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University of the Witwatersrand
School of Literature and Language Studies

Research Report

Title

ELECTRONIC LITERACY PRACTICES IN ENGLISH TEACHING: A CASE STUDY

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For the degree of Masters in Applied English Language Studies
by coursework and research report

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"The heights by great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight, but they while their companions slept, were toiling onward through the night" (Henry Wadsworth Longfellow).

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(AMDG)

ABSTRACT

This research is a Qualitative Case Study which investigates the electronic literacy practices of one English teacher and two Grade 10 English classes in a Muslim High school outside of Johannesburg. This study seeks to find out what the forms of electronic literacy used in the classroom are and for what purposes these are used. It is also aimed at investigating how the students in the English classroom engage with these forms of electronic literacies and whether or not gender plays a role in their engagement.

This study draws on work in New Literacy Studies, particularly theories of literacy as social practice, Multiliteracies and multimodality as well as current research in the field of electronic literacy. Although there have been numerous studies in the fields of electronic literacy and digital literacy in developed contexts like the United Kingdom and Australia, there is a paucity of research in South Africa in the field and particularly in the area of electronic literacy in the English classroom.

The main sources of data were: classroom observations from which field notes were created and group interviews with the students as well as an interview with the English teacher. The findings of this study reveal that being electronically literate in the English classroom means having access to sophisticated forms of technology not only inside the classroom but also outside as well as having a certain degree of fluency around computer use. The forms of electronic literacy used by the English teacher and the purposes for which they were used demonstrate his pedagogy in English and the social forces that shape the production of this pedagogy. The research shows an expansion of the teacher's role in the English classroom as he is no longer only 'a mediator of learning' but a mediator of technology. The status of the text has also changed as the 'disappearance' of print-based texts from the classroom was noted with the foregrounding of visual texts and hypertexts. It was found that the students on the whole were engaged with the technology used in the classroom and expressed a preference for its integration into their lessons as opposed to the traditional 'reading and writing' practices. Additionally, students' engagement did not vary according to gender.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report which is submitted for the Master of Arts in Applied English Language Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, is my own unaided work. Furthermore, it has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other University.

…….
Jeanette La Fleur

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This study focuses on the electronic literacy practices of one English teacher and his two Grade 10 English classrooms at a Muslim High school in South Africa. It is particularly concerned with the ways in which electronic forms of media have been integrated by the teacher into his English teaching in order to extend his practice, and furthermore with the ways in which students engage with such media.

Recently, the emergence of a new global order, advances in technology and an increase in new media, the growing importance of cultural and linguistic diversity, as well as shifts in the English language have led to a re-examination of definitions of literacy and literacy teaching (New London Group, 1996; Cope and Kalantzis, 2000). In addition, arguments concerning a shift from 'page to screen' and the dominance of the visual (Kress, 1998; Snyder, 1998) have also contributed to a redefinition of the concept of literacy which continues to be contested. The New London Group (1996) and Cope and Kalantzis, (2000) proposed the concept of Multiliteracies which challenges traditional definitions of literacy as being unitary, monocultural, static and monolingual and views language as being governed by rules (Gee, 1996, Street, 1995). Contemporary definitions of literacy highlight its sociocultural and dynamic nature as well as the integration of multiple modes of meaning making. Consequently, the concept of multimodality is closely linked to Multiliteracies (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000:5).

With recent technological changes such as the creation of the Internet and the World Wide Web (please refer to glossary), there is the recognition of the need to develop not just one kind of literacy but multiple literacies. In the context of global and cultural diversity, multiple literacies are created through multiple media and communication channels (Newfield and Stein, 2006:1), hence the concepts of visual literacy, media literacy, digital literacy and electronic literacy. Warschauer (2006:4) defines the term

electronic literacy[1] as "ways of making meaning from and interpreting texts in computer-based realms". An electronic literacy approach in the classroom therefore assumes the use of various electronic technologies to make meaning. Warschauer (2001) further suggests that electronic literacy, particularly the use of computers and the internet, encourages greater student participation especially with regard to those students who are least likely to participate in face to face conversation. Further, some researchers suggest that gender plays a role in the way students engage with electronic technologies (Millard, 1997; Sanford and Blair, 2005). However, further research is needed to determine in what ways gender influences student interaction with electronic forms of technology in the classroom.

Globally, a large majority of youth today are growing up in an electronically-mediated world where they interact with new technologies on a daily basis. Within their home environments, they have access to and use multiple ways of making meaning. These young people communicate via the Internet asynchronously (such as by sending e-mail) and synchronously (such as by participating in chat rooms). They send SMSs, (please refer to glossary) from cell phones that can take photographs and videos, create and maintain weblogs or blogs (please refer to glossary) download music, play video games and access podcasts (please refer to glossary). In short, theirs is a digital culture. Dan Tapscott (1998) in his book "Growing Up Digital", refers to such youth as the 'Net Generation' who are "an unprecedented force for change" (p, 11) as they are "an authority on an innovation central to society's development". However, this is not the general reality for a large majority of young people in South Africa. Although South Africa is considered as the most technologically advanced African country, access to new forms of technology is limited to a privileged few. This therefore means that the uptake of Information Communication technologies, ICTs, in schools is slow. Nevertheless, despite a wide range in social class backgrounds, a large number of young people in South Africa possess cellphones and this is generally their main source of interaction with new media (Czerniewicz and Hodgkinson, 2005:2). It is inevitable that

[1] Some researchers use the terms digital literacies and electronic literacies interchangeably. My study uses the term electronic literacies more broadly to encompass not only digital media but also electronic technologies such as overhead projectors and television.

technological change and shifts in how young people are constructed will have an impact on teaching and learning and are of particular interest to this study.

Increasingly, literacy educators are beginning to take cognizance of the changes in technology and the need to extend their understanding to include ways in which these technologies transform literacy practices as well as influence the lives of young people. Warschauer (1999) documents how teachers at Bay College Hawai'i integrated electronic literacies within their English second language classrooms with some measure of success. So too does Ilana Snyder (2002) in her work in Australia. However, a number of these initiatives occur in first world developed contexts. Such studies are still limited in South Africa and in particular studies focusing on electronic literacy practices within the English classroom.

The next section gives an outline of the research context of the study.

1.2 Research context

The school at which this research was conducted is located in a small Muslim community about 50 kilometers outside of Johannesburg and near Vereeniging. Although the school is considered private, it is subsidized by the State. The students come from mainly middle class families and annual fees from Grades 10 to 12 are R10 000. Such school fees make the school an affluent school and atypical in the South African context.

I have carried out research on one English teacher and two of his Grade 10 English classes. These classes comprised both language and literature studies. Learners were grouped according to gender hence males were in one class and females in another. This type of whole class grouping is quite unique within the South African context and is as a result of the religious practices of the school. It therefore provided the opportunity to explore possible differences in the way the boys and girls in this context engaged with the various forms of electronic literacy used in the English classroom.

In the next section, I present my research aims, the research questions and the rationale for the study.

1.3 Aims and Research Questions

The South African government through the Department of Education has endeavored to ensure that all schools in South Africa use Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) "to accelerate the achievement of the national education goals" (DOE, 2004: 15). This initiative has been defined as e-education and its goals have been elaborated in the Government's White Paper on e-education, (2004). (See Rationale for a more detailed explanation).

Given that e-education, though documented in policy in South Africa is still an emerging field, my research is aimed at investigating one teacher's electronic literacy practices in the English classroom, as well as how learners engage with these practices and in particular what role gender might play in the way learners interact with electronic forms of literacy. Finally, in my conclusion, I will be exploring the implications of these findings for the implementation of electronic practices in the English classroom.

1.3.1 Research Questions

My research is framed by two main questions:

- What kinds of electronic media does the Grade 10 teacher use in the English classroom and for what purposes?
- How do learners engage with electronic forms of literacy in the English classroom?
  - Does gender play a role in how learners engage with these forms of literacy? If so, what is the nature of this role?

1.4 Rationale

There are four underlying reasons for this study. First of all, given the paucity of research on the use of electronic forms of literacy in South African classrooms and in particular the English classroom as well as research exploring the question of gender and electronic literacy, my research would help to provide an understanding of what is taking place in the field. Secondly, in light of the Department of Education's White Paper on e-education (2004) and its drive to make every learner 'ICT capable' by 2013, teachers should not ignore the use of electronic media in their classrooms. Thirdly, given the expansion of the concept of literacy to include multiple literacies of which electronic literacies is an integral aspect, teachers need to include these new forms of literacy into their work. Through the use of electronic literacies there is the potential for students to enter into new discourse communities. Lastly, by incorporating electronic literacies in their classroom teachers will be providing learners with the necessary tools to compete in the global economy. Consequently, it is important that electronic literacies become an integral part of their learning. In this case, I have identified one English teacher who is already integrating ICTs into his work as an English teacher.

Research about the integration of ICTs in South African classrooms and the use of digital literacies in marginalized contexts has been conducted by Czerniewicz and Hodgkinson-Williams (2005); Kajee (2004) and Prinsloo (2005). However, none of these studies deal with the question of electronic literacy and the English classroom as well gender and electronic literacy. Some researchers (Sanford and Blair 2004; Beavis 2002) have suggested that there is a difference in the way boys and girls interact with electronic literacies. It is therefore important for teachers to understand the nature of these differences in order to inform their electronic literacy practices in the classroom. Additionally, Czerniewicz and Hodgkinson-Williams (2005) state that local research tends to be under-theorised. My research which deals with the question of electronic literacy in the English classrooms well as looks at the engagement of male and female students with electronic forms of literacy will be very useful, not only to add to the body of knowledge in the field but also to inform interventions in this area. The integration of ICTs into the English curriculum necessitates a well informed response that is guided by

sound theorized research. It is hoped that this research which is informed by new Literacy Studies and the theory of Multiliteracies and multimodality would contribute usefully to our understanding of the uses of electronic forms of literacy in the English classroom.

The importance of this research is also evident especially in light of the White Paper on e-education. The Department of Education has acknowledged the possible impact ICTs have on the teaching and learning process in the drafting of this document. In her foreword, the Minister of Education stated that "the introduction of ICT to our schools will create new possibilities for our learners and teachers to engage in new ways of information selection, gathering, sorting and analysis" (DoE, 2004). One of the principal goals of this White Paper is that every learner should be ICT capable by 2013. The importance of providing learners with access has been emphasized in the document.

The concept of e-education has been defined in the White Paper as the ability to:

- apply ICT skills to access, analyse, evaluate, integrate, present and communicate information;
- create knowledge and new information by adapting, applying, designing, inventing and authoring information;
- enhance teaching and learning through communication and collaboration by using ICT; and
- function in a knowledge society by using appropriate technology and mastering communication and collaboration (DoE 2004:15).

This has serious consequences for the English classroom as English teachers will have to find ways in which the use of ICTs will help to enhance teaching and learning.

Additionally, in light of the evolving shift in notions of literacy, some teachers are beginning to reevaluate their view as to what constitutes literacy. This change in thinking has implications for the teaching and learning process and the way they engage learners. It is important for teachers to value the experiences that young people bring to the classroom and use these realities to frame the teaching and learning process. Young people of today have multifaceted life worlds and schools need to engage with their life

worlds to make education more relevant to them (Kellner, 2002:165). As was previously mentioned in the introduction, young people are "growing up digital" where they use electronic technologies to communicate by email, to send SMS messages and generally to maintain relationships as well as to play and for their general entertainment. However, most of these experiences occur outside of school. At school, especially in South Africa, students' literacy experiences are mainly via traditional modes such as print, with reading and writing constituting the main forms of literacy. The importance of combining learners' outside of school practices with their in school practices, has been underscored by several theorists in the field of literacy. Ilana Snyder (2002:47) highlights the need for curriculum "to find ways to strengthen young people's in-school and out-of-school worlds" while Cope and Kalantzis (2000: 21) see this as the changing role of schools where "as different life worlds engage with education, one thing is certain: the process is one of transformation" with the purpose of improving learners' prospects. For the majority of South African youth, their out-of- school worlds do not involve the use of sophisticated electronic technologies and as such, electronic literacies would not play a role in bridging the home and school practices of these young people who have little or no access. However, for the students involved in this study who come from privileged middle-class backgrounds, the integration of electronic forms of literacy in their English classroom would help to bridge their in school and out of school worlds.

Electronic literacies as a fundamental aspect of the New Literacies are an important way for students to enter new Discourse communities (see literature review) whether through synchronous means such as chat rooms or shared white boards (please refer to glossary) or by asynchronous means such as electronic mail. These new forms of communication are so widespread that learners need to be exposed to them in the classroom. Such views are supported by theorists such as Warschauer and Kern who state:

> If our goal is to help students enter new authentic discourse communities, and if those discourse communities are increasingly located on-line, then it seems appropriate to incorporate on-line activities for their social utility as well as for their perceived value (Warschauer and Kern, 2000: 12, 13).

The electronic media especially through the World Wide Web have a great potential to enhance the teaching and learning of English. There are opportunities for research, group learning and collaborative problem solving, publishing, as well as numerous possibilities for authentic language experience to name a few. The literacy and communication possibilities are endless. Computer networks therefore make it possible "for learners … to extend their communication experience to worlds beyond the classroom" (Warschauer and Kern, 2000). Further, since large amounts of data are stored electronically in English, the relationship between English language learning and the development of digital literacy is especially strong (Pelleteri, 2000:171).

Globalisation has made the world highly competitive where access to resources and markets is extremely vital if countries like South Africa are to compete successfully in the global economy. Schools cannot afford to ignore such reality and should therefore provide young people with the necessary tools to compete in the global society or risk exclusion.

In light of the Department of Education's white paper on e-education as well as the increasing importance of electronic or digital forms of literacy and the shift in conceptions of literacy to include Multiliteracies, research into the electronic literacy practices of young people in South Africa and in schools in particular, is crucial. There is the need to build up a body of research in the area in order to open the field for further research and to guide the teaching and learning of English. It is therefore hoped that this research with its focus on a particular instance of the use of electronic forms of literacy in a Grade 10 English classroom in South Africa would add to that body of research.

This research report consists of six chapters:

Chapter 1: **BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH PROJECT; AIMS, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RATIONALE**

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I present my theoretical framework and review literature on Multiliteracies and multimodalities, literacy as social practice, electronic literacy and gender and electronic literacy.

Chapter 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter outlines the research approach and methodology. It also describes the methods and techniques used for the collection of data and techniques of data analysis**.**

Chapter 4: ENHANCING LEARNING? USES AND PURPOSES OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA IN MR. HALIM'S ENGLISH CLASSROOM.

This first data analysis chapter outlines the forms of electronic literacies used in the English classroom and the purposes for which they are used. It also discusses the effects of their use on the curriculum.

Chapter 5: STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT WITH ELECTRONIC FORMS OF LITERACY IN MR. HALIM'S CLASSROOM

The second data analysis chapter discusses the students' engagement with the various forms of electronic media used in the classroom with a specific focus on gender engagement.

Chapter 6: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarises the main findings of the study and the implications of these findings for the teaching and learning of English. I conclude with recommendations for future studies as well as the integration of electronic forms of literacy in the English classroom.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In order to provide a deeper understanding of the data collected as well as provide a framework for data analysis, this research is located within the New Literacy Studies (Gee, 1996; Street, 1998). As a consequence, it draws on literature dealing with literacy as social practice (Gee, 1996; Street, 1998; Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic, 2000), since the electronic literacy practices of the Grade 10 students observed are subsumed within their general social practices. This research is also framed around an expanded notion of literacy as developed in the concept of Multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996; Cope and Kalantzis, 2000). It draws on recent research on electronic and digital literacies (Snyder, 2002; Warschauer, 1999, 2006; Warschauer and Kern, 2000; Kajee 2005; Prinsloo, 2005). While most of these studies look at the question of literacy in general, a few (Warschauer, Warschauer and Kern and Kajee) examine the question of electronic literacy and the English classroom. This research into electronic literacy practices is also informed by New Literacy Studies and the concept of literacy as social practice. In order to answer the question of gender engagement in the English classroom, literature on gender and schooling and gender and literacy (Millard, 1997; Moss 2007) as well as gender and electronic literacy (Tella, 1992; Beavis, 2002) are also reviewed in this chapter.

2.2 New Literacy Studies

The New Literacy studies emphasize the need to move beyond narrow definitions of literacy and propose new ways of looking at the question of literacy (Gee, 1996; Street, 1998). A fundamental aspect of this new definition of literacy is the theory of literacy as social practice. Gee (1996) argues that the traditional view of literacy, the ability to read and write where reading refers to the ability to decode writing and writing as the ability to code writing into a visual form, “rips literacy out of its sociocultural contexts” (p.46). He therefore suggests a sociocultural approach to literacy where language and literacy are

defined in terms of Discourses[2]. Gee describes a Discourse as a "socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and 'artifacts', of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting" which can be used to identify someone as a member of a social grouping (1996:31). Gee (2003) further explains

> Different people can read the world differently just as they can read different types of texts differently…What determines this is your own experience in interacting with other people who are members of various sorts of social groups. (p.2)

He adds that through their social practices, these different groups work to encourage people to think in certain ways about certain sorts of texts. These different groups therefore have their own Discourses which influence each member's engagement with literacy. The social grouping to which the Grade 10 students and teacher in my study belong (for example their membership of. the Muslim community) would no doubt influence how they engage and interact with texts in the classroom. Thus, the electronic literacy practices of this group of students and their teacher are inextricably linked to the social practices within their various social groupings or Discourse communities.

The notion of literacy as social practice is shared by Street (1998) and Barton, Hamilton and Ivanič (2000). Barton et al. advance the view that the concept of literacy as social practice presents a shift from literacy as an individual attribute to examining ways in which people in groups use literacy. Street (1998:1) highlights the need for a reconceptualization of the concept of literacy within a broader social order – a New Communicative Order. This new order coincides with the emergence of new forms of technology and "takes account of the literacy practices associated with screen-based technologies –widely known as computer – mediated communication" (Snyder, 2003:264). Street argues for an approach to literacy that is "embedded in other communicative practices and involving a mix of semiotic modes" (1998:19). Street distinguishes between 'autonomous' models of literacy and 'ideological' models (1984). Street suggests that the autonomous model is based on a narrow definition of literacy which is culture-specific and unidirectional (p.1). This definition distinguishes literacy from schooling where literacy is often associated with progress and civilisation (ibid). He

[2] Gee (1996) uses the term 'Discourses' with a capital 'D', to refer to ways of being in the world as opposed to 'discourse' which refers to linguistic units.

argues that this homogenous model does not do justice to the complexity of different literacy practices (1984:10). On the other hand, the 'ideological' model of literacy is culturally embedded and assumes that literacy practices vary from one context to another. He further suggests the use of the word literacies rather than literacy (1984:8) to capture the complex and multifaceted nature of the concept. Also working in the New Literacy Studies, Barton et al. (2000) argue that "literacy is situated… in particular times and places" and "all literate activity is indicative of broader social practices" (p.1). Literacy as social practice results in literacies being positioned "in relation to the social institutions and power relations which sustain them" (2000:1). One such institution is education. Lankshear and Snyder (2000:32) suggest that in the context of education, technology and technologies should be understood in terms of social practice since a narrow identification of technology as merely tools and applications would be limiting. New technologies shape and are shaped by social relations and practices (Leander and Lewis, 2008:57). In short, literacy is situated, contextualized and embedded. This suggests that practices applied in developed contexts may not necessarily be applicable to less privileged contexts with the same results. As Prinsloo (2005) points out:

> The problems with not thinking of the new literacies as placed resources can be seen in studies which assume generalisability from middle-class America or European contexts to elsewhere (p.94).

In addition, Barton, Hamilton and Ivanič (2000) distinguish between literary practices and literacy events. Literacy practices are defined as social practices which connect individuals with their social worlds. Barton et al argue that these practices are best understood as existing "between people, within groups and communities" (p.7) and refer to what people do with literacy. Barton et al, add that literacy practices are not observable units of behaviour and include people's awareness of literacy and constructions of literacy. Snyder (2002) suggests that in the age of ICTs, literacy practices are "highly complex phenomena" in that they refer not only to deciphering texts but also to understanding how culturally significant information is coded (p.5).

Literacy events are the particular activities where literacy has a role (Barton et al, 2000:8). Such events exist within a particular social context and may be part of the

formal procedures and expectations of social institutions such as places of work and schools. These have been described as “observable events” which emanate from literacy practices and are usually shaped by them (ibid). In addition, within these events, different semiotic modes are used (ibid). Texts are a fundamental aspect of literacy events.

During my study, I observe some of the literacy practices of the Grade 10 students and their teacher as well as various electronic literacy events such as their blogs and poetry recordings which are situated within the broader practice of using electronic literacies in their English classroom.

2.3 Multiliteracies and Multimodalities

The term ‘Multiliteracies’ is associated with the New London Group (1996) and Cope and Kalantzis (2000). They suggest the term addresses “the multiplicity of communication channels and media” and “the increasing salience of cultural and linguistic diversity” (p.5). The notion of Multiliteracies moves beyond a narrowly defined conception of literacy and presupposes multiple forms of literacy. It acknowledges that literacy is in a perpetual state of evolution. Barton and Hamilton (2000) argue that there are “different literacies for different domains of life” and that “literacy is not the same in all contexts” (p10-11). The concept of Multiliteracies is closely linked to the concept of multimodality. Newfield and Stein (2000) support this expanded notion of multiliteracies as it includes technological forms of communication as well as the mainly orally based literacies of South African communities “who have not had access to print-based and screen-based technologies” (p.294). They find the concept of multiliteracies particularly appealing especially in the South African context as it challenges the traditional, autonomous model of literacy that dominated the South African school system. They also argue that the concept of Multiliteracies captures and validates the diversity of people’s literacies in specific sites as it is flexible and inclusive and does not seek to marginalize (ibid).

The very idea of different literacies presupposes the use of different modes for making meaning. Kress (2000) argues that "no text can exist in a single mode" and that all texts are always multimodal although a particular mode can dominate (p.187). The term 'multi' therefore suggests that "modes never occur by themselves but always with others as ensembles" (Kress, Jewitt, Bourne, Franks, Hardcastle and Jones, 2005:2). Consequently, a multimodal approach to meaning making "provides a fuller, richer and more accurate sense of what language is and what it is not" (p.2). A multimodal approach to literacy is also supported by researchers such as Cope and Kalantzis (2000) and Pahl and Rowsell (2006) among others. Pahl and Rowsell define multimodality as "communication in the widest sense, including gesture, oral performance, artistic, linguistic, digital, electronic, graphic and artifact related" (p.6). This includes the multimodal ways in which meaning is made on the World Wide Web (WWW) and in other interactive media. Within these new communicative systems, "the written, oral and audiovisual modalities of communication are integrated into multimodal hypertext systems" (Snyder, 2002:3) and require a plethora of competencies and skills to interact in this new semiotic terrain (p.163).

In addition, multimodal literacies and pedagogies focus on multiple forms of representation within the classroom that take into account issues of power, culture and history. One of the strengths of multimodal pedagogies is that they acknowledge the limits of language and offer learners a wider base for representation (Stein, 2004: 95).

A multimodal approach especially in the age of new electronic media has far reaching implications for the use and experience of texts. Kress et al (2005) argue that school English is changing and so is the English classroom (p.37). They add that the English classroom "is a complex multimodal sign of English" where the resources used in that space are signs of the teacher's pedagogy of English and the social forces that shape their production (ibid). Kress and colleagues (Kress, 2003; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996: Kress and Jewitt, 2003) suggest that there has been a remaking of the semiotic (i.e. communication and representation) landscape from black and white print to the use of colour and images thereby representing a shift from page to screen. People's experiences

of texts are now multidimensional. According to Kress (1998) this shift to the visual, made possible in part by certain developments in technology, "will entrench visual modes of communication as a rival to language in many domains of public life" (p.55). Kress et al (2005) in a study conducted on English in urban classrooms in England highlight that the book has been displaced by the use of screens with the dominant media being the new screens of the personal computer, the Playstation, the Gameboy (please refer to glossary) and the mobile phone (p.x). Leander and Lewis (2008) also state that "in contemporary youth culture, Mp3 players, such as the iPod, (please refer to glossary) are having a significant impact in shaping multimodal literacy practices" (p.57). As a consequence, Kress et al argue that the role of the book in the English classroom has waned, if not collapsed with a shift to more complex images and simpler texts. Durrant and Green (2001) also acknowledge the shift from page to screen and point out that "we are in the midst of 'a broad-based shift from print to digital electronics as the organising context for literate-textual practice and for learning and teaching" (p.1). They further argue that "while this does not mean the end of print—the death of the book—it certainly means that teachers need to adopt a more flexible and expansive view of literacy than they have needed in their everyday lives and work to date" (ibid).

The dominance of multiple modes of representation and in particular the visual mode has serious implications for the English classroom as young people's experiences of texts have expanded to include the use of image, sound, word and elements of gesture. Using my own children as examples, although they are both avid readers, a significant portion of their daily interactions with literacy is screen based in the form of the television screen, the computer screen or a gameboy. The texts they encounter in these media are therefore dominated by colourful graphic images. Snyder (2003) suggests that "young people have a different understanding of images" which is fundamental to the way they make meaning. Meanings made in these multimodal realms are not fixed or constant. Bearne (2003) argues that "children are already living the paradigm shift in how various texts work to make meaning" (p.98). Teachers would therefore need to make space for the use of multimodal texts in the classroom.

The ways in which various modes are combined with the visual do not only produce different kinds of texts but also facilitate different kinds of literacy practices. In the new communication landscape, these practices lead to new ways of being and doing, hence new Discourses which are particularly valued by the younger generation as well as being shaped by them

In my research, I am especially interested in the students' experiences of multimodal texts in the English classroom and the extent to which the screen has replaced interaction with traditional forms of texts in the English classroom.

2.4 Electronic literacy and the English classroom

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the focus of my study is on electronic literacy in the English classroom. By electronic literacy I mean the use of various forms of electronic media to make meaning as opposed to digital literacy which refers only to digitized forms of media. While the focus of the study is particularly on electronic literacy practices in the English classroom, a large portion of available literature deals primarily with literacy in general and not specifically with the English classroom.

As regards reading and writing and traditional print literacies, Kellner in Snyder (2002) argues that:

> in the era of technological revolution and new technologies, we need to develop new forms of media literacy, computer literacy and multimedia literacies, thus cultivating multiple literacies (157,158).

Electronic literacy is one of the new forms of literacy which Snyder (2002:15) defines as "the capacity to access networked computer resources and use them." She adds that it is "the ability to use and understand information in multiple formats from a wide range of sources when it is presented via computers" (ibid). Becoming digitally literate requires the ability to make critical, informed judgments about information found online. Warschauer in an interview with Ancker (2002:2) uses a broader definition and sees electronic literacies as "reading and writing and the knowledge, skills and practices that take place in the electronic medium", referring mainly to "the way people read and write

using the internet". He later suggests (2006) that electronic literacies consist of four overlapping sets of literacies: computer literacy; information literacy; multimedia literacy and; computer-mediated communication literacy (CMC). While computer literacy refers to fluency around computer use, information literacy deals with "one's ability to determine the extent of information needed, access such information in an efficient and effective manner as well as evaluate the said information and incorporate it into one's knowledge base" (Warschauer, 2006:4). CMC deals with interpretation and writing skills needed via the online media and multimedia literacy speaks to the "ability to interpret and create products using a variety of digitized semiotic resources i.e. texts, sound, video and images" (2006:4). This study is primarily concerned with the latter as well as computer-mediated collaboration to some extent.

An electronic literacy framework therefore presupposes a wider definition of literacy to include multiple literacies and includes "mastering processes that are deemed valuable in particular societies, cultures and contexts" (Warschauer, 1999:172).

Researchers such as Warschauer (1999 and 2006), Warschauer and Kern (2000) and Snyder (2002) have referred to the huge potential of electronic literacies to influence teaching and learning in a positive way. Warschauer (1999) and Warschauer and Kern (2000) particularly look at the English classroom. Warschauer and Kern suggest that through the use of ICTs language teaching has become "more exciting yet at the same time more complex" (2000:12). Snyder (2003:15) suggests that the Internet in particular can "broaden the literacy experience from the world of print by incorporating video, hyperlinks to archival information, soundclips, supporting databases and related software". Another of the benefits of an electronic literacies approach in teaching in general is that it assumes a more learner-centered approach to learning as learners become involved as co-investigators in their own learning and co-constructors of knowledge (Warschauer and Kern, 2000:182 and Warschauer, 1999:11). The role of the teacher also changes. Luke (2000) suggests that:

> (R)ather than having threatening implications for teachers' work, learning and teaching in cyberspace have the potential to enhance and expand teacher

> repertoires by taking tremendous pressure off their shoulders to be the sole source of classroom knowledge and interpretation (p.90).

This means that in some respects, teachers' work may be reduced. Warschauer and Whittaker (1997) argue that opportunities for more "decentred interaction" are created. To take advantage of these opportunities the teacher must learn to be "a guide on the side" rather than a "sage on the stage"(p.31).

Blogging is one form of computer mediated collaboration which Warschauer (1999, 2006) identifies as one of the forms of electronic literacies. Knobel and Lankshear (2006) view blogging as "the active sociality of New Literacy" where blogging is viewed as participation within a social context. Weblogs, or blogs as they are more commonly called, are a type of website created in a web journal format and can be directed at a specific group or at a larger community (Leander and Lewis 2008:59).

Blogging, like other electronic literacy practices of learners cannot be divorced from learners' social contexts. One of the literacy practices of the Grade 10 students observed is the creation of their own weblogs. These will be analysed as part of their general classroom literacy practices.

In this study, I am interested to find out how the roles of the particular English teacher and his students are affected with the integration of technology into the English lesson and how students respond to these changes.

2.4.1 Electronic Literacy in South African Schools

South Africa is the most technologically advanced country in Africa (Lelliott, Pendlebury and Enslin, 2000) and has the highest number of domains and websites within the South African Development Community, SADC. However, limited physical access to computers in schools as well as inadequate teacher training hinder the integration of ICTs and other electronic forms of literacy in education. The uptake of ICTs in schools across South Africa is uneven. This problem has been highlighted in the few studies that have been conducted in the field in South Africa. Some research has been conducted by

Organisations such as INTEL Teach to the Future and the Microsoft Partners in Learning Programmes specially focusing on their particular interventions in South Africa in the areas of teacher training and support. However, very few of them address the specific electronic literacy practices of young people. On the whole, there is a paucity of research in the field of electronic literacies and ICTs in South Africa and even less on their integration into the English classroom, which makes it an "emerging domain of enquiry"(Czerniewicz and Hodgkinson-Williams, 2005:2).

Czerniewicz and Hodgkinson-Williams (2005) as well the Department of Education's White paper on e-Education (2004) allude to the possible educational benefits to be derived as a result of the integration of ICTs into the curriculum which in turn may help to address some of the difficult educational challenges faced by the country. The Department of Education's White paper on e-Education (2004) acknowledges such perceived benefits. Although an increasing number of schools are gaining access to computers, this figure is substantially low as only 27.6% of schools in the country had access to computers in 2005 for teaching and learning according to an INTEL report (Czerniewicz and Brown, 2005). The INTEL study also revealed a general lack of integration of ICTs within learning areas within those schools that had received INTEL training and even among those that had access to computers. The report therefore highlights the need for further research to ascertain whether or not lack of access is really the issue or if implementation is being hindered by other issues.

Based on a study conducted in the Western Cape of South Africa on digital literacies in marginalized contexts, Prinsloo (2005) emphasizes the embeddedness of literacy, in particular new literacies, and warns that claims such as children's out-of-school encounters are richer than their in-school encounters are misplaced in the general South African context. Such claims in general usually refer to children in developed contexts and to middle class children such as those whom I observed, who have access to sophisticated forms of technology. However, the students and teachers Prinsloo encountered in the Western Cape had no experience with computers in their everyday out of school activities.

With regard to access to computers and the integration of electronic forms of literacy in teaching and learning, there are huge differences within and between urban and rural centers.

It is hoped that this research will provide a snap shot of one English teacher's practice and integrating relevant theory would add to the developing body of research in the field.

2.4.2 Gender and Electronic Literacy

In order to explore the question of gender and electronic literacy which is a relatively new field of research, it is important to consider various debates about gender and schooling and gender and literacy. The issue of gender and schooling and gender and literacy is a highly contested field. A number of debates in the field have developed in the United Kingdom and Australia with extensive research being conducted in those contexts. While there seems to be general consensus that a gender gap in literacy exists, the reasons for such a gap are contested as the issue is very complex.

Some debates in the field (Millard, 1997; Ofsted, 2003) suggest gendered differences in school participation in general as well as gender differences in academic achievement. These debates have been ongoing and historically tended to view the advantages of such a division as being located on the side of girls (Millard, 1997: 26). Educational initiatives in the United Kingdom and Australia to redress this imbalance have led to an apparent closing of the gender gap with an improvement of girls' performance but with the seeming disadvantaging of boys as a consequence. Subsequent debates suggest that boys lag behind girls in schooling (Ofsted, 2003). Concerns about boys' low level of achievement in schooling have led to concerns about boys' poor engagement with literacy. On the other hand, the suggestion is that girls more readily conform to schooled literacy practices. Such arguments position boys as having poorer reading and writing skills in relation to girls and as being interested in different genres of texts from girls (Millard, 1997:57). For example, Millard states:

> (boys) favoured genres are less in harmony with the English curriculum and the choices made for them in class by their teachers. The largest contrast is between boys' interest in action and adventure and girls' preference for emotion and relationships (1997:75).

Millard's view represents a stereotyping of boys and girls' reading preferences which could be problematic.

Some of the debates also refer to the English classroom as a feminised space where the teaching profession in general is viewed as feminised thus contributing to boys' overall disengagement with schooling. Reading and writing, that is the traditional conception of literacy, are therefore seen as the sole domain of women (Millard, 1997:28). This view of boys and girls' engagement with literacy seems to demonstrate a disconnection between aspects of masculinity and aspects of schooling (Moss, 2007) and can be located within the broader discourse of the school reform agenda and improving school performance. Consequently, the need for male teachers who would be role models for boys as well as bring different perspectives to schooling in general and hence to the English classroom has been often advocated as one way of addressing the general problem of boys and schooling (Martino and Kehler, 2007:409).

However, recent research on gender and literacy in general is challenging these beliefs about gender engagement with literacy and has begun to resist the apparent stereotyping of males (Rowan et al, 2002; Moss, 2007; Sanford, 2005). One of the major problems highlighted is the claim that the gender based literacy reform agenda tends to:

> treat boys as a homogenous group and hence relies on explanations that are grounded in a belief that some essential or rational difference exists between boys and girls (Rowan et al., 2002:29).

Rowan et al, Moss and Sanford (ibid) have been more cautious about ascribing fixed binary definitions to boys and girls' interests. Rather, they hint at differences between and within categories. Martino and Kehler (2007) challenge the view that male role models are needed for the teaching of English in particular as a means of enhancing boys' achievements. They argue that this will not guarantee that boys would necessarily become more engaged in school-based literacy practices. They highlight the need to consider other factors contributing to boys' poor performance (Martino and Kehler,

2007). Alloway et al. (2002) stress that a gendered pattern of literate practice and orientation to learning, as outlined above, needs to be understood within the broader context of boys' social practices of performing and negotiating their masculinities.

As regards gender and electronic literacy, some studies e.g. (Alloway and Freebody (2002); Alloway, Gilbert et al, 2002; Sanford 2005/2006) have suggested that boys dominate new technological spaces whereas girls have a lower level of engagement. Alloway, Gilbert et al claim that even though boys are

> less successful than girls in their ways of negotiating and participating in conventional literacy classrooms…they are more successful in terms of engaging with the multimodal literacies and literacy contexts of the future (and display) strong interest in electronic and graphic forms of literate practices (2002:4).

Boys as a group may thus be advantaged due to their active engagement with electronic modes of literacy, a possibility that is not acknowledged with a narrow definition of literacy as the ability to read and write. Catherine Beavis (in Snyder 2002), in a Deakin University study to explore "what incorporating computer games into the literacy curriculum might entail" found high levels of interest from boys even those who were considered 'less academically strong" while the involvement of the girls' was more variable (in Snyder, 2002:57). The difference in the way boys and girls engage with electronic literacies has also been highlighted in a study conducted by Tella (1992) on gender and email. She suggests that boys seem to favour games while girls prefer to engage in more practical activities (p.46). While males seemed to engage better with hardware, girls demonstrated the ability to provide detailed analysis in their writing. On the other hand, Gee (2003) in the book, *What Video Games have to teach us about Learning and Literacy*, found that girls and women are quickly catching up with boys and men in their interaction with video games, even though they often play different games (p.11).

Sanford and Blair (2004) and Sanford (2005/2006), also resist traditional notions about boys and girls' engagement with literacy in the light of new technologies. They suggest that there is noticeable gender difference in their engagement with new technologies. They also suggest that "the influence of technology in the form of computer games,

Internet searches and online chat rooms have shaped the ways boys react with texts and which texts they choose to read" (p. 459). Boys are therefore "morphing" their literacy practices to respond to the needs of a changing society. So, although it may seem as if some boys choose to resist classroom activities by ignoring them or defying the teacher, their practices are a way of shaping classroom activities to suit their purposes (p. 458).

While I agree that there are differences in the way boys and girls engage with schooling in general and literacy in particular, I do believe that we should be careful not to over generalize and ignore the complexity of the nature of their involvement. The following statement by Kalantzis and Cope (2000:121) about the teaching and learning of literacy, conditions my perspective:

> What they (students) know, who they feel themselves to be, and how they orient themselves to education varies because their lifeworlds vary; because life as they have subjectively experienced it varies markedly. As a consequence, people experience education differently, and their outcomes are different.

In light of this statement, it is therefore inevitable that boys and girls would experience schooling and literacy differently as their lifeworlds differ. However, not all boys share one universal socialization experience neither do girls. Hence, their performance would also differ. Children's engagement with literacy in my view relates to how they have been socialized into literacy.

Additionally, like Sanford (2005/2006) I am of the view that by looking at the question of boys' engagement with literacy within a much broader definition of literacy, one would see a change in the patterns of engagement and find that boys do engage with literacy but on a different level. While it is true that boys tend to have different reading preferences from girls, the onus should be on the teacher to introduce different genres of texts, with a variety of topics and modes that would be engaging for all students.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the theoretical framework around which this research is framed and have presented key perspectives pertinent to the study. I have located the

arguments within New Literacy Studies and in particular the notion of Literacy as Social practice. Literacy as social practice as defined by Street (1984), Gee (1996) and Barton et al (2000) among others, describes the social and cultural embeddedness of literacy. In my data analysis I will show how the electronic literacy practices of the Grade 10 students and teacher observed are located within their sociocultural contexts. Within their social contexts, they have their own Discourses, ways of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting (Gee, 1996) which influence the way they engage with literacy in general and electronic literacy in particular. Hence the concept of literacy as social practice is relevant to my work.

The concept of Multiliteracies and the notion of a multimodal approach to meaning making are of particular relevance as well. I have therefore used the work of Cope and Kalantzis (2000) and the New London Group (1996) as the basis for my arguments. I have argued that the notion of Multiliteracies presupposes multiple forms of literacy of which electronic literacy is an integral part. The concept of multimodality presupposes the use of different semiotic modes i.e. verbal, print, visual, gestural and sound in meaning making. In the age of digital and electronic media, a multimodal approach to literacy also has significant implications for the experience of texts. As a result Kress (2003) and others argue that we are witnessing a 'shift to the visual' from verbal and print-based modes.

I have also drawn on various literature on electronic and digital literacies some of which examine the use of ICTs in the English classroom and on the work of Warschauer (1999, 2002, 2006) among others. Using Warschauer's definition, I have defined electronic literacy to mean multimedia literacy and computer-mediated collaboration (Warschauer, 2006). Literature dealing with the use of electronic forms of literacy in South Africa (Czerniewicz and Hodgkinson-Williams, 2005, Czerniewicz and Brown, 2005, Prinsloo, 2005, Kajee, 2005) was consulted. Two important points emphasized were, that access to computers and ICTs does not necessarily mean their integration into the curriculum and, since literacy is embedded, one should be careful not to assume that the results achieved

in privileged contexts with the integration of ICTs into the curriculum would necessarily be achieved in marginalized contexts.

To explore the question of gender and electronic literacy, I have consulted literature on gender and schooling and gender and literacy (Millard, 1997; Alloway and Freebody, 2002 and Martino and Kehler, 2007 among others). The general view expressed was that there is a gendered difference in the way in which boys and girls engage with schooling and literacy. It was suggested that there is a gender gap in literacy as most girls are out performing boys in literacy and schooling in general. However, with regard to ICTs and electronic literacy, boys tend to be more engaged with technology than girls.

The next chapter examines my overall research design and approach which have guided the collection and analysis of data.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter sets out the research design of this study. It provides a discussion of the research approach, the research site and a note on the research participants. It also provides a description of the methods and techniques used for the collection of data as well as techniques for data analysis.

3.1 Research Site

As I have previously mentioned, my research was conducted at a Muslim High school in a small community outside of Johannesburg and focused on two Grade 10 classes and one English teacher. The decision to include a question on gender in my research questions was based on the fact that the classes are grouped according to gender according to religious practices of the school. The English classroom in which my observations took place, was fitted with a desktop computer and monitor, and printer mainly for use by the teacher, an overhead digital projector and an Activboard (please refer to glossary), which is connected to the laptop computer. There is also continuous internet access within the classroom. As a result of the teacher's innovative use of ICTs in his English classroom, one of the parents donated the Activboard and overhead projector for use in the classroom. This is testimony to the affluence of this small community and the involvement of the parents as well.

3.2 Research Participants

The focus of my research was on observing approximately thirty-five male and female Grade 10 students, aged between 14 and 16, and their English teacher. 14 of these students also participated in group interviews. The teacher, who, I refer to as Mr Halim, is very enthusiastic and passionate about his work and about using technology to enhance his practice as a teacher. He was one of the recipients of the innovative teachers' award for 2006, an initiative of Microsoft South Africa and SchoolNet

South Africa. This award is part of a worldwide initiative that recognizes teachers' innovative use of ICTs in the classroom. Mr. Halim and his students were central to the entire research process. While I had planned to interview a sample of about eight to ten students from each of the two classes, only eight females and six males agreed to be interviewed.

3.3 Research Approach

This research is based on a qualitative approach to data collection. The decision to use a qualitative approach was based on the fact that it is useful for observing people in their natural environment and for research where the focus is on the process rather than the product. A qualitative study is "essentially descriptive" in nature (Gillham, 2000:10). In my first data analysis chapter, I describe the forms of electronic literacies used in the classroom and the purposes for which they are used. Knobel and Lankshear (1999:84) refer to qualitative research as "field research" where data collection tools primarily involve observations of "real life events". According to Gillham (2000:10), such methods focus on "the kind of evidence 'what people tell you, what they do' that will enable you to understand the meaning of what is going on." Consequently, participants are directly involved in data construction (Knobel and Lankshear, 1999:88). This research is therefore a qualitative case study using data collection methods such as interviews and classroom observations since this type of approach was most suited to answering my research questions which are:

- What kinds of electronic technologies does the Grade 10 teacher use in the English classroom and for what purposes?
- How do learners engage with electronic forms of literacy in the English classroom?
- Does gender play a role in how learners engage with these forms of literacy? If so, what is the nature of this role?

3.3.1 Case Study

Knobel and Lankshear (1999: 95) describe a case study as "the intensive study of a bounded contemporary phenomenon, such as a classroom". Gilham (2000:1) has a similar definition of a case study. He sees it as an investigation of a particular case to "answer specific research questions… and which seeks a range of different kinds of evidence…" Based on definitions by Yin (1994); Knobel and Lankshear (1999); Gillham, (2000) and Wallace (1998), a case study is an in depth, descriptive and interpretive study that focuses on a single bounded instance. It is based on real-life contexts, and relies on multiple sources of data collection.

This research is an in depth Qualitative Case study that focuses on a particular instance of the uses of various forms of electronic literacy among two Grade 10 English classes and their teacher. The focus was on the electronic literacy practices of the teacher and students in their classroom space looking at the kinds of electronic media used in the classroom and for what purposes as well as how studnets engaged with these forms of media.

I have collected multiple sources of evidence such as field notes from classroom observations, interview data from two group interviews with the students and one interview with the teacher as well as artifacts. Gillham (2000:1) highlights the need to collect "different kinds of evidence", to make the study valid and to provide the best answers to one's research questions.

Additionally, one of the features of a case study is that is interpretive and relies on thick descriptions. I have used four thick descriptions in my data analysis that were created based on my interpretations of my field notes and observation data.

3.4 Methods and Techniques of Data Collection

The main sources of data in this research were guided by the aims of the research and the research approach, a qualitative case study. Data collection techniques therefore comprised: non-participant observations of two English classes for a period of three to four weeks with a total of twenty-three lessons being observed as well as an in-depth face-to-face semi-structured interview with the teacher. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with the boys and girls. Artifacts were collected consisting of samples of students' blogs and copies of their PowerPoint presentations. I also have a photograph of the classroom to illustrate the use of the different electronic media.

The decision to collect multiple forms of data was informed by research literature on triangulation which proposes the collection of multiple sources of information or different kinds of evidence and from "different methodological standpoints" (Gillham, 2000:13). The main objective was to obtain different perspectives and "collect data and insights not apparent or unobtainable by one method alone" (Hook, 1981:254). While observations allowed me to document different uses of electronic forms of literacy in the English classroom and students' observable engagement with these, interviews allowed me to ask the teacher and students questions directly relating to their engagement.

3.4.1 Non-participant observations

I had intended to observe at least twenty-eight lessons but the length of time spent was affected by other activities such as a cricket tour, in which students were involved. The actual number of lessons observed was twenty-three which includes eleven double periods. During these observations, comprehensive field notes were taken and these have formed the basis of my data analysis. I began my field notes by writing the date and the teacher's introduction into the lesson. I then noted the forms of electronic literacy being used and made detailed notes of the students' interaction as well as significant moments during the lessons such as the teacher's frequent comments on his pedagogy and his solicitation of students' comments about the glories of technology. I have also made

verbatim transcription of some of the classroom discourse (marked in inverted commas in field notes) as well as used my own words to summarize discussions. Being cognizant of the "observer's paradox" (Labov 1970 in Swann, 1994:27), I had hoped to be as unobtrusive as possible in order not to corrupt or influence the data collected. Labov suggests that the mere act of the researcher's presence is inclined to alter the natural setting. Nevertheless, the teacher's frequent comments such as "look how technology is helping us" (*Field notes of boys' lesson, of August 30*) and constant praise of the use of technology seemed to suggest undue influence of the researcher's presence as it appears as though the comments were made for my benefit.

3.4.2 Interviews

"Interviewing includes a wide variety of forms and a multiplicity of uses" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000:645). The purpose of the interviews was to elicit information as another means of data collection and particularly to explore issues that I had observed during the lessons which I could not discuss as a non-participant observer as well as to facilitate triangulation. I conducted three semi-structured group interviews with eight females and six male students. One of the reasons for having group interviews was to make students feel more comfortable in a group and less intimidated by the researcher. The main reason for conducting semi-structured interviews was to allow for greater flexibility during the sessions. Semi-structured interviews are said to be useful in helping the researcher "probe responses; develop themes that emerge in the course of the interview that provide valuable and relevant information" (Knobel and Lankshear, 1999:98). During the interviews I was able to follow up on comments made during the lessons or things I might have observed. For instance, during one of the lessons, one of the male students complained that they had "too much work "(*Field notes August 15*). I was able to ask him during the interview to explain why he made such a comment. He explained that with the use of technology in English their workload had increased. The interview questions were thus framed around: what technologies the students used in the English classroom and how they learnt to use them; the importance of ICTs to their future; and whether the use of ICTs in the English classroom makes a difference to the teaching and learning of English. (Please refer to Appendix C for a copy of the interview questions).

While the interview with the females started promptly and lasted for the scheduled forty-five minutes, the interview with the boys started approximately fifteen minutes as two of them were writing an exam. The interview was also disturbed by singing and music coming from the neighbouring classroom. As a result of this disturbance the tape recording was not clear. Thus a second interview was required with the boys.

The interview with the English teacher lasted approximately forty-five minutes and was framed around his motivation(s) for incorporating electronic literacies in the English classroom; the nature of training he received in the use of these technologies; his view of the learners' response to this 'new' approach to English teaching and his views on the implications for teaching and learning of English. (Please refer to Appendix D for a copy of the interview questions). All of interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed.

3.5 Methods and Techniques for Data Analysis

My analysis of the data is in no way intended to be a criticism of the teacher's performance nor of the students' efforts.

Knobel and Lankshear (1999:87) refer to data analysis as a "process of making sense or meaning" from detailed descriptions taken during field research. I have analysed the data collected using the theoretical frameworks of New Literacy Studies, Multiliteracies and multimodality as well as relevant literature on electronic literacies, gender and schooling and gender and literacy including gender and electronic literacy.

Data analysis was conducted through the use of thematic content analysis. This involved surfacing themes and concepts from the interviews and field notes. I also used the field notes to draw up a table documenting different types of electronic literacies and technologies used and the various activities and tasks undertaken to provide a general overview of the 23 lessons observed.

Throughout the analysis I looked for patterns in the data using the principle of triangulation which involved checking the validity of observations by moving between observation and interview data and looking for discrepancies in the data. The process also included analysis of key teacher and student claims taken from our interviews and looking for evidence of these claims in the classroom observations and artifacts.

3.6 Transcriptions

Transcriptions were made of all of the audio recorded interviews. The following conventions were used in the transcriptions and field notes:

?	Indicates inaudible speech and lack of comprehension of speech
(…)	Indicates a gap in the data.
“”	Inverted commas indicate direct quotes from participants during classroom observations. Data inserted without quotes indicate reported speech.

I found the transcription of the group interviews particularly challenging as I had some difficulty understanding what some of the students were saying especially when a number of them were speaking simultaneously. This was as a result of my unfamiliarity with certain South African accents. However, I tried as far as possible to make word-for-word transcriptions of what was being said.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Swann suggests that “watching people and observing what they do has certain ethical considerations” (1994:28). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) also suggest that “because the objects of inquiry in interviewing are human beings, researchers must take extreme care

to avoid any harm to them" (p.662). With this is mind careful ethical considerations were taken not to coerce nor cause any undue harm to participants.
Consequently, written informed consent was sought from the Principal of the school, each of the participants and their parents for their participation in the research. (see Appendix E and F for letters).

Finally, approval was received from the University of the Witwatersrand Ethics Committee for the conduct of the research and the audio recording of interviews.

3.8 Conclusion

I have stated that the overall research design of this study is based on a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. The decision to use a qualitative approach was based on the fact that I was observing students in their natural classroom environment with the intention of providing detailed descriptions of what was observed. A case study methodology was used as I conducted an in-depth, bounded study of the electronic literacy practices of one English teacher and his students where multiple sources of evidence were used. These were field notes, semi-structured interviews and artifact collection. Since this study is based on a single case, the results are not be generalizable to other contexts. However, I draw out implications for other contexts in the last chapter of the report.

In the next chapter, I present an analysis of the data collected. This chapter deals with the forms of electronic literacies used in the classroom and the purposes for which they are used. The chapter also analyses the effects of their use on the English curriculum.

CHAPTER 4: "ENHANCING LEARNING?" USES AND PURPOSES OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA IN MR. HALIM'S ENGLISH CLASSROOM.

4.1. Introduction

In order to answer my first research question, this chapter examines the various forms of electronic media used in the Grade 10 English classroom as well as the purposes for which they are used. I then look at the effects of their use in the English classroom focusing on the changing English curriculum; the role of the English teacher and the state of the text in this classroom. I argue that the forms of electronic media used in Mr. Halim's English classroom are closely linked to the literacy practices of the teacher and students as competent users of technology. I show that various forms of electronic literacy are used for multimodal purposes and primarily for the study of literature. I also argue that the pedagogy in the English classroom has changed with the expansion of the English teacher's role to include mediator of technology and with a change in the status of classroom texts from print-based texts to the use of visual texts and images.

I begin with a description of the first day of my observations at Al-Nur school.

4.2. Electronic literacies in the classroom: Kinds and Purposes

August 13 2007. Description of classroom visit.

> It is approximately 2:00 p.m. on a sunny winter's afternoon. It is the middle of Term 3. As I turn into Al-Nur *, I breathe a sigh of relief. It was a long drive. I immediately notice a change in scenery. I am struck by the beautiful big houses, some mansions, with their well manicured lawns and pretty flowers. This is the community where most of the students in the study live. Everything looks new and well maintained. The parapets are clean. There isn't a small house in sight. I arrive at the school and head for Mr. Halim's classroom. It is locked with a security gate. It is a trellidor, "the ultimate crime barrier". He is obviously not around. I am approached by three girls who inform me that today's lesson is in the computer laboratory. They show me to the lab and go to their respective classes.
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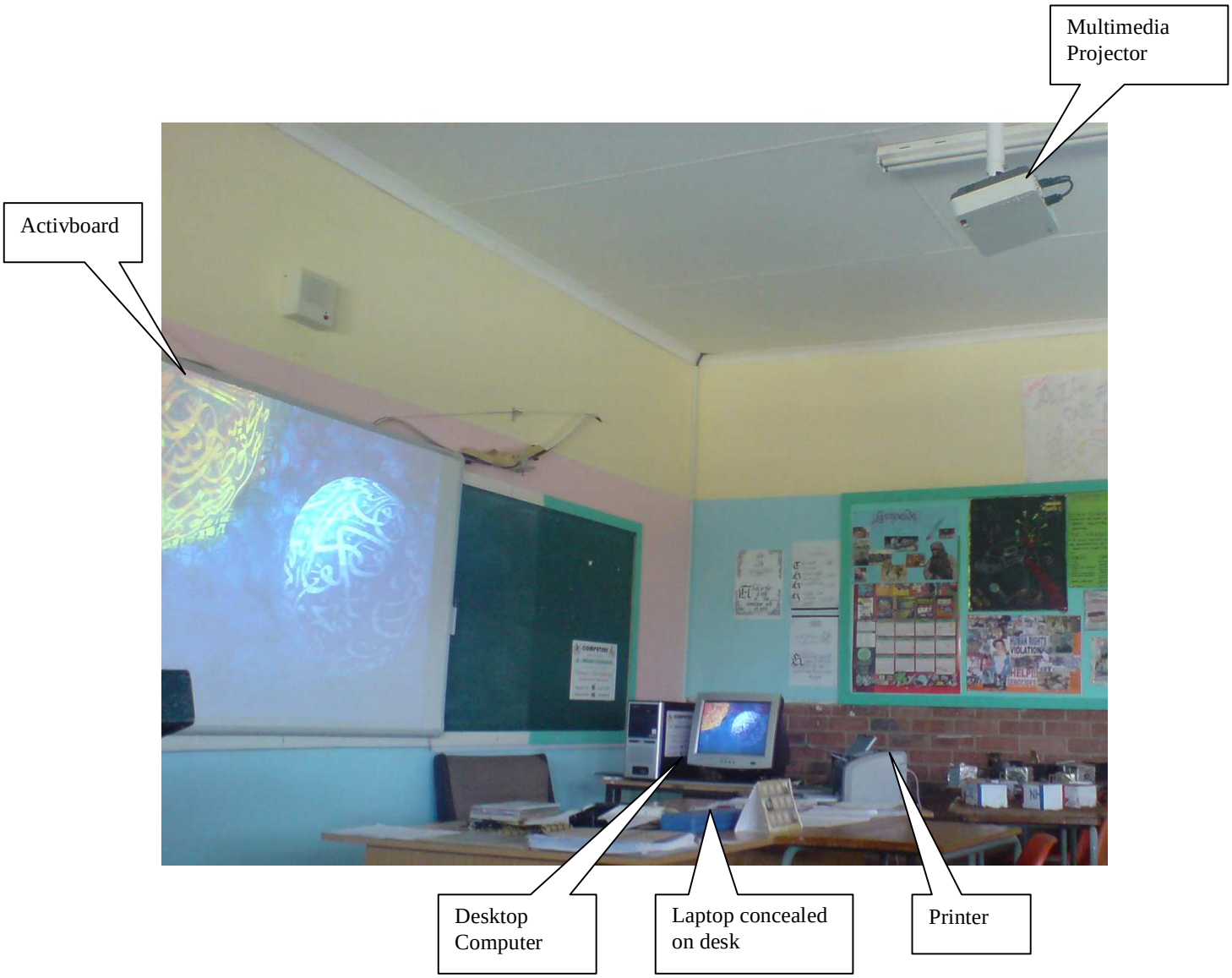
> * ***The name of the location has been changed to protect the identity of the teacher and students.***

This description presents the social context of the majority of students and the teacher at Al-Nur Muslim High school. They live in a middle class and obviously affluent neighbourhood and their literacy practices cannot be divorced from this context. This scenario as I have mentioned before, is atypical in South Africa but is fairly typical of a middle class suburban setting.

The photograph below shows Mr. Halim's classroom with some of the technologies used on a daily basis.



In this classroom, the Activboard and the laptop computer are used most extensively along with the Desktop computer. The teacher also used audiovisual equipment and software like a microphone, speakers, and Sound Forge (a digital media software which he downloaded from the Internet). There is a multimedia overhead projector which projects images for the laptop and computer onto the Activboard.

The extract below is constructed from my field notes and presents a thick description of classroom observations on August 23.

It is August 23 and I'm observing 10A's lesson. I arrive at Mr. Halim's class and he is waiting for the girls. They arrive shortly after the bell rings and he greets them with the usual "As-Salaam-o-Alaikum" to which they respond, "Wa-Alaikum-us-Salaam". He then tells them to organise themselves while he prepares for the lesson. The girls begin to stick poems they had written the previous week on the display board. Mr. Halim addresses them, "…We're starting a new poem and (we'll do) a play, the movie *Cry the Beloved Country*". We'll pick up more or less from where we stopped yesterday, just for 5 or 10 mins…" Then I'm going to switch from that computer and go to the Internet, to a particular site which you may find disturbing and you can guess what poem we're doing. I'm not saying the exact title". The girls listen attentively. Mr. Halim then tells them to switch off the lights in preparation for the scene they are going to watch. He then attempts to play a scene from a DVD of *Cry the Beloved Country* on the computer and projected onto the Activboard. However, there is no sound. He comments, "that's technology". One of the girls shouts, "Sir, did you plug in the speakers?" Another suggests, "perhaps the mute is on".

Mr. Halim then decides to take the DVD out of the computer and reinsert it. At last there is sound and the movie begins. However, there are other windows that have opened up along the right side of the screen. Mr. Halim has had enough! One of the girls goes to the Activboard and closes them. The film begins without further obstruction. Mr. Halim uses his infrared pointer to highlight aspects of the story he wants the girls to focus on. He says, "They're walking through Orlando. Take a note of the surroundings". I'm giving you clues as to the poem we'll be studying".

The girls watch attentively. In the meantime, Mr. Halim goes to the Laptop and calls up Internet site for part two of the lesson.

When the scene is finished, he stops the movie and switches over to an Internet site which is now projected from laptop onto the Activboard.

From this description, we get a sense of the first few minutes of one of Mr. Halim's classes and some of the forms of electronic literacies used in this well-resourced and networked classroom. It demonstrates how, within five minutes of the lesson, Mr. Halim used about four different forms of electronic media: a computer; DVD; multimedia projector and Activboard, for his lesson. The use of different electronic media and software was a common feature in this classroom and as one of the boys stated in an interview, "it's his teaching method".

At first glance, Mr. Halim's English classroom seems like a typical South African classroom with chairs and tables arranged in rows facing the front and a long display board running down the right wall of the classroom showing samples of students' work. A closer look at the front of the class reveals a laptop computer, a desktop computer, an Activboard, a digital projector hanging from the ceiling, a printer, and speakers, several pedagogical CDs and DVDs. This classroom is unique within his school as it is the only classroom of its kind apart from the computer laboratory. This is testimony to this teacher's passion for technology and his determination to integrate electronic forms of literacy into the English lessons. This classroom is also unique in that it is the only classroom apart from the computer laboratory that I have observed with a security gate. This demonstrates that security is a vital issue in this context where expensive equipment is used.

In the table below, I have mapped out the electronic forms of literacy used and activities students engaged in during my observations in order to provide an overview of the 23 lessons observed across the two classes, indicated by 'boys' and 'girls'.

DATE	TECHNOLOGIES / E-LITERACIES	ACTIVITIES
August 13 2007 (boys) Visual Literacy (double lesson)	• Computers- computer lab • Internet search: Google • Flash disk: images saved.	1. Analyse a political cartoon, a comic strip and an ad. 2. Show the main message of each one. 3. Show what aspects make it effective 4. Represent all of this on a **PowerPoint** presentation 5. Elect one person to present your interpretations to the class
Aug 15 (boys) Literature in focus (double lesson)	• Activboard/ projector • Laptop: CD Rom • Computer: internet: search • Computer/ blogging	1. Go to www.islam.com. Ask "mufti' if God is so good why is there so much suffering? **(Homework)** 2. Download responses 3. Search reformatory schools and post a comment onto blogs. 4. Do character analysis on worksheet. 5. Sort out blogs for homework
August 16 (girls) Poetry in action (single lesson)	• Microphone and speakers • Laptop • Activboard • PowerPoint slides on how to analyse a poem	1. Recite and record poems they wrote in their groups. 2. One student reads a poem she has written without the group. 3. To put poems on blogs (homework). 4. Play back and analyse using **PowerPoint** notes. 5. Continue analysis of poem "City Johannesburg by Mongane W. Serote. 6. Each group deals with a different aspect. 7. Put analysis on PowerPoint slides
August 20 (girls) Visual literacy Continuation of previous activity that took	• Computers in the computer lab • Microsoft PowerPoint (Return to class)	1. Continue analysis of political cartoon, comic strip and advertisement 2. Prepare PowerPoint slides.

place before observations. (double lesson)	• Activboard • Laptop • Interactive pen (see glossary)	3. Save work on flask disk 4. Oral presentations. Slides with images projected onto active board. 5. Girls submit **PowerPoint** presentations on flash disk.
August 23 (boys) Poetry in Action (double lesson)	• Microphone and Speakers • Laptop • Activ board • PowerPoint	1. Recite and record poems that they wrote (2 groups). The others are not finished. They continue to work 2. Students were previously given the task of preparing PowerPoint slides on a poem studied prior to my observations. Since they had not completed this task they continued with typing the slides 3. **PowerPoint** slides explored different themes in the poem.
August 23 (girls) Watch scene from Cry the Beloved country. Poetry (double lesson)	• Activboard and projector • Laptop • Desktop computer • Internet: Google search • DVD • Infrared pointer	1. Watch scene from "Cry the Beloved Country" played on laptop and projected onto active board. 2. Read and view newspaper clips downloaded from the Internet about abandoned babies. 3. Discuss the question of abandoned babies briefly. 4. Listen to poem "an abandoned bundle" being read by the teacher. 5. Briefly analyse the poem (without seeing it). 6. Prepare lesson to teach the poem to the Grade 9s using **PowerPoint** slides. 7. Detailed analysis of poem to be done for homework based on worksheets and study notes.

August 27 (girls) (double lesson)	• ActivBoard • Laptop • Flashdisk • Digital video camera (teacher's)	1. Group presentations, based on novel "Cry the Beloved Country" 2. Oral performance on various themes in novel. 3. **PowerPoint** slides presented. Include both visual and written text. 4. Teacher films some of the performances.
August 27 (boys) (double lesson)	• ActivBoard • Laptop • Flashdisks	1. 3 Group presentations. All of the groups not ready. 2. Oral performance by one group (not well prepared). 3. 2nd group does **PowerPoint** presentation. Visual images of Sophiatown shown. 4. Others talk through the visuals. 5. 3rd group does oral presentation 6. PowerPoint slides presented. Visual images shown. 7. Boys present a poem they have written.
August 30 (boys) Poem "an abandoned bundle" (the computer is	• ActivBoard • Laptop	1. Discuss in detail the issue of abandoned babies

offline hence there is no internet connection) (double lesson)	• Projector	2. Listen to the teacher reading the poem. 3. Analyse the poem without seeing it. 4. Collect handouts including poem and worksheets. 5. Add to **PowerPoint** slides previously started by females on how to teach poem to the Grade 9s.
August 30 (girls) Continuation of poetry lesson on “abandoned babies”.	• Laptop • DVD “Cry the Beloved Country • Desktop comptuter	1. Holiday assignment handed out. 2. Watch scene from movie. 3. Students add to the **PowerPoint** presentations on “how to teach poem “ An abandoned bundle” to Grade 9s”.
September 3 (girls) (double lesson)	• Computers (lab) • Laptop • CD Rom: Grammar in Action. • ActivBoard	1. Access University of Ottawa website for grammar lesson (activity aborted as computers are offline). 2. Engage with interactive software and do activities and evaluative exercises sentences and clauses.
September 3 (boys) (double lesson)	• Laptop • CD Rom : Grammar in Action. • ActivBoard	1. Engage with interactive software 2. Do activities and evaluative exercises orally on sentences and clauses.

A total of 23 periods were observed over a three to four week period, consisting of 11 double lessons and one single lesson of which 6 double lessons were with the boys and 5 double lessons and 1 single lesson with the girls. From the overview above it is clear that the most prominent forms of electronic literacy being used in Mr. Halim's classroom were the Activboard and the laptop computer. 21 out of the 23 lessons used the Activboard and laptop and in 19 out of 23 lessons PowerPoint slides were used either by the teacher or the students. The Activboard or smart board as it is sometimes called has replaced the normal chalk board and it is the screen on which all of the lessons including videos and presentations and internet sites are projected. Previously, Mr. Halim used a white sheet as the screen. The Activboard has now replaced that sheet. Almost all of the students interviewed said that they viewed this as one of the most important pieces of technology in the class.

> The first time sir put the Activboard on our wall… it was like wow. At the beginning we learned with a sheet. Yea, but still it was fun because we were learning on a computer and then with this Activboard.
>
> (***Extract from interview with girls***)

A cursory glance at the table above reveals that the Activboard and laptop were used for various purposes and for different literacy events such as the recording of poetry as well as to project the text and film of the novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country.*

The laptop computer has also been used to prepare written tasks and other presentations either by the teacher or students. These were prepared using Microsoft PowerPoint and included both written text and visual images. In the description below of the lesson of August 23, the students prepared PowerPoint slides as their main task on how to teach the poem, which they had been studying, "An Abandoned Bundle", to the Grade 9s.

Students were also encouraged to bring their own laptops to school. However, although reference was made to this during the interview, I only witnessed one student bringing his laptop into the classroom. Pedagogical software such as a grammar CD and a DVD of a film adaptation of the novel *Cry the Beloved Country* were played on the laptop. These were also projected onto the Activboard.

Additionally, one of the tasks given to the students was to prepare a presentation using themes from the novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*. This was a culmination of a number of tasks given to them, one of which was to visit a township and interview the people living there as well as take photographs. Both classes were divided into smaller groups and students could choose what modes their presentations would take. Some groups performed short skits, illustrating a theme from the novel, one group wrote a poem but all of the groups ended their tasks with PowerPoint presentations which integrated textual and visual images.

In terms of audio visual equipment, a microphone and speakers were used mainly to record and play recorded poetry and other sound clips. During my observations, the students recorded poems which they wrote as one of their group activities. These poems were saved on the laptop using software downloaded from the Internet then played for the students to hear. They were able to listen several times to the poems and comment on whether or not they had used the appropriate tone or feeling in their recitations. In this way the students acted as performers as well as the audience for their own poetry performances.

The use of flashdisks was also common in Mr. Halim's classroom. Some of the work that was done by the students, PowerPoint slides, essays, their blogs, their poems and any assignments were saved on their flashdisks and submitted to the teacher. Work submitted in written form on paper was generally filed in portfolio files. Below I continue the thick description of the girls' lesson of August 23 to further show the uses of electronic forms of literacy in the classroom and their purposes.

Thick description 2: Girls' lesson August 23

After watching the scene from the film, Mr. Halim shows the students two Internet articles about babies being abandoned. This is directly related to the poem they will be studying. He explains to the girls that the images are sensitive and not very nice. He then asks them to jot down their immediate knee-jerk response. He then reads a section of the first article. The next article is very disturbing and is titled, "Dumped baby eaten by dogs". It is a story form the Herald, Zimbabwe. The girls emit sounds of horror. Mr. Halim then conducts a Google search on "Dumped babies" to show students. He directs the students' attention to the large number of sites about dumped babies around the world. As he goes through the list he reads, "Dumped, dumped, dumped". …" He then asks, "You've seen the quality of life in the movie "Cry the Beloved Country". What do you think of the places people were living in?" One student responds, "well, they are poor". Mr. Halim's responds by asking, "So, only poor people would dump babies?" The negative response is muted. The girls are still in shock from the images shown and the subject matter. Mr. Halim asks them to imagine what the poem is about? The girls respond, "Babies being dumped." Mr. Halim continues by asking, "How do you think these images and articles a re going to help in creating an understanding of the poem?" Some of the students respond, "create an atmosphere for us". Mr. Halim in his usual probing style asks, "Imagine if I had just come and gave you the poem immediately. What would that have done? The fact that you watched the movie" The girls respond, "Capture feeling of sorrow. Like how could people do that to your own kind?" Mr. Halim then makes a link with an incident in the novel, Cry, the Beloved Country. He then asks the students to place models of shantytowns made previously throughout the classroom to create an atmosphere for the poem. Mr Halim sets the scene by saying, "you are looking at Jabavu City in Soweto". He explains that Jabavu City is a very elite area in Soweto then reads while the girls listen intently.Mr. Halim explains that this is based on a true story then says "now look at this place (referring to the shantytown models) can you imagine the smoke oozing like a gigantic sore?" Does this place look pleasant? Does it look good?" (Girls grunt something, the teacher hardly gives them a chance to comment) He continues, "How many of you had a sore and the pus oozing from there? Look at the metaphor there. I'm reading this poem again". "Now imagine dumped baby eaten by dogs. It happens in Zimbabwe, Japan, India," and he names other places. "So please don't stereotype or generalize". He reads the poem again until the end then asks, "was the baby alive?'- Some of the girls say no, others say yes. The teacher repeats "a squirming bundle". What's squirming? When something is squirming like that? Students: It's shaking. He then asks the students "to bring all the gut feeling into the poem" and to think of the images they saw in film version of the novel, *Cry the Beloved Country.*

The students are asked to comment on the poem without having seen nor read the text. They are then asked to do a SIFT (sense, intention, feeling tone) analysis of the poem. Mr. Halim then asks rhetorically, "You haven't got the poem in front of you right? What's the feeling of the poem?" The students respond, "nausea, disgust and shame". Mr. Halim then says, "You haven't read the poem".

Continuation of description

He continues, “now I want to play up on your minds, if I had not used this (referring to the technology) and the two websites and the scenes from Orlando in *Cry the Beloved Country*, What impact the lesson would have had?” The girls respond that the poem would not be alive. Mr Halim then highlights the way in which technology has brought the poem to life and has given learners a deeper understanding of the poem. Mr. Halim then distributes handouts including the poem, a news article about a baby abandoned at birth, a brief analysis of the poem and 2 worksheets which are taken from internet sites and not teacher generated. He remarks that this is the first time for the term that he is handing out notes. The students then examine the poem looking at the figures of speech used. They discuss quite briefly the two lines “like fish caught in a net” and “like pus oozing from a gigantic sore”. They do not spend much time doing this as the next task is handed out. This is their main task. It requires them to prepare a lesson to teach the same poem to the Grade 9s. Mr. Halim tells them “Your heading will be brainstorm lesson for Grade 9s. You are going to teach the lesson. And you’ll come in this class, you’re going to use the Activboard and you are going to teach them ‘An Abandoned Bundle’.
He continues, “You are going to work with the notes in front of you. You’ve seen me do the lesson? Power point, DVD, Activboard. First you’re going to present to me”. The girls look shocked. They respond, “no”. They don’t seem too enthused about this. Mr Halim tells them that he wants to see their lesson and says “firstly, you know how to use technology” and the students say yes. He continues, “is it a normal poetry lesson? So, you know what you have to do.”
The class spends another five minutes discussing the poem and then begins their joint preparation of the Grade 9 lesson using PowerPoint.

This description also gives us further insight into how Mr. Halim views his pedagogy. What comes across as salient to him and crucial to how the students teach the poem is the use of the technology which he foregrounds when he pointed out “you’ve see me do the lesson, PowerPoint, DVD, Activboard”. Here technology seems to be his pedagogy. The students therefore had to follow his teaching model and lesson structure and do as he did. (I will return to this issue in the next section below which deals with the effects on the English curriculum).

Based on my observations, the most important application in the classroom was definitely the Internet on which Mr. Halim and students depended for research as well as the

publishing of weblogs. For the poetry lesson on "An abandoned bundle" that is described above, Mr. Halim conducted a Google search on abandoned babies to get background information for pre-reading discussion on the theme of the poem. We also see the students being provided with handouts that include notes and other information downloaded from the Internet. The description above also shows detailed discussion that took place after the girls had watched the images and read Internet stories about abandoned babies in preparation for their study of the poem. Immediate access to a large number of sites created the opportunity for such discussion. During one lesson when the classroom was offline and he was unable to access the Web, Mr Halim made comments like, "It's very difficult not having to use the Internet," (*Field notes of boys' lesson August 30 2007*) and "if we had the Internet, we could have searched in dictionary.com for the meaning" of a particular word (*Field notes, of boys' lesson August 30 2007*). In another instance he said, "Now if we had to sit today an hour in front of the computer working, it would have been a brilliantly productive lesson" (*Field notes, September 3 2007*). Here Mr. Halim is equating working online with pedagogic success. Evidently, the Internet is used extensively in Mr. Halim's classroom and for several purposes. These also include accessing images for the students' visual literacy lesson where the students downloaded cartoons, advertisements and comic strips which they linked to the novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country* (*Field notes of boys' lesson on August 13*).

The various literacy events like the recording of poetry, the analysis of poems, analysis of cartoons, comic strips and advertisements, the screening of parts of the film, *Cry the Beloved Country*, directly related to the study of literature. The only language lesson for which forms of electronic media were used was the grammar lesson of September 3. This is in keeping with Mr. Halim's own desire, stated in the interview, to "teach literature through the use of technology" with the main objective being the enhancement of the lessons. *(Extract from teacher interview).* The forms of electronic literacy used in Mr. Halim's English classroom were also for various multimodal purposes. These included recording and playing back poetry, the downloading of images for the visual literacy lessons, and for general research which involved reading of hypertext. Being electronically literate in Mr. Halim's English class therefore means having access to

sophisticated forms of technology such as laptops, cellphones with the capacity to record video, audio and take photographs and computers with access to the Internet as well as fluency around computer use which Warschauer (2006) refers to as basic computer literacy.

The next section of this chapter examines the effects, both negative and positive of the use of electronic forms of media within this particular English classroom environment as well as the role of the teacher.

4.3. Effects of electronic forms of literacy on the English classroom.

This section examines the possibilities and some of the disadvantages of using electronic forms of literacy on Mr. Halim's English classroom. I begin by looking at the role of the English teacher in the electronic classroom. I then explore the effects of an electronic literacies approach in the English curriculum at the micro, classroom level. I conclude the section with a look at the status of the text in this English classroom.

4.4. The changing role of the English teacher?

One of the key roles of a South African teacher as spelt out in the Department of Education's "Norms and Standards for Educators" document is that of "learning mediator". Mr. Halim has demonstrated that he is more than a mediator of learning in English but he is also a mediator of the use of technology as he teaches students how to use electronic forms of technology. This role is not usually associated with that of an English teacher but is rather viewed as the domain of the computer teacher. Within this classroom space and with the introduction of new ways of teaching and learning Mr. Halim has been involved with teaching students how to use the new forms of media as he sees this as central to his role as a teacher of English literacy. In order to participate fully in the English lessons, students needed to be 'aufait' with the use of all the technologies

used by the teacher. It was therefore Mr. Halim's role to teach them how to use them in his class. In my interview with the girls, they highlighted how much they were helped by him to interact with various electronic literacies in the classroom.

> F2: And the Activboard… we learned together, at the same time, just like that.
> F3: But we started exploring more Internet and recording on computers, all that only with him.
> F? Yeah, we learnt a lot together with Mr. Halim. I think it's quite interesting.
> F3: We got easier with it as Mr. Halim went through the language course. So that If there was a problem, then we could like, troubleshoot it with him.
> *(Extract from interview with female students)*

From this extract one can see that not only have the girls learnt to use technology but are 'living' the technology as words like 'troubleshoot" suggest that ICT terms have infiltrated their speech.

Yet, another of the roles of a South African educator as envisaged in the Norms and Standards document is that of "designer of learning programmes and materials". The English teacher would therefore design programmes and materials suitable for the teaching of English. With the aid of computer software and the Internet, Mr. Halim is no longer the sole designer of learning programmes and materials for his students but can rely on pedagogical software already designed or the help of the Internet to provide suitable material for his classes. With regard to the text being studied for literature Mr. Halim downloaded some of his notes and activities from various Internet sites. Thus, in the lesson described above, the students were given handouts which comprised an analysis of poem "An abandoned Bundle". Consequently, the teacher was not the principal source of information within the classroom, reflecting another change in his role as English teacher. Usually, the traditional sources of information and authority within the classroom are the teacher and texts such as course books and dictionaries especially in the English classroom where an important source of information and authority is the set literary text. However, in the Grade 10 English classes observed, these sources of information and authority have shifted from the teacher and the literary text to the Internet and other electronic based resources. Mr. Halim also recognizes and embraces this shift as he says in the following extract that the teacher is no longer the "apostle of knowledge".

> "So, we learnt in our days through the empirical paradigm where teacher was the master and we were the students and that's how it operated. Now, today, in many classrooms, that still operates but if you take places where technology is used the reverse happens. The teacher is more a facilitator than the master of knowledge, or the apostle of knowledge, so to speak."
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> (***Extract from teacher interview)***

The word apostle refers to a person who is a leader and a figure of authority. The word apostle is also similar in meaning to the word 'sage" used by Warschauer and Whittaker (1997) in his guidelines for teachers on how to use the Internet for English Language teaching. He supports the view that the teacher is no longer the principal knowledge source and suggests that the teacher should become a "guide on the side" rather than a "sage on the stage".

Additionally, Mr. Halim's role as English teacher is closely linked to his conceptions of literacy and his ways of doing and being i.e. his literacy practices. These inform his choice of literacy events in the classroom. For instance, one of the literacy events observed was the use of the pedagogical software CD, "*DK, Grammar made Easy*, to teach grammar. A lesson of September 3 demonstrates the expanded role of the teacher as no longer being the principal source of authority. The lesson that was initially planned for that day should have involved students accessing the University of Ottawa's website in the computer laboratory and completing some of the grammar activities relating to sentence structure. However, since there were difficulties accessing the site, the teacher decided to return to the English classroom. At that point I expected him to stand in front of the class and present a grammar lesson. Instead, he loaded the DK, Dorling Kindersley, pedagogical CD into his laptop as his back-up plan. The programme selected was "*what is grammar*" where an animated cartoon figure assumed the role of the teacher and presented the lesson.This character became the voice of the teacher whose role had shifted to that of facilitating the process by operating the technology and interjecting at key moments to ask questions and check the students' understanding of what was taking place. The teacher's role in this lesson was that of facilitator or enabler of the grammar lesson. This grammar lesson also demonstrated Mr. Halim's high level of preparedness where he had a back-up plan to cater for failure in the technology. This high level of preparedness was observed throughout my observations. During his interview, Mr. Halim

also emphasized that the teacher needs to be prepared and always have an alternative in case technology fails.

> He must be able to know how to use PowerPoint and all other programmes so the lessons are still controlled by him…. You must be able to accept the fact that technology will fail you. You switch on the computer and it won't work, you switch on a projector and it won't work. You must be able to work around that. You don't give up a lesson because the computer has switched off.
>
> ***(Extract from teacher interview)***

Mr. Halim is also suggesting that the English teacher should be knowledgeable about computer applications and should always maintain control over the lessons.

We see another example of the teacher adopting the role of facilitator in the thick description above of the lesson on "An Abandoned Bundle" where the students' main task was to plan a lesson on how to teach the poem to the Grade Nines. Mr. Halim is the Grade Nine English teacher but the Grade Ten students were given the task of preparing and presenting the Grade Nine lesson. An examination of the second thick description of the girls; lesson of August 23 reveals that although the teacher has relinquished the role of planning his Grade Nine lesson and has seemingly given this control to the students, he still exercised tacit control as the students were told what aspects of technology to be used for their lesson.

Yet another example of the teacher being the "guide from the side" came from the lesson of August 15 with the male students, described below. They were completing a worksheet "literature in focus" based on the novel *'Cry, the Beloved Country'* and were also expected to post character analyses of various characters in the novel on their blogs. One student asked the question, "how do you post a character analysis?" to which the teacher responded, "for character analysis go to the Web, type in the word." He then proceeded to suggest a number of sites that would provide information on the text. In fact, what Mr. Halim has done is to replace his own authority as a teacher with the questionable authority of the Web, something he has done on several occasions. Here is a thick description of the boys' lesson of August 15 that demonstrates Mr. Halim's reliance on the Internet as a source of authority.

Thick description 3: Boys' lesson of August 15

At the beginning of the lesson, Mr. Halim tells the boys to take out their notes on Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*. They are to complete the worksheet titled, 'Literature in Focus'. Chapter 10 of the text in CD format is projected from the laptop onto the Activboard. The forms of electronic literacy used are: Activboard, laptop, desktop computer, Internet to access students' blogs and CD-Rom of novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country*.
Mr. Halim asks, "those of you who visited the shantytown, (refers to a visit some of the students made to a township to see what the life is like) can people living in a shantytown have the life we are living?" He continues to talk and then asks the boys to go to www.islam.com and to ask their Mufti (equivalent of a priest) "if God is so good, why must people suffer so much pain?" They are to download the response. He then enquires, How many of you know the site? A few respond in the affirmative. One of the boys asks for more details about the site , to which the teacher responds, "I'm not going to tell you. You will have to find out". Mr, Halim continues talking, "You can also phone into channel Islam on the radio". The boys continue to listen scarcely responding. "Alan Paton was the Principal of a Reformatory School in South Africa". He then gives them another task, this time to do a search on Reformatory schools and make a comment in their blogs.

He returns to the main task. "Do a character analysis and post it on the web on your blogspot". He continues, "we will not be able to work as efficiently as in the computer lab". He then tells them they can consult the text on the laptop to search for information on the characters and look at the other chapters. One student asks, "when you say post it on the web, what do you mean? Do you mean put it in your own work? Another student then asks, "How do you post character analysis". Mr. Halim advises, "for character analysis, go to the web, type in the word". He then tells them to look at the death penalty and explore whether or not Absalom deserved it.
The laptop is now disconnected from the Activboard and the PC is connected. Mr. Halim tries to access the students' blogs. He addresses the class, "In your groups you are doing two things; consolidating Monday's work (literature in focus) and sorting out your blogspots". He continues, our next step is when you start to post on each other's blogs. The boys are working in the groups discussing the literature questions. They do not consult the text on the laptop. Mr. Halim observes this and says, "people, I do not see you coming to the laptop to access information" The boys ignore him and continue to work in their groups.

In this description, we see reference being made to a question that was posed in the novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country* which states, "If God is so good, why must people suffer so much pain?" The teacher again referred the students to the site www.islam.com and another source of information thereby missing a good opportunity to debate the question.

This also clearly demonstrates that Mr. Halim's literacy practices are also located within his social and religious contexts as he pointed the students to an Islamic website where they were required to post a question to their 'mufti' or Islamic priest. They were also directed to telephone the Islamic radio channel to see an answer to the question.

In other instances, the Internet and other media were used as sources of knowledge to help with spelling where the teacher directed students to use the "spell check" option rather than help or have others help with the spelling of a word. Dictionary.com is generally used to check meaning as well. Here is an example:

> **Student**: Wants to type the word "visualization' in his PowerPoint slide and asks other students to help him spell the word.
> **Teacher:** "You don't have to ask how to spell visualization. You have a spell check on the computer".
> *(Extract from field notes August 30, 2007 boys)*

During our interview, Mr. Halim suggests that his is not a "top-down" approach as he stated that "they (the students) own the lesson and it's not top down. It's a very critical environment in which you operate". However, his classroom discourse cannot necessarily be described as critical as Mr. Halim often points the students to the web to find the definite answer to a particular question instead of teaching them to use the Web critically. Nevertheless, students were often given the chance to be generators of their own knowledge by creating their own study notes. This is one aspect of a bottom-up approach. During one of the poetry lessons the teacher remarked to the female students that it was the first time for the term that he was handing out study notes (*Thick description 2: August 23*). In addition, the PowerPoint slides prepared by the students in their poetry lesson of August 16, were to be used as their study notes. In an interview with the girls, they indicated that they resented teachers providing notes that they, the teachers, did not prepare and which were taken directly from a book.

> "in English it's like if you're summarizing the whole thing and you make your own notes, it's that you know the whole class put it together and it's right because sir went through it. It's not out of a book and so it makes it a lot easier to understand".

These students clearly appreciate being involved in the production of knowledge, a role which their English teacher, Hr. Halim, has allowed them to assume.

Another way in which the teacher's role has been influenced through the use of electronic forms of literacy is that his work load has decreased to a large extent. This demonstrates Luke's (2000) comment about tremendous pressure being taken off the teachers' shoulders thus giving them more time to guide students (p.90). Tremendous pressure has been taken off Mr. Halim's shoulders with the availability of the Internet as he is able to download comprehensive notes and activities about literary texts instead of preparing them 'from scratch'. During the lesson of August 23 with the boys and repeated in our interview Mr. Halim stated that:

> my work has become easier I've got their attention for a longer time, I talk less, they learn more and the interaction between pupil and teacher has actually increased. When I say interaction, I mean I've got more time to look at their work. praise them, affirm them, help the weak ones and even reprimand them in a very silent fashion.

While this study does not allow me to verify claims that the students learn more, I can say that based on my observations, the teacher does talk a lot as he has often dominated classroom discourse. This is not a situation of "chalk and talk" but rather one of "technology and talk". In this way, Mr. Halim's role has not changed but rather has remained the same. A close examination of the thick descriptions show Mr. Halim dominating classroom talk, at times not giving students sufficient time to respond to questions. In this respect, this classroom is no different from traditional classrooms (Chaudron, 1998). This quote also reveals that Mr. Halim perceives that his workload has decreased. However, even though his work has been reduced on the one hand, on the other, another layer of work is added as he always has to prepare a back-up lesson in case of problems with the technology.

During our interview Mr. Halim highlighted his perspective in this quote "if children don't learn the way you teach then you've got to teach the way they learn". The assumption here is that the teacher needs to adapt his/her pedagogy to suit the students' different learning styles. So, if students learn visually and through sound, then the teacher has to take cognizance of this and adjust his/her lessons accordingly. Consequently, Mr. Halim is pointing out that the use of technology and other electronic forms of media alters the way the teacher relates to the students as his/her teaching needs to be adapted to

accommodate the way they learn. The following extract explains Mr. Halim's views and motivations:

> Because children learn with their eyes today and the fact that we're living in a world where everything is visual, everything is on image, everything is on audio, music and billboards, so they're picking all these ah, dynamics through these 2 co-areas; eyes and ears. So, their learning has to be based on also the same bombardment of music, that's in inverted commas, You've got to bombard them with the same images and the same audiovisual images. So what happens is that they become more and more interactive with the lesson.
>
> *(Extract from teacher interview)*

Here, Mr. Halim is suggesting that the classroom should be a reflection of wider society which has become accustomed to multiple forms of representation through the use of sound, images, text and so on. He is therefore acknowledging the multimodal way in which children make meaning and is operating from an expanded notion of literacy as social practice as theorized by Street (1998), Gee (1996) and others.

Finally, one of the most unusual observations was the teacher's constant reflection on his practice more so his seeming reinforcement of his practice through comments to the students. Quite frequently during my observations and usually at the end of a lesson, Mr. Halim would ask reflective questions of the students about the contributions made by the various electronic forms of literacy to the lesson. These questions elicited only positive responses. At times they appeared contrived and seemed to be for the benefit of the researcher. Here is a list of the questions and the responses provided.

Day 1:	**Teacher:**	How has the computer made your life?
	Student:	It was fun.
	Teacher:	Today you learnt two things. You learnt interconnectivity and collaboration. What?
	Students:	(all repeat) interconnectivity and collaboration.
Day 4:	**Teacher**:	What did you learn here? (does not give students time to respond) Was it easier to work on the Internet for information or do a PowerPoint?
	Students:	Yes.
	Teacher:	How does this type of approach help you?
	Student:	One suggests that the PowerPoint presentations make issues more real. Another student suggests that using another medium of presentation like writing would be boring.

Day 5:	**Teacher**:	If I had not used this (referring to the technology) and the two websites and the scenes from Orlando in *Cry, the Beloved Country*, what impact the lesson would have had?
	Students:	It wouldn't be alive.
Day 6:	**Teacher**:	Asks students their views about the way the lesson was presented.
	Students:	1) It was an excellent lesson. 2) The way we used technology to enhance the understanding of the poem 3) we used new ideas.

It seemed rather unusual and dogmatic for Mr. Halim to be commenting on his own pedagogy in this way and for him to be eliciting positive comments on this from the students. Not only did it seem odd but it appeared as if he were expecting the students to laud his use of technology in the lessons. In this scenario students would not be expected to make negative comments.

The next section deals with the effects of the use of electronic forms of literacy on the curriculum of the classroom.

4.5. Effects on the English curriculum

In their study of the English classroom in three schools in London as I referred to in my literature review chapter, Kress et al (2005) argue that "school English is changing and so is the English curriculum" (p.37). This change has been observed in Mr. Halim's classroom, in some instances the changes have been positive and in other instances they seem to have distracted from the learning of English. I now examine the positive as well as the negative effects of the use of forms of electronic media on the English curriculum at the classroom level.

4.5.1 Enhancing learning?

The fact that Mr. Halim uses different types of electronic media in the classroom is indicative of his perception of the benefits to be derived from their use in terms of

enhancing his English lessons. The following comments made during some of the lessons demonstrate this view: "Look how interesting your lessons are becoming!" (*Field notes of August 13*). "Look at how technology is helping us!" (*Field notes of August* 30). During the interview with Mr. Halim he stated:

> When I started teaching approximately 12 years ago, I always looked at the media as an access to enhance learning and I was introduced to a book by Sally Tweedle and Anthony Adams… That made me interested in looking at literature for teaching using technology, in my case teaching literature through the use of technology. I've also wanted to enhance every lesson through the use of technology.

This extract reveals Mr. Halim's firm belief that the integration of technology into his English lessons, in particular his literature lessons, would help to add value to the lessons. I now explore some of the effects of the use of ICTs on the learning of English and in what ways they enhance the learning of English.

The need for students to have "multisemiotic, multimodal interaction" where they interface with word, print audio, video and graphics has been highlighted by Snyder (2002). Snyder and other researchers in the field suggest that the Internet and other electronic literacies offer increasing possibilities for learners to have multisemiotic, multimodal interactions. Evidence of this is seen in Mr. Halim's Grade 10 classes where the students' literacy events and practices involved the use of multiple modes such as word, print, audio, graphics and performance to make meaning. Previous descriptions of August 23's lesson where Mr. Halim showed a scene from the DVD of the novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country* and images and Internet sites on abandoned babies for the study of the poem "An Abandoned Bundle" as well as the performance and recordings point to the rich, multimodal and multisemiotic literacy events to which the students were exposed that have helped to enhance their experience of English lessons. The use of technology and the Internet helped to enhance the poetry lesson by adding a multimodal dimension to the study of the text with the use of powerful visual images which helped to make the poem more real to the students. This was also possible as the Internet afforded access to authentic materials, a point that was highlighted by Warschauer and Kern (2000).

An important aspect of the analysis of texts in English is the use of pre-reading of activities to provide detailed background information and context for the text being studied. The use of the Internet contributed to the pre-reading activities and provided opportunities for continued in-depth focused learning and study of the issues surrounding the poem. Mr. Halim's use of the film adaptation of the novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country*, helped to provide a visual context of the setting of the poem described in the thick description of the girls' lesson of August 23. He was able to connect the themes of poverty and hopelessness in the novel and film to that of the poem. Since the information downloaded from the Internet was projected onto the Activboard, the students were able to read newspaper articles and appreciate that the problem of abandoned babies is a global issue and not only a local South African problem. In the thick description of the boys' lesson of August 15 we also see Mr Halim highlighting the way in which technology has brought the poem to life and has given learners a deeper understanding.

Nevertheless, the incorporation of electronic media into the English classroom is not without its pitfalls. Ur (1995) makes the comment that:

> It is tempting to think that if students (particularly children) are happily absorbed in doing a task in an English lesson, they are therefore learning English – but it is not always so". (p.18)

Although Ur's comments were not made in relation to the use of electronic literacies in the classroom, I think they are still pertinent as they highlight some of the possible negative effects of the use of electronic forms of media in the English classroom. Warschauer (2000) highlights the fear that the use of electronic literacies in schools may lead to "language erosion". The frequent use of spell check and online dictionaries in the English classroom point to the fact that there was very little focus on spelling and exploring the meanings of words as there was always the "spell check" option or a Dictionary search. As a result, opportunities to explore the correct spelling phonetically were often missed in my view. There is the view that basic literacy skills are central to any reading and writing in electronic media. This therefore suggests that issues like spelling should not be ignored with the use of ICTs. However, the availability of the spell

check option and the possibility of checking the meanings of words through the use of the Internet could be viewed as positive. During my observations, there were instances where students did not know how to spell a word and the teacher suggested they do a spell check. During the collaborative PowerPoint writing activities (August 23, girls) one of the students did not know how to spell the word 'anecdotes' and typed 'annacdodes'. When the others tried to help the teacher suggested she used the "spell check" option. Students in Mr. Halim's classroom therefore did not have to become anxious over spelling. One of the added advantages of having these mistakes being made in the full view of the class via the Activboard is that the students can all see the mistakes being made and the teacher can immediately intervene to correct that mistake.

An analysis of the second and third descriptions further reveals that the incorporation of electronic media into the English classrooms has at times distracted from the learning of English. I analyse comments made by Mr. Halim during our interview and argue that some of his classroom pedagogic practices contradict his perceptions of his practice. When asked about possible implications for the use of ICTs for the teaching and learning of English, this is what Mr. Halim stated "at whichever point we introduce technology, it mustn't take over the lesson. So, technology can overtake a lesson if the teacher is not on top of things" (*Extract from teacher interview*). A detailed examination of the poetry lesson on "Abandoned Babies", the focus of the thick description of August 23, reveals that the girls were not given the opportunity to read and critically analyse the poem and explore the literary devices of the poem, a common feature of any poetry lesson but rather, the teacher spent most of the time reading and discussing peripherally some of the figures of speech. As a matter of fact, the poem was not distributed to the class until much later in the lesson among handouts that included a complete analysis of the poem downloaded from the Internet. In addition, the main task was the creation of PowerPoint slides detailing how to teach the poem to the Grade 9s. What Mr. Halim chose to foreground in his advice to the students was the use of electronic media as he pointed out, "You've seen me do the lesson, PowerPoint, DVD, Activboard". Another reason why I argue that technology distracted from a detailed analysis of the poem was my observation during the lesson with the boys when the computer was offline meaning there was no Internet

access. What I observed was the teacher spending more time discussing the poem and more significantly the boys being more involved in the discussions surrounding the poem. Below is an extract of the field notes from the boys' lesson.

Server down hence no internet connection. The lesson is therefore presented differently
Teacher: We're doing a new poem and it should have been done using the Internet but we have no internet connection. "It's very difficult not having to use the Internet".
Teacher: If you look at a township, how are children affected in a "dustbowl" like this?
Student: They are deprived of facilities
Student: A child may have to work hard to come out of that place.
Others disagree and suggest that it is highly unlikely that they will get out.
Teacher: What are the options for a girl who falls pregnant?
Student: Abortion L2: But you have to pay for it.
Another student: Get rid of the baby.
Another: Dump the child.
Another: Go to her mother who might advise her to try to find someone else.
Other suggestion: "Resort to crime" (**Teacher**) And come to Roshnee to steal our things!
Teacher: Then, what poem do you think we are going to study?
Students' suggestions: Crime, poverty, hardships in townships
Teacher: I spoke about babies…
Student: "Abandoned babies"
Teacher: Yes, you've hit the nail on the head. We're doing a poem on abandoned babies. He then makes reference to stories about babies abandoned in Brazil, India and other parts of the world.
Students : China, Russia and even here in Roshnee.
Teacher; Reads the poem (twice) " An abandoned bundle" set in Soweto which he calls the "Houghton of Soweto" and asks students to imagine. He then reads the line "it smothers our little houses like fish caught in a net" and adds, "Think of 'Finding Nemo". He continues to read
Teacher: How are you going to teach this to the Grade 9s? You need to improvise, like today the Internet is down.
Teacher: I'm going to read the 1st stanza again and you're going to tell me if this baby is alive or dead.
Students unanimously say "Alive"
Teacher: What does the poet tell us about this woman?
Student: She acts as if she is innocent.
Discussion on whether or not the woman was innocent ensues.
Teacher: Do you think you need to tell all this to the Grade 9s?
Student: Yes, well lots of Grade 9s are getting pregnant..
Another student: You have to let them understand "a child is something you can't just throw away".
Teacher: Does a SIFT analysis of the poem with the boys where they examine the intention of the poem, the feelings, tone as well as imagery and the figures of speech and their effects.

Extract from field notes August 30

What we observe here is a richer, more detailed discussion about the issues surrounding the poem as well as Mr. Halim discussing with the boys' what they might include and exclude from the Grade 9 lesson without referring to the use of technology.

I refer to the third description of the boys' lesson of September 15 to show how the use of technology has distracted from the teaching of English in Mr. Halim's classroom. In that lesson, the boys should have been completing a handout specifically focusing on the text *Cry, the Beloved Country* which was projected in CD-Rom format onto the Activboard. Instead, we see Mr. Halim having detailed discussions about their blogs. Prior to that, we see him giving them another task to do research on an Islamic website. In the end very little time was spent focusing on the novel.

Another possible negative effect of integrating electronic forms of technology into Mr. Halim's English class is the students' deficiencies in grammar. As a result of an assessment activity done by students, deficiencies in their grammatical knowledge were apparent. Mr. Halim therefore decided to plan a lesson on grammar which would specifically address the issue of sentence structure. A software programme "Grammar in Action" was used to address the problem. This is an interactive software programme aimed at children between nine and fourteen years old. Since the students in the classes observed were fifteen to sixteen years, the lesson may have been pitched below their level. Further, my observation of this lesson and others have led me to think that some of the basic literacy skills central to any reading and writing in electronic media are lacking and that maybe grammar has been neglected at the expense of the technology. Based on my observations, it appears as though too much time may have been spent on PowerPoint presentations with not sufficient time being devoted to sustained writing in class. Evidence of sustained writing was observed in student blogs which did not form the core of their work in English. The following extract highlights a number of the teacher's concerns with regard to the students' writing.

Mr Halim: Now you have to work on a software programme on sentence structure and grammar and all of that and I need you to enjoy it. You will enjoy it.
He then asks, "How many of you believe, sir, we're forgetting the basics when it comes to sentence construction?"
1 hand raised
Mr. Halim then asks why.
The student responds, "we don't write good sentences."
Mr Halim continues: "When I give back your presentations you will see that your sentences are going a bit haywire**".**
(*The teacher then loads the software onto the laptop and the contents are projected onto the active board)*
An animated image appears on the screen and repeats the title of the CD, " What is grammar?"
The boys smile.
Mr Halim pauses the CD after the first section and reminds the students that this is work they would have done in Grade 7.
He then continues.
The boys look on passively at the screen.
Mr Halim pauses again and asks, "Can you see the mistake you people are making?"
Mr Halim repeats after the CD, "a phrase forms part of a sentence but does not make complete sense (boys respond) "on its own". So important, he adds and continues, "many of you in your work write phrases for me. Your essays are full of phrases"

(Extract from field notes of September 3, boys)

Two key problems relating to grammar and writing have been identified. These are: (1) students are forgetting the basics with regard to sentence construction and (2) they do not write complete sentences meaning that their writing is full of phrases. Further, in examining the summary table earlier in this chapter, one notices that none of the lessons observed were devoted to the teaching of grammar. Additionally, by the end of the grammar lesson using the software, the male students continued to have problems with clauses as a number of their answers were incorrect despite repeated practice activities. This prompted the animated character to say "you haven't quite got that right".

In addition, during my observations, the genre of writing that dominated was the writing of PowerPoint slides. These slides make use of short sentences and phrases. During one of the lessons where the students were creating PowerPoint slides the teacher advised

"don't put too much on one slide. You need to be brief" (Field notes August 20). Consequently, it seems evident that the students' essays would be "full of phrases" as the models of texts that they are generally exposed to contain short, sentences that are usually in point form. The way writing is constructed in this classroom is contrary to what is generally required in a school environment. As a result the students' writing seems to have been negatively affected if not altered in some ways. This is borne out in Snyder and Prinsloo's (2007) comment that with the new electronic media "reading and writing in print or on screen, appears as not exactly the same thing, in their uses, functions." (p.172). During an interview with the boys it was mentioned that "every lesson is on PowerPoint". One of the male students also expressed his concern about their writing and seemed to have some reservations about the benefits of using the technology in the English classroom. Below is an extract from that discussion:

> **J: Do you think it (the use of ICTs) makes a difference to your learning, does it help you?**
> M2: I think in a way it improves and see last year you used to write lots and when you write your English improves. So this year we don't, we hardly write, mostly watch the lesson and so it's like it has its benefits and it has its, faults.
> **J: I'm going to get back to the negatives now. Can you highlight some of the things you think might be** (M2 interrupts).
> You see when you are writing your mind is more alert and active like compared to when you just sit there and look at the desktop and you're typing something.
> (*Extract from interview with boys)*

The concern of this student was that he felt the students were engaged in a passive activity where they watch the lesson unfolding instead of being more actively involved in the production of knowledge.

Another issue raised by both the male and female students and a result of the frequent use of technology in the English classroom is that their workload has increased. This increase in workload is due to the fact that for portfolio and assessment purposes, their work has to be handwritten and not typed. This therefore means that students have had to do a number of assignments twice, typed and handwritten. The boys seemed to be resisting this increased workload and as a result did not complete their assignments on time and did not post their blogs when asked. The teacher also expected the students to post most of their work on their blogs which seemed an onerous task for the males. This is an

indirect disadvantage of using electronic literacies in this particular situation. One girl stated

> You get a lot from here (English) then you must go home, type it out, still blog it, everything. It takes an effort, it takes time and you still have studying to do.

During the same interview with the students and in response to the question of whether or not their workload had increased with the use of technology the girls stated:

> F5: In a way it's less but it's just the amount we have to do.
> F?: Yea answering questions and posting. It takes a bit of time because you must type everything out and F2: (interrupts) I would say for the blogging and ??? We write it out but you know we have to retype it.. then we post it. It's like double.
> F3: Also when we ask Mr. Halim if we could (like) when we do assignments, an essay or something in class, if we could have it just typed out immediately then we can hand it in then he says it's going against curriculum requirements.
> F5: He wouldn't mind it but the government is a bit delayed in the technology.
> F?: They'll probably think we downloaded it from the Internet**.** (Others) Yah, yah….
> F?; They (the department) don't accept typed out work. They think it's copied.

A close examination of the above extract reveals a number of concerns: an increase in the students' workload as a result of the integration of electronic forms of media into the classroom and the level of preparedness of the Department of Education to accept work that is not typed. One of the boys stated in the interview, "the workload is much more. For example, you get a lot of homework compared before we had no such thing like a blog spot".

In the next section, I examine the status of the text in Mr. Halim's English classroom.

4.6. The status of the text in Mr. Halim's English classroom

Kress et al (2005) in a study that was conducted on English classrooms in the United Kingdom, suggest that with technology, the book is no longer the culturally dominant medium in Western societies. The current dominant media are "the new screens of the

PC, the Play station, the game boy, and the mobile phone"(p.x). They argue that, the book has therefore been "displaced by these new screens". Kress et al add that "the book's role has waned, if not collapsed, even in English (and) in many English classrooms texts appear as fragments, photocopied parts of larger texts". (p.x.)

In addition to this, Durrant and Beavis (2001) in the article "*Digital Culture, Digital literacies"* suggest that:

> While the printed page remains central to what we continue to do in English, the screen has also come to represent a new and important focus in the classroom for both teachers and learners (p.3).

I first examine the question of "the disappearing text" in the Grade 10 classrooms observed in the context of these two comments. An examination of the description of the lesson on August 23 with the girls and of the description of the August 15 lesson with the boys reveals that in the first instance a fragment of the film *Cry the Beloved Country* is shown and in the latter, Chapter 10 of the novel is shown from the CD and projected onto the Activboard and then shown on the laptop screen. At no time during the course of my observations, was the print-based novel used in class. In addition, the students did not use their novels for reference purposes as hard copies were absent from the classroom. The teacher did however refer to Absalom's [3]murder as well as quote from the text. Nevertheless, no page reference was given neither did the teacher highlight the original quote on the Activboard. The novel therefore seemed peripheral and was mainly sidelined and displaced by the various screens in the classroom.

The teacher observed that when the boys were working, they too did not refer to the text on the Activboard and remarked "boys I do not see you coming to the laptop to access information". A possible reason why the text was not consulted was that Mr. Halim had simultaneously been dealing with the students' blogs which became quite distracting and shifted the students' focus. The students were expected to refer to extracts of the novel projected on the screen for their task which they did not do. Note here that the process of

[3] Absalom is one of the central figures in the novel Cry, the Beloved Country.

reading the text is referred to by the teacher as "accessing information". The lesson in question clearly demonstrates the shift from "page to screen" with the absence of print-based texts in the class. However, the use of the film version of the novel helped to give the students a different experience of the text. In this case the film helped to provide a richer interaction with the text through visual and 'actional' modes. They were able to experience the story in different modes which in turn "offered different resources for meaning" (Jewitt, 2002:176). Jewitt further points out that such multimodal interaction helps to "provide new resources for students to engage with in their construction of character "(p.185).

Furthermore, during the lessons of August 23 and 30 in which the poem "An Abandoned Bundle" was studied, the students were not given a copy of the poem almost until the end of the lesson. The discussion and subsequent analysis of the poem took place without the students having seen the poem. The same occurred in the boys' lesson. However, even though the text was absent for most of the lesson, it would have appeared much later for homework as the students were given a copy along with a detailed worksheet to complete for their homework.

The absence of dictionaries was also noted. In one of the lessons when there was no Internet connection, one of the students wanted to find out the meaning of the word "remorse". The teacher tried to provide an example to explain the meaning of the word but ended by saying that had there been Internet connection they could have looked up the meaning of the word.

> **Student**: Asks, what is the meaning of remorse? (Obviously reading the handouts)
> **Teacher**: Gives an example "I am remorseful about my actions so I went to Mr. Halim to say I'm sorry".
> **Student**: Suggests guilt and sadness.
> **Teacher**: If we had the Internet, we could have looked up the word on dictionary.com

One would have assumed that this was the perfect opportunity for the teacher to point the student to a dictionary. However, there seems to be no value for print-based texts within this space.

During the interview, the teacher made a comparison between teaching previously without much use of the electronic media and now with its use. This is what he said:

> And years before there were no media in one classroom. For example, an audio, you can play an audio assignment. You had to bring in a TV, you had to bring this in. Now everything is here. You see, and we were stimulated by actual reading from a text. Now children can access the Internet and read the same text immediately. So that has changed and what has also changed is that information has become much more accessible. Books are online, textbooks are online. So, is there really a need for a textbook?

The absence of print-based text from this English classroom is therefore not accidental but deliberate. The above extract is a clear indication of the views of the teacher around the necessity for print-based texts in the classroom. He is acknowledging that young people's interaction with literacy is generally screen based as well as highlights the immediacy and accessibility of the Internet. Reading a print-based text is being replaced by "accessing information" from a screen. His question about whether or not there is need for a textbook, echoes theorists like Kress et al's (2005) views about the print based texts being displaced by new screens and the possible disappearance of print-based texts from the English classroom. In response to Mr. Halim's question about whether or not there is need for a textbook, I use Snyder's comment about writing in new media which states that "the introduction of new technology of writing does not automatically render older ones obsolete" (1998:xx/xxi). She suggests that technologies "will continue to coexist, interact and complement each other" (ibid). I use the same argument for the need for print-based text and suggest that within the English classroom electronic texts can coexist alongside print-based texts to complement each other.

4.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the forms of electronic media used in Mr. Halim's English classroom that form an integral aspect of the electronic literacy practices of this classroom. I have shown that these practices are closely linked to the sociocultural context of the students and teacher for example, their middle class background and their religious affiliation, within a South African context. Being electronically literate in this

context requires access to sophisticated forms of electronic media and the Internet which comprise the students' out-of-school literacy practices. I have also examined the effects of integrating electronic forms of literacy into the English curriculum. These include an expansion of the teacher's role as he becomes a mediator of technology in addition to being a mediator of learning. His role was also that of a facilitator and guide as he ceased to be one of the principal sources of information and authority in the classroom. I have also argued that the English subject in Mr. Halim's classroom has been transformed but although there were a number of benefits with the integration of electronic media into Mr. Halim's classroom, there were disadvantages for the English classroom as well. Another significant consequence of the use of electronic media in the English classroom is the disappearance or de-emphasis of print-based texts and the foregrounding of more visual texts in Mr. Halim's English classroom as the status of the text in general has changed. .

The next chapter deals with the students' engagement with the forms of electronic literacy used in the English classroom.

CHAPTER 5: STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT WITH ELECTRONIC FORMS OF LITERACY IN MR. HALIM'S ENGLISH CLASSROOM

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the students' engagement with the technologies in the English classroom. It begins with a general overview of their engagement in class then focuses specifically on the question of gender engagement with literacy especially with electronic forms of literacy. The chapter ends with a look at the use of weblogs in the English classroom.

5.2 General engagement

The students in the Grade 10 classes observed belong to what Tapscott (1998) referred to as the "Net generation" in that they are growing up in a world that is increasingly being mediated by electronic forms of literacy. Snyder (2002) and Gee (2003) among others highlight how youth in developed or first world contexts are interacting with various forms of ICTs such as cellphones, their computers, Mp3 players, game consoles and the Internet on a daily basis. These various forms of technology are screen based which means that young people are living the shift from "page to screen" or from print to the visual as described by Kress (1998, 2003). The role of the visual is said to be fundamental in their engagement with ICTs and other forms of electronic media. Within the South African context, a large majority of youth do not have access to and cannot afford sophisticated forms of technology. However, as Czerniewicz and Hodgkinson-Williams (2005) point out a significant number of them possess cell phones. This means that they too are interacting though in a limited way, with one form of technology.

The students I observed can be described as privileged as they have access to technologies that the majority of South African youth cannot afford. This therefore means electronic technologies are familiar to them and they form part of the 'Net

Generation'. On the whole, they displayed a relatively high level of engagement with the technologies used. This engagement can be attributed to the fact that ICTs and other electronic forms of media form part of their social practices and consequently are relevant to their out-of-school lives. Additionally, their classroom literacy events incorporated multimodal texts which contributed to the students' interest in their English lessons. Another possible reason for students' engagement with technology is the influence of their particular teacher.

Firstly, during the student interviews they highlighted the relevance of the technologies used in the classroom to their lives and to their futures. For instance, during the interview with the female students, one of them explained that the use of technology "would help in the future because the world is becoming more advanced, so it's to our advantage that we're doing things so advanced". Yet another student stated in the same interview that:

> When you are going into career fields it does help you. I know my father has a garage … when other people come to do inspections they have to make their PowerPoint presentations… So for us it is useful.

Snyder (2002:47) speaks about the need to engage the lifeworlds of students by combining their out-of-school worlds with their in-school practices. In this way school work would become relevant to them. The practicality and relevance of the use of technology has also been highlighted in the interview with the male students One of them pointed out that "the youth are mostly … technology inclined so it's something like we all do, now it's come into the classroom and makes it easier". The same student also pointed out that "it's something you want to pay attention to 'cause you're exposed to the technology in the world". This extract shows that the social context of these students privileges the use of sophisticated forms of technology which is a common feature of their out-of- school literacy practices.

Students' engagement could also be linked to their perception that the use of computers, the Internet and electronic literacies in general, helps to enhance their learning of English. Below are two extracts of field notes which demonstrate the students' reaction to the use of electronic literacies for the teaching of English.

Extract from interview with girls

F4: "It's different and it's not like any other class that you've been in before in our whole lives which makes it much more interesting. And English like she said is a boring subject and compared to last year, just work in your books and you come in and you take out your books and start reading. That's totally different 'cause it's like keeps you on your toes. You don't know what's coming next and everyday you come there is a different thing".
F8: "Well the Internet, it's a mystery. Totally different from other classes last year where every single year until last year it was the same. You had to read the book and answer the questions that they give us. It's the same writing, writing. This year in Mr Halim's class everything is done.. it's done different".
F2: "I think the use of colour with all this".
F?:" Yes. I think colour makes a difference".
F2: "Because the chalkboard, you just see black and white".

Extract from interview with boys

M1: "Exposure. I think like with the Internet you're exposed to different things. Like when you send emails or letters to the editor or when you get information from sites… being exposed to different learning styles".

M5: "I think it makes a big difference at least more beneficial when we use technology because as you said everything is quicker and more interesting".

M4: "It makes learning more fun. You're not always looking at black, you're not always looking at a green board**…"**.
M1: "Pictures, the mind understands pictures better".

The above extracts show some of the students' responses to the question about whether or not the use of electronic literacies makes a difference to the teaching and learning of English. An analysis of these responses suggests a number of advantages of using technology in their class. Both groups of students emphasized the fact that their English lessons were "different" and "interesting". They highlighted the novelty and variety of activities and materials used as well as the different applications; I assume software applications, which also added value to the lessons. The opportunities for expanded learning opportunities through the Internet and the World Wide Web have also helped to keep the students engaged and as one of the boys stated, "you can have a hyperlink to wherever you want. The teacher doesn't have to tell you. He can show you". The English subject which was once considered by some students as boring is no longer so as the use of technology has helped to make the language "more real, more alive" to quote one

student. During the interview another student spoke about Shakespeare "being alive" through the use of technology.

The integration of a variety of modes, visual, textual, sound and hypertext is of tremendous value to Mr. Halim's English lessons and has been appreciated by the students. The students' resistance to traditional pedagogies is evident in the above interview extract with the females. One student compared what they did in previous grades in English to what they have been doing in the subject in Grade 10 and stated that while previously what they did was "read the book, answer questions (and) write," the use of electronic modes of representation keeps them engaged. This validates Snyder's comments that "children's experiences and expectations of literacy are no longer necessarily paper based" (2002:48). Visually, the use of colour has been acknowledged as very important by both males and female students as is seen in the above extract. One student mentioned that the use of colour helps them "see what is on the board" when thinking about the work and hence, helps them to visualize. The same student pointed out during the interview that the use of the Internet and computers in general exposes them to "different learning styles". This is linked to the benefits of a Multiliteracies and multimodal approach to literacy which acknowledges different learning styles by valuing multiple modes of meaning making.

Mr. Halim's passion for technology as well as his positive attitude towards his work has had an influence on the students' engagement with the electronic forms of literacy in the classroom. The following extract is taken from the interview with the female students and reveals how they appreciate what he has done in the English lesson. Here it is evident that Mr. Halim teaches by example as he has also participated in the recording of poetry with the students.

> F4: I feel like you come to the English class and it's dynamic… and like I said the recording of poetry. Mr Halim recorded himself...
> F5: And the teachers' attitude towards the class
> F?; Yes, yes
> F? Now the way we remember our English is sir performs with us and he goes on with us, he makes us laugh. He shows humour.
> F? It makes a big difference

> F1: Even if you're having a bad day and you come into Mr. Halim's class, he would be smiling
>
> ***(****Extract from interview with the girls)*

Although not all of the males were unanimous in their views as to Mr. Halim's contribution to their level of engagement, it is evident that he has made a difference. One of them, who seemed to have had some doubts, stated this in the interview,

> " I don't know if it is the teacher that makes a difference but you know Mr. Halim does teach at a high level compared to other teachers. But it does change your learning."

Yet another student who was more confident stated, "Mr. Halim makes a big difference. (He) does make it easier for us and the Internet does make it easier for us". (*Extracts from interview with boys)*

The influence of the teacher was also evident in the students' discussion about who would be their English teacher for Grade 11. Even though the girls interviewed seemed somewhat confident that it would be Mr. Halim, one student stated that " if he doesn't we'll be back to the normal pen and paper" while another suggests "it's not going to be cool". Their primary concern is for the possible shift away from an electronic literacy approach back to the traditional pen and paper approach. These comments suggest preference for the use of technology in the English classroom as well as for a particular teacher.

5.3 Students' engagement: Gendered or not?

Although literature on gender and technology (Beavis, 2002; Lankshear 2003; Sanford 2005/2006) generally suggests that boys are more engaged with technology and are more skilful at navigating digital literacies, I found that both groups of students observed were highly engaged with the technologies used in the English classroom, regardless of gender. However, their level of engagement varied according to the technologies used and the tasks. Nevertheless, my observations seem to concur with some of Tella's (1992) findings that when computer mediated communication is introduced in schools boys seem to favour games while girls prefer to engage in more practical activities.

Contrary to most research findings, the grade 10 girls I have observed were highly engaged in the lessons and passionate about the use of technologies in their lessons. The following discussion with the female students about the technologies they used to record their poems for their audio assignment provides evidence for a high level of engagement.

> F4: With Windows XP you get a sound recorder on your computer… You just need a mic.
> F2: I use a normal cassette
> F6: me too, just normal. The old type.
> **J, the interviewer: You use the traditional way. How many of you? (**They indicate) There are 2**.**
> **J addressing F8: Do you use a cassette (recorder) as well.**
> F8: No, I use, I record on my cell phone then I save it on the computer and then I copy.
> **J: Tell me again, tell me again…**
> F8: You record on the cellphone then you get a cable and connect it to your computer so you send it to your computer then afterwards from your computer if you have a CD or flash drive then you copy.
> F?: Or you could use Bluetooth.
> *F8 then explains how to record onto a cellphone.*
> F8: You have to go to applications, select voice recorder
> F?; But Bluetooth even work. You save it like how you would add it to a normal cell phone.
> F?: if you're using the cable then it's generally your USB cable for your cell phone…
> **J: I'm learning. I'm clueless.**
> F8: I was the same like that. I shouldn't really bother about computers and using technology but until I came to this English class, I started becoming interested in it. How do things work?
>
> (*Extract from interview with girls)*

The above discussion demonstrates not only a high level of engagement but a high level of familiarity with digital technologies. These students used various forms of technology at their disposal to record their poems. This performance aspect of the lesson helps to add credence to a Multiliteracies and multimodal approach to literacy where activities in the English classroom can be extended through the use of multiple modes to add enjoyment of the lesson. Apart from the traditional cassette recorder, students used their cellphones while others recorded directly onto their computers using a microphone. They were also able to give me advice as to how to record sound using my cell phone which suggested a high level of confidence with the technologies. For one student (F8), the integration of technology into their lessons has helped to increase her general use of technology as well as her level of engagement with it.

Far from shying away from technology, the females definitely embraced it and felt very comfortable with its use. The description of the girls' lesson of August 23 on page 43, of the lesson in which a scene from the film *Cry, the Beloved Country,* was shown, demonstrates how the girls were engaged in activities involving the use of technology in the English lesson. They have again shown that they are neither uncomfortable nor reserved about issues relating to technology and are 'au fait' with technical issues as they were able to offer the teacher sound advice as to how to fix the technical problem he encountered.

While I found that both groups of students interacted in the lessons, their level of interaction varied according to the task and the technologies used. For example, the girls responded positively to the audio recording of the poems they wrote. One of them pointed out during the interview that "I feel like you come to the English class and it's dynamic… and like I said the recording of poetry ", while another added "the recording of poetry. We never thought we'd do something like that" in response to the question on the benefits of using electronic media in the English classroom and when asked if they enjoyed recording their voices one of them responded, "yes. I think it's fun". From the moment they entered the classroom for the poetry lesson in question, the girls rearranged the chairs, got into their groups and prepared for the recordings. On the other hand, in the boys' lesson the students were not fully prepared as some groups were still composing their poems. Only two groups recited their poems on that day. During the interviews when asked which of the digital technologies and electronic media they found most interesting the boys did not mention the microphone for recording of poetry. I then decided to ask them about their views on using the microphone for the recording of their poems. This is what they said:

J: **What about using the microphone? Did you guys like recording?**
M? For the poems?
J: **Did you like recording your poem?**
M1: … It was different..
J: **It was different but did you like it?**
M1: It was okay (laughs)
M3: Cause like you know, it was an on the spot kind of thing.
J: **But you had to write your poems before so?**

M3: No. We did but in class, we just decided to record the poem now, in front of the class.
M3: We didn't even know.
M2: We had to change our accents
J: When you had to write your Roshnee poems didn't you record them?
M?: No. Everyone didn't want to record.

(*Extract from interview with boys****)***

The recording of the poem could be considered a traditional task that required students to write poems and recite them. What differentiated this task from other poetry lessons was the recording of the poems. It is difficult to assess why the boys did not all respond positively to the recording of the poem. It might have been their resistance to the writing of the poems or the actual recording of the poems. Or it could have been their resistance to the work load. Here is an extract from the interview with them which suggests that there might have been some resistance to the work load:

M3: What happens is … when you (unclear).. all the work he starts with a new subject. You then forget about it very, very quickly. If your work is not done you have to start with a next section and get it done.
J: (seeks clarification) And you forget about the work you're supposed to be doing?
M3: Not forget about it, you can't do it in detail.
M2: You got all these things to concentrate on so you don't know which one to do, so you just leave out all.

Interestingly though, even though the girls also found that their work load had increased, they did not resist in this manner. Most of their work was up-to-date. In fact, the girls' general engagement with the English lesson was as predicted in the literature on gender and literacy and gender and schooling which suggests that girls are more engaged than boys.

Gendered differences were also apparent in the first lesson I observed on August 13. This was a visual literacy lesson that took place in the computer laboratory and required the students, in this case the boys to search for images on the Internet that related to any aspect of the novel, *Cry the Beloved Country*. They were then required to import these into Powerpoint presentations for analysis. Below is a thick description of this lesson which took place on August 13 that gives an insight into the boys' engagement in the English classroom.

Thick description 4: Boys lesson of August 13

It's my first day observing Mr. Halim's English lessons. I arrive at the Computer lab and the students are already seated in groups around the computers. Mr. Halim greets me very warmly and introduces me to the boys. I quickly find a vacant chair at the back of the room and try to be as inconspicuous as possible. Today's lesson is a visual literacy lesson where the boys are working in groups of three. There are about 5 boys per group. Each group is given a sheet of paper with the following instructions:

- You will be analyzing 2 political cartoons, comic strips or advertisements
- You need to show the message of each one
- You need to show what aspects make the cartoons etc. effective
- Represent all of this on a PowerPoint presentation
- Elect one person to explain your interpretations to the class.

One group is expected to analyse 2 political cartoons, the second group 2 comic strips and the third group 2 advertisements. This task is based on the novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country*, the set text for the term. The boys are required to search in Google for an advertisement, comic strip or political cartoon that best represents one aspect of the novel. They are to conduct individual searches then collaborate in groups to select one for analysis.

Mr. Halim then hands out copies of a Zapiro cartoon, downloaded from the Internet to explain further what is expected of the class.

Some of the boys have already commenced their Google search without carefully reading the instructions. One of them asks Mr. Halim to explain what is an advertisement while another asks, "Sir, the theme is on the book?" Mr Halim replies in the affirmative and explains, "remember, a cartoon is different from a comic strip". He adds that life experiences are reflected in a comic strip. While the boys are busy with their individual searches, Mr. Halim reminds them about particular aspects of the story.

Most of the boys are not collaborating. In the group dealing with advertisements 2 of them are collaborating while the others continue to work individually. Mr. Halim addresses the group dealing with the comic strip he states, "You guys are all doing your own thing. You're not coming together". He observes that a member of the group has found something and suggests that the others get together with that person to start working on their presentation.

Mr. Halim again addresses the boys, "I don't see any synergy. You're all working on your own". He then tells the group dealing with cartoons that they are all browsing and not collaborating. (He is obviously not pleased with the way things are going). He continues, "This lesson is going much differently from the girls, by now they had already begun working on their presentations". However, although members of the groups are finding images they all don't agree and continue their search.

Thick Description 4 (continued)

> It's almost the end of the lesson and no group has started their presentations Mr. Halim then asks the class what they learnt from the use of technology in the lesson. Some answer, "we have learnt to integrate the two, the cartoons and the novel". He then asks, "How has the computer made your life?' to which some respond, "it was fun". Mr Halim then says emphatically, "today you learnt 2 things. You learnt interconnectivity and collaboration" What? The boys echo, "interconnectivity and collaboration".
> The lesson ends with Mr. Halim telling the boys to save everything under his name or on a flash drive.

In this description, we see the boys engaging with technology but not to complete the assigned task. They seemed more interested in conducting the searches on Google and surfing the Internet than carrying out the task causing Mr. Halim to comment on their lack of collaboration and 'synergy'. Consequently, one week later when they should have presented their PowerPoint slides, they had not completed the task prompting the teacher to make another comment, "I'm not getting the inspiration from you." (*Field notes of August 20*). In another lesson, "literature in focus" when the boys were asked about their postings on their blogs and they had not completed them the teacher asked, "Is technology failing you in learning literature or are you failing technology?" He then berated them for "embracing technology for fun and games and going into Google and not for work." (*Field notes of August 15*). A similar view is shared by Tella (1992) who observed in her research that the boys seemed to engage more with games. Sanford (2005) also shares a similar view and suggests that while boys dominate technological space in out-of school situations, in school-based activities their focus is not as intense. Nevertheless, it would be unfair to say that all of the boys had the same level of engagement since there were boys who worked conscientiously and completed their tasks without much vocal resistance. Additionally, during one of the recreation periods during my period of observations, two boys, one of whom had brought his laptop computer in to the classroom, worked diligently to complete one of their assignments. The fact that these students came during their break periods to work on their English tasks demonstrates a certain level of engagement.

In the same way, not all of the girls had the same level of engagement with their tasks and like some of the boys seemed to be embracing technology for the games. On two occasions (August 20 and September 3), when the class was working in the computer laboratory, a few of the girls played 'solitaire' on the computer while others in their group were working. This occurred when the teacher had left the room.

However, when asked if he had observed any differences in the way the boys engaged with technology as opposed to the girls, the teacher made the following comments:

> Boys will be boys and I think girls will be girls. Boys by and large are not academically, you know, highly strung at this point in their lives so they're a bit lethargic in preparing their work but when you see their PowerPoint presentations it's very good. It's just that their interaction in class is very, it can be distracting at times. Their work would be incomplete. However, they are very au fait with the use of technology and girls on the other hand are sharp, are smart and they're very ah, you know, orientated to their work…
> For me it's the fact that girls work differently and boys work differently… as far as technology is concerned the boys and the girls have both embraced it equally. It's just that the girls are more interactive with it in the classroom situation and the boys would prefer to work with it on their own.
>
> (*Extract from teacher interview)*

Mr. Halim's comment that "boys will be boys" in this extract appears stereotypical and seems to acknowledge gendered differences in the way males and females engage with school work as well as echoes the views of researchers like Millard (1997) and Sanford (2005,2006) . The statements that boys are not academically strong as well as the comment that the girls are "sharp and smart" reflect claims made in the literature on boys and schooling that boys perform at a lower level than girls in school. In addition, the teacher confirms that both boys and girls engage with the use of technology but that their engagement differs.

5.4 Students' blogs as engagement

I now briefly analyze the students' blogs as part of their general engagement with electronic forms of literacy.

Blogging is seen as "participation within a social context" (Knobel and Lankshear, 2006) and blogs are generally associated with an out of school literacy practice rather than a school based literacy practice. They may be used as a personal space, be targeted at a specific group of people or a wider audience. Even though blogs are mainly textual, they may also include visual images and sound. Their focus may be directed at a specific event and in this case, "bloggers may mobilize at short notice to challenge an opinion or state of affairs and achieve a result" (Knobel and Lankshear, 2006:4).Blogs can be spontaneous, subjective and even contradictory and are sometimes considered as a powerful writing tool. However, with the advent of Facebook[4], the popularity of blogs seems to be on the wane. Gender differences in blogging were highlighted in a study carried out on blogging in the United Kingdom (Pedersen and Macafee, 2007). They found that for women, blogging is an important social activity whereas men seemed more interested in "opinion and information" and demonstrated more "technical sophistication". Richardson (2003:42) sees blogs as a "new and viable addition to the classroom instruction across the curriculum" which could facilitate publishing of students' work and build community by involving wide audience participation. Richardson also suggests that they "provide a lasting record of learning" (p.42).

In Mr. Halim's classroom, blogging was a recent phenomenon which commenced about one month prior to my observations. Even though the blogs could have been used to post whatever students wanted to post, Mr. Halim gave the students specific instructions as to what they should post. This generally included the work they were doing in the English class, such as their poems, character analyses, letters and transcript of interviews. Students were also expected to post evaluations of each term's work. However, the girls' initially posted more entries than the boys who took a long time to get started with their

[4] Facebook is a social networking website that connects people all around the world. It has gained in popularity within the past two years and has more than 58 million users worldwide (wikipedia).

blogs. One of the main reasons for this seems to be the boys' resistance to being monitored. In their interview discussion they stated:

> M2: We only use blogs for English, we don't really take pride in them. That's why it's so so…
> M1: Yea, even now, it's almost like you're being watched, you can't say what you want to say. M3: You limit your…
> M3: It's too much time, too much..

The boys also seemed to resist the increased workload. During one of the lessons, Mr. Halim tried to access the boys' blogs but found very few postings. He then showed them one of the girls' blogs to demonstrate to them what was expected of them. This is what he said:

> "Have a look at the following blogspots that have been posted by the girls". (*He shows them one of F's entries and points out that it is detailed).*
> He says "this is where you should be. They (the girls) are one step ahead of you". He continues, "What we are doing in class is completely new". He comments that the boys have made fewer postings.
>
> ***(****Extract from field notes August 15, boys)*

He then asks the students to explain why they have not posted their work on the blogs to which one of them replied, "it's too much work". This issue of the increased workload has been repeated on several occasions by some of the boys who complained about not having the time given all their other assignments to post their blogs. However, by the end of the term, the boys had complied with instructions and based on the blogs I examined, had finished their postings. The student who was most vocal in his protests about the increased workload had the most comprehensive blog. (See Appendix H). This demonstrates that vocal resistance does not necessarily reflect disengagement with school work. In my view, the boys knew that they were being assessed and if they wanted to do well they had to comply with the instructions and complete their work.

During the interview, when discussing the engagement of the boys and the girls Mr. Halim stated, "the girls are very eager to work with it spot on, you know and talk about the blogspots while the boys if you access the blogspots you will find they will post not as often as the girls." This comment relates to what was observed on August 15 where the teacher reproached the boys for not completing their postings.

On the other hand, the girls interviewed seemed to have enjoyed blogging whereas the boys just saw it as another onerous task to be completed. When asked to discuss their blogs the girls replied:

F?: It's so new to us. Yea
F?; Its fun, exciting, really fun.
F?: You don't have any trouble with expressing yourself
F4: But like you can put anything. Yes you're able to express yourself. It's our space. Like for you to do what you want to do.
J: Is this your personal blogs or the ones you do with your work?
Students: The same. They're joint. The same.
F2: You're allowed to have both, same as face book. As long as he (the teacher) finds your work. He must find your work.

(Extract from interview with girls)

Here you find that the girls are very positive about blogging. One student said it's their space and they can use it for whatever they want. However, a close examination of their blogs reveals very little, if any additional information other than what was requested by the teacher.

Based on my observations, blogging did not provide any significant add-on value to the English lessons. Students were able to publish their work including interviews they had conducted with apartheid activists which were done prior to my observations. However, although the girls seemed to have enjoyed the activity, the majority of the boys seemed disengaged with the activity. Additionally, blogging has been designed as a social activity normally associated with out of school literacy practices. However, by integrating it into the English classroom, blogging has taken on a new and possibly uninteresting status for the students as it is used for restricted purposes.

5.5 Conclusion

There has been the tendency in research to look at boys and girls' interaction with literacy in general and consequently with electronic media in terms of the following binaries: girls perform better at school as they are more engaged with school-based literacies; boys' engagement with school is poor; materials disadvantage boys and not

girls' and that boys engage more with technology. However, what I have observed is that the girls in the Grade 10 classrooms engaged with technology on an equal level as the boys. Even though the boys on the whole seemed to engage quite positively with technology in the classroom it is difficult to discern whether their lack of engagement in some tasks were directly related to the technologies used or to the nature of the tasks for example, poetry writing and performing. It was also difficult to ascertain whether the gender of the teacher had any an influence on the boys' participation. However, using Kalantzis and Cope's (2000) view that "people experience education differently" that was mentioned in the literature review, I am of the view that the Grade 10 boys and girls in Mr. Halim's classroom experience education differently and this is based on their own social contexts and personal histories. I suggest also that their exposure to technology outside of school and their view of the perceived benefits to be derived from their use have contributed to their high level of engagement in the English classroom.

In conclusion, this chapter has provided an overview of the students' engagement with technology in the Grade 10 classes observed. Based on the data presented, I have observed that students who have access to and use technology very frequently to make meaning would engage with it in school regardless of their gender.

In the final chapter, I present my conclusions of the study which include the implications for the English classroom and recommendations for the integration of electronic forms of literacy into the English classroom.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This research is a qualitative case study which set out to investigate the forms of electronic literacy used by one Grade 10 teacher and his students in the English classroom and the purposes for which they are used. The study also examined the nature of the students' engagement with these forms of literacy and analysed whether or not the issue of gender played a role in how the students' interacted with electronic media in the classroom. This study is situated within the New Literacy Studies and specifically draws on theories of literacy as social practice and multiliteracies and multimodalities. Literature on electronic and digital or silicon literacies, gender and schooling, gender and literacy and gender and electronic literacy were also consulted.

6.2 Findings

Based on my analysis of the data collected, I found that electronic literacy practices of the students and their English teacher were closely linked to the types of literacies they experienced in their out-of-school environments. It is evident that being electronically literate in this particular setting and participation in the electronic literacy practices of this classroom community meant having access to at least a computer and the Internet either at home or in the wider community. During my observations, one of the students who did not have Internet access at home frequently went to the Internet café in the neighbourhood to do assignments that required the use of the Internet.

The main forms of electronic media used in the Grade 10 classroom were the Activboard, the overhead projector, desktop and laptop computers and the Internet. Other electronic media used were the microphone and speakers, CDs, DVDs, flashdisks and various software. During my observations, these forms of electronic media were used

predominantly in literature lessons with the exception of one language lesson which focused particularly on grammar. Students were involved in various multimodal literacy events such as: the analysis of cartoons, advertisements and comic strips which were downloaded from the Internet and presented on PowerPoint; the performance and recording of poetry and the creation of weblogs. Most of the writing that occurred during my observations took the form of PowerPoint presentations. In addition, the teacher used the Internet to conduct research with the information from the various sites being projected onto the Activboard. The Activboard was also used to project scenes from, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* the film adaptation of the novel being studied by the students. The film was first loaded onto the computer. The laptop was used on a daily basis to prepare presentations in PowerPoint and to load pedagogical software. Audio recordings were also done on the laptop.

Integrating electronic forms of literacy into the English curriculum had various consequences. An important observation was the expansion of the teacher's role to include a mediator of technology instead of being simply a mediator of learning. Additionally, the teacher played the role of facilitator and guide who was no longer the principal source of information within the classroom. Other sources of information included the Internet and the World Wide Web as well as other electronic based resources such as the DK pedagogical software, *Grammar in Focus.* This shift in teacher's role was previously alluded to by Warschauer and Whittaker (1997) who argued that the teacher should become "a guide on the side" rather than "a sage on the stage".

I have argued that the integration of electronic media and ICTs into the English classroom has helped to enhance the English lessons through the use of multiple forms of representation where students experienced various modes such as the visual, sound, writing in hypertext and reading in different media. The multimodal exploration of the text, *Cry, the Beloved Country* through the use of the film adaptation of the novel and the visual literacy lesson helped to enrich the students' experience of the novel and also provided new resources for the students to engage with Mr. Halim has demonstrated that he has incorporated with some success a Multiliteracies and multimodal approach to the

teaching of English (*See thick description of girls' lesson of August 23*). Warschauer and Kern (2000) and Snyder (2002) among others have highlighted the possible benefits of successfully integrating electronic forms of media into the classroom The creation of expanded opportunities for learning made possible by the Internet for research purposes is one of the benefits observed in Mr. Halim's English classroom. For example, during the poetry lesson on "an abandoned bundle" the teacher was able to consult various sites that explored the issue of abandoned babies to provide more insight into the problem. The students were also introduced to new genres of writing such as the preparation of PowerPoint slides. This genre of writing is usually dominant in the world outside of the classroom.

Nevertheless, in spite of the possibilities created through the integration of electronic forms of literacy into the English classroom, I have also observed some disadvantages. I have argued that, there seems to be possible 'language erosion' with the use of ICTs in the classroom, an issue that raised by Warschauer (2000) Two issues that were raised were the problem of grammar where students experienced basic problems with sentence construction, prompting the teacher to organize a grammar lesson (*See fieldnotes of September 3*). The frequent use of the spell check option could also contribute to deficiencies in spelling as students would not see the need to focus on spelling rules with the availability of the spell check.

I have also argued that there has been a lack of detailed and critical focus on some texts such as the poem, "An Abandoned Bundle" as too much time has been spent foregrounding the technology. During a presentation of one of the plenary sessions at the *14th International Conference on Learning, 2007*, Bill Cope warned against what he called 'technocentrism' where education can be dominated by technology and where technology rather than learning is foregrounded. In many instances, I have observed an overemphasis on the benefits of integrating ICTs in the English classroom rather than an emphasis on the learning to be derived from such integration.

Another significant consequence of the integration of electronic forms of media into the classroom is the foregrounding of visual texts and the apparent disappearance of print-based texts form the English classroom. Within the context of the use of 'English in Urban Classrooms", Kress et al (2005) pointed out that the book has been "displaced by these new screens" (p.x) referring to the screens of the PC, mobile phone. The absence of print-based texts from Mr. Halim's English classroom has been a significant finding in this study. The absence of the physical text of *Cry, the Beloved Country* that was being studied as well as the absence of dictionaries for reference was also noted.

As regards the engagement of the students with the forms of electronic literacy used in the classroom, I found that the students were highly engaged. One reason for this was that they were accustomed to using sophisticated forms of technology in their out of school world thus the combination of their in school literacy practices with their out of school practices was welcome. Snyder (2002) and others have argued that it is important to engage the lifeworlds of the youth by combining their out-of-school literacy practices with their in school literacy practices. The assumption is that it is easy to incorporate home practices into school. However, what I have found of particular significance is that when events normally associated with out-of-school literacy practices are brought into the English classroom, they are morphed into school practices. For example, the students' blogs resemble any traditional school task except that they are published in an online medium. In this way, the home and school gap is not being bridged. Nevertheless, the Grade 10 students observed were also highly engaged because of the relevance of technology to their lives and the perceived benefits of technology to their futures. They also felt that the integration of technology had made their lessons more fun and interesting. The exposure to multiple modes of meaning making with the use of modes such as the visual and sound and in particular the use of colour helped increase student participation and engagement with the lessons.

With regard to the question of whether or not gender made a difference to the way the students interacted with the various forms of electronic literacy in the classroom, it was found that contrary to literature which suggests a difference in the way boys and girls

engage with technology, I found that the girls engaged with technology on an equal level as the boys. The girls were very 'au fait' with technology and were able to offer advice when necessary which indicated a level of familiarity and confidence with its use. However, there was resistance from the boys to some of the tasks for example the recording of poetry while the girls seemed more ready to comply. It was difficult to assess whether the boys' resistance was due to the technologies used and the nature of the tasks.

The next section examines the implications of the above findings for the English classroom as well as for the general integration of electronic forms of literacy in the classroom.

6.3 Implications

This study focuses on a privileged school in South Africa which is well resourced and has access to ICTs for teaching and learning. Although the Grade 10 English classroom observed is not representative of the wider South African context since for the majority of children and schools, ICTs are luxuries, the findings of this small scale study have serious implications, not only for the teaching and learning of English.

Firstly, the basic requirements for the use of electronic forms of literacy in the classroom as evidenced by this study are access to computers, internet connectivity and security. For all students to participate fully in the lessons, they should all have access to computers in their classrooms and not only in the computer laboratory. If not, there should be a smart board with a projector that would allow each student to participate fully in the lessons. As we have see in Mr. Halim's classroom, there was only one computer and one laptop but the presence of the Activboard with the projector allowed all of the students to experience the lessons. Continuous connectivity to the internet is also very important. However, in South Africa, dial-up Internet connection is quite expensive which immediately makes it a privilege for those who can afford it. In addition, students must be able to access computers and the internet outside of school to be able to complete assignments. If they

do not have access to computers and the Internet in their homes, they should be able to have access within their communities. Security is also a necessity as seen with Mr. Halim's classroom. Classrooms need to be reinforced with extra security to ensure that the computer equipment is kept safe. What does this mean then for the Department of Education's plan to make all schools in South Africa ICT ready by 2013? Is this a realistic goal given that some schools are located in areas that do not have access to electricity? In short, and based on my data analysis, the integration of electronic forms of literacy and ICTs into the English classroom and classrooms in general would require dedicated, adequately trained teachers who are fluent around computer use and access to technology not only in schools but also in the wider community to provide support for those students who have no access to technology at home. Continuous support for teachers not only from within their school environments but at the level of the Department of Education would be useful.

I continue to examine the implications of my findings with a look at the goal of Department of Education's White Paper on e-education to make every South African student ICT literate by 2013. I again highlight comments made by some of the girls' during our interview concerning the increase in their workload.

> F3: When we ask Mr. Halim if we could (like) when we do assignments, an essay or something in class, if we could have it just typed out immediately then we can hand it in then he says it's going against curriculum requirements.
> F5: He wouldn't mind it but the government is a bit delayed in the technology.
> F?: They'll probably think we downloaded it from the Internet**.** (Others) Yah, yah….
> F?; They (the department) don't accept typed out work. They think it's copied.

A close examination of the above extract reveals a number of concerns: an increase in the students' workload as a result of the integration of electronic forms of media into the classroom, an issue that was highlighted in my data analysis; the level of preparedness of the Department of Education to accept untyped work; issues of plagiarism and proper referencing. The students observed are already techno-literate and as such have already met the Department of Education's goal that every student should be electronically literate by 2013. As a result of the level of integration into their English lessons, they type

most of their assignments, prepare PowerPoint presentations and submit some of their work on flashdisks. Their interactions are generally multimodal and they would prefer to submit typed assignments. However, the Department requires that work be hand written before submission. Consequently, these students have an increased workload as they type their assignments for class purposes then write them out for their portfolios. This raises questions about the level of preparedness of the Department and their ICT readiness prompting one student to comment that "the government is a bit delayed in the technology". How is the transformation being phased in? How is assessment going to be transformed to integrate multimodal forms of work? These are serious concerns that have direct implications for all subjects and not only English.

At the micro classroom level, the integration of forms of electronic literacy into the English classroom has implications for the role of the teacher. The question about demands made on teachers' time and the pressure on teachers to reform has been repeatedly highlighted (Hargreaves, 1994; Lankshear et al, 2000). Hargreaves points out that teacher are always expected to change. Based on my analysis in Chapter 4, the use of ICTs in the English classroom leads to an expansion of the teacher's role to include mediator of technology. To fulfill such a role, the English teacher would have to be 'au fait' with the technology and forms of electronic media being used in class. Even though on one level there seems to be a reduction in the teacher's work as he/she is no longer the primary source of knowledge, a lot more is required of him/her in terms of preparation. The teacher always needs to have a contingency plan in case technology fails as was seen with Mr. Halim. This means that time spent on lesson preparation would increase.

At the level of the English curriculum, the shift from 'print-based modes to visual and other electronic texts' also has implications for the teaching of English. Snyder (1998) points out that "technology alters how language both written and visual is produced, processed and used" (p.xx). Students of English will therefore need to be taught new ways of reading and writing and engaging with English. Lankshear et al (2000) argue that students will have to be taught to read and write in different genres as demonstrated by

the Grade 10 students writing in PowerPoint, as well as 'critical cyber literacy' which involves reading in an on-line realm. I am of the view that students need to engage with print-based texts and not just extracts which should be complemented by visual texts to allow for a wider variety of texts in the classroom.

6.4 Recommendations for further research

If ICTs are to be successfully integrated into the English curriculum and also into the wider curriculum, there is need for further in depth research to map the electronic literacy practices of students in the classroom. There is also need for research on gender and electronic literacy to get a better sense as to whether or not gender plays a role in the way students engage with electronic media. Such research would help to guide interventions in the field and perhaps inform the Department of Education as to how best the objectives set out in the White Paper for e-education can be achieved.

The integration of electronic forms of literacy into the English classroom is a very complex issue which requires careful planning and execution to ensure maximum benefit to students. It is not simply a matter of putting computers into schools and training teachers. It is therefore important for English teachers and educators to carefully consider ways in which electronic forms of literacy can be used to enhance the teaching and learning of English. This means that they must be extremely clear as to the possibilities and benefits to be derived by integrating new technologies into the English classroom and their potential to improve the teaching of English.

I conclude with a quote from Lankshear et al (2000) who suggest that:

> Teachers need to approach the technologising of literacy and curriculum with caution, understanding and wisdom. They also need to ensure that education remains the main game and that technologies, new and old, remain faithfully in the service of that main game (p.xvi).

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Appendix A: Glossary of terms

TERM	DEFINITION
chat room	A branch of a computer network in which participants can engage in real-time discussions with one another
e-mail	A system for sending and receiving messages electronically over a computer network, as between personal computers
gameboy	a compact video game system.
hypertext	A computer-based text retrieval system that enables a user to access particular locations in webpages or other electronic documents by clicking on links within specific webpages or documents
internet	An interconnected system of networks that connects computers around the world.
iPod	**iPod** is a brand of portable media players designed and marketed by Apple
Mp3 Player	a portable consumer electronics device that stores, organizes and plays audio files
overhead projector (OHP)	A projector capable of projecting images above and behind the person operating it, thus allowing a lecturer or speaker to remain facing the audience while using it.
podcast	To deliver a Web-based audio broadcast over the Internet to subscribers.
smart board/activboard	It is an interactive whiteboard that is connected to a computer and a data projector.
weblogs (blog)	A website that displays in chronological order the postings by

	one or more individuals and usually has links to comments on specific postings
whiteboards	A panel covered with white, glossy plastic for writing on with erasable markers
World Wide Web	A system of extensively interlinked hypertext documents: a branch of the Internet.

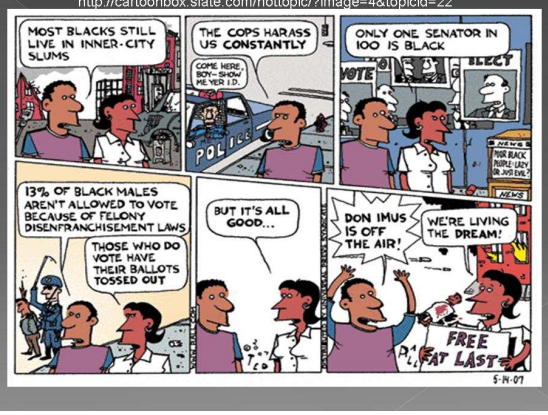
Reference: www.dictionary.com Last accessed January 29, 2008

Appendix B: Sample of students' work. Analysis of Comic strip

Group 2

Analyzing of comic strips in relation to ***Cry The Beloved Country***

http://cartoonbox.slate.com/hottopic/?image=4&topicid=22



Related themes

- Social dislocation
- Racism
- Violence
- Hope

Analysis…

- Alexander township.
- Claremont slums-place where Gertrude is staying.
- Rev. Khumalo experiences theft at bus station.
- Violence in slums and city at large.
- Jail-without a Dom pass, but Absalom was in jail for a different felony.
- Even though there is housing, most blacks still live in slums as depicted in the cartoon.
- Related to Cry the Beloved Country Because of Shanty Town, but those people had to wait for housing unlike today's times.

Further Analysis…

- Racism and harassment exists till today.
- "only one senator in 100 is black" – shows blacks were deprived of privileges , this touches the Migrant Labour System where blacks had to work in the mines, explored in the novel.
- Comic strip – Blacks weren't allowed to vote i.e. disenfranchisement laws.
- The novel – John Komalo and others had talks about these political issues but still had fear of being arrested due to monitoring by the police.
- Today – Democracy allows one to vote and have the right of opinion where you can say what you want.

Language issues…

- The hyphen in the word "inner-city" divides the word to indicate the precise meaning.
- The apostrophe used in "It's" and "we're" marks the missing letters in the contracted words.
- The ellipsis dots is used to indicate omitted words in the phrase.
- The use of the exclamation is to show excitement.

(August 20, 2008)

Appendix C: Student Interview Schedule

1. What technologies do you currently use in the English classroom?
2. Do you know how to use them?
3. How did you learn to use these technologies?
4. Do you consider these technologies an important part of your life? Why?
5. Do you think the use of ICTs make a difference to the teaching of English? Why do you say so?
6. Do you think the use of ICTs make a difference to your learning of English? Why do you feel this way?
7. What particular technology that is used in the English classroom do you find most helpful? Why do you feel this way?
8. Are ICTs being integrated in your other subjects? Which ones?
9. If ICTs are not being used in your other subjects, do you think ICTs should be integrated in your other subjects as well? Why?
10. Do you think ICTs will play an important role in your life in the future? Why do you feel this way?

11.1 Do you use ICTs at all at home, or outside of school?

11.2 What do you use? For what purpose?

Appendix D: Teacher Interview Schedule

1. How did you get interested in the idea of using ICTs in the teaching of English?
2. Which of the technologies do you use more frequently and why?
3. What was your initial motivation for using electronic technologies in your English class?
4. Has your motivation changed in any way since you started integrating electronic literacies in your classroom?
5. How long have you been using them in your teaching?
6. Have you received any particular training to enable you to do so? If so, was it provided by the school?
7. Did you find the training useful for your purposes of teaching English?
8. What have been the learners' responses to the use of ICTs in their English lessons?
9. Do you think there is a difference in the way boys engage with electronic media as compared with girls?
10. How do you think learners learn when ICTs are integrated into the teaching process?
11. Do you receive any support from the school and other teachers?
12. How have parents responded to the use of electronic literacies in the classroom?
13. What do you think are the implications of the use of ICTs for the teaching and learning of English?
14. Do you have any recommendations with respect to the use of electronic literacies in the classroom?

Appendix E: Declaration of Consent: School

PO Box 862
Kelvin
Johannesburg
July 30 2007

The Principal

Dear Sir
My name is Jeanette La Fleur and I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Master of Arts in Applied English Language Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand. My area of focus is the use of electronic literacy practices at school. This research is therefore aimed at investigating teachers' use of these practices in the English classroom. I am also interested in finding out how students engage with electronic literacy practices in the classroom as well as what are the implications for teaching and learning. I would like permission to conduct this research in your school.

Participation in this study would entail: a group interview with students as well as an interview with the English teacher and observation of lessons. I would like to audio record the interviews as well as collect samples of work. Data will be collected from both Grade 10 English classes and I will observe lessons for three school days per week for a period of 4 weeks. Permission letters will be given to all individuals from whom data will be recorded. Such participation is voluntary and at no stage in the research will the identity or location of the school, the identities of staff and learners be **disclosed**. The school and any research subjects referred to will be given pseudonyms.

The completed questionnaires and data collected from interviews will not be seen by any person in this organization at any time, and will be processed only by myself and my supervisor. Responses and all data received will be examined only in relation to the

study. This means that feedback that will be given to the organization will be provided in the form of group responses and not individual perceptions.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. This research will contribute to a larger body of knowledge on electronic literacy, as well as an understanding of the implementation of such practices in the classroom.

The school may withdraw permission for conducting the research at any time. I would be happy to answer any questions relating to the proposed research project or you can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Leila Kajee, Applied English language Studies, School of Education at Leila.Kajee@wits.ac.za or telephone number 011 717 3187.

If you are willing to grant permission for the research to be conducted in your school, please sign the attached consent form.

Yours sincerely

Jeanette La Fleur
jeanettelf@yahoo.com

Appendix E1: Declaration of Consent: School

Declaration of Consent (Principal)

I, _____(first name) _____ (surname), grant permission for the researcher, Jeanette La Fleur, to conduct the following research project: *Investigating Electronic Literacy Practices in English Teaching* (a Masters research project for the division of Applied English Language Studies, University of the Witwatersrand).

I declare that I have been informed of the details of her research proposal and agree to let her conduct the research at my School.

I have been informed that any participants in the research who is below the age of **18** years will need to obtain his/her parents' permission to participate in the study and will have to sign a declaration of consent.

Date: _____

Place: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix F: Subject Information Sheet (Letter to Parents)

Dear Parent/Guardian

Request for permission to conduct research in X school

My name is Jeanette La Fleur and I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Master of Arts in Applied English Language Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand. My area of focus is the use of electronic literacy practices, such as the use of internet technologies and smart boards, in schools. This research is therefore aimed at investigating teachers' use of these practices in the English classroom. I am also interested in finding out how students engage with electronic literacy practices in the classroom as well as what are the implications for teaching and learning. I would like to invite your child to participate in this project.

I will observe lessons three days a week for a period of four weeks. The normal school programme will not be interrupted in any way. I will sit in the class and observe what takes place. I also propose to conduct group interviews with learners which will be audio recorded. The name of your child will not be recorded. S/he will be given a false name (pseudonym) in the research. Upon conclusion of the research project, all tapes of interviews will be destroyed. In addition to the audio recording of interviews, samples of learners' work will be collected as part of the data collection process. These will be used only by the researcher and will also be destroyed upon completion of research.

Participation in all activities is entirely voluntary and will not take place without written permission from you the parent/guardian or the learner. If you do not wish your child to participate, s/he will not be disadvantaged in any way. If you do allow your child to participate, s/he may withdraw at any point.

Kindly sign the attached consent forms indicating whether or not permission is granted.

Yours sincerely

Jeanette La Fleur

Appendix F1: Declaration of Consent (Parents)

I _____ (first name) _____ (surname) agree to allow my son/daughter _____(full name) to participate in the following research project: *Investigating Electronic Literacy Practices in English Teaching* (a Masters research project for the division of Applied English Language Studies, University of the Witwatersrand).

I am aware that my child will be interviewed and that these interviews will be audio recorded. I am also aware that samples of my child's work will be collected and that tapes and transcripts of interviews as well as samples of work will be destroyed upon completion of the research project.

Appendix F2: Consent form: Interview (Parents)

I _____ consent to my child being interviewed by Jeanette La Fleur for her research project and understand that:

- Participation in this interview is voluntary
- The interview will take 45-60 minutes
- My child may refuse to answer any questions should s/he prefer not to
- s/he may withdraw from the interview at any time
- No information that may identify my child will be included in the research report and the responses will remain confidential.
- Since this is a group interview total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix G: Sample of Field notes

10 B (boys' lesson) : Field notes notes, September 3 2007

Lesson on grammar: Sentence structure

Technologies/literacies foregrounded: laptop, interactive smart board, CD Rom, projector
The first 10 mins of the lesson are spent doing a bit of administration: filing porfolios, handing out holiday assignment.
The system is still offline so learners do not go to the lab for the lesson. Instead they do the same grammar activity that was done by the females in the previous lesson.

- The teacher explains that since they cannot access the "uottawa" website at school, they will have to access it at home or at an internet café.
- Mr Halim gives the web address and says"You will access the website, the web page will open. Then looking at the computer on the right you will find a Dialogue box. In the dialogue box you will type in sentence. Press enter. When you press enter it will bring up a profile of I think 20 topics. You will enter the topic that says sentence structure. You will access the lesson on sentence structure. You will go through all of them and then you complete the test. There is a 10 mark test, 10 questions and I want you to write down the following and I'm going to ask you what is your experience of working on the Internet?... What are the advantages of doing an online test? What are the advantages of learning with the web in front of you as a teacher? 2 questions. Do we understand people? Goes over instructions; Now there are a lot of hyperlinks. You must tell me the advantages of the hyperlinks? eg.(3rd question?) It will tell you sentence and on the sentence you will find a line. You know what a hyperlink is? It will take you to what that is. You must give me the advantages of this.
- Now if we had to sit today an hr in front of the computer working , it would have been a brilliantly productive lesson but (alludes to problem with computer being offline). You see the disadvantages of technology?
- Now you have to work on a software programme on sentence and grammar and all of that and I need you to enjoy it. You will enjoy it.
- He then asks, "How many of you believe ,sir, we're forgetting the basic when it comes to sentence construction?
    - 1 hand raised
    - Mr. Halim: "Why?"
    - The learner responds, "we don't write good sentences."
    - When I give back your presentations you will see that your sentences are going a bit haywire.
    - The teacher loads the software onto the laptop and the contents are projected onto the smartboard.
    - The animated image appears on the screen. What is grammar?
    - The boys smile.
    - The same set of activities that was done by the females is displayed.

- Mr Halim pauses the CD after the section about the dog biting the postman and reminds learners that this is work they would have done in Grade 7.
- He continues with the section about the hairy dog.
- The boys look on passively at the screen.
- The teacher pauses again and says, "**Can you see the mistake you people are making?**
- He then reads through the sentences and explains the difference between "which" and 'who".
- The class then does the test distinguishing between phrases and sentences, as a whole class activity.
- The first test is titled "Is it a sentence?' The second talks about clauses.
- Mr. Halim then pauses the CD and asks "What is a subordinate clause? He continues, "You are subordinate to me so what is subordinate? Are you above me in authority or below?
- Responses "below"
- The teacher asks again what a subordinate clause is.
- Response: a lower level of clause.
- Mr Halim repeats the phrase then says ' "it is".
- As learners go through the test, the teacher ticks off their answers in the appropriate box.
- This continues until the end of the third test.
- Based on the computer's evaluation, the boys' area of weakness is distinguishing between phrases and clauses.
- The computer again explains the difference between main and subordinate clauses.
- Another exploratory test appears on the screen. The instructions: "click on the phrase button or the subordinate clause button to say whether the main sentence is accompanied by a phrase or a clause".
- For example, "The boy fell in the middle of the playground".
- Yasim suggests it's a phrase. The others are unsure.
- Mr Halim uses the infrared pointer to highlight the word phrase
- Next sentence, "James loved going on holiday even though he disliked the sun"
- Most of the boys tell the teacher to click on phrase.
- The lesson continues in this manner with the teacher pausing at intervals to ask questions like "makes sense?'and reinforce particular points. However the boys get most of the answers wrong.
- Mr. Halim asks the boys what is a subordinate clause.
- Response: "sir, it doesn't make sense".
- Mr halim asks "what doesn't make sense
- Sir, a subordinate clause. It needs a main clause for it to make sense.
- Based on evaluation, the computer says "you haven't quite got that right".
- The computer says "a phrase forms part of a sentence but does not make complete sense on its own"

- Mr Halim repeats “a phrase forms part of a sentence but does not make complete sense (boys respond) on its own. So important. Teacher continues, “many of you in your work write phrases for me. Your essays are full of phrases.
-
- At the end of the lesson the teacher asks the students, “what did you learn today?”
- Responses: 1)We didn’t have to use pen and paper” 2) it makes you understand better 3) if you did something wrong, you can do it over and over until you understand 4) with your own computer you can speed it up and learn at your own pace 5) We can explain o each other, we can disagree. 6) we can find answer immediately.

N.B: Field notes colour coded: Red: Teacher, Blue: Boys.

Appendix H: Student blog

Thursday, August 30, 2007

ask Mufti

Date:
2007-08-29 02:12:15
Title:
I am a grade 10 student ...nd we are studing the book "cry, our beloved country". While studing this we came across a statement whhich says " IF GOD IS GOOD, THEN WHY DO WE GO THROUGH SO MUCH OF PAIN?"
Category:
Beliefs and Practices (Aqeedah)
Question:
I am a grade 10 student in thr\e Al-Nur islamic school, and we are studing the book "cry, our beloved country". While studing this we came across a statement whhich says " IF GOD IS GOOD, THEN WHY DO WE GO THROUGH SO MUCH OF PAIN?" mufti can you please comment on this statemen and give me the islamic veiw of it...
Anwser:
In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful
Assalaamu `alaykum waRahmatullahi Wabarakatoh
It is our aqida and fundamental belief that Allah is Subhaan. He is pure and free from any blemish. No weakness or shortcoming can be attributed to the being of Allah. To attribute any shortcoming or blemish to the being of Allah is kufr. The statement in reference questions the pure being of Allah. That is also kufr.

There are many reasons for our pain in this world:

1. We are sent to this world to be tested by Allah. For that, we have to be faced with many adversities. Allah says, “Do people think We will leave them proclaiming ‘I believe’ and they are not tested?”
2. Our pains are also due to our wrongs and evil doings. Allah says, “Whatever adversity you are afflicted with, it is through the earnings of your hands.”

It is clear from the above that Allah is perfect and experiences of pain are either by Divine design or consequences of an individual's actions.

You should refer this issue to the principal of your school and request him to address the issue.And Allah knows best
Wassalam
Mufti Ebrahim Desai Darul Iftaa, Madrassah In'aamiyyah



Saturday, August 25, 2007

LETTER TO THE EDITOR; CRIME

P O Box 21284
*Al-Nur
1936
23 August 2007

The Editor
The Citizen
P O Box 43069
South Africa
2042

Dear Sir

RE: Crime in South Africa

The alarming crime statistics in South Africa is spiralling out of control. It is the topic of discussion on the lips of every concerned citizen. South Africa has the highest crime rate in the world. Since apartheid, the crime rate of our country has rapidly increased from an incredible1 466 429 crimes to 1 844 241 crimes in 2001, which were recorded by the police, and stills increases rapidly. Various crimes like fraud, murder, theft and serious assaults are exceptionally high in South Africa, compared to most developed countries.

As a law-abiding citizen I would like to express my disappointment and dissatisfaction with the present government. It is the same rights that we've struggled interminably for, that are now placing our lives in danger. It appears that the criminals of today have more rights than law-abiding citizens. The corruption occurring within the government is escalating at a faster rate than any other crime category. Cases are left unsolved, police personnel are incompetent and criminals easily escape from prisons and courts. Bribes beneficial to our polices are being accepted when it is infact their duty to enforce the laws more stringently.

As a concerned citizen I suggest that the death penalty be reinstated as a determent to serious crime. Does the government have the power to offer low-abiding civilians of the country more protection?

Yours sincerely
M R Amod

All statistics are provided by the SAPS CIAC, see www.saps.gov.za

Regret

REGRET

I pulled into my driveway. I can see the cars of all our close family parked outside. As I get out of my car, my brother offers me his hand in a handshake of condolences.

I enter my house. My wife and daughters are crying. Everyone is trying to pacify them. I look at my wife and try to be strong, but I can't stop my tears from flowing. There's so much grief in my house, so much pain and worry in my heart. It looks almost as if someone is has died or is very sick, although this is not the case. What I'm currently describing to you is any father's worst nightmare. My daughter has eloped.

Eloping has become so common, children trying to defy their parents. But I never imagined it would happen to me. My eldest daughter has ran away with our neighbour. The Mistrys are a nice Hindu family. We've never had problems with

them. The only question running through my head is why?

I'm a Muslim man, Muslim by name but hardly in practice. I try to read all my salaah but the shop makes it so hard. I never miss Jummah and attend Fajr on both Eids. Sometimes I tell my daughters to pray. We fast every Ramadaan and celebrate both Eids very lavishly. I take my daughters for Umrah every year. We always stop in Dubai, so they can do some shopping.

I want to make girls independent, I always had them in private schools, they don't really mix with the Indian girls, only those in the white schools.

I always gave my daughters the best, I only bought them branded clothes. I never told them 'no' for anything. They have a shoe to match every outfit and a scarf to match every shoe, although I never really see them wear scarves.

I don't get a chance to spend time with my girls. We take a holiday twice a year but I always gave them their freedom. I thought my daughters how to drive from young. I even bought her a car before she got license. I remember how happy she was that day. She must be in that car right now, she's using it to run away from me.

Where was my wife when my daughter was busy with the neighbour? I could have left her at home but, I needed her at the shop. We've been busy and I can't manage otherwise. I do let my wife stay at home sometimes but she needs that time to visit her friends.

I did all this for my children, So that I could show the world my beautiful daughters. I never shouted them because, I fear that they will hate me.

Am I so selfish that due to my own needs I let my children go astray. For my pride and image I never once told them to cover up and dress properly. For my money, I never let their mother to guide them. Through my ignorance, I never prayed and never set an example for my children.

With tears in my eyes, I sit on my mothers old musallas and pray to Allah to bring back my daughter. Only Allah can save my eighteen year old daughter from my forty-five year old Hindu neighbour, father of three children.



Wednesday, August 22, 2007

hardship is encouragement in disguise

HARDSHIP IS ENCOURAGEMENT IN DISGUISE

As a young boy, I experienced a lot of hardships as I was living in South Africa and in those days apartheid was a rule. My parents were in the Indian congress, which gave me the encouragement to take up upon politics.

I remember the experience which I encountered, which was known as the Sharpeville Massacre. It occurred on the 21st March 1960. The African men marched against the "doing pass low." The objective of the March was that African men leave their passes at home and present themselves for arrest. We marched to the local police station. Three hundred other policemen came to the local police station to assist them. While the Africans continued to march, the police opened fire against us. A total of 69 were shot dead and 180 were severely injured. I was lucky to come out scratch less.

I am glad I took part in such an event which taught me a lot of lessons. It gave a short period to feel how the black South Africans felt and lived through apartheid times. They wanted to be heard but were rather treated with violence; as a result these feelings of hatred build up within them. Having this experience made me feel like one of them. My heart cried with pity ness, but yet I was in the same shoes as them, just a wee bit better, because I was an Indian. I did not have to carry a pass. The fact that I could have been one of the 69 that was killed gave me shivers and made me feel the sadness of those who lost their beloved one's, innocent, young and old were heartlessly killed, but the attitude I required and had was if I died for my country. It was worth it. The fact that I saw people killed in front of me for justice made me stronger and encouraged me to fight against the government for what was right. After this event, my views towards the white people in general have changed. I found them to be heartless and unjustful being to react in that way.

This experience gave me a total different outlook on life but when I thought of my

family, friends and community as a whole, this gave me strength to a different to South Africa. I felt that what I was doing for my country was correct, because when looking at the lives of the sahaba and prophet (S.A.W), they were brave men who fought for their believes and what was right. Therefore knowing that one day I would be rewarded by Allah (god) for fighting for justice gave me even more strength.

Today when I sit back, relax and look at the new South Africa and ponder about my life, I feel grate honor knowing I played a role in the difference of South Africa. I also feel great honor when I think of the way I spent my youth, rather then regretting like most people today and how also when Allah questions me of my youth, I will have a answer. May Allah always keep South Africa non-sexiest and non-racist democratic South Africa.

Friday, August 17, 2007

poem on johannesburg

Jozi

Jozi is a very busy city
With many girls who are pretty
And sometimes they are witty
That is our beautiful city

And the crime
Is at it's prime
Safety is a priority
Because of the authority

You can get an occupation
At any station
There are many places to be
And a lot to see at Sandton City

There's a lot of clubs
Where people take drugs

Labour migration
Is dislocating the nation

With all the good and bad
Jo'burg City is Jo'burg City

Evaluation of powerpoint

It showed me how benefitting is technology, and how it can improve ones understanding of different things. It was a different way of learning. It showed me what effort my techer puts in to make all yhis powerpoints because it took alot of effort and time.

character anylasis- phase 2

Absalom Kumalo:
Public life:
life of crime friends who deal with crime
Private life:
Not stable… always movingHonest… confesses to the murderKills due to fear
Peoples perceptions:
Murderer… murders Arthur Jarvisgood character.. reformatoryCriminal… breaking into houses
Arthur Jarvis:
Public life
:Just person… blacks look upto him Opponent of Apartheid
Brave… creates a boxing club for blacks
Personal life:
President of African boys club..
Hero…
People's perceptions:
Barve character… against Apartheid, wanted justice
Wealthy man…
Foolish man… according to his father in the start of novel, but then is honoured by his father.
Disappointment due to his death

James Jarvis:
Public life:
Self concerned… only worries about himself and his family- in starting of novel.
Later he develops relationship with the people of Ndotsheni
supports people of ndoysheni.
Personal life:
hardship… son and wife's death
Family man…only worried about them and not the blacks
Good man… helps people of ndotsheni
Peoples perceptions:
high status in Ndotsheni … when the girl was passing him she waited
Tries to fufill his sons dreams…
stops being a racistRacist.. doesn't great the black man at his sons funeral..
John Kumalo:
Public life:
Political activist
Personal life:
Untruthful.. support his sons liesdeserts his brother in time of need
successful business man
social-dislocation

Peoples perceptions:
Believed to be corrupted by power…disliking to the church
People find him arrogant
.stands up for injustice…

Rev. Kumalo

Public Life:
Priest
Faith in god
Honourable man… look upto amoung the people of ndotsheni
Patient man… doesn't loose his temper…

Private life:

Gullable… trusts anyperson- ticket incident

Good character… makes the women to which he son made pregnant to marry his son

Family man… loves ands cares his son and sister, although they have disgraced him…

Peoples perceptions:

Respectful man

Honourable man

A firm believer

Monday, September 3, 2007

character analysis on cry the belovad country.

Stephen Kumalo

Stephen Kumalo is the protagonist and moral compass of Cry, the Beloved Country. He is a quiet, humble man, with a strong faith in God and a clear sense of right and wrong. An Anglican priest, Kumalo cares for his parishioners and presides over the modest church of the village he calls home. They struggle, however, to save money for their son's schooling and for a new stove. Kumalo is not flawless, and he occasionally erupts in anger and tells lies. Praying to God, however, saves him from temptation, and he always repents when he speaks unfairly.

As the novel begins, Kumalo undertakes his first journey to the city of Johannesburg. He is intimidated and overwhelmed by the city, betraying his simple background. With the help of generous hosts, kumalo finds his way in city Johannesburg and searches for his son. As the search drags on, we become aware of Kumalo's physical weaknesses. He is forced instead to search for his son. When it becomes clear that Absalom is in grave trouble, Kumalo's body is further broken by his grief, and further broken down when he finds his sister as a prostitute. By the time Kumalo leaves Johannesburg, he is deeply sad, but his faith is buoyed by the generosity of others. When he returns to his village, Kumalo works to improve the lives of his parishioners. In the end, he faces his son's death with mourning, but also with a sense of peace.

NB: * All names have been changed to protect the identities of students and the school.