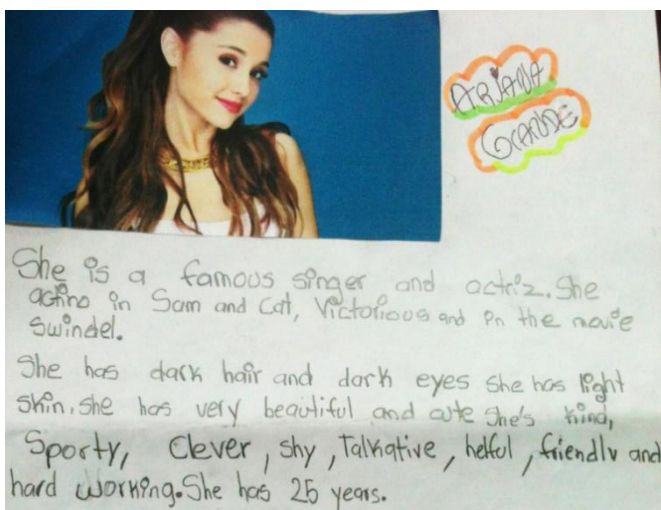


Figure 5. Description of a student's favorite singer.

In Carmenza's case, students were doing the final activity of their readers. So, they previously read the story and then they transformed the end of it by writing a new ending where they had to include the original characters (Class observation, 10/31/2014).

During Clara's class, she contextualized students by reviewing previous concepts. They wrote a summary about the reader in this class. She monitored the students' activity and gave them feedback about content and style. At the end, they

worked collaboratively giving feedback to each other when they were orally sharing their productions with the rest of the group (Class observation, 11/07/2014).

David included a variety of modes where students could convey meaning in his class. They started by talking about the story they began reading the previous class. After that, they read, listened to and spoke about each part of the story. In the post-reading activity, students saw some pictures related with the story and they described them orally and in a written way. Students expressed their thoughts about the topics and worked collaboratively in the activities (Class observation, 02/11/2015).



Figure 6. First part of the giant brochure.

Javier's students worked in groups solving the doubts and creating the second part of a giant brochure they had begun in the previous class and where they could use their artistic skills (See figure 6). They started the class by talking about what they had to do and providing oral and written examples of different ideas that they could include

in their projects. Javier used a Power Point presentation full of images to illustrate the examples (Class observation, 03/04/2015).

Melissa took advantage of the reader to practice different topics related with punctuation, capitalization and reading fluency. Students started with a reading activity where they could observe the practical use of concepts worked in previous classes. Then they discussed and wrote different examples where they practiced what they had learned (Class observation, 02/23/2015).

Children's Out-of-School Literacies

We consider out-of-school literacies those productions children do by their own initiative without any teacher instruction. These literacies may take place at home or in school, just by following their interests. The intention, not the place where children perform their practices, is what matters. Generally, children develop their out-of-school literacies at home but they sometimes have free time to do their favorite activities in school, too. In certain occasions, children make some time during the classes to develop their personal interests instead of doing what teachers have assigned.

Children use a variety of multimodal texts. Children use multimodal texts such as video games, internet, TV programs, videos, songs, movies, books, and images, to name a few, to interpret the world. Children extract information from these sources trying to understand their near reality. We found out that children use different modes to express their own feelings and thoughts. Through the interviews and children's artifacts, we identified that they write stories, poems, songs, letters, diaries, plans for their future, descriptions, messages, secret notes and narrations of their own experiences. They also

draw, color, sing songs, do role-playings, make personal booklets and handcrafts, use gestures when talking, and assign meaning to colors and objects. In the following paragraphs, we will present examples of how children use the different modes of representation (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

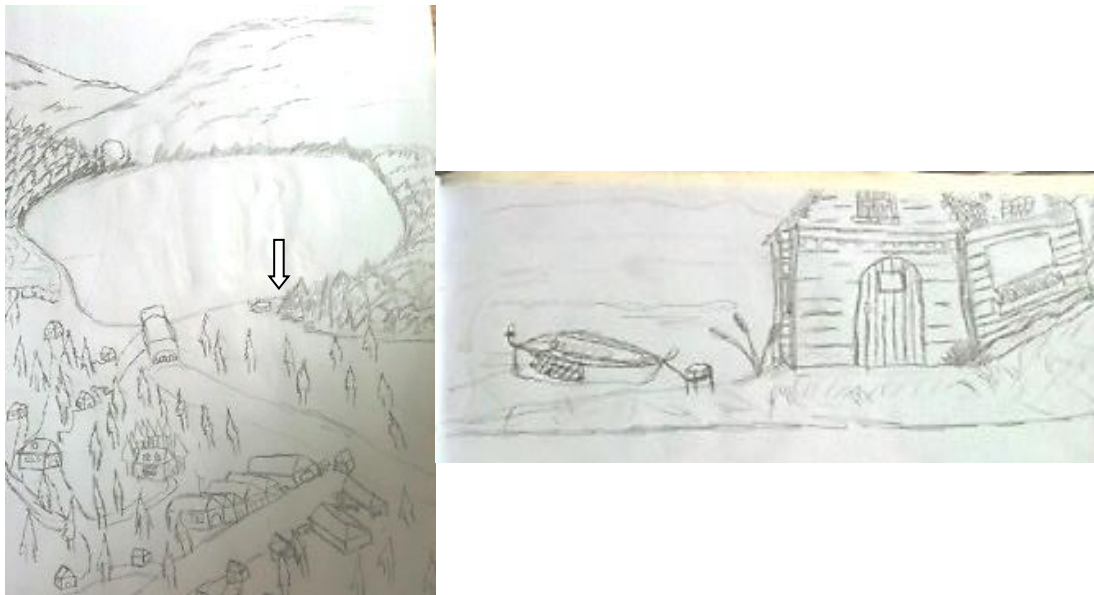


Figure 7. Sergio's spatial representation of one of his stories.

Sergio is able to use the spatial mode to show his ideas in the drawing of a landscape about one of his stories. He explained the context of the story by showing where the characters live and describing how the place is, "They live in this town that is surrounded by some mountains and their house is far, it is here; it is further from everything and here it is the house and here a room in the back" (Interview, 11/12/2014). He drew the entire landscape to locate the house in a territory and he also drew the house to show details (See figure 7).

Samuel is aware that through any mode of representation people can express their own interpretation of the world and express their ideas, “The others [...] can express themselves by means of drawings, words, movies, television, or any other means” (Interview, 11/12/2014). Indeed, he is capable to move between different modes of representation and make connections among the different pieces of information he gets from movies, books, digital comics, games, and the events he attends to construct the plot of the stories and the characters’ profiles. Similarly, Bianca likes to read the books from the movies she has watched (Bianca’s parents’ interview, 01/23/2015).

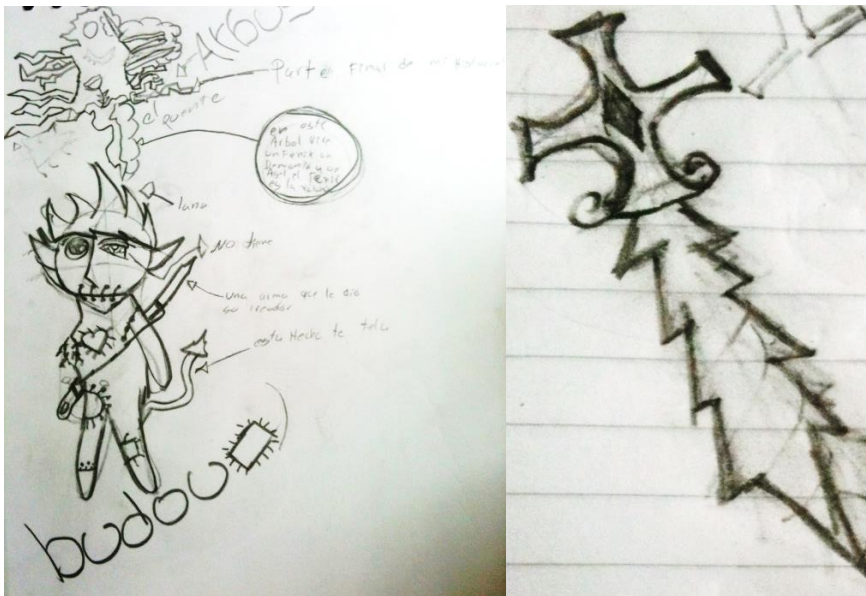


Figure 8. Sergio assigns meaning to colors and objects.

Children do visual representation of their ideas assigning meaning to colors and objects in their productions. Samuel and Sergio described some of the artifacts they brought to the interview. Samuel explained, “Blue means the panels; yellow is the sun’s reflection and red means the load and finally the cabins are orange, the gold and the

silver colors are the material [of the satellite]” (Interview, 11/12/2014). On the other side, Sergio pointed out, “The cross represents God and the crystal is black so it represents the darkness; so it was like the light and the darkness at the same time” (See figure 8). He also commented, “This is a tree [...] a part is the good and the other is the evil and there is a rose here to balance them, that keeps the good and the evil in balance” (Interview, 11/12/2014).

During the interviews, we noticed that children use gestures to complement their conversations. To illustrate this, we have Samuel’s case. He was talking about one of his favorite games and he used gestures to convey meaning about one of the scenes, “And he finally takes him this way”. Additionally, children spend some time making videos or building virtual worlds using some video games available on the internet (Santiago’s parents’ interview, 04/16/2015; Samuel’s interview, 11/12/2014).

Children express themselves through their literacies. Children find in their literacies the way to express their feelings and thoughts, reflect their values and connect their imaginary worlds with the reality. Children use pictures, stories and songs, among others to express their inner feelings, values, interests and thoughts. Sometimes when children are sad or angry, or when they have some trouble, they find in the expression of their ideas the way to avoid further problems. Samuel affirmed, “That [his literacies] helps me a lot to be serene and never fight” (Interview, 11/12/2014). Diana forgets about her problems and stops crying or being angry when writing stories (Interview, 01/21/2015). Carolina expresses her feelings when she writes her songs (See figure 9). She commented, “My songs [...] depend on the feeling [...] or in the mood I am”.

Similarly, Carolina finds in her theater lessons a way to calm down (Interview, 01/21/2015).

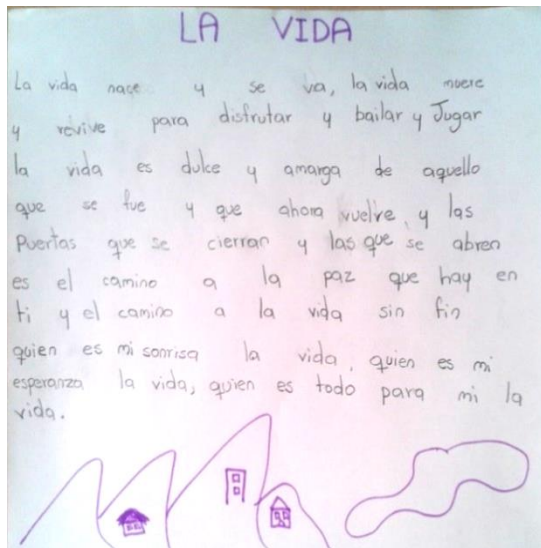


Figure 9. Carolina expresses her feelings of sadness in her song.

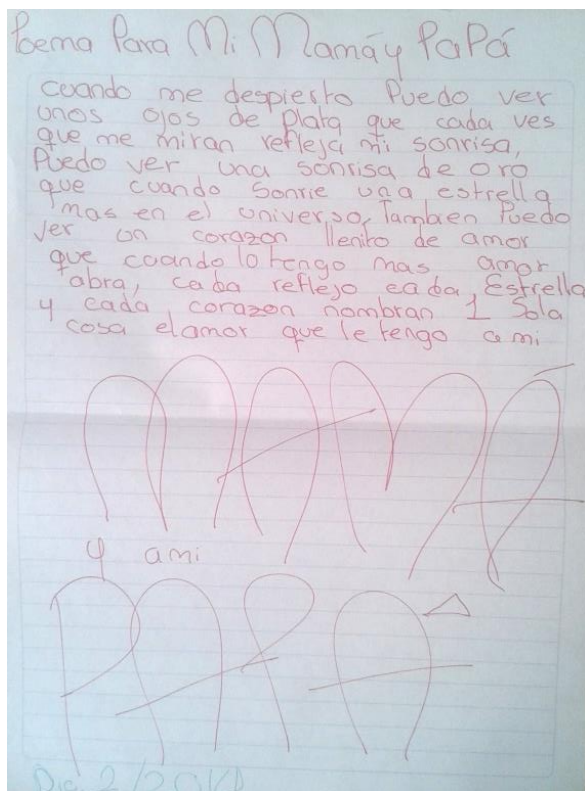


Figure 10. Elena's poem for her parents.

Samuel remarked, “When I release energy on a pencil and on doing traces, it is something special for me because I feel happiness. In the drawings I feel, I express my feelings, I feel that I express everything” (Interview, 11/12/2014). Santiago expresses his ideas and thoughts talking with others. These thoughts are his support for his way of acting (Interview, 11/10/2014). Elena finds in her letters the best way to express her gratitude and inner feelings to her family and friends (See figure 10). Differently to other children, she says that she is always happy when writing her poems and songs (Interview, 01/21/2015). In stories or drawings, children reflect on their characters their feelings or what they think. Samuel expressed, “What that dragon feels is what I am expressing inside me” (Interview, 11/12/2014). Similarly, Bianca’s characters do and feel as she does in her life (Interview, 01/21/2015) (See figure 11).

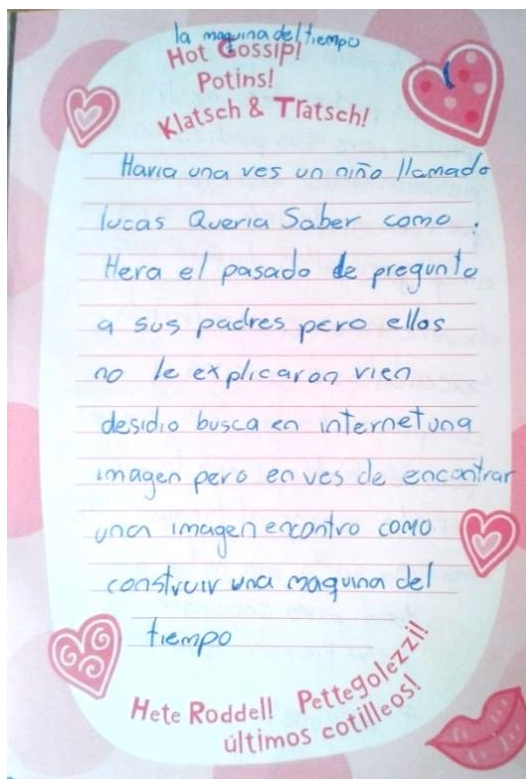


Figure 11. Bianca reflects in her characters what she thinks, lives, and feels.



Figure 12. Sergio's drawing about the destruction of a technological world.

Children create new alternatives for their reality and for what they interpret from the world; through their productions they express their willingness to change the world and express their inner feelings. For instance, Sergio thinks that technology is absorbing people, he sees his friends playing a lot with cellphones and tablets. He commented, "At this moment, technology takes the world away". So, in one of his pictures, he drew about a beast destroying a technological world (See figure 12). He also expressed, "I come out with crazy ideas about how I could improve the world to [...] give my tiny contribution someday" (Interview, 11/12/2014). When writing stories, Diana tries to change the world. She explains how her characters become better persons by watching others' attitudes. She reflects values such as friendship and solidarity in her stories (Interview, 01/21/2015) (See figure 13).

Había una vez un niño que es el príncipe que era muy travieso y tenía mucha creatividad. Una vez creó un sombrero de frutas, lo hizo con una piña, banana, pesa y una correa encima. En el palacio había una copa de helado del rey, ah, el niño se llamaba Juan. El príncipe se comió la copa de helado de su papa y se fue corriendo para que no lo descubrieran. Luego el rey, la reina, el niño y sus amigos del pueblo se fueron a jugar. Jugaron a jugar y jugar y jugar y se cansaron mucho pero tanto pero tanto que al otro día tenían que jugar algo tranquilo. Entonces juraron verdad o no y entonces le avisaron a decir a Juan el príncipe que le dijera al rey que él se comió el helado. Entonces le dijo pero no le contigas si no que lo abraso por decir la verdad el día.

Figure 13. Diana's story about telling the truth.

Children establish relationships between reality and the context they perceive in their literacies. For example, Samuel related what he sees in the movies with reality; he tells that Batman's house is like a building from where he studies. Through these imaginary contexts, he also makes understandings of the real world using comparisons and contrasting both spaces. He explained, "The human inside the machine [Robocop] makes the decision like the airplane captain who decides whether or not to take off". Likewise, Samuel mentioned words such as heritage, multinational enterprises, and

capital shares which he heard from the Batman and Ironman movies and he is able to introduce them properly in a conversation (Interview, 11/12/2014).

Children find similarities between what they find in their literacies with their real life. Sebastian compares a video game scene with a school test, “[in] the Clash of Clans game; you are getting a small village and you are preparing the troops; it is like studying for an evaluation”. He also makes a parallel between the troops on his video game with a group of students in a class (Interview, 11/10/2014). On the other hand, Samuel associates one of his favorite comics’ characters with one of his classmates; he also relates the field trips he watches in movies with the ones in school (Interview, 11/12/2014).

Different factors influence children’s literacies. Children receive influence and find inspiration to develop their literacies from different sources. Factors such as family and personal interests influence the development of children’s literacies (Burnett and Myers, 2002; Dyson, 1999; Kajee, 2011; Knobel, 2001). For example, Samuel affirmed, “On the one hand, I like comics a lot because that is a heritage from my father and on the other hand, cars also draw my attention a lot and that is a heritage from my mother’s brother, my uncle”. He remarked that his father is also a comics fan; so he supports him by downloading comic stories on the tablet, buying objects such as toys and notebooks, playing with him, and inviting him to special events (Interview, 11/12/2014).

Sebastian talks with his family about different topics. Then he finds information about what he got interested in and writes and draws about this theme (Interview, 11/10/2014). His parents provide him with story books; additionally, they loan books in English in the school library for him that later his older sister reads for him and his

younger brother (Interview, 04/17/2015). Similarly, Bianca's parents like her to read books; that is why, they take her to the bookstore to choose the books she prefers to read. They pointed out that it is important to know what she reads and guides her when it is necessary by getting material that is appropriate for her age and talking with her about the topics she is getting interested in (Interview, 01/23/2015). Likewise, Diana commented that her parents, family's friends and older cousins provide her with books. Her family and some family visitors get together to read aloud; she also receives influence from her older brother who likes to read a lot (Interview, 01/21/2015). Elena also receives books from her parents (Interview, 01/21/2015) and Samuel's parents suggest their son reading different genres of literature (Interview, 04/20/2015). Santiago's parents buy books and materials for him to read and write (Interview, 04/16/2015).

Children go deeper into their own interests through their literacies. Carolina's parents indicated that their daughter takes violin lessons what help her develop her own interests (Interview, 01/23/2015). Children also look for extra information about their favorite topics and it is easy for them to relate the different modes of representation. Sebastian likes to explore different topics investigating in books and drawing about them (Interview, 11/10/2014). His parents commented that he creates an imaginary world with play dough characters which he takes from the internet and he simulates conversations with these dolls (Interview, 04/17/2015). In the interview, He also showed us a map of his imaginary world (Interview, 11/10/2014) (See figure 14). On the other hand, he talks about what he learns in school with his brother or his stuffed animals when he is in his games.

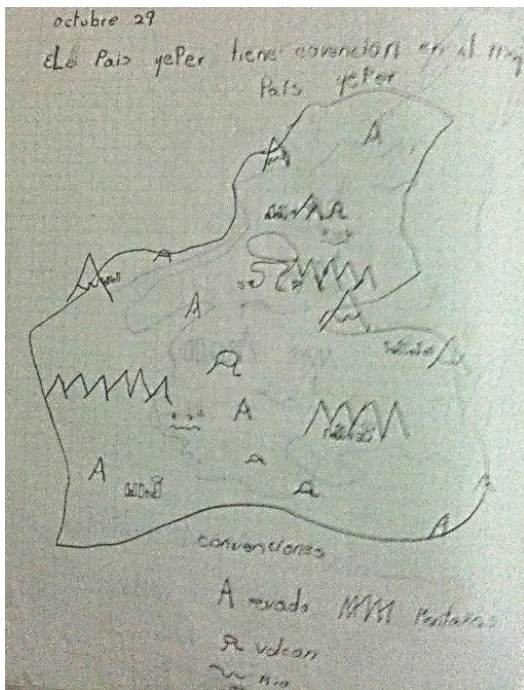


Figure 14. A map of Sebastian's imaginary world.

Some parents noticed that those interests can change as children grow older making their literacies change, too. For instance, Bianca's parents observed that when she was younger she was used to composing songs; but not any longer. Now, she is more focused on writing stories but she still continues developing her former literacy by belonging to the school choir (Interview, 01/23/2015). Santiago's parents affirmed that when their son was younger he felt that he was not good at drawing; so they decided to motivate him to improve his drawing skills buying books where he could practice and become better. Now, he likes drawing to the extent that he asked his parents to register him in drawing lessons

Children find in their own experiences and in their interests the inspiration for their productions. Santiago likes to write in his diary about his life project (Interview,

11/10/2014). Sebastian and Bianca write stories about their life experiences (Sebastian's interview, 11/10/2014; Bianca's interview, 01/21/2015) and Bianca even likes to go deeper in the topics she is interested in by asking her father. Carolina takes ideas to compose her songs from in- and out-of-school experiences (Interview, 01/21/2015). While Diana imagines her stories based on the subjects in school and from every experience she has (Interview, 01/21/2015). Sergio finds inspiration thinking about the beauty of the world and his beautiful memories (Interview, 11/12/2014).

Other people's literacies also influence children's literacies. When they see other children or even their parents doing something that is attractive for them, they tend to imitate those practices which they got interested in. For example, Sergio found in his friends' books about how to draw the ideas to make his own book of comics. He also feels eager to follow developing his literacies when he sees books at the bookstores, he dreams to have his creations in the shop windows one day (Interview, 11/12/2014). In the interview, Sergio, Bianca, and Diana told us they find inspiration for their stories from the books they read.

Children feel comfortable developing their own literacies. Children feel successful and proud of using their literacies to the extent that some of them become experts in the topics they are interested in. Even though, they feel successful with their literacies they do not share them with many people. For most of them, their literacies have a high level of privacy and they choose special places to develop them, a place where they feel free to express their ideas and feelings.

Samuel feels he is an expert when talking about comics. Indeed, he is able to move from one mode to another to look for information about his favorite comics

(written comics, games, movies, and events) finding similarities and differences among them. He also perceives that he can do things that others do not handle or understand. He showed us the drawing of a building telling that not even his parents could design it as he did (Interview, 11/12/2014) (See figure 15). Bianca feels successful because her stories meet others' approval, "Because I feel that I did it very well since everybody says, 'So nice!'" (Interview, 01/21/2015). Furthermore, some children like to have their own materials to collect their productions (Biancas' interview, 01/21/2015; Sebastian's interview, 11/10/2014, Santiago's parents' interview, 04/16/2015; Diana's interview, 01/21/2015); in some cases, they even create folders that become a portfolio for keeping their creations (Sergio's interview, 11/12/2014).

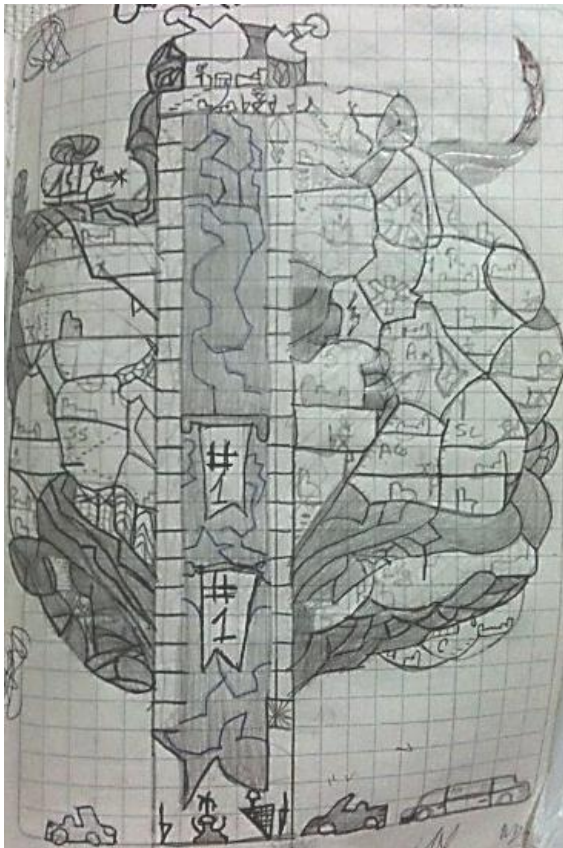


Figure 15. Samuel's production. A building.

Children keep their literacies for themselves or their closer people. Sebastian affirmed, “I even hide them [the stories about his personal experiences]”. He feels afraid of what others can say about him because he expresses his feelings in his writings (Interview, 11/10/2014). While Bianca shares her creations only with her best friend and family members (Interview, 01/21/2015). She also has a secret diary which she partially shared once with her parents (Bianca’s parents’ interview, 01/21/2015). Elena also shows her poems only to her parents (Interview, 01/21/2015). Diana only likes to read her stories aloud to her family and family friends because she feels valued (Interview, 01/21/2015). Indeed, children brought few literacy events to the interviews; they mentioned many of their creations but they just selected what they wanted to show us. Besides, most of their literacies were even invisible for us before we started inquiring our students about their literacy practices and selecting the possible participants for our research.

Children carry out their literacies in places where they feel comfortable and free to express themselves, specially their bedroom, where they have their own materials. Samuel affirmed, “There, [in his bedroom] I feel better and [...] I feel that I am unplugged from the world and that there only exist the colors, the drawings and me” (Interview, 11/12/2014). To the same extent, Santiago commented, “I lay down on my bed to think [...] about what it is going to happen afterwards, so I feel that I have to express it in any way and that way could be writing” (Interview, 11/10/2014). On the other hand, Sebastian’s parents told us that their son prefers playing with his brother in their parents’ bedroom (Interview, 04/17/2015).

Connection between Children's in- and out-of-School Literacies

Most of the children find an evident relationship between their in- and out-of-school literacies and they provided a variety of examples when we asked them. For others that relation is not visible but it is implicit in their discourses. In this section, we will describe how children use school topics, activities and experiences in other contexts and how they use their out-of-school literacies to complement school work.

Children make reference to school topics in out-of-school contexts. Sebastian repeats in his games with his younger brother what he learns and observes in school. He and his brother make believe they are teachers, and their stuffed animals are the students; they keep track of their behavior and work and they also think of reinforcement activities for their stuffed animals to improve (Sebastian's parents' interview, 04/17/2015). In the same way, Bianca uses what she learns in her classes to role-play at home (Bianca's parents' interview, 01/23/2015).

Elena is always making parallels between what she learns in different classes and her daily life. Her parents mentioned some situations where she intertwines both contexts, "Look what we practiced in Spanish class [...] look I do write it that way"; and "When she is playing with her dolls, she speaks to them in English all the time". They added that her classes also help her develop a critic perspective of what it means to be a good employee, "Look a client arrived and she did not react. Dad, you told her to keep her cellphone and look she has it out" (Interview, 01/23/2015).

Diana is always making connections between her in- and out-of-school literacies. She relates what she learns from different subjects to her imaginary stories, "I mixed what I learned in Math and Science [...], a butterfly asking a person for help to clean

that [pollution]" (Interview, 01/21/2015). Sergio thinks about the classes in his free time trying to give solution to those problematic situations that are discussed in school (Interview, 11/12/2014).

Santiago's parents narrated how their son is always talking about school topics with them, "He is always looking how to relate, to make connections with a subject or with something he has worked on his subjects" (Interview, 04/16/2015). Similarly, Bianca is always relating what she learns in school with her daily life. She asks her parents questions to go deeper into the school contents and she practices what she learns in school in every moment. For instance, when she learned about the space, she looked at it using her smartphone (Bianca's parents' interview, 01/23/2015).

Along the interviews, English as a second language teachers commented how their students connect what they learn in school with out-of-school activities. Students feel motivated to practice what they learn in their English classes doing different activities like reading books, watching movies, playing video games and chatting in this language. For instance, students get interested in learning English when they recognize it as a useful tool to understand their favorite songs or video games (Camila's interview, 02/20/2015; Catalina's interview, 02/13/2015). On the other hand, when children have the opportunity to interact with a person who comes from abroad or when they travel abroad; they feel motivated to use what they learn in their English classes in real contexts (Camila's interview, 02/20/2015; Catalina's interview, 02/13/2015; David's interview, 03/24/2015). Children also like to teach English to their parents to motivate them to learn the language (Camila's interview, 02/20/2015; David's interview, 03/24/2015). Moreover, some students like to assign names in English to the characters

they draw in their free time (David's interview, 03/24/2015). Sometimes, they want to go beyond their English classes and ask their parents to register them in extracurricular courses (Catalina's interview, 02/13/2015).

In-school literacies enrich children's out-of-school literacies. Children use what they learn and live in school to enhance their out-of-school literacies. Bianca finds in the topics she learns at school the inspiration to write her own stories, she intertwines real facts with imaginary worlds to enrich her creations (Interview, 01/21/2015).

Carolina finds inspiration for her songs in the topics she practices in her Science class. She also tries to compose songs in English and French, which are classes in her school (Interview, 01/21/2015). Likewise, Elena feels that what she learns in her English and Spanish classes is useful when she writes letters and stories and she also practices English when she plays with her dolls (Interview, 01/21/2015). Diana likes to speak and sing in English in family celebrations (Diana's parents' interview, 01/23/2015). On the other hand, Santiago emphasized that his arts class helps him improve his own drawings (Interview, 11/10/2014).

Some of the topics worked in school are also appealing for children so they decide to go deeper in them in their free time enriching their out-of-school literacies. For instance, children search the internet as a way to improve in their classes and go deeper in the school topics (Sergio's interview, 11/12/2014, Elena's interview, 01/21/2015). Besides, Sebastian's parents explained that their son also explores the internet to look for the lyrics of songs in English; they consider this as a helpful tool to improve his performance in this subject in school (Interview, 04/17/2015). Santiago puts into

practice what he learns in his Technology class by doing videos at home and uploading them to the web (Santiago's parents' interview, 04/20/2015).

Children use their out-of-school literacies to accomplish their school work.

Children spend their free time developing activities where they convey meaning about the world or express their feelings and thoughts. Sometimes, they introduce ideas from their own interests in their academic work. For instance, Samuel uses his comics and ideas from TV programs to write and illustrate stories assigned in different classes (Interview, 11/12/2014). He is also able to interpret images because of his interest in comics; this sensibility for arts is also useful when he is trying to understand a text with images regardless of the language (Samuel's parents' interview, 04/20/2015). Similarly, Sergio uses his drawings based on anime stories from TV to accomplish with his arts class when the teacher asks him to do free drawings (Interview, 11/12/2014). Carolina likes to look for information in songs and videos that supports her homework, "The songs bring information that can help do homework" (Interview, 01/21/2015). As Bianca's favorite way of expression is writing tales, she finds a direct relationship between her in- and out-of-school literacies; she uses tales that she has already written to accomplish with Spanish assignments (Interview, 01/21/2015).

Parents' and Teachers' Perceptions about Children's Literacies

Along the interviews with parents and teachers, we found some of their perceptions around the children's literacies; which in most of the cases match with what the children expressed; in other words they supported children's ideas.

Parents' perceptions about children's literacies. Parents observe school work as a children's priority perceiving that their children are responsible and independent to go further in their assignments. Sebastian, Bianca and Carolina have good attitude toward school; that is why, they always take the initiative to do homework. They are also independent and responsible with their in-school literacies which are an important part of their lives (Bianca's parents' interview, 01/23/2015; Carolina's parents' interview, 01/23/2015; Sebastian's parents' interview, 04/17/2015).

Parents also demonstrated that they admire their children's ways of expression. In Bianca's case, her parents expressed that they value their daughter's interest in reading. According to them, this is not a common characteristic of children at that age. Besides, her relatives admire her capability to express her feelings (Interview, 01/23/2015). While Carolina's parents admire their daughter's talent to compose songs (Interview, 01/23/2015).

Parents perceive that there is continuity between both contexts (Bianca's parents' interview, 01/23/2015; Carolina's parents' interview, 01/23/2015). Children use interchangeably what they learn in school and home regardless of where they are. For example, Elena's parents mentioned, "She is always relating what she works in school with her daily life" (Interview, 01/23/2015). Bianca's parents commented, "She has a lot of personal interests that come from school and she takes them to her daily life". Their daughter uses what she learns in school to role-play at home (Interview, 01/23/2015). Parents also perceive that internet is a good tool that complements school work and that helps their children go deeper in the interests. Sebastian's parents consider that their son

finds in the internet a good helper in his translations, besides he likes to find music in English which is one of his interests (Interview, 04/17/2015).

Not only academic topics but also school life is connected with children's out-school literacies. Samuel's parents described how he uses what he learns in school about how to deal with conflicts to solve her little sister's troubles with their parents. They also observed that their son is very organized, for example, he likes to keep order in his activities, his schedule and even in his personal presentation at home and he reflects this at school by organizing his classmates during teamwork (Interview, 04/20/2015).

Elena's parents remarked that the values their daughter acquires at home help her in her school life (Interview, 01/23/2015). Carolina's parents highlighted that the interaction she has with her classmates in school helps her have good relationships in her daily life. They told us that what their daughter learns out-of-school helps her gain confidence what makes her be successful in school and also the other way around. Similarly, her in-school literacies help her face life (Interview, 01/23/2015).

Teachers' perceptions about children's literacies. During the interview, we asked teachers about the different ways of expression of their students. Clara observed her students keeping diaries where they narrate what they do in different contexts; some other write poems or draw cartoons and keep them in a notebook. Moreover, some of her students like to read and tell her about those books (Interview, 02/20/2015). Melissa thinks that students who like reading books increase their vocabulary and imagination which enrich their own productions; she suggests that the family should promote this routine by giving books to their children (Interview, 03/25/2015).

Carmenza evidenced that her children also participate in different role plays, “They love to a certain extent everything that is related to these games [role-playing]. They [the games] are always indicating a role or an interest in something they read or watch on TV”. She recognized role-playing as another way of children’s expression. She has also noticed that some students visit the library to participate in the different projects in the breaks (Interview, 02/13/2015). Students like arts projects, such as drawings, handcrafts, ballet or music (Melissa’s interview, 03/25/2015; Javier’s interview, 03/27/2015). Carmenza remarked, “I think they [the drawings] are very interesting because they are not only graphics, there is a production that if you want to interpret it, it could be as clear as the written one” (Interview, 02/13/2015).

Some teachers have observed children like to interact in the social networks using the English they learn in school (Camila’s interview, 02/20/2015; Catalina’s interview, 02/13/2015). Catalina expressed that her students practice English through games, apps, conversations among them, and videos. Clara recognizes that technology helps students develop their literacies but they should be careful in the information they select and they should not rely totally on the grammar and spelling revision that the word processor software does (Interview, 02/20/2015).

Teachers mentioned that additionally to activities proposed in classes, students get interested in other things. Students focus their attention on doing drawings, graphics, stories, origami, tracing, playing with their toys, playdough or stickers and talking (Carmenza’s interview, 02/13/2015; Catalina’s interview, 02/13/2015; Clara’s interview, 02/20/2015; Melissa’s interview, 03/25/2015). Similarly, David and Javier recognize that their students find different ways to get away from what the teacher is doing during

the lesson; they send secret messages or letters to each other, color in their notebooks or books or they even continue doing activities from other subjects (David's interview, 03/24/2015; Javier's interview, 03/27/2015).

David perceives that students get distracted because of their age and that they like doing many things at the same time since they are accustomed to doing it. So, in the classroom they frequently get involved in activities not assigned by the teacher. He thinks that if a teacher is skillful enough he can use this as a teaching opportunity (Interview, 03/24/2015). Moreover, Carmenza remarked, "Now, we are working more with topics that are closer to them [students]". Sometimes they have disruptive conversations which become part of the class because they get interested in the topics proposed and begin discussing about them (Interview, 02/13/2015). Javier affirmed that it is important for students to have the opportunity to express their ideas around the topics they bring to class (Interview, 03/27/2015).

Answering the Research Question: Characteristics of Children's Personal Literacies

We were searching the characteristics of children's personal literacies. Similarly to some authors (Burnett & Myers, 2002; Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003), we also found that children have different purposes when they use those literacies. In this section, we will summarize the participants' ideas that helped us answer our research question.

Children's purposes for using their literacies. Along the interviews, all the participants gave us insights to understand children's literacy practices. They provided

us with ideas from different perspectives which made us recognize that children use their literacies not only for academic but also for personal issues. We noticed that children use their literacies for expressing their feelings and thoughts, for interacting with others, for reflecting their values and their desires to change the world, for learning, and for exploring their interests.

Characteristics of children's personal literacies. Based on the interviews and the artifacts, we observed that children's literacy practices share the following characteristics: People who are close to children influence their literacy practices; children's experiences and interests inspire them to make their productions; children's practices have different levels of privacy; children's productions include different modes of representation; age and new experiences make children's literacy practices change; and children use interchangeably the resources from their in- and out-of-school literacies.

We will analyze deeply the answers in the following chapter. There, we will connect these findings with the data we collected and later with the previous studies made in the field which we already summarized in the literature review.

Chapter 5

Completing the Puzzle: Discussion, Implications, and Future Directions

This chapter shows the connection between the literature review and the data analysis. First, we discuss how our findings helped us answer our research question. Then, we explain the relationship between our research and the previous studies about literacy. After that, we present some implications, limitations and suggestions for future studies in the field of education. At the end of the chapter, we share what we learned and how this exploration became a rewarding experience for us.

Our Findings Answer Our Research Question

In our study, the main objective for the data collection was to know about children's literacies from the perspectives of children themselves, their parents and their teachers in order to find out the characteristics of children's personal literacies. They gave us many insights to answer the question; but, additionally, children shared many ideas about their conceptions of literacy with us which we were not looking for. We also found that children use their literacies for different purposes and that those literacies share common characteristics.

Children's conceptions of literacy. We unintentionally found ideas that gave us light to recognize that children also have their own points of view about what literacy means, as a way to validate their voices, we want to reveal their reflections and include them in the discussion as an unexpected outcome. Samuel recognizes that there are different types of text with different characteristics. He said, "Comics are something that

you express by means of drawings because writing is not important here” (Interview, 11/12/2014). According to him, the drawings in comics express ideas, writing is additional to drawing without having the same importance and it is not necessary to convey meaning. Besides, Carolina expressed, “Writing is drawing” and she also added, “Reading is not just taking a book and read. Reading is whatever you read. Sometimes I go down the street and I like to compete with the person who is with me, and see who first finishes reading a word” (Interview, 01/21/2015). Similarly, Diana commented, “Science is like a drawing” (Interview, 01/21/2015). For these children, it is clearly that they can read images and different kinds of texts (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

Elena thinks that there are different ways to learn, “The books teach, the readers teach us something in school and the books also teach us at home, and so does what we write” (Interview, 01/21/2015). On the other hand, Sebastian realizes that his personal interests are also part of his literacy pointing out, “[writing is] using the pencil and the paper; [I write] what someone dictates to me [...] or what [...] I am interested in” (Interview, 11/10/2014). In addition to reading and writing, talking is also an important part of literacy and Santiago recognized that he better expresses his feelings and ideas when he is talking with others (Interview, 11/10/2014). All these statements were surprising for us because we could realize that children also have their own perceptions about literacy processes.

Purposes for children’s literacies. In the following lines, we will describe how children use their personal literacies for different purposes; highlighting that their literacies are related not only with academic matters but also with personal interests.

Children use their literacies not only as a way of expression but also as a means to explore different topics.

To express their feelings and thoughts. Children find in their literacies the way to express their inner feelings and thoughts. Along the interviews, the participants mentioned that children write, sing, draw, or talk to express themselves. As a matter of fact, some of the characters of their stories reflect what they feel or think (Bianca, Samuel and Santiago). Diana, Samuel and Carolina said that according to their mood they feel more or less motivated to use their literacies.

To interact with others. Children find in their personal literacies different ways to interact with those who are around them. The participants recognized interaction as an important purpose for children's literacies. Indeed, teachers mentioned how their students try to interact with each other in the middle of a lesson. Carolina and her parents give importance to this aspect in the girl's life telling that is something she learns in school and she can transfer to her personal life. Elena's favorite way of expression is writing letters where she demonstrates her feelings to her parents.

To show their values and their desire to change the world. Children use their personal literacies to express those values acquired at home or at school with the objective to give morals and show their intentions to have a better world. Diana showed us a story where the main character changed bad attitudes and became generous. Additionally, Sergio described a drawing where he wanted to destroy the technology that is absorbing his classmates. In their literacies, children express their willingness to transform the world.

To learn about different topics and the world. When children use their personal literacies, they learn about the world. Parents also mentioned that through several means their children learn about different topics, they investigate and go deeper not only in their own interests but also in the themes that call their attention in classes. Teachers look for appealing topics and contextualize every theme to make them closer and meaningful for the students. To a certain extent, teachers apply some dimensions of the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Both teachers and parents recognize that the internet is a good tool for children to learn remarking that children should be critical towards the information and parents should be attentive to the appropriateness of contents.

To explore their own interests. Children take time to go through their interests. Some of them even become experts on what they like. Samuel told us that he is the only one who can do some things; that not even his parents can do as he does them. Bianca's parents commented that some school topics or activities become her personal interest. Children and parents told us that children spend their free time developing the literacies where they feel comfortable. Participants frequently mentioned that children like to talk, write, draw, sing, read, and make handcrafts.

Characteristics of children's literacies. Now, we will answer our research question based on the participants' contribution during the data collection. We recognized the following characteristics of the children's personal literacies.

Children's literacies are influenced by others. Parents have a large influence on children's literacies. Most of the parents mentioned that they get books for their children. Bianca's parents suggested that it is important to be aware of what children

read and get materials that are appropriate for their age. In the interview, parents also mentioned that they provided their children with whatever they need to make handcrafts or to develop other interests. Children commented that they like to replicate what others do. Their friends also have some influence on their literacies.

Parents mentioned that the readers from school are a tool to promote reading habits, specially when children do not do it by their own initiative. They feel that they must promote activities where their children improve in their academic life. For instance, Sebastian's parents like to encourage him to practice in advance for his classes.

Children find inspiration from their experiences and interests. Children find the ideas to make new productions in their own lives. Most of the children expand what they live in the reality in their literacies. From school experiences, Carolina and Diana take ideas to write their stories and songs. Bianca, Sergio and Santiago like to write about their life. In Bianca's case, she includes herself in her stories, but she assigns the character a different name and introduces imaginary elements to enrich her literacies. Bianca's parents and Santiago reported the use of diaries.

Children have private and public productions. The most relevant observation here is that children brought few literacy events to the interview. They decided on what they wanted to show us. Bianca's parents told us how their daughter keeps her diary in secret; and she commented that she only shares what she writes with her parents and her best friend. Santiago's parents informed us that their son uploads his videos to the web. In the schools, we did not find any evidence that children who participated in our study share their personal productions with their classmates. They are not visible at school, nor

students or teachers take the time to make them public because of the multiplicity of activities both are involved during the school day.

Children move easily from one mode to another to construct their text. During the class observations and interviews, we observed that children move through different modes; talking, listening, writing and reading to construct their text. For instance during the interviews with Samuel and his parents, they explained that he takes information about comics from different sources in order to organize his ideas. Bianca's parents commented that their daughter like to connect information from the movies with the books in which they are based on. In the class observations, teachers took advantage of this characteristic of children's literacies to enrich their classes. To illustrate this, we noticed that David worked with a written story from the textbook to involve students in collaboratively talking, listening to other's ideas, interpreting images, suggesting solutions and completing sentences (Walsh, 2010).

Children's literacies change as they grow. Children change their interests and learn new things as they grow up. In Bianca's and Santiago's parents' interviews, they recognized that children's literacies change with the age. When Bianca was younger, she composed songs; now she prefers writing stories. Similarly, Santiago felt that he was not good at drawing but with practice he became a better drawer to the extent that he wants to be in extracurricular courses.

Children intertwine their in- and out-of-school literacies in a seemingly random way. In the parents' interview, we found out that they observe their children have a continuum in their literacies. For example, Sebastian replicates what he lives and learns in the school in his games with his younger brother and his toys. Elena talks to her

dolls in English. Bianca applies what she learns about business in her games and involves the whole family. In the children's interviews, they mentioned different situations where they intertwine their literacies. Bianca uses her own previous stories to accomplish Spanish assignments and it is easy for Samuel to get ideas from his comics and TV programs to write stories for Ethics homework.

Our Findings Challenge and Expand the Existing Literature

During the literature review, we read Burnett & Myers (2002) and Chandler-Olcott & Mahar (2003). We found out that our objectives are similar to the ones they had for their studies. The first researchers characterized the purposes of children's literacies from the children's position finding that they use their literacies for social interaction, learning, identity, pleasure and organization; suggesting that teachers should know about these practices. On the other hand, the second ones characterized adolescents' literacies realizing that their literacies help them interact with others, have fun and develop imagination. These authors recommended that teachers should be aware of those literacies to make the school "more meaningful and engaging". The previous researchers validated participants' voices by including their points of view. In our case, we expanded their studies since we included not only children's points of view but also the perspectives of the people who are close of their literacies (parents and teachers). They gave us more insights about children's personal literacies that helped us characterize children's practices.

These studies were conducted in the previous decade what implies that there has been an evolution in the principles of education what have made the schools'

methodologies change since those days until now. This has been evident in the recent years because of the increasing development of new information and communication technologies that have brought new texts designs which include not only words and pictures but also sound and moving images that also allow interactions. Mills (2006) emphasized the importance of implementing a pedagogy that responds to the new students' needs. What some of the research studies suggested as implications in their time are requirements for teachers in our schools today. Along the interviews, we found that teachers already take into account children's literacies in their teaching practices. For instance, Carmenza said that the school is closer to students' life. She recognizes the connection between students' literacies and school (Interview, 02/13/2015). The other teachers also notice the importance of connecting children's reality with the school literacies.

According to what we read, the studies carried out in Australia sought to analyze how teachers implement the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies in their schools because it was an educational policy there (Kitson et al, 2007; Mills, 2006; Walsh, 2010). In our context, this theory is not widely extended; the teachers who participated in our research have not knowledge of it. Nevertheless, they are implementing to some extent the principles of this pedagogy without being aware of this. Teachers realize the importance of contextualizing topics, analyzing the reality, including children's personal points of view, and applying in creative ways what they learn in school; what make the theory of Multiliteracies a reality in our schools. In one of the schools, this connection is more evident because its methodology is more related to the principles of this pedagogy.

Walsh (2010) suggested that learning will be more meaningful when there is a link between literacy activities, modes and text. In our research, we found out that teachers not only present the topics through a variety of text designs but also allow their students to construct understanding and show comprehension through different ways of expression. In the class observations, we realized that teachers used different modes to develop their lessons; children participated in listening and talking activities where they worked collaboratively to convey meaning and clarify their doubts. This was the starting point for reading and writing activities where they included different text designs; in which sometimes students came back to listening and talking; in other cases this was in the other way around, starting with reading to writing or talking.

Some of the studies had as their population immigrant students in the United States or Australia what led them find a discontinuity between in- and out-of-school contexts (Kajee, 2011; Li, 2007). On the other side, Pahl (2007) found a connection between home and school contexts among preschoolers in England. She suggested that teachers can explore children's literacies and make these connections. Similarly, McCarthy (1997) advised that teachers should know about students' lives to find activities leading to make these connections. In our case, we realized that our study expands Pahl's and McCarthy's research; our children move between both contexts without making any distinction in the use of their literacies. Indeed, they intertwine those literacies to enrich them. In the class observations and in the teachers' interviews, we also realized that teachers make the contents closer to students by contextualizing them and allowing students to express their opinions about the topics.

Implications

This research has generated different kinds of reflections around children's personal literacies what request that different segments from the education field dedicate some time to put them into practice. It is important to make children's literacy characteristics and purposes visible for parents and teachers in order to continue changing the paradigms that are the foundation of the teaching practices. We will present some implications around children's literacies.

For teachers. The increasing changes in the information and communication technologies have given everybody access to a wide range of information and a plurality of ways of interaction with others. Teachers' task is to transform their classes in spaces where students acquire the tools they need to deal with the new demands. They also need to guide students to be critical by choosing the chunk of information that is useful and appropriate for them. Teachers should give students the opportunity to learn from the experiences, construct their own knowledge, analyze from different perspectives and apply what they learn in creative ways. In other words, teachers should apply to some extent the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies.

It is important to go beyond those literacies students develop in class, that are not part of it and the teacher does not assign. Having knowledge of what students secretly do during class can give teachers some insights about students' personal interests and abilities which teacher can take into account to make their classes more meaningful for them.

Students understand topics easily when teachers present them in a diversity of ways, this is what Cope and Kalantzis (2009) called synaesthesia. Teachers should not

only include different modes to present information to keep students' interest but also give them the opportunity to show their understanding from different ways allowing them to select the mode in which they feel more comfortable to express their ideas. Similarly, students bring to school their personal literacies which are frequently not visible for teachers. Taking into account those literacies gives teachers ideas on how to increase students' engagement with school. A good way to recognize children's literacies is to create research groups with them.

Teachers should validate children's voices and help them connect their in- and out-of-school worlds to make not only the learning process more meaningful but also the assessment process more engaging and inclusive for students. Bringing their personal literacies and using a variety of multimodal texts as part of the process is a way to enhance children's learning experiences.

For schools. Schools should equip classrooms with all the material and technological devices that help teachers use the new text designs in order to carry out better learning and teaching processes. It is important to remark that the merely use of devices or technology is not what allows improving the process. Schools should also consider the implementation of the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies in order to have better learning processes that lead students to develop critical positions toward their surroundings. To implement these new strategies schools need to have training datelines in order to set the goals they want to achieve with their students.

For faculties of education. Faculties of education are responsible of designing curricula that help pre-service teachers get not only the bases of the subject matter but also the pedagogy of the specific discipline. Literacy is one of those subjects that should

be in the plan. It should include the conception of literacy as a social practice and the new proposals to tackle it. This is the only way to have an extended knowledge of these theories that have been away from our context.

For educational policies. The Colombian Ministry of Education should consider the implementation of the theory of the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies in order to strengthen the existing policies regarding the understanding and production of different kinds of texts and the development of competences already stated in the national policies of education. Furthermore, what we consider important is that regardless of the methodology or approach the Ministry decides to implement in the schools, the policies should be socialized with the whole educative community.

Limitations

Access to participants. We preselected some students but their parents did not agree on their participation, so we had to spend more time looking for other participants. During the process, one boy who had his parents' informed consent letter signed did not want to continue in the process because he did not want us to interview his parents. Time was also a constraint that is why we decided on a small population sample.

Collecting data. We had technical problems with the record of one of the children's interview, the audio was broken. Also, one of the participant teachers renounced her employment and we could not finish her part (interview missed). We omitted all data related with these two participants. Another issue was related with the collection of the students' artifacts; they brought few artifacts to the interviews. One

family did not attend the interview after sending two appointments; however, their child continued in the process and we took into consideration his interview and artifacts.

Literature about children's literacies. We spent a lot of time looking for studies focused on children's literacies, Multiliteracies and multimodality. We just found a few that were relevant for our study. A wide sample of this literature made reference to immigrant children; we only considered some of them for revision. It is important to highlight that we encountered few literature in Latin America but they were not congruent with the objectives of our study.

Suggestions for Future Research

We explored children's personal literacies in the context of Elementary school from different perspectives; children, parents and teachers. The theories of Multiliteracies and multimodality gave us light to analyze the data collected from the interviews, the class observations and the children's artifacts. Nevertheless, it is important to continue going deeper in the issue of children's personal literacies. We had few participants who were nine to eleven years old and the time devoted to the collection and analysis of data was also a constraint. We suggest further research on the characterization of personal literacies at different ages. Additionally, we propose studies with children or older people who have sensory (visual, hearing), cognitive or motor limitations on how multimodal texts would enhance their learning process.

What Did this Study Mean to us?

When I started this stage of my life, I was eager to know what was behind that appealing name of Master of Arts in Learning and Teaching Processes of Second Languages. The new issues started appearing since the very first classes and I learned many lessons. At this moment, I will just describe those that marked my academic and professional life and also those ones that questioned me about my teaching practices.

In the academic field, literacy was the concept that most called my attention. This concept has received many wrong translations but what it is clear is that it really exists and it is not just developing reading and writing skills that was the only definition I knew before I started the master program. After doing our study, I can say that I am observing my students' personal literacies from a different perspective; one where they can express their feelings, thoughts and opinions using a variety of modes. I realized that multimodal texts and the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies have been always present in my classes to a certain extent. But now that I know more about them and that I know that students can take advantage of them, it is necessary to start thinking how these two concepts can continue enriching my teaching practices.

I also learned more about research. I think that it is important to go beyond my students' work and analyze the situations from different positions. Along these two years of doing this study, many ideas came to my mind about doing research at school. One of them is the importance of devoting more time to go deeper into what my students produce in the different subjects because this could give me more insights for my classes. This could also be the opportunity for students to emphasize on what they really are interested in.

Student's voices enriched this study. In the interviews with them, I felt astonished listening to the explanations they gave me. They really felt that they knew about the topic and this was meaningful for them. This activity made me get interested in having an experimental research group with the students, working with them as researchers and going deeper into their personal literacies (drawing, video games, role-playing among others).

Similarly, I learned from others' voices. It was awesome for me to listen to teachers and parents talking about children's personal literacies. I recognized that it is necessary to know about my students' interests outside the classrooms. If teachers try to find out about the reality they face, the curriculum could be more appealing for them what could be reflected in better academic performances.

Nowadays, inclusion is an important part of the school agendas; including children's personal literacies in the assessment process could be a chance to cope with it and to be fair with students. Bringing their personal literacies as part of the process is also a way to validate their voices.

This stage is coming to its end and it let me not only many learnings for my life but also the enthusiasm to continue exploring what is beyond literacy. I reflected about the importance of having research as a teaching practice what could be the starting point for a new path in my teaching life.

Claudia Cañas Mejía

When I undertook this two-year journey, I was not aware of the demanding tasks I would have to tackle and the wonderful changes that were waiting for me. As a

teacher, I gained understandings that helped me realize the importance of my role in my students' life. As a woman, God presented me with the biggest gift I could receive, Paulina, my lovely baby. I wanted to dedicate myself to the new being that came to my life but it was also necessary to devote time to my professional development. However, I got enlightenments that deeply modified the way I see education processes and that made this trip an arduous but extraordinary experience.

Along this process, I challenged my teaching beliefs and practices. Now I have a different perspective of what it takes to be a teacher. When I began this master's program, I had a narrow view of the concept of literacy. I just related it with the traditional processes of reading and writing. As an English as a second language teacher, I was concerned about children's spelling and pronunciation. I used to work with phonics and how to connect the speech with the written form. Now, I recognize that knowing about the world, analyzing from different points of view and applying learnings in appropriate and creative ways is more relevant.

I have always started my lessons asking my students about their experiences and I have taken into account their interests and ways of expressions. However, it is not enough to use multimodal texts and embrace students' background; it is necessary to go beyond. The Pedagogy of Multiliteracies will help me improve my classes. I will invite my students to be more critical in the exploration of the topics guiding them to look for creative ways to apply their knowledge and connect what they learn in school with their lives.

I have also questioned students' evaluation processes, specially these days that I am also finishing the school year and there are many decisions to make. What is worthy

to be evaluated? How do our decisions as teachers affect students' life? How can we be fair with our students? How can we take into account their voices in this process? How can children, parents and teachers get involved in the process?

This part of my life is ending. I know that all I have learned in these two years will influence the way I will guide my little girl and my students. Now, I have more questions than answers but I have an entire life to answer those unsolved questions that remain in my mind.

Angela Patricia Ocampo Castro

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Letters

We used three different models of the informed consent letters modified according to the specific need. The changes in some parts of the letter depend on the participants and the data we wanted to collect.

Informed Consent Letter for School's Principals

Título y Nombre del/ de la Rector/a
Rector/a
Institución

Estimado/a Rector/a:

Cordial saludo,

Nosotras, **Claudia Cañas Mejía y Ángela Patricia Ocampo Castro**, somos estudiantes de la Maestría en Procesos de Aprendizaje y Enseñanza de Segundas Lenguas de la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana. Uno de los requerimientos para aspirar al título de magíster es el desarrollo de un proyecto de investigación como parte de nuestro trabajo de grado (tesis). Para dicho trabajo, hemos propuesto la investigación “An exploration of children’s personal literacies”, cuyo objetivo es caracterizar las prácticas en literacidad de nuestros estudiantes, tanto dentro como fuera de la escuela, con el fin de reconocer cómo estos dos espacios se yuxtaponen como base de una reflexión que nos ayude a mejorar el currículo y el aprendizaje y la enseñanza de la lectura y la escritura en un sentido amplio y más allá de la clase de inglés. Este trabajo de investigación está dirigido por el Dr. Raúl Alberto Mora Vélez, Profesor Asistente de la Escuela de Educación y Pedagogía de la UPB.

Como parte de la investigación se hará la recolección de datos, que consiste en observación de clases; sin en ningún momento entrar a hacer intervención en el proceso de estas; las cuales incluirán la toma de fotografías. La idea de tomar fotos, más que poner en tela de juicio las prácticas de la institución, es demostrar que en las instituciones educativas a veces se encuentran mayores manifestaciones de la lectura y la escritura que lo que se piensa en principio. También se realizarán unas entrevistas para

conocer de las prácticas letradas que docentes y padres de familia observan que sus estudiantes e hijos tienen dentro y fuera del colegio. Es importante anotar que las observaciones y entrevistas que se lleguen a hacer se utilizarán para la investigación de la tesis de grado, ponencias, talleres u otros escritos académicos a que se dieran lugar. Solo si usted como líder de su institución lo permite, se hará referencia al nombre de su institución en el trabajo investigativo a realizar.

Los resultados de este proyecto de investigación se emplearán en principio para la escritura del trabajo de grado (tesis). Sin embargo, los datos que se recojan en el trabajo de campo también se podrían utilizar en futuras ponencias y publicaciones académicas. En todos los casos, se hará uso de pseudónimos. En el caso de la institución, solo si usted como líder de su institución lo permite, se hará referencia al nombre de la misma en el trabajo investigativo a realizar.

Esta carta, entonces, tiene por objeto solicitar su autorización para que nosotras, en el marco de este proyecto de investigación podamos llevar a cabo nuestro trabajo de campo para desarrollar nuestra investigación. A los docentes y padres de familia que vayan a apoyar esta tarea se les entregará una forma de consentimiento similar. En el caso de los estudiantes, se les enviará copia del consentimiento a sus padres o acudientes.

Los docentes, padres de familia y estudiantes que participen en esta tarea lo harán en completa libertad y se espera que no haya ninguna coerción para su colaboración. Ellos estarán en completa libertad de no participar, sin que ello pueda constituir motivo de represalias en la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana. Ellos estarán en derecho de ver el producto final y, de no estar de acuerdo con algo en el mismo, se harán los cambios del caso.

De antemano agradecemos su colaboración en el desarrollo de esta investigación, la cual nos ayudará en nuestra formación como investigadoras. En caso de cualquier inquietud con respecto a este proyecto de investigación, puede contactar directamente al Dr. Mora en su correo raul.mora@upb.edu.co, o en su celular 313-702-6386.

Atentamente,

Nombre(s)

Candidato/a (s) a Magíster en Procesos de Aprendizaje y Enseñanza de Segundas Lenguas

Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, Sede Central Medellín

He leído la información en esta carta y estoy de acuerdo con la participación de los estudiantes y/o docentes de esta institución en esta investigación.

Nombre, Cargo y Firma

Fecha

Informed Consent Letter for Teachers

Estimado Docente,

Cordial saludo.

Nosotras, **Claudia Cañas Mejía y Ángela Patricia Ocampo Castro**, somos estudiantes de la Maestría en Procesos de Aprendizaje y Enseñanza de Segundas Lenguas de la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana. Uno de los requerimientos para aspirar al título de magíster es el desarrollo de un proyecto de investigación como parte de nuestro trabajo de grado (tesis). Para dicho trabajo, hemos propuesto la investigación “An exploration of children’s personal literacies”, cuyo objetivo es caracterizar las prácticas en literacidad de nuestros estudiantes, tanto dentro como fuera de la escuela, con el fin de reconocer cómo estos dos espacios se yuxtaponen como base de una reflexión que nos ayude a mejorar el currículo y el aprendizaje y la enseñanza de la lectura y la escritura en un sentido amplio y más allá de la clase de inglés. Este trabajo de investigación está dirigido por el Dr. Raúl Alberto Mora Vélez, Profesor Asistente de la Escuela de Educación y Pedagogía de la UPB.

Como parte de la investigación se hará la recolección de datos, que consiste en observación de clases; sin en ningún momento entrar a hacer intervención en el proceso de estas; las cuales incluirán la toma de fotografías y la recolección de producciones de los estudiantes. La idea de tomar fotos, más que poner en tela de juicio las prácticas de la institución, es demostrar que en las instituciones educativas a veces se encuentran mayores manifestaciones de la lectura y la escritura que lo que se piensa en principio. También se realizarán unas entrevistas para conocer de las prácticas letradas que usted observa que sus estudiantes tienen dentro y fuera del colegio.

Esperamos que los resultados de este estudio nos ayuden a entender mejor las prácticas letradas de los niños y, por lo tanto, poder impactar mejor el aprendizaje y el currículo escolar. Los resultados de este proyecto de investigación se emplearán en principio para la escritura del trabajo de grado (tesis). Sin embargo, los datos que se recojan en el trabajo de campo también se podrían utilizar en futuras ponencias y publicaciones académicas. En todos los casos, se hará uso de pseudónimos, a no ser que usted autorice lo contrario.

Esta carta, entonces, tiene por objeto solicitar su autorización para que nosotras, en el marco de este proyecto de investigación, podamos contactarlo a usted para desarrollar el trabajo de campo que será soporte para el proceso investigativo.

Usted está en completa libertad de participar, sin ninguna forma de coerción para su colaboración y sin ninguna posibilidad de represalias en su institución educativa o en la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana en caso de no aceptar. Usted tiene derecho a ver las fotos, así como el producto final y, de no estar de acuerdo con algo en el mismo, se harán los cambios del caso.

De antemano agradecemos su colaboración en el desarrollo de esta investigación, la cual nos ayudará en nuestra formación como investigadoras. En caso de cualquier inquietud con respecto a este proyecto de investigación, puede contactar directamente al Dr. Mora en su correo raul.mora@upb.edu.co, o en su celular 313-702-6386.

Atentamente,

Nombre(s)
Candidato/a (s) a Magíster en Procesos de Aprendizaje y Enseñanza de Segundas
Lenguas
Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, Sede Central Medellín

He leído la información en esta carta y estoy de acuerdo con mi participación en esta investigación.

Nombre, Cargo y Firma

Fecha

He leído la información en esta carta y estoy de acuerdo en aparecer en materiales de audio para el propósito de esta investigación.

Nombre, Cargo y Firma

Fecha

Informed Consent Letter for Parents

Estimados Padres de Familia,

Cordial saludo.

Nosotras, **Claudia Cañas Mejía y Ángela Patricia Ocampo Castro**, somos estudiantes de la Maestría en Procesos de Aprendizaje y Enseñanza de Segundas Lenguas de la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana. Uno de los requerimientos para aspirar al título de magíster es el desarrollo de un proyecto de investigación como parte de nuestro trabajo de grado (tesis). Para dicho trabajo, hemos propuesto la investigación “An exploration of children’s personal literacies”, cuyo objetivo es caracterizar las prácticas en literacidad de nuestros estudiantes, tanto dentro como fuera de la escuela, con el fin de reconocer cómo estos dos espacios se yuxtaponen como base de una reflexión que nos ayude a mejorar el currículo y el aprendizaje y la enseñanza de la lectura y la escritura en un sentido amplio y más allá de la clase de inglés. Este trabajo de investigación está dirigido por el Dr. Raúl Alberto Mora Vélez, Profesor Asistente de la Escuela de Educación y Pedagogía de la UPB.

Como parte de la investigación se hará la recolección de datos, que consiste en observación de clases; sin en ningún momento entrar a hacer intervención en el proceso de estas; las cuales incluirán la toma de fotografías. La idea de tomar fotos, más que poner en tela de juicio las prácticas de la institución, es demostrar que en las instituciones educativas a veces se encuentran mayores manifestaciones de la lectura y la escritura que lo que se piensa en principio. También se realizarán unas entrevistas para conocer de las prácticas letradas que usted observa que su hijo (a) tiene dentro y fuera del colegio. Además, se le pedirá a su hijo(a) que nos dé a conocer algunas de sus producciones.

Esperamos que los resultados de este estudio nos ayuden a entender mejor las prácticas letradas en los niños y por lo tanto, poder impactar mejor el aprendizaje y el currículo escolar. Los resultados de este proyecto de investigación se emplearán en principio para la escritura del trabajo de grado (tesis). Sin embargo, los datos que se recojan en el trabajo de campo también se podrían utilizar en futuras ponencias y publicaciones académicas. En todos los casos, se hará uso de pseudónimos, a no ser que usted autorice lo contrario.

Esta carta, entonces, tiene por objeto solicitar su autorización para que nosotras, en el marco de este proyecto de investigación, podamos contactar a su hijo/a y podamos para observarlo/a y entrevistarlo/a, así como también hacer recolección de algunas evidencias de sus prácticas letradas dentro y fuera del colegio; para así desarrollar el trabajo de campo.

Usted está en completa libertad de aceptar la participación de su hijo/a, sin ninguna forma de coerción para su colaboración y sin ninguna posibilidad de represalias en su institución educativa o en la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana en caso de no aceptar. Usted tiene derecho a ver las fotos, así como el producto final y, de no estar de acuerdo con algo en el mismo, se harán los cambios del caso.

De antemano agradecemos su colaboración en el desarrollo de esta investigación, la cual nos ayudará en nuestra formación como investigadoras. En caso de cualquier inquietud con respecto a este proyecto de investigación, puede contactar directamente al Dr. Mora en su correo raul.mora@upb.edu.co, o en su celular 313-702-6386.

Atentamente,

Nombre(s)
Candidato/a (s) a Magíster en Procesos de Aprendizaje y Enseñanza de Segundas
Lenguas
Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, Sede Central Medellín

He leído la información en esta carta y estoy de acuerdo con la participación de mi hijo/a en esta investigación.

Nombre, Cargo y Firma

Fecha

He leído la información en esta carta y estoy de acuerdo en que mi hijo/a aparezca en materiales de audio y video para el propósito de esta investigación.

Nombre, Cargo y Firma

Fecha

Appendix B

Questions For The Interviews

We conducted just one interview per participant. The following are the main questions we used with children, their parents and teachers; in some cases we rephrased the questions for the interviewees to have a better comprehension.

Questions for Children's Interview

1. Cuando tienes algo para expresar ¿Cómo lo expresas?
2. ¿Qué producciones haces para expresar lo que sientes?
3. Cuando estás en casa ¿Qué lees? ¿Qué escribes?
4. ¿En qué se parecen las tareas que te asignan en el colegio con lo que haces en tus ratos libres?
5. Lo que aprendes en el colegio ¿Te sirve para aplicarlo por fuera de él?
6. Cuando te mencionan las palabras lectura y escritura ¿Con qué las relacionas?

Questions for Teachers' Interview

1. ¿Qué tipos de actividades proponen sus estudiantes para demostrar la comprensión de los temas?
2. ¿Qué tipos de actividades ha observado que sus estudiantes realizan diferentes a las actividades asignadas por usted, durante la clase?

3. ¿Cómo piensa que sus estudiantes pueden relacionar lo que usted les enseña y les pide como parte del proceso de aprendizaje dentro del aula; con las actividades que ellos realizan en su vida cotidiana?
4. En conversaciones con sus estudiantes o porque ha visto evidencias ¿Qué actividades conoce usted que ellos realizan por iniciativa propia para expresar sus ideas o explorar temas de su interés?

Questions for Parents' Interview

1. ¿Qué tipo de actividades hace su hijo(a) en casa para dar cumplimiento con las actividades asignadas en el colegio?
2. ¿Cómo relaciona su hijo(a) lo que le enseñan en el colegio con las actividades que él/ella realiza en su vida cotidiana?
3. ¿Qué tipo de actividades realiza su hijo(a) en casa que usted observe hace por iniciativa propia para expresar sus ideas o explorar sus intereses?
4. ¿Qué actividades hace su hijo(a) en su vida cotidiana que le ayudan a su proceso de aprendizaje en el colegio?

Appendix C

Quotes From The Analysis

Page 50

“I take time to do them [drawings] when I finish the homework” (Samuel).

“Me tomo el tiempo de hacerlos [los dibujos] cuando acabo las tareas” (Samuel).

“I sometimes do play” (Bianca).

“A veces si me pongo a jugar” (Bianca).

Page 51

“There are always questions about yourself and we can have the freedom to be ourselves” (Carolina).

“Siempre hay preguntas de uno mismo y uno se puede tomar la libertad de ser uno mismo” (Carolina).

Page 53

“It is important to give them [students] the freedom to choose what they like to write about” (David).

“Es importante que se les de la libertad de que ellos [los estudiantes] escojan sobre que les gusta escribir” (David).

Page 56

“Spanish class teaches us how to communicate” (Carmenza).

“Lengua castellana nos enseña a comunicarnos” (Carmenza).

Page 57

“Not all the information that the media shows us is useful; so it is important for them to be selective” (Clara).

“No toda la información que nos presentan los medios nos sirve; entonces es muy importante que ellos seleccionen” (Clara).

Page 58

“They could feel a little bit lost [in the activities]” (David).

“Se pueden sentir un poquito perdidos [en las actividades]” (David).

Page 63

“They live in this town that is surrounded by some mountains and their house is far, it is here; it is further from everything and here it is the house and here a room in the back” (Sergio).

“Viven en este pueblo que está rodeado por unas montañas y la casa de ellos está como que muy alejadita, queda por acá; más alejadita de todo y aquí sería pues la casa y aquí pues un cuarto trasero” (Sergio).

“The others [...] can express themselves by means of drawings, words, movies, and television or any other means” (Samuel).

“Los otros [...] puedan ya sea por medio del dibujo, por palabras, por películas, televisión por cualquier medio se expresen a través de esto” (Samuel).

Page 64

“Blue means the panels; yellow is the sun’s reflection and red means the load and finally the cabins are orange, the gold and silver colors are for material [of the satellite]” (Samuel).

“El azul significa los paneles, el amarillo el reflejo del sol y el rojo significa la carga y el naranja por último son las cabinas, el dorado y el plateado son los materiales [del satélite]” (Samuel).

“The cross represents God and the crystal is black so it represents the darkness; so it was like the light and the darkness at the same time” (Sergio).

“La cruz representa Dios y el cristal es negro entonces representa la oscuridad entonces como si fuera luz y oscuridad al mismo tiempo” (Sergio).

“This is a tree [...] a part is the good and the other is the evil and there is a rose here to balance them that keeps the good and the evil in balance” (Sergio).

“Este es un árbol [...] una parte es de bien y otra parte es de mal y para que se equilibre esto hay una rosa acá que mantiene el bien y el mal equilibrados” (Sergio).

Page 65

“And he finally takes him this way” (Samuel).

“Para remate lo coge así” (Samuel).

“That [his literacies] helps me a lot to be serene and never fight” (Samuel).

“Eso [sus literacidades] me sirve mucho para yo estar tranquilo y nunca pues pelear” (Samuel).

“My songs [...] depend on the feeling [...] or in the mood I am” (Carolina).

“Mis canciones [...] depende[n] del sentimiento [...] o en el estado como este yo” (Carolina).

Page 67

“When I release energy on a pencil and on doing traces, I feel that it is something special for me because I feel happiness. In the drawings I feel, I express my feelings, I feel that I express everything” (Samuel).

“Al descargar energía en un lápiz y haciendo trazos, es algo único para mí porque siento felicidad. En los dibujos yo siento, yo expreso mis emociones, en esto siento que expreso todo” (Samuel).

“What that dragon feels is what I am expressing inside me” (Samuel).

“Lo que siente ese dragón, es lo que yo estoy expresando por dentro” (Samuel).

Page 68

“At this moment, technology takes the world away” (Sergio).

“La tecnología en este momento es como que quita el mundo” (Sergio).

“I come out with crazy ideas about how I could improve the world to [...] someday give my tiny contribution someday” (Sergio).

“Creo las ideas locas, y ahí que como podría mejorar el mundo para [...] algún día contribuir con mi granito de arena” (Sergio).

Page 69

“The human inside the machine [Robocop] makes the decision like the airplane’s captain decides whether or not to take off” (Samuel).

“El humano dentro de la máquina [Robocop] lo decide como el capitán del avión que él decide si sí despegar o no” (Samuel).

Page 70

“On the one hand, I like comics a lot because that is a heritage from my father and on the other hand, cars also draw my attention a lot and that is a heritage from my mother’s brother, my uncle” (Samuel).

“Por un lado a mí gustan mucho los comics y eso es herencia de mi papá y la otra es porque los carros también me atraen mucho y esa es herencia del hermano de mi mamá, mi tío” (Samuel).

“[in] the Clash of Clans game; you are getting a small village and you are preparing the troops; it is like studying for an evaluation” (Sebastian).

“[en] el juego de Clash of Clans; uno va teniendo una aldea entonces yo voy preparando las tropas; es como estudiar para una evaluación” (Sebastian).

Page 74

“Because I feel that I did it very well since everybody says, ‘So nice!’” (Bianca).

“Porque siento que yo lo hice muy bien porque todo el mundo dice ‘¡Ay qué bonito!’” (Bianca).

Page 75

“There, [in his bedroom] I feel better and [...] I feel that I am unplugged from the world and that there only exist the colors, the drawings and me” (Samuel).

“Porque allá me siento mejor y [...] siento que estoy desconectado del mundo y que solo son los colores, el dibujo y yo” (Samuel).

“I lay down on my bed to think [...] about what it is going to happen afterwards, so I feel that I have to express it in any way and that way could be writing” (Santiago).

“Yo me acuesto en mi cama a pensar [...] sobre que va a pasar después y entonces siento que tengo que expresarlo de alguna manera y esa manera sería más o menos escribiendo” (Santiago).

“I even hide them [the stories about his personal experiences]” (Sebastian).

“Hasta las [historias de sus experiencias personales] escondo” (Sebastian).

Page 76

“Look what we practiced in Spanish class [...] and look I do write it in that way” and

“When she is playing with her dolls, she speaks to them in English all the time” (Padres de Elena).

“Mira lo que vimos en español [...] y mira que sí se escribe así”, “Cuando ella está jugando con sus muñecas ella todo el tiempo les habla en inglés” (Elena’s parents).

“Look a client arrived and she did not react. Dad, you told her to keep her cellphone and look she has it out” (Elena’s parents).

“Mira llegó una cliente y ni se puso las pilas, pa’ usted le dijo que guardara el celular y mira que ahí lo tiene afuera” (Padres de Elena).

“I mixed what I learned in Math and Science [...], a butterfly asking a person for help her to clean that [pollution]” (Diana).

“Lo de matemáticas y lo de ciencias, entonces lo combiné, [...], una mariposa diciéndole a una persona que le ayude a limpiar eso [pollution]” (Diana).

Page 77

“He is always looking how to relate, to make connections with a subject or with something he has worked on his subjects” (Santiago’s parents).

“Él es siempre buscando pues como relacionar, hace alguna conexión con alguna materia o con algo que haya visto en las materias” (Padres de Santiago).

Page 79

“The songs bring information that can help do homework” (Carolina).

“Las canciones traen información que pueden ayudar para las tareas” (Carolina).

Page 80

“She is always relating what she works in school with her daily life” (Elena’s parents).

“Ella todo el tiempo esta relacionando lo del colegio con lo de la vida cotidiana” (Padres de Elena).

“She has a lot of personal interests that come from the school and she takes them to her daily life” (Bianca’s parents).

“Ella tiene como muchos intereses personales que le salen como del mismo colegio, los lleva a su vida cotidiana” (Padres de Bianca).

Page 82

“I think they [the drawings] are very interesting because they are not only graphics, there is a production that if you want to interpret it, it could be as clear as the written one” (Carmenza).

“Me parecen [los dibujos] muy interesantes porque no son digamos el simplemente gráficos, hay una producción que si uno la quiere interpretar puede ser tan clara como la escrita” (Carmenza).

“They love to a certain extent everything that is related to these games [role-playing]. They [the games] are always indicating a role or an interest in something they read or watch on TV” (Carmenza).

“Les apasiona de cierta manera pero lo que tiene que ver con estos juegos [de rol]; siempre va indicando un rol, siempre va indicando un interés ya sea por algo que leen por algo que ven en la televisión” (Carmenza).

Page 83

“Now, we are working more with topics that are closer to them [students]” (Carmenza).

“Estamos cada vez más trabajando con temas que son más cercanos a ellos [los estudiantes]” (Carmenza).

Pages 85

“Comics are something that you express by means of drawings because writing is not important here” (Samuel).

“Comics son algo que uno expresa por medio de dibujos porque los escritos ahí no cuentan” (Samuel).

Page 86

“Writing is drawing” (Carolina).

“Escribir es dibujar” (Carolina).

“Reading is not just taking a book and read. Reading is whatever you read. Sometimes I go down the street and I like to compete with the person who is with me, and see who first finishes reading a word” (Carolina).

“Leer no es simplemente coger un libro y leer, leer es cualquier cosa que tu leas. A veces yo voy en la calle y me gusta hacer carreras con el que vaya, a ver quién termina la palabra” (Carolina).

“Science is like a drawing” (Diana).

“Ciencia es como un dibujo” (Diana).

“The books teach, the readers teach us something in school and the books also teach us at home, and so does what we write” (Elena).

“Los libros enseñan, en el colegio [el] plan lector nos enseña algo y los libros en la casa también nos enseñan algo, lo que escribimos también” (Elena).

“[writing is] using the pencil and the paper; [I write] what someone dictates to me [...] or what [...] I am interested in” (Sebastian).

“[escribir es] utilizar el lápiz y el papel; [escribo] lo que me dictan [...] o lo que [...] me interesa” (Sebastian).

Appendix D

Authors' Biography

Claudia Cañas Mejía

She is currently working in a well-known private school in the city of Medellín, Colombia. She has been working for the last eleven years in the elementary section of this school as an English as a second language teacher. In 2009 and 2010, she was in charge of the academic coordination of the English area in the elementary section of the school. She also works as an associate professor at the Language Center of Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana. She holds a Teaching Degree in Foreign Languages from Universidad de Antioquia (1999) and she is also a graduate specialist in English Teaching from Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana (2006). She carried out an action research study titled “Building Self-Confidence in the English Classroom” co-authored with Ángela Patricia Ocampo Castro to fulfill the requirements for this post-graduate program. She is also a candidate for the MA in Learning and Teaching Processes in Second Languages from Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana (2015). She conducted a qualitative study with an ethnographic approach titled “An Exploration of Children’s Personal Literacies”, co-authored with Ángela Patricia Ocampo Castro to fulfill the requirements for the master program. She is also a teacher-researcher at the Literacies in Second Languages Project.

Ángela Patricia Ocampo Castro

She is currently working in a well-known bilingual private school in the metropolitan area of the city of Medellín, Colombia. She has been working there for the last nine years in the elementary section as an English as a second language and Spanish teacher in different subjects. She was in charge of the Elementary Academic Coordination in 2007 and was leading the Natural Sciences and Language Arts processes in 2008 and 2009 respectively. She holds a B.A. in Languages from Universidad de Antioquia (1996); and a Teaching Degree in Children's Education from Corporación Universitaria Lasallista (1999). She is also a graduate specialist in English Teaching from Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana (2006). She carried out an action research study titled "Building Self-Confidence in the English Classroom" co-authored with Claudia Cañas Mejía to fulfill the requirements for this post-graduate program. She is also a candidate for the MA in Learning and Teaching Processes in Second Languages from Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana (2015). She conducted a qualitative study with an ethnographic approach titled "An Exploration of Children's Personal Literacies", co-authored with Claudia Cañas Mejía to fulfill the requirements for the master program. She is also a teacher-researcher at the Literacies in Second Languages Project.