

Culture and Communication: Revealing Limits to Literacy-Learning
Communications in Saudi Children's Home and Kindergarten
Communities

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Statement of Originality

The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Signed:

Date: 30-5-2016

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Abstract

This study used sociocultural theory as a lens to explore the social interactions between young children and adults, including parents, maids and Early Childhood Teachers (ECTs), during emergent literacy practices at home and in kindergarten environments in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The study examined adults' literacy beliefs, attitudes, roles, and relationships in the home and the kindergarten environment, and how this relationship contributes to young children's literacy learning from middle and below average income families. Mixed Methods Explanatory Sequential design was used to organise the investigation. In the first phase of the study, a sample of 325 parents with children aged three to five and a half years old was obtained from 10 kindergarten centres in Mecca. In the second phase, case studies of two children in their social environments with their two maids and two ECTs were included. Four in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with ECTs and maids, along with classroom observations of the social interaction during emergent literacy activities between teachers and the focus children in the kindergarten centres.

Results from the questionnaire revealed that literacy as a social practice was evident through the ways children and adults interacted during literacy-based practices. Nearly one third of parents indicated that their children have shown interest in adults' reading materials in the home, including newspapers, TV guides, magazines, computers, and smartphones. More importantly, fathers in this study were less engaged than mothers in their daily literacy practices at homes. An integrated analysis from the parental questionnaire, teachers' interviews, and classroom observations revealed that reading the Quran to children at home and in the kindergarten occurred frequently in order to develop children's reading skills and to strengthen children's sense of identity in their Muslim culture and heritage. Parents' level of education was found to have an impact on the children's positive attitude and interest in using technological tools as a literacy source of learning and communication with others at home. There was a significant effect of the household income on the child's attitudes in response to print.

The communication between parents and ECTs was found to be influenced by gender segregation law in KSA. This study showed that mothers were the main people who were culturally allowed to communicate with ECTs, but not fathers. The most surprising finding that Saudi fathers were found to be mostly involved in the kindergarten centres in relation to their children's behavioural issues. Interestingly, the kindergarten directors were found to be the only people in charge to communicate with fathers, not the ECTs. This may be due to the fact that

directors in the KSA have the status or position of power to take in charge in communicating with fathers.

This study found that parents and teachers in home and kindergarten setting are disconnected and do not value each others' roles. The analysis revealed that almost all parents agreed that fathers and mothers played a significant role in their children's literacy development. In contrast, the majority of parents disagreed with the important role ECTs have played in fostering children's literacy learning. The study found that ECTs experienced limited opportunities to integrate techno-literacy resources, such as computers, iPads, and the Internet, during teaching literacy experiences, and had a lack of literacy training, which eventually influenced their limited perspective toward teaching literacy.

Further analysis indicated that the role of maids in engaging with young children's literacy practices in KSA was important, under-recognised and under-utilised. The importance of this finding cannot be overstated. Maids in this study were found to have an influence on children's writing and drawing skills and on children's social interaction with others at home, while they had no influence on children's attention to rhyming sounds, using technological tools, response to print, or reading skills. Significant differences were found in terms of children's interactions with others depending on whether there was or was not a maid in the home. ECTs agreed on the influence of maids on Saudi children's literacy learning. However, they had different perspectives toward the level of maids' influence on children. This may be determined by teachers' own perspectives and working experiences with children and parents.

Recommendations from this study are targeted at teachers, who have scope to activate fathers' role in their children's literacy education. There are several ways in which this could be achieved, such as by designing literacy workshops for fathers in order to develop their understanding of the importance of emergent literacy learning, and by involving them effectively in their children's education, including literacy. Parents were scarcely aware of the positive and important role that ECTs play in their children's emergent literacy learning in the kindergarten environment. There is room for change in the relationships between parents and teachers, especially in terms of open communication methods between home and kindergarten settings. This thesis includes a detailed discussion of these findings, as well as recommendations for practical application and future research.

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Chapter One – How Children Learn Literacy in Their Social Context

“The evidence also shows that interactions between adults and children as they encounter literacy are significant in shaping literacy practices and the human relationships that surround and are embedded in literacy” (Hall, Larson, & Marsh, 2003, p. 94).

1.1 Introduction

Children gain their first knowledge and experiences in their home environment, learning from sources including adults, such as parents, grandparents, siblings, and sometimes domestic workers. Through social interaction, children engage with others in home learning and develop their own emergent literacy skills. This study was located in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), where maids play a significant role in child rearing and education at home. Kindergarten centres play another vital role in maintaining children’s emergent skills before they begin school. This research investigates the social interaction of young children with adults at home and in the kindergarten environment during involvement in emergent literacy activities. It uses sociocultural theories to examine social interaction and children’s learning, as their learning is scaffolded by others.

1.2 My Personal Interest in Carrying Out this Research

Because of my own experiences working as an early childhood teacher, and more recently in my role as university lecturer in Umm Al-Qura University in Mecca, I am interested in literacy for children aged three to five years. The journey of my current investigation has been influenced by my study in Australia for more than six years. This interest escalated when I started my Masters degree at the University of Western Sydney, where I had opportunities to work in several Australian childcare centres in Sydney. My understanding was developed and extended to view literacy through another cultural lens. I was amazed by how different cultures value literacy and practices differently to my own culture (Saudi culture). This influenced my decision to be a researcher in the emergent literacy area. When I moved to Newcastle to do my second Masters degree (Master of Philosophy in Education) and subsequently commenced PhD study with a focus on early childhood literacy, I was influenced by Linda Newman, who guided my further investigation and understanding of literacy from a contemporary perspective. From my research, I found that there is great concern regarding teaching emergent literacy in the kindergarten stage around the world. As discussed in Chapter Four, based on the existing

literature, many Early Childhood Teachers (ECTs) still use a directed teaching style which focuses on fundamental concepts and processes of literacy through the use of pencil and paper tasks (Clark & Kragler, 2005). Few ECTs have the knowledge to incorporate technology in teaching emergent literacy. Nor do they use a broader range of socially oriented approaches.

Another concern I had was addressing the gap in the existing literature: most of the literature available exclusively investigates a few aspects of home literacy, such as reading and writing skills. I agree with Grieshaber, Shield, Luke, and Macdonald (2011), who proposed that the Home Literacy Environment (HLE) is an important contextual factor, is complex, and needs to be investigated through all aspects of literacy learning.

Accordingly, I decided to further investigate many aspects of home literacy, including oral language (such as talking, listening, phonemic awareness), language usage in a range of functions, reading and print awareness (such as environmental print awareness), writing, visual literacies (such as viewing and drawing, and critical thinking), the literacies of technology (such as computers, internet, iPads, iPhones, iPods), popular culture (such as movies, theatre, art), functional literacy (such as road maps, timetables), and literacies other than Arabic that are relevant to the lives of young children. Researchers have not examined in great depth the role of fathers in their children's literacy: in particular, in Eastern countries, including KSA. What previous research there is revealed that fathers participated in their children's literacy practices, although less than mothers (Morgan, Nutbrown & Hannon, 2009). As a result of this gap, I chose to focus on the role of fathers in children's literacy learning, as well as fathers' communications with their children's ECTs and the ways in which this communication occurs.

Moreover, I decided to investigate the relationships between these factors and other home variables, such as literacy artefacts, functional uses of literacy, verbal references to literacy, library use, parental encouragement and value of reading, parental teaching of skills, beliefs about their own roles, ECTs and maids' role in assisting their children's emergent literacy, parental modelling of literacy behaviours, parental education, and parental attitudes toward education.

The other issue I found in the existing research was the lack of communication between homes and the kindergarten setting (Alameen et al., 2015). Beside this, there was little recognition of the vital role of ECTs in children's emergent literacy in many cultures, including Eastern culture: in particular, KSA. In addition, ECTs face several challenges related to work restrictions and the ability to communicate with children's parents only within culturally and

socially acceptable boundaries. This has led many teachers to become conscious of how difficult it is to communicate with children's fathers in particular. Although ECTs are aware of the important role and value of fathers being actively involving in their children's education, development, and literacy in learning, they seem to lack an awareness of how to involve fathers. From my experience of working as a teacher in a kindergarten centre in KSA and my professional experiences as a student working in Australian childcare centres, I have noticed the differences in regard to children's literacy learning in terms of the curriculum, resources, perspectives, and teaching pedagogies. This inspired the investigative aims of this study: to explore the way that ECTs in KSA view and integrate literacy in the teaching activities in and out of the classroom areas, in order to understand children's social interaction with adults (at home and kindergarten environments) during emergent literacy practices. Figure 1.1 illustrates the clear picture of the investigation process of Saudi children's emergent literacy learning.

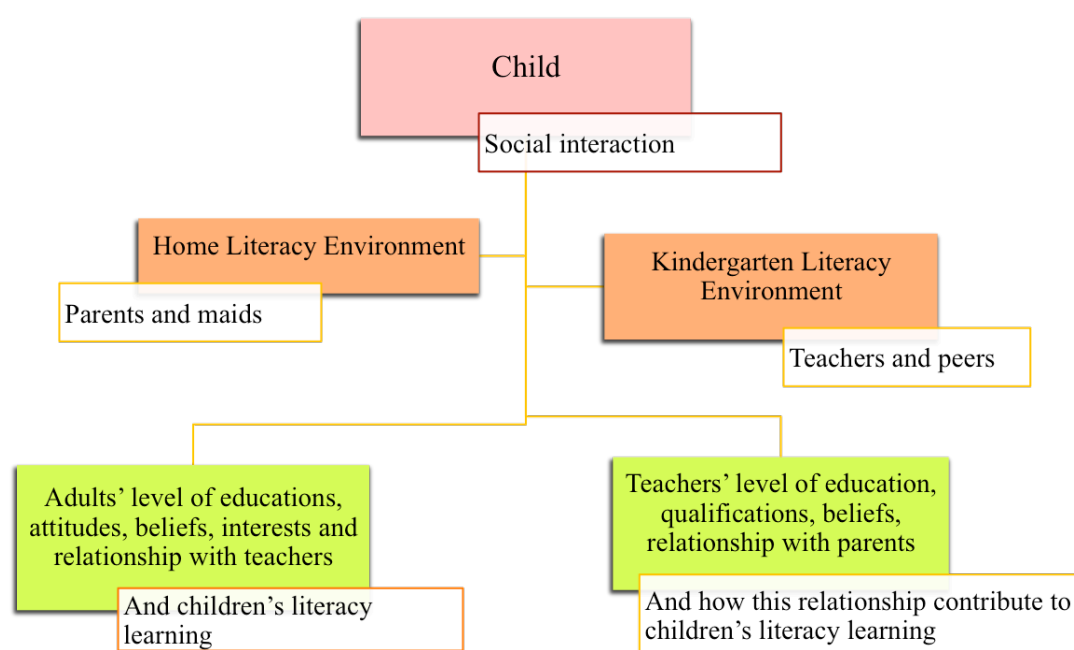


Figure 1.1. The investigation process for this study

1.3 Research Aims and Research Questions

Responding to the gaps in knowledge about adults' roles in assisting young children's literacy learning, this study explores the sociocultural environments of KSA homes and kindergartens. It investigates the roles of parents, teachers and maids, who all contribute to the development of young children's literacy. This research is a mixed methods study conducted in two phases.

This study had two aims, together they addressed both the home and kindergarten environments in the KSA. The research aim for the first phase (the Questionnaire Phase) was:

1) To explore children's literacy practices at home, encompassing the reading of books, print awareness, interest in letters and writing, multi-literacy, technological interests (watching video and TV, and using computers), popular culture and critical literacy in the home setting

In the second phase (the Case Studies Phase), the research aim was:

2) To explore early childhood teachers' literacy beliefs, practices, philosophies, teaching pedagogies and their own perspectives toward the roles of parents and maids regarding children's emergent literacy learning. This exploration included communication between home and kindergarten.

The primary research question this study addressed was: "What is the role of adults in young children's literacy learning in KSA?" The sub-questions in both phases framed the study and guided the investigation process:

Questionnaire Phase

1. To what extent and in what ways do parents engage with their children's literacy activities at home?
2. How do parents view the role of early childhood teachers and maids in their children's literacy learning?

Case Studies Phase

1. How do early childhood teachers and maids provide an environment to support children's literacy learning in the home and the kindergarten?
2. How do early childhood teachers communicate with parents? And in what ways does this communication benefit children's literacy learning?
3. How do early childhood teachers view the role of parents and maids in children's literacy development?

1.4 Key Terms of the Study

Key terms used through the thesis include emergent literacy, communication, educated, non-educated, home literacy environment (HLE), and kindergarten. Emergent literacy, or “early literacy,” is related to children’s early literacy concepts, behaviours, and skills that develop into and precede conventional literacy (Kaderavek & Sulzby, 1999; Schickedanz, 1990; Sulzby, 1985; Teale & Sulzby, 1996). Beck (2002) suggests that “emergent literacy is concerned with the early phases of literacy development, the period between birth and the time when children read and write conventionally” (p. 44). Floyd, Canter and Judge (2008) have also argued that a universal definition of the term “emergent literacy” is needed to include behaviour such as interacting with technology and print-based resources. Another emergent literacy definition has included these early literacy behaviours as well as language development:

literacy includes talking, listening, and visual literacies such as viewing and drawing, and critical thinking, not just reading and writing. In addition, the literacies of technology (such as computers, internet, faxes), popular culture (such as movies, theatre, art), functional literacy (such as road maps, timetables), ecological literacy (especially for Indigenous groups) and literacies other than English are relevant to the lives of young children today (Spedding, Harkins, Makin & Whiteman, 2007, p.7).

Spedding et al.’s (2007) definition does not include any mention of social interactions as an important element of literacy development. Accordingly, the contemporary and broader perspective of “emergent literacy” is included in the *Five Literacy Keys* developed by Woodrow, Arthur and Newman (2014) in order to frame the Literacy Connection Professional Learning Program. These are:

1. Literacy is a social practice.
2. Children are learning about literacy in their families and communities.
3. Play with familiar literacy materials encourages children to take on roles of literacy users.
4. Literacy learning involves key concepts and processes. These include concepts of print, phonemic awareness, phonics, processes of speaking and listening, reading and writing, visual literacy and critical literacy.
5. Educators have a critical role in scaffolding children’s literacy understandings (p. 92).

I will discuss sociocultural theories and literacy as social practice in Chapter Three of this thesis.

In addition, communication between adults and Early Childhood Teachers (ECTs) plays a significant role in fostering children’ emergent literacy. In this context, communication is defined as dialogic interactions, including verbal, non-verbal, and physical interactions, that

occur between adults and children (Jonsson & Williams, 2013). Sustaining positive and productive communication channels between both parties can enhance the educational system, as parents are considered one of the most influential factors in children's education. In this thesis, the use of the term 'educated' in this research refers to 'formally educated', and 'non-educated' refers to 'not-formally educated'.

The home literacy environment (HLE) is vital in motivating and developing children's literacy learning. The home environment includes several variables that may influence the way that children grasp literacy knowledge and experiences. In recent years, researchers such as Phillips and Lonigan (2009) have defined the HLE,

as encompassing variables such as literacy artefacts, functional uses of literacy, verbal references to literacy, library use, parental encouragement and value of reading, parental teaching of skills, child interest, parental modelling of literacy behaviours, parental education, and parental attitudes toward education (p. 147).

Although this definition includes all the aspects of a HLE, exposing children to technological literacy resources – such as watching educational programs on TV, playing with educational songs and e-stories on iPhones and iPads, as well as using the computer to play reading and writing activities – are increasingly significant aspects. These aspects relate to technological resources now available in many households, including Western and Eastern households. In any case, children's social and cultural contexts are very significant and should be considered by ECTs.

Another term used in this thesis is kindergarten. In KSA, kindergarten is also called preschool stage, encompassing children aged three to six years.

1.5 Overview of the Thesis

This thesis consists of nine chapters. Chapter One discusses my personal, social, cultural, and historical context and interest in carrying out this research, my research statement, and the keys terms that used in the present study.

Chapter Two highlights the social and cultural context of KSA, which has influenced the choice of the research methods and the methodology of this study. This chapter discusses the conservative and complex social, educational, and political characteristics of KSA, drawn from the Islamic law of gender segregation within the country. Saudi women have been through major changes in educational, social and even political life as a result of the previous King (Abdullah), who acknowledged and believed in the role of Saudi women in shaping their own

society and leading the country beside men toward a better future. This chapter takes us from the traditional view of Saudi lives to the modern changes that have happened in Saudi education, including kindergarten, and the social life of Saudi`s citizens, including women.

In Chapter Three, Vygotsky`s sociocultural theory is discussed in relation to child development and education. This chapter highlights how children learn and develop within Vygotsky`s theory in terms of the concepts of imagination and play, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and mediation. Contemporary literacy perspectives, including literacy as social practice and events perspectives, are discussed in depth with examples. Chapter Three explores Vygotsky`s concept of mediation through play-based literacy learning practices which facilitate children`s learning.

In Chapter Four the relevant literature is reviewed. The first theme explored in this chapter is Home Literacy Environment (HLE) variables, such as parents` level of education and SES, and parents` habits, activities, beliefs, and attitudes toward teaching their children emergent literacy. Maids as a sociocultural part of Saudi households with their roles, language use, and educational and cultural backgrounds are highlighted. The second theme is the Kindergarten Literacy Environment (KLE), exploring the ECT`s emergent literacy practices in the classroom, their beliefs, educational levels, qualifications, and their teaching style and philosophies. The third theme introduced in this chapter discusses the relationship between home and kindergarten settings, and communication processes and styles in terms of supporting children`s emergent literacy practices.

Chapter Five discusses the research design, which is based on Mixed Methods Explanatory Sequential (MMES) design. It explores the adopted research paradigm and methods of investigation in both phases, including the quantitative (the questionnaire) and qualitative (case studies, interviews, and observations). This chapter revisits some of the social and cultural context of KSA, which has influenced the investigation process and choices in the research design. It explores the approaches that have been used to analyse both types of data.

In Chapter Six, the quantitative data is described and discussed. Descriptive Analysis (DA) and Factor Analysis (FA) were both used in order to analyse data from the questionnaire. The use of these approaches to analysis is based on the questionnaire design and the number of variables. This chapter discuss the correlations found between different variables at home, such as parental level of education, household income levels, having maids, and how it affects children`s literacy interests, attitudes, and learning at home.

Chapter Seven is the first of two case study chapters. This chapter describes and discusses the HLE and KLE of Gasem (pseudonym), who is five years and five months old, through the questionnaire, interviews, and observation checklist of child, teacher and peer observations during literacy activities. It also explores the maid's interaction with Gasem and his literacy activities at home, her own literacy beliefs, the relationship between home and kindergarten, and the maid's relationship with her employer. The chapter discusses the relationships between home and kindergarten settings through parents and teacher communication.

Chapter Eight follows the same structure as Chapter Seven. It presents and discusses the data related to Kareem (pseudonym), who is five years and six months old, through a case study.

Chapter Nine integrates the overall analysis and findings of both the quantitative and qualitative data related to children's emergent literacy practices, attitudes and interests from the parental questionnaires, the teachers' and maids' interviews, and the classroom observations of children and teachers' literacy learning. This chapter concludes by providing several recommendations and suggestions for future research in the field of the early childhood education.

Chapter Two will now present the social, cultural, and historical context of KSA.

Chapter Two – The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA): Social and Cultural Contexts

“Saudi women devise their own strategies to challenge gender inequality and achieve social justice not only in education but in all life matters, especially given the complexity of women’s issues and concerns in what is so called ‘Third World’ Islamic patriarchal societies” (Hamdan, 2005, p. 42).

2.1 Introduction

This study was conducted in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), particularly in the city of Mecca, which is representative because it is one of the biggest cities in KSA. My own ontological and sociocultural perspectives led me to focus on the role of women in KSA. Being a woman in KSA is completely different from most parts of the world. Therefore, this chapter describes some of the complexities of KSA lifestyle and cultural practices.

Without doubt, KSA has unique educational, cultural, social, and socioeconomic characteristics, which have been shaped by strictly applied Islamic law and oil wealth. El-Sanabary (1993) highlighted these characteristics, which involve a dual educational system of males and females, gender-specific educational policy, and curriculum differentiation at various levels of education, including primary, secondary, high school, and university. The conservative and complex nature of Saudi culture has been discussed over the decades, with many questions put forth by scholars (Al-Jadidi, 2012; Al-Rabiah, 2008; Alzaydi, 2010; Robertson & Al-Zahrani, 2012; Gresham, 2013; Khoja, 2013). I believe that researchers in KSA should draw their attention to investigating the nature and ambiguities of KSA culture before undertaking any research there.

This chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part discusses in detail the characteristics of KSA and the changes it has been through in the last fifty years, especially in regards to KSA socioeconomic, social and political life, gender segregation, and foreign maids as significant people in KSA culture, as well as women’s rights and their educational, political, and social positions in society. The second part discusses the education system, including kindergarten education, curriculum, teaching pedagogies, objectives, and policy.

2.2 Overview of the Kingdom

2.2.1 Geographical location and weather of KSA

KSA is located in the Middle East in the south western part of Asia. It borders the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, north of Yemen (CIA World Fact Book, 2012). Generally, the weather in KSA is harsh, dry and hot, but it differs from region to region. The KSA is divided geographically into five main regions: the Central region, including Riyadh, which is the largest and the capital city of KSA; the Western region, which includes three main cities – Mecca (known as Makkah), Medina, and Jeddah; the Eastern region, which is the most significant economic region of KSA as it is the source of the oil wealth of the country; and the Southern and Northern regions, which are similar in terms of climate and agricultural resources (Hajj & Umrah, 2011).



Figure 2.1. Map of KSA (Source: CIA World Fact Book, 2012).

2.2.2 The currency

KSA currency is Saudi Riyal (SR). There are 100 cents per riyal. One SR is equivalent to about 0.3361 Australian dollars.

2.2.3 Population of KSA

The population of KSA is estimated at 27,345,986 people (90 per cent Arab; 10 per cent Afro-Asian) (CIA World Fact Book, 2012). Age group structure is clarified in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

2.1: Age Groups and Structure in KSA in the Year 2012

Age structure	Total	Male	Female
0-14 years	27.6%	3,869,961	3,681,616
15-24 years	19.3%	2,832,538	2,458,339
25-54 years	45.4%	7,086,004	5,323,373
55-64 years	3.2%	674,571	555,136
65 years and older	3.1%	444,302	420,146 (2014 est.)

2.2.4 Flag of the Kingdom

The flag of KSA is green, featuring an Arabic inscription and a sword in white. The Arabic inscription is “lā ’ilāha ’illā-llāh, muhammadun rasūlu-llāh,” which means “There is no God but God; and Muhammad is his Messenger” (Ministry of Higher Education, 2010). The sword was added into the flag in 1906, symbolising the military success of Ibn Saud, the founder of the KSA (see Figure 2.2).



Figure 2.2. KSA Flag (Source: CIA World Fact Book, 2012).

2.2.5 Celebration days in KSA

KSA celebrates three main events during the year. These events relate to religious and cultural characteristics that shape KSA’s lifestyle and social practices. Saudi National Day (23

September) is one of the most significant events, which all Saudi citizens celebrate. The second and third religious events are Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha. Eid Al-Fitr is celebrated at the end of Ramadan, the month of fasting. Muslims in this event give *zakat*, also called charity, to poor people. Eid Al-Adha is on the tenth day of Dhu Al-Hijjah and lasts for four days. During these days, Muslims sacrifice an animal for the sake of Allah and distribute its meat to poor Muslim families and friends.

2.2.6 Religion and language

In KSA, religion, culture, and government are interconnected. The first word in Quran is “read”, through which God asks the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to obey him. This was an explicit call from God to his prophet to renounce ignorance, and places stress upon reading and becoming literate. According to BinAli (2013), the call of Islam reflects the importance of education and knowledge, as well as the imperative to uplift and develop human minds in order to educate and uplift the society. From this historical and religious position, KSA becomes the birthplace of Islam and is considered by Muslims the locus of Islamic religion. King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud is the custodian of the two Holy Mosques in Mecca and Medina. Since the beginning of the sixth century AD, Islam has impacted on and shaped KSA history and character (Pharaon, 2004). All Saudi people are Muslim and have adopted Shari’a (Islamic doctrine) as law in addition to the constitution of the country (Pharaon, 2004). There are two main Muslim group in KSA: Sunni and Shia (Nydell, 2002). The population is approximately 90 to 95 per cent Sunni and 10 to 15 per cent Shia (CIA World Fact Book, 2012).

Islamic doctrines draw on the revelations from God (Allah) to his last prophet Mohammed (Nydell, 2002). KSA has adopted the Quran and Hadith (the written record of the prophet Muhammad’s declarations) as the basis of law in the country, and accordingly this law influences all decisions. According to Nydell (2002) the word Islam means “submission” and Muslim means “one who submits”. The doctrines of the religion of Islam, as Nydell (2002) stated, “are viewed as a summation and completion of previous revelations to Jewish and Christian prophets” (Nydell, 2002, p. 83). Syeed and Ritchie (2005) stated that:

we will use Quran and the Sunnah (traditions of Prophet Muhammad) – Islam’s two authentic sources of sacred knowledge to support our view that the activities of observing, learning, contemplating, practicing, and sharing each pillar’s rituals and their underlying meanings to promote a child’s sense of ethics, vocation, and social responsibility that is balanced with the child’s development of rich inner spiritual life marked by taqwa (God-consciousness), iman (faith), and ihsan (virtue) (p. 296).

Pharaon (2004) emphasised the importance of Islam as a nature-based religion of everyday Muslim practises, including washing, eating, and communicating with others in proper behaviours. Nydell (2002) indicated that most of the chapters within the Quran are in cadenced, rhymed verse, whereas the other are in prose. Quran is the epitome of writing in Arabic style, and reading and reciting the Quran was the most traditional means of education for Muslim people (Nydell, 2002).

Arabic language is considered the “Allah-given” language. This is the most significant tie that binds society in KSA, as it provides a link between the past and present (Chejne, 1965). In the KSA, Arabic is the official language in all aspects of life and communication. In education, Arabic instruction is provided in all subjects and at all levels, except when teaching a course about other languages. Most importantly, Arabic is the language of communicating with Allah through reading Quran as well as praying. Nowadays, teaching and memorising Quran passages is a main part of the curriculum in all schools in KSA, beside the mosque. The mosque is not just a place where Muslims practice praying: it is also considered a traditional school for learning Shari’a and the Quran. This is available for all Muslims, no matter their age level, including children.

2.3 The History of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)

KSA is a monarchy, led by the Al Saud royal family, supported by a council and ministers. According to Al-Munajjed (1997), in the early eighteenth Century, Saudi Arabia had very strong tribal roots and histories dating back to Ibn Sau, who was the ruler of the town of Dariya located in Najd. Muhammad Ben Abdel Wahab (“AlShaikh”) established the foundation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia alongside Muhammad Ibn Saud by the nineteenth Century (Baki, 2004; Gresham, 2013). At this time, women in Saudi Arabia were excluded from public life (Quamar, 2013). In the past, although Saudi Arabia was politically as well as militarily strong, it was weak in its economic position (Baki, 2004). In 1938, oil was found in KSA, which led the country to the major changes reflected in the economic boom of the 1970s (Nydell, 2002). This change called for additional labour, increasing the job opportunities in the cities, leading many people to move from their traditional life to city life (Baki, 2004). After the oil boom in the early 1970s, improvement in the education sector in KSA for both sexes was evident (Nydell, 2002; Pharaon, 2004; Quamar, 2013). Economic development will be discussed in depth later in this chapter.

Major changes have since taken place in the KSA, brought about by the Crown Prince Abdullah, who was very serious when he announced reform to the educational, political, and social life of the country (Raphaeli, 2006). The Saudi government has come to consider women's education an area for change; however, the nature of Saudi culture, which has long relied on gender segregation, has seen slow improvement. The definition and history of gender segregation will be discussed as a barrier to women's educational, political and social life in the following section.

2.4 Overview of Modern Characteristics of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

2.4.1 Saudi's women social life

Women play an important role in Saudi society. Their role as mothers is significant in developing a healthy society, and should be recognised and rewarded. Islamic regulations and laws provide a framework to structure the role of women in society, safeguarding their contribution. This framework emphasises the marital relationship for women as well as men (Al-Lail, 2004).

2.4.2 Marriage and divorce

2.4.2.1 Marriage

Islamic family laws are drawn from two significant sources, including the Quran and Shari'a. Marriage is defined in Islam as a social bond between two parties: it is not applicable unless both parties (husband and wife) approve it (Khasawneh, Hijazi & Salman, 2011). Men in the KSA, drawing on Islamic law, have the right to control women's ability to travel as well as work. Even after being married, a woman does not take her husband or his family's name: she keeps the name of her family in order to establish her civil identity (Al-Lail, 2004). If she is rich, she can do whatever she wants with her money and can run her own financial matters without consulting her husband. Even if her husband is poor, he is obligated to take responsibility and provide her with all the necessities of life (Al-Lail, 2004). For instance, if she used to have a servant in her family's house before being married, then she is entitled to have one in her husband's house, at his expense (Al-Lail, 2004). Most of the marriage process is arranged between families.

2.4.2.2 Divorce

Laws in the KSA are based on Islam, and have granted men more rights than women in some cases, including divorce (Shannon, 2014). Within Shari'a laws, women have the right to get divorced; however, it requires the consent of the husband. Additionally, the wife has to forgo part of (or the entirety of) her dower (Rehman, 2007). Another effect of divorce upon women is that children belong to the husband's family and may be lost to the mother after divorce (Gresham, 2013).

2.4.3 Family and child rearing in the Eastern world

Both fathers and mothers in Eastern Muslim societies, including KSA, play an important role in the education and upbringing of their children. Fathers in Eastern Muslim families have ultimate power as they have the final decisions in the households. On the other hand, Eastern Muslim mothers are slightly different than Western mothers regarding the amount of their responsibilities. Muslim mothers in the Eastern world, including KSA, are required to transmit the religious and cultural traditions of the family as well as produce successive generations (Pharaon, 2004). This does not preclude her right to work outside her house: she may be employed by a man. Pharaon (2004) argued that in the Quranic view, woman should not be confined to the four walls in her house: she has a role to play in society according to her desire to work.

Child rearing means providing children with proper support to ensure they develop well physically, socially, and intellectually as well as emotionally. In the Islamic world, Muslims believe that they must raise their children in a strict Muslim environment where they are required to read and memorise the Quran and perform rituals from a very young age (Khan, 2005). These ritual practices include praying, reading the Quran, fasting (not having food or drink between sunrise and sunset), and giving a little amount of money from their allowance to charity (Khan, 2005). According to Khan (2005), young children in Muslim communities are required not only to memorise the Quran, they are also requiring to memorise the meaning of the passages they are learning and reading. As part of Islamic and traditional practice, Muslim families take their young children to mosque to read the Quran and to pray as part of a healthy upbringing. Most young children attend daily, or sometimes weekly, to learn how to practice Islamic rituals, not only just praying and reading the Quran. Other Islamic schools include weekend schools in the mosque, youth groups (run by some religious young Muslims), and

summer camps that were developed by some parents in order to instill Islamic identity in their young children (Khan, 2005). In all Muslim families, the Quran is the first Holy book that inspires spiritual practices in daily life.

Syed and Ritchie (2005) point out that the first and most important role of Muslim parents is to assist children to maintain their original nature (fitrah) in their heart, as well as to train them to practice the Five Pillars of Islam in order to maintain their faith. Children grow and enter three main stages of development based on the Model of Childhood proposed in Islamic tradition (Magid, 2003).

1. The first seven years (from birth to seven years) of the child's life are the years of exploration and play (Syed & Ritchie, 2005). Children at this stage are supervised in their discovery activities by the adults around them, including parents, teachers, siblings, and so on. This period is reflected in children's development and learning in the kindergarten centre.
2. The second seven years (seven to fourteen years) are the years of learning and discipline (Syed & Ritchie, 2005). This stage is called the "age of sponsorship," where parents and community leaders teach children Islamic manners, the consequences of behaviour, how to perform the pillars of Islam, and how we connect together as Muslims (Syed & Ritchie, 2005). At the age of seven, children who do not perform praying (*Salat*) start to be disciplined.
3. The final stage (fourteen to twenty-one years) are the years of children being befriended by their parents and other adults to welcome them into society, where they will be joined in a sisterhood or brotherhood of equals (Syed & Ritchie, 2005).

All Muslims, including parents, have been influenced by the Prophet Muhammad's care and respect for children, and for this reason, all children love him without seeing him and follow his practices (Syed & Ritchie, 2005). An example of this is the Prophet Muhammad's wife (Aisha) who reported that when the noble prophet saw his beloved young daughter (Fatima) coming toward him, he stood up, greeted her and kissed her. He then escorted and seated her in his lap (Sunan of Abu Dawood, in Talukdar, 2004).

2.4.4 Saudi women's social customs

People in KSA have their own customs for both males and females. Each region in the country also has its own customs. However, in general, men in KSA wear four main pieces of clothes. They wear an ankle-length shirt of cotton, which is known as a *thawb*. They wear on their heads a large square of cotton, which is called as *ghutra*. Ghutra is usually folded diagonally over a skullcap, which is known as *kufiyyah*, and held in place with a black cord circlet called *igal*.

Because of the value placed in Islam on covering women's bodies, women in KSA customarily wear the traditional dress, which consists of two items of clothing. The first is the *abaya* or "body veil" which covers all the body. The veil is commonly worn by Muslim women in the Gulf countries, including KSA (Al-Qasimi, 2010). The second is the *niqab* or *burqa*, in which a cloth covers the face (except the eyes) as a part of sartorial hijab. A traditional *abaya*, as Al-Qasimi (2010) has described, is black, wide, and loose, with large wing-like sleeves open from the front (see Figure 2.3 below). Although *abaya* currently has many fashions and designs, it is still a very important religious and cultural element of Muslim women's social practice, including Saudi women.



Figure 2.3. Abaya (Source: Al-Qasimi, 2010, p. 47)

2.4.5 Maids' obligations in Saudi households

Maids are significant parts of the Saudi households' makeup. Maids in Saudi households have been described as "oxygen" that the household cannot live without (Ahmad, 2014). Most Gulf families, include Saudi families, rely on in-home care provided by foreign maids. Bennett (2009) reported that many expatriate working women in Dubai believed that enrolling their young children at governmental nurseries centres was better for their own children's development and wellbeing than in-home maids. In parallel, in KSA, almost every upper and middle class household employs foreign maids who are recruited from non-Arabic speaking countries, including Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, and Ethiopia (Al-Jarf, 2009). Roumani (2005) highlighted several reasons behind the increased number of households who employ maids. For example, he suggests that there is a lack of viable alternatives, such as formal childcare centres, for children 0-2 years, and an increased number of mothers engaging in employment.

In recent research by Al-Matary and Ali (2013), about eighty per cent of households in KSA have a maid, but only 50 per cent of mothers have a career. This indicates an overdependence of mothers on aid from domestic maids (Al-Matary & Ali, 2013). Nowadays, there are a few private nurseries which have been established with technical and financial support from the state (UNESCO, 2011). These centres have opened to assist mothers who work full time and do not have maids. However, these centres do not meet the expectations of most mothers in terms of the under-qualified staff and the quality of the services provided to young children (UNESCO, 2011). This leads most mothers to get assistance instead from foreign maids to take care of their children. Most maids have only a basic level of schooling. According to Ahmad (2014), some families with non-working mothers have maids to serve and assist in rearing children. Some children and infants have died as a result of being left in the care of inexperienced maids, while other maids have simply decided to escape because they could not bear working in conditions that were not to their liking (Ahmad, 2014).

The KSA has recently faced major issues with the "running maids" phenomenon (Al-Seghayer, 2012). Recent research has indicated that there are a prevalence of maids running away for many reasons (Scully, 2009; Al-Seghayer, 2012). These reasons include the work environment being completely inadequate, being overworked, mistreatment by family members, poor living conditions inside the sponsor house, very low wages that are not paid on a regular basis or on time, and sexual harassment (Scully, 2009; Al-Seghayer, 2012). Many families in KSA still believe that taking care of infants and elderly people is part of a maid's job, which has

resulted in problems for families in the past (Ahmad, 2014). Maids have reported that they often work more than fifteen hours a day with a low salary, though many families believe that this hard work is equivalent to the salary that maids earn from them (Scully, 2009; Ahmad, 2014). This has led many maids to run away and seek other domestic work in the lucrative illegal network where they can earn much higher pay: around 1,200 SR (408.60 AUD) monthly instead of just 800 SR (272.40 AUD) as made by legal maids (Al-Seghayer, 2012). These housemaids are lured to work for a illegal network with other runaway housemaids because of their need to earn money and repay debts to recruitment agencies back home (Al-Seghayer, 2012). As a result, the recruitment of maids has been stopped from the Philippines and Indonesia in an effort by these two nations to improve the working conditions of their citizens and grant more benefits, raise their salaries, and improve their living conditions (Ahmad, 2014). This has enticed many Saudi families to hire illegal maids, as they are the only option they have to find assistance with their life demands. Many families may hide the truth about their maids' contract condition (Ahmad, 2014). These issues led the Saudi government to issue in 2012 new draft legislation in order to control migrant workers' passports (UNCCSF, 2012). The new legislation ensures the right of both parties, including employees and employers.

There has been minimal research investigating the role of maids within Saudi households. Al-Matary and Ali (2013) acknowledged that the role maids play in society has not been documented and investigated enough in KSA, and thus the findings of their study could have relevance to the entirety of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. This previous research, as well as current research related to maids in KSA, will be discussed later in this thesis.

2.4.6 Saudi women's position in society

In regards to the position of women in society, some interpretations of Quran teachings on women have been mixed with stereotyping, influenced by the cultural beliefs about Muslim women. The Quran and Hadith assign women a special status which has legal prescriptions, detailing their obligations in their private and public roles as mothers, daughters, wives, sisters, citizens, and believers (Al-Lail, 2004). In Islam, women are granted the time needed to raise a better generation, and subsequently a better society. Therefore, the Quran has given women an ethical and moral obligation to raise children, while obeying and taking care of their husband (Al-Lail, 2004).

Additionally, the Quran has identified the traditional roles for men in society. Al-Lail (2004) emphasised the role of men, who are commanded to exert their physical energy as well as earn a living for their family. They are the complement to the women, who perform the job of building and maintaining the social structure of the family. This is considered a full time activity for which men have to pay by spending their earnings on their family (Al-Lail, 2004). This traditional view reflects the notion that men are obligated to work outside, while women are obligated to be in private places such as in their families, where they belong and feel protected and safe. This position, which most women are forced to obey and accept, has recently begun to change. There are some changes that women have been through within the country in the area of education, research, politics, and economy, which are highlighted in this chapter.

Women are not allowed to drive cars according to Saudi law (Pharaon, 2004). This law is not just for Saudi women, but for all women who live in KSA. Research from the United States of America by Shannon (2014) reflects the experiences of American troops stationed in KSA as a base of operations for the Gulf War invasion of Iraq by the US and other allied forces in 1990. Saudi law dictated that women cover themselves entirely, including their faces, outside their homes and in the presence of unrelated men (Shannon, 2014). This shocked American female soldiers.

As Saudi culture forbids women from operating vehicles and working in a mixed environment, something to which American women are accustomed, many questions have been raised by American women. To minimise the cultural conflict that could arise when American female soldiers reached KSA, the military briefed female soldiers on Saudi customs and the ways that they should behave in order to minimise the conflict they might face with the Saudi populace (Shannon, 2014). As Shannon described, American women were operating supply and transport vehicles, but only while they were on duty. They were prohibited from driving cars at any time (Shannon, 2014). Although American servicewomen had an exception allowed by the Saudi government, they were still subject to Saudi law and risked punishment for violating dress codes, as well as travelling with unrelated men (Krieger, 2007; Shannon, 2014).

Dowell (1990) has argued that women in the KSA had in the past been permitted to lead camels across the desert. He argued also that the customary ban on women driving cars was an un-Islamic decision, as it forced women to hire foreign males as drivers (chauffeurs) to transport them from place to another (Shannon, 2014; Dowell, 1990). These women still respect their religious and governmental laws by wearing veils and driving with another female passenger or

other relatives, so that they do not break the laws against women travelling alone (Shannon, 2014).

In addition, religious police patrol the public spaces on the lookout for improperly veiled women or those who have transgressed the myriad of other laws meant to enforce sex segregation (Shannon, 2014). Therefore, women must publicly obey the religious law in the way they behave and dress, otherwise they will be punished by the religious police. American soldiers described the complexity of Saudi culture as pure sex discrimination, giving it the term “gender apartheid” (Shannon, 2014).

As well as not being permitted to travel from place to place, women are also banned from travelling abroad, even for studying, without written permission from their closest male relatives, under Saudi and Islamic law (Baki, 2004). Women, as Baki (2004) stated, are restricted in the use of public transportation when in the presence of unrelated men. For instance, they have to enter the bus by a separate entrance, which is located in the back of the bus, and then they must occupy designated seating (Jerichow, 1998). The main reason behind these mobility restrictions on women specifically is due to the Saudi traditional and religious beliefs in family honour (Baki, 2004).

The challenge faced by Saudi women in relation to driving has been a barrier for some women in accessing educational institutions such as schools, universities, and other educational departments. Women in KSA have suffered for a long time as a result, and have often resigned themselves to their fate, accepting unhappiness in silence (Quamar, 2013). However, by seeking higher education, most women are now more educated and have started to voice their demands, such as their right to drive. Women’s educational history and rights will be introduced in the following section.

2.4.7 Gender segregation

The conservative nature of KSA has led Saudi Arabia to become the keeper of Islamic religions (Baki, 2004). Many researchers in the area of education, economic and social life have studied and investigated the uniqueness of Saudi culture (El-Hazmi, Al-Swailem, Warsy, Al-Swailem, Sulaimani, & Al-Meshari, 1995). Without doubt, gender segregation is still considered a significant aspect of KSA cultural and religious characteristics. Gender segregation is based on Islamic law, which maintains and reflects the gender divisions (El-Sanabary, 1993; Hamdan, 2005). The Quran gives women and men equal rights, civil rights, and social rights, as well as

political rights (Baki, 2004). Men in Islam have been given special preferential treatment over women due to socioeconomic as well as cultural reasons, rather than religious reasons (Naeem-ul-Haq Chishti, 2012). According to the Quran:

And women have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable, but men have a degree over them (Al-Quran 2:228).

Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, since Allah has made some of them excel the other, and because they have spent of their wealth (Al-Quran 4:34).

Based on Islamic laws, social life within Saudi Arabia is made up of two separate worlds, which includes private and public domains. As described by Alhazmi and Nyland (2010), political and economic activities in the public domain are associated with men, while the private domain is associated exclusively with women. The private domain is where Saudi women spend most of their time, and includes home, family life, relatives and kinsmen, gardens and intimate relationships. This domain is described as a sanctuary which men are responsible for keeping safe and secure for their women (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2010; Deaver, 1980). According to Alhazmi and Nyland (2010), the concept of sanctuary has permeated not just from the religious view of women, but has been created from the cultural view of the Arabic world, including Saudi Arabia.

Another conservative view existing as a result of the gender separation concept is *ired*, which refers to family honour and women's chastity (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2010). The concept of *ired* led Muslim men, including Saudi men, to be sensitive regarding the issue of gender segregation as a means of protecting their *ired* from being lost (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2010; Baki, 2004). *Ired* is mainly associated with women, not with men. Accordingly, this has created a debate around the logic of the concept of *ired* and its effect on women's rights as a result of the practice of gender segregation in the KSA. "Wahhabism" (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2010; Baki, 2004) is a term derived from Abdel Wahab, who is considered one of the establishers of KSA. *Ired* is deeply embedded in Wahhabism. Wahhabism is a strict orthodoxy, interpreting the Quran's warning about mixing sexes by tightly restricting any form of interactions that may occur between unrelated and unmarried women and men (Baki, 2004). Therefore, Arab women in general (and Saudi women in particular) have adopted the custom of veiling their faces in the manner of past civilisations whose elite would cover themselves entirely as a sign of prestige as well as status (Afkhami, 1995).

Wahhabism scholars argued that gender segregation is a purely Islamic practice (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2010; Baki, 2004). Based on the Wahhabism belief, this practice should be enhanced

and respected in order to protect people's *ired*, or to block all the possible roads that might lead women to lose their chastity and virtue when they mix with unrelated men (Alhazmi & Nyland 2010; Baki, 2004). As a Saudi woman, I agree with Jawhari (2007) that the concept of *ired* has led many Saudi men to consider women an "erotic creation". This affects most aspects of women's lives and slows any further improvement toward women's rights in the public domain. Muslim women in general are not just scared of losing their *ired*, they are scared of being judged by the public. In KSA, the loss of women's *ired* leads to a sexualised depiction of those women who may be forced by their family circumstances to work in a mixed gender environment (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2010).

The word *ired* does not appear in the Quran, but it is mentioned in the Hadith, the speech of the prophet Muhammed (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2010). Nevertheless, mixing gender is forbidden in all aspects of life in KSA, including educational institutions (such as schools and universities) and entertainment places such as restaurants and parks (Al-Munajjed, 1997; Alhazmi & Nyland, 2010). Moreover, most public entertainment is prohibited: for instance, there are no cinemas, alcohol is banned, and women must cover themselves entirely in any public area (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2010). Restaurants are structured to service both genders in a specific way. Alhazmi and Nyland (2010) have described how most of the restaurants function within the country. Most of the restaurants in the KSA have two sections, one catering only for men, while the other is for both men as individuals and families. Others are just for families, where each family is seated in a separate, partitioned arrangement (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2010). There are no restaurants catering only for women, though there are a few coffee shops that have opened to cater only to women. It can be concluded that gender segregation has influenced not just Saudi citizenship in the area of education, politics and social life, but also others who are non-Saudi. The following section discusses the effect of gender segregation on women's social life in the KSA.

2.4.8 Women's Rights in KSA

Without doubt, Saudi women who are highly educated have stood up and requested their rights. The women's rights movement in the KSA has criticised the system that requires women to be accompanied by a chaperone, such as a father, husband, brother, or son, in order to conduct any business in public (Raphaeli, 2006). Raphaeli (2006) added that women are prohibited from entering government offices and other service agencies. Even when crime occurs in a Saudi

home, policemen are not allowed to enter this home if there is no chaperone (Raphaeli, 2006). Under gender segregation laws, men, whatever their positions are, are not allowed to enter any place that has foreign and unrelated women and vice versa. Nydell (2002) stated that both Arab women and men in general are very conscious about their appearances when they meet publically. Raphaeli (2006) described how all Saudis, including males and females, were not even allowed to hold public gatherings in order to discuss social or political issues, and petitions are the only way by which reformists can communicate and express their needs with the political leadership (Nydell, 2002; Raphaeli, 2006).

In October 2003, the first national Committee for Human Rights held a major conference in Riyadh, which was the first conference in KSA attended by hundreds of Saudis, including both men and women (Raphaeli, 2006; Taheri, 2004). Taheri clarified that Saudi women were invited to present papers at the conference, breaking the tradition of gender apartheid that had prevented the holding of any mixed conference until then. Most of the major issues faced by women in the KSA centred around the elimination of the discrimination against women; they wished for opportunities to play a full role in the national economy (Taheri, 2004).

In the third petition signed by 300 Saudi women with higher education, addressed to the Crown Prince Abdullah, women made eighty demands (Raphaeli, 2006). These demands can be divided into three categories: social, educational, and economic. The social demands were related to the status of women, particularly the promulgation rules related to divorce and alimony, and the equal treatment of Saudi women married to non-Saudis as compared to non-Saudi women who are married to Saudis (Raphaeli, 2006). The educational demands as described by Raphaeli (2006) included opening up the opportunities for studying in various specialisations at the universities, opening up opportunities in government and public agencies, and compulsory education for both girls and boys. The economic demands related to the establishment of organisations in civil society, enabling the appointment of women and eliminating the need for a chaperone to accompany women during business and financial transactions (Raphaeli, 2006; Taheri, 2004).

Regarding education, reformers in the KSA not only demand change in what is taught, but how it is actually taught (Krieger, 2007). Another weakness in the educational system mentioned by Krieger was the lack of emphasis on research. Krieger clarified that less than 0.25 per cent of the country's gross domestic product was spent on research, and universities do not have private sectors for research. Improving the quality of education in KSA is one of the most important issues.

2.5 King Abdullah and the Tremendous Change in KSA

As mentioned previously, King Abdullah took serious steps towards not just improving the quality of education, but also women's rights. King Abdullah sought to increase the number of women in decision-making positions, particularly those related to Saudi women's education (Quamar, 2013). In 2005, King Abdullah's Foreign Scholarship Programme was launched in order to provide better educational opportunities for Saudi students, both men and women, to pursue higher education in their field at foreign universities (Quamar, 2013). In fact, this program was extended after the successful completion of the first five-year term in 2010 for another five years. By 2013, nearly 100,000 Saudi students had enrolled in this program to seek higher education overseas in Western countries, and 47,000 had returned after completion of their studies and were engaged in various sectors, including the economy, education, science, and management in both the private and governmental sectors (Quamar, 2013).

In addition, King Abdullah gave \$10 billion to endow a new university (Krieger, 2007; Quamar, 2013). The new co-educational university, called King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), was opened in 2009 (Krieger, 2007). The number of female students in this university is limited. Also, the university has been criticised by some of Saudi society because of its co-educational system, which allows male and female students to be mixed (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2010; Baki, 2004). Al-Lail (2004) argued that although Western methods of education have been adopted by all Muslim countries and have been accepted as part of their heritage, there remains a problem of parallelism between the traditional Islamic type of education and Western education.

Another outstanding achievement in higher education are Al-Faisal University and Abdullah University. Al-Faisal University was developed by the King Faisal Foundation and organised by the sons Turki and Saud (Krieger, 2007). Krieger (2007) clarified that Al-Faisal University, like Abdullah University, models itself on Western universities with Western scholars. It is considered a co-educational environment: a big improvement for female students, many of whom study through closed-circuit television at the country's female colleges (Krieger, 2007). At King Abdullah University, males and females are permitted to interact in accordance with the legally mandated gender segregation system. As Krieger (2007) reported, the university has split-level classrooms, where women attend the same lecture classes as men, though they do so from balconies surrounded by one-way glass. There is a separate entrance especially for female students, who can be dropped off by their drivers. This leads them directly to stairwells, elevators, and floors that are strictly segregated by gender rules (Krieger, 2007).

Although there are obstacles faced by women in KSA, we cannot ignore the massive improvement in the educational sector. In this regard, Taheri (2004) acknowledged that during the past thirty years the number of Saudis with higher degrees has increased from a few dozen to almost a million, consisting of 300,000 Saudis who have studied in the United States and other Western democracies. It can be concluded that, although KSA has moved toward serious changes in all areas of life, there are limitations that can be found in the Islamic and social values of Saudi culture.

2.5.1 Economic changes in KSA

Presently, KSA is one of the richest countries in the world and has major and political influence, guided by King Salman. The improvement of the quality and accessibility of the educational sector in the KSA, particularly for women in the past two decades, has led to increase in the number of educated women. This has had a positive impact on women's socio-political and economic conditions (Quamar, 2013). Scholars have argued that the most predicted outcome of modernisation process in KSA, which involved industrialisation, urbanisation, literacy, sociocultural changes, and communication, is felt in the noticeable changes of Saudi women's status and roles (Al-Lail, 2004). The Saudi government is looking for economic change and is therefore working on developing a Saudi workforce by encouraging Saudi nationals to participate effectively in all the sectors of the economy (Baki, 2004; Krieger, 2007). Replacing foreign workers with Saudi workers is known as "Saudisation". Al-Munajjed (1997) argued that Saudisation requires a higher level of participation of both genders. Baki (2004) argued that responsibility of higher education is to replace foreign labourers with qualified Saudi workers, including men and women. However, this does not include low-level domestic and manual work.

Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that the new middle classes in KSA have created a significant economic power base in the shape of tens of thousands of small, medium, and large companies active in virtually every field (Taheri, 2004). Taheri (2004) reported that 90 per cent of the money in the country comes from middle class families, showing us that this class is economically strong enough not to rely on the largesse of the ruling family and government subsidies provided by oil revenues. Brown (2014) indicated that 46 per cent of the population in KSA falls into the middle class, while 35 per cent of the population falls into the lower class,

and the remaining 19 per cent is upper class. With the national changes in the KSA lifestyle, more families now hire maids.

2.5.2 Educational improvement in KSA

2.5.2.1 The impact of Islam on education system and curriculum in KSA

As KSA is considered the holder of Islam and it has the most significant Islamic position in the world, this not only influences social lifestyle, but also impacts education. The influence of Islam shapes the educational content, structure, and curricula to fit in the Quranic practice that Allah commands Muslims to observe. Therefore, in every level of education in the country, Islam plays a significant part, emphasising the methods and practices of life in KSA. The structure of education in KSA is as follows:

1. Kindergarten (also called preschool) accepts children aged 3-6 years. Kindergarten stage became compulsory in 2014. Kindergarten curriculum and stages are described later in this chapter.
2. Primary stage (also called elementary) accepts students between 6-12 years old.
3. Intermediate stage accepts students between 12-15 years old.
4. Secondary (called also high) stage accepts students 15-18 years old.
5. Higher education accepts students above the age of 18 years old.

In all stages, Islamic study is embedded in the curricula.

In the kindergarten stage, children are required to study and memorise Quran from the age of five years, beginning with a few chapters of Quran that suit the children's age. In other stages, starting from primary and through to higher education, Islam is integrated in all the curricula through the teaching and learning of Islamic subjects. These are:

1. The Holy Quran, through having weekly sessions to memorise specific chapters of Quran.
2. Tafseer (the meaning of Quran).
3. Fiqh (Islamic law).
4. Tawheed (Islamic faith).

Women's education in the past was affected by the Islamic movement and is described below.

2.5.2.2 Women's educational movement in the KSA

Historically, women had limited opportunities to access education and restricted public roles. This was due to a traditional understanding of life and was perpetuated by prevailing social behaviour (Quamar, 2013). Education in KSA was mainly for the purpose of obtaining positions in the elite government office, and aside from the parastatal system, women were permitted no interest in other opportunities (Roy, 1992). The main aim of education was “the correct understanding of Islam and the inculcation and dissemination of the Islamic creed” (Roy, 1992, p.489). The other purpose of education in the KSA, according to Roy (1992), was to focus on teaching young students and absorbing Islamic values, imparting different skills and knowledge about doctrines and ideals. This led to questions around the quality of education in the KSA, which came to the fore in the 1990s as a result of growing unemployment among the local population. As a result, there was serious demand for educational reforms inside the kingdom (Quamar, 2013).

According to Roy (1992), the illiteracy rate in KSA is reported to be over 50 per cent. Hamdan (2005) suggests that female literacy is estimated to be at 50 per cent, compared with male literacy at 72 per cent. The Saudi government therefore must develop a sounder policy concerning the quality of education at the elementary and secondary levels (Roy, 1992). Roy argued that the problem existing in education in the KSA was due to the lack of student quality, compounded by an educational system which permits the promotion of those who are ill-qualified and ill-prepared in the name of honouring those who are sensitive and politically important, tribally or in their family relationships and connections (Roy, 1992).

In the past, the major obstacle to female education in the KSA has been the lack of adequate school facilities (Quamar, 2013). Quamar (2013) added that boys' schools were located even in the rural areas, where girls were not permitted to enrol. Additionally, Roy (1992) argued that the KSA government needed to shift from the quantitative to the qualitative: from the rapid physical advancement of the 1970s to a review of its own educational policies that might no longer apply, given pervasive shortages of national workforce.

Educational policy reform has been slow. Emphasis in basic education (Primary, Intermediate and General Secondary) has been on increasing enrolment and providing better facilities, higher quality teaching materials, equipment, and lowering the teacher to student ratio (Roy, 1992). According to Roy (1992), this improvement has enhanced the capacity of the economy to grow and to absorb some of the most updated technologies currently available. Roy

reported that by the mid-1980s, the Ministry of Education (MOE) indicated that 96 per cent of all males (760,000) and 90 per cent of all females (600,000) of eligible age (six years old and above) were enrolled in primary levels schools in the KSA. The number of boys' schools totalled 4,200 primary, 1,320 intermediate and 460 general secondary schools. However, the number of girls' primary schools was far fewer than boys, totalling 3,000, though there were the same number of intermediate and general secondary schools (Roy, 1992). Roy also remarked that it was notable that more girls than boys had completed their primary schooling and then continued to complete the intermediate level and the general secondary level, causing the rate of educated females to increase to 95 per cent. The reason behind this was that boys approach the age of 15 years and often then leave school to take on employment, while girls have no employment opportunities at this time (Roy, 1992).

During the 1990s, KSA faced the problem of a slowing economic sector, increased educational output, and rising unemployment, which led to serious movement by the Saudi government to improve the quality of education and reform the education policy (Quamar, 2013). It was argued that KSA would not be able to achieve the changes or to overcome its economic crisis without the participation of its women, who constitute around half of the population yet remain inactive economically (Quamar, 2013). Accordingly, a new educational policy was formulated in 2005, aimed at increasing the number of women participating in education in general, specifically in the area of professional education. Moreover, the new core curriculum has included physics, geography, chemistry, mathematics and religion. Arabic literature has also been selected to be of greater relevance, particularly in the applied sciences, as well as technology (Roy, 1992). According to Quamar (2013), the current education system in KSA has four main characteristics: an emphasis on Islam, separate education for both males and females, a centralised education system, and state financial support.

In addition, the Saudi governmental regime has faced serious demands from a group of Saudi intellectuals, businessmen, and reformists, besides numbers of royal family members, asking to implement comprehensive structural reforms in the country (Raphaeli, 2006). The growth in the number of educated women has been accompanied by economic participation and has improved the sociopolitical conditions for women, leading to rising awareness among women regarding their rights (Quamar, 2013). Women's sociopolitical rights in KSA have been one of the major issues that hinder women's position to improve in the country, due to some Islamic groups. According to Taheri (2004), these groups were outraged when the government allowed the creation of the first National Committee for Human Rights in KSA. As a result,

Saudi Islamists expressed to the nation their belief that the concept of human rights was a “Jewish Fabrication,” designed in order to present all the religious faiths as equal (Taheri, 2004).

It can be concluded that gender segregation still creates a big dilemma in women’s lives in the KSA, particularly in social and educational aspects of life. The education system, including kindergarten, has shown noticeable development, yet it is still affected by cultural beliefs and values. Kindergarten education is introduced in the next section.

2.6 Kindergarten Education in the KSA

In KSA, kindergarten education is considered part of the pre-school level of learning. It caters for children aged three to six years and was not previously considered part of the basic education ladder, since attendance was not a prerequisite for enrolment in grade one of elementary or primary school (Al-Jadid, 2012; Kashkary & Robinson, 2006; UNESCO, 2011). Recently, the Minister of Education in KSA, Prince Khaled Al-Faisal, made vital changes in the kindergarten education system in the country. By the new academic year 2013-2014, the Minister of Education required all new students complete at least two semesters at the kindergarten stage before enrolling in elementary (primary) school (Saudi Gazette, 2013). This decision was made as a result of the poor rate of literacy among first grade students, who were lower in their literacy skills compared with other students who had already completed a kindergarten year (Al-Dwaihi, 2009). Some children may face difficulties in acclimatisation or academic achievement when enrolled in primary school without being well prepared at home or in pre-school education. Kindergarten education helps to prepare them by allowing them to acquire some academic, cognitive, behavioural, or social skills (Kashkary & Robinson, 2006). In addition, Khaled Al-Faisal announced that with the expansion of kindergartens in the coming five years, around 3,500 ECTs female graduates will be employed, and 300 kindergarten centres will be opened every year across KSA regions (Saudi Gazette, 2014).

According to the report, the number of kindergarten centres in KSA is 1,591, and with the expansion, capacity will increase by 123 per cent from the recent number of 123,313 to 273,313 children (Saudi Gazette, 2014). According to the Minister of Education, elementary school will accept children who are at least six years old or 90 days short of their sixth birthday (Saudi Gazette, 2013).

2.6.1 Kindergarten (preschool) stage

The kindergarten stage in KSA has been divided into two main levels of education and care. These are:

1. Nursery level. This level accepts children who are from one to three years old. This level of learning has been described as an extension of the home environment as it provides special care and play activities for young children (Alzaydi, 2010). The services catering for this level are limited in terms of quantity and quality. Many staff are unqualified and untrained. This has led many mothers to rely on maids' care.
2. Kindergarten level. This level caters for young children aged from three to six years old. According to children's age, children attend in three stages of learning, which are divided to KG1, KG2 and KG3, as following:

KG 1: accepts children who are at the age of three years old.

KG2: children who have reached the age of four years are allowed to enrol in this stage.

KG3: children between five to six years old may enrol in this stage (UNESCO, 2011). The KG3 stage is designed to prepare kindergarteners with all the required skills for elementary school by the following academic year. These skills include emergent literacy and numeracy skills.

In all KG stages, a teacher's qualification must be no less than a Bachelor of Early Childhood Education degrees. The average number of children in each kindergarten classroom varies from 20-25 and has two teachers, including main and assistance teachers. The public kindergarten centres are fully publicly funded by the government sector, while the private centres get a share of funding. KSA has focused on the importance of early literacy learning through the Early Childhood Education Policy, which draws on a conceptual framework based on providing a high quality of care, play, and education for all children (Al Shaer, 2007). Kindergarten education in KSA has focused on fostering the development of social skills that young learners are perceived to lack, such as dealing with "peer rejection" and academic failure (Kashkary & Robinson, 2006).

2.6.2 Overview of kindergarten curriculum, program and pedagogies in KSA

In 1965, there was no official curriculum for kindergarten education in KSA (BinAli, 2013). The initial curriculum was designed by the General Presidency for Girls' Education

(GPGE). The Arab Gulf and UNESCO have also been involved in a comprehensive project to develop an early childhood curriculum in KSA (Kashkary & Robinson, 2006). In 1982, the Self-Learning Curriculum (SLC) was agreed on as a national curriculum for kindergarten education (BinAli, 2013). SLC drew from Islamic and cultural themes, and included activities such as Arabic language learning, simple arithmetic and science education, religious and moral activities, the development of children's artistic skills, health and social education, and physical education (General Presidency for Girls' Education, 1984, pp. 13-44). The SLC focuses on each individual child, taking into account his/her self-development as well as his/her modes of learning (BinAli, 2013). The curriculum also provides all children with age-appropriate structured activities, including numeracy and literacy activities. The effort to improve kindergarten education in the KSA has been continued by the GPGE through 1980, which aimed to improve its curriculum and provisions (Kashkary & Robinson, 2006).

The most recent reformation of the kindergarten curriculum (the seventh edition) in KSA was published in 2005 (Ministry of Education of Saudi Arabia, 2005; Bahatheg, 2011). There are no major modifications to these units (Badawood, 2006). The SLC is mandatory in all the kindergarten centres in KSA, including both public and private centres. The SLC kindergarten curriculum is organised into seven areas which are described in seven books.

The teacher's manual book is the first book. This book is designed to guide kindergarten teachers on how to set the pre-school stage for children's learning and development. There are six chapters to the book:

1. Educational principles and their application. This chapter explains the principles and relates it to the KSA educational policies and pre-school objectives. The Ministry of Education (MOE) in KSA has set nine main objectives for kindergarten education. These are consistent with the overall educational policy of KSA. The objectives are:
 - a. To refine the child's innate character, and look after his/her moral, mental and physical growth in sound natural conditions, which are consistent with the teachings of Islam.
 - b. To establish the religious orientation based on monotheism, in a way which is naturally consistent with innate character.
 - c. To introduce the child to the rules of conduct and facilitate the absorption of Islamic virtues and valid interests in the presence of a good example to follow for the child.
 - d. To familiarise the child with the school environment, prepare him/her for school life, and move him/her gently towards shared social life with peers and friends.

- e. To provide the child with a wealth of true expressions, simple basics, and information that is appropriate for his/her age and relevant to his/her surrounding environment.
- f. To train the child to apply motor skills, to get used to sound habits, and train his/her senses for the best possible utilisation.
- g. To encourage the child's creative expression, expand his/her aesthetic taste, and allow his/her energy to function under guidance.
- h. To fulfil childhood needs, please the child, and refine him/her without pampering or exhaustion.
- i. To be on the alert in order to protect children from dangers, treat early misbehaviour, and face childhood problems appropriately (Al-Hokeel, 1992, pp. 290-291).

The General Presidency for Girls' Education, the main authority responsible for kindergarten education in KSA, has established further detailed goals, which are:

- a. Religious and linguistic education of the child.
- b. Bringing up the child in a healthy and physically fit manner.
- c. Preparing the child for elementary school and educating him/her.
- d. Social education of the child (General Presidency for Girls' Education, 1978, p. 8).

Based on the kindergarten objectives, the designers of the kindergarten curriculum have formulated the curriculum on children's needs, which are considered to be the core of the SLC.

The children's needs are as follows:

- a. Children need to be appreciated for their individual abilities and needs.
- b. Children need to be respected and treated in a warm way in a similar environment to their homes in order to ensure their feeling of security.
- c. Children need to be guided by a qualified teacher who is a good example of Islamic morals.
- d. Children need to establish a good relationship with other children and with adults.
- e. Children need to use language appropriately.
- f. Children need to understand concepts that are suitable to their ages and their needs.

- g. Children need to use all their senses in their play.
- h. Children need to practise good habits in a safe environment.
- i. Children need to be creative in their way of expressing themselves (Samadi & Marwa, 2006).

Through the SLC, kindergarten teachers will assist children to acquire the following knowledge, skills, and dispositions:

- a. Children will build a good relationship with God (Allah), themselves, and with others, including adults and their peers.
 - b. Children will develop their basic skills such as classification, sequence, matching, correspondence, assembly, and creativity, as well as numeracy and literacy skills.
 - c. Children will use their own language (Arabic) to express themselves, including their thoughts and emotions.
 - d. Children will develop their gross and fine motor muscle skills.
 - e. Children will learn to be more dependent on themselves when achieving tasks that suit their abilities (Al-Jadidi, 2012, pp. 40-41).
2. Children's behaviour guidance (discipline methods). This chapter guides kindergarten teachers about the appropriate methods and guidance for disciplining misbehaving children (Al-Jadidi, 2012). Physical punishment is not allowed. Only techniques such as time-out are to be used by teachers, in order to give children an opportunity to reflect on their deed and to cool off.
 3. Organising the physical environment. This chapter explains how to organise the children's kindergarten classroom (Al-Jadidi, 2012). It also clarifies how the kindergarten's physical environment influences children's learning. The chapter provides kindergarten teachers with instructions on how to structure and equip the environment, including indoor and outdoor spaces. Based on the Self-Learning Curriculum (SLC) in KSA, learning environments need to be structured in different areas in kindergarten classrooms (Al-Jadidi, 2012). Each area should represent an activity related to a specific skill. The learning activities in these areas should balance the children's needs, including physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and linguistic needs, and should include literacy and numeracy activities (Al-Jadidi, 2012). This chapter gives kindergarten teachers a full description of how to organise classroom areas with various forms of materials for children at all levels (KG1, KG2 and KG3) (Al-Jadidi, 2012).

4. Daily program instructions. This chapter provides kindergarten teachers with information on how the SLC should be implemented within the daily program in the kindergarten centre. The kindergarten programme starts at 7.30 a.m., ends at 12:00 p.m, and is organised in eight sessions (see Table 2.2). They are breakfast time, Quran recitation session, circle, outdoor free playing session, morning tea, indoor free playing session, and the last meeting with teacher.

Table 2.2

2.2: Summary of the Kindergarten Daily Program in a KSA Kindergarten Centre

The period	The time	Type of Activity	Activity structure
Morning Tea (meal time 1)	7:00am-7:30am (30 minutes)	Teacher-directed. Children learn Islamic habits of eating, including what happens before and after each meal. This involves <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Washing hands. 2. Du'a (supplication) before each meal by saying the name of Allah: "Bismillah wa ala barkatillah." 3. Eating slowly. 4. Eating together as a family. 5. Du'a (supplication) after each meal: "Al hamdu lil lazi at ta mana wa saqana wajaalana minal muslemeen." 6. Washing hands. Transition song to prepare children for next activity.	First meal with teacher and children as a family. Meals provided by children's families from home.
Quran Recitation Session	7:30am-8:00am (30 minutes)	Teacher directs the activities and children's participation. Transition song to prepare children for next activity.	Islamic Studies teacher teaches children Quran using instructional materials, such as overhead projectors. This involves teaching children Arabic alphabetic letter phonics and written forms. Islamic Studies teachers who are specialists in Quran study provide these lessons to kindergarten children. Children need to learn the alphabetic letters in order to learn and memorise Quran.
Circle	8:00am-8:30am (30 minutes)	Teacher-directed activities and children's participation. Transition song to prepare children for	ECT presents a topic related to the unit's subject, sings different materials, and displays techniques. During the daily presentation, the

		next activity.	ECT should encourage children to participate and express their views and experiences by asking questions that provoke them.
Outdoor free play time	8:30am-9:30am (60 minutes)	Children's choice (child-initiated activities). Teacher intervenes to direct behaviour during learning process. Transition song to prepare children for next activity.	This session includes free play (unstructured activities) out of the classroom in a range of indoor and outdoor playgrounds. Outdoor free play materials such as bicycles, balls, basketballs, slides, swings, a sandpit with sandpit tools, and so on are available. All the activities are age-appropriate and designed to develop children's motor, gross and social skills. ECTs are encouraged to participate in children's play as well as supervising. Structured activities are organised beforehand by ECTs, such as catching games, running and stopping, hide and seek, objects in the sandpit and so on.
Breakfast (meal time 2)	9:30am-10:30am (30 minutes)	Teacher-directed. Children learn Islamic habits of eating food before and after each meal (as mentioned earlier in meal time 1).	Second breakfast meal with teacher and children as a family. Meals provided by children's families from home.
Free Play at corners	10:30am-11:30am (60 minutes)	Children's choice (child-initiated activities). Teacher intervenes to direct behaviour or to enhance the learning process through questioning, scaffolding, and interacting with children. Transition song to prepare children for next activity.	Free play in classroom corners, with the least direction from teacher. Her role is to prepare corners, prevent and solve behavioural problems if they occur, observe, and write reporting notes about children.
Last meeting session with teacher	11:30am-12:00pm (30 minutes)	Teacher-directed activities in response to children's choice and preferences, such as playing finger rhymes, singing rhymes and songs, matching games, and so on.	Review of the day's activities. The whole class does relaxing activities according to the children's choice, such as stories, rhythms, finger play, and games.

The 1991 version of the SLC explained to teachers how to organise the physical environment for children in order to assist them to learn in a structured and well-prepared environment.

According to the SLC (1991), the Education Environment (EE) should be divided into indoor and outdoor structured spaces, in which each area has its own activities. These are as follows:

- a. The indoor space. The classroom should be constructed in seven main areas, including areas for writing, art, reading (i.e. a library corner), discovery, manipulation,

construction, and a home area, as well as an additional area, such as a computer area, which varies according to thematic units. Each corner has a concept that can be introduced and changed in relation to the daily schedule, as well as to the conceptual learning skills and knowledge of each unit of learning implemented during the year.

- b. The outdoor space. This must be a well-shaded space due to the hot and dry weather in KSA. This area contains all the equipment that allows children to practice their own “gross motor” skills. It is divided into three main spaces, which are:
 - i. A sandpit space, equipped with sandpit toys.
 - ii. An active space for motor activities, such as running, jumping, climbing, and leaping at different speeds.
 - iii. Bike tracks and platforms where all cycling activities run.

Outdoor activities are structured based on the curriculum. There are structured outdoor activities, which the ECTs prepare based on each unit of learning. Literacy is integrated into each area, including the area’s signs and the written rules of using the equipment in the area. There is an even greater emphasis on literacy activities in the reading and writing areas.

In regards to assessment: the early childhood teacher in a Saudi kindergarten uses many methods to record observations of the child and her/his progress, including a narrative recording of the child’s behaviour. Al-Rabiah (2008) clarified these methods to include writing anecdotal notes, daily observations, time sampling, event sampling and a checklist to assess the child’s ongoing progress. Instruction in a kindergarten classroom is organised according to the child’s needs. Activities related to literacy learning will be discussed later in this research.

In KSA culture, the involvement of parents, particularly fathers, in kindergarten programs is limited (Khoja, 2013). Khoja (2013) clarified that kindergarten teachers (or ECTs) usually communicate with children’s parents by sending home a weekly report. These reports explain to parents their children’s learning progress.

The first chapter explains the teacher’s roles and responsibilities during the daily program, including a full description of the objectives, content, and different techniques, as well as pedagogies and illustration of materials that can be used in a daily program (Al-Jadidi, 2012). The daily program is structured to achieve the following purposes:

- a. Encourage the children's self-learning
 - b. Provide an opportunity for children to make decisions in their learning contexts.
 - c. Provide opportunities for many types of social interactions.
 - d. Provide opportunity for children to work in a variety of environments include indoor and outdoor (Samadi & Marwa, 2006).
5. Preparing the children for their first year in the school. This chapter explains to teachers the methods that can be used to build a close relationship between the staff in the kindergarten centre and the child's parents, in order to assist the child with a smooth, gradual transition to the school year (Al-Jadidi, 2012).
 6. Planning and constructing of the educational unit for kindergarten children. This chapter contains full descriptions of the educational units in terms of what they mean, the principles of preparing these units, and the steps applied for planning and constructing them (Al-Jadidi, 2012). This book also has an appendix of working papers for mathematics.

The other six books include the ten learning units that integrate literacy, numeracy, and science. The first five units of learning are on water, sand, food, home, and hands. These units are explained in detail, and each unit is organised in a separate book. Each book contains objectives, concepts, and required materials, as well as an explanation of the unit's related activities. These books have been designed in a way that provides kindergarten teachers with practical knowledge of how to facilitate children's learning and development, as well as the type of materials related to the unit (Al-Jadidi, 2012).

The other five units of learning are combined in one book (the seventh book) on subjects related to friends, health and safety, clothes, family, and books. Table 2.3 describes the content of SLC.

For a long period of time, kindergarten teachers' training has relied primarily on individual and non-governmental efforts, including those of the Gulf-Girl Association for Welfare (Kashkary & Robinson, 2006). In fact, providing courses on early childhood education began only recently in some of KSA's universities, aiming to give early childhood teachers official qualifications and skills. The kindergarten programme was designed under the supervision of the General Presidency for Girls' Education, and involves only part-time work. Typically, public kindergartens in the KSA are annexed to primary schools (Kashkary & Robinson, 2006).

Table 2.3

2.3: Content of the Self-Learning Curriculum (SLC)

Number of Book	Title of the Book	Content of the Book
1	Teacher's Manual	Chapter 1 – Kindergarten Objectives Chapter 2 – Child's behaviour, based on Islamic perspective Chapter 3 – Organising the classroom environment Chapter 4 – Daily program instructions Chapter 5 – Preparation for the new school year and information on how staff communicate with children's parents
2	Units of Water	Contains all the concepts related to water sources, water uses, animals that live in the water, the importance of water, and so on.
3	Units of Sand	Consists of all the concepts related to sand, such as animals that live in the sand, the importance of sand, the uses of sand, and some hands-on experiences with sand, such as mixing water with sand, observing the difference of the sand textures, and so on.
4	Units of Food	Contains all concepts related to food, such as food sources, the importance of food, exploring different type of foods, such as taste, shapes, sources, and how to keep them clean and safe, some jobs related to food, and so on.
5	Units of Hands	Contains all the information about hands as part of the body, the uses of hands, the importance of having hands and how to keep them clean and safe, such as by avoiding sharp materials, different sizes of hands (baby hands vs adult hands) and so on.
6	Units of Housing	Contains all concepts related to housing, such as housing shapes, materials used to build houses, the importance of houses as shelters, and so on.
7	Five units (different units of learning)	Contains five small units (family, books, friends, my health and safety, and clothes)

Kindergarten teachers are required to plan lessons and activities as well as evaluating lessons ahead of time. Teaching pedagogies in all kindergarten centres in Gulf countries, including KSA, were influenced for a long period of time by the Montessori philosophy. There are some Montessori centres across the Gulf countries which aim to provide ECTs with certificate programs in order to become qualified Montessori teachers (Bennett, 2009). In KSA, all the public and private kindergarten centres implement the SLC, also using different teaching

approaches such as Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The Montessori approach has been a major influence, with some private kindergartens using an intensively Montessori approach as well as SLC (Bahatheg, 2011). For instance, in the capital city of KSA, Riyadh, there are eight Montessori kindergarten centres (Bahatheg, 2011). According to Richardson (1997), the Montessori approach states that the environment should be prepared and maintained for the child by his/her teacher. In regards to literacy, the Montessori approach considers that graphic and written language should be presented to young children as a fundamental tool for social communication and as a way of perfecting their spoken language (Richardson, 1997). Walsh and Petty (2006) clarified that when children engaged in language and communication through talking to each other, drawing pictures, and writing, they also tended to read when their teachers were reading to them. This philosophy is based on the importance of recognising the child's curious nature and learning through play.

Montessori teaching techniques include group discussion through asking age-appropriate questions, problem solving, shared reading sessions, supporting and stimulating peer interaction, and teacher and child interaction (Al-Rabiah, 2008). The classroom environment is constructed to meet children's developmental needs so that the child is free to learn, investigate, and participate in a well-planned, stimulating environment under the structured guidance of the teacher. This teaching philosophy considers the child as an individual with a readiness to learn. The conceptual framework contains units of learning based on the work of Comenius from the seventeenth century. It emphasises teaching children topics related to their experiences and level of intelligence. The instruction begins with concrete stages where teachers instruct the children with the use of models, pictures, diagrams or other representations, if the actual objects are not available. Classroom instruction is geared to the child's sensory perception (Puckett & Diffily, 2004). The units of learning in the kindergarten framework in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries are Sand, Water, Food, House, Clothes, Hands, Family, Friends, Health and Safety, and Books.

2.6.3 Differences between kindergarten in public and private sectors

There are some differences between public kindergarten and private (for-profit) kindergarten centres. These differences are evident in curricula, including literacy and mathematics, daily activities, daily working hours, and teacher qualifications (Table 2.4). Another difference is due to gender segregation laws in KSA. Generally, kindergarten children

are not segregated at this age in classes in all public centres. However, there are a few private and Islamic kindergarten centres that focus intensively on teaching Quran and segregate girls and boys in different classes, based sometimes on parental requests and/or Islamic curriculum structures.

Table 2.4

2.4: Differences between Public and Private Kindergarten Centres

	Public kindergarten	Private kindergarten
Supervision Department	Ministry of Education	Ministry of Education
Teachers' Teaching Qualification	Bachelor of Early Childhood or Bachelor of any field of Education	Higher School Certificate or above
Daily Working Hours	7.30 am-12:00pm	7.30 am-1.30pm
Teachers' Training	Training is compulsory for all teachers, particularly for teachers who do not have Early Childhood qualifications. Training hours are four hours per week for about eight weeks (BinAli, 2013).	Training is not compulsory in all private kindergarten centres: it depends on the manager as well as the advice of the kindergarten inspectors (BinAli, 2013).
Daily Periods	Daily program periods have seven sessions, including morning tea, Quran recitation session, circle, outdoor free play time, breakfast, free play at corners, and the last meeting session.	Includes the main seven sessions plus intensive literacy, mathematics, and English. Some kindergarten centres have extra periods or sessions, such as learning another language, based on parental requests.
General Curriculum	SLC	SLC
Extra Curricula	<p>Literacy Curriculum: learning alphabetic letters, phonics, writing their own names and a few words, describing artifacts and drawing in the last meeting period, listening and repeating rhymes and songs, learning new vocabularies related to concepts of each units of learning.</p> <p>Mathematics Curriculum: learning numbers from 1-20 through naming the date, month, and year every day within the Circle sessions, recognising shapes.</p>	<p>Literacy Curriculum: beside the regular literacy activities of public kindergarten, the literacy curriculum in private kindergarten focuses closely on reading and writing activities. These activities include learning alphabetic letters in both Arabic and English, learning phonics, and writing their own names with a few words in both languages.</p> <p>Mathematics Curriculum: the curriculum is similar to the Mathematics curriculum in public</p>

		kindergarten, but includes more focus on addition/subtraction and grouping.
Teaching Tools	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In art corner: pencils, paper (white and coloured paper of different sizes), crayons, easels, painting tools, craft collages, glue, and scissors. 2. In circle and last meeting: whiteboard with whiteboard markers, projector, CDs, DVDs, castes, reading books, printed cards, puppets and a puppet theatre. 3. Excursions with the class, based on the concept of the unit of learning. 	Same resources as in public kindergarten. Computers and iPads are also used to teach children literacy and numeracy.
Teaching Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discussion sessions with teachers and peers. 2. Hands-on experiences. 3. Questioning. 4. Problem solving. 5. Shared reading sessions with teachers. 6. Involving parents (mostly mothers) in daily program activities, such as cooking. 	Same as in public kindergarten centres.

2.6.4 Limitations of using SLC

The SLC has been evaluated by researchers so as to identify the gaps in the curriculum, as well as to evaluate teacher attitudes toward using SLC and applying it in their teaching (BinAli, 2013). The limitations are as follows:

1. The GPGE commissioned a team of Early Childhood specialists in 1996 to review the SLC in order to identify any gaps and to address them (BinAli, 2013). The main problem found by the team was that there were limited educational activities on offer for kindergarten children in the area of mathematics, literacy (in particular, reading and writing), and science, such as learning letters or special activities to learn numbers (Al-Otabi & Swilam, 2002; Zamzami, 2000).
2. Al-Otabi and Swilam's research (2002) on kindergarten teachers' attitudes toward applying SLC in their teaching found that teachers put the most emphasis on religious concepts rather than focusing on other activities or preparing kindergarteners for primary school.

3. Saber (1996) has reported that parents do not understand the SLC concepts. This may be due to the lack of communication between home and kindergarten environments and the lack of family involvement in the kindergarten daily program. One of the main aims of this research was to explore the methods, regularity, and any difficulties that families might experiences in communicating with kindergarten centre staff or vice versa.
4. Zamzami (2000) evaluated the SLC by sending a questionnaire to 220 teachers. This found there was a lack of qualified teachers holding a degree in Early Childhood Education (ECE). In following research in KSA, Al-Otaibi (2007) found that only half of teachers in kindergarten centres (both public and private) have degrees in ECE, while the other half hold degrees in other subjects.
5. The teachers' manual does not explain enough or have a clear guide as to how to integrate the SLC into teaching (Bahatheg, 2011; BinAli, 2013).

The 2005 version of the SLC has addressed some of these limitations. There is additional information on special activities designed to teach kindergarten children alphabetic letters and numbers. These are integrated into the original six units of work. Additionally, there is more guidance in the first book and the teachers' manual, providing more support for kindergarten teachers (Al-Muneef, 1999).

2.7 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has discussed the cultural, economic, educational, and social backgrounds of KSA. It is important to understand the complex and the unique characteristics of the social and cultural lifestyle in KSA, which influenced the choice of research methodology and the data generated from this research. This chapter highlighted the development of the KSA lifestyle on both the educational and economic level, as well as the political position of Saudi women. Women's rights have been highlighted and discussed, as well as their achievements in higher education and research. Education systems, including kindergartens, policies, curriculum and their related issues, have been addressed in this chapter. Issues relating to maids in KSA were discussed as a significant aspect of the Saudi household environment. Kindergarten education, curriculum, pedagogies, and policy have been addressed in detail, as well as a brief snapshot of the limitations of using SLC in kindergarten classroom in KSA and an outline of the updated version of SLC. In the following chapter I will outline the sociocultural theory and literacy perspectives that I adopted as a theoretical framework in order to analyse the study findings.

Chapter Three – A Sociocultural Lens on Early Literacy Teaching and Learning

“The sociocultural literature suggests that literacy is an inherently social process, so the development of mental operations cannot be studied without examining the wider social context in which literacy is experienced” (McLachlan, 2007, p. 18).

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to shed light on the complexity and multifaceted nature of literacy learning in the early years via a sociocultural lens. This includes a strong focus on language acquisition.

Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory has not been widely used for framing early childhood education in Gulf countries or investigating early childhood phenomena. The dominant theoretical paradigms have been developmental (psychological) and maturational (as shown in this chapter). The only Vygotskian concept that has been used in teaching kindergarten children is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) through the social interactions between child-teachers-peers or child-teacher during daily activities (Bahat heg, 2011). In most of the Eastern countries, researchers have focused on applying sociocultural theory in learning contexts, particularly studying children’s learning in the classroom. For instance, Al-Jadidi (2012) used sociocultural theory as an analytical framework in order to understand kindergarten teachers’ professional preparation in KSA. Another study by Otaibi and Swailm (2002) investigated the significance of preschool education in KSA (Al-Jadidi, 2012). However, there is no research in this field using sociocultural theory to explore the role of emergent literacy learning in the home and kindergartens in KSA. This thesis therefore adds a unique perspective to this important emerging body of research.

The religious and conservative cultural background in KSA has shaped the education system, people’s lifestyles, means of communication, and social practices (as detailed in Chapters Two and Five). Sociocultural theory is therefore appropriate as a lens for study in this context, where adults who interact with children, including parents, teachers, and maids, live within strictly defined gender roles. These particular social and cultural contexts influence the way children learn literacy.

The discussion in this chapter is divided into three main parts. The first part discusses the differences between Vygotsky and Piaget’s theories of learning and development. Both theories are discussed here because of the criticism levelled at the Self-Learning Curriculum (SLC) in

kindergarten education in KSA in regards to its limitations: specifically, its focus on the individual child's interest, needs and age (Al-Muneef, 1990; Al-Otabi & Swilam, 2002; Bathat heg, 2011; BinAli, 2013; Saber, 1996; Zamzami, 2000). The second part of the chapter discusses Vygotsky's theory further, including concepts that relate to imagination and play, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and mediation. These are discussed in relation to literacy learning. The third part of this chapter discusses contemporary theories and concepts of literacy that are synergistic with a sociocultural perspective. It highlights perspectives on literacy as social practice and events by clarifying and distinguishing the differences between these two approaches. This chapter also explores new literacy – also known as techno-literacy – which relates to how young children can develop literacy skills using technology.

3.2 Vygotsky and Piaget's Learning and Development Theories

Vygotsky's sociocultural theories of learning created great debate among theorists interested in studying children's learning. Vygotsky was influenced by the earlier works of Jean Piaget: in particular, Piaget's work *The Language and Thought of the Child*, developed between 1923 and 1926 (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Piaget was born in Switzerland in 1896. He was "a psychologist with a fundamentally biological orientation" (Campbell, 2006, p. 1). Bodrova and Leong (2007) clarified some of the fundamental similarities and differences between Piaget and Vygotsky's theories. Vygotsky was born in Russia in 1896, the same year as Piaget (Blake & Pope, 2008). In the 1920s and 1930s in Russia, Vygotsky and his collaborators applied a sociocultural approach to learning and development, based on human activities that are mediated by language and other symbolic systems in a cultural context (Dixon-Krauss, 1996; John-Stenier & Mahn, 1996). The idea of the human mind as mediated by "symbolic tools" was the most significant element of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (Lantolf, 2000). According to Blake and Pope (2008), Vygotsky believed the sociocultural environment was very important for children's cognitive development.

Piaget focused his work on the development of individual children, while Vygotsky studied the development of thinking and emotions equally (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Vygotsky emphasised children's social interactions and instruction (Blake & Pope, 2008; Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Piaget, on the other hand, focused on the role played by children's interaction with physical objects in developing a mature form of thinking (Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Blake & Pope, 2008). For Piaget, physical objects and the child's action on them are of primary

importance, while people are of secondary importance (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). In contrast, Vygotsky viewed a child's interaction with objects as of primary importance as long as they occur in a social context, as well as being mediated by communication with others, including adults and capable peers (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Piaget's theory pointed out the differences in human abilities according to sequential age stages, in which children's later knowledge, abilities, and skills draw on the previous ones (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). Piaget divided children's cognitive development into four stages: the sensorimotor stage (0-2 years), pre-operational stage (2-7 years), concrete operational stage (7-11 years), and formal operational stages (11-16 years).

Sayer and Ball (1975) explained that children can receive very important information through language directed by the adults surrounding them; however, children need to have a clear structure that assists them to assimilate information. Piaget's constructivist view focused merely on the individual, whereas Vygotsky focused on social activity and interaction (Blake & Pope, 2008). Piaget viewed the child as an "independent discoverer" who discovers the world on his/her own, while Vygotsky argued that a child's learning exists in a cultural context, and that the means of discovery and things to be discovered are all products of culture and human history (Bodrova & Leong, 2007).

The popularity of Piaget's constructive theory was manifested through Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP). In 1987, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in Washington DC developed the first definition of "good practice" in early childhood education and professions (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). The document conceptualised good teaching practice as both "age-appropriate" and "individual-appropriate" (Fleer, 1995). It provided teachers with examples of appropriate and inappropriate practices for children from age of 3 to 8 years (Quick, 1998). The DAP, referred to as a child-centred approach, takes into account the child's unique characteristics, needs, and interests, as well as viewing children as the vital source of the curriculum (Bredekamp, 1993; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Charlesworth, 1998). In other words, from engaging in the surrounding environment, children as active learners build their own knowledge and understanding through experience in this environment, rather than being passive learners. DAP has been widely influential in many countries worldwide (Samuelsson & Fleer, 2008).

However, DAP was later been criticised for being based only on Piaget's theories, without reflecting other theories of learning, such as the work of Vygotsky and information

processing theories (Bredekamp, 1993; Fler, 1995; Spodek, 1988). Accordingly, Vygotsky's approach to the social interaction of children (that is, learning through active participation with adults in cultural activities, including formal and informal activities) addressed the shortcomings of DAP (Fler, 1995). This has been acknowledged by recent research on the child's brain development, which reported that the child's brain grows through their interactive activities with others, as well as interaction with concrete resources (Charlesworth, 1998). Because of this, Vygotsky's work has recently had more recognition and influence as it views the child's development and learning from a social perspective (Fler, 1995). From a Vygotskian view, children's cognitive development is not only characterised by engagement in cultural and social settings with more knowledgeable adults or peers, but also through cultural variation (Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett, & Farmer, 2015).

The second critique of DAP was that it did not address children from different ethnic groups and socioeconomic status (SES), as it was mainly focused on children from white and middle SES (Charlesworth, 1998; Fler, 1995). The third critique was that DAP did not adequately emphasise developing children's skills at the preschool stage in language, literacy and mathematics, particularly for young children from low SES and cultural minorities backgrounds, who were lacking in literacy and language skills (Cooper, 2009). The criticism of DAP was a wake-up call for early childhood policy makers in regards to the early childhood curriculum and guidelines for children's learning, in which more explicit definitions were needed (Cooper, 2009).

Both Vygotsky and Piaget agreed that the development of children should be viewed as a series of qualitative changes, which cannot be seen as merely an expanding repertoire of ideas and skills (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Based on Piaget's ideas, these changes in a child's development occur in distinct stages, while Vygotsky's idea proposed a set of less defined periods (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Vygotsky and Piaget believed the child is active in his/her acquisition of knowledge and agreed on the active intellectual efforts that a child makes in order to learn (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Bodrova and Leong asserted that both Vygotsky and Piaget agreed that a child constructs his/her own understanding, and this understanding is restructured with age and experience. Piaget believed that the child is like an adult in terms of using language so as to express thoughts to others as well as to transmit information in spoken form (Ginsburg & Oppen, 1979). In the same vein, Sayer and Ball (1975) explained that children can receive very important information through the language of adults surrounding them; however, children need to have a clear structure to assist them to assimilate this

information. Vygotsky (1978) highlighted the importance of using symbolic tools and signs to facilitate relationships with the surrounding environment. In accordance with this, Vygotsky argued that humans do not act directly on the physical world, but instead use labour activities and symbolic tools that allow us to make changes in the world by mediating or regulating our relationship with others, thereby changing the nature of that relationship (Lantolf, 2000). These tools include language, symbols, music, and technological tools, such as digital cameras, computers, and so on. These physical and symbolic tools are created by humans, who are influenced by their own cultural contexts and values, in order to make them available to the next generation after making various required adjustments (Lantolf, 2000).

Vygotsky believed that logical relationships are based on culture as well as transmitted via sharing activities, which only exist when teachers make these relationships explicit for children through questioning or description (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Bodrova and Leong stated that Vygotsky believed that it is not enough that the child knows the right answer: he/she must use the relevant tools to find the answer. In this context, an example of using tools as mediators is the action research conducted by Pane and Salmon (2011), in which they used music to mediate children's creative writing of stories and reading aloud experiences. Pre-service teachers who participated in this research observed noticeable differences between children's writing with and without music (Pane & Salmon, 2011).

Woodrow et al. (2014), in their *Futuro Infantil Hoy* (Children's Futures Today) program in Chile, provided another example of mediation through the use of technological tools (cameras) as a pedagogical practice for teaching children's literacy in disadvantaged communities. The purposes of using technological tools were as a means of communicating with families and creating new sources of learning, as well as recording children's learning (Woodrow et al., 2014). Tools such as the digital images used in the *Futuro Infantil Hoy* worked as a mediator between people and the environment, and created a new channel of communication between educators and children as well as between educators and children's families (Woodrow et al., 2014).

Vygotsky examined a range of subjects, including language, psychology of art, thought, development, and learning, focusing on the education of students with special needs, which led to a rich and multifaceted theoretical approach (John-Stenier & Mahn, 1996). Vygotsky's ideas and work in Russia were not recognised until the 1950s and early 1960s, but since then, his sociocultural approaches have gained attention and have been developed further by scholars

around the world: in particular, in the West (John-Stenier & Mahn, 1996). Sociocultural theory has influenced early childhood education, and broadens our perceptions and understanding of how literacy is learned by children (Hamer, 2005).

3.3 Sociocultural Theories and Literacy Learning

In addition, sociocultural theories of human development (McNaughton, 2006; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bruner, 1966; Vygotsky, 1978) focus on the significance of the relationships between home, community, and school settings for developing children's learning (Glynn, Berryman, Grace & Glynn, 2004). It is important to draw attention to sociocultural approaches as a collection of theories that enable an emphasis upon the social and cultural contexts where literacy is practiced (Perry, 2012). The association between a sociocultural approach to literacy and sociolinguistic conceptualisations exist in the ways in which language represents culture (Perry, 2012).

Sociocultural theory has shifted our perspective from a narrow view of literacy as a set of skills and knowledge which need to be learned to viewing literacy as something beyond reading and writing skills. It encompasses a varied range of activities and practices undertaken with a range of purposes in cultural and social contexts (Barratt-Pugh, 2002). Providing interesting activities that meet the child's needs, abilities, and interest allows children to learn when they can see the purpose of what they are learning.

Vygotsky's work focused on two significant dimensions of learning and development (Daniels, 1996). Vygotsky was concerned about the connections between that which can be understood to be social and what can be understood to be individual and psychological. The second dimension he was concerned about regarded the ways in which the social world is described, theorised, and arranged in a course of academic study (Daniels, 1996). For many years before he started his career as a professional psychologist, Vygotsky was interested in semiotics and semantics as well as the role of speech in social interaction, (Daniels, 1996; Minick, 1996). These elements, as Daniels stated, are reinforced by two popular propositions – the so-called “Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)” and the “general genetic law of cultural development.” The ZPD is explored later in this chapter. The general genetic law of cultural development concerns the social condition in association with the psychological, both of which are related to the social formation of the human mind (Daniels, 1996). In addition, children

learn in social contexts and participate in at least two significant socialisation settings, which include home and school (Glynn et al., 2004).

Accordingly, Barratt-Pugh et al. (2006) noted that early childhood educators should take into consideration a sociocultural model when planning and organising a range of experiences for children in early childhood centres. These experiences should be linked to children's cultures and interests in order to provide continuity between the children's home and childcare environments (Barratt-Pugh et al., 2006). When children come to early childhood or school settings, they have a variety of experiences from their interactions with their families, communities, and friends who reflect their cultural and social backgrounds. According to Arthur et al. (2015), in a home environment, the child may be immersed in many family and community experiences relating to relationships, literacy, and numeracy, such as reading the train timetable, going to mosque or church, going shopping, listening to songs and watching television, reading food prices and labels, and so on. Accordingly, investigating family cultural contexts and observing children's interaction and communication with others at the centre can give educators insight into how to build on what these children already know. Social contexts or settings include community, family, and institutions in which the children live or that they attend, and their effect on the ways that these children take up and learn literacy (Barratt-Pugh et al., 2006). Vygotsky (1978) stated that:

the specifically human capacity for language enables children to provide for auxiliary tools in the solution of difficult tasks, to overcome impulsive action, to plan a solution to a problem prior to its execution, and to master their own behaviour (p. 28).

As Vygotsky (1978) noted, the cognitive and communicative tasks of language then become the starting point of the new and upper level forms of activity in children, which differentiate them from animals. In activity such as drawings, Vygotsky mentioned that, "Young children name their drawings only after they have completed them; they need to see them before they can decide what they are" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 28). According to Vygotsky (1978), this indicates the changes in the speech function that children go through in their development.

When children become older, they can decide what they are planning to draw at an advanced level (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky saw the origin of children's writing to be "gestures" in which the child is exposed to a variety of visual signs that form his/her future writing. "Gestures," as Vygotsky describes them, include writing in the air and signs. There are two dimensions to the origin of gesture in child development, described by John-Steiner and Mahn (1996), in which these gestures are linked to the origin of written language. The first dimension

is scribbling and dramatising, and the second is symbolic play, where the child assigns meaning when playing with objects through using gestures (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) describe children learning to read and their use of writing tools to scratch on a piece of paper or write on the wall as developing the child's spontaneous conceptions about the process of telling a story or engaging in imaginative literacy-related play.

Currently, the role of literacy, as seen through a sociocultural lens, focuses on viewing children as having an active part in a variety of cultural and social activities, not just in their school, early childhood settings or other educational institutions, but also in their home and community (Hamer, 2005). Within a sociocultural perspective, the ideas of community as well as participation are applied to novice learners (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). The implication of these ideas, as John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) described, was to study the dynamic of the collaboration and interdependence of social and individual processes as a natural part of children's development. It also examines ways of communication, which include written language, print-based literacy, oral language (such as storytelling), visual literacy (such as pictures in storybooks), and viewing symbols (such as traffic lights) (Hamer, 2005). Children thus learn in multimodal worlds where they can explore new knowledge using new models of learning through social interaction. This leads us to Vygotsky's notion (1978) of a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), discussed below.

3.4 Vygotsky's Concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Vygotsky's ZPD concept has been applied by Western educators in their classroom instruction for teaching children (Bodrova & Leong, 2000). Vygotsky (1978, p. 86) offers the following definition of the ZPD as, "[t]he distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers." This exists within the social and participatory nature of learning as well as teaching (Verenikina, 2008). Vygotsky has chosen the word "Zone" as he believes that development is not a point in a scale, rather a continuum of behaviour or degree of maturation (Lake, 2012). Lake also described the words "proximal" and "development" that Vygotsky used. According to Lake, "proximal" is defined as *next to* or *close*, as Vygotsky means that the zone is restricted to those behaviours that will mature or develop in the near future. It does not refer to all the possible behaviours that will emerge: just to those that are closest to emerging at

any time (Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Lake, 2012). The development of the child's behaviour occurs, according to Vygotsky, in two significant levels, which form the boundaries of the ZPD (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). These levels are the lower level, called the independent performance, which is what the child can do alone, and the higher level, called the assisted level, which is the maximum of what the child can do with assistance from others. Figure 3.1 below shows the three levels of ZPD.

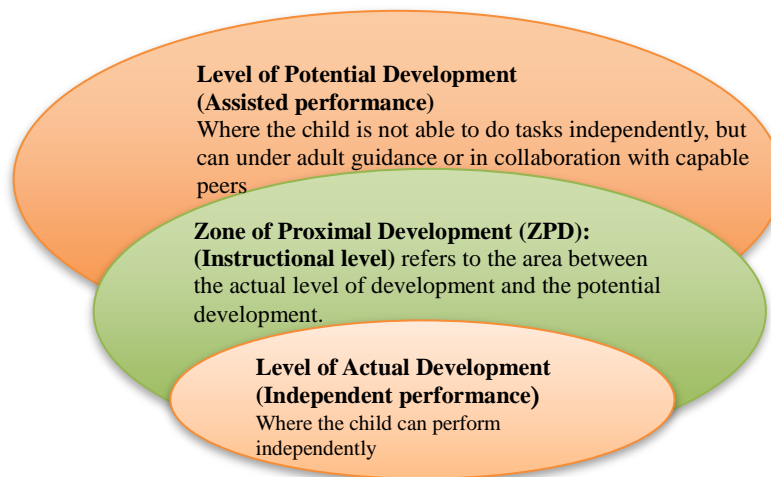


Figure 3.1. The Zone of Proximal Development

Vygotsky believed that the level of “independent performance” is a very significant index for the child's development; however, he argued it is not sufficient to merely describe the development (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). The higher level is where “assisted performance” exists as a result of the child interacting with others. This interaction between the child and another capable person (adults or capable peers) can consist of clues, hints, rephrasing questions, demonstrating of the task, asking the child to restate what he/she has been asked, asking the child what he/she understands, and so on (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Bodrova and Leong stated that, “[the] ZPD is not limitless, a child cannot be taught at any given time. Assisted Performance is the maximum level at which a child can perform today” (Bodrova & Leong, 2007, p. 39). In this context, Bodrova and Leong (2007) provided an example of two girls (Teresa and Linda), who were trying to walk across a balance beam. Although the teacher held out his hands to assist both children, and they were given the same support, Teresa stood on the beam only holding her teacher's hands, while Linda was able to walk on the beam by herself easily (Bodrova & Leong, 2007).

Thus, Dixon-Krauss (1996) stated that in order to operate in the ZPD, the child must be involved in an instructional task that is initially too challenging for the child in order to later

perform independently. His/her performance also has to be guided by capable peers or adults. In addition, as children need to be provided with tailored learning opportunities, Vygotsky believed that it is important to establish two development levels, including lower and higher levels (Gray & MacBlain, 2012). The lower level, as Gray and MacBlain describe it, provides a baseline measure of what can be achieved by the child independently on an ability task, while the higher measure is the level on which the child can achieve the task with assistance or support.

Hedegaard (1996) clarified Vygotsky's notion in regards to the importance of defining both levels of the child's development in order to know the relation between the child's process of development and the possibilities of instruction. As Vygotsky pointed out, the central characteristic of instruction is that it creates the ZPD, motivating a series of inner processes of development (Hedegaard, 1996). At this time, it is important to provide children with new challenging tasks and opportunities in order to further extend the child's learning (Gray & MacBlain, 2012). With this recognition of the child's ability through Vygotsky's ZPD, Gray and MacBlain (2012) emphasised the educator's role in planning and facilitating children's learning by providing each different child with different levels of support in order to achieve different levels of achievement. Vygotsky believed that rather than expecting the child to achieve unrealistic goals, knowledgeable adults will be able to tailor a program that suits the capabilities of each individual child (Gray & MacBlain, 2012; Hedegaard, 1996). Hedegaard (1996) argued that children in the classroom do have some similarities, although they have different rates as well as forms of learning.

When the children have common traditions prior to school or in the school environment, they will have similar forms of knowledge and awareness of the procedures of concrete activities, which enables them to interact and communicate through these activities (Hedegaard, 1996). Hedegaard recommended that these forms of communication and interaction should be fostered and developed further in school. As educators, working in the ZPD forms a relation between the steps of children's learning and the steps of the planned instruction (Hedegaard, 1996). Kutnick (2004) stated that the ZPD provides a good space for the development of children's language skills. Daniels (2001) explained that the ZPD encompasses four dimensions: assessment, scaffolding, cultural and collectivist.

Assessment

The first dimension is *assessment*, which, according to Vygotsky, emphasises the child's development and what they can do with expert assistance (McLachlan, Flear & Edwards, 2010). It is focused on what the child can do or will be capable of doing on their own in the future, instead of looking at what they can achieve currently without guidance (McLachlan et al., 2010).

Scaffolding

In the *scaffolding* dimension, an expert constructs a scaffold or pathway in order for the child to gain new knowledge, as well as to present this knowledge to the child (McLachlan et al., 2010). According to Lake (2012), scaffolding as a metaphor regarding the ZPD did not originate with Vygotsky; instead, scaffolding “refers to the temporary use of instructional support that provides the learner ease of access to the targeted zones of the subject matter until it becomes internalised” (Lake, 2012, p. 53). Moll (1990) argued that Vygotsky was not clear in terms of the forms that scaffolding can take, as well as whether or not young learners can be engaged in negotiating how the scaffolding would take place. Bruner used “scaffolding” as a metaphor, and it is used with a similar meaning in education (Lake, 2012). For instance, if a child recognises a letter on the page, the teacher can scaffold the child's learning to reach a higher level through teaching him/her the letter sound, and then the words starting with that sound, and then the scaffold can be removed when no longer needed.

An extension of the concept of scaffolding was developed by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976), who used this term to refer to instructional support as well as the social interaction that takes place between the child and other individuals as they guide the child's active learning and development in the ZPD. Bruner studied the concept of scaffolding, and focused primarily on the acquisition of language (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Bruner also stated that when young children start learning language, parents have to present the child with mature language. This means talking to the child with proper language, not in “baby talk,” which in turn develops the child's language acquisition. Bodrova and Leong believed that parents vary in the amount of contextual assistance they provide for their young children. They aimed to explain how the child's words and conversations are “scaffolded” and “appropriated” by his/her parents into sequences of culturally approved language (Kutnick, 2004). Dixon-Krauss (1996) illustrated scaffolding through parent-child story reading, where the adults tailor the social interaction

through scaffolding the reading activities to assist the child's participation in these interactive activities.

A useful definition of "scaffolding" was developed by Tharpe and Gallimore (1988), which includes the following:

1. Modelling (through imitating behaviours);
2. Contingency management (through providing the learner with rewards or punishments to follow specific behaviour);
3. Feedback (to help further the child's performance);
4. Instructing (explicit guidance);
5. Questioning (to check understanding);
6. Cognitive structuring (chunking, sequencing, segregating, or otherwise structuring a task into form components; hence adjusting the task to suit the learners) (p. 177).

The ZPD is closely associated with scaffolding, as scaffolding operates within the ZPD (Sidek, 2011). Scaffolding can take many forms. This includes spontaneous scaffolding, such as elaborating on vocabulary by using a frame of reference familiar to students, and planned scaffolding: for instance, using a specially designed graphic organiser during a cooperative learning task (Watts-Taffe & Truscott, 2000). In this regard, adults, particularly parents and teachers, can scaffold children's literacy practices through modelling (Fleer, Edwards, Hammer, Kennedy, Ridgway, Robbins & Surman, 2006). Dixon-Krauss (1996) stressed the significance of the role of the ZPD for children as it provides educators with references, particularly in Western education, by which to analyse classroom literacy instruction and assess children's practices. Employing the ZPD in the classroom requires the teacher to arrange the environment in which scaffolding is created, thereby allowing the learners to achieve a higher abstract perspective on the learning tasks (Dixon-Krauss, 1996).

In terms of scaffolding literacy learning in the classroom, teachers should provide learning opportunities that are suitable for children's abilities, providing assistance if they need it, and mediating learning within social interactions (Dixon-Krauss, 1996). In addition, mediation can enhance ZPD effectiveness when ZPD is used as an activity in the classroom to foster children's language acquisition as well as learning (Sidek, 2011). Dixon-Krauss believed that social interaction offers the context for supporting and guiding children's learning. Thus, teachers can provide support as the child develops novel, creative understanding as well as

analytical skills during social interaction (Dixon-Krauss, 1996; Sidek, 2011). For instance, visual literacy tools, such as pictures, storybooks, and expert assistance, as well as the use of teacher's directions and explicit instructions, may be used as mediations (Daniels, 2001; Sidek, 2011).

Cultural

The third aspect of ZPD is the *cultural* perspective, which McLachlan et al. (2010) referred to as the distance between the everyday experiences that the child is involved in and the forms of cultural knowledge naturally represented in a formal curriculum. In this dimension, teachers can use the scaffolding strategy for supporting children's knowledge, including informal and formal literacy, based on children's everyday experiences and "school knowledge" as Vygotsky called it (McLachlan et al., 2010).

Collectivist

In the *collectivist* dimension of ZPD, McLachlan et al. stated that children as learners have a more active role to play. From this definition of the ZPD, McLachlan et al. argued that children cannot learn by themselves, as they need assistance from adults in order to learn new knowledge. This knowledge is collectively constructed and is given meaning within a social context that learners engage in with others (McLachlan et al., 2010).

In this research, one of the main aims is to observe children's social interactions with their teachers and peers through a variety of literacy activities in kindergarten classrooms in the KSA. Accordingly, Vygotsky's notion of ZPD is very relevant in the KSA context, in which social and cultural identities reflect children's learning, starting from home and moving into kindergarten settings where learning occurs within shared and interactive activities. Vygotsky's notion integrates social support that will in turn create a ZPD in which young learners will be able to show the nascent skills not tapped by static task procedures (Campione, 1996). Campione argued that by observing these nascent skills, educators could offer a better assessment of an individual's potential for proceeding further than their current competency level. Additionally, the ZPD notion is related to the process in which parents teach their children literacy activities at home, such as shared reading and guiding them to become

independent learners. Children learn new skills and develop their vocabulary through their social interactions with peers. Imitation is another form of learning. However, Vygotsky argued that a child cannot imitate what he/she has seen through observing adult behaviour and practice without developing understanding (Fleer & Robbins, 2006). Gray and MacBlain (2012) supported Vygotsky's view that children create their own ZPD when they engage in play, particularly where the child behaves beyond his/her normal age and exceeds his/her regular behaviour. This highlights the importance of play, as children have opportunities to learn, interact, communicate, and make meaning in the world around them.

When Vygotsky speaks of the ZPD, he emphasises interaction and progression in learning through two interrelated concepts. These concepts are inter-psychological functioning and intra-psychological functioning. Inter-psychological functioning refers to how children participate in cultural and ritual practices within their community (Fleer & Robbins, 2006). For instance, saying grace before eating meals in the childcare centre or home (Fleer & Robbins, 2006). In the case of KSA and other Islamic countries, children have to say the name of God (Bismillah) before eating meals as a spiritual and religious practice. Bismillah is an acknowledgement that the food belongs to Allah and respect for living things. This spiritual practice teaches Muslim children to obey God and respect food, and reflects the cultural context of the children's home and community. As children imitate these acts and words in practices, which they observe and learn from their surroundings, they function in inter-psychological settings (Fleer & Robbins, 2006).

Fleer and Robbins (2006) described another type of interaction where children develop understanding and values about their religious and cultural practices. In this context, as children get broader experiences in their cultural and religious practices and come to understand the purpose of these practices and have their own faith, they function at an intra-psychological level (Fleer & Robbins, 2006). This is of particular interest in KSA where children pray with their parents: they develop the understanding and belief that praying is the second Pillar of Islam as a religious, spiritual, social and cultural value and practice. Without a doubt, adults play a significant role in the child's movement and transformation from the inter-psychological level to the intra-psychological level, in which the children become more mature and capable learners. Play, as outlined later in this chapter, relates to children's learning and development at the kindergarten or preschool stage. Mediators, such as tools, can apply as in the social learning context, as discussed in the next section.

3.5 Mediation

Bodrova and Leong (2007) stated that Vygotsky believed that mediation is something between “[a]n environmental stimulus and an individual response to that stimulus” (p. 69). Vygotsky stated that mediators turn into mental tools, though only when the child combines these tools in his/her own activity (Bodrova & Leong, 2007) and makes it part of intra-psychological functioning. Adults such as parents and teachers can provide children with these tools through their joint activity, which is required in order for children to internalise them, and then these tools can work as mediators for children to move towards more advanced psychological processes (Karpov & Haywood, 1998; Bodrova & Leong, 2007). For instance, using puppets as mediators to facilitate children’s learning processes helps children to increase their cooperation, interest, attention span, interaction, and involvement levels.

Vygotsky’s works distinguished two major types of mediations: metacognitive and cognitive (Vygotsky, 1978, 1988). In the metacognitive type, Vygotsky refers to children’s acquisition of semiotic tools of self-regulation: self-planning, self-checking, and self-evaluating (Vygotsky, 1978, 1988). For instance, when the child does not want to share a toy with his/her peer, the child can be guided by saying, “No, we have to share together and take turns,” and this guidance assists not only the child’s self-regulation, but also regulates the child’s behaviour. Cognitive mediation refers to children’s acquisition of cognitive tools, which are important for solving problems (Vygotsky, 1978, 1988). This type of mediation begins when young children start school and begins to learn “scientific concepts” (Karpov & Haywood, 1998). For example, children might use tools, such as a pen and a plastic toy, to explore the concept of sink versus float. These tools might aid them to distinguish between heavy dense objects which will sink and small hollow objects which will float.

Bodrova and Leong (2007) described the external mediator as a temporary step that leads the child’s behaviour from dependent learner to independent. Teacher planning that may result in this independence is a significant process (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Moreover, the ZPD is described by Vygotsky as “[a] tool through which the internal course of development can be understood” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 87). Mediators can take many forms. These are:

1. Verbal mediator: This type of mediation consists of any speech, written words or sentence (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). The verbal mediator can be used by children, and can be used to assist children’s task performance (Bjorklund, 2013).
2. Visual mediator: Mediation can be undertaken using pictures, stuffed animals or diagrams.

3. Physical mediator: This type of mediator includes sets of behaviours, such as particular rituals or habits, that trigger the child's mental processes (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). For instance, transition songs can mediate children's behaviour in kindergarten classrooms to assist in starting a new activity. This triggers children to behave in a certain way.

Thus, teachers can use verbal, visual, and physical mediators to support children's literacy outcomes by learning letter-sound knowledge, phonological awareness, concepts about print, and so on.

In a learning context, verbal and visual mediators can both be used at the same time to foster children's literacy learning processes, particularly in more complex tasks. For instance, storytelling (verbal mediation), learning alphabetic letters using pictures and reading them aloud to children (visual and verbal mediation), and physical activities (making letter shapes with fingers or arms or sound shapes with tongue and lips) can all contribute to successful learning. Further elaboration of the relation between play and ZPD is presented in the next section.

3.6 Play and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Although Vygotsky did not write much about play, he believed in the importance of play as one of the highest forms of children's development (Hakkarainen & Bredikyte, 2008; Lake, 2012). Elkonin (1978) perceived play as a leading activity, *i.e.* activity in which children master a range of mental tools that are necessary to successfully function in their own modern society. Following this, cultural-historical approaches claim that role-play forms a leading activity and plays a vital role in children's cognitive, social and physical development (Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Duncan & Tarulli, 2003; Elkonin, 1978; Vygotsky, 1978; Zaporozhets, 1997). Vygotsky asserted that as play is a leading activity in the preschool period, creating the ZPD, this compels developmental changes and gives children opportunities to extend their understanding of their sociocultural world (Duncan & Tarulli, 2003; Hakkarainen & Bredikyte, 2008; Rosko & Christie, 2013; Vygotsky, 1967). Elkonin was Vygotsky's colleague who continued to develop Vygotsky's work after his death - relating to teaching strategies in preschool and kindergarten classrooms - particularly the teaching of children with special needs (Bodrova & Leong, 2015).

Vygotsky's primary feature of play was the rule-based nature of play (Duncan & Tarulli, 2003). Through play, children act out real-life situations, where they set their own rules to

move beyond their current level of understanding (Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Lake, 2012). To illustrate this concept, when a child plays with sand in the sandpit he/she might build a birthday cake and pretend to have a birthday party, and when his/her peers join in the game, the child sets up his/her own rules. These rules reveal the child's own way of thinking, imagining, and communicating with his/her peers. Vygotsky argued that children are not acting out or following specific rules of behaviour. For instance, in imaginative play children at an early age cannot distinguish the differences between acting as a teacher and acting as a mother (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Besides, children at around four years show that they are sensitive to any mistakes in their role-playing, and often they correct each other's mistakes during shared activities (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Vygotsky also believed that the child can achieve his/her greatest achievements through play. Lake (2012) provided another example of video games in relation to driving cars, as when the child sees the driving sequences, he/she will learn another form of developmental play. Based on Lake's (2012) example, when the child is engaged in a project based on his/her interest in driving cars, ECTs can structure activities based on literacy skills, such as playing video games and describing the steps of play to a teacher or another child, or describing and naming the type of cars in the video games. This is also based on a Vygotskian framework, as he stressed the value and importance of play to a child's development, particularly in symbolic forms (Vygotsky, 1978). However, playing tools or games should be appropriate to the child's age, ability and interests.

Zaporozhets (2000) stressed the role of the adult, drawing an example from Skjarenko concerning the play of three-year-old children who had come from nursery to kindergarten and were not able to add any new features to their play. A child in this situation will lose interest in, for instance, continuously lulling a doll or rocking a pram forwards and backwards. When adults start providing new ideas or knowledge to motivate children's play, then children become more interested. Hakkarainen and Bredikyte (2008) argued that adults play different functions in different stages in children's play, based on the child's age and their methods of constructing the ZPD. When children engage in play based on their interests, they can enjoy a game for longer as well as developing new skills and learning new words. In the preschool age group, children start to develop play plots based on their everyday experiences and on what they see and hear as they watch/read/experience their favourite characters on TV programs, stories, fairy tales, and so on (Hakkarainen & Bredikyte, 2008). Educators need to observe the child in order to assess the child's level by comparing his/her performance with their peers or

by identifying the child's competence based on their abilities and understanding as well as contextual influences (McLachlan et al., 2010).

When teachers observe children carefully through play, they can get useful information to identify the children's actual level of development, and this can help shape culturally responsive curricula (McLachlan et al., 2010). Rogers and Evans' (2007) UK-based research assessed children's responses to role-play provision and relationships with other children using observations. Observations and reflection were used as methods for data collection and analysis. They noted that teachers have to think seriously about their role in children's play, as well as about how much time they need to spend in structuring, stopping, and interfering with play. The teachers who participated in this research highly emphasised the value of play in promoting children's learning, particularly with social and language development (Rogers & Evans, 2007). Children need enough space and time to play freely and let their imagination run freely. Rogers and Evans reported that, due to a lack of space in the classroom area, many children created unsanctioned changes in their environment to pursue their own interests. They claimed that the indoor environment may be ill-equipped to meet the needs of 4-5 years old children due to lack of time and space.

In addition, Rogers and Evans (2007) found that an over-structured classroom environment hindered children from sustained role-play and meaningful social interaction, especially boys. In this context, gender differences as well as cultural differences were found to be related to playfulness between children, particularly boys, from Western and Eastern cultures (Rogers & Evans, 2007; Taylor, 2011). Outdoor space and equipment can be an effective way to give children opportunities to create their own role-play, create play spaces for themselves, select the equipment they need, and their playmates (Rogers & Evans, 2007). Play can also regulate and organise children's behaviour through self-regulation by adopting specific roles and rules of particular play themes (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). For instance, in sociodramatic play, when the child plays the role of a baby, he or she can pretend to cry and stop when his or her "mother" comforts them. This crying action is initiated by the play situation and is not a true reaction to being hurt. Therefore, acting as a baby and mimicking behaviour such as crying requires higher mental function (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). However, play needs more control compared with other contexts, and thus "provides a ZPD for the development of higher mental functions" (Bodrova & Leong, 2007, p.128).

Vygotsky has limited his investigation to children's dramatic play, or "make-believe

play,” in preschool and primary school age groups (Bodrova & Leong, 2000, Hannon, 2000a, Bodrova & Leong, 2007). According to Bodrova and Leong (2012), make-believe play can be considered a leading activity for children of preschool age; whereas for children of primary age, leading activities are usually referred to as intentional learning activities. Bodrova and Leong (2007) believe that play in kindergarten is “socially oriented” (p. 129). Play in Vygotsky’s paradigm does not have to occur with other children, which means the child can pretend to have a playmate or can act out a scene with toys (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Bodrova and Leong (2000) believed that make-believe play creates the ZPD for early literacy development. The transfer of meanings, according to Vygotsky, is assisting the child to consider a word as the property of a thing: even though he/she cannot see this word, they understand the thing it designates (Vygotsky, 1977). For instance, the child may use the word “horse” for a piece of stick, and imagine the stick as a horse and play with it. As Vygotsky (1977) clarified from this example, when the child applied the word “horse” to the stick, mentally he/she sees the object “stick” standing behind the word “horse”. In parallel, Miller (1998) sheds light on the importance of play in developing literacy, particularly in the early years of the child’s development. Miller (1998) focused on imaginative play in which the child uses symbols as a means of representation. To draw on the last example by Vygotsky, Miller stated that when the child rides a stick and imagines it is a horse, they also imitate the horse’s sound.

In the same context, Excell and Linington (2011) emphasised the significance of the initial exposure to literacy for young children, which in their opinion should not be through using formal explicit instruction. They asserted that literacy-enriched play occurs spontaneously in preschool centres, particularly in the context of play-based activities. Similarly, Cassell (2004) clarified that many emergent literacy activities are incorporated through play. Regarding the ZPD, Miller (1998) illustrated that young children will behave as readers and writers before they acquire the necessary skills. In other words, when young children hold a picture book and imitate the adults as they read a book, this behaviour reflects the children’s interest in reading and their understanding of the concept of “book” and the reading process. Excell and Linington (2011) claimed that the acquisition of literacy skills is multifaceted and complex and cannot be acquired in isolated parts.

Children accordingly cannot develop the skill of writing in isolation from other skills, including reading, speaking, and listening (Excell & Linington, 2011). These skills can be developed through immersion in a challenging and stimulating environment where play is taking place. Miller (1998) believed that the home is a vital setting as a rich and natural source

for preschool children to learn and experience literacy knowledge and practices. Miller (1998) continued that in formal settings such as school, play is planned and deliberately provided for children to learn literacy and to begin to learn who to be as literacy users and makers. In the context of play, children show what knowledge they already have, including writing and reading skills and knowledge (Miller, 1998). Thus, children can develop their literacy skills through play, which occurs within a social context with a group of peers.

Ongoing developments and critiques of the ZPD

Vygotsky's concept of ZPD has been discussed extensively and his ideas critiqued, expanded and developed by scholars over the last two decades (Chaiklin, 2003; Gredler, 2012; Versesov, 2004). Versesov (2004) emphasised that we should distinguish between Vygotsky's original text relating to the ZPD as a concept and the ZPD definition in relation to the association between development and instruction. Chaiklin (2003) examined three main assumptions concerning the ZPD in relation to children's learning and development. These include; a generality assumption, assistance assumption and potential assumption. In regards to the generality assumption, Chaiklin (2003) raised an important question; if Vygotsky's intention was to use the concept of development for all kinds of learning, then why did he not name it as the 'zone of proximal leaning'? Consequently, Chaiklin suggests that the term used by Vygotsky was not coincidental (2003). Vygotsky distinguished between instruction aimed 'toward [the child's] full development from instruction in specialised, technical skills such as typing or driving a bicycle' (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 123). Chaiklin (2003) and Veresov (2004) clarified the need to understand that the ZPD must be related to the child's development, but is not concerned with the development of the child's skills in a specific task.

The assistance assumption relates to the concept of ZPD focused on the importance of competent teachers or peers assisting children's learning, which links collaboration among children and the ZPD (Chaiklin, 2003; Gredler, 2012). Chaiklin (2003), argues that when Vygotsky first introduced the concept of ZPD, he considered it in relation to some kinds of collaboration, direction and assistance, in which the child will be able to solve the more challenging tasks he/she can achieve independently. From Vygotsky's view, it is important to understand the meaning of assistance in association with the child's development and learning, rather than understanding the competence of the more knowledgeable peers or teacher *per se* (Chaiklin, 2003).

Moreover, Gredler (2012) discussed two important points to understand the role of teachers or more capable peers in the child's cognitive development. The first point elaborated by Gredler (2012), was that the process of teaching is considered as "always in the form of the child's cooperation with adults" (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 204). Gredler (2012) illustrated this point through discussing the example of a teacher assisting her students' development of scientific subject-matter concepts, in which the concepts occur as part of the students' educational process, and includes a special form of systemic collaboration between the students and teacher. The second point relates to the significance of this interaction that occurs between the adult as an 'ideal form of behaviour' and the child as a 'present form of behaviour' for the child's mental development (Gredler, 2012). Chaiklin (2003) argued that the term 'collaboration' in assessing the ZPD should not be understood as a joint effort to move the child forward by the more expert person where the child's maturing functions are inadequate to achieve the tasks. Instead, collaboration refers to any situation in which the child is being offered some kind of interaction with other capable people in relation to a particular problem to be solved (Chaiklin, 2003).

In relation to the third assumption, the potential assumption, Chaiklin (2003) stated that Vygotsky did not assume that learning within ZPD is always an enjoyable moment for the child. For instance, the child who is engaged in playing a scoring game, may not find this an enjoyable experience, in particular after losing. However, the child's engagement can be still considered as part of the ZPD. Chaiklin (2003, p. 4), acknowledged that 'the potential is not a property of the child – as these formulations are sometimes interpreted – but simply an indication of the presence of certain maturing functions, which enables a situation that gives a potential for meaningful, interceptive action'. Therefore, Versesov (2004) stressed that the definition of ZPD outlines only one particular and narrow part of development, but not the whole process of this development. He concluded that the conditions of ZPD as distance between the potential development and actual development happen only in the case of strong social relationships occurring between the individuals (Versesov, 2004). The following section explores the new perspectives of literacy from sociocultural approaches and its relevance to learning and teaching literacy.

3.7 Literacy Perspectives Related to Sociocultural Approaches

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Perry (2012) indicated that there are three major contemporary perspectives related to sociocultural approaches, which are literacy as a social practice, multi-literacies, and critical literacy. The first two perspectives are explored in this chapter in relation to sociocultural approaches, as they are the focus of this study and critical literacy is not recognised in KSA curriculum. The following section discusses the first perspective.

3.7.1 Literacy as a social practice

The perspective of literacy as a social practice has been influenced by the seminal fieldwork of Street (1984) in Iran. Street's perspective on literacy as "practices" is opposite to Heath's perspective on literacy as "events". Heath's (1982) traditional perspective viewed literacy events as, "[a]ny occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participants' interaction and their interpretative processes" (p. 93). Meanwhile, Street (2003) referred to literacy practices as the broader cultural conception of a specific means of thinking about and doing writing, as well as reading, within cultural contexts. Street has focused on ethnography as a methodology. He adopted this approach from the British school of ethnography, which allowed him to use the interpretative methods that assisted him to observe and record literacy practices in Iran (Street, 2012).

Street studied the meanings as well as the functions of literacy as social practices and divided these into three main domains of social activity in the Iranian cultural context (Street, 2012). These are: 1) "*maktab*" literacy practices, which relate to primary religious school based on the Quran; 2) "schooled" literacy practices, which are more associated with the modernising context of the state school; and 3) "commercial" literacy practices, which relate to the practice of buying and selling fruits for the propose of transport to the city and the market (Street, 2012). The way that Street has categorised these as literacy practices assisted him to distinguish differences between the three domains of social activity (Street, 2012). The context that pertains to *maktab* literacy practices exists due to the traditional and religious authorities in the Iranian villages, which are located in a Quranic learning context in a social hierarchy that was dominated by men (Street, 2012). Students in *maktab* literacy were taught to understand the meaning of words as well as conventions about the position of words in the religious texts such as the Quran (Street, 1984). The challenge of Quranic traditional school for young children is to

recall the passages as well as learn the sound–symbol correspondence without even knowing the language, which is based on classical Arabic (Rassool, 2009).

The schooled literacy practice, according to Street (1984), referred to literacy acquired in state school. Schooled (or state) literacy was related to a new learning style as well as to modernisation, preparing some children in this village for urban lives and employment demands (Street, 1984). Commercial literacy practices occurred in relation to the economic activity of selling and buying fruit with nearby cities, present at the time of economic boom (Street, 1984). This involved learning literacy skills through different activities, such as writing notes, lists, names on crates, the signing of cheques, the writing out of bills, labelling boxes and so on, in order to facilitate the purchasing and selling of quantities of fruit (Street, 1984; Street, 2012). Thus, the fieldwork of this ethnographic study by Street provided a significant framework for understanding the broad and complex meaning and functions of literacy contexts associated with the notion of “literacy practices” (Street, 1984) that has strongly informed contemporary literacy research, and scholarship practice.

In his new approach to and understanding of literacy, Street has distinguished between two models of literacy, including autonomous and ideological models (Perry, 2012; Street, 1984a, 2005b). The autonomous (or cognitive) model, as described by Street, includes formal literacy instruction and conceptualises literacy in official terms, which has significant consequences for individual cognition as well as society within the inherent characteristics that literacy is assumed to have (Perry, 2012; Street, 2005). This includes the skills of reading and writing. Traditionally, literacy is thought of as a cognitive activity, involving alphabetical code-breaking, phonics, grammar, and comprehension skills. The autonomous model of literacy allows for a narrow definition of what literacy is that puts many people into the failure (illiterate) category than broader conceptualisations do. Street (2005) illustrated that “persons in mainly literate societies who have been labelled as non-literate in terms of testing will find themselves actively engaged in collective literacy activities, so the boundary between literate/non-literate is less obvious than individual ‘measure’ of literacy suggest” (p. 419). The autonomous (or cognitive) model of literacy on which many literacy programs and practices are based was not appropriate as an intellectual tool or for understanding the children’s diversity of reading and writing skills (Street, 2005). This drew attention to an ideological model.

The ideological model conceptualises literacy as a set of practices that take place in particular contexts, which are linked to power and cultural structures in the society (Perry,

2012). Street (2005) argued that the ideological model allowed for more culturally sensitive perspectives on literacy practices, as cultures vary from one context to another. Aligned with Street's ideological model, contemporary theorists such as Barton and Hamilton (2000) and Gee (1996) viewed literacy as a social practice that occurs within social and cultural contexts and which consists of children's interactions with everyday life texts. Barton and Hamilton (2000) viewed literacy not merely as sets of reading and writing skills, but also believed that literacy involves concepts, processes, values, attitudes, and dispositions as well as social relationships with others. Researchers such as the New London Group (1996), Jones Díaz and Makin (2002), Zammit and Downes (2002) and Hedegaard (2004) have viewed literacy from contemporary and broader perspectives, which includes reading and writing, speaking and listening, viewing, creating multimodal texts, and reading and writing electronic texts. In the ideological context, Jones Díaz (2007) viewed literacy as a social practice that consists of meaning embedded in written, oral, and visual texts that are socially constructed and situated. Similarly, Hamer (2005) developed a sociocultural model of literacy learning which focused on the active role of infants in constructing their own knowledge and understanding of literacy. Infants' literacy learning can also be developed by supporting infants with the space, time, and opportunities to observe literacy practices around them (Hamer, 2005). Hamer viewed these activities as cultural activities that occur in social practices. Woodrow et al. (2014) have incorporated these ideas into their Five Literacy Keys, which incorporate autonomous literacy skills, concepts, and practices as well as the concept of literacy as social practice.

In early childhood education, literacy as a social practice involves children engaging in and learning through their active interaction within a range of contexts (Hamer, 2005). These contexts include the home, community, and kindergarten. Each of these contexts or settings reflects its own literacy practices associated with specific home experience related to a specific context, which may or may not differ to or be valued by other contexts (Hamer, 2005). For instance, praying before each meal as a social, cultural and religious practice might be valued from household to household and from culture to culture, such as in Eastern and Western households, but not in some early childhood settings. Therefore, literacy practices take place in a social context, and not in "innate" or biological contexts (Jones Díaz, 2007). In a social context, language and communication are considered a significant part of literacy that provides young children with a rich literacy environment (Hamer, 2005). Teaching literacy, according to Hannon (2000b), is more than teaching specific literacy skills. It also refers to teaching a set of literacy skills to many different learners at different ages, and at many different learning

situations. Hannon has differentiated between teaching children's literacy at home and in school contexts. Hannon (2000b) stated teaching literacy at home is more likely to be closer to facilitation (where the children are surrounded with adults, such as families and community), whereas in a school context (where usually one teacher teaches many children) it "tends to be at the instruction end of the spectrum" (Hannon, 2000b, p. 210). Drawing on this argument above, according to Hannon (2000b), if we view literacy as a social practice and literacy teaching as a matter of engaging children in learning activities with much scaffolding, then this process is more appropriate for facilitation than instruction. In another word, children in a home environment surrounded with their parents, siblings, relatives and community may interact in more literacy activities and learn new concepts within their cultural and social contexts more than when they learn in a school setting. This is not just depending on a teacher's recognition and understanding of children's cultural and social backgrounds, but depends also on how teachers integrate children's backgrounds within the curriculum and into the teaching program.

When children communicate with their peers or adults using spoken, visual, and written texts in their environment, they convey meaning. There are different levels of meaning behind any type of given text depending on the social contexts in which the texts operate (Jones Díaz, 2007). Social environments, where children engage in relationships with others, including both their peers and adults, assist children to develop language through interaction. It can be argued that the narrow view of literacy as restricted to writing and reading texts in a school context suits the idea of literacy in an individual (autonomous) sense, instead of in social world in which individuals interact and participate (Jones Díaz, 2007). Jones Díaz (2007) believes it is crucial for early childhood educators to go beyond the narrow view of literacy as a set of skills, as this is a vital step to fostering children's literacy learning. Theorists who believe literacy is a social practice examine literacy through what people *do* with reading and writing and their purpose in doing it (Perry, 2012). These practices are connected with as well as being shaped by values, feelings, beliefs, attitudes, and social relationships with others (Perry, 2012). Literacy can be understood as a social connection and relationship where people interact within their communities and share their own cultural practices. When children participate either directly or indirectly in literacy activities within their immediate contexts, they explore, observe, and form understanding about literacy practices, attitudes, meanings, and literacy skills (Hamer, 2005).

In the same vein, Rogoff (1990), in her in-depth observations of her own children as well as many cross-cultural studies, documented various forms of children's participation with their

parents and peers. She found that even when the children were not participating in conversation with adults, they were involved in the adult world through participation in adult agricultural and household daily work. Rogoff (1990) stated that:

Cognitive development occurs in socioculturally organised activities in which children are active in learning and managing social partners, and partners are active in structuring situations with access to observe and participate in culturally-valued skills and perspectives (p. 37).

Rogoff's research supports the sociocultural claim that relationships among individuals shape the basis of linguistic and cognitive development. Accordingly, Fler and Surman (2006) claim that from a sociocultural approach, ECTs are required to think differently about children as learners and also about how to assess them. Children need to be assessed through a sociocultural framework as interactive learners who influence each other, rather than assessing each individual child, where the child feels isolated (Fler & Surman, 2006). In addition, Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett and Farmer (2008) argued that each child learns differently, and therefore needs to be understood within particular social and cultural contexts, including the family, community, school or childcare centre.

It is also important to clarify the differences between the concepts of literacy as a social practice and literacy events, as these concepts can be interrelated and the connection between them is vague (Perry, 2012). Drawing upon Heath's (1982) work, Barton and Hamilton differentiated between literacy as social practice and literacy events when they explained that literacy events are observable, as we can see what people are doing with texts, while practices connect to unobservable beliefs, attitudes, values, and power structures (Perry, 2012). The contemporary view of literacy contains both perspectives. To illustrate that: in the cultural event of Saudi's National Day, people's actions can be observed as they dress in the Saudi traditional costumes, fly flags over roads, decorate buildings and cars with pictures of the king, sing, and do a traditional dance with swords in order to express their admiration and loyalty to the nation and its leaders. As they engage in such cultural practices, children learn literacy through singing traditional and national songs, viewing and reading the written texts on the flag and posters etc. Their practices underpinning events are embedded in the cultural traditions of the nation.

Heath (1982) argued that literacy events need to be interpreted in association with the sociocultural patterns that they may reflect or represent. Heath (1982) clarified that literacy events have to take place within their cultural context. This helps us to understand how such patterns as time and space usage, caregiving roles, sex segregation and age are interdependent

from the features of literacy events that a community develops. To understand these differences, a researcher investigates the nature of these practices and events, which I believe cannot be viewed or studied separately. This supports the previous notion of Evans (2005) that literacy practices integrate literacy events that include those situations where writing or reading is primary to communication; however, it emphasises as well the conception that people have of those events and values, as well as the beliefs within which those practices are positioned.

Purcell-Gates, Perry and Briseño's (2011) work with the Cultural Practices of Literacy Study (CPLS) used literacy as a social practice theory as a frame to investigate literacy in different marginalised communities (Perry, 2012). They developed a model of literacy practice after eight years of analysing data from multiple case studies in the USA. The model represents the theoretical relationship between literacy events and literacy practices (Purcell-Gates, Perry & Briseño, 2011). Perry (2012) presented the Model of Literacy Practice (Figure 3.2 below).

The shaded layers of this model contain observable literacy events, starting with intended writing and reading, and then moving toward the texts per se. The unshaded layers include contexts (power of relationships, social institutions, histories, available languages, beliefs and values), social activity domain (focused area of Human Action), and social purpose (social goals accomplished by literacy practice).

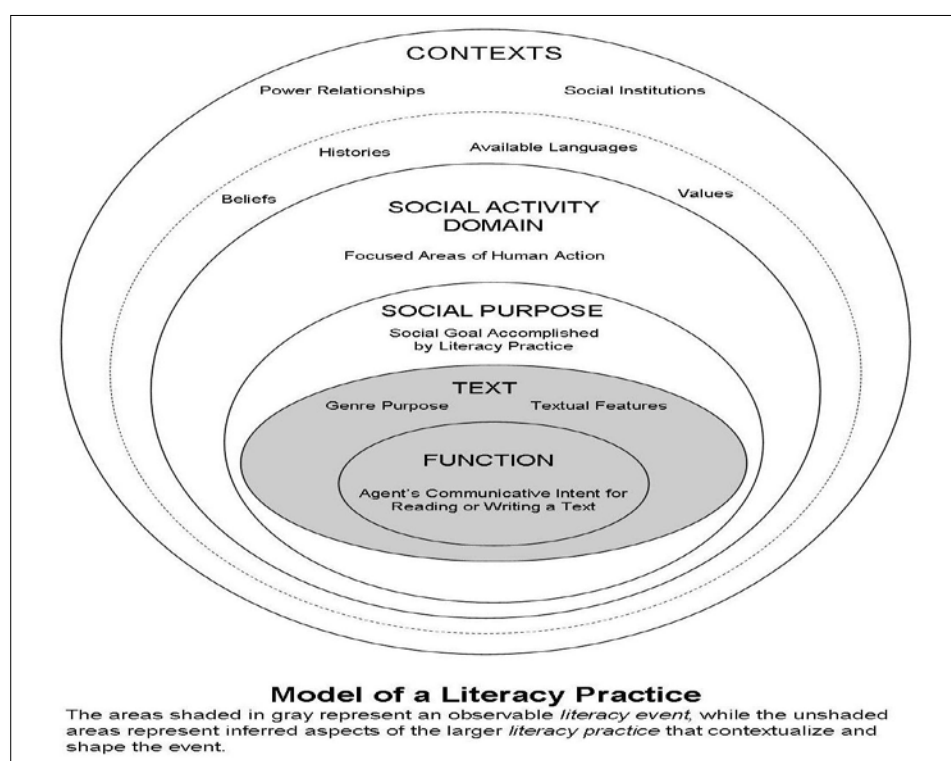


Figure 3.2. Model of a literacy practice (Source: Perry, 2012, p.56)

The model above explains the sophisticated relationships between literacy as event and literacy as practice, using the influences of cultural contexts and power relationships within social structures. This description reflects the broader view of literacy as going beyond one set of skills. This approach challenges many educators, especially in early childhood settings, encouraging them to rethink how to integrate literacy into the early childhood program. Although the perspective of literacy as social practice can help to describe what types of knowledge are essential to engage effectively in literacy practices, this perspective may not clarify the process of how people learn to read and write (Perry, 2012). Contemporary literacy view incorporated the perspective of multi-literacies, which are discussed in the following section.

3.7.2 Multi-literacies

It is important to acknowledge that terminologies such as “multi” or “new” can be used in describing changes in digital communication which seek to describe multiple devices and media texts (Rowse & Walsh, 2011). Multiple modes (e.g. image, sound, gesture, movement and text) are processed during communication, and multiple aspects of literacy, or multi-literacies, are needed in our networked, global society. As literacy changes, young children are exposed to new types of communicative tools and situations in which these tools are utilised, which are multimodal rather than being exclusively linguistic (Hill & Nichols, 2006). These changes have required us to rethink the concept of literacy. The concept of multi-literacies developed by the New London Group in 1996 was driven by the perspective of literacy as a social practice (O’Rourke, 2005; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Mills, 2009; Perry, 2012).

The New London Group focused on “the big picture; the changing world and the new demands being placed upon people as makers of meaning – in changing workplaces, as citizens in changing public spaces and in the changing dimensions for our community lives, our life worlds” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 4). The New London group, according to Hill, (2007) has focused on the pedagogy of multi-literacy, which has expanded our perspectives and understandings of literacy as reading, writing, speaking, and listening to include various multimedia symbol forms. Multi-literacies acknowledge the various forms of literacy practice needed for work, leisure, personal growth, citizenship, and community participation as well as cultural expression (O’Rourke, 2005).

The multi-literacy concept has some synergies with literacy as social practice. Both emphasise the real world contexts where people take part in literacy practices, as well as emphasising the role of the power relationship that forms literacy learning and literacy per se (Perry, 2012). However, the perspective of multi-literacy differs from the perspective of literacy as social practice in several ways. In this regard, the New London Group (1996) viewed multi-literacy as a combination of the two most powerful propositions due to the changing communication environment (Mills, 2009). The first proposition pertains to the multiplicity of the channels of communications as well as the media tied to the growth of mass media, multimedia, the use of the Internet, and the increased salience in cultural and linguistic diversity (New London Group, 1996). The second proposition concerns the increasing significance of cultural and linguistic diversity as a result of globally marketed services as well as migration (New London Group, 1996).

Lankshear and Knobel (2003) described the term “multi-literacies” as being related to the term “new literacies”. This also might refer to literacy practices that are interrelated with digital literacies within a rapidly changing social context, depending on who is using the term. The New London Group focused on the changing social, economic, and political world and the implications these have on social futures and changing lives (Perry, 2012). The New London Group and other theorists of multi-literacies emphasise the changing nature of the world and the power relationships that construct the ways that language and literacy are used, with these changes internally adopted (Perry, 2012). In contrast, the perspective of literacy as social practice tends to focus on the acknowledgement of the dynamic nature of literacy practices as well as culture (Perry, 2012). Perry argued that scholars of literacy are required to think about how literacy should be taught, instead of just focusing on what literacy is.

Hill (2007) viewed multi-literacies as highly relevant and an inseparable part of the early childhood context. However, Lankshear and Knobel (2003), in reviewing the research in relation to new technologies as well as early childhood, found that multimodal resources were used primarily to develop the decoding and encoding of alphabetic texts. Likewise, they argued that new technologies interconnected with literacy were profoundly under-researched in the early childhood field compared with other age groups, such as primary students (Hill, 2007). Cope and Kalantzis (2000) argued that children engage in the world in which multi-literacies exist and in which their families and communities construct specific ways of literate thinking and behaving, and value specific kinds of literacy. Hill (2007) claimed that in order to explore the term “multi-literacies,” we need an understanding of “semiotic theory” and an exploration

of how symbols, in the form of letters and words, drawings, photographs, colours, icons of various types, and animated movement, can communicate meaning. In relation to sociocultural contexts, semiotics offers a way in which sociocultural meanings are made, as well as goals accomplished through the use of various semiotic resources, such as oral language, visual symbols, signs and music (Hill, 2007). Multi-literacies also include techno-literacies, digital literacies, electronic literacies, print-based literacies, and visual literacies (Hill, 2007).

Based on the research of Lankshear and Knobel (2003), Hill (2005) developed an Australian early childhood research project titled *Mapping Multi-Literacies*. This project involved twenty teacher researchers who studied children aged four to eight years old to investigate their funds of knowledge and their understanding of multiliteracies (Hill, 2007). The researchers who were involved took a techno-tour of children's homes to observe the use of new technologies that children were involved in with their families. Hill found that children were far more experienced than teachers anticipated in terms of using information and communication technologies (ICT) (Hill, 2007). Hill stated that children were even using online websites and linking to their favourite television shows and knew to find information that related to their interests. These findings supported the previous results of Marsh's research (2005), which involved the study of children aged two and a half to four years old in early childhood settings.

Moreover, Marsh (2005) argued that techno-literacies, or new literacies, including television, mobile phones, and computer games, are embedded in young children's everyday lives. Data generated from this research showed that television was found to be the primary source of textual pleasure for young children at home, as parents reported that their children regularly enjoyed watching television. As children and their families engaged in watching television programs, they were involved in discussions, played games related to their favourite TV characters, and acted in narrative texts within the home space (Marsh, 2005). Parents showed recognition of the importance of play as a response to television narratives, and families also reported that television had a vital role in developing children's skills, including linguistic and social skills. This result emphasised the importance of play and techno-literacies in developing young children's literacy learning. Marsh (2005) indicated that 71 parents acknowledged that technology as well as popular culture was significant to their children's literacy development, while many educators in the nursery room did not believe that these practices assisted the development of literacy in young children. My research goals addressed

the contradiction between parents and teachers' beliefs and practices in regards to using technology as an important resource for teaching children emergent literacy.

Another finding was related to mobile phones, with children observing their parents reading and responding to text messages (Marsh, 2005). By observing these practices, they are acculturated into electronic print, mediated by mobile phones. In addition, as children from three to four years engaged in playing computer and PlayStation games, they were involved in practices such as reading categories, magazines, and game covers. These practices, as Marsh (2005) described, came about as a result of parents and older siblings scaffolding young children's computer games, leading to development of their literacy skills as well as other skills, such as navigating computer games successfully and improving their self-esteem and confidence. Marsh (2005) concluded that literacy as a means of self-expression and pleasure was strongly evident through children's engagement with techno-literacy tools, including television, mobile phones and computer games, and this was recognised and supported by families, including parents and siblings. Although Marsh's research moves our attention to the role of technology in teaching young children literacy, there are many contemporary technological devices such as iPods and iPads that now play a significant role in literacy learning for young children. Playing with iPads can enable children to explore painting, drawing, writing, digital photography, animation, digital story telling and iBooks through the different available applications (apps) (Dezuanni, Dooley, Gattenhof & Knight, 2015) and share them with others, such as their parents, teachers, and peers.

Freebody and Luke (1990) developed a four resources model in order to outline the kinds of literacy resources that should be addressed by any theory of literacy education and any literacy pedagogy. The four interrelated dimensions of this map provided insight for teachers to analyse children in terms of what they know about multi-literacies, as well as helping for future planning when it comes to revealing the next step in building children's knowledge and understanding (Hill, 2007). These dimensions include the:

functional user (locating, code breaking, using signs and icons; selecting and operating equipment; moving between mediums; cameras, videos, computers); meaning maker (understanding multimodal meanings; purpose of text and text form; connecting to prior knowledge); critical analyser (discourse analysis, equity, power and position, appropriate software/hardware); and transformer (using skills and knowledge in new ways, designing texts, producing new texts) (Hill, 2007, p. 59).

As Hill (2007) clarified, the researchers reported that children succeeded in producing new multimodal texts, and this in turn led to the necessity of understanding the multimodal

meanings. The use of graphic and alphabetic software, for instance, encouraged communication and other emergent literacy behaviour and enhanced interpersonal interaction between children (Hill, 2007). This research by Hill (2007) has shown that young children aged three to four years old were able to represent meaning through playing with digital photographs when they imported these photos to the computer, and made changes when playing with the layout, colours, and shapes. Hill (2007) argued that is not enough that children be able to read, write, listen, and speak: they should be able also to do more as they code break, decipher, express ideas, and transfer meaning through a range of media involving layout, design, animation, colours, and graphics. Due to the changes in means of communication in the world, children need to be exposed to multimodal literacies. Mills (2009) concluded that global trends call for a multi-literacy approach that integrates an increased range of hybrid literacies and new pedagogies. This justified the greater attention paid toward multi-literacies in early childhood development. The next section discusses multimodality.

3.8 Multimodality

Multimodality involves meaning making that occurs throughout a range of communication channels “in which written-linguistic modes of meaning are part and parcel of visual, audio, and spatial patterns of meaning” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 5). The New London Group used multiple words that refer to the term “meanings,” such as “modes of meaning,” “designs,” and “design elements” (New London Group, 2000, pp. 25-28). Multimodality articulates the complexity as well as the interrelationship of more than one mode of meaning, encompassing visual, linguistic, auditory, gesture, or spatial modes (Mills, 2009). Each mode or design was described by Mills: for instance, visual modes consist of images, screen formats, paper layout, colours, vectors, perspectives, backgrounding, and foregrounding. Gestural modes of meaning contain body language, gestures, feelings, behaviour, and kinesics. Audio meanings or modes involve sound effects, music, and voiceovers. Spatial meanings encompass architectural, environmental, and geographical meanings (New London Group, 2000). Similarly, Kress (2000) rejected the narrow definition of literacy that negated cultural context and focused solely on print or written texts. Instead, Kress (2000) emphasised viewing literacy as involving multiple modes of visual, gestural, spatial, and other modes of representation.

3.9 Summary of the Chapter

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, the ZPD, and mediation of children learning have been discussed in this chapter, with particular emphasis on literacy. A comparison was drawn between the perspectives of Piaget and Vygotsky regarding the child's development and learning. As children interact with people in different social contexts, such as kindergartens (ECTs and peers) or other adults at home (including parents, maids, siblings, and other relatives), they gain more understanding about the environment around them and gain more essential literacy skills. The interaction that occurs in a social context assists the child to learn through the ZPD, which fosters his/her learning to begin to achieve the task independently. Having introduced Vygotsky's notion of using the ZPD as well as the functions of using mediators in teaching children skills, including literacy skills, the chapter moved on to discuss different perspectives towards literacy. Perspectives explored were literacy as social practice and literacy as events. I concluded this chapter with the contemporary views of literacy that relate to multi-literacies and multimodality.

The following chapter is a literature review that discusses the variables at home and in kindergarten settings that assist Saudi children's emergent literacy learning, based on Western and Eastern research.

Chapter Four – Literacy in the Home and Kindergarten

“The recognition of the importance of the early years for children’s literacy development and the significant of the intertwined role of parents and educators may banish forever any notions that early education is just about ‘putting out the play dough’ and looking after young children” (McLachlan, 2007, p. 27).

4.1 Introduction

Children’s literacy development does not exist in a vacuum. Rather, it takes place in powerful environments that may assist or hinder children’s gains in literacy and language learning (Weigel, Lowman & Martin, 2007). These environments include the home and kindergarten, which have been the subjects of discussion over the past decades (Hundeide, 2005). Partnership between parents and Early Childhood Teachers (ECTs) in kindergarten centres is dependant on trust, but can offer challenges due to differing communication styles, emotions, and expectations between both parties (McGrath, 2003; Reedy, 2007). A good partnership between the home and kindergarten environments can benefit parents by educating them about their children’s learning and development (Bekman & Kocak, 2013; Ihmeideh & Oliemat, 2015; Pinto, Pessanha & Aguiar, 2013). Similarly, a good relationship between these environments allows ECTs to get feedback from parents on children’s home practices. To achieve an optimal relationship between the home and kindergarten, communication should occur between parents and ECTs who have knowledge about child development (Reedy & McGrath, 2010).

Parents can also benefit from a productive partnership with the kindergarten setting in terms of their children’s social interactions (Bekman & Kocak, 2013). For instance, Bekman and Kocak (2013) studied 100 children from five different countries (including Bahrain, KSA, Turkey, Belgium, and Switzerland), who were attending a mother-child education programme (MOCEP). They observed positive changes in the children’s overall development and in mother-child interaction, with indirect effects on the relationship with the child’s father and his positive relationship with the child. Although this research was not related to literacy per se, it focused on interventions in family relationships from different cultural contexts and social interactions in order to help their children’s linguistic, social, physical and cognitive development.

The benefits of a high quality of home as well as kindergarten is that it enables children to gain necessary academic skills. These skills become cumulative and long-lasting, and this encourages children to utilise greater learning opportunities than their peers in a poor quality

preschool setting (Sylva et al., 2013; Pinto, Pessanha & Aguiar, 2013). Pinto et al. argued that when children grow up in care environments that are stimulating and well-organised, they will have better vocabulary, more advanced attention and memory skills, and improved peer relationships. Pinto et al. (2013) asserted that preschool quality is as strong an influence as the home environment on children's early language and literacy development. Thus, maintaining communication between both settings benefits children's literacy learning and bridges the gap between home and kindergarten settings.

In order to provide children with literacy-rich environments, it is important to understand the factors that may affect the relationship between the home and kindergarten, which in turn influence young children's literacy learning. However, these factors were found to change from culture to culture and thus have different levels of influence on children's literacy practices at home (Bingham, 2007; Burgess, 2011; Hartas, 2011; Korat, 2009; Korat, Klein, & Segal-Droi, 2007; Yong, 2009). The reviews of the literature in this chapter firstly discuss the Home Literacy Environment (HLE) and the variables associated with children's literacy practices, including international comparisons but focusing on KSA in particular. This considered family research that has addressed parental literacy attitudes, levels of education, socioeconomic status (SES), and the role of fathers and foreign maids in children's literacy learning. The second section focuses on the Kindergarten Literacy Environment (KLE), and includes a review of the literature pertaining to the ECT's literacy practices in the classroom, their qualifications, and their beliefs about teaching literacy. The concluding summary illustrates how existing literature has been used to design the current study.

4.2 Home Literacy Environment (HLE)

Family and community literacy practices are reflected within children's HLE, which comprises a variety of activities, attitudes, and resources that are interconnected (Yeo, Ong & Ng, 2014). Cairney (2003) viewed family literacy as a social and cultural practice related to written text, while Hannon (2003) referred to family literacy as interrelated practices that take place within families. Taylor's (1983) earlier ethnographic work on 'family literacy' with middle-class families coined the term 'family literacy' and provided clear understanding of how children read and write, though their daily participation in their family's life (Cairney, 2003; Hannon, 2003; Wasik, Dobbins & Herrmann, 2001).

The other meaning of family literacy described by Hannon (2003), refers to certain kinds of family literacy programmes targeting families. Family literacy programmes defined as ‘programmes to teach literacy that acknowledge and make use of learners’ family relationships and engagement in family literacy practices’ (Hannon, 2003, p. 100). Cairney (2002) stated that “families can be understood as cultures in which participants (family members) construct particular ways of acting, believing and valuing through interactions among family members” (p. 160). Researchers such as McLachlan, Nicholson, Fielding-Barnsley, Mercer, and Ohi (2012) argued that we need to be clear about the meaning of family literacy, which refers to the research that focuses on family literacy practices within home settings. They stated that differences in the backgrounds of families were found to have a significant effect on children’s achievement in school and there were strong associations between parents’ beliefs, attitudes, interaction styles, knowledge and their children’s school achievement (McLachlan et al., 2012). To understand families’ literacy cultural and social practices, we need to explore their own literacy practices and beliefs through examining their HLE.

Most importantly, defining or measuring the quality of a HLE has to go beyond quantitative measures, recognising the complexity of interaction between variables in any context (Spedding et al., 2007). Volk and de Acosta (2003) argued that the HLE includes “cultural ways of utilising literacy” (p. 11), encompassing the ways in which parents understand and value literacy as well as their behaviours toward literacy (Volk & de Acosta, 2003). Foy and Mann (2003) suggested that there are three main aspects to a HLE, employed frequently to provide a measure of family home literacy. These include the following: a) shared reading experiences between children and their parents in the home environment; b) parental beliefs toward literacy; and c) parents’ own literacy practices at home. With respect to Foy and Mann’s findings, different measures are often used to assess a HLE, such as the family’s overall SES and the parents’ level of education. However, it is important to acknowledge that different components of the HLE depend on cultural aspects as well as on children’s literacy and language abilities (Yeo et al., 2014). As will be shown, providing children with a rich HLE, where all aspects of emergent literacy are valued and supported in the home environment, supports improved development of children’s literacy skills (Al-Momani et al., 2010; Sylva, Sammons, Chan, Melhuish, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2013; Weigel et al., 2005). In the following section, I explore family literacy research, ongoing concerns and issues from different social and cultural contexts relating to adults’ attitudes toward literacy, roles, and the cultural and social aspects of HLE that contribute to children’s literacy practices at home.

4.2. 1 Parental attitudes toward literacy

Examination of the literature about parents' attitudes toward their children's literacy learning reveals two main themes: 1) the importance of parental attitudes toward their children's reading skills prior to school years (Bennett et al., 2002; Hume, Lonigan & McQueen, 2012; Kim, 2009; Weigel et al., 2005; Yeo et al., 2014); and 2) the importance of parental attitudes toward literacy that incorporate new literacies other than reading (Aloofy, 1994; Brown et al., 2013; Castles, McLean, Bavin, Bretherton, Carlin, Prior, Ukounne, Wake, & Reilly, 2013; Skwarchuk, Sowinski & LeFerre, 2014).

4.2.1.1 Parental attitudes towards reading

Parental attitudes and approaches to teaching children literacy before formal schooling tend to be parent-led and are traditionally based on teaching reading skills, such as alphabetic letters (Bennett et al., 2002; Haney & Hill, 2004; Weigel et al., 2010). Parents often direct the type of learning opportunities they provide for their young children, and they also control when and how these opportunities take place, e.g. library visits and public book readings. Within the USA context, Bennett et al. (2002) suggested that literacy-related variables, including joint book reading, parental attitudes toward and interests in reading books, and parental education levels, might strongly influence pre-schoolers' language and literacy learning outcomes. This result seems to be consistent with other research, which found shared storybook reading is important for later independent reading ability (Wood, 2002). These results, as Bennett et al. (2002) indicated, are a first step towards shedding light on the process underlying the development of language and literacy skills in some young children's learning. Interestingly, subsequent research from the USA revealed that direct parent teaching was not strongly related to print interest measures or the frequency with which children played with literacy-related toys at home (Hume et al., 2012). This builds on the previous Korean finding by Kim (2009), which suggested that parent teaching is associated with the achievement of children in emergent literacy. Hume et al. (2012) acknowledged that the questions used to assess parent-teaching practices were mostly focused on teaching print-related concepts, including teaching letters of the alphabet and pointing out printed words in the environment, which requires more direction.

Research from the USA confirmed that parental engagement with their children in some form of early literacy activities at home leads to higher scores in all literacy areas (Haney & Hill, 2004). These areas consist of reading skills, such as alphabetical knowledge, two or three

letter words, and vocabulary, as well as concepts about print. The most frequently reported teaching activity implemented by children's parents was the direct teaching of letter names and sounds. This study reported that children who were directly taught words or stories did not have a higher score on the alphabet subtest. Although this study contained a homogeneous sample, children who consistently had a higher score across all early literacy skills received some types of parent-teaching activities at home. Children's reading interest was strongly related to parents exposing their children to literacy (Hume et al., 2012). Surprisingly, Hume et al. (2012) found that although parents in American households who did not initially expose children to literacy may be less likely to change these attitudes over time, parents who started exposure to literacy showed positive attitudes, such as reading more often to their children, keeping more children's books in the home, and allowing their children to see them practicing reading for pleasure more often, which had a positive influence on children's interest in literacy. Children who are more interested in these activities behave in ways that motivate parents to become more involved in teaching activities and vice versa. According to Hume et al. (2012), parent-teaching activities and the amount of time they expose children to literacy appear to be two different constructs. Accordingly, exposure to literacy practices, such as providing more books, reading more to children, and reading in front of children, changed less over time than parent-teaching activities, such as pointing out words, playing rhyming games with children, and teaching letters of the alphabet (Hume et al., 2012).

In reviewing parental household routines, researchers suggested that the more parents engaged in literacy routines in the household with their young children, the higher the reading interest and print knowledge of these children (Weigal et al., 2010). These routines have real value in regards to providing children with consistency and stability. For instance, engaging children with reading activities such as reading aloud, homework tasks, and dinnertime conversation were found to be positively associated with children's basic reading and comprehension skills. This finding acknowledged a positive relationship between parent-child activities and the development of children's literacy. These results matched those observed in earlier study by Kim (2009), who stated there was a positive association between the frequency of parental home reading and children's vocabulary, phonological awareness, and letter-name knowledge. These skills are eventually utilised in building the foundation for conventional literacy abilities (Kim, 2009).

Following from this, parent-child early engagement in reading activities within a Singaporean context was found to be the strongest predictor for children's reading motivation,

as well as their emerging reading abilities (Yeo et al., 2014). Researchers such as Wu and Honig (2010) and Yeo et al. (2014) suggested that when children found their parents presenting a positive role model related to the value and enjoyment of reading, they became more positive towards reading for pleasure. The most surprising finding was that a family's literacy activities, such as visiting the bookstore and library with their child, as well as parents modelling reading and writing to their child, did not predict greater reading competence, although they have been reported to have greater impact on children's language and literacy development (Burgess et al., 2002; Weigel et al., 2005). According to Yeo et al. (2014) parents have to believe that they have the necessary skill sets to teach their child to be able to read, or they can access the resources that assist their child to acquire reading skills, both of which are very important before entry into the first grade.

Recent research by Barratt-Pugh and Maloney (2015) investigated the implementation and the outcomes of a family literacy program *Growing Better Beginnings*, which builds on the previous program, *Better Beginnings: Birth to Three*, launched in 2005 in Western Australia. The assessment of the *Better Beginnings* family literacy program 2007-2010 was supported by major stakeholders such as teachers and librarians as well as families who considered this program an important opportunity to enhance children's early home literacy practices, and encourage families to take part as effective members of libraries (Barratt-Pugh & Maloney, 2015). They found the program made a positive impact, and this perception extended to teachers who reported they were able to link the *Better Beginnings* program to their classroom programs and could see the positive learning outcomes across the curriculum, including language development, early numeracy, creativity and concept development (Barratt-Pugh & Maloney, 2015). A significant outcome of receiving the reading pack was that it raised parents' awareness of the importance of reading books with their children and brought noticeable changes in parents' literacy practices (Barratt-Pugh & Maloney, 2015).

Despite the importance of previous findings, there were several similar limitations to each study. The first was that results were all based on parental self-report measures. This may affect parents' responses to questions, as parents may respond to questions in what they see as a socially acceptable manner (Barratt-Pugh & Maloney, 2015; Bennett et al., 2002; Haney & Hill, 2004; Hume et al., 2012; Weigel et al., 2005). To develop a full picture of parents' and their children's literacy attitudes and interests, additional studies will be needed, using multiple measures to record those practices. Bennett et al. (2002), for instance, suggested that observing and recording parental reading activities with their children in a home environment by using

video tapes or audiotapes could be useful to address bias issues related to survey data, and might reduce any likelihood of parents misunderstanding the written questions. Another similarity between these studies was the focus on certain aspects of the HLE with targeting families, namely reading skills and print concept (Bennett et al., 2002; Haney & Hill, 2004; Weigel et al., 2005; Yeo et al., 2014). Some scholars suggested that family literacy programs should be aimed at fostering the development of children's literacy in consideration of their family context, not focusing solely on autonomous skills (Anderson, Anderson, Friedrich, & Kim, 2010; Weigel et al., 2010). This called for a longitudinal study to be conducted through to the first grade, investigating a broader picture of family ecological influences, including letter knowledge, word decoding, phonemic awareness, concept of story, vocabulary, and concepts about print (Bennett et al., 2002; Haney & Hill, 2004; Hartas, 2011; Weigel et al., 2010). There is room for further progress in determining the relationship between children's literacy skills and home literacy achievement within a variety of linguistic and cultural contexts (Kim, 2009; Phillips & Lonigan, 2009). As discussed in Chapter Three in this thesis, contemporary literature has started to focus more on new literacy practices at home, which is discussed in next section.

4.2.1.2 Parental attitudes toward new literacies

Many parents seemed to have shifted their practices from a traditional view, framed in terms of reading and writing, to an expanded view that includes new and multiple literacies. More recent research has focused on parents' attitudes toward incorporating other aspects into the HLE, including formal and informal literacy activities such as reading, phonics awareness, and using technological tools such as watching television and using computers in learning emergent literacy (Castles et al., 2014; Jones Díaz, Arthur, Beecher, & McNaught, 2000; Skwarchuk et al., 2014). For instance, Australian researchers Jones Díaz et al. (2000) investigated literacy practices among parents from specific cultural backgrounds, including Aboriginal and Arabic-speaking families at home and prior-to-school settings in New South Wales. Parents were found to value home literacy experiences, including storytelling, shared books, sound recognition games, writing, and computer games, in developing their children's literacy learning (Jones Díaz et al., 2000). Those families were found to have broad definitions of literacy that encompassed emergent literacy skills such as book-handling and retelling familiar narratives as well as approximations of writing and the use of technologies, media, and environmental print resources (Jones Díaz et al., 2000). Most importantly, Jones Díaz et al.

(2000) found that bilingual families valued their vital role in developing their children's literacy in both their mother tongue and in English.

Within the Australian context, many parents recognised the significant role of television programs and computer games as important tools for developing children's oral and written language, particularly for bilingual children who speak English as a second language (Jones Díaz et al., 2000). This finding matched the previous findings by Aloofy (1994), who acknowledged that within the context of KSA, both parents had a vital role in boosting their children's critical literacy knowledge through interpreting technical words and concepts on TV for their children, increasing their level of understanding and comprehension. Castles et al. (2014) conducted questionnaire- and observation-based longitudinal research in Australia focusing on children at 8 months old, followed by annual parent questionnaires carried out from 12 months old and face-to-face measurements from age four. The parental questionnaires included both formal literacy experiences (e.g. "How often do you teach your child to print letters and words; how often do you help your child read letters and words?") and informal literacy experiences (e.g. "I look at or read children's books to my child") (Castles et al., 2014). Other literacy experiences were investigated in HLEs, which included watching television, using computers, letter knowledge, oral language, articulation, and phonological awareness. An important finding of this study indicated that around half of four years old children use computers on a weekly basis, and this use was positively correlated with letter knowledge (Castles et al., 2014). It suggested that "computer use and letter knowledge represents a first step in determining the role, and potential benefits, of early computer use in children's emergent literacy development" (Castles et al., 2014, p. 197).

Contrary to expectations, watching television was found to be negatively correlated with the level of informal literacy experiences, and no negative association was found with formal literacy experiences (Castles et al., 2014). In this study, informal literacy experiences at home were found potentially to be related to long-term reading outcomes, particularly reading comprehension and enjoyment of reading, and associated with language skills, which may be significant for ongoing literacy development such as vocabulary. These results are consistent with data obtained in Canada by Skwarchuk et al. (2014), whose study reported that storybook exposure was a significant predictor for children's vocabulary skills. However, Skwarchuk et al. (2014) contended that parents' attitudes toward literacy at home influence home literacy experiences, therefore it might be indirectly associated with their children's early literacy performance.

Within the Australian context, Brown, Byrnes, Watson and Raban (2013) produced data on parents' own reading habits and their reading practices with their children aged four to five years old. Unsurprisingly, this revealed that the older children were, the more likely they were to have capabilities to distinguish between letters, shapes, and numbers. Most importantly, these children showed that they came from literacy-rich HLE families in terms of the variety of early literacy activities, the amount of time parents spent engaging with their children, and the regularity and the routine of reading to their children, making HLEs a rich source for children's learning (Brown et al., 2013). In HLEs where parents supported their children's learning and attempted to respond to their children's interest as well as embedding their children's learning within a familiar literacy culture, children were reported to enter preschool with a high degree of literacy and curiosity about written words (Brown et al., 2013). Brown et al. (2013) argued that although parents were not focused exclusively on the use of new technology as the main source for literacy learning activities, traditional literacy (like reading books) was supplemented by interest in new technology.

Despite these significant findings by Skwarchuk et al. (2014) and Brown et al. (2013), caution must be applied, as these findings are based on parental questionnaires rather than observational data. Although the questionnaire asked about home practices involving using screen time, the popularity of these technological devices might differ depending on the ways that children and families access literacy information at home and in preschool environments (Skwarchuk et al., 2014). This should be investigated further in the future. Other HLE aspects, such as parental level of education, are discussed in the following section.

4.2.2 Parental level of education

There is ongoing debate about the complexities and multifactorial nature of whether parental educational level influences young children's literacy outcomes. The discussion in this section has drawn from two different points of view. First, a large group of researchers (Bingham, 2007; Park, 2008; Roberts, Jurgens & Burchinal, 2005; Rodriguez & Tamis-LeMonda, 2011; Wu & Honig, 2010) argued that there was no direct effect of maternal education on the quality of children's early literacy development, which contradicted previous findings about the significant impact of maternal education on children's emergent literacy learning. For instance, family literacy studies investigated the differences in child literacy levels among Head Start families in the USA, and found these differences may not be related to

the gender of the child or even the parental level of education (Morgan et al, 2009; Yong, 2009). Rather, other factors were involved, including family structure and parental beliefs about the needs of children. In this vein, mothers with lower levels of education had less contact with the outside world and had fewer local opportunities for their children's development (Bekman & Kocak, 2013). This finding is in agreement with those obtained by Korat's (2009) study, which suggested that mothers with lower levels of education were just as sensitive to their children's literacy levels as those with higher levels of education. However, Park (2008) argued that despite the correlation found between home literacy environments and parental education, there is still a considerable proportion of less educated parents, often involved with their children's literacy activities, who have positive attitudes towards reading, as well as having a large number of books at home. This suggests that establishing literacy routines and activities by parents, whether they are well educated or not, can promote children's literacy learning. In this context, Hume et al. (2012) emphasised the importance of establishing regular literacy activities in the early years in childhood in order to promote children's literacy interests, as this can potentially lead to greater literacy skills.

The second group of researchers (Al-Momani et al., 2010; Al-Qaryouti & Kilani, 2013; Bennett et al., 2002; Korat et al., 2007; Korat, 2009; Phillips & Lonigan, 2009; Weigel, Martin & Bennett, 2006) hold a contrary view, as they agreed that the parental level of education positively affects children's literacy learning. More educated parents appeared to have a desire to provide their young children with a well-rounded and rich literacy environment that stimulates learning via many emergent literacy skills. For example, Al-Qaryouti and Kilani's (2013) study in Oman found that the higher the parental education level, the greater their involvement in their children's literacy practices, except in visiting kindergartens. Interestingly, there were no differences found between educated parents in terms of gender who participated in this study (196 mothers and 116 fathers) in the practice of skills development, such as writing and reading to children, although there were more mothers than fathers. This indicated that Omani parents show equal concern for their children's reading and writing skills in the early stages, and assumed the development of parental scaffolding skills for teaching reading and writing (Al-Qaryouti & Kilani, 2013). This supported the previous argument by Al-Momani et al. (2010), which stated that parents expected their children to read, write, and form simple sentences at a mastery level by the end of their kindergarten year (i.e. from four to five years of age).

However, parents seemed to not be aware of the importance of other emergent literacy skills, such as phonics awareness and print knowledge. This may be a cultural factor influencing the diversity of parents' literacy practices from one household to another (Al-Momani et al., 2010). Although these findings by Al-Momani et al. (2010) and Al-Qaryouti and Kilani (2013) relate to parental attitudes toward literacy in Eastern cultures, this might be not similar to those of parents in KSA. A note of caution is due here, since this research used one source of data collection and did not reflect parental culturally-based literacy practices, such as reading Quran to children. These findings call for further investigation using long-term direct observations of children's interactive literacy activities with their parents and siblings to achieve a greater understanding of children's literacy learning (Perry et.al, 2008). It can be noted that little has been investigated regarding parental level of education and their young children's early literacy practices in Eastern culture, including in KSA.

The extent to which maternal education is a factor influencing young children's literacy learning has been the subject of debate. Several studies from the USA, Australia, Jordan, Israel, Singapore, KSA, and the UK have argued that maternal education does have a rich influence upon children's emergent literacy development (Burgess, 2010; Hartas, 2011; Korat et al., 2007; Wu & Honig, 2010; Yong, 2009). Bingham's study (2007), for instance, found that the quality of the home literacy environment and the quality of mothers' joint book-reading interactions were associated positively with children's emergent literacy skills development. However, one limitation of this study is that there is a need to consider the mother's beliefs separately from their behaviours in relation to the children's emergent literacy practices (Bingham, 2007). With respect to this finding, Bingham's study only targeted specific Euro-American ethnic mothers who were self-selected and highly educated. Also, the use of diverse methodologies beyond questionnaires, such as using observations and interviews, are needed to examine parents' beliefs (Bingham, 2007).

From different cultural backgrounds, Wu and Honig's (2010) study compared two groups of well-educated American and Taiwanese mothers and their reading beliefs. The main finding of this research was related to Taiwanese mothers' beliefs score, which indicated that they valued engaging in verbal participation strategies during reading activities and valued their own role in their children's early language learning. Taiwanese mothers may feel that they do not know to help their children in their early reading activities, but they do their best, and may use ways that are not "entertainment-oriented" or "fun" for their children, but are rather "structured" to teach their children words and sounds. Taiwanese mothers reported lower

frequency in print-related activities at home compared to American mothers (Wu & Honig, 2010). Wu and Honig (2010) reported that approximately 66 per cent of Taiwanese mothers in their study rarely or never read to their children, only reading one to two times a week at bedtime, and 56 per cent of mothers reported rarely or never reading to their children during the daytime. Taiwanese mothers had fairly low use of libraries and bookstores as literacy resources, with 51 per cent of mothers reporting that they rarely or never visited the library with their children, and 21 per cent of mothers reporting that they rarely or never visited a bookstore with their children. Therefore, despite being well educated mothers, they did not seem to value book reading.

In contrast to Taiwanese children, American children showed more signs of emergent literacy, and parents showed increased awareness of the importance of reading to their children at home (Wu & Honig, 2010). Maternal education in this study was only found to be associated with home literacy resources and the children's literacy behaviours. In this context, home literacy resources and frequency of storybook reading were found to be less prevalent in Taiwan than in the USA. This may be because more children's books are available in the USA for parents to borrow or buy from libraries or bookstores, which helps parents engage in more language and literacy promoting experiences with young children (Wu & Honig, 2010). This suggested that children who experience a supportive and quality learning environment at the age of fifteen months, as provided by their educated mothers, were more likely to continue such experiences through to the age of five, compared with children with a less supportive environment (Roberts et al., 2005; Rodriguez & Tamis-LeMonda, 2011). However, despite the importance of these findings, this study has not provided long-term assessment of children's reading level in relation to how their mothers' beliefs about reading and their educational levels and cultural practices affect their children's later reading skills. Rodriguez et al. (2011) concluded that providing children in pre-school age with learning experiences was helpful in building their competencies and assisting them to learn more complex aspects of emergent literacy.

Within Eastern cultures, mothers in countries such as KSA and Jordan have been blamed for their children's lower literacy and educational achievements (Al-Momani et al., 2010; Bader, 2005). In KSA, mothers have been expected to effectively develop literacy practices, including reading habits for their children, especially for those under six years old (Bader, 2005; Fayez, Sabah, & Abwudwan, 2011). This "mother blame" has emerged from cultural and traditional beliefs towards mothers as primary carers and educators. The cultural view of

mothers' responsibilities toward their children's education was discussed in depth in Chapter Two. Despite the importance of Bader's (2005) findings, his study has not specifically investigated the influence of a Saudi mother's education level on their children's literacy learning prior to school years.

Maternal education within diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds has been investigated by Quiroz and Dixon (2011), who analysed four case studies of mothers with different linguistic abilities: low English/low Spanish, high Spanish/low English, high English/low Spanish and high English/high Spanish mothers in USA. They found that mother-child communication, as observed in the discourse analysis from these case studies, can facilitate children's learning as it relates to the mother's role in assisting her child with learning early literacy skills. More specifically, Quiroz and Dixon (2011) found in the high English/high Spanish case that the quality of language interactions at home in Spanish also facilitated the English language literacy skills. While these results are important and included the triangulation of data, providing some validation to these patterns of association, one critique draws on the limited implications for the larger population in the USA (Quiroz & Dixon, 2011). Results provided by Roberts et al. (2005), Rodriguez et al. (2011), Quiroz and Dixon (2011) from the USA were significant in shedding light on children's diverse emergent literacy practices at home. Studies integrating other family members, such as fathers rather than just mothers, and studies targeting a larger population are needed to give a clearer picture about other aspects that contribute to young children's literacy practices.

It can be noted that previous studies evaluating maternal education level in relation to the development of children's early literacy observed inconsistent results about whether a maternal educator can be considered the most significant environmental factor or not (Al-Momani et al., 2010; Al-Qaryouti & Kilani, 2013; Bennett et al., 2002; Phillips & Lonigan, 2009; Weigel et al., 2005). In reviewing the literature, there is uncertainty about the association between mothers' level of education and the family SES in relation to the quality of the home literacy environment. Cultural factors such as "mother blame" may be responsible for the view of well-educated mothers as the most influential factor for providing a rich HLE (Al-Momani et al., 2010; Bader, 2002; Fayeze et al., 2011).

4.2.3 Fathers' role in their children's literacy

One of the key environmental factors associated with children's early literacy development is the role of the father. Fathers' contributions in their young children's early literacy activities are considered significant, necessary and interesting not just for their families, but also for fathers themselves (Ortiz, 2004). However, very little was found in the literature on the question of fathers' contributions in their young children's literacy learning. Fathers were seen as being less engaged than mothers in reading books for pleasure to their children (Burgess, 2011). On the other hand, some researchers agreed that fathers were more engaged in literacy with their children than mothers, as they recognised their children's literacy achievements and provided them with literacy opportunities in the home other than books (Bauman & Wasserman, 2010; Macleod, 2008; Morgan et al., 2009; Ortiz, 2004; Taylor, 2011). For example, Ortiz (2004) found that Latino fathers in the USA had an important role in their young children's education and they believed that they and their children's mothers should be involved in teaching their children early literacy, particularly reading and writing activities. Fathers reported that their involvement was due to several reasons, including bringing families together, facilitating fun, and negating the perceived influences of racial bias. Latino fathers were found to have different perspectives to each other on their contribution to their children's literacy activities. Some parents engaged with their children for fun, others saw this engagement as a necessary task, and the rest felt that this involvement was a challenge. Ortiz (2004) concluded that parental reading and writing activities at home serve a vital function, as they are mutually beneficial for a shared learning experience between parents and their children.

More broadly, Taylor (2011) gave a specific view of the father's role by focusing on the involvement of Latino fathers from low SES. This was done by exploring their contributions to their children's childcare routine and learning activities, not just their engagement in reading books to their children. Fathers reported that they were engaged with their children in daily activities, including watching educational TV, practicing words, singing songs, and talking about their children's activities in the High Scope centre. Fathers who reported such activities were domestic and bilingual (from English and Spanish backgrounds). In regards to reading activities, there were differences found among Latino fathers. According to Taylor (2011), there were noticeable differences in the type of information fathers provided their children when reading the storybooks. Some fathers described the story in great detail, while others were more likely to refer back to their children's real-world experiences. Another major finding was that

the frequency as well as the variety of activities and routines that the Latino fathers were found to be involved in with their children supported the notion of fathers as multifaceted. Although the results of this study advocate the father's role in enhancing their children's literacy skills, several questions remained unanswered, such as whether the father's book-sharing styles are complementary to mothers, and how parental narrative styles may combine to assist children's literacy skills (Taylor, 2011). Not surprisingly, Taylor (2011) found the majority of fathers (75 per cent) reported that mothers were also involved in book reading, and other family members, such as older siblings and extended family members, were engaged in reading to their children. This result strongly emphasised the notion that parents and other family members at home can influence children's literacy learning outcomes.

Researchers such as Bauman and Wasserman (2010), Macleod (2008), Morgan et al. (2009), and Taylor (2011) focused on investigating educators' stereotypes that fathers from low SES do not have the desire or willingness to involve themselves in their children's emergent literacy development. Bauman and Wasserman (2010) and Taylor (2011) investigated fathers of low SES and their children's literacy practices from the Head Start program in US centres. Bauman and Wasserman's (2010) study was produced from a series of pre-workshops, pre and post interviews with fathers who have a lack of resources at home required to foster their children's literacy development, or who may be hampered previously by poor experiences due to social barriers, such as seeking assistance or resources from their child's teacher. The most important and clinically relevant finding from Bauman and Wasserman's study was that fathers benefitted from these workshops as they explored their own issues with learning to read as well as recognising the importance of being engaged with their children in a variety of emergent literacy activities. Another interesting finding was that a father's involvement in reading with their children at preschool age was a key factor in their children's school success, and that this success tended to continue in their educational outcomes in the future. Most importantly, fathers from low SES showed willingness to develop the competence and confidence to engage with their children in literacy activities. Similar findings from the UK by Macleod (2008) reported that families from disadvantaged areas, in terms of access to economic and social resources, became more aware of how to support their children's literacy and language development. Parents, in particular fathers, acknowledged the benefits of the family literacy program as they gained a better understanding of the relationships between school and home. This understanding increased their self-confidence in providing more opportunities to their children to interact during shared literacy activities at home (Macleod, 2008). These results

contradict those obtained by Morgan et al. (2009) from the UK, where fathers from higher income brackets were more likely to be involved in their children's literacy activities than fathers from lower income families.

Differences between fathers from low and high SES found by Morgan et al. (2009) encompassed four key roles, including providing literacy opportunities, showing recognition of children's achievements, interacting with children around literacy, and being a model of literacy use for children. In all of these, Morgan et al. (2009) found that fathers tended to be less involved than mothers. Despite these findings, caution must be exercised in interpreting the findings from Morgan et al.'s study, as it relied heavily on mothers' reports of fathers' involvement. This suggests that findings of this study might have been different if fathers had been interviewed, as it is possible that fathers may underestimate their level of involvement in their children's literacy learning.

But as reported earlier by Macleod (2008), in relation to analysing fathers' participation from low SES levels in family programs in UK, fathers had been discontinuing their attendance at family literacy programs for several reasons. These included but were not limited to; 1) fathers perceived a threat to their masculine identities; 2) fathers felt threatened by what they called gendered tasks and a feminised environment; and 3) feeling unwelcomed by the women participants in the program (pp. 779-780). Based on these findings by Macleod (2008), family literacy programs still face some challenges and gender issues related to involving fathers within family literacy programs.

Similarly, studying fathers' involvement is challenging in some cultural contexts, such as KSA. As discussed in Chapter Two, education in KSA has certain characteristics due to its religion and culture – in particular, due to gender segregation, and the fact that all the early teaching workforce is female (Alameen, Male & Palaiologou, 2015). The study by Alameen et al. (2015), for instance, investigated the leadership roles and responsibilities in early childhood education in the KSA, which yielded significant results in relation to communicating with parents (particularly fathers). Fathers were encouraged to have full engagement with the staff, which can be considered unusual in the context of education of young children in KSA (Alameen et al., 2015). Interestingly, using technological channels of communication, such as websites and emails, was seen to be effective in bridging the gap between home and the kindergarten setting in the KSA context and as developing relationships with parents and the community (Alameen et al., 2015). Although this study is not literacy-based, it gives us a clear

insight into the complexity of communicating with fathers in KSA. However, there are still many unanswered questions about how ECTs usually communicate with fathers in KSA, and how the communication between the home and kindergarten settings benefit children's literacy learning, which calls for further investigation of the KSA context. It is evident that the research to date has addressed the role of mothers' involvement in their children's literacy in Western households, but few have targeted fathers' role, particularly in countries such as KSA.

4.2.4 Family's socioeconomic status (SES) levels

In the early years, the HLE is conceptualised as dependant upon a family's socioeconomic status (SES), which encompasses both parental education and income levels (Yeo et al., 2014). In the literature, there was a range of arguments regarding the impact of family SES levels on children's literacy practices in the home within different cultural contexts (Bialystok, 2002; Bialystok & Herman, 1999; Feng, Gai & Chen, 2014; Niklas & Schneider, 2013; Woodrow et al., 2014). Researchers such as Niklas and Schneider (2013) and Woodrow et al. (2014) have investigated early literacy practices within low-income families in different cultural contexts.

Reading and oral language are thought to be strongly associated with a child's SES background within the German context (Smidt et al., 2012; Niklas & Schneider, 2013). Smidt et al.'s study investigated children's reading and oral language learning at home and preschool setting. The nature of the HLE was seen as a significant predictor of spelling and reading in a German context as compared with an English context (Niklas & Schneider, 2013). For example, Smidt et al. (2012) found that children from higher SES have better opportunities to be involved in "oral language" activities. A possible explanation for this might be that attending preschool in urban areas increases the chance of those children from higher SES to be involved more in "oral language" activities compared with other peers. Similar findings by Korat and Shamir (2007) found that children from low SES in Israel, who tested lower than their middle SES peers on Phonological Awareness (PA), demonstrated a higher level of improvement compared to children from middle SES who start off with higher PA scores prior to the two reading activities. Learning new vocabulary as well as remembering it is related more to demanding cognitive skills than are sub-PA tasks, a process which was much easier for children from middle SES, who were familiar with these kinds of tasks, compared to low SES children, who were not (Korat & Shamir, 2007). Thus, Korat and Shamir stressed that an e-book, which

is considered as an authentic reading experience compared to other traditional drill approaches, may constitute a better source for assisting children's language development and their emergent literacy skills, such as story comprehension.

Another finding by Smidt et al. (2012) indicated that oral language was predominantly used as a part of literacy activities in the preschool year, while the use of print material was not observed regularly. Although this study revealed results of early childhood literacy practices in Germany, the information gathered was somewhat lacking in regards to the quality of print material used and the use of oral language particularly among children and families from middle and low SES. One unanticipated finding came from the group of children from families where the parents' mother tongue was not German. These pupils had higher child-staff ratio, and had a level of German language skill that was much higher than those peers with lower child-staff ratio (Smidt et al., 2012). This result may be explained by the fact that ECTs are aware of the additional resources for bilingual children to enhance their knowledge of the German language (Smidt et al., 2012). The most interesting finding was that there was a significant link between the frequency of literacy activities and child- and family-related characteristics, including geographic location and federal state affiliation (i.e. child-staff ratio). Niklas and Schneider (2013) argued that learning reading and spelling skills in German is much easier than in English, thus German kindergartners do not need to practice writing letters with their parents before entering primary school. Regarding potential differences in literacy practices, Niklas and Schneider indicated that there was no set path from children's oral language skills to code-related skills in a German context. In contrast, in the English context, results indicated that good vocabulary assists children's code-related acquisition skills (Niklas & Schneider, 2013). Niklas and Schneider (2013) indicated that parents may spend less time doing reading activities, visit libraries less frequently, and spend more time watching television at home. It is important to note that watching television, from a contemporary perspective, is considered an important source of multi-literacies. However, this depends on how children watch, the quality of the program they are watching, and how caregivers engage with children on the content of the shows watched. Niklas and Schneider (2013) stated that this finding illustrates that, despite parents' low income backgrounds, providing disadvantaged children with books and encouraging them to read, as well as providing trained kindergarten teachers, can compensate for the lower levels of HLEs among these families. HLEs prove to be very significant for children's early reading development, not just in an English context, but also in German households (Niklas & Schneider, 2013). This argument draws our attention to the

significant role of the preschool setting in assisting children's literacy and language acquisition, particularly for bilingual and disadvantaged children.

Along similar lines, Woodrow et al. (2014) conducted the Literacy Connections program with poor communities in Chile. They reported that families and educators who participated in this program and the implementation of the program strategies gained great benefit through being active partners in their children's literacy learning. Another positive outcome from this project was the changes observed in teaching pedagogies and practices. The main findings from this program were that families developed clear knowledge about how to have an effective role in their children's learning (Newman & Woodrow, 2015; Woodrow et al., 2014). From both studies by Niklas and Schneider (2013) and Woodrow et al. (2014), it is evident that despite varied cultural and low SES backgrounds, it is important that educators are aware of how to encourage families to become a significant influence on their children's literacy practices. However, it has been argued that some families who were unable to provide their children with rich, varied literacy resources could still be rich in language and interaction when parents actively supported their children's engagement in literacy practices at home (McLachlan et al., 2012). Some lower educated parents can be seen to be more motivated and active in providing their children with better literacy learning environments at home, whether in terms of providing a variety of resources or in terms of spending quality time with their children. Therefore, a family does not need to be monetarily wealthy or well educated to provide a rich literacy environment for their young children such that they are able to achieve their optimal literacy learning levels.

There are a variety of play-based literacy activities observed among low SES families, such as telling stories to their children, reading to them, encouraging their children to talk or sing, showing their children letters and print materials, visiting the library, inviting children to draw and scribble, and allowing children to play in the house (Wasik & Hindman, 2010). Although Wasik and Hindman's study (2010) used the self-administered Family Literacy Survey (FLS), which can assist educators and professionals to understand, in an in-depth way, how families engage in literacy activities and how educators can play a part in supporting families in literacy, it was difficult to determine the validity and reliability of the FLS beyond the Head Start families and children, and thus needs to be tested more widely.

Researchers such as Aram (2005), Korat and Shamir (2007), and Metsala (1996) have investigated the influence of SES levels on children's literacy learning among children from

low and middle SES. Other studies investigated how families' high SES predict children's literacy achievement compared to children from a low SES (Burgess et al., 2002; Phillips & Lonigan, 2009; Wasik & Hindman, 2010; Wood, 2002). Grieshaber, Shield, Luke and Macdonald (2011) argued, based on their study findings, that there were no relationships between a family's SES and the levels of print resources available at home, or how these resources were used, which contradicted the previous research by Korat and Shamir (2004) of the importance and influence of SES on children's literacy learning.

Wood (2002) examined the nature and frequency of parents' joint literacy activities with their preschoolers and how these activities can be related to children's success in early reading in a five year longitudinal study from the UK. In this study, 61 children participating with their families were divided into three groups: a *typical group*, where parents engaged and exposed their children to a variety of home language activities; a *singing group*, where parents sang everyday with their children, almost to the exclusion of all other language activity types; and a third, *no activity group*, where parents did almost no activities with their children. As Wood described, all SES groups were represented, particularly in the typical group, while the singing and no activity groups tended towards lower SES parents. Wood (2002) found that the best reading-related attainment was observed in the typical group, which was characterised by a high frequency of language activities and a varied profile of joint activities (Wood, 2002). Contrary to expectations, this study did not find a significant difference in language practices between all the SES groups (low, middle, and high), as presented in the typical group, who were found to engage in the most diverse range of activities with their children.

However, this data must be interpreted with caution because the sample size for the singing and no activity groups was small compared to the typical group (Wood, 2002). This difference in sample sizes raises crucial questions regarding whether the samples are actually representative of the various profiles of activities children do with their parents. An interesting conclusion can be drawn from this study related to the HLE, as Wood stated that home factors that contributed to the children's emergent literacy learning are many, difficult to isolate, and hard to quantify.

In contrast with previous studies that focused just on one level of family SES (e.g. Wood, 2002; Burgess et al., 2002; Aram, 2005; Korat et al., 2007), researchers such as Metsala (1996), Park (2008), Phillips and Lonigan (2009), and Weinberger (1996) investigated the differences between familial literacy practices and parental behaviours from different sociocultural groups

and different SES levels. For example, Phillips and Lonigan (2009) compared parental early literacy-focused behaviours, including shared reading and code-related activities (alphabet and print-focused activities and phonological awareness, such as rhyming games), among very large SES groups from a cluster-analytic perspective. In cluster 1 (middle SES), children were reported to have spent a moderate amount of time watching television and had moderate frequency in shared book reading activities compared to clusters 2 and 3 (highest and lowest SES). These results are consistent with data obtained by Metsala (1996), which suggested that families from middle SES preferred to provide their children with a range of opportunities for constructing their own understanding about literacy by making literacy materials available for their children's independent use and adopting a more playful approach when teaching their children literacy activities (compared to low SES families). Parents in cluster 2 (highest SES) had the highest frequency of reading to their children compared to other groups. In contrast to cluster 1, children in cluster 2 watched less television, and were found to have higher frequencies of playing alphabet games and teaching letters, similar to children in cluster 3.

Most importantly, Phillips and Lonigan (2009) found that children in cluster 3 (lowest SES), had fewer books and less instances of shared reading activities. However, they had the highest frequencies in alphabet-related activities compared to cluster 2 and 3. This matched previous findings from Park (2008), who discovered the number of books at home to be a strong predictor of children's literacy achievement at fourth grade in 25 countries, and Newman et al (2015), who found that low SES families teach their children in the way they know how. However, Park (2008) stated, "[i]t seems unclear to what extent the number of books at home measures the overall literacy environment at home or the economic power of a family to purchase books and other materials" (p. 503).

Similarly, Metsala (1996) found parents from low SES families had fewer print-related activities and described literacy activities they designed for the cultivation of literacy skills, such as using flashcards and reciting the alphabet. These findings contradict the previous findings by Grieshaber et al. (2011) and Weinberger (1996), who found there was no relationship between family SES, their levels of available print resources, and how these resources were used in the home. Grieshaber et al.'s (2011) finding showed that the level of use of these resources was not associated with the overall number of print resources owned. These findings confirmed those of Phillips and Lonigan (2009), who found that despite owning the fewest books, children in cluster 3 (lowest SES) reported moderately higher frequencies of children independently looking at books. Thus, future researchers should move beyond

considering the level of family SES as a certain measure of the level of literacy support offered in the home (Grieshaber et al., 2011). Park (2008) recommended that future studies look to explore further contextual elements, such as the educational system in the country, the political regimes, and the relationship between cultural resources provided at home and young children's literacy learning.

Despite the important results from Phillips and Lonigan's study, two questions remained unanswered: what specific mechanisms in the HLE affect the different patterns of children's literacy behaviour and achievement currently and in the future, and how do they do this? This supports the idea that the HLE is a complex and multifaceted environment (Burgess et al., 2002; Wood, 2002). Thus more extensive study is needed to increase our understanding about the relationship between early HLE experiences and the development of children's language and literacy development across all SES groups.

The relationship between a family's SES and mothers' educational levels and their emergent literacy practices was investigated among different sociocultural contexts (Aram, Korat, Saiegh-Haddad, Arafat, Khoury & Elhija, 2013; Hartas, 2011; Roberts et al., 2005). Roberts et al. (2005) measured four specific areas of home literacy practices including shared book reading frequency, maternal book reading strategies, child's enjoyment of reading, and maternal sensitivity. This study targeted African American mothers from low SES in the USA. Roberts et al. (2005) emphasised the significance of controlling for home background factors, including maternal education level, maternal reading skills, and the child's gender in the data analysis. Mothers reported on average that they engage in reading with their children more at three and four years old (around 4.7 times per day) than at two years or at entry to kindergarten (around 4.3 times per week, from Roberts et al., 2005). Maternal education was correlated only with the frequency of reading and maternal sensitivity (Roberts et al., 2005). This contradicts Aram et al.'s (2013) finding that children whose mothers are more highly educated and more skilled demonstrated more frequent literacy activities.

Arabic-speaking kindergarteners with lower SES in Israel were found to be starting school with lower literacy skills compared with their peers from higher SES (Aram et al., 2013). Higher SES mothers were found to have fewer intrusive behaviours compared with mothers from lower SES, in accordance with evidence from other cultures that middle SES or highly educated parents respect their children's autonomy. This supports the findings by Newman et al. (2015) that families from low SES backgrounds attempt to "teach literacy" in a

more directed way that is familiar to them. Similarly, Hartas (2011) found that mothers with higher levels of education in the UK were more likely to have a higher SES, while mothers with low SES and poor educational qualifications became more resourceful through accessing services and finding support to obtain more educational material to benefit their children's literacy learning. More specifically, mothers who had a higher score in maternal sensitivity and who used more book reading strategies had children who achieved higher receptive vocabulary scores on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (Robert et al., 2005). In this regard, the HLE predicated around 6 per cent of the variance related to children's phonological awareness and about 9 per cent of the variance related to their Concept About Print (CAP) beyond the levels of SES (Aram et al., 2013). This low literacy achievement among Arabic-speaking children in Israel draws attention to the significance of providing young children with language opportunities that inspire their curiosity through play as well as through shared reading activities with their families (Aram et al., 2013).

Aram et al. (2013) argued that despite the complexity of Arabic orthographies, Arabic-speaking mothers paid more attention to reading words, which affected their attitudes towards asking their children to improve their handwriting and correcting their letters when they did not perform correctly. As Aram et al. reported, the finding of this study supported the association between maternal writing guidance and the way children learn the written system. Thus, HLE was directly related to literacy skills learning at home (Aram et al., 2013). Although these findings were significant in shedding light on the influence of SES on mothers' level of education and on children's emergent literacy learning, these findings were based only on mothers' self-reports of the child's interest in literacy and may be affected by the social desirability of mothers who may provide answers that make them look good (Johnson & Fendrich, 2002). With respect to these findings, Yong's (2009) study from Australia suggested that using resources available in the home and the community beyond books can help low-SES families with their children's literacy learning without overwhelming costs.

Moreover, a group of researchers from Australia agreed the SES factors at individual and school level were found to be associated with preschool children's literacy quality of achievement in English-speaking countries (Buckingham et al., 2014; Buckingham, Wheldall, & Beaman-Wheldall, 2013). Buckingham et al. (2013) asserted that children from low SES families typically had lower reading abilities when they started school and were more likely to struggle as readers in the school. However, there are few variables found to be associated with children being poor readers, which include less time spent reading with family, less parental

encouragement of academic pursuits, less sleep, and higher rates of absenteeism (Buckingham et al., 2013). At school level, according to Buckingham et al. (2013), SES was a significant factor, related to school practices and cultural preferences of teachers more than school structure and resources. Buckingham et al. reported that large numbers of children who are from disadvantaged families struggle to be able to read in school even at a basic level.

Children's reading achievement was also found to be strongly associated with the average SES of the school they enrolled in (Buckingham et al., 2013). It is interesting to note that reading instruction in the first year of school plays a very significant part in literacy development in general, most specifically in bridging the literacy gap (Buckingham et al., 2013). In line with this finding, Al-Qaryouti and Kilani (2013) indicated that parents from middle SES were enthusiastic toward their children's emergent literacy more than parents from low SES and high SES. A relevant question to raise is whether a family's SES background is indeed the most influential factor that contributes to children's later literacy achievement. Buckingham et al. (2013) concluded that identifying the multiple, cumulative and interactive effects of factors related to low SES children, as well as understanding the process of children being poor in literacy at the early stage, is the key to minimising the impact on literacy skills.

Another difference found among low SES families was the frequency of the activities implemented with their children, such as reading, teaching about letters, and playing (Korat et al., 2007; Korat & Shamir, 2007; Phillips & Lonigan, 2009; Smidt, Lehl, Anders, Pohlmann-Rother & Kluczniok, 2012; Wasik & Hindman, 2010; Wood, 2002). In this context, Korat et al. (2007) from Israel reported that mothers from higher SES backgrounds were more likely to discuss written texts and to raise topics that go beyond the text when they read to their children. This result seems to be consistent with research regarding families from high SES backgrounds in the German context, which showed children from these families have better opportunities to be involved in oral language activities and displayed a more elaborate vocabulary as a result of their conversation with their teachers and peers (Smidt et al., 2012). In contrast to higher SES, Aram (2005) found that adult-child joint writing activities in low SES families at home and in a kindergarten setting in Israel were a good predictor of early literacy skills and achievement in the school period. Thus, these children had higher emergent literacy levels compared with peers with mothers from low SES backgrounds who did not partake in these activities. The main findings of this study highlighted the significance of promoting early literacy learning among young children in their kindergarten year, particularly children from low SES (Aram,

2005). Children were also found to differ widely in their early literacy learning and skills, and these differences were found to continue even after the child started school (Aram, 2005).

Despite the importance of Korat et al.'s (2007) result, this study examined children's emergent literacy levels at only one point in time, targeting a small number of people in one ethnic group, from Jewish Hebrew-speaking backgrounds, and so it cannot be generalised to the whole population. It was recommended by Korat et al. (2007) that using a longitudinal design would have been more suitable in examining children's writing and reading for a lengthy period of time before entering school, as well as including a focus on other literacy components, such as phonic and print awareness and visual literacy.

Based on the previous results, there is an ongoing debate about the influence of family SES on children's emergent literacy development, which has been shown to differ even within the same level of SES (Aram, 2005; Burgess, Hetch & Lonigan 2002; Grieshaber et al., 2011; Phillips & Lonigan, 2009; Wasik & Hindman, 2010; Wood, 2002). The next section moves beyond the role of mothers and fathers to consider others who may live in the home. Because of the relevance to KSA, the role of maids in particular will be an important focus. Maid-related variables will be discussed in the following section.

4.2.5 The role of foreign maids in children's literacy learning

Due to economic changes, many mothers in Arabian Gulf countries now seek jobs, and thus have delegated the care of their young children to maids during their working days, who are mostly foreign to KSA. Some of these maids speak English in addition to their first language, while others also speak Arabic alongside their native tongue. Accordingly, studies have found that foreign maids have an influence on children's acquisition of their first language (L1), second language (L2), and their emergent literacy learning (Al-Jarf, 2009; Al-Qaryouti & Kilani, 2013; Leung, 2012; Matary & Ali, 2013; Roumani, 2005).

Al-Jarf (2009) reported that the result of surveys conducted in KSA revealed that foreign maids have an influence over children's Arabic acquisition. She argued that although children who were cared for from birth by maids who did not speak fluent Arabic may have been negatively influenced in their linguistic development, that influence disappeared once the children attended kindergarten. From a similar cultural context, Roumani (2005) reported that many parents in Dubai expressed concern about the negative effect of their maids' presence on their young children's linguistic, emotional, and social development, as well as on their cultural

and religious beliefs. This supports previous findings in KSA by Alansari (1990), who found that maids have a negative influence on children's linguistic and emotional development based on the time children spend attached to those maids. However, the impact of maids on children's language skills depends on the amount of time the children spend with their maids at home, whether these maids are educated or not, and the language they speak natively (Al-Jarf, 2009; Roumani, 2005). Roumani (2005) indicated that it was challenging to access maids for research due to employer reluctance to grant maids privacy; therefore, maids were interviewed indirectly through their employers who agreed to carry out the interviews with their maids. This may affect the findings of this research.

Another concern regarding the negative influence of maids on children was raised by Al-Matary and Ali's (2013) research conducted in KSA. Although this study did not investigate the impact of maids on children's literacy, it explored KSA child-rearing practices, which illustrates children's attachment to maids in Saudi households. Foreign maids were found to have negative impacts on mother-child attachment in raising children (Matary & Ali, 2013). They found that a high proportion of babies (31.5 per cent) were entirely bottle-fed. According to Islamic law, a mother is required to breastfeed her baby for a minimum of 2 years. In fact, Matary and Ali (2013) acknowledged that maternal employment does not appear to be the cause of poor mother-child attachment, but rather an overdependence on foreign maids looking after children. They found that mothers were unwilling to acknowledge the potential for a negative impact of maids on the mother-child relationship, as the mothers refused to answer the related survey question (Matary & Ali, 2013). They argued that these maids who take care of babies were untrained as child-minders, which could have negative long-term consequences. Matary and Ali (2013) concluded that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has to consider employed mothers and allow them to work part time or flexible hours while receiving full time pay.

In contrast, current research by Leung (2012) conducted in Hong Kong asserted that most parents acknowledged the positive influence of the presence of a live-in English-speaking Filipino domestic helper, with their children experiencing an increased ability to understand a number of varying English language idioms, including American, British, and Hong Kong English, thus increasing the opportunities for their children to practise English as a second language. This differs from one household to another and from one cultural group to another. For example, an Omani study by Al-Qaryouti and Kilani (2013) reported that high SES families in Oman rely mostly on a maid to help mothers to foster their children's learning, while middle SES do not tend to have maids and are more enthusiastic towards their children's learning. It is

recommended by Leung (2012) that future research is needed to investigate the influence of foreign domestic helpers not just on children's listening abilities, but also on their reading and writing abilities.

The influence of maids on children's emergent literacy learning has not been investigated in KSA, as most of the previous research has focused on language in general or on children's linguistic, emotional, and social development, without exploring in depth the impact of maids on children's literacy practices at home. Recommendations made by Taylor (2011) agree with the previous one made by Roberts et al. (2005), Rodriguez et al. (2011), Quiroz and Dixon (2011), specifically in regard to the importance of further research needed to consider all aspects of the HLE to gain a better and more in-depth understanding of children's educational experiences. It is therefore relevant to this thesis to investigate HLE elements including the role of maids, which contribute to Saudi children's emergent literacy practices within the sociocultural context prior to school years.

4.3 Kindergarten Literacy Environment (KLE)

A large body of research from Australia (Yong, 2009), USA (Powell, Diamond, Bojczyk & Gerde, 2008), New Zealand (Foote, Smith & Ellis, 2004), Jordan (Al-Momani et al., 2010), Canada (Girard, Girolametto, Weitzman, & Greenberg, 2011; Lynch, 2009), Greece (Stellakis, 2012), India (Joshi & Taylor, 2005), and KSA (Gahwaji, 2011) has investigated ECTs' attitudes, beliefs, qualifications, and years of experience in enhancing young children's literacy development and learning. Little is known about the role of ECTs in promoting children's literacy learning in KSA and other Eastern countries, especially in prior-to-school contexts (Al-Momani et al., 2010). For instance, Alsharif (2007) contributes to the limited literature from within KSA that investigates the role of ECTs in the kindergarten environment. She found that ECTs carried out various activities such as story reading sessions, introducing new words, and familiarising the children with the shapes of Arabic words.

As discussed previously in this chapter, establishing good communication with parents is one of the most important roles for ECTs. However, in Eastern cultures, school directors, rather than individual teachers, are the main people responsible for establishing good relationships with parents. In Jordan, for instance, Ihmeideh and Oliemat (2015) investigated family involvement in the kindergarten setting from ECTs and directors' perspectives in five domains, including planning, implementation, evaluation, children's extracurricular activities, and

communication with kindergartens. Interestingly, ECTs and directors perceived family involvement in children's extracurricular activities and communication with kindergarten domains as effective; however, they found family involvement in planning, implementation, and evaluation domains ineffective. Surprisingly, most parents' visits were made in the directors' office, where directors meet and discuss with families the issues relating to their involvement in the centres. In order to get a clear and full picture of a HLE, it is necessary to discuss in depth the factors, including ECTs' literacy practices, pedagogies, experiences, and beliefs, that influence children's literacy learning, as this may be related to the HLE in some ways.

4.3.1 ECTs' literacy practices

ECTs' attitudes differ widely regarding how and when they start teaching young children literacy skills. Although literacy views have changed, some ECTs were still not sure where literacy should be integrated and were found to have different practices in teaching literacy for kindergarten children, which were influenced by their own beliefs of what should be taught. Some studies have investigated ECT roles exclusively in developing children's learning of alphabetic knowledge and letter name activities in preschool classrooms (Girard et al., 2011; Guo, Justice, Kaderavek & McGinty, 2012; Sylvester & Kragler, 2012). Researchers such as Gahwaji (2011), Jones Díaz et al. (2000), and Lee and Ginsburg (2007) focused on the contemporary perspective toward teaching literacy as a social practice that incorporates more interactive teaching approaches. In relation to reading activities, literacy-rich contexts in addition to storybook reading may be effective for developing children's emergent literacy skills in early childhood classrooms (Girard et al., 2011). The result of Girard et al.'s (2011) study indicated that ECTs were frequently engaged with children in conversation during storybook reading at all levels of literal as well as decontextualized talk. These results matched those observed in an earlier study from New Zealand by Foote et al. (2004), who found that ECTs offered literacy experiences for children by involving them in telling their own stories, listening to oral language, playing with rhymes, and acting out characters in the story, while the children engaged in discussions and conversation (Foote et al., 2004).

ECTs' perceptions of their own practices were positively and significantly associated with their practices in three main areas, including the use of letter names, sounds, and predictions (Girard et al., 2011). This finding further supported the ideas of Foote et al. (2004), who found

that ECTs' memories of their own formal literacy learning when they were children has shaped their beliefs as well as influenced their teaching pedagogies. However, this data must be interpreted with caution because there was a lack of consistency between what the teachers said they believed about literacy and what happened in the teachers' pedagogical practices in the four child care centres studied: thus, this needs to be investigated further (Foote et al., 2004). Despite these promising results, questions remain regarding the domain-specific knowledge that ECTs possessed about emergent literacy, including the use of new technologies as tools to support existing literacy provision.

In the USA, researchers agreed that many ECTs' interactive activities were teacher-directed, often involving paper and pencil tasks, while other teachers incorporated activities that were narrowly focused on literacy skills and did not focus on fundamental concepts of literacy and language development (Clark & Kragler, 2005; Sylvester & Kragler, 2012). Likewise, Al-Momani et al. (2010) argued that although Jordanian parents agreed their children should be taught literacy through small group activities, they attributed a higher value to the use of traditional direct instruction methods, such as drills, homework, worksheets, and tests. Furthermore, a year-long case study by Sylvester and Kragler (2012) of three teachers and 13 children in a voluntary pre-kindergarten (VPK) classroom in the USA examined the influence of instructional practices on children achievement in the VPK class. Results from this study indicated that there were limited rich child-teacher interactions that extended children's literacy further and facilitated language development (Sylvester & Kragler, 2012). According to Sylvester and Kragler's (2012) study results, there was one area of development frequently observed in children's literacy development, which was alphabet knowledge. They stated that it is important to assess each child's initial sound and letter-naming fluency, as well as ECTs' instructional readiness when they enter the kindergarten centre.

The ECTs, in addition, differed in their knowledge and views about how to assist young children with their literacy development (Powell et al., 2008). These differences were based on ECTs' perspectives toward the mandated curriculum and a child's needs (Clark & Kragler, 2005; Gahwaji, 2011; Powell et al., 2008; Sylvester & Kragler, 2012). Powell et al. (2008), for example, investigated ECTs' conceptions of early literacy in Head Start centres. Some teachers were more likely than others to value children's engagement in hands-on activities when learning literacy and interacting with other children in the classroom (Powell et al., 2008). The results indicated that although teachers in these centres recognised the significance of achieving emergent literacy goals, they did not show a common understanding of early literacy (Powell et

al., 2008). This finding matched Clark and Kragler's (2005) previous findings, which indicated that teachers were not actively involved in promoting children's literacy concepts in the classroom environment. This was because of mandated practices have little space for negotiation of the curriculum, nor do they take into account language practices for diverse children (Clark & Kragler, 2005). The most interesting finding stated that although some children came from homes where Spanish was the first language, none of the teachers were bilingual, and none of the classrooms contained Spanish-language books. The most important and clinically relevant finding was that preschool children had limited language gains due to the mandated curriculum which did not meet children's diverse educational needs (Sylvester & Kragler, 2012). In conclusion, Sylvester and Kragler (2012) stated that the curriculum should be formed to meet children's various needs. These findings raise intriguing questions regarding the nature and extent of the critical need for high quality teacher-children interactions, which is affected by the district-mandated curriculum (Sylvester & Kragler, 2012).

Some ECTs believed in the effectiveness of using technology as a valuable means of social interaction while teaching literacy (Flewill, Messer & Kucirkova, 2015; Gahwaji, 2011; Jones Díaz et al., 2000; Lee & Ginsburg, 2007). Jones Díaz et al. found, however, that ECTs' perspectives toward literacy were often narrow, focusing on book-based literacy in English rather than including technology and media literacies. Many ECTs believed that the use of television and video is detrimental to young children's literacy development at home (Jones Díaz et al., 2000). However, the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia states that "[c]hildren benefit from opportunities to explore their world using technologies and to develop confidence in using digital media" (DEEWR, 2009, p. 38).

In a case study from KSA by Gahwaji (2011), conducted in private kindergarten centres in Jeddah using observations, questionnaires, and children's tests, it was found that using interactive teaching programs via Information and Computer Technology (ICT) has a positive influence on increasing children's oral language, word acquisition, and written words. Some of the issues emerging from Gahwaji's study related specifically to modifications to the curriculum to meet the technological changes in preschool centres in KSA. The importance of supporting ECTs to try different ICT resources in teaching literacy was highlighted. Caution is required in this aim, however, as teachers need to clearly understand the literacies they aim to develop. The result of this study indicated that using interactive teaching programs are expensive in terms of the cost of hardware (e.g. computers and whiteboards) and require staff to be trained in using such technology. These results are consistent with those of McVee, Bailey

and Shanahan (2008) from USA, Dong (2014) from China, and Flewill et al. (2015) from the UK, where it is agreed that ECTs are not only required to provide and select appropriate ICT resources (devices and software), but also must put in a great deal of thought to develop a local curriculum and pedagogy, and be trained well before attempting to integrate these resources in early childhood classrooms. Despite these promising results, there are still many unanswered questions about the associations between home literacy practices and children's literacy outcomes in preschool and teaching pedagogies in both settings. McVee et al. (2008) added that teachers are required to foster a learning environment where children can share exploration and problem solving and explore literacy and technology as a transactional process. Despite the significant findings by Gahwaji (2011), with a small sample size limited to a private centre in KSA, which may be not the same case as with a public centre, these findings cannot be generalised to other centres.

Another excellent example of integrating technology in early childhood classrooms comes from Felwill et al. (2015) in the UK. To understand children's literacy interactions in a social context, such as using iPads during classroom literacy activities, sociocultural theory was applied. Significantly, findings from this study indicated that incorporating touch-screen devices in the repertoire of classroom-based activities provides rich opportunities for education in the early childhood field. Children in this study were shown to be motivated, and this could be harnessed to enable more autonomous forms of literacy learning with sustained concentration and opportunities for communication and creative endeavours across different expressive media and modes. In this study, using iPads in the early childhood classrooms enabled children and ECTs to have enjoyable and flexible episodes that enhanced literacy learning outcomes (Felwill et al., 2015). These results further support the ideas of Dezuanni et al. (2015), which suggested iPads were mobilised by the children not only as a screen to view film and television content or gaming devices, but as multimodal production tools that enabled the development of children's literacy and creativity.

Literature concerning teachers' beliefs indicated that there is a strong relationship between teachers' beliefs about the appropriateness of teaching early literacy and mathematics and the SES backgrounds of children (Lee & Ginsburg, 2007). They compared 60 teachers' beliefs toward teaching early literacy and mathematics among preschool children from different SES in New York City. In regards to subjects, ECTs tended to put more emphasis on following their children's interests in literacy-rich environments that promote positive attitudes to literacy

as well as social competence. In mathematics, ECTs tended to integrate mathematics in everyday experiences in the classroom (Lee & Ginsburg, 2007).

Another important finding reported that ECTs of children from low SES held some concerns about their children's lack of readiness to learn literacy in particular, and focused on preparing young children for the kindergarten year as well as assisting with the children's computer skills (Lee & Ginsburg, 2007). These findings have important implications for ECTs of children from low SES, as they may require more information and assistance in order to create a literacy-enriched environment. They must receive information on literacy development and on appropriate assessment measures as well as on developmentally appropriate means to engage with children through literacy activities (Lee & Ginsburg, 2007). A possible explanation for these results might be the differences of teaching experiences, which might affect beliefs, as well as the variation in training on how to teach the two subjects. Lee and Ginsburg (2007) concluded that if preschool teachers are involved in continuing professional development as well as expanding their knowledge and experiences about teaching young children's literacy, their beliefs and teaching pedagogy may improve, which would lead to greater success in literacy education. This result is consistent with data obtained in Clark and Kragler's (2005) study, which suggested that it is not enough that ECTs make changes in their classroom environment, but that they also need to take the time to change their own practices and be willing to be involved in new approaches that incorporate more literacy materials and activities. However, with a small sample size, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be large enough to be replicated to the whole population in the USA or another different cultural context. Despite these promising results, questions remain regarding low SES children's parental literacy practices at home. In general, therefore, it seems that the SES factor does influence teachers' beliefs and pedagogy in teaching literacy.

Moreover, parents' expectations for teachers to prepare young children academically for schoolwork places pressure on ECTs to teach children how to read and write (Al-Momani et al., 2010; Al-Qaryouti & Kilani, 2013; Sverdlov et al., 2014). In particular, the pressure is perceived as coming from first grade primary school teachers, who believed that ECTs are responsible for developing children's literacy skills prior to the start of the "proper" schooling years (Goldstein, 2007). It should be noted that cultural expectations of parents vary in Western and Eastern countries, although parents universally consider writing and reading skills as important skills to develop (Al-Momani et al., 2010; Joshi & Taylor, 2005).

As hypothesised by Sverdlov et al. (2014), ECTs expressed their beliefs that both parents and the educational system view the promotion of emergent writing, reading, and alphabetic skills to be the highest priorities for kindergarten education, as these competencies are associated with school readiness. These results supported previous research into this area, which links the way ECTs incorporate literacy materials in the classroom, particularly writing materials, and children's real progress in literacy development (Clark & Kragler, 2005). It has been suggested that the ECT's role in including more writing materials and increasing children's opportunities to write through writing activities have an influence on children's awareness of how language works. In particular, this assisted in focusing children's attention onto particular aspects of print and oral language through activities centred on understanding what writing looks like, practicing writing their names, and providing brief descriptions of their pictures (Clark & Kragler, 2005; Girard et al., 2011). These findings are in line with those of Xue & Meisels (2004), who stated that ECTs prioritise the needs of advancing their children's phonological awareness in conjunction with meaningful alphabetic skills, such as letter-knowledge, emergent writing and reading, and comprehension instructions, all of which are linked to first grade formal reading instruction. Drawing on the findings of Sverdlov et al. (2014), the major limitation was reliance on ECTs self-reporting of their literacy practices, which calls for future research to conduct empirical investigations of teachers' literacy practices through implementing class observations.

Overall, ECTs face many challenges related to parents' expectations and demands from primary teachers for children's literacy development and learning skills prior to school (Al-Momani et al., 2010; Al-Qaryouti & Kilani, 2013; Goldstein, 2007). ECTs literacy activities were limited and they generally teach only within the mandated curriculum (Sylvester & Kragler, 2012). It can be concluded that ECTs' attitudes toward providing children with a rich literacy learning environment and rich interactive literacy activities are very significant for extending children's emergent literacy skills.

4.3.2 ECTs' teaching qualifications

Some research has emphasised the importance of ECTs being experienced and having higher qualifications in order to foster young children's emergent literacy learning (Joshi & Taylor, 2005; Powell et al., 2008). Previous research from India by Joshi and Taylor (2005) has studied the impact of ECTs' experience and training on their relationships with parents and

children's learning. They found that ECTs who were satisfied with their training felt more confident in teaching children, as well as establishing and maintaining good relationships with parents (Joshi & Taylor, 2005). In contrast, Powell et al. (2008) demonstrates that the number of years of teaching experience held by ECTs in Head Start centres was more significant in terms of knowledge about early literacy than professional preparation. Accordingly, some parents felt that more experienced and trained teachers do not treat them equally, as those teachers view themselves as more knowledgeable than parents, which might affect the communication process between them (Joshi & Taylor, 2005).

Prior studies have noted that there is a positive relationship between ECTs' training and qualifications and their value of family involvement. For instance, Ihmeideh and Oliemat (2015) found there were differences between ECTs due to type of kindergarten (private or public), area of certificate, and training programmes. It is interesting to note that ECTs value the effectiveness of family involvement as low, while directors viewed this as low to moderate. However, it is unclear whether the directors have given opinions based on professional or marketing perspectives. A possible explanation for this might be that most kindergartens in Jordan are run by the private sector, which aims to maximise profits. In regards to public centres, ECTs are more likely to attend training courses relating to family involvement programs, run by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Jordan, which aim to increase teachers' awareness of the importance of family involvement in kindergarten educational programmes (Ihmeideh & Oliemat, 2015). However, the sample in this study was limited to two regions (Amman and Zarqa); thus, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be replicated in other contexts. Further research should be undertaken to investigate family's perceptions of being effectively involved in kindergarten programmes in term of planning, evaluating, and decision-making.

In addition, an Australian study by Yong (2009) emphasised the importance of the qualifications of the teacher in teaching and evaluating children's literacy learning. Perlman and Fletcher (2008) argued that teachers' experiences, education, and professional development are significant only for certain types of literacy instruction. Yong (2009) found that some teachers often ignore cultural and family experience, or they underestimate the knowledge that the children possess and how this influences the children's lives. This is because these teachers had different educational qualifications: only one teacher had a Bachelor of Education, while the others had a Diploma in Teaching, which affects the accuracy of evaluation of the children's knowledge. Al-Momani et al. (2010) argued that teachers paid little attention to the value of the

home literacy environment, although parents acknowledged the importance of the home literacy environment in assisting their children's emergent literacy.

Sharing information, knowledge, and insight about children's learning can facilitate efforts in enhancing children's development in general as well as their literacy learning (Joshi & Taylor, 2005). This result highlighted the importance of collaboration between parents and teachers in order to foster children's literacy learning. They also asserted that encouraging parents to reflect on what they do with their children at home is a very significant step in understanding family literacy at home, which provides a continuity of literacy learning between both environments (Hannon & Nutbrown, 2006). Parents expressed their appreciation of receiving written communication materials, yet they also expressed common concerns about having so much to juggle at pick up time that children's papers were often misplaced before even being read (McGrath, 2003; Reedy, 2007). Teachers also expressed their perspective towards parents, believing that parents did not read the individual written daily notes send by teachers (McGrath, 2003).

The quality of education provided as related to ECTs' educational levels was investigated in Greek preschool programmes (Rentzou, 2012). Quality can be defined as dynamic and interactional characteristics that can be evaluated through observing the setting across different days (Rentzou, 2012). Findings showed that ECTs with lower educational levels assigned higher scores related to the quality of care and education, and this may refer to those teachers who try to cover possible inadequacies by giving higher than actual scores (Rentzou, 2012). Another finding indicated that ECTs with fewer years of experience assign higher scores. ECTs are aware of the real levels of the quality of care and education provided by them; however, emotional conflicts may not lead them to accept the fact that they provide a low quality of education and care (Rentzou, 2012). It was reported that the ECTs had negative attitudes toward assessment of their teaching outcomes, were unwilling to admit that they provide poor education or care, and were ignorant of which elements need to be achieved in order to provide quality outcomes (Rentzou, 2012). Rentzou (2012) recommended that it is important for more serious steps to be considered in order to improve quality of education and care, as well as to empower directors in evaluating the role of ECTs.

4.3.3 ECTs' beliefs about teaching literacy

ECTs' beliefs about children's literacy learning is another concern, sometimes creating conflict with parental beliefs about what children need to learn and in what ways. Sverdlov, Aram and Levin's (2014) research was conducted in Israel after six years with a national early literacy curriculum. They explored ECTs' beliefs and practices about emergent literacy in the kindergarten and their perceptions about children's parents and educational system expectations (Sverdlov et al., 2014). As a result of the adoption of the new curriculum, ECTs' practices changed from the emphasis on the child's whole development to a commitment to focusing more on formal academic instruction (Sverdlov et al., 2014). According to Sverdlov et al., the most significant change was in the frequency of activities that aim to foster children's emergent writing-reading as well as alphabetic skills. ECTs reported that they take parents' expectations and beliefs into account and attempt to reassure parents that they are fostering their children's oral language as well as communication skills, while at the same time developing children's alphabetical skills (Sverdlov et al., 2014). These findings may be somewhat limited by ECTs' self-reports regarding their literacy practices; therefore, an investigation of ECT's beliefs and practices using classroom observations is needed.

Some ECTs believed that children of a preschool age could learn literacy better through play (Morrow & Rand, 1991; Saracho, 2002). In the USA, Saracho (2002) investigated the ECT's role in enhancing young children's literacy learning through observing and videotaping children's literacy practices during their playtime. According to Saracho (2002), ECTs described their roles during literacy-related play activities, which included acting as discussion leaders, examiners, storytellers, informers, instructional guides, decision makers, and learning centre monitors. Saracho (2002) found that play significantly helps teachers to develop children's understanding and skills in regards to emergent literacy. This can be achieved in spontaneous play, where children have countless opportunities to engage in practicing reading, writing, listening, and speaking. This supports previous claims made by Morrow and Rand (1991) that preschool children are found to be more engaged in literacy during free play periods when given literacy materials prepared by teachers and providing these children with the teacher's guidance in regards to how to use these resources.

On the other hand, other teachers believed that they play an important direct role in developing children's writing and reading skills before formal schooling (Ure & Raban, 2001). The findings by Ure and Raban (2001) revealed that preschool teachers in Australia believed

that young children were not ready for literacy, and those children would be explicitly taught to write and read once they start school. This belief was that those children lacked the developmental readiness to learn reading or writing, combined with the fact that they did not have many opportunities to engage in literacy-based experiences at the kindergarten centres (Ure & Raban, 2001). ECTs believed that they had limited knowledge and training information in terms of literacy development and what should be taught (Lynch, 2009; Ure & Raban, 2001). Interestingly, those teachers seemed to lack knowledge of the distinction between print literacy as learning to read and write, and print literacy as social practice (Ure & Raban, 2001). Lynch's (2009) research from Canada indicated that teachers believed the approach towards teaching young children to read and write has changed from a stronger focus on viewing literacy as a cognitive practice to a more recent emphasis on viewing literacy as a social practice. Those teachers expressed their concern about parents pushing their young children to learn to read and write too early (Ure & Raban, 2001). They also believed that those children who had an interest in literacy, or who had shown ability in writing and reading in preschool, would have these abilities fostered as there was continuous support for this in the home environment (Ure & Raban, 2001). This emphasises the importance of home literacy experiences in facilitating young children's literacy development and learning apart from rich literacy experiences in kindergarten. Although they were aware of the view of literacy as social practice, in this study, many ECTs expressed the opinion that they did not believe in the importance of play, specifically dramatic and imaginative play, in teaching children writing and reading. ECTs' beliefs were focused exclusively on the importance of children recognising their own names and writing them by the end of the preschool year (Lynch, 2009; Ure & Raban, 2001).

Thus, ECTs' own beliefs influence the way they value and understand how to teach literacy. Jones Díaz et al. (2000) found that ECTs in many settings in NSW made their own assumptions regarding children's understanding of literacy, which were influenced by their own deficit view of literacy, instead of learning from parents in relation to home literacy experiences. According to Jones Díaz et al. (2000), ECTs should go beyond the traditional models of emergent literacy and take into account multiple literacies that children are exposed to in their daily life experiences.

However, ECTs in Greece, according to Stellakis (2012), demonstrated solid knowledge about the concept of literacy, which has to do with communication; however, they failed to connect literacy to written language. This supported Lynch's (2009) finding that little is known about preschool teachers' beliefs about teaching young children literacy, particularly print

literacy. Final findings indicated that ECTs viewed their role in a very traditional way, related to teaching letters as an isolated skill, and seemed to entirely lack knowledge about their role as mediators (Stellakis, 2012). ECTs were also found to have a knowledge of grammar, function, purpose, and structure, but lacked knowledge about speech and writing (Stellakis, 2012). Most importantly, ECTs did not recognise their vital role in facilitating literacy learning through mediation (Stellakis, 2012). Therefore, ECTs' lack of recent knowledge related to early literacy development demonstrated the urgent need for development of specialised educational programmes for pre-service kindergarten teachers (Stellakis, 2012).

4.4 Summary of the Key Message from the Existing Literature

In the area of Early Childhood Education research, there is a great debate in regards to the factors that influence young children's literacy learning in the HLE and KLE. This debate poses different sets of unanswered questions in the literature which call for further investigations, particularly concerning the multifaceted and complex nature of HLE factors in relation to young children's literacy learning (Burgess et al., 2002; Quiroz & Dixon, 2011; Roberts et al., 2005; Rodriguez et al., 2011; Taylor, 2011). Some of this may be specific to debates related to parental education in Western and Eastern research, which suggested that the more parents were educated, the more attention and assistance children were likely to gain to develop their early literacy skills (Al-Qaryouti & Kilani, 2013, Bennett et al., 2002; Bingham 2007, Hill, 2004; Korat et al., 2007; Korat, 2009; Wood, 2002; & Yeo et al., 2014). However, other researchers such as Hume et al. (2012), Park (2008), and Wasik and Hindman (2010) found there is no direct impact of parental education on children's literacy learning. Very little has been said in the literature about parents' educational level in relation to young children's education in KSA, which is a new area of investigation for future researchers. There were also only a few studies that have targeted fathers' involvement in their young children's literacy practices at home (Burgess, 2011; Morgan et al., 2009; Ortiz, 2004; Taylor, 2011).

Environmental factors, such as a family's SES and the lack in lower SES families of parents valuing their engagement with their children's literacy learning, have very significant influences in terms of literacy resources (Al-Qaryouti & Kilani, 2013; Burgess et al., 2002; Korat & Shamir, 2007; Phillips & Lonigan, 2009; Smidt et al., 2012; Wasik & Hindman, 2010; Wood, 2002). Despite these results confirming the influence of SES on children's literacy progress prior to school, Weinberger et al. (1996) and Grieshaber et al. (2011) argued that SES

has no influence on children's literacy learning. They suggested that there are poor children with fewer resources, who still use these resources regularly and accomplish later school outcomes. The correlation between SES and children's literacy learning was not explored in relation to Saudi's children's emergent literacy learning, and this needs to be explored further. Foreign maids in some countries, such as KSA, Oman, United Arab Emirates, and Hong Kong, have differing influences in child rearing and education (Al-Jarf, 2009; Al-Qaryouti & Kilani, 2013; Leung, 2012; Matary & Ali, 2013; Roumani, 2005). The influence of maids on young children's emergent literacy in Saudi households is a new subject for investigation in the area of early childhood research. Research in this area may give a clearer understanding of how maids contribute to the children's literacy practices at homes.

ECTs' roles, beliefs, and practices in relation to literacy revealed the need for high quality teacher-child interaction, rather than focusing on meeting the requirements of the mandated curriculum (Sylvester & Kragler, 2012). Cultural factors influence ECTs (Al-Momani et al., 2010; Ihmeideh, Khasawneh, Mahfouz & Khawalden, 2008). Within Eastern culture, gender segregation laws have affected the way teachers communicate with fathers, resulting in directors being the main source of communication (Alameen et al., 2015). However, since the early childhood workforce (directors and ECTs) are largely female (Alameen et al., 2015; Ihmeideh & Oliemat, 2015), this raises serious concerns regarding ECTs not being allow to communicate with fathers, calling for further research to investigate the ambiguity around communication in relation to children's literacy learning. Questions are also raised about how much ECTs value the home literacy environment as part of their consideration in developing literacy (Al-Momani et al., 2010). However, this might be different in a Saudi context, which needs to be investigated further. Little is known about the role of ECTs in promoting children's literacy learning in KSA and other Eastern countries, especially in prior-to-school contexts (Al-Momani et al., 2010; Alsharif, 2007). Some Eastern researchers such as Al-Momani et al. (2010), Al-Qaryouti and Kilani (2013), and Ihmeideh et al. (2008) called for more attention on the partnership between the ECT and children's parents, seeking more contributions and collaborations in order to enhance children emergent literacy, bridging the gap between the home and kindergarten. More specifically, ECTs' views about the importance of the HLE need to be explored further: in particular, in KSA.

Overall, after reviewing the main gaps identified in the literature related to HLE and KLE, the current research aims to address these gaps within the social and cultural context of the KSA using a sociocultural lens as a framework for investigation. To overcome the barrier of

reaching fathers in the KSA in both environments (HLE and KLE), this study adopts the Mixed Methods Explanatory Sequential design as the most appropriate method of investigation. This respects the nature of gender segregation laws in the country. Figure 4.1 conceptualises the way that the gap has been identified from the literature. More details relate to the research design and data collection for this study can be found in the next chapter.

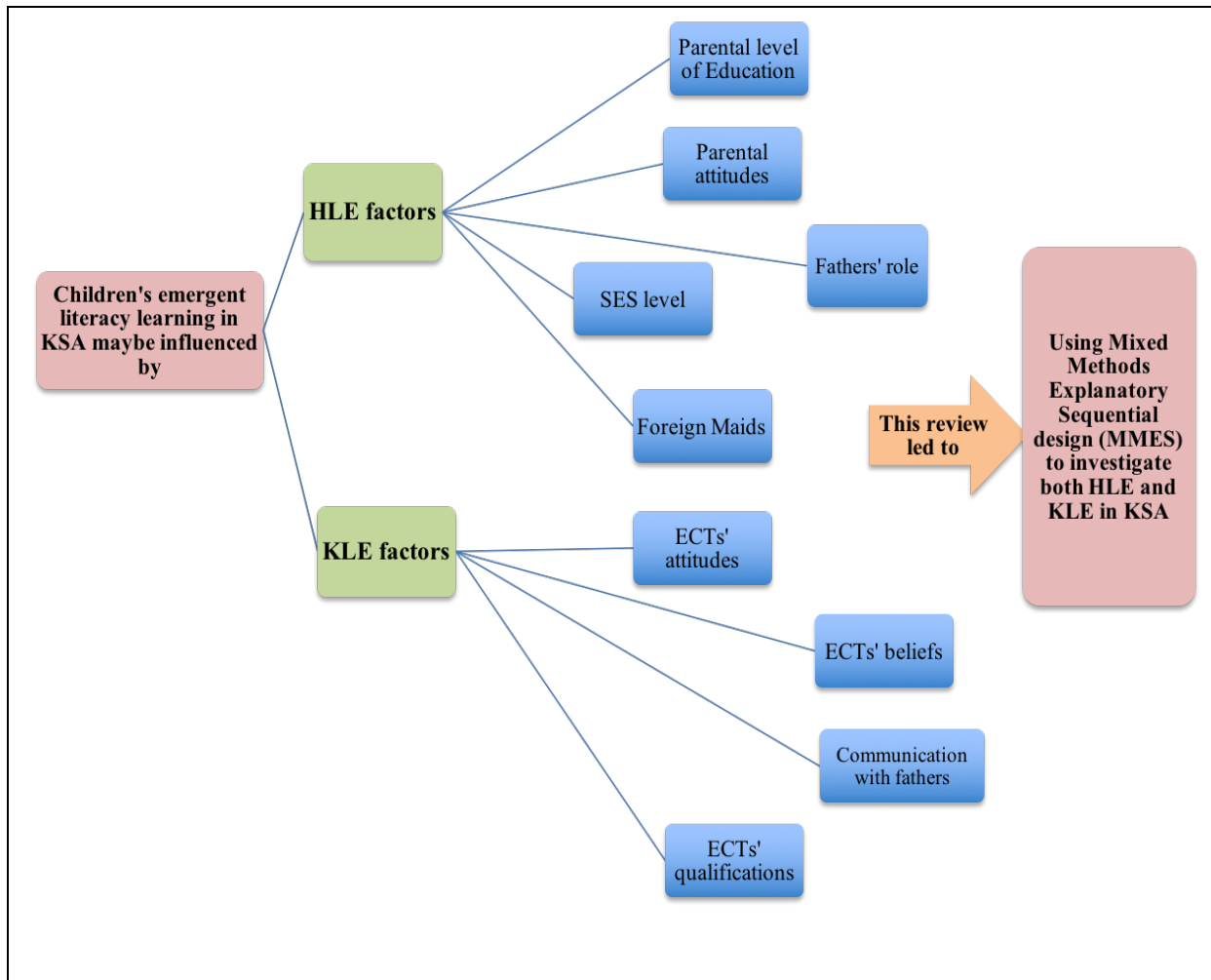


Figure 4.1. Framework for the research design drawn from the literature review

Chapter Five – Applying Mixed Methods as a Line of Inquiry in the KSA

Context

“Although culture is difficult to study by quantitative methods, future research on culture and literacy could productively bridge the qualitative/quantitative divide, and more research is needed using quantitative or mixed methods to investigate the links between literacy learning and culture” (Kamil, Pearson, Moje, & Afflerbach, 2011, p. 531).

5.1 Introduction

This study has drawn on a Vygotskyian sociocultural theory of learning, in which social interaction plays a significant and core role in children’s acquisition of knowledge and in learning (Wertsch & Sohmer, 1995). Sociocultural theorists believe that by communicating with more capable and knowledgeable people, individuals are able to build upon their own understanding and knowledge, and thus “leapfrog” developmentally in higher stages than would be likely without such communication (Baniabdelrahman, 2013). This study has adopted a Mixed Methods Explanatory Sequential Design (MMESD) in consideration of the historical sociocultural complexity of KSA, which is reflected in the home and kindergarten environments and the ways that children’s literacy is formed and developed. The research was designed in two phases, quantitative (questionnaire phase) and qualitative (case studies phase), described in detail in this chapter. The nature of KSA’s cultural characteristics required that the research be undertaken in two phases using different methods that respect the participants’ culture, because gender segregation in Islam has influenced the ways females and males interact. This includes researcher-participant relationships.

Both phases of the MMESD have been outlined in detail in this chapter. This chapter begins by describing the methodology and research design, the research paradigm, research questions and design, and the justifications for selecting this design. Explanations of the sampling, the criteria of set selection, access to the research site, and pilot study methods are provided. Descriptions of the research methods conducted in each phase, incorporating quantitative and qualitative methods, are included. The data analysis techniques used in order to answer the research questions are also described in this chapter. This chapter concludes with a discussion of research trustworthiness, internal and external validities, and ethical considerations. Limitations of using the methodology in this study have been outlined in detail.

5.2 Research Paradigm

This study adopted a pragmatic paradigm. Both positivist and interpretive paradigms were used to answer the research questions posed (Creswell, 2012). The positivist paradigm is based on truth, rigid rules of logic and measurement, prediction, and principle (Cole, 2006; Halcomb & Andrew, 2005; Weaver & Olson, 2006). An interpretive paradigm is based on the view that there are many truths and multiple realities (Weaver & Olson, 2006). A pragmatic paradigm is a useful approach to investigation as it gives the researcher a suggestion of what works and allows him/her to answer the research questions through a combination of methods (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Creswell, 2012). This enhances the quality of research. Punch (2009) stated that, “pragmatism is not the only philosophy or paradigm associated with mixed methods research, but it is the main one” (p. 291). Mixed methods research is “research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or programme of inquiry” (Punch, 2009, p. 298).

The advocates of mixed methods research confirm it as a significant approach that is driven by pragmatism, yielding real answers to real questions, useful in the real world, and which avoids mistaken allegiance to either quantitative or qualitative approaches on their own. It also enables rich data to be gathered which affords the triangulation advocated for in research for many years, respecting the mixed, messy real world, and thus increasing validity and reliability: in short, it “delivers” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 26). The purpose of applying mixed methods research, as clarified by Punch, (2009) is that, as researchers, we can use the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research when collecting the data to compare, validate, and corroborate results. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2006) argued that becoming a pragmatic researcher yields a myriad of advantages for individuals, which enables other researchers to become more flexible in their investigative strategies. Pragmatic researchers, in addition, have more opportunities than other researchers to combine the different levels of research issues, including macro and micro issues, and to combine empirical precision with descriptive precision (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006).

Pragmatic research also has some weaknesses. A pragmatic researcher has to have expansive knowledge about multiple approaches and methods of data collection, and know how to mix them appropriately (Migiro & Magangi, 2011). According to Migiro and Magangi, mixed methods research can also be difficult for one researcher to undertake, especially if using

two approaches, which should be used concurrently. Some of the mixed data needs to be worked out by the research methodologists in detail, including how to solve the problem of the mixing paradigm, how to qualitatively analyse qualitative data, and how to interpret conflicting results and report them (Migiro & Magangi, 2011). Therefore, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches can assist the researcher in developing a conceptual framework in order to validate the findings generated from the quantitative phase. It does this by referring to information extracted in the qualitative phase and building indices from the qualitative data that can be used to analyse the quantitative data (Cohen et al., 2011; Migiro & Magangi, 2011; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006).

This research relates to investigating home and kindergarten literacy environments and how they assist Saudi children's emergent literacy learning. It cannot be rigorously undertaken with a single paradigm, regardless of whether it is positivist or interpretive. For instance, this study investigated KSA households. As a female researcher, I found accessing these houses was challenging given the rules of gender segregation. Therefore, using a questionnaire was the only way to collect data from both children's fathers and mothers. Supporting this argument, in recent research by Robertson and Al-Zahrani (2012) in integrating ICT in teaching higher education in Saudi classrooms, face-to-face interviews were conducted with male students which excluded female students due to cultural barriers. Limitations in using research methods such as interviews due to gender segregation law in KSA is described in detail in Chapter Two.

Figure 5.1 shows the relationship between the Home Literacy Environment (HLE) and Kindergarten Literacy Environment (KLE) in influencing Saudi children's emergent literacy skills within their social and cultural contexts. These skills reflect the contemporary perspective of literacy which includes language, reading books, print awareness, making meaning, interest in letters and writing, technological interests, and popular culture. The nature of the Saudi HLE required the use of quantitative and qualitative methods (questionnaire and interviews) to access parents and maids in order to understand adults' social interaction when engaging in literacy activities with children. In the KLE, qualitative methods included interviews with Early Childhood Teachers (ECTs) and observations of teacher-child literacy interaction in the classroom.

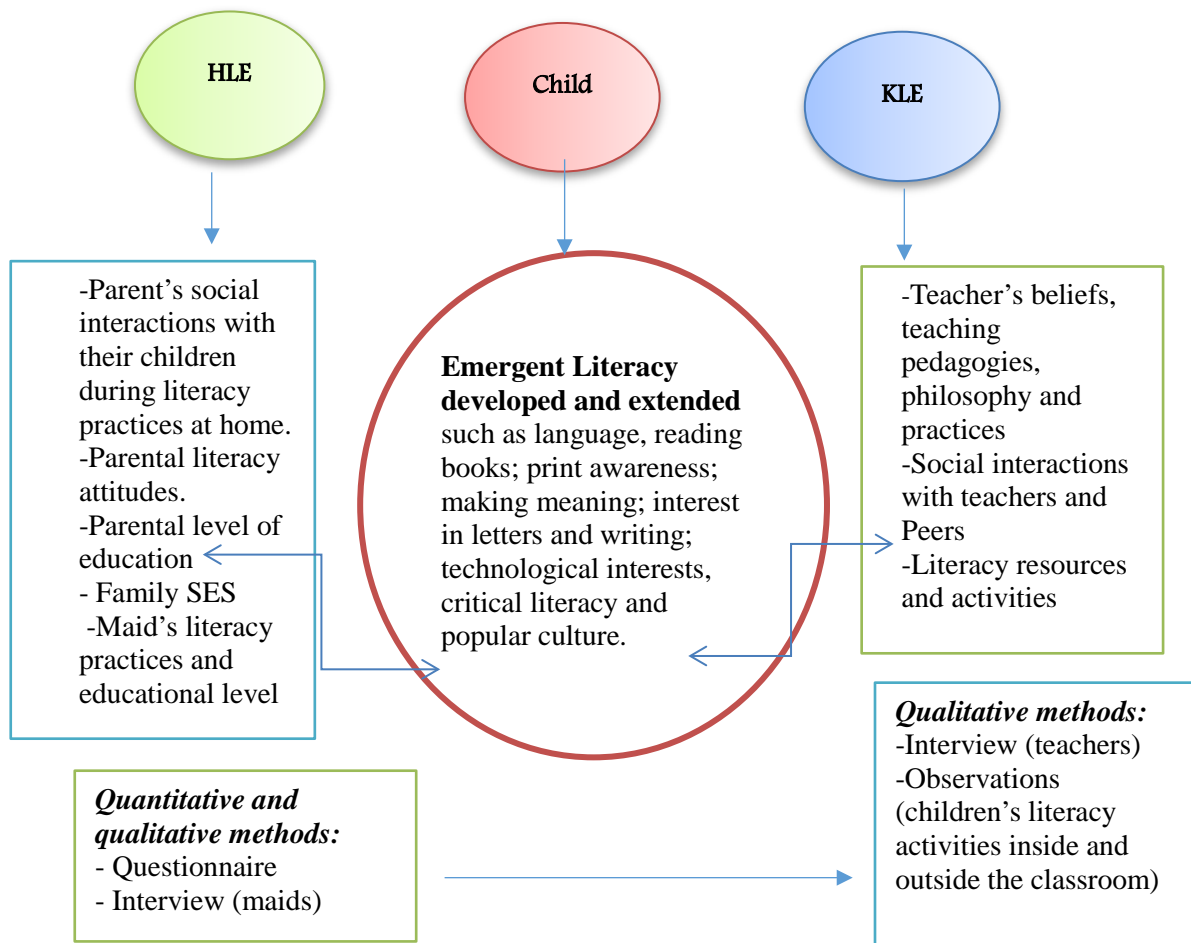


Figure 5.1. Investigation of the roles of HLE and KLE in supporting young children's literacy learning (including aims, sources and methods of data collection).

5.3 Research Questions

After reviewing the existing literature, a gap was identified between HLE and KLE, including how they support children's literacy learning in KSA. There has been little research undertaken in KSA in this area. Therefore, this study intended to address this gap and provide new knowledge about children's emergent literacy practices with the involvement of their parents, foreign maids, and teachers in KSA. The way Saudi cultural practices impact on literacy in the home and kindergarten settings are without doubt different to other cultures, and to investigate this, the research questions have been formed. The primary research question is this: "What is the role of adults in young children's literacy learning in KSA?" This is followed by sub-questions in both phases (Questionnaire and Case Studies phases) which frame the study and guide the investigation process to answer the primary question.

In Questionnaire Phase

1. To what extent and in what ways do parents engage with their children's literacy activities at home?
2. How do parents view the role of early childhood teachers and maids in their children's literacy learning?

In the Case Studies Phase

1. How do early childhood teachers and maids provide an environment to support children's literacy learning in the home and the Kindergarten?
2. How do early childhood teachers communicate with parents? In what ways does this communication benefit children's literacy learning?
3. How do early childhood teachers view the role of parents and maids in children's literacy development?

5.4 Research Design

The design used here, based on a two-phase model, is particularly useful for investigating complex phenomena (Ivankova, Creswell & Stick, 2006). Mixed methods researchers such as Creswell (1994), Morgan (1998), and Morse (1991) acknowledged the importance of focusing intensively on the research design, whether this is sequential or parallel, in order to make it clear and visible for the readers (Bazeley, 2002). In these designs, different elements remain separate; therefore, every element has its own paradigmatic and design requirements (Bazeley, 2002).

Punch (2009) continued by saying that this type of research requires researchers to have specific skills and experience in collecting and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data, as well as having the time and required resources to conduct the research successfully. The usefulness of such a design is based on three major dimensions implicit in the question of how we combine the two approaches. These dimensions are procedural issues, including priority (weighting), implementation (timing), and integration (mixing) (Ivankova et al., 2006; Punch, 2009).

To overcome these issues, the decision-making process in this research was guided by the

theoretical perspective and its research questions. The data in this study was collected over three months in two phases. Firstly, quantitative data was collected using the questionnaire. The goal of this phase was to investigate mothers' and fathers' literacy practices at home with their children, alongside maids' literacy practices with their employer's children and the ways in which they assist children's emergent literacy learning. This led to selecting the informants for the second phase of the study. Next, data was collected and analysed through case studies.

The goal of the qualitative phase was to explore the research phenomena in depth as well as to elaborate on the statistical results obtained in the first quantitative phase (Ivankova et al., 2006). I decided to use a multiple case study design in order to get the depth of qualitative analysis, which involved extensive data collection from different sources (ECTs and maids), as well as two levels (home and kindergarten) (Yin, 2003). The data analysis in the second phase involved performing a thematic analysis on two levels: individual cases and across cases, comparing the themes and categories. It used a number of cross-case analysis techniques, including text units (sentences) counts for each theme across the four cases (Ivankova et al., 2006).

Quantitative and qualitative research requires different priorities. The researcher must make decisions about the emphasis in data collection and analyse accordingly (Ivankova et al., 2006). The emphasis in this study was given equally to both the quantitative and the qualitative phases, and generated data related to the primary research question. The qualitative data about home literacy practices, found in the second phase, was revealed to be strongly related to children's emergent literacy learning in the kindergarten environment.

Integration is the third issue raised by Ivankova et al. (2006) and Punch (2009). This refers to the stage in the research process where the mixing or integration of both quantitative and qualitative methods occurs (Ivankova et al., 2006). In the study, the quantitative and qualitative phases were connected (Hanson et al. 2005) in the early stage, when the results of the data analysis in the quantitative phase of the study guided the data collection in the qualitative phase. The two phases were connected in the selection of the participants for the qualitative follow-up (Creswell et al. 2003; Ivankova et al., 2006). Selecting the participants (children) for the qualitative case studies was based on parent responses to the questionnaire in the first quantitative phase. The qualitative stage also encompassed developing the interview questions for ECTs and maids and an observations checklist for observing children and teachers during the literacy activities. The results in the quantitative phase were considered during the

design of these methods. Due to the limited time for data collection, the first participants who agreed to take part in the second phase were selected for it. Further discussion in relation to the research design, methods and participants is included in this chapter.

5.5 Justification for Selecting this Design

There were three reasons for selecting MMES design. First, the conservative nature of Saudi culture, particularly with regard to gender segregation, makes it difficult for a female researcher to interview males (*e.g.* fathers) and vice versa, leading to fathers choosing the questionnaires over interviews. Secondly, this design enables an in-depth understanding of the research problem through generating a wide range of data types. Boudreau (2005) has also argued that studying children's early literacy requires collecting information from multiple sources, gathering both quantitative and qualitative data, and obtaining information about children's literacy practices from repeated observations across a variety of naturalistic and comprehensive contexts. Thirdly, the research questions and aims cannot be effectively investigated without a mix of research approaches, including both quantitative and qualitative approaches. For instance, in this study, there was a need for the questionnaires to investigate the emergent literacy practices at home, including reading books, language and print awareness, interest in letters and writing, making meaning, technological interests, and popular culture. To give a clear picture of the complexity of the research problem, the next section highlights the data analysis phases, process, types and methods.

5.6 Data Analysis Process, Types, and Methods in Phases (Quantitative and Qualitative)

In this design, the mixing occurs at the quantitative data analysis stage (Migiro & Magangi, 2011). At this early stage, the collected data from the questionnaires was analysed using Descriptive Statistics (DS) and Factor Analysis (FA), which was then used to develop the items and themes in the interviews and observation checklists in the case studies phase. Quantitative data described the trends or explained the relationships between variables (Migiro & Magangi, 2011). The investigator in the quantitative approach relies on numerical data in order to test the relationships between variables (Migiro & Magangi, 2011). Quantitative data was analysed firstly by using DS, measuring central tendencies (mean, mode and median), the spread of score (variance, standard deviation and range), and relative ranking score (Creswell, 2012).

The primary aim of FA was to identify simple items (loadings more than 0.30 on only one factor). These can be then elucidated (assuming that items are factorable): a) the fact that partial correlations among items are small, with a minimum of 0.3 with at least one other item, suggesting reasonable factorability; b) the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy tests is above the recommended value of 0.6, and; c) the Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant (P -value < 0.05), which shows that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix, and that the factor model is appropriate. No item was eliminated because they contributed to a simple factor structure and met a minimum criterion of having a primary factor loading of 0.3 or above, with cross-loading of 0.3 or above.

The data generated from the observations and interviews was analysed using a thematic analysis technique. Thematic analysis is a very common technique in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012). Thematic analysis is “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). The importance of using thematic analysis based on the nature of this technique is that it moves beyond counting the explicit phrases and words to describe the explicit and implicit ideas of the theme identified in the data (Guest et al., 2012). Thematic analysis is a very useful technique for capturing the most complex meaning of text within the data set (Tuckett, 2005). Braun and Clarke (2006) stated that

thematic analysis can be an essentialist or realist method, which reports experiences, meanings and the reality of participants, or it can be a constructionist method, which examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society (p. 81).

Additionally, it is an appropriate approach for answering the research questions relating to the second phase. These questions investigated the role of ECTs and maids' involvement in children's literacy learning at home and in kindergarten environments, and the obstacles that might hinder the communication process between teachers and parents, and how it supports their children's literacy learning. Table 5.1, below, explains the type of MMES data analysis, process, methods and technique, type of data, and data analysis decisions in the MMES design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 218).

Table 5.1

5.1: Type of MMES Data Analysis, Data Analysis Process, Methods and Analysis Technique, Type of Data, and Data Analysis Decisions in the MMES Design

Type of MM Data Analysis	Data Analysis Process, Methods & Analysis technique	Type of Data	Data Analysis Decisions
Connected data analysis to explain results	1. Collect the quantitative data using close-ended questionnaire.	Numeric data (frequency of parents' literacy practices at home with their children based on Likert rating scale (1-6 response)).	Decide on systematic sampling as the type of sampling in the first phase (see research sampling, p. 218).
	2. Analyse the quantitative data using Descriptive Statistics (DS) and Factor Analysis (FA).		
	<u>Analysis Tool:</u> computer software SPSS		
	3. Design the qualitative strand drawing on the quantitative results.	Text data transcribed from interviews.	To follow up the first phase, purposive sampling was used in the second phase for identifying what results need to be explained further. Decide how the qualitative results in the second phase explain the quantitative results in the first phase.
	4. Collect the qualitative data using case studies, including semi-structured interviews and open-ended observation, using a checklist that guides observation of engagement in children's literacy with others.	Checklist and reflective note (text) from the researcher's observation of children's literacy practices.	
	5. Analyse qualitative data.	Photos of children's literacy work samples	
6. Interpret how the connected results answer the quantitative, qualitative, and MM questions.			
<u>Analysis Technique:</u> Nvivo software program, used to sort data, assign labels, and data.			

Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2006) provided a detailed analytic model and methods of data analysis for both phases, as explained in Figure 5.2, below (adopted from Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006, p. 491).

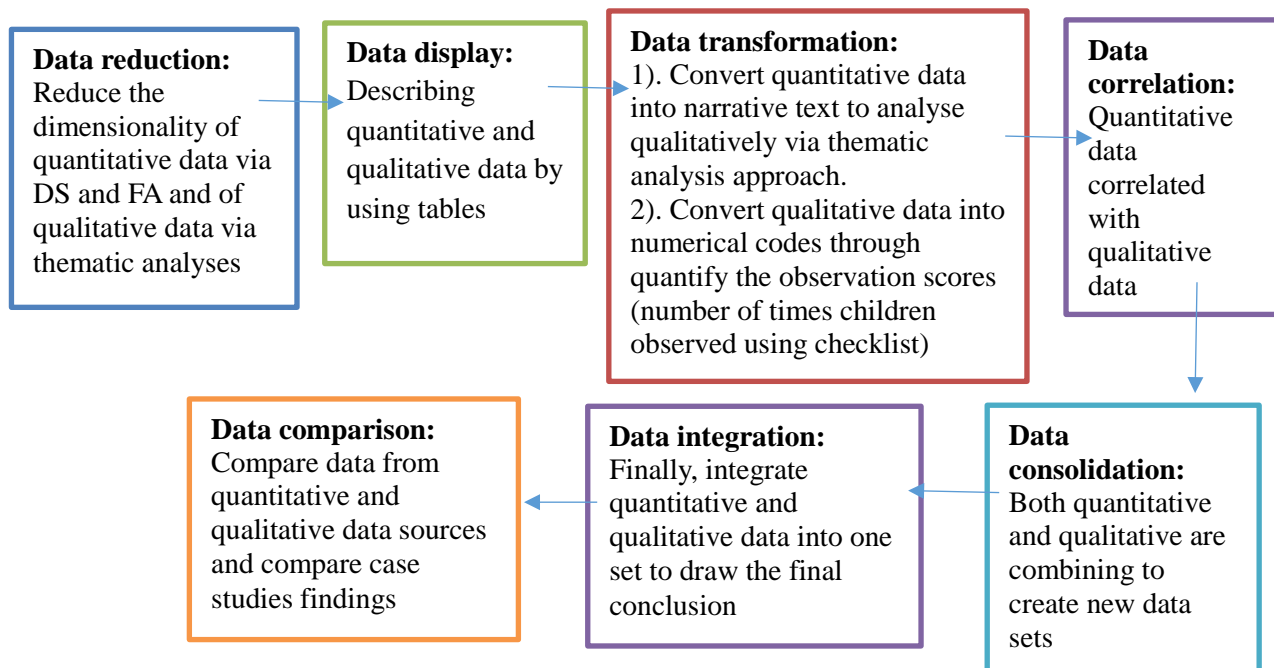


Figure 5.2. Model of data analysis in both phases (quantitative and qualitative)

5.7 Types of Variables and Data Sources

In this sequential mixed methods sample, the following were measured:

1. Independent variables, including SES, parents' level of education, parents' beliefs, literacy practices, maids' linguistic backgrounds and literacy practices with children at home, and communication patterns with kindergarten centres.
2. Intervening variables, including the effect of teaching experiences and pedagogies on children's literacy skills, and the effect of the language of any domestic staff on children's language and literacy practices.
3. Dependent variables, including children's emergent literacy levels. This sample included a selection of units of analysis through the sequential use of probability and non-probability sampling (Cohen et al., 2011). In this sampling, the methodology and the result from the quantitative strand affects the methodology and the results for the subsequent qualitative strand (Cohen et al., 2011; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). The sources of data were parents, ECTs, foreign maids, and children. This is elaborated in each phase below.

5.7.1 First phase (questionnaire phase): sampling and ethical considerations

Systematic sampling was used as a type of probability sampling, meaning that the researcher had to ensure that the sample represents all members of the population (Cohen et al., 2011). Cohen et al. (2011) argued that probability sampling is less biased than non-probability sampling. The research sites included eleven kindergarten centres in the city of Mecca, which is multicultural and includes urban and rural areas. Parents were selected systematically from the overall list of kindergarten centres in Mecca. This means every second name was picked out of the kindergarten centre list (Cohen et al., 2011). The frequency interval (f) is:

$$\frac{60}{30} = 2$$

One kindergarten was selected to undertake the pilot study phase, and the other 10 kindergarten centres were selected for the first phase of the actual research. The sources of data in this phase were children's parents, and the instrument was a questionnaire. This involved systemic sampling for selected parents who had children aged four to five and a half years old enrolled in kindergarten centres (see Table 5.1). The parents were randomly invited from the list of children in kindergarten centres. The estimated number of children aged three to five and a half years in each kindergarten centre was 60 children. A total of 500 questionnaires were sent out, with the aim of receiving 300 back (60 per cent).

5.7.2 Second phase (qualitative-interview and observations based): sampling

In the second phase, the sample was a purposeful sample. This sample was very useful as it accessed participants who had in-depth knowledge about particular issues (Creswell, 2012). Three cases were chosen for the initial stage of data collection. Only two cases are reported in this thesis because, according to Roller and Lavrakas (2015), researchers are responsible for monitoring the variability of data collected compared to the variability of what was expected. They can then make a "Goldilocks decision", in which they decide the original sample size was too large, too small or was the right size (p. 27). Since the data generated from the third case study was adding overload to the amount of data and was not different to the first case study (in terms of the home and kindergarten environment characteristics), the third case is not reported here. The decision to choose between cases was also influenced by sociocultural perspectives,

which advocate selecting cases that present various literacy practices at home and kindergarten. One of the more contemporary Saudi households was selected (that reflected multi-literacy and new literacy practices), as well as one case of a more traditional Saudi household (that reflected literacy practices in a monolingual and monocultural environment). The chosen sample for two case studies is outlined below, highlighting the purposes for each sample.

1. Two ECTs were invited for interview at their workplace (kindergarten centres) in order to observe their literacy practices with children in and out of the classroom. This enabled a response to the research aim of studying the teacher's influence on children's emergent literacy in kindergarten centres.
2. Two foreign maids were invited for interview at their employers' homes to investigate their role in children's literacy practices at home, and whether or not they interacted with children in their home language. Maids who spoke Arabic or English as their second language were selected to be interviewed in a language they were familiar with.
3. Two children whose parents had completed the questionnaire, and whose foreign maids and ECTs agreed to participate, were invited for observation in the second phase. This aimed to investigate their literacy skills in the classroom, and to examine how parents, teachers, and domestic maids might have an impact on children's emergent literacy development. In order for participants to participate in this research, there were some criteria that they needed to meet.

5.8 Selection Criteria of Sampling

The criteria of selection for phases in this study were as follows.

5.8.1 Pilot study phase

1. The research site was similar to the one in which the researcher planned to conduct research in the primary study. The site in this phase was one centre selected systematically from the list of kindergarten centres in Mecca in order to undertake the pilot phase. This centre was later excluded from the actual research.
2. Pilot sample:
 - a. Four parents of four children, including fathers and mothers, were invited to participate voluntarily to complete the questionnaire in one centre.

- b. Two maids and two early childhood teachers from the same centre, and who were related to those children, were interviewed after obtaining their permission.

In the pilot study phase, no observations of children's literacy practices with their teachers and peers in the kindergarten environment were undertaken.

5.8.2 Questionnaire

The characteristics of the sample in the first and second phases of this study were representative of the population, in an attempt to make a plausible generalisation (Cohen et al., 2011). The criteria were as follows:

1. Kindergarten centres, including public (non-profit) and private kindergarten centres.
2. Centres that were interested and agreed to be a part of the research and provided signed consent forms (see Appendix A.3).

Five hundred parents, who had children aged three to five and half years old, enrolled in both private and public kindergarten centres, participated by being invited to complete the questionnaire. The actual research for the first phase was conducted in ten kindergarten centres in the city of Mecca.

5.8.3 Two case studies with interviews and observations

1. ECTs with different teaching experiences, literacy practices, beliefs, philosophies, and teaching qualifications, including new and highly experienced teachers.
2. Foreign maids who had signed consent forms and understood the purpose of this study were interviewed at home with their employers' approval (see Appendices A.4 & B.2.2).
3. Foreign maids who had fluent Arabic or English languages were interviewed by the researcher.
4. Children aged three to five and half years old and their parents agreed to participate in this study through completing the questionnaires, and the parents agreed for their children to participate in the case studies where the children and their teachers were observed. Assent was sought from children. Children were given a sheet with two faces (smiley/sad) to indicate (yes/no) (see Appendix A.4). Their teachers and maids were also interviewed

regarding these children's literacy practices at home with maids, and in classroom daily programs with their teachers and peers.

5. Observing children and teachers' literacy activities in the kindergarten environment, including inside and outside classroom areas, through the kindergarten daily program.

5.9 Accessing Research Sites

5.9.1 Pilot study

The first contact with the pilot centre was made through an organised meeting with the head of the Organisation of Kindergartens that controls public and private centres in the city of Mecca, KSA. The purpose of the research and the time frame for collecting the data in the kindergarten centres was outlined in a letter and explained verbally through the formal meeting with her. The head of the Kindergarten Organisation provided a detailed list of all kindergarten centres in Mecca. After she selected the required number of centres from the list, the head of the Kindergarten Organisation sent an official letter, based on my Ethical Approval Letter (approval number H-2010-0197), to notify all the selected centres about the research details (aims, duration, instruments, and number of parents, teachers and children who could participate in this study voluntarily), and provided them with the researcher's name and details. Research was not commenced at any centres until permission had been granted by her. After getting permission from the Kindergarten Organisation to access the research sites, the first visit to pilot the research instruments was made.

5.9.2 Pilot site

First contact was made by telephone to the kindergarten principal in order to organise the first visit to pilot the research instruments. The principal received the information letters, which explained the research purposes, timeframe, and methods of data collection, and then approved invitations to be made to teachers. I provided two different information letters to the teachers (one for them and one for parents). Those letters explained all research purposes, the process of data collection, and the methods of data collection. The parent information letters were sent by teachers to children's parents. Before distributing questionnaires, informed consent permission was sought from parents.

Following questionnaire return, I received some positive comments from the children's parents about the research aims. There was no negative feedback received from any of the participants, which would have required changes in the questions. As they reported, the research instruments were very intensive and covered all the areas related to literacy practices at home and in kindergarten settings. The teachers reported that some questions in the interview provoked their thinking about what can be done to improve literacy learning and to update the current curriculum in order to focus more on this area. The teachers' beliefs, practices, perspectives toward literacy activities, and practices in the pilot study will be explored further in the pilot study analysis in the next chapter.

5.9.3 The primary research sites

Questionnaires were sent following informed consent by children's parents. One hundred and seventy five parents did not return the questionnaire (35 per cent). This might be partially due to some families hiring illegal foreign maids, which is against the law in KSA. In the second phase, only two kindergarten centres from the ten selected by the head of Kindergarten Organisation for the first phase were invited to participate. These centres were chosen in order to conduct the case study interviews with teachers and children's maids, as well as for observing teachers and children's literacy activities during the kindergarten's daily program. I then invited teachers to participate in this study after explaining its purpose and giving them opportunities to read the research statement. Following informed consent, two ECTs were interviewed in the quiet room at the kindergarten centres.

Another unit of sampling was the children's maids. Before maids were interviewed, permission from them and from their employers was sought and obtained (see Appendices A.4 & B.2.2). I explained to the foreign maids the purpose of the research before conducting the interviews. I tended to use simple Arabic words to explain the purposes of the study and the procedure of the interviews to avoid misunderstandings. This was possible because most of the maids who come to KSA speak Arabic. Maids were given opportunities to ask questions. To further understand the methods of data collection, a description of each method is outlined below.

5.10 Details of Research Methods

5.10.1 Questionnaire

I gained the consent of children and their parents to participate in this study. A self-administered questionnaire was then completed by children's parents at home. The questionnaires were completed without the presence of the researcher; however, the researcher's contact details were included on the questionnaire coversheet in case the participants needed clarification on some questions or to raise concerns. The questionnaire was based on a Likert rating scale, which includes a range of responses from 1 to 6: 1) strongly agree, 2) agree, 3) mostly agree, 4) mostly disagree, 5) disagree, and 6) strongly disagree (see Appendix A.1). The questionnaire used in this study was adopted from Boudreau (2005) and was adjusted for three reasons: 1) to suit the aims of this study, based on sociocultural theory, in which Saudi parents engage with their children's literacy practices in ways that reflect the culture; 2) to investigate literacy practices based on contemporary definitions of literacy (Spedding et al., 2007; Beck, 2002; Floyd et al., 2008; Woodrow et al., 2014) which were discussed in Chapter One; and 3) to ensure reliability, so the questionnaire items were adjusted to a 6-point Likert rating scale. Previous research by Alwin and Krosnick (1991) argued that using a 6-point scale is more reliable than using a 5-point one.

Using a questionnaire as method of data collection is reliable, quick to complete, and is straightforward to code into a computer program or data file (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2012). In particular, it enables the researcher to overcome gendered barriers in accessing male respondents. Boudreau (2005) stated that:

reliability/internal consistency analyses were completed on the various constructs created in design of the questionnaire to determine if parents' responses to questions theorized to measure a common construct yielded similar scores (p. 37).

The questionnaire was self-administered and took 10-15 minutes to complete. One reminder was sent to the parents in Week 2: to complete and return the questionnaire. The questionnaire contained five main sections with a total of 46 questions that measured the parents' literacy practices, attitudes, and opinions toward literacy practices with their young children at home. There were two significant questions investigated within the questionnaire. The first question was: "How do the parents' demographic factors, including family SES level, mothers' level of education, fathers' involvement, and funds of knowledge support their children's literacy practices?" This followed from section one of the questionnaire, which asked parents demographic questions such as the parent's relationship to the child (father or mother), socio-

economic level, and the parent's level of education. The socio-economic level of the family was measured by asking parents questions related to their salary (Saudi Riyal (SR) per month), and asking how many members were in the family. For example, if the annual income of a family of three was 50,000 SR, the family was considered to have a high SES level.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, most of families in KSA were middle class, and their salary estimates were made relative to the average salary. Cultural aspects of literacy practices at home as part of Saudi culture were investigated. For instance, celebrating Eids with their family as part of KSA culture, reading and singing cultural songs, and daily activities at home that included literacy, cooking, reading the food menu and playing football, were given a score.

The second question in the questionnaire was "How do parental habits, activities, and beliefs toward literacy practices at home strengthen your children's literacy development?" Accordingly, this question, presented in section three, asked parents about their regular literacy activities with their children at home, as well as children's emergent literacy practices at home, such as reading books, print awareness, interest in letters and writing, and technological interests. It also included questions about parents' perceptions of their child's kindergarten centre.

Section four asked parents if they had maids or not ("Yes" or "No"). If parents answered "yes", then they were asked some questions about their maids. Parents were also asked about their own beliefs on the roles of early childhood teachers and domestic maids in their children's emergent literacy learning. Questions about maids included information about their maid's background, length of employment, how much time their child spends with their maid, where she comes from, her languages, her educational levels, her literacy practices with the child, and the parents' beliefs about the maid's influence on their children. Section five asked parents about how they communicated with ECTs and how often this communication took place. Parents were asked to indicate who regularly communicated (father, mother or other); how often they communicated with ECTs (such as daily, weekly, and so on); and the way in which they communicated with ECTs (such as email, face to face, and so on).

5.10.2 Rationale for using a multiple case studies approach

In the second phase, where qualitative investigation was applied, two case studies were conducted in two kindergarten centres in Mecca. The use of multiple cases in this study was more useful than using a single case study, as it allowed the researcher to make comparisons, as

well as allowing findings to be replicated (Cohen et al., 2011). The case studies approach aimed to understand the subjects and investigate human experiences in depth. Yin (2009) defined the case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13). Using the case studies in the qualitative phase can give the researcher a clear and holistic view of the participants’ characteristics in real life experiences, as well as when evaluating and analysing the social events (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009).

Using multiple case studies allowed the researcher to explore how the cultural practices in KSA households relate to literacy learning. Additionally, exploring parents and teachers’ literacy teaching styles (based on sociocultural theory where adults interact with and scaffold children’s literacy learning) is very significant in understanding literacy practices within Saudi culture and was the main aim of the case studies approach. Triangulation was used as a powerful way to demonstrate concurrent validity and credibility using different sources of data (Cohen et al., 2011; Ivankova et al., 2006; McMillan & Wergin, 2002), semi-structured interviews, and participant observations. The use of interviews, observations, and home visits will be explained in-depth later in this chapter.

5.10.3 Semi-structured one-on-one interviews

5.10.3.1 Kindergarten teachers

Semi-structured interviews are a common source of data collection in qualitative research (Maxwell, 1996). The semi-structured interview instrument was developed to investigate the teacher’s literacy beliefs, perspectives, teaching pedagogies and practices in the classroom, and to examine how these teachers use the children’s home experiences when planning and structuring the learning environment. The teachers’ interview protocols contained 32 questions related to the teacher’s educational background, teaching experiences, literacy perceptions, practices, activities, pedagogies, philosophy, and their beliefs (Appendix B.1.2). Permission was sought from ECTs before and after conducting the interview to make sure that they understood the research purposes. The interviews were conducted with two kindergarten teachers with different teaching qualifications and experiences. Each interview took around an hour.

5.10.3.2 Children's maids

Children's maids were also interviewed to enable in-depth data about the children's literacy practices at home. Maids are considered part of the sociocultural environment that surrounds children, and they are likely to influence their literacy learning. The interviews explored in-depth the foreign maids' influence on children's literacy practices at home, through asking different questions that explored their educational and cultural backgrounds, and the kinds of activities they engage in with their employer's children. The interviews with maids contained 15 questions, and took approximately 40-50 minutes. The interviews were recorded by taking notes. I recorded one interview with a maid by audio after getting her approval in the kindergarten centre. Another interview with a maid was conducted by her employer at home. Member checking was used (where the researcher provided the interviewees with transcripts or interpretation of the data for their review and comment) to ensure accuracy. However, no comments or changes in transcripts were requested by those maids.

5.10.3.3 The significance of using semi-structured interviews

The use of this semi-structured interview process is based on the argument of Al-Momani et al. (2010). This states that using a semi-structured interview is useful, as it enables researchers to expand on the interviewee's answer, and to alter sequences to overcome the common tendency for interviewees to anticipate questions. It also enables researchers to explore in-depth interviewee beliefs and perceptions about the current state of development of literacy skills in kindergartens. Additionally, the interview is generative in a way: new knowledge and thought are likely to be created at some stage (Creswell, 2012; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). However, this depends on the research questions and the researcher's way of inviting participants to put forward their ideas, suggestions on particular topics, and the proposal of solutions for problems during the interview. Finally, the emphasis on depth and the interviewee's own language as a way of understanding meaning has to be captured in natural forms.

In a case such as this where I was interviewing foreign maids, using simple Arabic or English rather than complex language was essential. As most maids in KSA were not native to KSA, using simple language that they understood helped to get rich data and gave them opportunities to express their ideas and knowledge. According to the selection criteria in this

research, maids had to be able to speak either Arabic or English in order to be interviewed by the researcher, who was fluent in both languages.

5.10.4 Participant observation

The open-ended observation method used in this study was adopted from Jones Díaz et al. (2001), and was adjusted for the research aims to make it appropriate to the participants' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. For instance, the writing direction in Arabic is from right to left. Other structural changes were made, such as adding a column to analyse each observation regarding children's literacy practices. All instruments, including the observation protocol, were translated to Arabic, as it was the official language of the participants in KSA. The multiple observations were conducted in different naturalistic contexts in the kindergarten setting, including inside and outside the classroom, such as in the playground.

The observation protocol consisted of five main indicators designed to facilitate documentation of the frequency of the child's interest and engagement in particular literacy activities in and outside the classroom setting (Appendix B.3). These indicators were language, literacy attitudes, making meaning, print concepts, and writing. Each indicator had many items and columns to tick (observed, not observed) and open sections where I wrote comments and interpretive notes (for more detail, see Chapter Seven). Also, samples of children's literacy work were photographed and analysed with the consent of the teachers, children and their parents.

The next process was to observe two children in two different centres. All these children were boys: a result of the randomised process of selecting the first three respondents. Every child was observed in 20 observations through the kindergarten's daily program over the course of two months. Observations of children and ECTs' literacy interaction were documented using the observation checklist and photographing the activities, without taking pictures of the children's faces, in order to preserve confidentiality in line with ethical considerations. These activities included both inside the classroom and outside area activities, such as playing in the playground (*e.g.* jumping on different shapes when teacher names the shape). The rest of the children in the classroom were not observed, and I explained and ensured this earlier through the letter that was sent to parents, including those parents who did not agree for themselves and their children to participate in this research. Limitations of this form of data collection arose from the short time of conducting the research – three months – which was not long enough to

obtain evaluative data. A visual diary of children's interests was used for each focus child to record and show his literacy interests in the learning areas in the classroom. The social interactions between teachers and the focus children were recorded using the observation checklist and via taking photographs to analyse later.

5.10.4.1 Process of observing the site and participants

After selecting the kindergarten centre systematically, I accessed the site in order to get an initial understanding of the limitations of the learning environment. Before starting the fieldwork, I organised weekly visits with each centre director. The opening hours of the centre were from Sunday to Thursday, from 7:30 am to 12:00 pm. I collected twenty observations for each child from each kindergarten centre over the course of eight weeks. The initial observations of the site informed me about the availability of literacy resources and events that took place there, such as cooking workshops where mothers were invited to participate in classes in which they cook healthy and traditional foods with their children. This event developed children's literacy skills through reading the recipes with their mothers when cooking, as well as the social interaction with other mothers. The observations of children's interactions with their peers and their teachers during literacy experiences were documented using the observation checklist, taking field notes, and taking photos of children's literacy practices during the daily program.

During the observation process, I recorded children's interactions with their teachers in the classroom and outside. For instance, in the storytelling session, the teacher asked the children some questions relating to the story, and each child had a different answer reflecting their understanding of the story. Documenting the children's learning process by taking photos was important to help me to reflect and analyse the children's literacy skills, learning styles, and their funds of knowledge. I had made the decision to sit in a place where I could see the children and observe them during the class experiences, but which allowed me to avoid interrupting the learning process where children were engaged in planned activities with peers and teachers (Creswell, 2012). For instance, when I attended the daily program at 8:30 am, I entered the classroom quietly to avoid interrupting the teachers. However, I started gradually interacting with children during the literacy program, such as spelling out some words and reading them stories in the library area. It is important to acknowledge that all the literacy and

other activities had to be planned earlier for the next day, so the teachers knew what I expected to observe in terms of the activities, concepts, and length of each activity.

The final step of observation was to withdraw from the research. As I had been working over the eight weeks, I developed a good relationship with the children, ECTs, mothers who were already familiar with me from the regular visits to the centre, and the staff. I avoided leaving suddenly, so I informed the staff that week eight would be the last week for my data collection phase. After getting all the observations documented, I thanked the kindergarten director, ECTs, and staff for their invitation and collaboration in the data collection process.

5.10.5 Home Visits

Another method of documenting children's literacy learning was by making home visits. Wessels and Trainin (2014) asserted that home interviews and observations of family literacy practices can enrich our understanding of the home literacy environment. The home visit was not planned as part of the methodology, but I was invited and given permission by Sarah (Gasem's mother in Case Study One) to access their home. She invited me to conduct the interview with her maid and to observe her child interacting with her and their maid during literacy activities at home. In Case Study Two, Fatima (Kareem's mother) responded differently in regards to accessing the home, so literacy resources at Kareem's home were not observed. More details about case study participants and literacy resources at homes are explained further in Chapters seven and eight.

5.11 Trustworthiness of the Research

5.11.1 Overview of validity and credibility in the qualitative and quantitative research

Qualitative research drew on a naturalistic approach, which seeks to understand phenomena in a real world setting, and where the researcher makes no effort to control the phenomena of interest. It has been argued by Winter (2000) that quantitative researchers seek to disconnect themselves as far as possible from the process of the research, whereas qualitative researchers come to embrace their engagement as well as their role within the research. Qualitative researchers attempt to be present during changes in the research, making a record of an event before and after the change takes place. Researchers in both qualitative and

quantitative paradigms need to represent credibility in their studies. When researchers in quantitative studies speak of reliability and validity, they are referring to the research being credible.

The credibility in qualitative research depends on the researcher. In other words, the researcher engaged in qualitative research is the instrument. This refers to the researcher's own ability and effort (Golafshani, 2003). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that validity and credibility are fundamental criteria for assessing the quality of quantitative research, whereas credibility, conformability, consistency or dependability, and applicability or transferability are significant criteria for the quality of qualitative research. In this regard, validity in quantitative data might be enhanced or ensured through careful sampling and suitable instrumentation, as well as by suitable statistical treatment of the data (Cohen et al., 2011). On the other hand, in qualitative data:

validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness, the scope of data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and disinterestedness, or subjectivity of the researcher (Cohen et. al, 2011, p. 179).

5.11.2 Validity and reliability of the quantitative research

Reliability in quantitative research means, as Creswell (2012) stated, that scores from an instrument are consistent and stable. Creswell indicated that results in the same scores have to be consistent several times. Reliability, as Creswell (2012) and Cohen et al. (2011) described it, is a measure of consistency: thus, if the scores are reliable, they are valid. Several scores can yield reliable data if:

1. The questions in the instruments were clear and unambiguous.
2. Procedures of the test administration were matched and standardised.
3. Participants were comfortable and relaxed and the questions were interpreted for them.

The reliability of this type of research is based on the idea of replication. A similar group of respondents in a similar context should achieve similar results. The research questions, aims, and methodology are designed to be explicit and clear to other researchers in order to facilitate replication.

The procedure used to test or examine the instrument's reliability was internally consistent and reliable. If an individual's scores are internally consistent through the entire item on the research instrument, this procedure means the scores from an instrument are reliable and

accurate (Creswell, 2012). In another words, the notion of consistency with which questionnaire (test) items are answered or individual's scores remain the same can be achieved through the test-retest method at two different times (Golafshani, 2003). This concept, according to Golafshani, aims for stability in which the results are similar. To illustrate this, participants completed certain items in the questionnaire instrument at the beginning of the research in one way (such as having a positive view about the influence of maids in their children's literacy learning), then answered the same questions later in the same instrument in a similar way (positive toward the influence of maids on children's literacy learning in the home environment).

In quantitative data, "validity can be thought of as the larger, more encompassing term when you assess the choice of an instrument" (Creswell, 2012, p. 159). Validity in quantitative research is concerned with whether the scores from the instrument are valid or not.

To ensure this, there are some steps provided by Cohen et al. (2011):

1. Identify a suitable research instrument to be used.
2. Search for evidence of validity through looking at prior studies that have used the same instrument as well as reporting the same scores.
3. Search closely for the aim for which this instrument was used.
4. Search for how other research studies have interpreted the scores from this instrument in terms of their intended use.
5. Assess whether or not the researchers have provided enough evidence to link their interpretations to their use of this instrument (p. 198).

5.11.3 Internal validity

Internal validity is defined as "the true value, applicability, consistency, neutrality, dependability, and/or credibility of interpretations and conclusions with the underlying setting or group" (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006, p. 234). In this case, no suitable instruments were available; therefore, the instruments were developed to suit the social and cultural contexts of participants, drawing from sociocultural theory. The use of MMESD in this study was needed to ensure validity. In addition, to ensure validity, guidelines provided by several researchers were used in this research (i.e. Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998; Onwuegbuize & Leech,

2006; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). These were: prolonged engagement and persistent observations in the field, triangulation of method, triangulation of sources, research bias, and peer examination. The following section gives a description of these measures.

1. Prolonged engagement and persistent observations in the field. This was considered from early in the pilot research through the practice of data collection, reflection and analysis, followed by the actual implementation of six months of research data collection and analysis. Piloting the research instruments was undertaken in order to refine and redesign these instruments if needed, based on the participants' feedback (Al-Momani et al., 2010).
2. Triangulation of method. With the mixed methods used in this research, the results of quantitative analysis from the questionnaire were used to explore relationships with the qualitative analysis of the interviews and observations data. This ensured the internal, content, concurrent, construct, and external validity. Triangulation will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.
3. Triangulation of sources. Both quantitative and qualitative data were given equal weighting in order to answer the research questions. This was used in order to exclude the issue of selective use of data or under-representation of one sort of data against another and reduce any risk of accentuating the positive or negative or ignoring the negative.
4. Research bias. To help minimise bias in the field, the researcher kept a daily journal to reflect on the research process and to challenge her previous assumptions at the outset of the study.
5. Peer examination. The research approach encouraged supervisors to comment on the research findings. With these comments, the research was refined further by addressing questions which required further clarification.

5.11.4 External validity

External validity is concerned with the way in which research findings of one study can be replicated in other situations. Eisenhart and Howe (1992) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that it is hard for researchers to ensure generalisability in qualitative research, and therefore many researchers have refined their understanding of generalisability. It is also argued that researchers should not be concerned with providing an index of transferability, as it is not their task (Eisenhart & Howe, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Rather, researchers should be

concerned with providing rich and in-depth data for the readers, which will assist them to judge whether or not transferability is possible (Creswell, 2012). Accordingly, this study is intended to provide thick and rich data through the use of a mixed method design in order to answer the research questions that required such a design, rather than to provide generalisability. To enhance transferability, I have provided the instruments, so another researcher can replicate my findings.

5.11.5 Validity and credibility of the qualitative research

To understand how to achieve credibility and validity in this study, it is important to discuss the researcher's own position.

5.11.5.1 Researcher's own position toward validity and credibility

As this research sits within a sociocultural approach, the researcher aimed to become a part of the sociocultural environment. The researcher in qualitative research cannot avoid being biased, as the researcher was present and may have had an influence, which was unavoidable. In this regard, to ensure validity and credibility, researchers should not rely only on listing some of the strategies used in the research, such as triangulation, member checking, peer review, audit trail and so on. Rather, I believe it is important to make the research *visible* for judgement by other researchers and audiences.

5.11.5.2 Visibility of the research

In regards to this visibility, Mishler (1990) and Cutcliffe and McKenna's (1999) positions on making the process of the research design visible were considered. Mishler (1990) asserted that the researcher must both explicitly and implicitly consider the degree of validity through all research processes by providing sufficient information about the study to make it visible, thus enabling the audience to make a judgement of trustworthiness and quality by drawing on the evidence. Rolfe (2006) argued with Mishler's position that "the only site for evaluating research studies – whether they are qualitative or quantitative – is the report itself" (p. 8). To draw both positions together, the researcher claimed that the quality of the research will be adequate if the researchers immerse themselves in their research process. They should make this explicit, not just by mentioning the methods which were used to obtain a credible research

result, but also by translating the research into a readable form that audiences from other disciplines can easily understand.

In terms of implicit information, researchers must mention when certain truths have been hidden: for instance, if something happened during the data collection. An example of this would be if, when recording the interview, the interviewee asks the interviewer to pause the tape recording for a second as he/she might want to say something which he/she does not want expressed in public. In this case, the interviewer can mention that the recording was stopped at this point in the thesis, but not what happened after stopping the recording, in order to retain the ethical privacy of the participants. Thus, readers will not make judgements about the study *per se*, but about what is presented in the report.

However, in cases such as KSA, an environment with conservative ideas of gender segregation, taking notes during the interview was the only means of recording data. The interviewer asked the interviewees for more clarification when necessary during the interview process. The next process was that the interviewer transcribed the interviews, and then asked the participants to check them in order to get more accurate data. All of these steps are made visible in this report, as well as explanations of the researcher's own sociocultural positioning (see Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine).

5.11.5.3 Methods of triangulation

Triangulation of methods has been used through several data generation methods. These were the questionnaire, a semi-structured interview with parents, teachers and maids, and participant observations of children's literacy practices. I agree with many researchers on the importance of using triangulation as a strategy for increasing the validity of evaluating the research findings (Anfara, Brown, Margarine, 2002; Golafshani, 2003; Mathison, 1988; Maxwell, 1996). It is evident that using triangulation methods through multiple methods of data collection is very useful in overcoming the deficiencies of using a single method of data collection (Anfara et al., 2002; Cho & Trent, 2006). It is also useful to make sure of the accuracy of specific data items through using member checking to judge the overall credibility of the data (Anfara et al., 2002).

Member checking is another significant strategy that the researcher believes can be used to establish credibility, which supports the previous argument by Rolfe (2006). To illustrate this point, Cutcliffe and McKenna (1999) explained that when the researcher conducts the

interviews with participants, the researcher is encouraged, after recording the interviews, to return to the participants and attempt to get additional verification. As a result of this process, any initial findings that are not recognised by the participants, and also the researcher, should indicate if any disagreement existed and, if so, it should be reported (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 1999; & Golafshani, 2003). Thus, drawing on the argument above, it can be noticed that many researchers have their own positions of validity. In this research, interviews with participants (teachers and foreign maids) were recorded using a note-taking strategy.

However, I agree with Rolfe's (2006) claim that rather than over-searching specific criteria to judge validity, researchers ought to acknowledge that there is a multiplicity of qualitative paradigms, with each paradigm requiring a diverse approach to establishing validity. An audit trail is a critical process which enables the reader to determine how far the data, and constructs emerging from it, may be accepted (Shenton, 2004). Shenton argued that the audit trail allows any observer to trace the course of the research step-by-step throughout the decisions made and procedures undertaken. Thus, I believe that the quality, validity, and credibility of the research can be assured through the visibility of the research report and the research process, triangulation by using different methods, member checking, an audit trail, and reflexivity.

5.12 Ethical Considerations

The research did not proceed until it had been approved by the University of Newcastle Human Research Ethics Committee (approval number H-2010-0197 – see Appendix C). The following gives detail about the ethical considerations concerning informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, asking sensitive questions, considering bias, using appropriate research methods, the possibility of causing harm to participants, and considering copyright in the adopted research tool. Consideration was also given to participants' cultures in regards to collecting data using audio recordings.

5.12.1 Informed consent

An information letter and permissions for the pilot study and the actual research were approved by the head of the Kindergarten Organisation in KSA (see Appendix A.2). Principals, children's parents, classroom teachers, domestic maids, and the maids' employers participating

in the research received the letters and granted their consent (Appendices A.2, A.3, A.4, B.2.1 & B.2.2). These letters outlined the purpose of the study, research methods, timeframe of collecting research methods, and so on. It was translated into Arabic, the official language of Saudi Arabia. Parents who did not wish to participate in the research process in each phase were informed that their children would not be included when collecting data through observation or through collecting samples of their literacy work, and would not be disadvantaged in any way. To ensure this, I sent introductory letters to the children's parents to explain the research process, and to ensure the parents and their children's right not to participate in this research. I also provided all parents with my contact number and email in case they had any questions or concerns regarding this study.

5.12.2 Maintaining confidentiality

Participants were informed that their confidentiality would be protected. Information about participants' identities was not shared with others. Pseudonyms were used to differentiate between people in reporting the study. Any personal information collected for this study was confidential to the researcher. All data was de-identified using pseudonyms for both individuals and for the kindergarten site. The identity of the kindergarten sites will not be disclosed when the results are published. After the data has been collected and analysed, the survey data, digital photographs, and digital interview recording were securely stored on a password-protected computer. Children's literacy artefacts were de-identified. All data was retained for at least five years in a locked storage cabinet at the University of Newcastle.

5.12.3 Asking sensitive questions

Seeking information can often pose ethical issues, so this study avoided asking participants questions that could be sensitive, particularly for maids. Roumani (2005) mentioned in her data collection that it was not easy to interview maids because many employers insisted on being present during the interview. In this study, the maids were interviewed privately without the presence of their employer. The interviewer avoided asking questions that could create any problems for these vulnerable people, such as questions concerning their relationship with their employers.

5.12.4 The possibility of causing harm to participants

This study was designed in a way that ensures there will be no physical or emotional harm for participants, particularly for vulnerable groups such as children and foreign domestic maids. This was done by carefully examining whether their involvement in this study would cause any harm to participants in any way or not. This study abided by the University of Newcastle Human Ethics guidelines.

5.12.5 Withdrawal Rights

Parents and their children, kindergarten teachers, and maids were informed prior to commencing the study through the research statements sent earlier to inform them that they were able to withdraw from the study at any time. They were also informed that no harm or negative effects would be caused by this research in regards to their relationships with their employers if they decided to withdraw from this research.

5.13 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter described the research paradigm and design used in this study in order to address the research questions. The paradigm used in this study was described, giving a brief description of the paradigmatic researcher's advantages. The choice of the mixed methods design was justified and discussed as the most suitable design to use in this study in order to answer the research questions. This chapter began with the discussion of the research statement, outlining the research questions in both phases. Because of the complexity of KSA's culture, the steps of conducting the mixed methods design were discussed, highlighting the sample size, criteria, and characteristics in each phase. This chapter also provided a description of the methods used in the quantitative and qualitative phases, including a rationale for using each method. The process of collecting and analysing data was explored in this chapter. Finally, this chapter concluded by discussing how to ensure the validity and the credibility of both quantitative and qualitative data, and the researcher's position on how to establish validity and credibility through discussing strategies used to achieve this purpose. The ethical considerations of the process of collecting and analysing data were also discussed. The following chapter introduces the quantitative results generated from the questionnaire instruments, including the quantitative and qualitative data.

Chapter Six – Understanding Children’s Early Literacy Learning in the KSA

Context

“Understanding how the home literacy environment contributes to the development of important language and emergent literacy skills is critical in promoting successful literacy acquisition” (Kim, 2009).

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the quantitative data from the questionnaire related to Saudi children’s early literacy practices at homes. Five hundred questionnaires were distributed and 325 returned (65 per cent). The response rate in a self-administrated questionnaire should be 60 per cent or more, so the return rate in this study was appropriate (Babbie, 1973; Richardson, 2005). Some basic information about participants’ demographics, derived from the analysis of study variables through SPSS statistical software, is analysed in this chapter. The significance level was set at $P = 0.05$. Sociocultural theory was used as a theoretical framework for this study to address the primary research question and sub-questions presented in Chapters One and Five. The questions discussed in this chapter relate to children’s early literacy practices, adults’ literacy attitudes and beliefs toward adults’ roles, and communication between home and kindergarten. These variables were analysed using descriptive analysis, followed by factor analysis, in order to identify the correlations between them and other variables, including parental level of education, level of income, child’s age, and presence of maids at home. Before addressing the relationships between study variables, it is important to understand the parents’ demographic information.

6.2 Descriptive Analysis

6.2.1 Demographic information of participants

The analysis of parents’ demographic information included their levels of education, income levels, and children’s ages when their parents started teaching them literacy (see questionnaire in Appendix A.1). The participants included 52 fathers (16.0 per cent) and 270 mothers (83.1 per cent), of whom 180 (55.4 per cent) participants had qualifications equivalent to a Bachelor degree, and 127 (39.1 per cent) participants had lower levels of education. The analysis revealed that 18 (5.5 per cent) participants reported having postgraduate degrees. Participants’ average household salaries were calculated in Saudi Riyal (SR) per month. One

hundred and sixty participants (49.2 per cent) reported income levels of less than 9000 SR, followed by 107 participants (32.9 per cent) who reported having average levels of income between 9001 SR (equal to \$3127 AUD) and 15,000 SR (equal to \$5210 AUD) per month (Table 6.1 shows the details). This particular population, based in Mecca, had a greater proportion of people with a below-average income than the general population of KSA (Brown, 2014).

Table 6.1

6.1: Frequency Distribution of Participants by their Demographic Characteristics, Including Qualification, Income Level, and their Child's Age

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	N	%	%	%
Children's age group in months				
36-46 months old	10	3.1	3.1	3.1
47-57 months old	76	23.4	23.4	26.5
58-68 months old	231	71.1	71.1	97.5
69 and over	8	2.5	2.5	100.0
Total	325	100.0	100.0	
Participants' parental status				
Father	52	16.0	16.1	16.1
Mother	270	83.1	83.9	100.0
Sub-total	322	99.1	100.0	
Missing (other)	3	0.9		
Total	325	100.0		
Household level of income (SR)				
(1 AUD=2.91SR)				
<9000	160	49.2	49.2	49.2
9001-15000	107	32.9	32.9	82.2
15001-20000	36	11.1	11.1	93.2
20001-30000	15	4.6	4.6	97.8
30001-40000	1	.3	.3	98.2
>40000	6	1.8	1.8	100.0
Total	325	100.0	100.0	
Level of education				
Completed primary school	16	4.9	4.9	1.5
Completed high school	86	26.5	26.5	5.5
Diploma	25	7.7	7.7	60.9
Bachelor degree	180	55.4	55.4	68.6
Masters	13	4.0	4.0	95.1
PhD	5	1.5	1.5	100.0
Total	325	100.0	100.0	

Later, the income categories of 30001-40000SR, and over 40000SR, were grouped into one single category for more detailed analysis. This indicated that all participants were from middle-income families. Participants' children's ages ranged from 36 to 71 months (aged three to five and a half years old) with a mean of 60.16 \pm 5.92. The children were divided into a number of age groups, of whom the majority belonged to age group 58 to 68 months old ($n = 231$, 71.1%). Children's early literacy practices will be discussed in the following section.

6.3 Children's Early Literacy Practices at Home

The primary research question asked was this: how are literacy environments supporting young children's literacy learning? Several factor analyses were conducted in relation to parental involvement in their children's literacy learning. These factors included children's literacy at early age, children's languages and phonemic awareness, children's response to print, children's reading attitudes and interests, children's writing and drawing, technological interests, adults' literacy attitudes, and practices at homes. Table 6.2 indicates the child's age when their parents started singing for them, showing pictures or alphabetic letters to them, or reading to them. According to this table, the children's mean age was 17.90 months (with SD \pm 13.39), ranging from one month to 54 months when their parents started singing for them. The children's mean age was 24.50 \pm 11.54 when their parents started to show them pictures, ranging from a minimum of one to 60 months, and 40.17 months, with a standard deviation of 10.79, when their parents started showing them alphabetic letters, ranging from a minimum of four to a maximum of 62 months. In relation to reading, the children's mean age was also 43.98 \pm 11.56 months when their parents started reading for them, ranging from a minimum of eight months to a maximum of 62 months (see Table 6.2).

These results showed that some Saudi parents starting singing for their children from one month, but the majority started later. Most parents started reading activities, such as pointing to pictures and alphabetic letters, at five years of age. These results are likely to reflect that although most parents seemed to start reading activities when their children became older, those parents appeared to be aware of the importance of early literacy and their own practices. These findings further support the idea of Bennett et al. (2002), from the USA, that parental literacy attitudes that afford opportunity for young children to learn were essential in their children's literacy and language acquisition in preschool. To get a clear understanding about children's reading attitudes at home, subsequent analysis is provided in the following section.

Table 6.2

6.2: Child's Age at the Onset of Singing, Reading, Showing Pictures, and Alphabetic Letters

		Child's age during singing	Child's age while pointing to pictures	Child's age while pointing to alphabetic letters	Child's age during reading
N	Valid	325	325	325	325
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		17.90	24.50	40.17	43.98
Std. Deviation		13.39	11.54	10.79	11.56
Minimum		1	1	4	8
Maximum		54	60	62	62

6.4 Factor Analysis**6.4.1 Child's reading attitudes and interests at home**

To answer the primary research question, I analysed children's literacy attitudes using factor analysis in order to identity the relationships between variables (see Appendix D, Table 6.1). Table 6.3 shows the 12 items relating to child's reading attitudes and interests at home. These were initially factor analysed using principal component analysis with Varimax orthogonal (independent) rotation. Further specific details of selected factor analyses can be found in Appendix D. The reading attitudes included: interest in story, pretend reading, story making, completing words when parents started reading, interest in adults' materials, asking adults for help when reading, spelling, pointing to pictures and logos, asking questions about story characters, and collaboration in reading activity.

Generally, eight items loaded onto Factor A relate to a child's interest in/attitudes about reading, and accordingly they were labelled as a single factor: "child's interest in reading-related traits". Another four items were loaded onto Factor B, related to a child's reported interest and attitudes about reading activities. Since they were related to the usefulness of storytelling in helping children's reading abilities, this factor was labelled, "using storytelling as a reading promotion". The overall communalities of the included variables are quite low, with one variable (S2_Q1e_Interest_Adult_Reading) having a small amount of variance (27.1 per cent) in common with the other variables in the analysis. This may reflect that the variables selected for this analysis are only poorly related to each other. However, the KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity both indicated that the set of variables are at least adequately

related for factor analysis. The analysis showed that children had positive attitudes toward engaging in reading practices at home.

Table 6.3

6.3: Factor Loadings and Communalities Based on a Principle Component Analysis with Orthogonal Rotation for 12 Survey Items Related to Child's Reading Attitudes and Interests at Home

Rotated Component Matrix ^a	Component Loadings		Communality
	Factor A: Child's interest in reading	Factor B: Using storytelling as a reading promotion	
S2_Q1a_Interest_Story		0.70	0.50
S2_Q1b_Pretend_Read		0.80	0.65
S2_Q1c_Story_Making		0.75	0.62
S2_Q1d_Filling_Words	0.36	0.55	0.44
S2_Q1e_Interest_Adult_Reading	0.41	0.31	0.27
S2_Q1f_Asking_Help_Reading	0.66		0.46
S2_Q1g_Naming_Letters	0.73		0.53
S2_Q1h_Spelling	0.72		0.55
S2_Q1i_Pointing_Pictures	0.62	0.41	0.55
S2_Q1j_Pointing_Logos	0.74		0.58
S2_Q1k_Asking_Ques_Characters	0.52	0.44	0.47
S2_Q1l_Collaborating	0.54	0.33	0.40
Initial Eigenvalue	4.729	1.340	
% of Total Variance (before rotation)	39.409	11.163	
Rotated Eigenvalue	3.405	2.663	
% of Total Variance (after rotation)	28.377	22.196	
Total Variance		50.572	

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotated Component Matrix^a: Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Factor loadings/small co-efficients < 0.30 are suppressed (only item loadings > 0.30 were considered relevant to factor loadings)

Factor loadings > 0.30

Parents were asked the following questions: “does your child have books at home? If yes, how many picture books do you have in your home for your child's use?” Table (6.4.1) indicates parents' responses (yes, no) to having books at home. According to this table, 293 parents (90.2 per cent) reported that their children have access to books at their homes.

Table 6.4.1

6.4.2: Numbers of Picture Books at Home

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Yes	293	90.2	90.2	90.2
	No	32	9.8	9.8	100.0
	Total	325	100.0	100.0	

The findings clearly show that most families surveyed had books at home. From those who responded “yes”, a total of 200 (61.5 per cent) parents noted that they had 1-10 books available at their homes for their children’s use. Overall, there were an average of 2.4 ± 1.09 (*i.e.* Mean \pm SD) picture books available at homes to be used by children (see Table 6.4.2). It can be noted that all participants in this study are from middle and below average income families, which may have justified the low number of printed books owned by children.

Table 6.4.2

6.4.1: Having Books at Home

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No books	32	9.8	9.8	9.8
	1-10 books	200	61.5	61.5	71.4
	11-20 books	55	16.9	16.9	88.3
	21-30 books	20	6.2	6.2	94.5
	31-40 books	10	3.1	3.1	97.5
	41-50 books	2	.6	.6	98.2
	More than 50 books	6	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	325	100.0	100.0	

More than a half of parents ($n = 174$, 53.5%) reported that their children never ($n = 44$, 13.5%) or rarely ($n = 130$, 40.0%) indicated an interest in having a story told to or read for them (see Table 6.2 in Appendix D). When parents were asked about their children’s accessibility to other types of reading materials (*e.g.* comic books, electronic books and magazines) that children could use in their homes, parents ($n = 238$, 90%) reported having them at home for their children. These reading materials included storybooks, cooking menus, alphabetic posters, iBooks and literacy apps on iPads, educational programs downloaded on the computers, felt boards with story figures, signs and labels, magnetic letters, and Quranic resources (books and CDs). These results reflected that Saudi parents are aware of

contemporary literacy perspectives, which is consistent with data obtained in Australian studies by Jones Diaz et al. (2000) and Castles et al. (2014). These studies found that families had broad definitions of literacy that encompassed emergent literacy skills such as book-handling, retelling familiar narrative, approximations of writing, use of technologies, media and environmental print resources, oral language, letter use, watching television, and phonemic awareness.

As part of investigating parental involvement, parents were asked whether children had access to any libraries from which to choose and read their favourite books (see Table 6.3 in Appendix D). One hundred and twenty-six participants (38.77 per cent) reported “yes” to this question (see Appendix D, Table A6.4). Later in the qualitative stage it was noticed that for this group of participants, going to “public libraries” meant having access to bookstores. Those participants, who did not refer to any libraries, reported that there were no public libraries that had reading sections for children (see Appendix D, Table A6.4). In regards to the frequency of a child’s response to print, the majority of participants ($n=100$, 30.8 %) noted that their children never frequently identify any words in their environment. Likewise, the majority of participants ($n=130$, 40.0%) noted that their children could not frequently identify the front, back, top of, and bottom of a book, and had not turned pages appropriately for Arabic language. The participants were also asked to show the extent to which their children had recognised that illustrations on a page were related to what the print said. Again, the majority of participants ($n=288$, 8.6 %) noted that their children had not frequently recognised the issue (see Appendix D, Table A6.6).

6.4.2 Children’s response to print

To further analyse parental involvement in children’s literacy learning, parents’ beliefs about their children’s responses to print were analysed (see Table 6.5). The three items (a-c) relating to parents’ beliefs in child’s responses to print (see questionnaire) were also factor analysed using principal component analysis with Varimax (orthogonal) rotation (see Table A6.1 in Appendix D for more details).

Table 6.5.

6.5: Factor Analysis Table on Reasons for the Parents' Belief about Children's Response to Print

Component Matrix ^a	Component Loadings	Communality
	Factor A: child's response to print	
S2_Q5a_Identifying_Words_Environment	0.691	0.47
S2_Q5b_Identifying_From_Book	0.795	0.63
S2_Q5c_Recognising_Illustration	0.844	0.71
Initial Eigenvalue	1.823	
% of Total Variance (Before rotation)	60.760	
Total Variance	60.760	

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Component Matrix^a: Component Matrixa: Only one component was extracted. The solution cannot be rotated.

Factor loadings/small co-efficients < 0.30 are suppressed (only item loadings > 0.30 were considered relevant to factor loadings)

Note: Factor loadings > 0.30.

When asked whether or not children in the study knew that Arabic scripts/language are written and printed from right to left in a cursive style, most parents ($n=256$, 78.8 %) responded “yes” and noted that their children knew about some specific aspects of print relating to the Arabic writing and printing style (see Appendix D, Table A6.5). This result showed that young children are learning the conventions of print, which may have been influenced by their own parents' positive attitudes toward reading at home.

6.4.3 Child's language and phonemic awareness

The 10 Likert scale items relating to a child's language and phonemic awareness were initially factor analysed (see Appendix D, Table A6.1), using principal component analysis with Varimax orthogonal (independent) rotation. Generally, six items were loaded onto Factor A, which were related to children's awareness of rhyming words/sounds, and as such this factor was labelled “child's attention to rhyming sounds”. Another four items loaded onto a second factor were related to a child's awareness of language and phonetics through interaction with others, and were then categorised as Factor B: children's interactions with others as language adoption (see Table 6.6).

Table 6.6

6.6: Factor Analysis of Parents' Responses to their Children's Language and Phonemics Awareness

Rotated Component Matrix ^a	Component Loadings		Communality
	Factor A: child's attention to rhyming sounds	Factor B: children's interactions with Others	
S2_Q7a_Producing_Rhyming	.792		.640
S2_Q7b_Commenting_Rhyming	.798		.666
S2_Q7c_Repeating_Clapped	.831		.716
S2_Q7d_Recognising_Rhyming	.656		.460
S2_Q7e_Relating_Sounds	.507	.455	.464
S2_Q7f_Singing_Songs	.304	.629	.489
S2_Q7g_Following_Verbal		.850	.723
S2_Q7h_Participating_Conversation		.838	.711
S2_Q7i_Interacting_Others		.703	.570
S2_Q7j_Using_Language	.795		.650
Initial Eigenvalue	4.37	1.715	
% of Total Variance (before rotation)	43.736	17.153	
Rotated Eigenvalue	3.451	2.638	
% of Total Variance (after rotation)	34.509	26.380	
Total Variance		60.889	

The overall communalities of the included variables are moderate, even though some items (d, e, and f) do not explain at least half (50.0 per cent) of each original item's variance, suggesting that these three items/variables are only moderately related to other items. However, the KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity both indicated that the set of variables are at least adequately related for factor analysis.

Almost three-quarters of the participants ($n=244$, 75.1 %) reported that their children had sung simple songs, either on a daily basis ($n=98$, 30.2 %) or several times a day ($n=146$, 44.9 %) (see Table A6.7 in Appendix D). These results indicated there was a relationship between parents' attitudes toward teaching their children language and phonemic awareness and positive literacy attitudes toward learning at home. These findings matched those observed in earlier studies by Kim (2009), which suggested that there was a positive association between the frequency of parental home reading and children's vocabulary, phonological awareness and letter-name knowledge.

6.4.4 Child's writing and drawing

The six items (a-f) relating to the parent's belief in their child's writing and drawing activities (see Table 6.7 below & Table A6.1 in Appendix D) were also factor analysed, using principal component analysis with Varimax (orthogonal) rotation. A large number of participants ($n=192$, 59.1 %) noted their children had frequently pretended to write letters, either on a daily basis ($n=92$, 28.3 %) or several times a day ($n=100$, 30.8 %) (see Table A6.8 Appendix D). When asked about the tools that children used for drawing purposes, almost one-third of the participants ($n=107$, 32.9 %) reported that their children had used a mix of drawing tools (pencil and crayon) and technologies (iPad and computer). Other participants (32.0 per cent) reported their children used both pencil and iPad as the main drawing tools (see Appendix D, Table A6.9). This again indicates emergent print awareness and writing behaviours.

Table 6.7

6.7: Factor Analysis of Children's Writing and Drawing Activities

Component Matrix ^a	Component Loadings	Communality
	Factor A: writing and drawing as a means of children's learning	
S2_Q8a_Drawing_Pictures	.744	.553
S2_Q8b_Writing_Letters	.755	.570
S2_Q8c_Pretending_Write	.680	.463
S2_Q8d_Writing_Words	.663	.440
S2_Q8e_Drawing_Pictures_Telling_Story	.760	.578
S2_Q8f_Collaboration_Writing_Experiences	.620	.384
Initial Eigenvalue	2.988	
% of Total Variance (Before rotation)	49.801	
Total Variance	49.801	

6.4.5 Child's technological interests

The seven Likert scale items relating to the child's technological interests were initially factor analysed in Table 6.8, using principal component analysis with Varimax orthogonal (independent) rotation. Generally, four items were loaded onto Factor A, which were related to children's interest in using technology for learning, and accordingly this factor was labelled "*interest in using technology as a literacy source*". Another three items were loaded onto a second factor related to the child's interest in information and communication technologies, and were then categorised under the second factor as "*technology adoption to learn and*

communicate with others in interaction with others”. The overall communalities of the included variables were almost reasonable (> 50.0 per cent of the variances), even though variable *e* explained less than half (50.0 per cent) of the original variable’s variance, suggesting that this item/variable is poorly related to other items. However, the KMO and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity both indicated that the set of variables are at least adequately related for factor analysis (see Table A6.1 in Appendix D).

Table 6.8

6.8: Factor Analysis of Child’s Technological Interests

Rotated Component Matrix ^a			
	Component Loadings		Communality
	Factor A: interest in using technology as a literacy source	Factor B: technology adoption to learn and communicate with others	
S2_Q10a_Using_Computers_Play	.721		.525
S2_Q10b_Using_Computers_Listen	.868		.754
S2_Q10c_Watching_Movies	.738		.633
S2_Q10d_Listening_Online	.753		.653
S2_Q10e_Writing_Names		.564	.346
S2_Q10f_Communicating		.800	.651
S2_Q10g_Using_Computers_Search		.832	.707
Initial Eigenvalue	2.97	1.29	
% of total variance (before rotation)	42.56	18.42	
Rotated Eigenvalue	2.43	1.83	
% of total variance (after rotation)	34.84	26.14	
Total variance		60.988	

The majority of parents ($n=207$, 63.7 %) reported that their children’s interest in technological advances using computers, phones or tablet pads were commonly of interest to their children for playing alphabet games (see Table A6.10 in Appendix D). When parents were asked whether they spent any time with their children watching TV programs, almost all participants ($n=323$, 99.4 %) reported watching TV programs with their children, while only two (0.6 per cent) reported that they did not watch TV programs with their children at home (see Table 6.9.1). When asked about the amount of time their children spent watching TV programs, parents ($n=240$, 73.8 %) reported that their children allocated less than 4 hours to

watching TV programs per day (see Table 6.9.2). As shown in Table 6.10, almost participants ($n=151$, 46.5 %) noted that their children had only used TV to watch cartoon programs, followed by 138 participants (42.5 per cent) who reported their children had used TV for a combination of cartoon and rhyme programs.

Table 6.9.1

6.9.1: Parent and Child Television Co-viewing

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative %
Valid	Yes	323	99.4	99.4	99.4
	No	2	0.6	0.6	100.0
	Total	325	100.0	100.0	

Table 6.9.2

6.9.2: Children's Hours of Television Viewing

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative %
Valid	0-2 hours per day	98	30.2	30.2	30.2
	2-4 hours per day	142	43.7	43.7	73.8
	4-6 hours monthly	31	9.5	9.5	83.4
	6-14 hours per day	14	4.3	4.3	87.7
	14-20 hours monthly	15	4.6	4.6	92.3
	20-25 hours monthly	25	7.7	7.7	100.0
	Total	325	100.0	100.0	

Table 6.10

6.10: Common TV Programs Watched by Children

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Nothing	2	.6	.6	.6
	Cartoon programs only	151	46.5	46.5	47.1
	1(Dora)	1	.3	.3	47.4
	Cartoon and rhymes programs	138	42.5	42.5	89.8
	Cartoons and national geography	13	4.0	4.0	93.8
	Cartoon, music, rhymes, sport, etc	18	5.5	5.5	99.4
	Cartoon and educational programs	2	.6	.6	100.0
	Total	325	100.0	100.0	

6.4.6 Adults' literacy attitudes and practices at home

The 12 Likert scale items relating to adults' literacy attitudes and practices at home were initially factor analysed in Table 6.2, using principal component analysis with Varimax orthogonal (independent) rotation. Generally, five items, including items h to l, were loaded onto Factor A, which related to adults' literacy attitudes and practices at home, and accordingly they were placed under Factor A, labelled "*parent's interaction with their children's literacy activities*". Items a, d, e and g were strongly loaded onto the second factor, which was related to adults' literacy attitudes and practices at home, and were then categorised under Factor B as "*parents' attitudes towards their children's literacy learning*" (see Table 6.11). The remaining three items (b, c and f) were also strongly loaded onto the third component and were labelled as "*adults' role in supporting child's literacy*" (see Table A6.1 in Appendix D). The overall communality for each variable was close to 0.50 of the variance of that variable with one item having a communality lower than 0.50 (*i.e.* 0.367). Although this item (b) explains less than half of the original variable's/item's variance (suggesting this variable is only poorly related to other items), the KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity both indicated that the set of variables were at least adequately related for factor analysis.

Table 6.11

6.11: Factor Analysis of Adults' Literacy Attitudes and Practices at Home

Rotated Component Matrix ^a				
	Component Loadings			Communality
	Factor A Parent's interaction with their child's literacy activities	Factor B Parent's attitudes towards their child's literacy learning	Factor C Adult's role in supporting child's literacy	
S3_Q2a_Mother_Reading		.542	.322	.443
S3_Q2b_Father_Reading			.496	.367
S3_Q2c_Maid_Reading			.859	.749
S3_Q2d_Encouraging_Child		.612		.452
S3_Q2e_Attempt_Teach		.796		.662
S3_Q2f_Playing_Rhyme		.316	.591	.504
S3_Q2g_Helping_Child_Write		.603		.441
S3_Q2h_Discussing_Child	.551	.461		.517
S3_Q2i_Playing_Child_Games	.718			.595
S3_Q2j_Engaging_Child	.747			.616
S3_Q2k_Telling_Stories	.812			.681
S3_Q2l_Providing_Opportunity	.682			0.50
Initial Eigenvalue	4.142	1.275	1.118	
% of total variance (before rotation)	34.517	10.625	9.316	
Rotated Eigenvalue	2.754	2.181	1.600	
% of total variance (after rotation)	22.949	18.178	13.330	
Total variance			54.457	

When parents were asked about their reading attitudes, mothers ($n=200$, 61.5 %) reported they read to their children on a daily basis ($n=122$, 37.5 %), while only 74 (22.7 %) reported that fathers did so on a frequent, daily basis (see Appendix D, Table A6.11). When asked what types of activities they usually do while playing with their children, 78 participants (24.0 per cent) reported that they do nothing. However, participants ($n=96$, 29.5 %) reported physical activities and exercise, including football, walking, and biking most commonly, followed by 72 participants (22.2 per cent), who played computer games (see Appendix D, Table A6.12).

When asked what else participants used at home to improve their children's literacy skills, 67 (20.6 per cent) reported they do nothing, 49 (15.1 per cent) reported practicing alphabetises and phonetics, 47 (14.5 per cent) reported conversation, and 47 (14.5 per cent)

reported reading books as the most dominant activities (for more details see Appendix D, Table A6.13). When asked about the public holidays specific to participants' cultural heritage that were celebrated by the families, 278 participants (85.5 per cent) reported celebrating Eids and the remainder celebrated both Eids and National Day (see Table 6.12).

Table 6.12

6.12: Cultural Heritage Events (and Holidays) Celebrated by Participants

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Eids	278	85.5	85.5	85.5
	Eids and National Day	47	14.5	14.5	100.0
	Total	325	100.0	100.0	

When asked about the literacy resources that participants reported their children have access to at home, almost half of the children were reported ($n=152$, 46.8 %) to have access to a range of literacy resources at their homes. Alphabetic posters, cards, or whiteboards were the second most dominant literacy resources that some participants ($n=67$, 20.6 %) reported were used by their children (more details in Appendix D, Table A6.14).

6.4.7 Parents' beliefs toward adults' roles

A sub-question was the following: "How do parents view the role of early childhood teachers and maids in their children's literacy learning?" To answer this, the six items relating to maids' literacy attitudes and practices at home (Table 6.13) were factor analysed, using principal component analysis with Varimax (orthogonal) rotation. More details relating to the factor analysis of maids' literacy attitudes is shown in Table A6.1 in Appendix D.

Table 6.13

6.13: Factor Analysis of Maids' Literacy Attitudes and Practices at Home

Component Matrix ^a	Component Loadings	Communality
	Factor A: Maid's attitude toward child's literacy development	
S4_Q5b_Maid_Singing	.830	.689
S4_Q5c_Maid_Writing	.773	.597
S4_Q5d_Maid_Watching	.701	.492
S4_Q5e_Maid_Using_Own_Language	.593	.352
S4_Q5f_Maid_Sport_Cooking	.454	.206
S4_Q5a_Maid_Reading	.721	.520
Initial Eigenvalue	2.855	
% of total variance (before rotation)	47.588	
Total variance	47.588	

Parents were asked how strongly they agreed with a series of statements about literacy, indicating their strength of belief in statements about their own role, as well as the role of ECTs and maids in assisting children's literacy learning (see Table 6.14). According to this table, the majority of participants ($n=271$, 83.4 %) did not believe that ECTs played a role in fostering children's literacy learning: they either strongly disagreed ($n=98$), moderately disagreed ($n=142$) or disagreed ($n=31$). Similarly, over two-thirds of the participants ($n=228$, 70.1 %) disagreed that maids played a significant role in children's literacy development: they either strongly agreed ($n=178$), moderately agreed ($n=51$), or agreed ($n=83$). In contrast, almost all participants ($n=312$, 96.0 %) agreed that fathers played a significant role in their children's literacy development. Likewise, the same number of participants ($n=311$, 95.7 %) were in agreement that mothers play a role in their children's literacy development. The four Likert scale items relating to adult beliefs in their children's literacy development were initially factor analysed using principal component analysis with Varimax (orthogonal) rotation.

Parents were asked whether there are any maids at home. Almost two-thirds of the participants ($n=208$, 64.0 %) reported having no maids in their homes, while other participants ($n=117$, 36 %) indicated they did have maids at home (see Appendix D, Table A6.17). For those participants who reported having maids at home, their maids had worked for 31.38 ± 35.98 months (mean \pm SD), with a range of 1 – 204 months. Of these, 61 maids were Asian (52.1 per cent) and the rest were African ($n=56$, 47.9 %). Participants reported that the time

these maids spent with their children was either 2 – 4 hours ($n=61$, 52.1 %) or more than 4 hours ($n=56$, 47.9 %).

Table 6.14

6.14: Participants' Literacy Beliefs towards Adults' Roles in their Children's Literacy Development

Adults' Literacy Beliefs	Frequency Distribution [n, (%)]			A*	MA*	SA*	Total n(%)
	SD*	MD*	D*				
a. ECTs	98(30.2)	142(43.7)	31(9.5)	14(4.3)	15(4.6)	25(7.7)	325(100.0)
b. Fathers	7(2.2)	1(0.3)	5(1.5)	83(25.5)	51(15.7)	178(54.8)	325(100.0)
c. Maids	162(49.8)	18(5.5)	48(14.8)	37(11.4)	32(9.8)	28(8.6)	325(100.0)
d. Mothers	9(2.8)	1(0.3)	4(1.2)	18(5.5)	24(7.4)	269(82.8)	325(100.0)

While participants ($n=46$, 39.3 %) noted that their maids did multiple tasks when spending time with their children, participants ($n=35$, 29.9 %) reported their maids played computer games and/or watched TV, followed by ($n=22$, 18.8 %) who mentioned that their maids had been supervising their children (see Appendix D, Table A6.25). When parents were asked whether their maids were involved with their children in at-home literacy learning activities, the majority of participants ($n=74$, 63.2 %) reported “yes”. These results uphold the previous finding by Al-Qaryouti and Kilani (2013) that middle income Omani families without maids at home were more enthusiastic about their children's learning than high-income families with maids. Subsequent analyses relate to the relationship between the presence of a maid at home and children's early literacy learning.

6.5 Communication Between Home and Kindergarten Settings

Another sub-question was the following: “how do parents view their role in communicating with early childhood teachers, and how often do they communicate?” According to Table 6.15, mothers were reported to be the main communicators with their children's teachers ($n=293$, 90.2 %). Fathers were less involved in communicating with teachers ($n=15$, 4.6 %), which is dictated by gender segregation law in KSA. Alameen et al.'s (2015) study found fathers were fully engaged with early childhood leaders who were females,

which was indicated to be unusual in a Saudi education context. This may be a subject for further investigation.

Table 6.15

6.15: Participants' View on the Person who Usually Communicates with Teacher

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Mother	293	90.2	90.2	90.2
	Father	15	4.6	4.6	94.8
	Both Parents	1	.3	.3	95.1
	Other Family Members or Relatives	16	4.9	4.9	100.0
	Total	325	100.0	100.0	

The most frequent mode of communication with mothers was by meeting in person ($n=170$, 52.3 %), followed by telephone call ($n=75$, 23.1 %). Using technology such as email was less frequent ($n=2$, 0.6 %). This finding did not match previous findings by Alameen et al. (2015), who found that using technological channels of communication, such as websites and email, was effective in bridging the gap between home and school settings in KSA.

Over half of the participants ($n=170$, 52.3 %) preferred to communicate with their children's teacher in person, followed by participants ($n=75$, 23.1 %) who reported using telephones (see Table 6.16).

Table 6.16

6.16: Mode of Communication between Child's Teacher and Mother

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	In person	170	52.3	52.3	52.3
	Email	2	.6	.6	52.9
	Letter	34	10.5	10.5	63.4
	Telephone	75	23.1	23.1	86.5
	Other ways	44	13.5	13.5	100.0
	Total	325	100.0	100.0	

The majority of participants ($n=145$, 44.6 %) reported having occasional communication with their children's teacher, followed by participants ($n=79$, 24.3 %), who noted this occurred on a weekly basis. A considerable number of participants ($n=54$, 16.6 %) reported that they

rarely communicated with their children’s teachers (see Table 6.17). When participants were asked about their satisfaction with the type and amount of communication they had with their children’s teachers, just over 70 per cent of the participants ($n=228$) reported their being satisfied. Nearly 30 per cent of participants ($n=97$) were not satisfied with the ways they communicated with their children’s teachers (see Appendix D, Table A6.26).

Table 6.17

6.17: Frequency of Communication between Parents and their Children’s Teachers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Rarely	54	16.6	16.6	16.6
	On occasion	145	44.6	44.6	61.2
	Weekly	79	24.3	24.3	85.5
	Daily	46	14.2	14.2	99.7
	Several times per day	1	.3	.3	100.0
	Total	325	100.0	100.0	

6.6 The Association Between HLE Variables

6.6.1 Relationships between parental levels of education and child’s interest in reading

The differences between mothers’ and fathers’ attitudes toward their children’s learning of reading was analysed to address the following research questions: “to what extent and in what ways do parents engage in their children’s literacy activities?” An independent-samples t -test was first conducted to compare mean scores of both the child’s interest in reading, and the use of storytelling as reading promotion by parents. No significant differences were found between scores for fathers ($M=0.022$, $SD=1.024$) and mothers ($M=0.003$, $SD=0.997$); $t_{(320)} = 0.125$, $P = 0.900$, based on the child’s interest in reading (see Tables 6.18). In addition, no significant difference was found between the scores for fathers ($M=0.123$, $SD=1.034$) and mothers ($M=-0.020$, $SD=0.995$); $t_{(320)} = 0.949$, $P = 0.344$, based on the use of storytelling for teaching reading. These results suggest that parenting status had no effects on the children’s interest in reading or on the use of stories as a reading development technique.

Table 6.18.1

6.18.1: Group Statistics

	Parenting Status	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE
Child's interest in reading and stories as a reading development technique	Father	52	0.020	1.02	0.14
	Mother	270	0.00	0.995	0.06
	Father	52	0.123	1.03	0.14
	Mother	270	-0.020	0.995	0.06

Table 6.18.2

6.18.2: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		<i>t</i> -test for Equality of Means						
		F	P	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Child's interest in reading	Equal variances assumed	.001	.978	.125	320	0.90	.018	0.151	-0.279	0.31
	Equal variances not assumed			.123	70.87	0.90	.018	.154	-0.289	0.32
Using storytelling as a reading promotion	Equal variances assumed	.011	.918	.949	320	.344	.143	.151	-.154	.442
	Equal variances not assumed			.924	70.37	.359	.143	.155	-.166	.454

6.6.2 Correlation between children's age and their interest in reading

Table 6.19 shows the correlation between child age and interest in reading when using storytelling as a reading promotion technique. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to assess this relationship at a significance level of $P = 0.05$. There were no correlations between age and interest in reading ($r = -0.030$, $n = 325$, $P = 0.591$) or use of

storytelling ($r = -0.035$, $n = 325$, $P = 0.530$). The narrow age range could be a reason for this. Likewise, this is a time that children often express emergent interest in reading.

Table 6.19

6.19: Pearson Correlations Between Study Variables and Child Age

Variables		Children's age	Children's interest in reading	Using storytelling as a reading promotion technique
Child's age	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	325		
Children's interest in reading	Pearson Correlation	-.030	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.591		
	N	325	325	
Using storytelling as a language promotion technique	Pearson Correlation	-0.035	.000	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.530	1.000	
	N	325	325	325

Note. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The association between household income level and children's interest in reading, or the use of story as a language development technique, was analysed. Table 6.20 represents a one-way between-subjects ANOVA, which was conducted to compare the effect of household income level on the children's interest in reading or on the use of stories as a language development technique. There were no effects of household income on the children's interest in reading [$F_{(4, 320)} = 1.836$, $P = 0.122$], nor on the use of story as a language development technique [$F_{(4, 320)} = 1.320$, $P = 0.262$]. These results suggest that in this study, household income level does not influence children's interest in reading or the use of stories for language development.

Table 6.20

6.20: One-Way ANOVA Between Study Variables and Household Level of Income

	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	P
Children's interest in reading	Between groups	7.269	4	1.817		
	Within groups	316.7	320	.990	1.836	.122
	Total	324	324			

Using storytelling	Between groups	5.258	4	1.314		
as a language	Within groups	318.7	320	.996		
promotion	Total	324	324		1.320	.262
technique						

Table 6.21 represents a one-way between-subjects ANOVA which was conducted to compare the effect of parents' educational level on children's interest in reading or the use of story as a language development technique. There was no significant effect of parents' education on children's interest in reading [$F_{(5, 319)} = 0.502, P = 0.775$], nor on the use of story as a language development technique [$F_{(5, 319)} = 1.375, P = 0.233$]. These results suggest that parents' educational level did not contribute to their children's interest in reading or their use of story in language development. This contrasts with earlier studies that found that parental education level influenced children's emergent literacy development in areas such as storybook reading, identifying letters of the alphabet, visiting the library, and having discussions about print materials (Bingham, 2007; Burgess, 2010; Hartas, 2011; Korat, 2009; Korat, Klein & Segal-Drori, 2007; Roberts et al., 2005; Wu & Honig, 2010; Yong, 2009). I suggested that a family's level of book ownership and education is not necessarily related to whether or not they encourage their children to read.

Table 6.21

6.21: One-Way ANOVA Between Study Variables and Parents' Educational Level

	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Children's interest in reading	Between groups	2.527	5	.505		
	Within groups	321.4	319	1.008	.502	.775
	Total	324.0	324			
Using storytelling as a reading promotion technique	Between groups	6.833	5	1.367		
	Within groups	317.1	319	.994	1.375	.233
	Total	324.0	324			

Comparisons of mean interest in: 1) reading, and 2) storytelling as reading promotion, in "book" and "no book" conditions were conducted. An independent-samples *t*-test (Table 6.22.2) was conducted to compare mean scores of both "*child's interest in reading*" and "*using storytelling*" in children with and without books at home. There was a significant difference in mean scores between children with books ($M = -0.064, SD = 0.9695$) and those without ($M = 0.5865, SD = 1.0970$), in terms of their use of stories as language development technique

($t_{(323)} = -3.557, P = 0.000$). However, no significant difference was found between the score of children who had books at home ($M = -0.029, SD = .977$) and those without ($M = 0.2655, SD = 1.1686$) in terms of their interest in reading [$t_{(323)} = -1.586, P = 0.114$]. These results suggest that having books at home only effects children's use of story as a language development technique.

Table 6.22.1

6.22.1: Group Statistics

	Having books at home	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE
Child's interest in reading	Yes	293	-0.0290	.977	0.057
	No	32	0.2655	1.1686	0.206
Using stories as a language development technique	Yes	293	-0.064	.969	0.056
	No	32	0.586	1.097	0.193

Table 6.22.2

6.22.2: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		<i>t</i> -test for Equality of Means						
		<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>T</i>	d.f.	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Child's interest in reading	Equal variances assumed	1.372	.242	-1.586	3235	0.114	-.2945	0.185	-.6599	0.0708
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.374	35.89	0.178	-.2945	.2143	-.7292	0.1402
Using storytelling as a reading promotion	Equal variances assumed	.271	.603	-3.557	323	.000	-.6505	.1829	-1.0104	.2906
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.220	36.48	.003	-.6505	.2020	-1.0601	.2410

A comparison of child's interest in reading or using storytelling as a reading promotion in "maid" and "no maid" conditions was conducted (see Table 6.23). An independent-samples *t*-

test compared “child’s interest in reading” and “using stories as a language development technique” in “maid” and “no maid” conditions. There was no significant difference in the scores for maid ($M=0.0119$, $SD=0.999$) and no maid ($M=-0.0066$, $SD=01.002$) conditions; [$t_{(323)}=0.161$, $P=0.872$] in terms of children’s interest in reading.

Similarly, no significant difference was found between the scores for “maid” and “no maid” conditions in terms of using stories as a language development technique [$t_{(323)}=-0.741$, $P=0.459$]. This suggests that the presence of a maid at home has no effect on the child’s interest in reading nor on using storytelling as reading promotion.

Table 6.23.1

6.23.1: Group Statistics

	Maid at home	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE
Child’s interest in reading	Yes	117	.0119	.9990	.0923
	No	208	-.0066	1.002	.0695
Using stories as a language development technique	Yes	117	-.0548	.9285	.0858
	No	208	.0308	1.038	.0720

Table 6.23.2

6.23.2: Independent Samples Test

		Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	P	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Child’s interest in reading	Equal variances assumed	.002	.966	.161	323	0.872	.0188	.1157	-.2090	0.246
	Equal variances not assumed			.161	243.3	0.872	.0188	.1156	-.2091	0.246
Using storytelling as a reading promotion	Equal variances assumed	3.962	.047	-.741	323	.459	-.0856	.1156	.3131	.1418
	Equal variances not assumed			-.764	263.6	.445	-.0856	.1120	-.3063	.1350

A comparison of means of “*child’s response to print*” in “book” and “no book” conditions is presented in Table 6.24. An independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the child’s response to print in “book” (1-10 books) and “no book” conditions. There was a significant difference in the scores for no books ($M=0.6401$, $SD=1.1860$) and books ($M=-0.0082$, $SD=0.9962$) conditions ($t_{(230)} = 3.326$, $P = 0.001$) in terms of children’s response to print. These results suggested that having books at home has an effect on a child’s response to print.

Table 6.24.1

6.24.1: Group Statistics

Number of Books	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE
No books	32	.6401	1.1860	.2096
1-10 books	200	-.0082	.9962	.0704

Table 6.24.2

6.24.2: Independent Samples Test

		Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	P	T	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
Child’s response to print	Equal variances assumed	1.908	.169	3.326	230	0.001	.648	0.1949	.2642	1.032
	Equal variances not assumed			2.931	38.318	0.006	.648	.2211	.2007	1.096

An independent-samples *t*-test (Table 6.25.1) was conducted to compare the child’s response to print in “maid” and “no maid” conditions. No significant difference was found in the scores for maid ($M=-0.355$, $SD=1.026$) and no maid ($M=0.019$, $SD=.986$) conditions; $t_{(323)} = -.480$, $P = 0.632$.

Table 6.25.1

6.25.1: Group Statistics

	Having maids at home	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE
Child's response to print	Yes	117	-.035	1.026	.094
	No	208	.019	.986	.068

Table 6.25.2

6.25.2: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	P	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Child's response to print	Equal variances assumed	.371	.543	-.480	323	0.632	-.055	0.115	-.2831	0.172
	Equal variances not assumed			-.475	232.8	0.635	-.055	.1169	-.285	0.174

The association between households and the child's response to print was investigated. Table 6.26 represents a one-way between subjects ANOVA, which was conducted to compare the effect of household income level on the child's response to print. There was a statistically significant effect of household income on the child's response to print [$F_{(4, 320)}=2.979$, $P=0.019$]. This finding suggests that parents' income does contribute to their children's response to print.

Table 6.26

6.26: One-Way ANOVA Between Study Variables and Household Level of Income

	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F	P
Child's response to print	Between groups	11.63	4	2.908		
	Within groups	312.3	320	.976	2.979	0.019
	Total	324	324			

Because the result was statistically significant, *post hoc* comparisons using the Tukey HSD test were also computed to compare different levels of income (conditions). It indicated that the mean score for the lowest income condition ($M = 0.1297$, $SD = 1.039$) was significantly different from that with the highest income condition ($M = -.628$, $SD = .5524$) or from level 2 income holders ($M = -.1457$, $SD = .8667$). Taken together, these results suggest that income level does influence a child's response to print (Table 6.27). This finding contradicted the previous findings by Grieshaber et al. (2011) and Weinberger (1996) that there was no relationship between family income and the levels of print resources and how these were used in the home. This is because this study used a sample derived from middle income families whereas other studies were performed on a wider range of incomes.

Table 6.27

6.27: Descriptive Analysis of the Relationships Between Household Income and the Child's Response to Print

Income in SR	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	95% Confidence Interval for Mean				
				SE	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
1 (<9000)	160	.129	1.039	.082	-.032	.292	-1.304	3.106
2 (9001-15000)	107	-.1457	.8667	.083	-.311	.020	-1.304	2.035
3 (15001-20000)	36	-.193	1.070	.178	-.555	.168	-1.304	1.907
4 (20001-30000)	15	.412	1.161	.299	-.230	1.055	-1.304	3.106
5 (>30001)	7	-.628	.5524	.208	-1.139	-.117	-1.304	.272
Total	325	.000	1.000	.055	-.1091	.109	-1.304	3.106

In relation to the child's response to print, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of parents' educational level on the child's response to print (Table 6.28). There was no significant effect of parents' level of education on this factor [$F_{(5, 319)}=1.059$, $P=0.383$]. This suggests that parents' level of education does not contribute to their children's response to print.

Table 6.28

6.28: *One-way ANOVA between Study Variables and Parental Educational Level*

	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F	P
Child's response to print	Between groups	5.291	5	1.058		
	Within groups	318.7	319	.999	1.059	0.383
	Total	324.0	324			

The correlation between children's age and their response to print was analysed (Table 6.29). A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the two at the significance level of 0.05. There was a significant negative correlation between these two variables ($r=-0.127$, $n=325$, $P=0.022$).

Table 6.29

6.29: *Pearson Correlations Between Study Variables and Children's Age*

Variables		Child's age	Child's response to print
Child's age	Pearson	1	-.127*
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.022
	n	325	325
Child's response to print	Pearson	-.127*	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.022	
	n	325	325

Note. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Relationships between the child's age and their attention to rhyming sounds and interactions with others were examined (Table 6.30). A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess these relationships at the significance level of 0.05. No significant correlations were found between these variables ($P > 0.05$).

Table 6.30

6.30: The Correlations Between the Children's Attention to Rhyming Sounds'/Children's Interactions with Others and Age

		Child's age	Child's attention to rhyming sounds	Children's interactions with others
Children's Age	Pearson Correlation			
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	<i>n</i>	325		
Children's attention to rhyming sounds	Pearson Correlation	.041		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.463		
	<i>n</i>	325	325	
Children's interactions with others	Pearson Correlation	.046	.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.408	1.000	
	<i>n</i>	325	325	325

A mean comparison of child's attention to rhyming sounds and children's interactions with others in book and no book conditions is shown in Table 6.31. An independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare mean scores of both the child's attentions to rhyming sounds and their interactions with others in families with books and no books conditions. There was a significant difference between those who had books at home ($M=-0.029$, $SD=.9901$) and those without ($M=-.37$, $SD=1.04$) in terms of children's interactions with others [$t_{(320)} = -2.105$, $P = 0.036$]. No significant difference was found in regards to the effect of quantity of books on the child's attention to rhyming sounds ($P > 0.05$). These results suggest that having books at home influences children's interactions with others (Table 6.31: *t*-Test for Difference in Means).

Table 6.31.1

6.31.1: Differences Between Means Among Families with Books and No Books Conditions in terms of Child's Attention to Rhyming Sounds'/Child's interactions with Others

	Having Books	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE
Child's attention to rhyming sounds	No books	32	-.247	.029	.203
	1-10 books	200	-.045	.029	.068
Children's interactions with others	No books	32	-.370	1.040	.183
	1-10 books	200	.029	.990	.070

Table 6.31.2

6.31.2: Independent Samples T-test for the differences in Mean Scores of both Child's Attention to Rhyming sounds' / Interactions with Others in Families with Books and No Books Conditions

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	P	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
										Lower Upper
Child's attention to rhyming sounds	Equal variances assumed	.466	.495	-1.060	320	0.290	-.201	0.190	-0.576	0.173
	Equal variances not assumed			.940	38.45	0.353	-.201	.214	-0.635	0.232
Children's interactions with others	Equal variances assumed	.128	.721	-2.105	320	.036	-.399	.189	-.773	.0254
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.031	40.50	.049	-.399	.196	-.797	-.0020

In relation to maids, an independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare child's attention to rhyming sounds and children's interactions with others in families with maid and no maid conditions (see Table 6.32). There was a significant difference in the scores for maid ($M=0.150$, $SD=0.838$) and no maid ($M=-0.084$, $SD=0.107$) conditions; [$t_{(323)}=2.039$, $P=0.042$] in terms of children's interactions with others. No significant difference was found between the scores for maid and no maid conditions in terms of child's attention to rhyming sounds [$t_{(323)}=-0.511$, $P=.609$]. These results suggest that having a maid at home has an effect on children's interactions with others.

Table 6.32.1

6.32.1: Group Statistics

	Having maids at home	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE
Child's attention to rhyming sounds	Yes	117	.037	.997	.092
	No	208	-.021	1.003	.069
Child's interactions with others	Yes	117	.150	.838	.077
	No	208	-.0844	1.072	.074

Table 6.32.2

6.32.2: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	P	T	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Differ- ence	Std. Error Differ- ence	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
										Lower Upper
Child's attention to rhyming sounds	Equal variances assumed	.102	.750	.511	323	0.609	.0591	0.115	-.1684	0.286
	Equal variances not assumed			.512	241.7	0.609	.0591	.1155	-.1683	0.286
Child's interactions with others	Equal variances assumed	8.919	.003	2.039	323	.042	.2345	.1150	.008	.460
	Equal variances not assumed			2.182	290.0	.030	.2345	.1074	.023	.446

A one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effects of household income level on children's attention to rhyming sounds and on children's interactions with others (see Table 6.33). No significant effect of household income was found on the two variables, respectively [$F_{(4, 320)}=0.453$, $P=0.770$ vs $F_{(4, 320)}=1.180$, $P=0.320$]. This finding suggests that household income does not contribute to children's attention to rhyming sounds or their interactions with others (see Table 6.33).

Table 6.33

6.33: One-way ANOVA between Study Variables and Household Level of Income

	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F	P
Child's attention to rhyming sounds	Between groups	1.826	4	.457		
	Within groups	322.174	320	1.007	0.453	0.770
	Total	324.000	324			
Children's interactions with Others	Between groups	4.709	4	1.177		
	Within groups	319.291	320	.998	1.180	0.320
	Total	324.000	324			

Table 6.34 presents a one-way between-subjects ANOVA conducted to compare the effect of parents' educational level on the child's attention to rhyming sounds, and on children's interactions with others. No significant effect of parents' educational level was found on the two variables, respectively [$F_{(5, 319)}=0.879$, $P=0.495$ vs $F_{(5, 319)}=1.632$, $P=0.151$]. This finding suggests that parents' level of education does not contribute to their children's attention to rhyming sounds or their interactions with others

Table 6.34

6.34: One-way ANOVA between Study Variables and Parents' Educational Level

	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F	P
Child's attention to rhyming sounds	Between groups	4.405	5	0.881		
	Within groups	319.5	319	1.002	0.879	0.495
	Total	324.0	324			
Children's interactions with others	Between groups	8.083	5	1.617		
	Within groups	315.9	319	0.990	1.632	0.151
	Total	324.0	324			

The associations between “access to in-home drawing tools” and the “child's attention to rhyming sounds” and their “interactions with others” were analysed. Table 6.35 presents a one-way between-subjects ANOVA conducted to compare the effect of in-home drawing tools on the child's attention to rhyming sounds and their interactions with others. There was a significant effect of access to drawing tools at home on the child's attention to rhyming sounds [$F_{(7, 317)}=2.396$, $P=0.021$], whereas its effect on the children's interactions with others was insignificant [$F_{(7, 317)}=1.448$, $P=0.185$]. This suggests that accessibility of drawing tools at home, such as pencils, crayons, computers, and iPads, contributes to children's attention to rhyming sounds. This result showed that the more children and parents become engaged in

sharing literacy-related activities, such as drawing, the more they tend to engage in other related literacy activities, such as in singing songs or rhymes with their children.

Table 6.35

6.35: One-way ANOVA between Study Variables and Drawing Tools

	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F	P
Child's attention to rhyming sounds	Between groups	16.282	7	2.326		
	Within groups	307.718	317	.971	2.396	.021
	Total	324.000	324			
Child's interactions with others	Between groups	10.040	7	1.434		
	Within groups	313.960	317	.990	1.448	.185
	Total	324.000	324			

Table 6. 36 shows the correlation between writing and drawing as a means of children's learning and their age. A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the two at the significant level of 0.05. There was a significant, slight correlation between the child's age and their tendency to write and draw towards their learning ($r=0.109$, $n=325$, $P=0.05$).

Table 6.36

6.36: Pearson Correlations between Study Variables and Children's Age

Variables		Child's age	Child's response to print
Child's age	Pearson Correlation	1	0.109
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.050
	<i>n</i>	325	325
Writing and drawing as a means of children's learning	Pearson Correlation	0.109	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.050	
	<i>n</i>	325	325

Note. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

A mean comparison of writing and drawing as a means of children's learning in book and no book conditions is shown in Table 6.37. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare writing and drawing as a means of children's learning sounds in book and no book conditions. There was a significant difference in the scores for book ($M=0.0439$, $SD=0.9789$) and no book ($M=-0.4019$, $SD=0.1137$) conditions ($t_{(323)}=2.413$, $P=0.016$) in terms of writing

and drawing as a means of children's learning. This finding suggests that having books at home has an effect on children's writing and drawing.

Table 6.37.1

6.37.1: Group Statistics

	Having books at home	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE
Writing and drawing as a means of children's learning	Yes	293	.0439	.9789	.057
	No	32	-.401	1.113	.196

Table 6.37.2

6.37.2: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	P	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
										Lower	Upper
Writing and drawing as a means of children's learning sounds	Equal variances assumed	.713	.399	2.413	323	0.016	.445	0.184	.0822	0.809	
	Equal variances not assumed			2.175	36.42	0.036	.445	.205	.0302	0.861	
	Assumed										

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare writing and drawing as a means of children's learning sounds in maid and no maid conditions (see Table 6.38). There was a significant difference in the scores for maid ($M=0.05$, $SD=0.9911$) and no maid ($M=-0.028$, $SD=01.006$) conditions; [$t_{(323)}=0.678$, $P = 0.498$]. This finding suggests that having maids at home does not have any effect on children's learning of writing and drawing.

Table 6.38.1

6.38.1: Group Statistics

	Having maids	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE
Writing and drawing as a means of children's learning	Yes	117	.050	.9911	.091
	No	208	-.028	1.006	.069

Table 6.38.2

6.38.2: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	P	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
										Lower Upper
Writing and drawing as a means of children's learning sounds	Equal variances assumed	0.034	.854	.678	323	0.498	.078	.115	-.1490	.3060
	Equal variances not assumed			.681	243.6	0.496	.078	.115	-.1483	.3053

Table 6.39 shows the correlation between children's age and their interest in using technology as a language source, or in communication with others. A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess these relationships at the significant level of 0.05. There was a significant correlation between children's interest in using technology as a language source and their age ($r=0.115$, $n=325$, $P=0.039$). It appeared that the older children are, the more interested they are.

Table 6.39

6.39: Correlations

		Child's age	Child's attention to rhyming sounds	Children's interactions with others
Children Age	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	<i>n</i>	325		
Children's interest in using technology as a language source	Pearson Correlation	.115		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.039		
	<i>n</i>	325	325	
Technology adoption to learn and communicate with others	Pearson Correlation	-.076	.000	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.172	1.000	
	<i>n</i>	325	325	325

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare “*children's interest in using technology as a language source*” and “*technology adoption to learn and communicate with others*” in “book” and “no book” conditions (see Table 6.40). There was no significant difference in the scores for book ($M=0.0353$, $SD=0.9878$) and no book ($M=-0.3239$, $SD=0.1067$) conditions [$t_{(323)}=1.938$, $P=0.053$] in terms of children's interest in using technology as a language source. There was no significant difference in the scores for book ($M=0.0288$, $SD=1.008$) and no book ($M=-0.2641$, $SD=.8901$) conditions; [$t_{(323)}=1.577$, $P=0.077$] in terms of “*technology adoption in order to learn and communicate with others*”. This finding suggests that having or not having books in homes has no effect on children's interest in using technology as a language source or their adoption of technology to learn and communicate with others.

Table 6.40.1

6.40.1: Group Statistics

	Having books	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE
Child's interest in using technology as a language source	Yes	293	.0353	.9878	.057
	No	32	-.3239	1.067	.188
Technology adoption to learn and communicate with others	Yes	293	0.028	1.008	.058
	No	32	-.2641	.8901	.1577

Table 6.40.2

6.40.2: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	P	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
										Lower Upper
Child's interest in using technology as a language source	Equal variances assumed	0.932	.335	1.938	323	0.053	.359	.1853	-.0053	.7240
	Equal variances not assumed			1.822	37.04	0.077	.359	.1972	-.0403	.7590
Technology adoption to learn and communicate with others	Equal variances assumed	2.371	.125	1.577	323	.116	.292	.1857	-.0724	.6584
	Equal variances not assumed			1.744	40.21	.089	.292	.1680	.0465	.6325

Comparisons of means of children's interest in using technology as a language source or to communication with others in maid and no maid conditions is represented in Table 6.41.

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare children's interest in using technology as a language source and technology adoption to learn and communicate with others' in maid and no maid conditions. There was no significant difference in the scores for maid and no maid conditions; in terms of either children's interest in using technology as a language source [$t_{(323)}=1.062$, $P = 0.289$] or technology adoption to learn and communicate with others [$t_{(323)}=.247$, $P = 0.805$]. This finding suggested that having maids at homes has no effect on the children's interest in using technology as a language source, or their use of technology to learn and communicate with others.

Table 6.41.1

6.41.1: Group Statistics

	Having maids at home	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE
Child's interest in using technology as a language source	Yes	117	.0785	.924	.085
	No	208	-.044	1.039	.072
Technology adoption to learn and communicate with others	Yes	117	0.0182	1.037	.095
	No	208	-.0102	.980	.068

Table 6.41.2

6.41.2: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	P	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Child's interest in using technology as a language source	Equal variances assumed	3.683	.056	1.062	323	0.289	.1226	.1155	-.1046	.3499
	Equal variances not assumed			1.097	264.5	0.274	.1226	.1118	-.0975	.3428
Technology adoption to learn and communicate with others	Equal variances assumed	.328	.567	.247	323	.805	.0285	.1157	-.1991	.2562
	Equal variances not assumed			.243	229.5	.808	.0285	.1175	-.2030	.2601

Table 6.42 represents a one-way between subjects ANOVA, which was conducted to compare the effect of parents' educational level on children's interest in using technology as a language source and on technology adoption to learn and communicate with others.

Table 6.42

6.42: One-way ANOVA between Study Variables and Parents' Educational Level

	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F	P
Child's interest in using technology as a language source	Between groups	3.603	5	0.721	.717	.611
	Within groups	320.397	319	1.004		
	Total	324.000	324			
Technology adoption to learn and communicate with others	Between groups	13.304	5	2.661	2.732	0.020
	Within groups	310.696	319	.974		
	Total	324.000	324			

There was a significant effect of parents' level of education on the technology adoption to learn and communicate with others [$F_{(5, 319)}=0.732$, $P=0.020$]. This finding suggests that parents' levels of education contribute to their children's adoption of technology in order to learn and communicate with others. The association between household income level and children's interest in using technology as a language source and on technology adoption to learn and communicate with others was analysed (Table 6.43). A one-way between subjects ANOVA, which was conducted to compare the effect of household income on children's interest in using technology as a language source and on technology adoption to learn and communicate with others. There was no significant effect of household level of income on these variables [$F_{(4, 320)}=1.195$, $P=0.313$ vs $F_{(4, 320)}=1.697.732$, $P=0.150$].

Table 6.43

6.43: One-way ANOVA between Study Variables and Income Level

	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F	P
Child's interest in using technology as a language source	Between groups	4.770	4	1.192	1.195	.313
	Within groups	319.230	320	.998		
	Total	324.00	324			
Technology adoption to learn and communicate with others	Between groups	6.730	4	1.683	1.697	0.150
	Within groups	317.270	320	.991		
	Total	324.000	324			

In relation to drawing, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of drawing tools on children's interest in using technology as a language source and on technology adoption to learn and communicate with others (Table 6.44). There was only a

significant effect of availability of in-home drawing tools on children's interest in using technology as a language source [$F_{(7, 317)}=02.650$, $P=0.011$].

Table 6.44

6.44: One-way ANOVA between Study Variables

	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F	P
Children's interest in using technology as a language source	Between groups	17.917	7	2.559	02.650	0.011
	Within groups	306.086	317	.966		
	Total	324.000	324			
Technology adoption to learn and communicate with others	Between groups	9.473	7	1.353	1.364	.220
	Within groups	314.527	317	.992		
	Total	324.000	324 _{ss}			

In relation to the first research question, I examined the correlation between parents' interactions with their children's literacy activities, parents' attitudes towards their children's literacy learning, and adults' role in supporting child's literacy and their children's age (Table 6.45). The Pearson correlation coefficient shows that there is no such relationship between the three variables and the children's age ($P < 0.05$).

Table 6.45

6.45: Pearson Correlations Between Study Variables and Children's Age

Variables		Child's age	Parents' interaction with their children's literacy activities	Parents' attitudes towards their children's literacy learning	Adult's role in supporting child's literacy
Child's age	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	<i>n</i>	325			
Parents' interaction with their children's literacy activities	Pearson Correlation	.018	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.747			
	<i>n</i>	325	325		
Parents' attitudes toward their children's literacy learning	Pearson Correlation	-.003	.000	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.959	1.000		
	<i>n</i>	325	325	325	
Adult's role in supporting child's literacy	Pearson Correlation	-.017	.000	.000	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.755	1.000	1.000	
	<i>n</i>	325	325	325	325

Note. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

A comparison of parents' interaction with their children's literacy activities, parents' attitudes towards their children's literacy learning, and adults' roles in supporting the child's literacy in book and no book conditions was analysed (see Table 6.46). An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare these variables in book and no book conditions. There was only a significant difference in the scores of parents' interaction towards their children's literacy activities in book and no book conditions ($M=0.0381$, $SD=0.9937$ vs $M=-.3495$, $SD=1.0050$) conditions; [$t_{(323)}=2.093$, $P = 0.037$].

Table 6.46.1

6.46.1: Group Statistics

	Having books at home	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE
Parents' interaction with their children's literacy activities	Yes	293	.0381	.9937	.0580
	No	32	-.3495	1.005	.1776
Parents' attitudes towards their children's literacy learning	Yes	293	.0282	.9703	.0566
	No	32	-.2585	1.227	.2169
Adults' role in supporting child's literacy	Yes	293	.0063	.9944	.0580
	No	32	-.0585	1.0638	.1880

Table 6.46.2

6.46.2: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	P	T	Df	Sig.(2- tailed)	Mean Differ- ence	Std. Error Differ- ence	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
										Lower Upper
Parents' interaction with their children's literacy activities	Equal variance assumed	.184	.668	2.093	323	.037	.387	.185	.023	.752
	Equal variance not assumed			2.074	37.92	.045	.387	.186	.009	.766
	Assumed									
Parents' attitudes towards their children's literacy learning	Equal variance assumed	1.184	.277	1.544	323	.124	.286	.185	-.0787	.652
	Equal variance not assumed			1.279	35.36	.209	.286	.224	-.1682	.741
	Assumed									
Adults' role in supporting child's literacy	Equal variance assumed	.950	.330	.348	323	.728	.064	.186	-.3018	.431
	Equal variance not assumed			.330	37.163	.743	.064	.196	-.3338	.463

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare parents' interaction with their children's literacy activities, parents' attitudes towards their children's literacy learning, and adults' role in supporting the child's literacy in maid and no maid conditions (see Table 6.47.1). There was no significant difference in the scores of the above study variable in maid and no maid conditions; [$t_{(323)}=.973$, $P = 0.346$; $t_{(323)}=-.672$, $P = 0.502$; $t_{(323)}=.293$, $P = 0.770$], respectively.

Table 6.47.1

6.47.1: Group Statistics

	Having maids at home	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE
Parents' interaction with their children's literacy activities	Yes	117	.069	.9792	.090
	No	208	-.0392	1.0117	.070
Parents' attitudes towards their children's literacy	Yes	117	-.0497	1.007	.093
	No	208	.0280	.9972	.069
Learning Adults' role in supporting child's literacy	Yes	117	.021	.952	.088
	No	208	-.012	1.027	.071

Table 6.47.2

6.47.2: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	P	T	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Differ- ence	Std. Erro Differ- ence	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
										Lower	Upper
Parents' interaction with their children's literacy activities	Equal variances assumed	.000	.987	.943	323	.346	.109	.1155	-.1183	.336	
	Equal variances not assumed			.952	247.1	.342	.109	.1145	-.1165	.334	
Parents' attitudes towards their children's literacy Learning	Equal variances assumed	.133	.715	-.672	323	.502	-.0777	.1156	-.3053	.149	
	Equal variances not assumed			-.671	238.5	.503	-.0777	.1159	-.3062	.1506	
Adults' role in supporting child's literacy	Equal variances assumed	.111	.739	.293	323	.770	.033	.1157	-.1937	.2615	
	Equal variances not assumed			.299	256.0	.765	.033	.1132	-.1892	.256	

Table 6.48 represents a one-way between subjects ANOVA, which was conducted to compare the effect of parents' educational levels on their interaction with their children's literacy activities, parents' attitudes towards their children's literacy learning, and adults' role in supporting child's literacy. There was no significant effect of parents' education on these variables: [$F_{(5, 319)}=1.113, P=0.353$; $F_{(5, 319)}=1.109, P=0.355$; $F_{(5, 319)}=.471, P=0.798$].

Table 6.48

6.48: One-way ANOVA between Study Variables and Educational Level

	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F	P
Parents' interaction with their children's literacy activities	Between groups	5.554	5	1.111		
	Within groups	318.4	319	.998	1.113	0.353
	Total	324.0	324			
Parents' attitudes towards their children's literacy Learning	Between groups	5.536	5	1.107		
	Within groups	318.4	319	.998	1.109	0.355
	Total	324.0	324			
Adults' role in supporting child's literacy	Between groups	2.372	5	.474		
	Within groups	321.6	319	1.008	.471	0.798
	Total	324.0	324			

A one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of household income level on parents' interaction with their children's literacy activities, parents' attitudes towards their children's literacy learning, and adults' role in supporting the child's literacy (see Table 6.49). There was a statistically significant effect of household income on adults' role in supporting child's literacy [$F_{(4, 320)}=2.99, P=0.019$]. However, no significant effect of income was found on parents' interaction towards their children's literacy activities, or parents' attitudes towards their children's literacy learning: respectively [$F_{(4, 320)}=.849, P=0.495$; $F_{(4, 320)}=2.990, P=0.818$]. These results suggest that household income only contributes to adults' role in supporting their children's literacy.

Table 6.49

6.49: One-Way ANOVA between Study Variables and Income Level

	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F	P
Parents' interaction with their children's literacy activities	Between groups	3.400	4	.850	.849	0.495
	Within groups	320.600	320	1.002		
	Total	324.000	324			
Parents' attitudes towards their children's literacy Learning	Between groups	1.561	4	.390	.387	0.818
	Within groups	322.439	320	1.008		
	Total	324.000	324			
Adults' role in supporting child's literacy	Between groups	11.673	4	2.918	2.990	0.019
	Within groups	312.32	320	.976		
	Total	324.000	324			

Table 6.50 represents a one-way between subjects ANOVA, which was conducted to compare the effect of in-home drawing tools on parents' interaction with their children's literacy activities, parents' attitudes towards their children's literacy learning, and on adults' role in supporting child's literacy. There was no significant effect of access to drawing tools at homes on these variables [$F_{(7, 317)}=1.173$, $P=0.318$; $F_{(7, 317)}=.673$, $P=0.695$; $F_{(7, 317)}=1.512$, $P=0.162$].

Table 6.50

6.50: One-Way ANOVA between Study Variables and Accessibility of Drawing Tools at Homes

	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F	P
Parents' interaction with their children's literacy activities	Between groups	8.178	7	1.168	1.173	0.318
	Within groups	315.8	317	.996		
	Total	324.0	324			
Parents' attitudes towards their children's literacy learning	Between groups	4.747	7	.678	.673	0.695
	Within groups	319.2	317	1.007		
	Total	324.0	324			
Adults' role in supporting child's literacy	Between groups	10.471	7	1.496	1.512	.0162
	Within groups	313.5	317	.989		
	Total	324.0	324			

More analysis was conducted to investigate the maids' role in children's literacy development. Table 6.51 shows the correlation between maids' attitudes toward children's literacy learning and the children's age. A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the two at the significant level of 0.05. There was no significant correlation between these two variables ($r=0.178$, $n=74$, $P=0.130$).

Table 6.51

6.51: Pearson Correlations between Study Variables and Children's Age

Variables		Child's age	Child's response to print
Child's age	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	<i>n</i>	74	
Maid's attitude toward child's literacy learning	Pearson Correlation	-.178	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.130	
	<i>n</i>	74	74

Note. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare maids' attitude toward the child's literacy learning in book and no book conditions. There was no significant difference in the scores for book ($M=0.0331$, $SD=1.023$) and no book ($M=-0.4568$, $SD=.3869$) conditions in terms of maids' attitudes toward child's literacy learning [$t_{(72)}=1.059$, $P = 0.293$]. This finding suggests that having books at homes has no effect on the maid's attitudes toward child's literacy development (Table 6.52).

Table 6.52.1

6.52.1: Group Statistics

	Having books	n	Mean	SD	SE
Maid's attitude toward child's literacy learning	Yes	69	.0331	1.023	.1232
	No	5	-.4568	.3869	.1730

Table 6.52.2

6.52.2: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	P	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Maid's attitude toward child's literacy learning	Equal variances assumed	1.601	.210	1.059	72	.293	.4899	.4627	-.4325	1.4124
	Equal variances not assumed			2.306	8.954	.047	.1899	.2124	.0089	.9708

Table 6.53 presents the results of a one-way between-subjects ANOVA, which was conducted to show the effect of in-home drawing tools on maids' attitude toward child's literacy development. There was no significant effect of access to drawing tools at homes on the maid's attitude towards child's literacy learning [$F_{(5, 68)}=1.203$, $P=0.317$].

Table 6.53

6.53: One-Way ANOVA between Study Variables and Accessibility of Drawing Tools at Homes

	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F	P
Maid's attitude toward child's literacy learning	Between groups	5.931	5	1.186	1.203	0.317
	Within groups	67.069	68	.986		
	Total	73.000	73			

Table 6.54 represents a one-way between subjects ANOVA, which was conducted to show the effect of household income on maids' attitude towards the child's literacy learning. There was no significant effect of income on the maid's attitude towards the child's literacy learning [$F_{(4, 69)}=.766$, $P=0.551$].

Table 6.54

6.54: One-Way ANOVA between Study Variables and Household Income

	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F	P
Maid's attitude toward child's literacy learning	Between groups	3.106	4	.776		
	Within groups	69.894	69	1.013	.766	0.551
	Total	73.000	73			

The association between parents' educational level and maids' attitudes toward child's literacy development was analysed by conducting a one-way between subjects ANOVA in order to show the effect between these variables (see Table 6.55). There was no significant effect of parents' educational level on the maid's attitude towards the child's literacy learning [$F_{(5, 68)}=.987, P=0.432$].

Table 6.55

6.55: One-Way ANOVA between Study Variables and Parents' Educational Level

	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F	P
Maid's attitude toward child's literacy learning	Between groups	4.939	5	.988		
	Within groups	68.06	68	1.001	.987	0.432
	Total	73.00	73			

6.7 Interpretive Summary of the Main Findings

In this chapter, children's social interactions with adults during emergent literacy practices was examined within HLEs from middle and below-average income families in KSA. The analysis showed that Saudi homes are rich in terms of literacy resources provided to children at early ages, which positively affects their attitudes toward learning literacy. All homes reported having some books, although the maximum number was not high. There was an association found between having books at homes and children's use of story as a language development technique and children's response to print. This new finding contributes to knowledge about the effects of having a low number of books at home, which has not been found by previous studies within the KSA context. This may be due to the fact that half the population in this study were below-average income families. Another possible explanation is that children in this study tended to show more interest in using technologies such as iPads to view iBooks. Most importantly, there was a significant correlation between the quantity of books and children's

interactions with others. This finding suggests that when children have access to other reading materials at homes, their interaction with others will be increased. Also, having books at home was found to have an effect on children's writing and drawing. These findings propose that having enough printed resources at home positively affects children's overall literacy learning. Other literacy resources used by children, as reported by almost half the parents, included alphabetic posters, iPads, computers, cards, and whiteboards. Thus, these analyses related to HLE resources strongly indicate that parents recognise the value of interacting with their children during literacy activities, which reflects their awareness of contemporary literacy practices.

The analysis suggested that the majority of parents (83.4 %) did not value the role of ECTs in fostering children's literacy learning. This finding draws attention to a lack of parental awareness of the important role of ECTs in extending their children's literacy learning. As expected, around 228 (70.1 %) of parents reported disagreement on whether or not having a maid at home played a significant role in their children's literacy development. Most importantly, the findings showed that having maids at home affected children's interactions with others and had no negative effect in other areas. Further analysis showed that having maids at home had no effect on children's interest in reading or on interest in using technology as a language source or as a communication tool with others. Likewise, it was demonstrated that there were no differences between fathers and mothers in relation to their children's interest in reading. Although these findings contribute to the literature in relation to the differences between parents' attitudes, these results were limited to parental reading skills. A surprising finding was that children's age was significantly correlated with their interest in using technology as a language source. Further analysis showed that children became more interested in rhyme as they get older. Most importantly, the findings suggested that accessibility to drawing tools at home, such as pencils, crayons, computers, and iPads, contributes to children's interest in rhyming sounds. The more materials available for children and the more parents show interest, the more the child becomes interested in learning rhyming sounds.

Another surprising finding from this study was that parental educational level only contributed to their children's technology adoption for learning and communicating with others. This finding has two possible interpretations. Firstly, this may support the fact that when parents are more educated, they become more aware of the importance of integrating technology tools in their children's emergent literacy learning. The second possible explanation for these findings could be that some parents were from a mid-level SES: therefore, they earn

more and could afford more technology for their children to access at home. The family income level did not significantly impact on maids' attitudes toward children's literacy learning at home. This study shows that income level only affects children's ownership of books at home. However, as the study was limited to middle- and below-average income families, different results might be found in a different population.

This study presents evidence that communication with children's ECTs was conducted almost exclusively by mothers - a result of gender segregation law in KSA. Based on mothers' self reporting, the majority communicated with ECTs in person and by telephone, while fathers only communicated by telephone. Caution must be used when interpreting the findings relating to fathers, as they were reported by mothers. These findings draw attention to the cultural issue of fathers not being allowed to communicate with ECTs in KSA. The results of this study, are in agreement with Burgess et al. (2002) and Woods (2002) that the HLE is a complex and multifaceted environment. This is due to the fact that there are several factors at home that contribute to children's literacy learning in KSA. These factors are: early child-adult literacy social interactions (by parents and maids), the richness of HLE resources and the way they are used, parental level of education, and parental beliefs and attitudes.

In order to get clear insight about the relationship between children's early literacy learning in the kindergarten setting, the next phase of the study was designed to investigate children's emergent literacy practices at kindergarten centres. Only two cases were reported here and the children were selected from those families who participated in the questionnaire phase. The next chapters (Seven and Eight) analyse two case studies of children's literacy learning, including influences of their ECTs and maids, in home and kindergarten environments.

Chapter Seven – Gasem’s Literacy Practices at Home and in the Kindergarten Setting

7.1 Introduction

A case study approach was used to explore in depth children’s literacy learning and their social interaction with adults, including their parents, maids, and teachers, during literacy activities. After collecting the data relating to home literacy practices through parental questionnaires, I purposively selected two focus children who had parental consent and invited them to take part in the second phase in this research process. The first two children chosen were boys; thus, these cases present two boys from the same age group, five and a half years old. The case studies were conducted in two public kindergarten centres in the city of Mecca, KSA. In order to get in-depth data and to understand those children’s literacy learning, their teachers and maids were interviewed. I also observed the children’s social interactions with their classroom teachers and peers over a period of seven weeks. This helped me to investigate the differences and similarities in children’s social interactions with adults during literacy activities in both settings, including home and kindergarten.

This chapter is divided into five main parts. The first part discusses the rationale behind selecting the two focus children. The second part explores and analyses the case of the first child, Gasem, in his home environment, including the child and parents’ demographic information; family SES level; parental literacy beliefs, attitudes, and interactions with their child; the maid’s role; and family cultural practices at home. The third part of this chapter focuses on the kindergarten literacy environment, describes and analyses the physical classroom environment and the demographic information of the Early Childhood Teacher (ECT): her literacy beliefs, attitudes, teaching strategies, and perspectives toward involving families in kindergarten program. The fourth part sheds light on the frequency of communication between parents and teachers, ways of communicating between home and kindergarten settings, and the challenges of communication that exist between parents and teachers. These reflect social and cultural gender barriers that exist because of gender segregation laws in KSA. Finally, the chapter discusses observations of Gasem’s emergent literacy skills at the kindergarten, and the comparison between his literacy practices, learning styles, and interaction with adults, and how these contribute to developing and extending his emergent literacy skills.

7.2 Rationale for Selecting the Focus Children

Children's emergent literacy learning extends across both the home environment and the kindergarten environment. In the second phase of this research, the two case study children were purposively selected. The purposive sampling for the case studies phase included the following criteria: mothers who completed the questionnaire and said they had maids at home; children who had been observed in the classroom; and children's teachers and maids who were interviewed in regards to their own literacy practices, attitudes, beliefs and their involvement in children's literacy learning at the home and kindergarten settings. As mentioned in Chapter Five, the selection of those children included consideration of the differences between families' linguistic background (including bilingualism and monolingualism), the maids' cultural, educational, and linguistic backgrounds, and ECTs' qualifications and teaching experiences, in order to examine how these differences may have influenced those children's literacy learning at home and kindergarten. These cases were representative of traditional and contemporary families in KSA.

7.3 Analysis of the Case Studies

The analysis in this phase take different levels, starting from analysing the mothers' responses to questionnaires, followed by analysis of interview transcripts and classroom observations in order to get an in-depth understanding of each child's emergent literacy practices and learning at both home and kindergarten. Interviews with maids investigated their cultural backgrounds, level of education, experiences, working hours, literacy practices, social interaction with their employers' children, and literacy resources at home. During observations, I documented literacy resources in one home by using a camera to record the adults' and children's literacy interests, attitudes, and social interactions.

At the two kindergarten centres, I investigated each child's literacy practices and skills through observing the physical environment of the centre, the classroom structure and resources, and teachers' social interactions with children (see Table 7.1). To extend my understanding of each child's literacy skills, I interviewed teachers to explore their levels of education, experience, qualifications, and their beliefs about how mothers, early childhood teachers and maids assist with children's literacy learning, and teaching strategies (see Appendices B.1.1, & B.1.2).

The investigation of the focus children's literacy skills at the kindergarten centre was conducted using an open-ended observation checklist with five indicators. These included language, literacy attitudes, making meaning, concepts about print and symbols, and writing. The observation timetable was organised with the classroom teachers. These visits produced twenty observations for each focus child, reflecting their social interactions with their peers and teachers during different literacy experiences. These included Quran recitation sessions, circle times, outdoor free play sessions, indoor free play sessions, and their last meeting with their teacher.

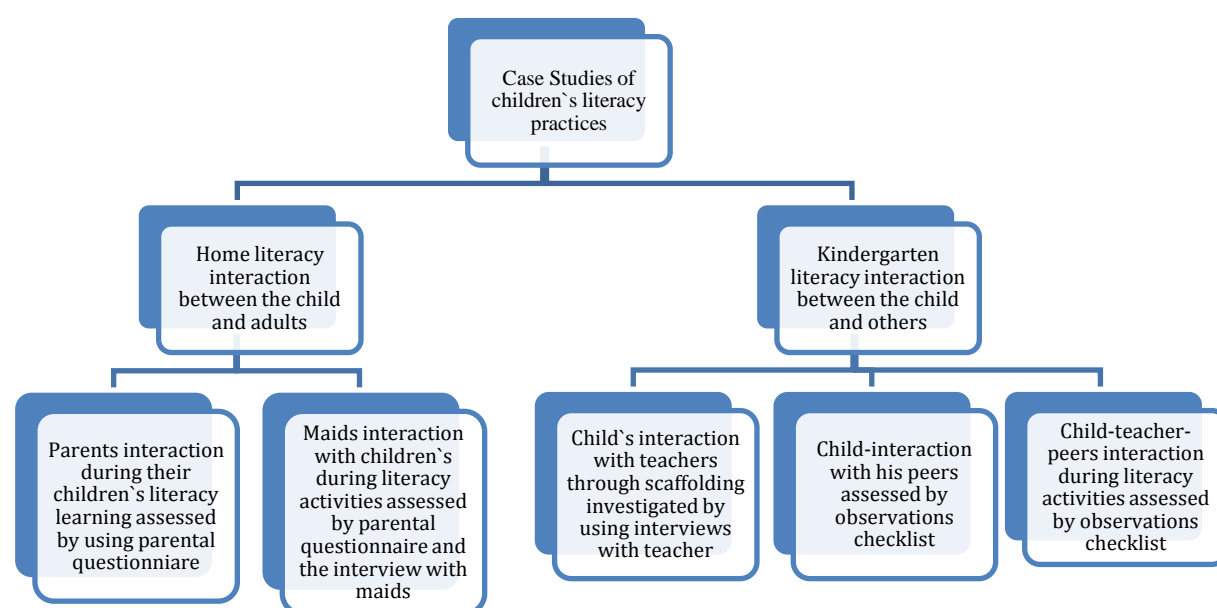


Figure 7.1: Case studies analysis process from home to kindergarten

Twenty observations were conducted per child over five consecutive weeks. The rest of the observations were in the two weeks after the school holiday break. Each item gave a specific score (from 0 - 20) in the summary (see Appendix B.3, Tables A7.13 & A8.12), which shows how many times he was observed in each experience. For instance, the score 20 indicates that he was observed 20 times per item, while 4 indicates he was observed only 4 times out of 20, which may indicate his lack of interest in that area. The writing samples of the focus children in the literacy area and their drawings in the art area were analysed through assessing their symbol and writing development during the seven weeks. Teachers' reflections on children's literacy learning progress were analysed. Information on the focus children gathered from home and kindergarten environments was analysed in term of similarities and

differences between site literacy practices. Further discussion of the findings can be found in Chapter Nine.

7.4 Introducing Gasem and Kareem

In all cases, fictional names for mothers, children, and their teachers and maids are used to ensure that participants are deidentified. The two children (Gasem and Kareem) were selected from different kindergarten centres. The centres are identified by numbers (Centre 1 and Centre 2). The demographic information of participants in the case studies phase is displayed in Table 7.1, below.

Table 7.1

7.1: Participants' Demographic Information

Child's name	Gasem	Kareem
Child's age	5 years, 5 months	5 years, 6 months
Kindergarten level	KG3	KG3
Mother's name	Sarah	Fatima
Parents' level of education	Both have Bachelor degrees, mother in education (teaching English language)	Both parents have Bachelor degrees
	Father works in Saudi Telecom Company (STC)	Both mother and father work as social workers
Family income level	Middle income level	Middle income level
Language spoken by adults	Arabic-English-Tagalog	Arabic
Maid's name	Normini	Rani
Maid's own language	Tagalog	Indonesian
Maid's working experience and qualifications	11 months as maid in KSA Had a certificate as housemaid.	15 years experience working as maid in KSA She has worked at Kareem's house for six months.
Maid's level of education	Completed grade five only	Completed primary school
Teacher's name	Aisha	Rokaya
Teacher's level of education	Bachelor degree in teaching early childhood (kindergarten stage in KSA)	Bachelor degree as a primary teacher in teaching children language (reading and writing)

Teacher's teaching experience	Five years experience working with different age groups (3-4 years and 4-5 years old).	33 years experience (13 years as a primary school teacher and 20 years as a teacher in public kindergarten)
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The following section discusses in detail the case of Gasem and his emergent literacy practices in his home and kindergarten environments.

7.5 Gasem's Home Literacy Environment

At the time of this study Gasem was five years and a half old. He was the eldest sibling, having a one year old brother. He was born in KSA and speaks Arabic as his first language. He knows some English words and has many English resources at home. He has also started to learn some Tagalog words from his maid Normini. Gasem's home environment is full of languages: three languages are practiced between Gasem, his maid, and his parents. He likes reading and listening to stories and he enjoyed interacting with his mother and maid through learning new vocabularies in Arabic and English. He loves singing alphabet letters songs and playing letter games in both Arabic and English with his mother. Gasem also likes to spend time with his parents watching National Geographic programs, and enjoyed watching Cartoon Network with his little brother and his maid.

7.5.1 Parents' demographic information

Gasem's parents were educated and had Bachelor-level degrees. Gasem's family was of middle socioeconomic status. Both of Gasem's parents worked full time (from 7:00 am to 2:00 pm). His father worked in customer service in the Saudi Telecom Company (STC). He had attended many English workshops to improve his ability to deal with customers from different cultural backgrounds. His mother (Sarah) worked as an English language teacher at a high school in the city of Mecca. Because she worked full time, she hired an educated maid from the Philippines. Sarah reported that the family lived in America for one year while his mother studied an English course. Sarah was from an educated family background. She loved reading and travelling and she was very open to learning about various cultures. Both parents spoke Arabic and English at home. Sarah reported that she interacted with her child during literacy activities at home, while the father was less engaged.

7.5.2 Emergent literacy interaction between child and adults at home

In the questionnaire, Sarah reported that she started to teach Gasem literacy from an early age. She started singing nursery rhymes and songs in Arabic and English while he was six months old. Sarah also started engaging with her child in pointing to printed pictures in books and storybooks when he was nine months old. Later, as Gasem got older, around one year, Sarah reported that she started to interact with him through pointing to alphabetic letters and sounding them out for him, and reading him picture books in Arabic and English. Table 7.2, below, illustrates the emergent literacy interaction between Gasem and Sarah in the early years of his development.

Table 7.2

7.2: Emergent Literacy Social Interaction in Arabic and English Between Gasem and Sarah

Gasem and Sarah's interactions during emergent literacy activities at home	Gasem's age when Sarah started teaching him literacy
a. Sang nursery rhymes or educational songs for him	6 months old
b. Pointed to pictures in books and story books	9 months old
c. Pointed to alphabetic letters and sounded them out	1 year old
d. Read picture books to him	1 year old

Within each literacy interaction, Sarah provided enough guided participation necessary to scaffold her child's literacy learning and development within his Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). She used scaffolding as a teaching strategy to facilitate her child's literacy learning. In this context, scaffolding, according to Wood et al. (1976), refers to the use of tools or techniques used to assist a child to achieve his/her goals and improve his/her unassisted efforts. In the questionnaire, Sarah was asked "why did you decide to start reading to your child at this age?" She reported that:

Because he likes to listen to story time with his little brother, so I found him really interested to learn letters and read pictures stories books.

Sarah acknowledged that she observed Gasem's interest in reading and exploring environmental print resources from an early age. He was interested in reading letters and exploring illustrations in books. This reflects Sarah's awareness of the importance of exposing her children to literacy resources at home in the early stages of childhood, as well as reflecting her role in scaffolding Gasem's emergent literacy practices. This result is consistent with

previous findings that exposing children to shared storybook reading experiences at an early age is important for children's later independent reading ability (Wood, 2002; Bennett et al., 2002).

7.5.3 Gasem's literacy attitudes and interests

In the questionnaire, Sarah reported her interaction with Gasem and his literacy practices at home, including his reading attitudes and interests, response to print, language and phonemic awareness, writing and drawing, and technological interests. These responses, reported by Sarah, reflect how regularly Gasem was involved with his mother during a variety of literacy practices at home. These are summarised in Table 7.3, below.

Table 7.3

7.3: Gasem's Reading Attitudes, Interests, and Response to Print at Home

How often does your child engage in the following activities with you?	1 Several times per day	2 Daily	3 Weekly	4 Occasional	5 Rarely	6 Never
a. ask or indicate an interest in having a story told or read?			<input type="checkbox"/>			
b. pretend to read a book (such as turning pages, producing speech that is similar to the actual story in the book and so on)?				<input type="checkbox"/>		
c. make up a story based on the pictures?			<input type="checkbox"/>			
d. fill in words or lines from a story when reading with you? (When you are reading a book your child says the next line or word before you read it)?			<input type="checkbox"/>			
e. show interest in adult reading materials (i.e. newspaper, TV guide, magazine, computer, smartphone. etc...)?						<input type="checkbox"/>
f. name letters of the alphabet?	<input type="checkbox"/>					
g. ask you to spell words?	<input type="checkbox"/>					
h. point or talk about pictures when you read stories?	<input type="checkbox"/>					
i. point to or ask about logos, symbols or signs?	<input type="checkbox"/>					
j. ask questions about characters or event when you read or tell stories or predict the next event?	<input type="checkbox"/>					
k. collaborate with others in reading experience?	<input type="checkbox"/>					

As seen in the table above, Sarah reported that she engaged with Gassem several times per day in the following activities: naming letters of the alphabet, spelling words, pointing or talking about pictures when reading stories, pointing to or asking about logos, symbols or signs, asking questions about characters or events when he reads or tells stories or predicts the next event, and collaborates with others in reading experience. He also interacted with his mother on a weekly basis through asking or indicating an interest in having a story told or read, making up a story based on pictures, filling in words or lines from a story when reading, and asking his mother to spell words for him. This finding reflects Sarah's awareness of her significant role in assisting her child's learning through social interaction. Hume et al. (2012) found that children's early reading interest was strongly associated with whether or not their parents exposed them to literature. On an occasional basis, Sarah indicated that Gasem pretended to read a book through turning pages or producing speech that was similar to the actual story in the book.

The analysis of his interest in reading books at home was based on three factors. Firstly, his early interest in reading books since he was one year old. Secondly, the number of books at home that are available for him to read: between 30 - 40 books, including Arabic and English picture dictionaries, illustrated story books, fairytale story books, and colour and shape books. Thirdly, Sarah's educational level, her qualification as an English teacher, and her beliefs in the importance of exposing her child to different linguistic backgrounds which influence his reading attitude and interest in books in both languages, including Arabic and English.

7.5.4 The child's interests in drawing and writing activities at home

Drawing was one of the other favoured activities for Gasem at home. According to Sarah, Gasem used a range of resources to draw at home, including pencils, crayons, a whiteboard, and an iPad. Sarah reported that:

My child love drawing activities and use a variety of resources we (me and his father) make available for him at home. These resources include; Pencil, computer, iPad, White board and magnetic alphabet letters.

This response indicates that his father also provided him with a rich literacy environment. However, he seemed to be less involved with his child's literacy interaction at home; in particular, in drawing and writing activities. Table 7.4 (below) shows Sarah's responses to her child's interest in drawing and writing skills. Gasem engaged with Sarah several times per day

in activities such as drawing pictures and telling stories about them, and writing letters or letter approximations. Through drawing activities, he interacted with his mother by telling stories about his drawing, which gave him the opportunity to develop and foster his oral language and imagination. On a daily basis, he engaged in writing words and collaborating with his mother in writing experiences (through scaffolding of his writing) in order to improve his literacy learning.

Table 7.4

7.4: Gasem's Writing and Drawing Practices with Sarah at Home

How often does your child engage in the following activities with you?	1 Several times per day	2 Daily	3 Weekly	4 Occasionally	5 Rarely	6 Never
a. drawing pictures?	✓					
b. writing letters or letter approximations?	✓					
c. writing words?			✓			
d. drawing a picture and tell the story about it?	✓					
f. collaborating with others in writing experience?			✓			

These findings show Sarah's positive attitude and awareness of the importance of early writing and drawing experiences for developing her child's literacy skills. This may be linked to her higher level of education. This result is supported by previous findings by Yang and Noel (2006) that children can use drawing as a starting point for letter reproduction and name writing, which can facilitate their functional literacy development.

7.5.5 Gasem's response to environmental print

In his home environment, Gasem showed that he regularly engaged with his mother by reading books and using other print-related skills. As mentioned earlier, when Gasem was one year old, he began to point out environmental print spontaneously, reflecting that he was enjoying interacting with his mother in this way, and had learned to distinguish print from non-print through the exploration of sign and labels. Sarah initiated interactions that mainly focussed on scaffolding her child's ability to differentiate print from pictures and photos.

Sarah reported that Gasem engaged with her and with his father on a daily basis by identifying words in the environment when they went to shops or restaurants (such as food packaging, signs of stores and restaurants, *etc.*). This showed that Gasem was aware of Arabic print direction (reading from right to left). Both of his parents showed an understanding of printed literacy resources and their functions in developing their child's attitude toward literacy. These types of print identification interactions strengthened Gasem's print awareness and motivation to explore letters. These responses are illustrated in Table 7.5, below.

Table 7.5

7.5: *Gasem's Response to Environmental Print*

How often does your child engage in the following activities with you?	1 Several times per day	2 Daily	3 Weekly	4 Occasionally	5 Rarely	6 Never
a. identifying words in the environment (such as food packaging, signs of stores and restaurants, etc.) in your environment by him or herself?		✓				
b. identifying the front, back, top of, and bottom of a book and turns pages appropriately for Arabic language?	✓					
c. recognising that illustrations on a page are related to what the print says?	✓					

7.5.6 Gasem's attitude toward language use and phonemics awareness

Gasem showed that he listened to Sarah saying words and making the sound of letters (see Table 7.6). Several times per day, he was encouraged by his mother to engage in spontaneous learning experiences. These included producing rhyming words, repeating clapped patterns, recognising rhymes, sounds or word patterns, relating some sounds with letters to make their sounds, singing simple songs, and using language for a range of functions, such as labelling, describing, explaining, predicting, imagining, analysing, and synthesising. Sarah mentioned that she interacted with her child on a daily basis through listening to his comments on rhyming words and assisting him to recognise rhymes, words, sounds, and patterns. Sarah also reported that she verbally guides Gasem through teaching him the sounds of letters and through participating in conversations with him in order to foster his phonemic awareness and letter name knowledge several times per day.

These practices existed within a social interaction framework where scaffolding and

teaching facilitation approaches occurred between Gasem and his mother. Hannon (2000) proposes that if we view literacy as a social practice, and literacy teaching as a matter of engaging children in learning activities with much scaffolding, then accordingly, this process is more appropriate for facilitation than instruction.

Table 7.6

7.6: Gasem's Language and Phonemic Awareness

How often does your child engage in the following activities with you?	1 Several times per day	2 Daily	3 Weekly	4 Occasionally	5 Rarely	6 Never
a. producing rhyming by himself?	<input type="checkbox"/>					
b. commenting on rhyming words?		<input type="checkbox"/>				
d. repeating clapped patterns?	<input type="checkbox"/>					
c. recognising rhymes, sounds or word patterns?		<input type="checkbox"/>				
d. relating some sounds with letters?	<input type="checkbox"/>					
e. singing simple songs?	<input type="checkbox"/>					
f. following your (or someone else's) verbal directions?	<input type="checkbox"/>					
g. participating in conversations with others?	<input type="checkbox"/>					
h. initiating interactions with others?	<input type="checkbox"/>					
i. using language for a range of functions e.g. labelling, describing, explaining, predicting, imagining, analysing, synthesising?	<input type="checkbox"/>					

7.5.7 Gasem's technological interests at home

Gasem's home environment offered a variety of electronic literacy materials, such as computers, iBooks and electronic writing and drawing applications. These resources stimulated Gasem to participate in language and literacy activities at home. Gasem was engaged several times per day in activities such as using computers, phones or iPads to play alphabet games, as well as using electronic devices to watch movies and listen to rhymes, songs, or online stories. On a weekly basis, Gasem was engaged in using the computer and iPad to write names and letters. This result is consistent with those of Castles et al. (2014), who found children aged half of four years old used computers on a weekly basis, and that this use was positively correlated with letter knowledge. In addition, Gasem is occasionally engaged in activities such as

communicating with other family members using Skype and FaceTime, and in using computers to search for information (see Table 7.7 below).

Gasem played with many educational electronic programs on his iPad. As Sarah indicated, one of his favourite applications was Minecraft. Minecraft is an interactive game about breaking and placing blocks. At first, players build structures to protect against nocturnal monsters, but as the game grows, players work together to create wonderful, imaginative things. It can also be about adventuring with friends. This result showed Gasem's positive attitude and interest in playing imaginative and creative games with others in small groups. This interactive app may have potentially developed his social, imaginative, and problem-solving skills. Although this app was not literacy-based, parents could use the child's interest in it as a stimulus for developing his literacy skills. For example, by initiating conversation (asking him to describe the process of building blocks), and communicating with a social network of friends using the app.

Watching television was one of the important literacy resources that Gasem engaged in at home. However, his television watching was limited compared with other activities such as using an iPad. According to Sarah, Gasem spent between 6 - 12 hours monthly watching television. Sarah maintains that:

He loves watching cartoon programs such as Spongebob, Tom and Jerry, and Gumball.

Table 7.7

7.7: Gasem's Interests in Technological Tools at Home

How often does your child engage in the following activities with you?	Several times per day 1	Daily 2	Weekly 3	Occasionally 4	Rarely 5	Never 6
a. using computers, phones, or iPads to play alphabet games?	✓					
b. using computers, phones, or iPads to listen to rhymes or songs?	✓					
c. watching movies on a computer?	✓					
d. listening to online stories?	✓					
e. writing names and letters?			✓			
f. communicating with other family members using Skype, FaceTime or a similar program?				✓		
g. using computers to search for information?				✓		

Based on Sarah's responses, Gasem spent a few hours per month watching English language popular culture cartoon shows on television, such as Spongebob, Tom and Jerry, and

Gumball. As these programs were from Western culture, this may indicate a global influence on the child's thinking in regards to the differences between his own culture and others (customs, music, lifestyle and so on), as well as on his acquisition of English. In this sense, parents were attentive to cultural differences in order to develop their children's critical literacy when viewing those programs. Aloofy (1994) argued that parents play a vital role in boosting their children's critical literacy skills through interpreting technical words and concepts that their children view on TV. In the kindergarten environment, teachers also need to be aware that children come to the classroom well versed in literacy through watching such programs. In this context, teachers have to develop children's skills in respect to following the action and plots of television shows, and assist children to transfer those skills to the reading of relevant texts in order to make these practices more explicit and meaningful (Stewart & Ratliff, 2009).

7.5.8 Literacy resources at Gasem's home

Gasem was immersed in a variety of literacy resources at home, in both Arabic and English. The photos below display those resources available at Gasem's home. These reflect the rich literacy environment that Gasem is exposed to in terms of reading and drawing skills (see Figures 7.2, 7.3, 7.4 & 7.5). These resources included English picture books of fairy tales, an English-Arabic picture dictionary, thematic books (such as food and colour name books), a mini library with a variety of English and Arabic storybooks, whiteboard and markers, a cubby house, and an iPad. He showed interest when I observed him drawing his hand spontaneously by tracing around his hand on the whiteboard using the marker pen.



Figure 7.2. English picture books of fairy tales

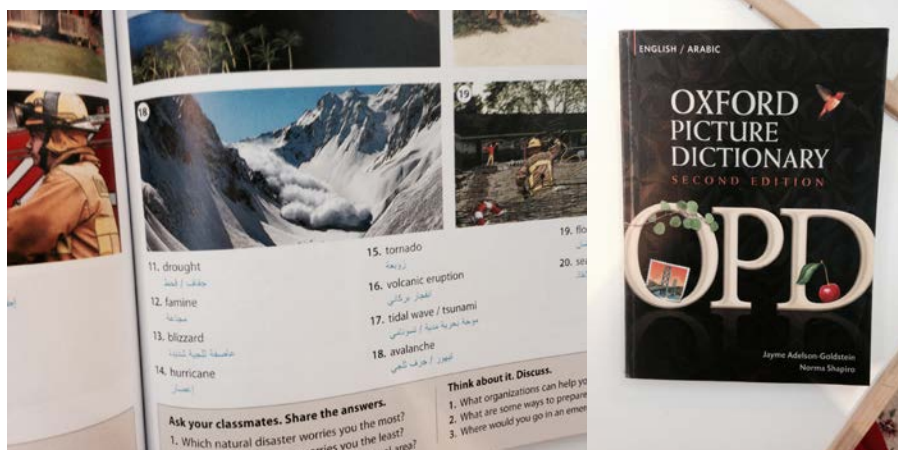


Figure 7.3. English-Arabic picture dictionary



Figure 7.4. Gasem's favourite Minecraft app on iPad, colour names book in Arabic, and themed book about food in English



Figure 7.5. Literacy area at home (library and drawing areas, including pencils, crayons, a whiteboard, marker pens, a kids play tent, and tables for colouring and drawing)

The literacy resources available to Gasem likely impacted on his literacy interests and practices. Parental attitudes, practices, and beliefs are very important variables for encouraging children's literacy learning at home. It is evident that well-educated parents provide their young children with a well-rounded and rich literacy environment that stimulates the learning of many emergent literacy skills (Al-Momani et al., 2010; Al-Qaryouti & Kilani, 2013; Bennett et al., 2002; Korat et al., 2007; Korat, 2009; Phillips & Lonigan, 2009; Weigel et al., 2006).

7.5.9 Parental attitudes, practices and beliefs at home

Sarah indicated that she strongly agreed that all adults, including mothers, teachers, fathers, and maids, have a very important influence on fostering her child's literacy development in home and kindergarten environments (see Table 7.8 below).

She had a more positive attitude to adults' roles in her children's early literacy learning than others. Sarah's positive beliefs toward her maid may be associated with the maid's level of education, her ability to speak English, and her willingness to interact with her employer's children's literacy activities at home. It is also very relevant that she is a language teacher. Sarah has given different views than others relating to parental education levels. Sarah believed that parents who are well educated can provide their children with better learning opportunities than parents who are not. This may be because the high educational background of Sarah and her parents positively influenced her perspective on the importance of educated parents as good role models for their children. The open-ended questions in the questionnaire helped me to ascertain her deeper views.

Table 7.8

7.8: Sarah's Beliefs about Adults' Role in Fostering Gasem's Literacy Development

Sarah's literacy beliefs	1 Strongly agree	2 Mostly agree	3 Agree	4 Disagree	5 Mostly disagree	6 Strongly disagree
a. Early childhood teachers play an important part in fostering children's literacy learning.	✓					
b. Fathers play an important role in their children's literacy development.	✓					
c. Maids play an important role in children's literacy development.	✓					
d. Mothers play an important role in children's literacy development.	✓					

7.5.10 Adults' literacy attitude and practices at Gasem's home

Sarah played a more interactive role in scaffolding her child's literacy learning than Gasem's father and maid. Table 7.8 shows that Sarah engaged with Gasem on a daily basis through telling or reading familiar family and community stories, and stories related to her culture, while Gasem's father never read to him (as reported by Sarah). Normini rarely read to Gasem and did not indicate whether she read in Arabic, English, or in her own mother tongue, Tagalog.

Literacy was integrated in play activities in their home. Sarah indicated that she engaged in games with her child on a weekly basis. These involved literacy, such as reading a recipe and pretending to cook, writing a shopping list, pretending to read to the toys, and discussions about books and other texts that promoted consideration of diverse perspectives (such as gender).

Sarah provided Gasem with a range of opportunities to engage with stories, songs, games, or books that were about cultures different to their own Saudi culture. Sarah had mentioned previously that they travelled overseas to expose their children to different cultures and gain new knowledge about other cultures. Another explanation may be the multiple languages used at home by adults, including Arabic, English, and Tagalog. Table 7.9 illustrates adults' literacy attitudes and practices with the child at home. Sarah explained that they interacted with Gasem in other activities at home that involved literacy experiences. Sarah reported that Gasem and his father usually play sports such as football during the weekends and school holidays. This activity is a literacy-based practice as it provided Gasem with "exportable knowledge" that he could use in daily conversations with others. According to Smith and Wilhelm (2002), exportable knowledge is "information boys can use in conversation, such as headlines, football scores, jokes, 'cool parts' of books or movies" (pp. 150-157).

Sarah indicated that they also do usually have family conversation time in order to encourage their child to talk to about what he had done at the kindergarten centre. It was evident based on these findings that the adults surrounding Gasem, including his parents and maids, were aware of the significance of social interaction during language and literacy activities for the enhancement of his abilities and interest in literacy. One of the most significant and influential sociocultural literacy practices that Gasem engaged in was the Quran preschool that he attended during weekends. Quranic preschool is rich in printed media and standard Arabic sources for fostering emergent literacy learning – reading skills in particular (Wagner, Spert & Ezzaki, 1989).

Table 7.9

7.9: Adults' Literacy Attitudes and Practices at Home

Adults' literacy attitudes and practices at home	1 Several times per day	2 Daily	3 Weekly	4 Occasionally	5 Rarely	6 Never
a. mother reads to child?		✓				
b. father reads to child?						✓
c. the maid reads to child?					✓	
d. play with your child in games that involve literacy (e.g. pretending to cook and reading a recipe, writing a shopping list, pretending to read to the toys etc.)?			✓			
e. engage with your child in discussion about books and other texts that promote consideration of diverse perspectives (e.g. gender)?			✓			
f. tell or read familiar family and community stories and stories related to your culture?		✓				
g. provide opportunities for your child to engage with stories, songs, games or books that are about cultures different to your own?				✓		

7.5.11 Maid's literacy and cultural backgrounds

The family's maid, Normini, was Filipina and spoke English with all members of the family. Her mother used to work as a maid in Oman. She was from a low socioeconomic background. Her father and mother were both from the Philippines. Her father was deceased. She was married with two children, a five year old boy and two year old girl. She worked as a maid in order to support her family financially. She explained that:

My mother brings up my children as my husband does not have a job and he is not educated. So, I am the breadwinner and support my family and my mother.

Normini indicated that she had worked previously as a maid with a family with a child.

She explained:

This is the second time I work as a maid but my first time in KSA as I have a working contract for two years and I've already been here for 11 months, with Gasem's family. I worked before as a maid with a family with a child.

Normini completed grade five, but due to her family's financial difficulties she could not afford to continue her education, and decided to work as a maid. Before she worked as a maid, she trained to get a certificate as a housemaid. She worked long hours, from 7:00 am to 11:00 pm, which is around 16 hours, on a daily basis. She looked after Gasem's younger brother after she

had carried out the home duties – cleaning, washing and cooking. She had one day off per week.

7.5.12 Normini's interaction with Gasem

According to Sarah, Normini showed positive attitudes toward interacting with her child in literacy activities at home on a weekly basis, such as singing nursery rhymes, doing writing and drawing activities, and watching movies on TV or playing computer games (see Table 7.10). On an occasional basis, Normini engaged with Gasem using her own language as well as being involved in sport and cooking activities at home. However, she showed less engagement in reading activities with the child at home. This may be due to Normini also having responsibility for work in the house for long hours. These results revealed that Normini played a positive role in assisting Gasem's literacy learning at home.

Table 7.10

7.10: Normini's Literacy Interaction with Gasem during Literacy Activities at Home

Normini's literacy attitudes and practices at home, and literacy interactions with Gasem	1 Several times per day	2 Daily	3 Weekly	4 Occasionally	5 Rarely	6 Never
a. the maid reads to child story books?					✓	
b. the maid sings nursery rhymes with your child?			✓			
c. the maid involves in your child writing and drawing activities?			✓			
d. the maid engages with your child in watching movies on TV or playing computer games ?			✓			
e. the maid use her own language when engaging with your child?				✓		
f. the maid involves in your child sport and cooking activities at home?				✓		

When I asked Normini during the interview about her social interactions with Gasem at home, she indicated that she interacted with Gasem in literacy activities. She mentioned:

I play with Gasems on iPad, Arabic and English games. I also sing for him some English songs.

Normini indicated that she had a good relationship with Gasem's parents as they encouraged her to use her own language at home through interacting with children in literacy practices and

teaching the family some words in Tagalog. She mentioned some of these words, translating the meaning to English. Normini reported that:

I teach Gasem and his family some Filipino words as the family is interested in learning languages and different cultures. For example, mador: bad odour, mayo: hot, makendo: cold. I sing in Arabic and English but not in Tagalog.

To develop her own literacy skills, she learned Arabic songs by watching television with the children. She stated that:

I learnt some children's songs from the Arabic children's educational program on TV and I repeat them with Gasem and his siblings.

Normini reported that she used literacy resources, such as the library and the iPad provided by Gasem's parents, in order to teach him to read. She explained that:

Gasem has a small library of books, CDs, Oxford English-Arabic dictionary with illustrations, videos, tapes, games and programs in English and Arabic. I also teach the children English through stories, books and downloaded programs on iPad, such as the English Alphabet letters program. I also read traditional and old English stories to them.

Normini indicated that she used these resources, in English and Arabic, to scaffold Gasem's literacy learning. The social interaction that occurred at home between Gasem and Normini through a variety of literacy activities reflected positively on the development of Gasem's literacy learning within a multilingual environment. She mentioned that:

They [Gasem's parents] are highly educated and cultured. They welcome and encourage multilingualism. They are a family who loves reading, travelling and learning about various cultures. Gasem's mother [Sarah] speaks English fluently as she is an English language teacher. She [Sarah] loves education and reading. She always encourages me and her children to learn English well and not just Arabic. At home, we use both languages, Arabic and English when we talk to each other. They encourage me to learn the Arabic language, as it is the language of the Quran. Sometimes, we [she, Gasem and his parents] communicate in Tagalog, but not much.

This result shows that Sarah expected Normini to teach Gasem Arabic, as well as English.

Normini suggested that she positively interacted with Gasem during literacy activities such as speaking, writing, and reading at home, which may have scaffolded his learning in English. She was not fluent in Arabic. She explained that:

My speaking, writing and reading, they are mostly in English.

Normini is a Muslim and Gasem's family involved her in celebrating their cultural and religious events as a member of the family. Normini indicated that:

I join the family in Islamic Holy days and celebrations such as the month of Ramadan, Eid Fitr, Adha Eid (Sacrifice Day), in addition to Birthdays and the National Day. We buy new clothes and we make cakes and sweets and special foods for the occasions.

Based on Sarah and Normini's responses to questionnaires and interviews, it was evident that Gasem's home literacy environment was rich in terms of the resources available at home, and in terms of child-adult interaction. Miller (1998) believed that the home is a vital setting as a rich and natural source for preschool children to learn and experience literacy knowledge and practices. This case illustrated that the HLE was rich in terms of the variety of literacy resources in both languages (Arabic and English) and the positive attitudes of adults (parents and maid) towards engaging with Gasem during literacy practices. The bilingual environment stimulated Gasem's interest in literacy activities at home, including reading, writing, singing, watching TV, and playing with an iPad. HLE factors, such as parental level of education, the mother's experience as an English teacher, and the parents' positive attitudes toward maids, were found to be the most significant factors that positively influenced the maid's willingness to interact with Gasem during home literacy practices. Although the father's interactions with Gasem were fewer than his mother's were, he was actively engaged in reading and drawing activities at home.

In the next section, I turn to analysing the kindergarten literacy environment experienced by Gasem, and focus on his exploration and interaction within a social context.

7.6 Kindergarten Literacy Environment

Gasem attended a kindergarten centre in a suburb of Mecca five days a week. The opening hours of the centre were 7:00am to 12:00pm. A visit was arranged with the directors of the centre through face-to-face formal meetings in order to find a convenient time to visit the kindergarten program. The following section describes the kindergarten's physical environment, including literacy resources and classroom structure. It also describes the level of education, experiences, beliefs, teaching pedagogies, social interactions with children, and relationships with children's parents of the teacher, Aisha.

7.6.1 The kindergarten's physical environment

In Gasem's kindergarten centre, the hallways were decorated with children's creative works, including art and written pieces. The areas of learning in the classroom included Writing, Art, Reading (*i.e.* a library area), Discovery, Manipulation Area, Construction, and a Home Area. Examples of the work from these areas of learning areas were displayed on kindergarten walls for mothers, as part of the kindergarten's strategy to involve mothers in the

daily program (see Figure 7.6). The photos below show a kindergarten environment rich in resources, in particular, environmental print resources. Environmental print resources in the classroom included signs and symbols in Arabic and English, such as a welcome sign, bathroom sign, and emergency exit sign posted on the wall (see Figure 7.8) There was no computer in the classroom for children to use as it was not part of the curriculum.



Figure 7.6. Areas of learning displayed in kindergarten hallway

Figure 7.7 displays the documentation of children literacy works to encourage mothers' involvement in their children's daily learning at the centre.



Figure 7.7. Kindergarten hallway decorated with children's drawing pieces.

Figure 7.8 shows the environmental print resources was displayed in Arabic and English to children, staff, and visitors such as “Emergency Exit” sign.

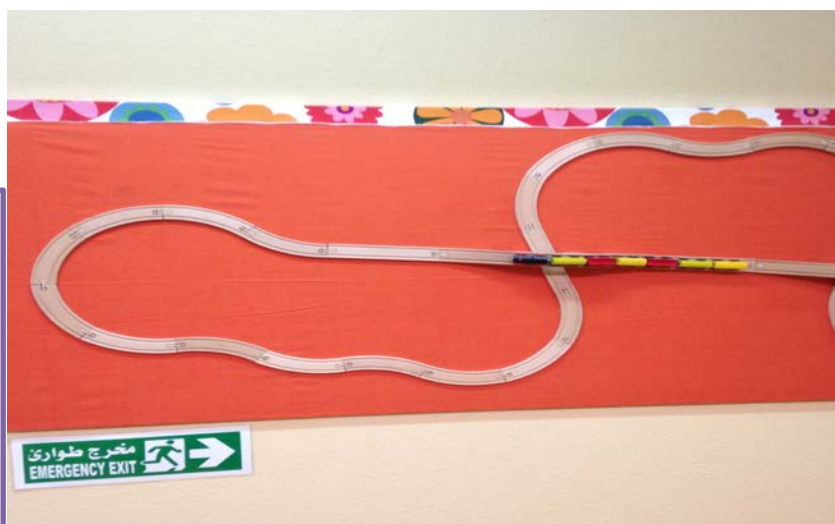


Figure 7.8. The Arabic and English sign display below the construction area on the kindergarten wall

7.6.2 Aisha’s demographic and teaching background

In Gasem’s classroom there were two teachers, the classroom teacher and the assistant teacher. Aisha was Gasem’s classroom teacher. During the interview with Aisha, she indicated that she had worked as an early childhood teacher for five years and had worked in both private and public kindergarten centres in the city of Mecca. Aisha had working experience with children from different age groups, including 3 - 4 year olds and 4 - 5 year olds. This may have influenced her beliefs and positive attitudes toward using different literacy teaching strategies based on children’s ages and interests. She mentioned that:

Of course there is a difference between teaching literacy to 3 - 4 and 4 - 5 year old children. I give children activities that are suitable for their age and abilities. So, I gradually increase the level of difficulty of tasks according to the children’s age. When the child improves his writing such as writing the alphabet letters, I go a step further and ask him to write a word starting with a specific letter and linking the word to the matching picture. Then, we start writing simple words.

She had a Bachelor’s degree in kindergarten teaching from the teachers’ college. Since college, she attended a few workshops relating to teaching children storytelling. She stated that:

I had another general kinder training courses but I haven’t undertaken any specific workshops or courses about teaching children language (early literacy skills).

However, she did not attend any courses relating to teaching children’s language in early years: in particular, early literacy skills. This result highlights the issue of ECTs’ lack of literacy teaching training. This finding is in line with previous studies that found ECTs have limited

knowledge and training in literacy development and teaching content (Lynch, 2009; Ure & Raban, 2001).

Regarding her achievements, she had undertaken a course about the storytelling of Yousuf (Joseph, Son of Jacob, Peace be upon Him) to learn about using narrative structure to help children absorb the information in a story and connect it to their own experiences. In addition, in this course she practiced using her facial expressions as an educational tool during storytelling sessions. She believed that it is important for ECTs to attend teaching workshops which develop their understanding of how to use environmental resources in a more effective way. She acknowledged that this workshop developed her skills and knowledge of the importance of storytelling integrated through imaginative play, and improved her knowledge on how teachers can utilise this in the teaching program. She mentioned that:

Previously, I made the Puppetry area, dolls area where I put many dolls (doctor, patient, mother, father, child, policeman, etc.) to help children play, imagine and tell a story by themselves and from their own imagination, which help their language and social interaction with their peers in the group. This area also helped show the child's personality and language problems, therefore allowing us as teachers, to work on providing the necessary assistance to those children.

7.6.3 Classroom environment and structure

ECTs play a significant role in scaffolding children's emergent literacy prior to school. Aisha structured the classroom environment in a way that supported interaction between children through ensuring there was enough space, time, and materials for children to play and share. As the Self-Learning Curriculum (SLC) in kindergarten in KSA is focused mainly on the child's needs and interests, teachers give attention to organising the learning environment in a way that assists each individual child's needs and interests, in order to enhance their potential development and learning. Some of the private kindergarten centres in KSA have adopted and applied the Montessori curriculum instead of SLC (Bathatheg, 2011). Lillard (1972) described Montessori's approach as follows:

It focuses on each child as one continuously developing person from birth to early adulthood (p. 185).

The classroom consisted of open-ended resources, such as paints, clay, paper and crayons, and recyclable materials such as clothing, food packages, magazines, puzzles, and whiteboards. This reflected the Montessori concept that the environment has to be arranged in a way that develops children's skills in the areas of cooking, cleaning, gardening, caring for the natural environment (including plants and animals), and art, and provides library corners in which

children are free to move around (Ültanır, 2012). Arthur et al. (2015) emphasise the importance of providing children with many resources to support many approaches to learning.

In the classroom physical environment, Aisha had strict rules in terms of the number of children who may use each play area. The total number of children in the class was 27 children, with two ECTs. Each area of learning should have a specific number of children according to the total number of children in the classroom, and the classroom size. This was as follows: four children in the writing area; five children in the art area; four children in the Reading (Library) area; two children in the Discovery area; four children in the Manipulative area; four children in the Construction area; and four children in the Home area. Aisha developed children's social skills such as taking turns, sharing, listening and responding to others. Accordingly, children showed respect for the classroom rules and demonstrated clear understanding of them. For instance, the teacher created a "printed pass badge" for each area (with the area name) for each child to wear around their neck in order to access the learning area (see Figures 7.9). This strategy encouraged social play and peer interaction, and regulated children's behavior in respecting others, tolerating the rules, and learning to share objects. However, it may also have restricted children's learning opportunities and enthusiasm to learn.



In Figure 7.9 Gasem showed his printed pass before he accessed the construction area with his peer. The pass badge contained illustrations relating to blocks and texts in Arabic to illustrate the name of the area.

Figure 7.9. Construction area printed access pass

7.6.4 Teaching literacy pedagogies

Aisha mentioned that she used scaffolding as one of the effective teaching pedagogies to foster children's literacy learning through assisting the child to move gradually from one level

of learning to another. Aisha used different social interaction strategies with children to develop their literacy skills. This included facilitating, directing, and building positive relationships between children. Aisha facilitated children's literacy learning through giving them opportunities to be involved in making decisions about their learning, and individual choices about whether they wanted to engage in shared activities or individual tasks. She developed Gasem's problem solving skills by asking him appropriate and challenging questions. In the matching area, for instance, Aisha prepared the activity "Words with pictures ending with the letter b", requiring Gasem to match the letter "b" with a picture of a boat, dog, and grape (in Arabic, these 3 words end with the letter "b"). Gasem did not need any assistance from Aisha to work out the activity. He was observed thinking for a short time and made a few attempts and errors; then he completed the activity in the correct manner. He was able to recognise the written words on the matching cards related to the pictures (observation 5 in Appendix B.3).

Another strategy used by Aisha was to build and sustain positive relationships between children to encourage discussion, speaking, and listening skills. She indicated that:

As a teacher, I use many pedagogical methods to teach children literacy. I ask children questions, I let them use analytical thinking and imagination, to help them express their ideas and learn specific concepts. Discussions between the teacher and the children and between the child and his/her peers are important teaching methods.

Aisha emphasised the importance of integrated literacy learning within the daily program in all areas of the classroom as well as outside the classroom. In the classroom area, areas including the library and home areas were the most significant areas of literacy learning, designed to develop children's reading, writing, oral language, and imagination. Children engaged in shared activities using printed resources such as pens and paper, picture cards, alphabetic posters, informational books about animals and foods, and storybooks provided by their teachers. Aisha stated that:

I introduce intensive language, in particular reading and writing in the session through telling stories so the child listens to the episode plot with his peers. Then, we discuss the concepts of the story by asking the children questions and by encouraging them to use analytical thinking by asking: "If was not...?" to give the child the opportunity to think about various possibilities and chances when there is a problem in the story. This provides the child with the opportunity to not only think but also to find out about their language outcome.

Aisha created an exercise book for each child to develop their writing and reading skills, exploring each child's interests and language abilities. She indicated that:

I have previously allocated an exercise book for each child with their names, in the Library area, to provide them with an opportunity to tell a story from their own imagination or from their social environment, then, the child will write it in their book.

In the Outdoor area during the free play session, literacy as social practice was integrated as part of the daily planned and spontaneous experiences. These experiences included playing with sand using relevant tools, naming sand tools, drawing alphabetic letters in the sand, drawing a treasure map in the sand, planning a bike path, and writing the score of a basketball game on a score sheet. Aisha reported that she usually talked with children after the free play session asking questions such as what they did in the sandpit, what they most enjoyed, and what they would like to do next time in the free play session. These questions assisted her in further planning, as well as understanding the children's needs and interests.

7.6.5 Relationship between Gasem's home and kindergarten

A positive and happy relationship between the home and kindergarten settings is desirable for children to develop their full potential. When families and educators work together as partners for the benefit of children's learning, they need to communicate with and support each other. A good partnership between the home and kindergarten environments can benefit parents in terms of educating them about their children's learning and development (Bekman & Kocak, 2013; Ihmeideh & Oliemat, 015; Pinto, Pessanha & Aguiar, 3013), and a good relationship between these environments allows ECTs to get feedback from parents on children's home practices. Aisha believed that:

The relationships with families are not as they should be. There must be positive and effective communication between home and kinder for the overall benefit of the child.

Aisha indicated that, in general, ECTs in KSA encountered challenges while communicating with children's parents due to sociocultural barriers. Culturally, ECTs are allowed to communicate with mothers but not fathers. These challenges affected the way teachers presented and taught literacy to children in their early years. This will be explored fully in the subsequent section of this chapter. Every teacher had her own way to communicate with mothers. Aisha used "WhatsApp" instant SMS messaging as a way of communication with mothers. She reported that:

As a way of contact, I use WhatsApp as a new communication method and social media, with the mothers through establishing a group for them and for the class teacher to discuss everything related to their child's literacy and the activities they do in the classroom; to send notices and to inform the parents of the child's progress and problems so they can talk to the child at home about them; I talk to the mothers about the new concepts being taught; to answer the mothers questions and concerns so they feel satisfied with the level of communications.

Other communication methods reported by Aisha were telephone calls, letters to the mother and, if necessary, to the father, and face-to-face interviews with the mothers if required. Email was rarely used by both teacher and parents. Aisha indicated that:

We rarely send emails because most parents do not find email as an effective and easy way of communication.

Sarah endorsed Aisha's claim that she communicated with her child's teacher using WhatsApp, as she was usually busy working full time as a teacher. Sarah reported that she communicated with Aisha on a daily basis.

Aisha indicated that she does not communicate with fathers at all. She stated that:

my communications with the father is zero, but with the mother it is 80%.

Alameen et al. (2015) found that using technological channels of communication between directors and parents, such as websites and emails, was effective in bridging the gap between home and kindergarten settings in the KSA context, and that it developed relationships with parents and the community. Although teachers used technological channels such as WhatsApp with mothers, they could not use the same method to communicate with fathers. These results showed that communicating with fathers is challenging for teachers due to the conservative nature of Saudi culture. This makes it difficult to reach fathers and to involve them in the kindergarten program. Aisha refers to the sociocultural context of KSA when she stated:

Our society is very traditional and the Saudi culture is very conservative and restricting. No communication is ever allowed between the fathers and the teachers, for any reason. In case of emergencies, only the principal is allowed to talk to the father but not the teachers. Rare occasions are if the mother is deceased, for example, then the Administration talks to the father about his child.

According to Aisha, the director of the kindergarten centre was the only person allowed to communicate with fathers. Alameen et al. (2015) found that fathers were encouraged to have full engagement with the directors, which can be considered a step towards empowering fathers' involvement in early childhood education in KSA. According to Alameen et al.'s study, positional power is given to people with the permission to communicate in kindergarten settings in KSA.

In terms of involving fathers in the daily program, Aisha showed a clear understanding of the value of fathers' participation in the kindergarten program or in social events, provided it was done in ways respectful to the religious and cultural values of KSA. The result evident in this centre was that fathers were involved in sharing new knowledge and ideas with children and staff through engaging in cultural and social events in the kindergarten program. It would

be valuable for teachers to get fathers more effectively involved in the daily program, but it seems to be impossible. Aisha gave examples to illustrate fathers' participation in some cases at the kindergarten program:

We [teachers, director and staff] do involve fathers in our national and relevant events but in a way that is appropriate to our conservative Saudi society. For example, we involve fathers who know about First Aid and Fire Brigades to teach the children about their role, their vehicles, the tools they use to extinguish fires; safety and how to prevent risks. We co-ordinate the event and provide a separate room [private room] for them [fathers], to give their presentation to the children in the kinder. Also, during the National Day celebration, we do the same and we offer Arabic coffee, recite the National Anthem, present a folkloric dance with a Saudi sword and flag as part of Saudi Arabia's heritage and we take photos too.

Although fathers did play a part in the kindergarten program by talking to directors and participating in a few social events, their participation was limited and restricted by cultural rules. Further analysis revealed that ECTs still faced serious challenges in getting fathers to be fully involved in children's literacy learning in the centre as well as cooperating with fathers in order to bridge the gap in the communication between them. These challenges were due to the mandatory curriculum and the restricted roles set by policy makers concerned with gender segregation between teachers and fathers.

7.6.6 Aisha's literacy beliefs, practices, and expectations

Interestingly, Aisha believed that parents' level of education was not a significant variable impacting children's literacy development and learning, though she did not say whether her belief was based on research or her own personal opinion. Studies have argued that there is no direct effect of maternal education on the quality of children's early literacy development (Bingham, 2007; Korat et al., 2007; Korat, 2009; Park, 2008; Roberts, Jurgens & Burchinal, 2005; Rodriguez & Tamis-LeMonda, 2011; Wu & Honig, 2010), which contradicts this study's previous finding that maternal education significantly affects children's emergent literacy learning. Aisha emphasised that:

However, sometimes the opposite is right as education may be extremely important but the educated parents may always be busy and do not find time to teach their children literacy (how to read and write). Some mothers who are not highly educated are interested in their child's daily learning and teach him/her the Alphabet or reading a meaningful story to them at home. This can be due to the mother's eagerness to compensate for what she has missed out on as a child. So she wants to provide her child with the best education.

In relation to family income, Aisha believed that income was not a significant variable influencing children's learning. She believed that, compared to high-income families, families

from low income backgrounds care more about their children's literacy learning and are more motivated to give their children a better education. She justified this by saying that the kindergarten setting provided all children with literacy resources, including those children who came from disadvantaged families. Aisha believed that kindergarten can compensate for disadvantage at home. These results seem consistent with research that has found that providing disadvantaged children with books and encouraging them to read, as well as providing trained kindergarten teachers, can compensate for low levels of family income and HLE (Niklas & Schneider, 2013).

Aisha believed that less social interaction between parents and children can disadvantage children when their parents are working full time. She reported that:

Nowadays, all children have access to educational tools and materials in the home and outside. But unfortunately, they are missing social interactions with their parents and extended family, in terms of reading and writing activities. Perhaps the father does not read at home or the mother does not share her children learning the letters, does not read stories to them. This could be the parent's negligence of their children or being busy working.

Aisha drew attention to the importance of considering those children who are disadvantaged, and less engaged with their families, when planning learning experiences. At the beginning of every year, the kindergarten centre distributed a survey to the parents of newly enrolled children in order to collect information about their social, educational, and economic backgrounds. Aisha believed that this way of collecting data at the early stage of the kindergarten year was useful for understanding the children and their families' backgrounds. She stated that:

by finding out about the parents work we can have a better understanding of the child's educational level at home through his parents' influence.

She acknowledged that:

As a teacher we can notice this through the child's level and communication with the mother which makes us more aware and attentive to those children by intensifying their classroom activities.

She believed that understanding the children's family, social, and cultural backgrounds was likely to give teachers clear insight into, and understanding of, how to plan further learning experiences for children that incorporated their parents. She indicated that:

We [teacher and children] can benefit from the mother's skills in organising a session, let's say, about safety and health if she's a doctor, to raise the children's awareness about illnesses and how to prevent them. So the children can learn new vocabulary related to the doctor's role and tools used such as stethoscope. The same for the father. If he works at the Post office, we send him a letter asking him to provide us with the postman's tools such as stamps. There are various

opportunities to involve the parents especially in relation to mothers and fathers' skills, by applying them to the kinder setting in an appropriate way.

It is interesting to note, however, that there was a difference of opinion between Sarah and Aisha about the role of maids. Sarah believed in the importance of involving maids in children's literacy learning, while Aisha believed that maids played a negative role in children's literacy learning. Most importantly, Aisha believed that maids – in particular, Indonesian maids, who were not formally educated and did not speak Arabic – negatively influence children's language and literacy learning. These opinions support the idea of Al-Jarf (2009): that although children who were cared for from birth by non-Arabic speaking maids may be negatively influenced in their linguistic development, that influence disappears once children attend kindergarten, in the KSA context. In short, the investigation of maids' roles in this study makes evident the importance of involving maids in Saudi children's literacy learning.

Aisha stated that the mother should be aware of her significant role in educating her child, and time spent with maids may negatively impact the child's language and literacy development. These opinions suggest that parents should be aware of the importance of employing qualified maids to look after their children because maids do influence young children's learning, particularly in literacy and language. She justified her statement by suggesting that:

Usually the maid plays a negative role in the child's development of language and behaviour and this is due to the negligence of the mother and her leaving the child for long hours under the care of the maid without any supervision. Especially Indonesian maids who are not educated and who do not speak Arabic well which affects the language of the child in a negative way.

In terms of her teaching expectations, Aisha criticised the child-teacher ratio. She had 27 children to two teachers in her class, which may negatively influence children's interaction and learning. Most studies in the western world have examined correlations between child-adult ratios and the quality of care that children receive between the ages of three to five. There was noticeable evidence that the ratio strongly predicts quality for infants and toddlers more than for older children (Cleveland, Forer, Hyatt, Japel, & Krashinsky, 2007; De Schipper, Riksen-Walraven & Geurts, 2006; Hayes, Palmer & Zaslow, 1990). Aisha believed that the child-teacher ratio is one of the most important predictor variables on children's quality of learning and teacher teaching quality. She raised this concern as she mentioned that:

I think we need to change the curriculum and teaching methods. I believe that we should reduce the teacher-child ratio to enable the teacher to focus more on a smaller number of children. We have 27 children here with just two teachers in the semester. Personally, I found this a big barrier to focusing on children's learning and behaviour.

7.6.7 Observations of Gasem's social interaction with Aisha and peers in the classroom

Through my journey observing Gasem during seven weeks (20 observation periods), I used different methods of documentation, including taking photos of his working samples, using an observation checklist, and a visual diary. My visual diary recorded Gasem's engagement and interaction with his peers, and can be seen in Figure 7.10. Based on these observations, Gasem was interested mostly in the construction (through blocks), drawing, home and library areas. In Figure 7.10, the arrows are numbered as 2-block, 6-drawing, 5-home dramatic play and 7- library signified the child's interest in those areas during the daily program. More than one arrow indicates that the child has moved backwards and forwards between the activities or areas. The other method of documentation used to record Gasem's emergent skills in the classroom was a checklist. This method helped investigate each focus child's literacy learning in the kindergarten setting. Arthur et al. (2014) argued that a closed method of observation, such as a closed checklist, is a useful and easy method that provides a summary of each child's development. However, it does not provide contextual detail. Therefore, I used an open-closed observation checklist as it gave an indication of how the child engaged in emergent literacy activities in indoor and outdoor classroom spaces.

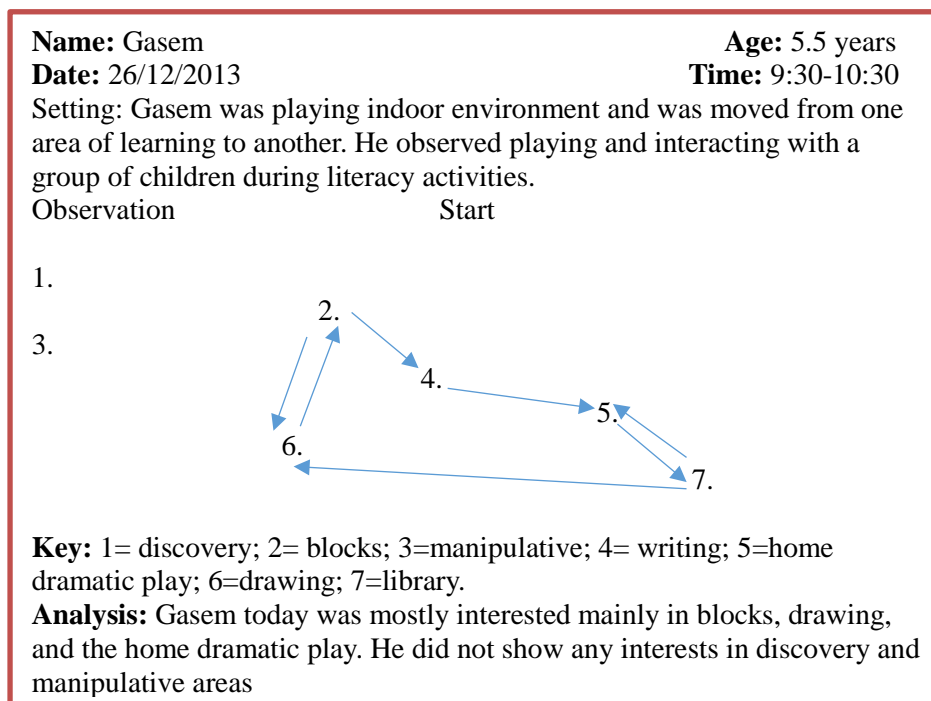


Figure 7.10. A visual diary of Gasem's daily interest in the indoor environment.

The open-closed observations checklist tool had three sections (observed, not observed, and an analysis of each focus child's literacy learning process). The investigation of the focus child's emergent literacy through the checklist included indicators such as literacy attitudes, language use, making meaning, and concepts about print symbols and writing (see Appendix B.3). These themes or indicators were similar to the parental questionnaire themes that aimed to assess the continuity of children's literacy learning outcomes at home and in kindergarten settings. Gasem interacted socially with his teacher and peers during all the observed activities. The observation score of what the child did was 20/20 (observed in every section) in the following activities: participates in interactions with others; initiates interactions with others; hears and responds to others in small groups; follows verbal directions; uses language for a range of functions, such as labelling, describing, explaining, predicting, imagining, analysing, and synthesising; and explores with writing materials (pens, pencils, crayons, chalk, textas, brushes, paint). This reflected that Gasem's learning literacy was fostered and developed through social interaction with others in which literacy was integrated. Figure 7.11 illustrates an example of Gasem's social interactions with his teacher and peers in which he showed ability to use language for a range of functions such as naming, describing, labelling, and classifying different types of vegetables on flash cards.

Using language for range of functions (number 10, Appendix B.3)

Gasem was observed during the last meeting taking turns to match each vegetable with its own box. The first time, he needed his teacher and peers' help, but then he was able to continue the task successfully on his own. This showed the teacher and peers' role in scaffolding Gasem's learning.

Analysis: Gasem showed the ability to use language for a range of functions such as naming, describing, labelling, and classifying vegetables: potato, sweet potato, cucumber, green beans, capsicum, onion, tomato, mint, zucchini, and mouloukhia.

He also showed the ability to distinguish between illustration and text, with his teacher's assistance, through asking questions. For instance, he linked the illustrations on the page with the printed words (pictures of paint, paint materials, tools). Gasem interacted socially with his teacher and peers by sounding-out letters and matching them with words starting with the same letter, such as M for mint, C for carrot, S for sweet potato)



Figure 7.11. Observation of Gasem's ability to use language in a range of functions during the last meeting session

Another example of Gasem's literacy learning was his interest in drawing activities with his peers, observed during the free play session in the art area (Figure 7.12). He used his home experiences of going to sea with his family during the weekends and applied it to his drawing. This showed his ability to make meaning through verbal description - to show the real meaning behind his work to his teacher.

Drawing observation (number 3, Appendix B.3)

Gasem chose to draw on the oil painting board outside the scope of the class with his friend and under the supervision of his teacher. Gasem first drew wide close lines in blue in the middle of the page. The teacher asked him, “What is this shape, Gasem?” He said, “A sea.” Then he drew a vertical line and a horizontal line, a circle representing the head, and two straight lines representing the legs. He did the same thing another time, saying that his drawing represented him and his mother at the beach. Then he drew a circle, describing it as the sun, and a line below the sea, saying that it was the beach. Gasem used the blue colour for the sea and light brown for the sandy beach, people (himself and his mother), and the sun. Gasem was able to build on his previous experience, as he mentioned that he went to the beach with his family in Jeddah city: thus, his artwork was a mixture of his imagination, analysis, and his previous experience. When his drawing was completed, his teacher asked him to describe the content of his drawing using verbal terms such as mother, sun, beach. He was able to spell them out correctly.

Analysis: This experience involved Gasem’s ability to develop control holding the paintbrush and using spoken language to interact with others. He showed his ability in utilising conversational skills through responding to adults’ questions around his drawing and staying focused on his topic. He understood the purpose of drawing: to create meaning.



Figure 7.12. Vegetable printed in Arabic on cards with their pictures

However, the overall analysis showed that Gasem was not observed at all in some literacy activities and got a score 0 out of 20 (not observed). Those activities included being familiar with using various forms of technology, *e.g.* radio, cassettes, phones, and gameboys; accessing and exploring the internet; searching the internet for information; manipulating a computer indiscriminately; playing games on a computer purposefully; and using a computer for word processing and searching. This was because Gasem and his peers had no opportunities at the kindergarten to play with electronic resources and extend their literacy knowledge, understanding, and skills relating to using technological devices. His home resources, however,

were rich with a variety of printed open-ended resources and technological resources, and he was observed to use them frequently at home.

In week one of the classroom observation, Gasem did not yet seem very interested in writing activities. In week two, he was observed to have ability in controlling and holding a pencil (see observation 5 in Appendix B.3). In the following week (observation 8, Appendix B.3), he was able to independently write without assistance in Arabic, from right to left, and was able to spell words correctly. However, in week six, after the school holiday, Gasem was not able to write his name correctly in the right direction in Arabic, and he wrote his name in the opposite sequence: that is, first he wrote the letter m (the last letter of his name), followed by e, s, a, and G (mesaG instead of Gasem) (observation 15, Appendix B.3). The frequency of Gasem's interest in writing activities at home with his mother was reported as being on a weekly basis (see Table 7.7). Similarly, in the kindergarten setting, Gasem was infrequently observed engaged in writing activities (see Table A7.13 in Appendix B.3) such as writing for his own purpose and being asked about the purpose of his writing. He scored 4/20, which meant that Gasem's teacher should consider giving more attention to developing and scaffolding Gasem's emergent writing skills. A possible explanation for this might be that Gasem's writing ability was still emerging. Another possible explanation for this is that, as Aisha believed, the child-teacher ratio affected the quality of care and education that children received.

7.7 Summary of Gasem's Case Study

A fine-grained analysis of the data in this study demonstrated that children were exposed to early literacy experience through interacting with adults in literacy-based activities in the HLE in KSA. Evidence drawn from Gasem's case study revealed that his positive and early interest in print had been developing since he was only nine months old. He was interested mostly in reading books, drawing, imaginative play, pointing to pictures, technological tools, and phonemic activities such as repeating rhymes. The follow-up data showed that Gasem had a rich literacy environment which was full of printed resources (thematic and story books, posters, signs in Arabic and English) and multitechnological resources (computer, iPad, iPod, iPhone, television) provided by his parents. This result is in agreement with those obtained by Brown et al. (2013), that HLEs where parents supported their children's learning and attempted to respond to their children's interests, as well as embedding their children's learning within a

familiar literacy culture, allowed children to enter preschool with a high degree of literacy and curiosity about written words. In the kindergarten environment, literacy resources were limited to printed and open-ended resources. Brown et al. (2013) suggested that preschool environments should include environmental print materials, books, and new technology offering the chance to listen to stories, share reading books, and use technological tools such as computers to play literacy games and other educational activities. A possible explanation for these results could be Gasem's positive attitude toward literacy, which was influenced by his mother's positive attitudes and beliefs about the significant role of adults, including father, maid and teacher, in developing children's literacy learning.

Most importantly, although Gasem's father reported providing a variety of literacy resources at home, he was less engaged in his child's interactive literacy activities at home compared to Gasem's mother. These findings seem to be consistent with other research, which found that the fathers were less engaged than mothers in children's literacy at home, such as by reading books for pleasure to their children (Burgess, 2011). Another concern about fathers in KSA related to their communication with ECTs. Gasem's father faced sociocultural barriers in regards to communicating with his child's teacher.

Further analysis revealed that the maid played a significant role in interacting with Gasem in literacy-based experiences at home. This study found evidence that maids, including Normini, engaged in early literacy activities with children at home that included drawing, watching television, singing and playing with alphabet apps on an iPad in the English language. This result reflected the relationship between a maid's positive attitude toward being engaged with the child's literacy learning and parents being educated and valuing the learning of English as a second language at home. It can be also noted from the analysis that although the mother acknowledged the positive influence of her maid on her child's literacy learning, the maid was less engaged in reading to the child at home.

This study found disagreement between Aisha and Sarah relating to the influence of parents' educational level on children's literacy achievement. Aisha had negative beliefs toward maids' roles in children's literacy learning. Her concern was based on the quality of maids in terms of their educational and linguistic backgrounds. Further analysis revealed that there were few differences relating to Gasem's interests and practices seen in both settings, which referred to adults' interaction and resources provided to him. For instance, Sarah indicated that Gasem was encouraged at home by adults, including her maid Normini, to use technological tools,

including an iPad, and to watch a variety of educational programs on television to develop his literacy learning. These programs were Western and mostly in English. This reflected the multi-literate environment which influenced Gasem at home. Not surprisingly, observations showed that there was no computer and internet provided for children in the classroom. Therefore, children, including Gasem, had no opportunity to experience playing with computers or iPads with their peers. Aisha referred to access to internet, computers, and iPads in the classroom being limited by the mandatory curriculum that they were required to follow. Teachers have no choice in integrating new resources and developing their teaching skills. This issue was discussed previously by Gahwaji's (2011) study, which indicated that there is a specific need to modify the curriculum to meet the technological changes in preschool centres in KSA.

In addition, other significant results revealed from the observation data showed that Aisha followed a traditional approach of observing, and a direct-teaching style, which was influenced by Montessori's approach. Most literacy activities that Aisha observed focused on reading and writing skills. The most common teaching strategies used by Aisha were scaffolding, interacting, instructing, explaining, and observing. Social interaction was mostly observed between peers, where children played and learned in small groups, and child-teacher interactions. Discussion was limited to free play time in the corners and free play time outside. These results drew attention to the fact that ECTs lack contemporary perspectives on multi-literacies and literacy as social practice, as they were focused mainly on print-based literature. This was due to a lack of resources and the ECTs' concerns about meeting the requirements of the Self-Learning Curriculum (SLC). These results are in line with those of previous studies from the USA, which found that many ECTs' interactive activities were teacher-directed, often involving paper and pencil tasks, while other teachers incorporated activities that were narrowly focused on literacy skills and did not focus on fundamental concepts of literacy and language development (Clark & Kragler, 2005; Sylvester & Kragler, 2012).

Result from ECTs' interviews revealed that the child-teacher ratio was an unavoidable challenge which may affect children's literacy social and learning outcomes. Thus, this needs to be considered carefully by policy makers. Further results showed that ECTs faced serious pressure and demands in meeting the requirements of implementing the curriculum on time at the same time as meeting parents' expectations. These results further support the idea of Sverdlov et al. (2014) that ECTs should take parents' expectations and beliefs into account and attempt to reassure parents that they are fostering their children's oral language as well as communication skills, while at the same time developing children's alphabetical skills.

Interestingly, analysis confirmed that communication between both settings was established using “WhatsApp” between ECTs and mothers, but not with fathers. This draws attention to the fact that ECTs and policy makers need to find alternative and culturally appropriate ways of communication for enabling fathers’ roles, in terms of incorporating fathers in the kindergarten centre program and decision-making.

Overall, the HLE and KLE in which Gasem was immersed were found to be different in terms of adults’ literacy beliefs, practices, attitudes, perspectives, and resources. These differences drew our attention to the gap that exists between both settings. The following chapter (Chapter Eight) analyses the second case study – Kareem – in terms of his emergent literacy attitudes, interests, and practices at home and kindergarten settings.

Chapter Eight – Kareem’s Literacy Practices in Home and Kindergarten Settings

8.1 Introduction

Kareem’s emergent literacy interests, attitudes, needs and practices are discussed in this chapter. This chapter addresses three main themes. Firstly, Kareem and adults’ interactions at home are examined in terms of their literacy practices, attitudes, beliefs, and relationships. Secondly, social interactions at kindergarten between Kareem, his teacher, and peers during literacy activities are explored through analysis of classroom observations. Finally, the relationship between Kareem’s home and kindergarten environments is investigated and analysed in relation to communication frequency, means of communication, and the challenges that may hinder the communication process.

8.2 The Rationale Behind Kareem’s Case Study

Kareem was selected purposively in the same manner as Gasem. The analysis of Kareem’s case is based on three main sources of data: the parental questionnaire completed by his mother Fatima; interviews with his maid Rani and kindergarten teacher Rokaya; and an observations checklist of his literacy interactions during literacy activities with his teacher and peers. The analysis of the data did not only focus on the positive relationship between Kareem’s home and kindergarten in fostering and extending his emergent literacy skills and learning. Rather, the analysis was focused extensively on how adults’ interactions with children can impact on children’s literacy skills, learning and development. As this study has adopted sociocultural theory in the complex cultural context of KSA, examining literacy learning within social contexts in both home and kindergarten is necessary in order to understand literacy cultural practices. Based on the analysis in Chapter Seven, it can be seen that literacy practices, frequencies, parental teaching styles, and beliefs are varied, and differ from one household to another and from one centre to another.

The differences and similarities between the two cases will be analysed and discussed in depth in Chapter Nine. The investigation of Kareem’s case took two sequence levels from home to kindergarten settings. The only challenge that I faced in relation to Kareem’s case was Fatima’s initial concern about interviewing Rani. I made a phone call to Fatima and explained

to her that privacy regarding her maid would be ensured and used only for the purposes of this study – and, most importantly, it would benefit her child’s literacy learning outcomes. Interestingly, Fatima was initially interested in being part of this research, but when it came to the maid interview as the second step in the qualitative investigation, she hesitated and was concerned. She did not allow me access to her maid at home or to conduct the interview at the centre. She suggested to me that I send the interview questions to her with her child so she could interview her maid by herself. This speaks to a previous finding by Roumani (2005) that interviewing maids was challenging, due to parents’ concerns. Therefore, maids were interviewed indirectly through their employers who agreed to carry out the interviews with their maids. When the indirect interview was conducted and the transcript sent to me, I made another phone call with Fatima to ask for further clarification regarding her maid. The data need to be considered with this limitation in mind. Fatima’s concern toward accessing her maid was maybe due to the fact that this research was conducted at the same time as the Saudi government was taking serious action against illegal maids. Another possible explanation may be that she was concerned about protecting the maid from being judged for her lack of formal education. In addition, Fatima was perhaps unwilling to give up time with her children to allow the maid to be interviewed. This may have influenced Fatima’s decisions in respect to interviewing her maid, who may be employed illegally. Maids’ issues were discussed in Chapter Two. In Figure 8.1, the investigation process of Kareem’s case study is outlined briefly.

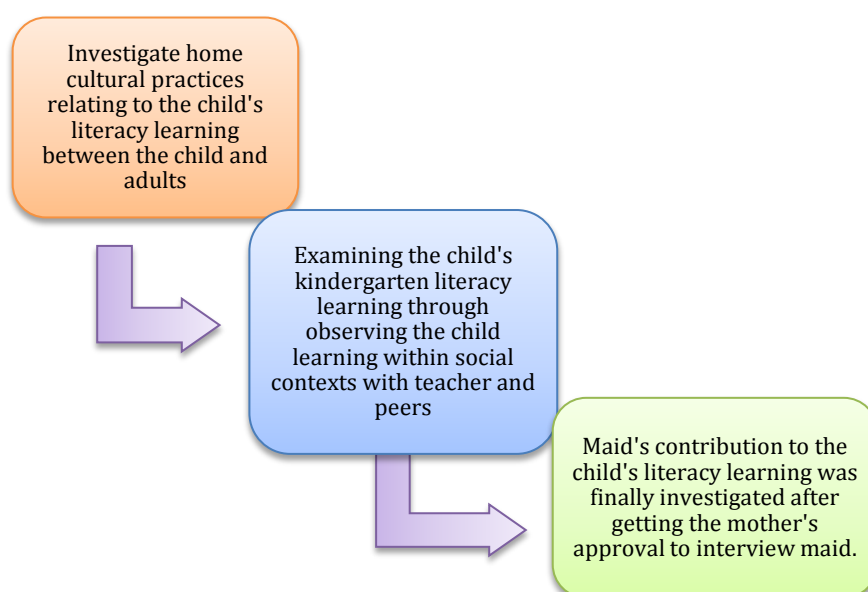


Figure 8.1. Kareem’s investigation process from home to kindergarten setting

The classroom observations timetable was initially organised with the classroom teachers based on the units of learning, which had different concepts. The learning units running at the time of the classroom observations were: My Health and Safety, Food, and My Country. Literacy was observed to be integrated in the classroom areas as part of SLC and as part of classroom instruction. As every child is individual and has his/her own interests and needs, I explored, in-depth, Kareem's literacy interests and needs at home. The following section addresses and analyses the variables that contributed to Kareem's literacy learning in the home environment.

8.3 Kareem's Home Literacy Environment (HLE)

Kareem's HLE was an example of a traditional family in KSA. It had a monolingual environment in which they spoke Arabic. At the time of this study, Kareem was five and a half years old. Kareem was interested in cars as well as alphabet letters, their sounds, and their pronunciation. He liked to play games on his iPad, such as games with letters and numbers, and racing car games. Fatima reported that Kareem demonstrated the ability to search the internet and download new games by himself. Parental demographic information and Kareem's early interest in literacy are discussed and analysed in the next section.

8.3.1 Parents' demographic information

Kareem's parents' involvement in their child's literacy practices at home is based on Fatima's report. Fatima indicated that she and Kareem's father had Bachelor-level degrees, and work as social workers in the governmental sector in the city of Mecca. Similar to Gasem, Kareem was categorised as coming from the middle socioeconomic level. The monthly household income salary was between 20,000-30,000SR, which equals \$6,816.20-10,122.43 AUD. Kareem's emergent literacy interests and social interactions are discussed and analysed in the following section.

8.3.2 Emergent literacy interaction between children and adults at home

Parental involvement in children's literacy practices was examined. Responding to question 3, Fatima indicated that Kareem showed interest in interacting with her as she sang nursery rhymes and educational songs for him since he was six months old. When he was one

year old, Fatima noticed that he was interested in pointing to picture books and storybooks. At the age of three years and six months, Kareem started pointing to alphabetic letters and sounding them out with Fatima's assistance. Fatima reported that she had been involving Kareem in shared reading of picture books since he was four years old. Fatima showed a positive attitude and clear understanding of the importance of early interaction with Kareem on his literacy learning. Weinberger (1996) found that parents' interactions with their children during book reading had a positive impact on those children in their later literacy development at school. Table 8.1 shows the emergent literacy interaction between Kareem and Fatima for the early years of his childhood development.

Table 8.1

8.1: Emergent Literacy Social Interaction Between Kareem and Fatima at Home

<i>Kareem and Fatima's interactions during emergent literacy activities at home</i>	<i>Kareem's age when Fatima started teaching him literacy</i>
a. Sang nursery rhymes for him or educational songs	6 months
b. Pointed to pictures in books and story books	1 year old
c. Pointed to alphabetic letters and sounded them out	3 years and 6 months old
d. Read picture books to him	4 years old

In response to question 4 – “why did you decide to start reading to your child at this age?” – Fatima reported that:

Because my children [Kareem] and his little brother loved listening to bed time stories, so I decided to teach him reading.

It is not surprising that Fatima believed in the importance of starting to teach Kareem literacy, since he showed a strong indication of his willingness and enthusiasm toward reading picture books and interacting with his brother and mother in this shared activity, which deepened his interest in reading. Kareem's attitude and interests in print, language, phonemic awareness, writing, drawing and technology are discussed in detail in the next section.

8.3.3 Kareem's literacy attitudes and interests

Fatima reported that she engaged in interactive activities with Kareem in reading, writing and drawing at home. As mentioned earlier, the assessment of the adults and children's

interactions in literacy activities at home was based on a 6-point Likert rating scale, which included a range of responses from 1 to 6: 1) Several times per day, 2) Daily, 3) Weekly, 4) On occasion, 5) Rarely, and 6) Never. Fatima reported Kareem's attitudes and interests toward print and her interactions with her child during these activities at home, which are shown in Table 8.2, below.

Table 8.2

8.2: Kareem's Reading Attitudes, Interests, and Response to Print

How often does your child engage in the following activities with you?	1 Several time per day	2 Daily	3 Weekly	4 Occasionally	5 Rarely	6 Never
a. ask or indicate an interest in having a story told or read?	<input type="checkbox"/>					
b. pretend to read a book (such as turning pages, producing speech that is similar to the actual story in the book and so on)?		<input type="checkbox"/>				
c. make up a story based on the pictures?			<input type="checkbox"/>			
d. fill in words or lines from a story when reading with you? (When you are reading a book your child says the next line or word before you read it)			<input type="checkbox"/>			
e. show interest in adult reading materials (i.e. newspaper, TV guide, magazine, computer, smartphone. etc...)?		<input type="checkbox"/>				
f. name letters of the alphabet?	<input type="checkbox"/>					
g. ask you to spell words?		<input type="checkbox"/>				
h. point or talk about pictures when you read stories?	<input type="checkbox"/>					
i. point to or ask about logos, symbols or signs?		<input type="checkbox"/>				
j. ask questions about characters or event when you read or tell stories or predict the next event?			<input type="checkbox"/>			
k. collaborate with others in reading experience?		<input type="checkbox"/>				

Table 8.2 shows that Fatima interacted with Kareem several times per day in activities including: indicating an interest in having a story told or read, making up a story based on the pictures, and pointing or talking about pictures when she reads stories for him. On a daily basis, Kareem interacted with Fatima by: pretending to read a book (such as turning pages, producing speech that is similar to the actual story in the book, and so on); showing interest in adult reading materials (*i.e.* newspaper, TV guide, magazine, computer, smartphone); naming letters

of the alphabet; asking her to spell words; pointing to or asking about logos, symbols, or signs; and collaborating with others in the reading experience.

On a weekly basis, Kareem showed interest in: making up a story based on pictures; filling in words or lines from a story when reading with Fatima; asking her questions about characters or event when she reads or tell stories; and predicting the next event. These results indicated that Kareem's social interactions during reading activities at home were facilitated by his mother. This interaction between the child and another capable person (adults or capable peers) can consist of clues, hints, rephrasing questions, demonstrating the task, asking the child to restate what he/she has been asked, asking the child what he/she understands, and so on (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). In this same vein, when Fatima was asked the question "How many picture books do you have at home for your child to use?", she reported that Kareem had between 1 - 10 pictures books at home. This was different to Gasem's case, which showed that he had a variety of Arabic and English picture books at home, estimated between 30 - 40 books. However, the number of books owned by children at home might not affect their reading development. Previous studies have shown that a family's literacy activities (such as visiting the bookstore and library with their child, parents modelling reading and writing to their child) did not predict greater reading competence, although they have been reported to have greater impact on children's language and literacy development (Burgess et al., 2002; Weigel et al., 2005).

In response to question 3 – "Does your child have other reading materials at home?" – Fatima indicated that Kareem played with a variety of educational literacy apps downloaded on the iPad. These include iBooks, racing car apps, and alphabetic programs in Arabic on his iPad. Fatima reported that Kareem does not visit the public library at all. This was the same as in Gasem's case, which was due to the fact that there was no public library in the city of Mecca that encouraged children's reading activities, or had a reading program for children. Fatima stated that she had to purchase picture books for Kareem based on his interests from the bookshops, which was similar to Gasem's case. Accordingly, these results reflected the need to increase opportunities for children to be exposed to printed books and stories.

8.3.4 The child's interests in drawing and writing activities at home

Emergent drawing and writing activities are an important part of early literacy development and learning. In accordance with this, the learning environment, whether at home

or in a kindergarten setting, needs to be set up for children in a way that encourages children to access materials and make their own choices, in order to explore new ideas in creative ways. Kareem's early interest in drawing and writing at home was reported by Fatima. In responding to question 9 – "What does your child use to draw?" – Fatima indicated that Kareem draws using pencil and drawing apps on an iPad. Kareem also showed a daily interest in writing letters and words and writing letter approximations (see Table 8.3). On an occasional basis, he showed attempts to write words. Kareem was less socially involved with others in collaborating in writing skills. In drawing activities, Kareem was involved in drawing pictures and telling stories about them several times per day.

Table 8.3

8.3: Kareem's Writing and Drawing Practices with Fatima at Home

How often does your child engage in the following activities with you?	1 Several times per day	2 Daily	3 Weekly	4 Occasionally	5 Rarely	6 Never
a. draw pictures and tell the story about it?		<input type="checkbox"/>				
b. write letters or letter approximations?		<input type="checkbox"/>				
c. write words?				<input type="checkbox"/>		
d. collaborate with others in writing experience?					<input type="checkbox"/>	

8.3.5 Kareem's response to environmental print

Kareem's interactions with Fatima in regards to environmental print were limited. On an occasional basis, Kareem showed that he was engaged with Fatima in identifying words in the environment (such as food packaging, signs of stores and restaurants, etc.). He was also involved weekly in identifying the front, back, top of, and bottom of a book and turning pages appropriately for Arabic language. The most frequent activity that Kareem performed daily with Fatima was recognising that illustrations on a page were related to the print (see Table 8.4).

Table 8.4

8.4: Kareem's Response to Environmental Print

How often does your child engage in the following activities with you?	1 Several times per day	2 Daily	3 Weekly	4 Occasionally	5 Rarely	6 Never
a. identify words in the environment (such as food packaging, signs of stores and restaurants, etc.) in your environment by him or herself?				<input type="checkbox"/>		
b. identify the front, back, top of, and bottom of a book and turns pages appropriately for Arabic language?			<input type="checkbox"/>			
c. recognise that illustrations on a page are related to what the print says?		<input type="checkbox"/>				

In oral language and phonemic awareness, Kareem showed interest in participating in conversations with others and initiating interactions with others, at home, several times per day (see question 7).

Kareem participated with Fatima daily in activities including recognising rhymes, sounds, or word patterns; following Fatima's verbal directions; and, most importantly, using language for a range of functions, *e.g.* labelling, describing, explaining, predicting, imagining, analysing, and synthesising. Another interesting result showed that Kareem engaged weekly with Fatima in oral language and phonemic activities including producing rhyming by himself; recognising rhymes, sounds, or word patterns; and singing simple songs. Another result showed that Kareem was less practiced in activities including repeating clapped patterns and commenting on rhyming words (see Table 8.5). As a result, the language spoken at Kareem's home, and how the language was used most frequently, were very important variables that assisted in developing Kareem's emergent reading and speaking abilities. These results are substantiated by Aram and Levin (2002), who argued that the significance of joint writing is that the skills included are word writing/recognition and phonological awareness, which were found to be good indicators for children's writing and reading acquisition in school.

Table 8.5

8.5: Kareem's Language and Phonemic Awareness

How often does your child engage in the following activities with you?	1 Several times per day	2 Daily	3 Weekly	4 Occasionally	5 Rarely	6 Never
a. produce rhyming by himself?			<input type="checkbox"/>			
b. comment on rhyming words?					<input type="checkbox"/>	
d. repeat clapped patterns?				<input type="checkbox"/>		
c. recognise rhymes, sounds or word patterns?			<input type="checkbox"/>			
d. relate some sounds with letters?		<input type="checkbox"/>				
e. sing simple songs?			<input type="checkbox"/>			
f. follow your (or someone else's) verbal directions?		<input type="checkbox"/>				
g. participate in conversations with others?	<input type="checkbox"/>					
h. initiate interactions with others?	<input type="checkbox"/>					
i. use language for a range of functions e.g. labelling, describing, explaining, predicting, imagining, analysing, synthesising?		<input type="checkbox"/>				

8.3.6 Kareem's technological interests at home

Although some educators may be concerned about children being isolated from their social world as a result of using technological tools in their daily life, some parents encourage their children to use electronic tools in order to develop emergent literacy skills. Fatima indicated that Kareem showed interest in playing with technoliteracy tools such as computers, phones, or iPads; for playing alphabet games and listening to rhymes or songs, on a daily basis. Kareem showed less interest in listening and viewing activities, such as listening to online stories and watching movies on a computer, compared to other activities. Kareem's level of interaction with Fatima in writing activities, such as writing letters and names, was surprisingly low compared with the other focus child. In addition, Kareem did not show any social interaction with other family members using Skype, FaceTime, or similar programs (see Table 8.6). Marsh (2005) indicated that literacy, as a means of self-expression and pleasure, was strongly evident through children's engagement with technoliteracy tools including television, mobile phones and computer games, and that this was recognised and supported by families, including parents and siblings.

Table 8.6

8.6: Kareem's Interests in Technological Tools at Home

How often does your child engage in the following activities with you?	1 Several times per day	2 Daily	3 Weekly	4 Occasionally	5 Rarely	6 Never
a. use computers, phones, or iPads to play alphabet games?		✓				
b. use computers, phones, or iPads to listen to rhymes or songs?		✓				
c. watch movies on a computer?			✓			
d. listen to online stories?			✓			
e. write names and letters?				✓		
f. communicate with other family members using Skype, FaceTime or similar program?						✓
g. use computers to search for information?		✓				

In responding to question 11 – “Do you watch television with your child? If yes, How many hours does your child usually watch?” – Fatima indicated that she and Kareem enjoyed watching television on a daily basis for 2 - 4 hours. His favourite cartoons programs included Tom and Jerry, Ben 10, and Spiderman. Consequently, this showed that inadequate book availability at home, lack of interest in printed resources at home, and long hours spent watching television may influence Kareem in developing his reading habits at home.

8.3.7 Literacy resources at home

Kareem's parents provided him with a variety of literacy resources at home. In responding to question 6 – “What are the literacy resources that your child has at home?” – Fatima indicated that Kareem has different literacy resources at home, such as a whiteboard and markers, religious books such as the Quran, and alphabetic posters in order to improve his literacy learning. Fatima observed Kareem while he was engaged in drawing and documented his drawing sample using a camera (see Figure 8.2).



Kareem's drawing in Figure 8.2, showed that he had good control of holding the pencil and crayons and drawing lines. In his drawing work sample, he displayed the home experience about fruits shapes, names, and features.

Figure 8.2. Kareem's drawing sample at home

8.3.8 Parental attitudes, practices and beliefs at home

As parents play a significant role in encouraging their children's emergent literacy practices at home, the mother's beliefs, attitudes, interactions, and practices with her child at home were investigated further. In question 1 (section 3), Fatima was asked about her beliefs, including range of responses from 1) strongly agree to 6) strongly disagree (see Table 8.7).

Table 8.7

8.7: Fatima's Beliefs about Adults' Roles in Fostering Kareem's Literacy Development

Adults' literacy beliefs	1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 Mostly agree	4 Mostly disagree	5 Disagree	6 Strongly disagree
a. ECTs play an important part in fostering children's literacy learning.	✓					
b. Fathers play an important role in their children's literacy development.	✓					
c. Maids play an important role in children's literacy development.					✓	
d. Mothers play an important role in children's literacy development.	✓					

Fatima reported that she strongly agreed with the importance of her role, the father's role, and the early childhood teacher's role in fostering Kareem's literacy learning and development at home and in kindergarten environments. On the other hand, Fatima disagreed with the importance of the maid's role in supporting Kareem's emergent literacy learning.

8.3.9 Adults' literacy attitude and practices at Kareem's home

Fatima indicated that she read to Kareem daily, while his father, as reported by Fatima, read to Kareem weekly. Fatima indicated that Rani does not read to Kareem at home. Likewise, Fatima reported that she interacted with Kareem on a daily basis in storytelling activities, as she reported that she read familiar family and community stories, and stories related to their own culture to him (see Table 8.7).

Table 8.7

8.7: Adults' Literacy Attitudes and Practices at Home

How often does your child engage in the following activities with you?	1 Several times per day	2 Daily	3 Weekly	4 Occasionally	5 Rarely	6 Never
a. mother reads to child?		✓				
b. father reads to child?			✓			
c. maid reads to child?						✓
d. play with your child in games that involve literacy (e.g. pretending to cook and reading a recipe, writing a shopping list, pretending to read to the toys etc.)?				✓		
e. engage with your child in discussion about books and other texts that promote consideration of diverse perspectives (e.g. gender)?					✓	
f. tell or read familiar family and community stories and stories related to your culture?		✓				
g. provide opportunities for your child to engage with stories, songs, games or books that are about cultures different to your own?					✓	

In responding to question 4 – “what do you usually do to improve your child's literacy skills?” – Fatima reported that she encouraged Kareem to listen to electronic stories on his iPad, and she was keen to teach him the Quran as part of KSA cultural and religious practice. She indicated that:

To improve our child's literacy skills, we [she and his father] engage with him during listening to children stories on his iPad. I also teach him Quran at home as part of literacy learning.

All the focus children were reported by their mothers to read the Quran at home with their mother's assistance. Reading the Quran is not only part of the religious and cultural values that

children must have in KSA, but is also the most important printed literacy resource for improving their reading skills. In the Islamic world, Muslims believe that they have to ensure their children have a strict Muslim environment where their children are required to read and memorise the Quran and perform rituals, from a very young age (Khan, 2005).

Another important result is in Fatima's answer to the question, "Which holidays specific to your cultural heritage does your family celebrate?" She indicated that they celebrate Eids with their own community as a social and cultural event. Fatima stated that:

We [as family] just celebrate Eids through praying Eids prayer in the community mosque and then visit our family to celebrate these special events.

On the other hand, Rani indicated that she celebrated religious and cultural events with her employer and their children. She reported that:

I join the family in celebrating the Islamic Holy days such as Ramadan, the Eid (Fitr) and Adha Eid (Sacrifice Day) as well as Birthdays and the Saudi National Day. We celebrate by preparing the house, making special traditional Saudi food and sweets, we sing and we play.

These cultural and social practices reflect that families were aware of the importance of teaching their children emergent literacy skills and practices within their own cultural context, such as by praying, which developed the child's sense of identity and belonging to his community.

8.3.10 Maid's literacy and cultural backgrounds

Rani had an Indonesian background and spoke Bahasa Indonesia, but little Arabic language. She had worked as a maid with many Saudi families, especially families with children. She had worked in KSA for about 15 years and had been working with Kareem's family for only six months. Rani was from a low socioeconomic family. As a result, she had only completed primary school. She started working as a maid in KSA to support her family financially. She indicated that:

I have only completed primary school and I could not continue my education. I started working to support my family because I come from a poor family.

Rani had experienced working as a maid since she was young, but she had no specific training or academic certificate in working with children. She worked for long hours in different houses and did house chores such as looking after children, cooking and cleaning. She was not

satisfied with her working hours, which may have influenced her emotionally, physically, and socially. She expressed her concern that:

I've worked in different homes and sometimes I have to put up with working long hours every day, from looking after children, to cleaning and cooking.

The working hours, according to Rani, were no less than 16 hours per day from early morning to midnight. As both parents were working full time as social workers, Rani had to look after Kareem's baby brother and at the same time do all the house work. She stated that:

I start working at 8am until 12 midnight. My boss and his wife are both social workers. So I have to baby sit their child, then do all the home duties, cleaning, washing, cooking, etc... After that, I play with the children.

In the same context, most maids had to work for long hours, which was reported to be one of the most important issues in regards to employing maids in KSA. That led some maids to run away. Maids' issues in KSA were addressed in Chapter Two. Rani's social interaction with Kareem is discussed in the following section.

8.3.11 Rani's social interaction with Kareem

Rani reported that she spent quality time interacting with Kareem's little brother, who was one and a half years old, during literacy activities at home such as watching television, colouring, listening to Arabic songs, and playing games on the iPad. However, according to Fatima and Rani, she was not allowed to interact with Kareem in any type of literacy activities at home because she did not speak fluent Arabic. Rani stated that:

I play with the children. We do colouring, watch cartoons, listen to Arabic children songs and play games on iPad in Arabic. I also sing for the baby some of the Arabic songs.

Literacy activities such as singing Arabic songs, watching television, drawing, and colouring in Arabic were reported to be the most common literacy activities that she was involved in with children at home. Rani maintained that:

Sometimes, I sing with the children the Arabic songs I learnt from the children's programs on TV. I also if I have extra time, I play with them jumping, colouring, drawing and watching cartoons on TV.

Fatima reported that her maid sang nursery rhymes with her children daily (see Table 9.8). Activities, such as the maid engaging with the child in watching movies, or TV, or playing computer games, and the maid being involved in the children's sport and cooking activities at home, happened on an occasional basis. The maid was less involved in the child's writing and

drawing activities (“rarely”). The maid had no social interaction with the child in reading activities or using her language with the child, which was reported by the mother as “never” happening. The interview with Rani indicated that:

No I don’t use my own language with the children. The mother is very adamant about teaching her child proper Arabic.

Table 8.8

8.8: *Rani’s Literacy Interaction with Kareem During Literacy Activities at Home*

Rani’s literacy interaction with Kareem during literacy practices at home	1 Several times per day	2 Daily	3 Weekly	4 Occasionally	5 Rarely	6 Never
a. the maid reads to child story books?						✓
b. the maid sings nursery rhymes with your child?		✓				
c. the maid involves in your child writing and drawing activities?					✓	
d. the maid engages with your child in watching movies on TV or playing computer games ?				✓		
e. the maid use her own language when engaging with your child?						✓
f. the maid involves in your child sport and cooking activities at home?				✓		

This was due to Fatima’s concern about her children’s Arabic language, as she believed that the maid had a negative influence on her children’s language development. This attitude toward Rani led to her being discouraged from interacting with children using her own language. At the same time, this limited her social interaction and communication with children in the Arabic language. Rani was aware of the parents’ concern about her influence on their children’s emergent literacy learning. She mentioned that:

The parents want to ensure their child learns Arabic and they think that if I use my own language with him, this will influence the child’s learning of the Arabic language.

On the other hand, Rani stated that she had different and positive experiences working with other Saudi families, who encouraged her involvement in their children’s education and learning. She reported that:

No. However, I’ve worked before with many Saudi families and some of them did not mind me teaching their children letters, numbers and few words of my own language. So, it depends on the parents and not on the children.

Based on those results, Rani's social interactions with Kareem during literacy activities were very limited – in particular, in reading activities – and this may be due to the fact that she had a lack of Arabic language proficiency. She reported that she had a good relationship, based on mutual respect, with her employers. Accordingly, Rani expressed her willingness to learn Arabic in order to be able to read the Quran. She clarified:

As Muslims, we do learn Arabic because it is the language of the Quran. However, I found it difficult to understand spoken Saudi language because accents do vary from one area to another, but during my long practice with families, I learnt the spoken Arabic.

Learning Arabic, and overly long working hours, were the most challenging tasks that Rani experienced while working at Kareem's home. Findings in this study indicated that all maids were from a low SES and had low levels of formal education. Similarly, Normini (Gasem's maid) was forced to work for 16 hours per day, which may reflect negatively on the quality of work and interaction with their employers' children.

8.4 Kareem's Literacy Learning at Kindergarten Environment

In Centre 2, there were a range of literacy resources including open-ended resources, printed, and electronic resources. Printed resources consisted of a variety of age-appropriate books, including picture books and thematic books. Other printed resources were: alphabetic posters, two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes, number posters, signs, and symbols. Electronic resources included a projector used for teaching purposes, and a computer that was only used once a year in relation to the My Book unit. There were also environmental recycling resources in every classroom, such as recyclable plastic food containers, coloured collages, paper, cardboard and so on. Other resources available at the centre included puppets and a puppet theatre, and a shadow theatre and shadow puppets. The kindergarten centre provided children with those resources at the library on the first level, where children sometimes spent time listening to stories displayed on the shadow theatre and read their own favourite stories.

The kindergarten's library was located on the first floor in the corner of the hallway. The library was full of children's books for different age groups and in different themes. It included story picture books, flipboard storybooks, and alphabet trace books (see Figures 8.3 & 8.4). The children's meal room in Centre 2, which was located on the opposite side to Kareem's classrooms, was decorated with healthy food and healthy eating habit posters. In the daily mealtime session, literacy was integrated in the room through the literacy posters of healthy food, practicing healthy eating food habits, and pictures.



Figure 8.3. Kindergarten library



Figure 8.4. Flipboard story and journal book



Figure 8.5. Meal room



Figure 8.6. Dua (supplication) poster in Arabic

In Figure 8.6, the poster on the left is the Dua (prayer) children say before eating, and the second one on the right is the Dua for afterwards. Before mealtime, for instance, children were observed implementing Islamic healthy habits such as washing both their hands. Before eating they recited “Bismillah wa’la barakatillah” aloud, ate with the right hand according to cultural custom, recited the Dua after eating, removed the rest of the food before getting up, and then washed both hands after meals. The following section describes the learning environment in Kareem’s classroom in more depth.

8.4.1 Classroom environment and structure

Providing a print-rich classroom environment for children in order to expose them to emergent reading in a functional way is very significant for all children: in particular, kindergarteners. Similar to Gasem's classroom structure, the structure of the environment in Kareem's classroom was influenced by the Montessori approach: "self-directed" individual learning that respects children's freedom of choice in self-learning activities in an environment well-prepared by teachers. In Kareem's classroom, the classroom door was decorated with children's pictures and names, and beside the door there were cubbies labelled with children's names for storing their personal items. Children's drawing and work samples and artifacts labelled with children's names were displayed on a special wall in Kareem's classroom (see Figure 8.8). The classroom was rich in resources, including environmental print resources, such as alphabet letter posters in the library area - for children to scaffold their reading and writing skills and to encourage children to recall the letters (see Figure 8.10). In addition, posters of weekdays names, alphabet letters and related pictures were displayed on the wall to assist children's abilities to distinguish texts from illustration, and to motivate them to read and write, using those resources to inspire their thoughts, ideas, and develop their understanding of how text conveys meaning (see Figure 8.9).

The indoor learning environment was structured in eight sessions. These were: morning tea time, Quran recitation session, circle, outdoor free playing session, breakfast time, indoor free playing session, and the last meeting with teacher. There were two teachers, including the main teacher, Rokaya, and an assistance teacher. The classroom physical environment was designed to meet the overall needs of kindergarten children and to facilitate their development through age-appropriate experiences and resources. Due to the individuality of each child, expectations vary. Each child is challenged differently using the ZPD approach. Teachers assisted each child to independently learn, explore, and discover, without assistance, by providing a variety of tasks to challenge their abilities and promote their learning.

Similar to Aisha, Rokaya had her own methods of regulating children's behaviour and encouraging their learning. Boundaries were set relating to the number of children who could use the learning areas, and taking turn in sharing learning toys, in order to provide children with opportunities for quality learning. Kareem's classroom was big enough - there was enough space for children to move freely and learn in shared group experiences. Although it was challenging for Rokaya and her assistant to manage a learning environment with 31 children,

the boundaries she established in the classroom helped to sustain children's play, and protected active children from traffic and other distractions. Teachers were encouraged to give children free choices during the classroom activities, including free play. Children were allowed to pursue personal interests and choose between different areas of learning. According to the Montessori approach, the learning environment must be a child-sized environment, beautiful, safe, orderly, must allow free choice activities for sensory play, and encourage the child's independence and curiosity (Bullard, 2010; Mooney, 2005; Ültanır, 2012).

Similar to Gasem's class, each area of learning had a specific number of children playing and interacting with each other as a group. This was decided according to the total number of children in the classroom, which was 31 children, and the classroom size, as follows: four children were permitted in the writing area; five in the art area; five in the reading (library) area; two in the discovery area; five in the manipulative area; five in the construction area; and one child in the home area. Rokaya added a Mosque area for children to practice praying, listen to the Quran on a CD player, and read the Quran. In this area, only one child was allowed to enter with the teacher.

Children took turns to practice praying and reading the Quran with teacher assistance (see Figure 8.7).

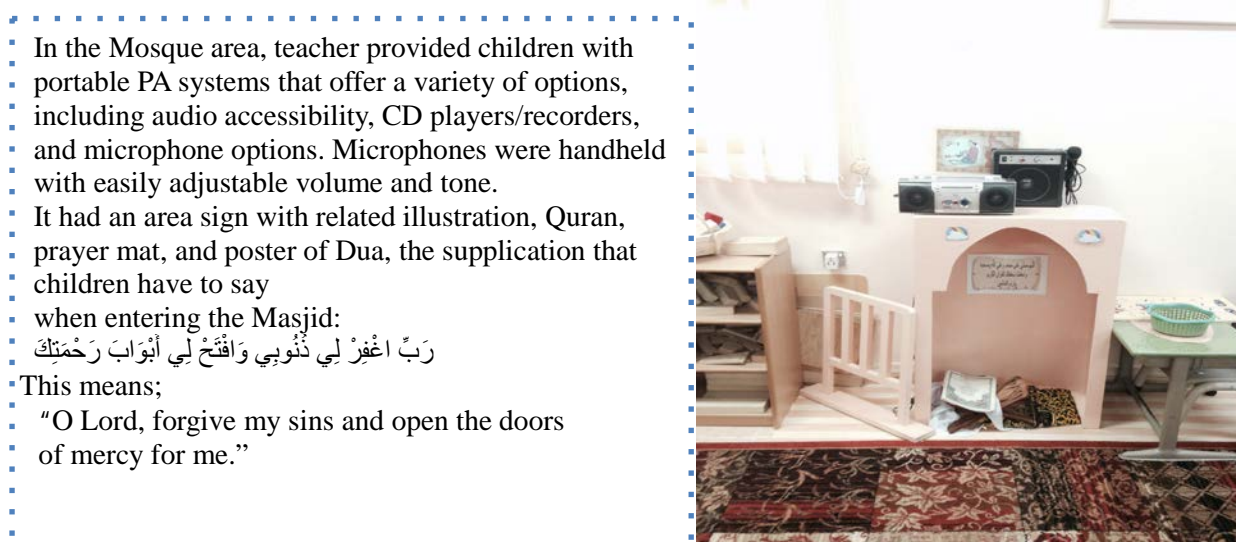


Figure 8.7. Mosque Area in the classroom set up for practicing praying and reading Quran

One of the most important social practices for children to understand was about how to share the learning space and resources effectively. Before each session started, the teacher gathered the children and sat in a circle to remind them about the activity rules, to ensure that

they understood the right, for themselves and others, to have a safe, quiet, happy and productive learning environment.

In Figure 8.8, children's drawing and working samples were displayed on the wall as a sharing experience. In the last meeting session, teachers gave children the opportunity to discuss their work with others, give ideas, listen to others' comments and respond to peers' questions relating to their samples of drawing or other work.



Figure 8.8. Children's working samples displayed on the wall in the classroom



In the classroom, there were rich environmental posters, in Arabic, for helping children's reading skills. These included: alphabetic letters with pictures starting with the same letter (such as S-Sun), weekday names, and signs of each area with a related illustration (to assist children who cannot read to recognise them) (see Figure 8.9).

Figure 8.9. Environmental printed posters displayed on the classroom wall for children



In Figure 8.10, Kareem is pointing to the alphabetic poster on a wall in the library area. He showed ability in naming the letters and sounding them out correctly to his teacher. Environmental printed resources motivate children to read and write with teachers who are scaffolding their learning.

Figure 8.10. Alphabetic poster on the wall in the library area

Teachers' literacy teaching qualifications, experiences, attitudes, and expectations are analysed in the following section.

8.4.2 Rokaya's demographic information

Rokaya mentioned in the interview that she had much experience working as teacher. She had worked for 33 years: 13 as a primary school teacher and 20 as a kinder teacher in public kindergarten. She obtained a Diploma of kindergarten teaching from the Complementary College in Mecca in 1982. In 1995, she completed a Bachelor degree in primary teaching, specialising in teaching children language, reading, and writing. She had undertaken many courses in teaching Arabic language, as well as other kindergarten courses, including courses in planning, exploration, organising the classroom environment, and designing cognitive games. Based on Rokaya's experiences as a primary teacher, she put emphasis on providing children with extracurricular literacy activities, such as reading and writing, in order to prepare them for school. These activities gave children additional opportunities for working in a group and sharing their own interests together. These activities were also essential to children's literacy development and learning, developing their self-esteem, and fostering their academic performance.

8.4.3 Teaching literacy pedagogies

Rokaya had different pedagogical perspectives and strategies to Aisha. She integrated literacy in most of the kindergarten activities, including indoor and outdoor areas. Indoors, she

provided children, including Kareem, with a variety of literacy activities that were age-appropriate, to meet individual needs. For instance, in the library area, she mentioned that she focused mostly on developing children's reading and writing skills through providing alphabet posters and a variety of picture story books related to the unit's themes and the child's interests. In addition, she indicated that she introduced literacy activities besides numeracy in every session. She believed that literacy should be integrated in all areas of learning, such as the home area, art area, and library area. In the computer area, particularly in the My Book unit, Rokaya organised the learning area to meet the children's needs through providing children with educational software programs such as drawings, letter games, audio stories, writing and phonemics, and syllabic breakdown of every word in the stories. Rokaya argued that these skills allowed each child to learn the skill needed to decode written text, either working individually or in interactive shared activities with other groups of children. Those activities were introduced to children once per year as part of the My Book unit, which reflects that classroom activities were limited to environmental print resources.

In the outdoor area, literacy was integrated through the use of environmental print resources such as signs and symbols of the kindergarten facilities. Rokaya stated that:

Outside the classroom as I [Rokaya] mentioned, through the symbols of facilities of the kinder, that children have already learnt like the symbol of the toilet or WC, the library, sand and sand games tools, the box marked with the symbol shovel. Also, the symbols displayed in the toilet at the level of the child, such as the steps for hand washing after using the toilet, illustrated in symbols and pictures. So, the child can see them clearly and easily. Another example is the symbol of flushing the water after using the toilet, then washing the hands and drying them up with a hand towel.

Using visual technology resources in teaching children's literacy skills is one of the most effective and interactive teaching strategies that Rokaya used with her students in the classroom (see Figure 8.11). She used the projector as an instructional tool to engage children in interactive discussions and to hold their attention. The interview with Rokaya indicated her awareness of the significance of using the projector to teach children new concepts, the sounds of the alphabet letters, and to assist them in recalling them. Rokaya implemented lots of direct instruction to teach children the alphabet sounds through using the projector. I observed Rokaya using the projector to introduce new learning concepts, such as "germs", through displaying germ names, shapes, types, and ways to keep ourselves healthy (as part of the My Health and Safety units). Rokaya's integration of literacy in teaching scientific concepts about germs, as part of the My Health and Safety unit, is shown in Figure 8.11.

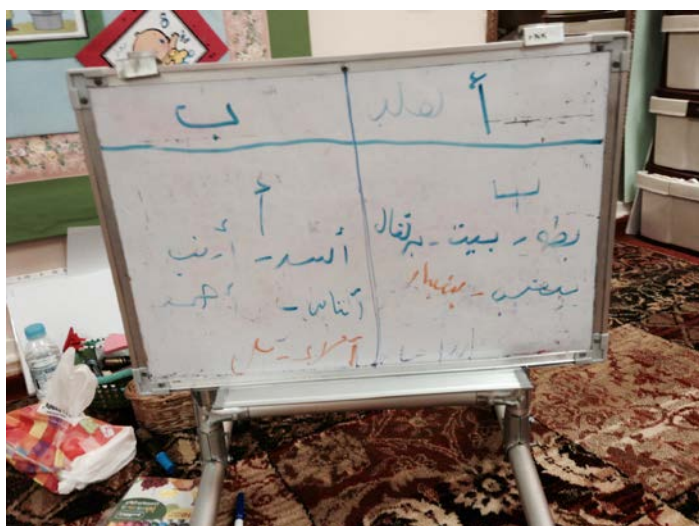


In Figure 8.11, Rokaya used the projector to display the germs' shape and name in Arabic for children on the classroom projector as part of My Health and Safety concepts.

Figure 8.11. Using visual technological tools to introduce new concepts about germs to children

Another teaching strategy that Rokaya applied was to use the whiteboard to encourage social interaction between teacher and children, in order to learn reading and writing skills (see Figure 8.11). Playing matching games, such as matching letters with words, assisted children to learn the letter sounds, shapes, and spelling. Encouraging children to frequently practice letter recognition assisted them to be more fluent and to use their memory skills to remember which word starts with a specific letter. She used children's name cards to scaffold children's writing and reading abilities through spelling out the letters, and learning new words that start with the same letters. She mentioned that:

We [she and her children] exchange ideas about what letters do those names begin with and correct the mistakes. For example, who is our friend whose name starts with the letter A and who is absent today? And so on. Sometimes the children make mistakes when the letters are similar, such as "S" and "Sh", "D" and "Dh", and "P" and "B".



In Figure 8.12, Rokaya was observed using the whiteboard to interact with children during alphabetic games. Children were divided into two groups, A and B. Each group was given words starting with specific letters, such as A-apple, B-banana and so on. Children interacted and scaffolded each other's learning by correcting their mistakes, questioning, and developing their problem

Figure 8.12. Using the whiteboard in an interactive teaching activity in the classroom

Based on previous results, the teaching strategies that Rokaya applied with her kindergarten children promoted their attitudes and enthusiasm toward learning a range of skills and processes, such as problem solving, critical thinking, reading and writing, and positive attitudes toward learning.

8.4.4 Relationship between Kareem's home and the kindergarten setting

From the analysis of the interview with Rokaya, it appears that she believed that the relationship between kindergarten and home settings should be positive, but it was not as it meant to be. She asserted that the teacher had a duty to involve mothers in the daily kindergarten program. For instance, she mentioned holding an interview with mothers at the beginning of the kindergarten year, and discussing with them the most effective and acceptable ways of communication between home and kindergarten, for the overall benefit of the child. Rokaya also believed that it was important for the teacher to know about the children's cultural and social backgrounds and family structure, such as the number of his/her siblings, their names, and other general things, to make the child feel safe and confident. However, she identified some of the communication obstacles that made communication between home and kindergarten settings limited and impossible. One of these obstacles for mothers was transport. As discussed in Chapter Two, women in KSA are not allowed to drive, and they rely on their husbands or private drivers to drive them, which makes it difficult for some mothers to attend in-person meetings with their children's teachers. Rokaya commented that:

However, there are some obstacles to this communication that is transport. But, with the availability of WhatsApp, contact and interaction with the mothers has improved and increased.

She acknowledged that using technology to communicate with mothers, such as by WhatsApp instant SMS messaging, was very effective in improving the quality of communication between both settings. On the other hand, Fatima reported that she communicated with Rokaya through in-person formal meetings (section 5, question 2). Fatima reported that she was not satisfied with the frequency of communication with Rokaya, which rarely occurred. Fatima stated that Rokaya did not like to share her contact number with her. Fatima said that:

My child's teacher refuses to give her number to me. We don't have any idea about kindergarten programs and our children learning progress to be able to extend and foster this knowledge my child has in Kindergarten classroom.

There were few mothers who were unwilling to collaborate with teachers to discuss their children's learning progress at the kindergarten centre. She explained that those mothers were

sensitive toward hearing about their children's learning weaknesses. Rokaya said of her communication with mothers:

As a teacher, my communications with the mothers is about 50%. Unfortunately, there are still some mothers who are not interested in communicating with the teacher even after I encourage them and give them my telephone number. Also, some mothers are very sensitive towards issues concerning their children, and they are not open to learning about their child's weakness or emotional problems.

Despite the fact that Fatima faced difficulties communicating with her child's teacher, Rokaya stressed the importance of building and maintaining positive parent-teacher relationships in supporting children's learning and development. She indicated that societal perspectives toward the role of kindergartens have changed. Rokaya asserted that:

It is worth mentioning that the society's perspective of the kindergarten has become more serious and mature than before. Before, kinder was a place for play and recreation only, but now, parents value its role as a vital educational pre-school foundation stage where children develop necessary literacy skills.

Positive and regular communication with parents improves parents' understanding of the importance of the role of the kindergarten centre in educating and nurturing their children. It was mentioned by Aisha (Gasem's teacher) that some mothers still have a traditional perspective toward the kindergarten centre as a nursing setting, not as an educational centre.

In this case, Rokaya pointed out the importance of communicating with fathers in some sensitive cases that required fathers' involvement to resolve the learning or behavioral issues that their children may struggle with at kindergarten. She illustrated that:

There was a child who refused to attend the kinder, from the start of the year. He used to leave the classroom and did not respond to the teacher. Although we told his mother about it, she did not seem responsive. So, we had to contact the father to solve the problem. Then, the child started changing and seemed to settle more in kindergarten. He showed a significant shift and attended regularly and interacted with his peers. He became happier. This is evidence that the father has a great effect on his son's learning. With a follow up with the mother, the child's behavioral also improved greatly and he seemed more interested in the kindergarten.

Another challenge in communication between the home and kindergarten environment was to involve fathers in the daily kindergarten program. Rokaya referred to the limitations of involving fathers in the centre due to the social and traditional barriers of communicating between genders in KSA. She maintained that:

Given the social traditions in the country, we need the mother's consent before we can contact the father (her husband). So, the kinder policy is we only contact the father in extreme situations when necessary.

Rokaya's literacy beliefs, attitudes and expectations are examined further in the next section.

8.4.5 Rokaya's literacy beliefs, attitudes and expectations

The analysis of Rokaya's interview showed that she believed that both mothers and fathers played vital roles in fostering their children's literacy learning and language acquisition. She emphasised the importance of the home environment for providing the children with continuity of learning outside the kindergarten environment. In addition, she believed in the positive influence of watching educational television programs in developing children's oral language and vocabularies, reading, and writing skills. Besides, Rokaya believed that parents should not only encourage their children to watch television, but should develop their children's critical thinking through discussing what they watch, and giving them opportunities to express their ideas and thoughts. In accordance with parental educational levels, Rokaya agreed that parents with higher levels of education had greater positive influences on their children's literacy development and learning than did parents with lower education. Rokaya argued that:

Parents' own education is extremely important for their children's literacy learning, because they would encourage their children to read and write and speak. The opposite is rarely correct. Very few uneducated mothers really care about their children's education. Most mothers who are educated are very interested in developing their children's language.

Investigating children's literacy experiences at home was one of the most important strategies that Rokaya and other teachers considered. They believed that incorporating children's prior knowledge in their future planning, and linking the classroom activities and instruction to children's cultural and social background helped make a strong connection between home and kindergarten settings. According to Rokaya, this was done through the kindergarten parental survey at the start of the school year, which asked parents a range of questions relating to the home environment such as: the family's income and educational levels, number of family members, and parents' employment backgrounds. Rokaya illustrated that:

For example, in the session "Guest" we invite the mother if she wishes to participate in the session, to explain to the children about how to clean their teeth, if she's a dentist, and about how to prevent decay and how to regularly brush our teeth in the appropriate manner.

Another method Rokaya used was to investigate children's literacy experiences at home, so they could be extended and applied to new knowledge at kindergarten. For instance, when Kareem mentioned that he had a swimming pool at home, a discussion took place about the swimming pool in the My Health and Safety unit. Rokaya extended children's knowledge about swimming as an exercise and a sport, the importance of keeping the swimming pool clean, and swimming pool safety procedures.

Rokaya emphasised the significance of scaffolding children's learning through ongoing encouragement of the child and through the activities that she prepared for each individual child based on his/her needs and abilities. She indicated that:

When I [Rokaya] see a brilliant child who has more advanced skills I [Rokaya] provide them with advanced activities suitable for their mental and linguistic abilities. When a child has lower skills I also give them activities appropriate for their ability, then I gradually increase the level of difficulty for them. I encourage them by discussing the child's works he does at home with his peers and by displaying their works in the classroom.

Rokaya stated that the kindergarten survey also investigated children's language development to find out if any child had language difficulties, and to investigate parents' social status (such as being a single parent), in order to consider those cases when children enter the kindergarten. She believed that having children with social problems, such as a divorced mother, negatively affected the child's social interaction with others. She asserted that:

We [teachers] also find out from the questions and answers, whether the parents are divorced, so we can take this into consideration because this can influence his language and social interactions.

As part of the kindergarten program, involving children's mothers was very significant for maintaining positive relationships between homes and the kindergarten centre. Many mothers attended the exhibition and were motivated to participate in reading and writing activities organised by teachers and children. Rokaya gave an example to illustrate the mothers' involvement at a literacy event at kindergarten:

We have held a Newspapers' Exhibition at the kindergarten that was organised through children's participation. Each child was encouraged to bring an article from a newspaper, relate to his/her interests with the help of their parents and discussed at home with their parents. Prior to the exhibition, the every child involved in interactive discussion in the class about his/her article and why they have chosen it. Then all articles were displayed together on boards that have the children's names.

As Rokaya mentioned, the aim of this festival was not only to encourage the children to read and think analytically, but to involve parents in their children's activities organised by the kindergarten.

According to Rokaya's interview, another workshop was conducted at the kindergarten: the writing workshop, where children learnt to compose a word such as "Mecca" or "home", then had to read the letters separately, read the syllables, and then the whole word. As Rokaya indicated, the children also wrote the words on materials with various textures (soft, hard, *etc.*) with the help of their mothers, as a fun, educational activity. Children and teachers used cards that had blank areas so the child could fill the blanks by writing. Rokaya mentioned that the

mothers had great interactions with their children, and that this program enriched the children's language outcomes and broadened the mothers' understanding of the various methods used to teach writing.

Parent's income levels were investigated from the teacher's own perspective. Similar to Aisha's belief, Rokaya believed that income levels did not influence the way that children learned literacy. This result supported Gasem's teachers' beliefs toward children's socioeconomic levels as not being a predictor of children's emergent literacy learning outcomes. Rokaya justified this by the free resources that were provided to all children who were enrolled in the kindergarten program. She asserted that:

I don't think that low income can have a negative effect on the child's learning of reading and writing. As long as the child attends the kinder and benefits from all free materials available to him/her by the government, there is not any difference between a child and another in terms of access to educational materials provided universally free of charge to all children, regardless of their parents' income. All what matters to the teacher is the child's learning of reading and writing skills required at his age.

Rokaya's perspective on maids' influences on children's literacy learning and language was different to Aisha's perspective. Although Aisha believed that maids had a positive influence on children's literacy learning, based on the quality of time children interacted with maids, Rokaya believed that maids may negatively or positively influence children's language acquisition and literacy development, depending on the maids' level of education and time spent interacting with children. She argued that:

Their influence could be negative or positive depending on the maid's interactions with the child and her level of education and how much time she spends with the child. Parents have the responsibility to make sure the maid's influence on their child is not negative.

Rokaya recommended that parents take responsibility for selecting suitably qualified maids for their children, based on their educational and cultural backgrounds, and monitor: how much time their children spend interacting with their maids, the quality of interaction and the types of literacy activities that occur. In regards to teacher expectations, Rokaya emphasised the role of policy makers and authorities in encouraging teachers' development and creativity. She believed that the issue of quality assurance and innovation encouraged many teachers to develop their teaching methods, upgrade their knowledge, and use computers, the internet, and the projector in teaching literacy. Using a variety of teaching technologies in teaching young children was the most important step toward improving children's literacy, reading and writing skills.

8.4.6 Kareem's social interaction with teachers and peers in the classroom

In the classroom, Kareem's interactions with his teacher and peers were observed in different literacy learning contexts, including indoor and outdoor learning areas. I recorded Kareem's literacy learning process during the seven weeks of my field work in the classroom through an observation checklist, a visual diary, and by analysing his drawing, writing and other shared literacy activities with his peers and teacher. Kareem was interested mostly in library, home (dramatic play), writing, and block areas (see Figure 8.13). In this figure, the arrows numbered as 2-block, 6-drawing, 5-home and 7- library signify the child's interest in those areas during the daily program.

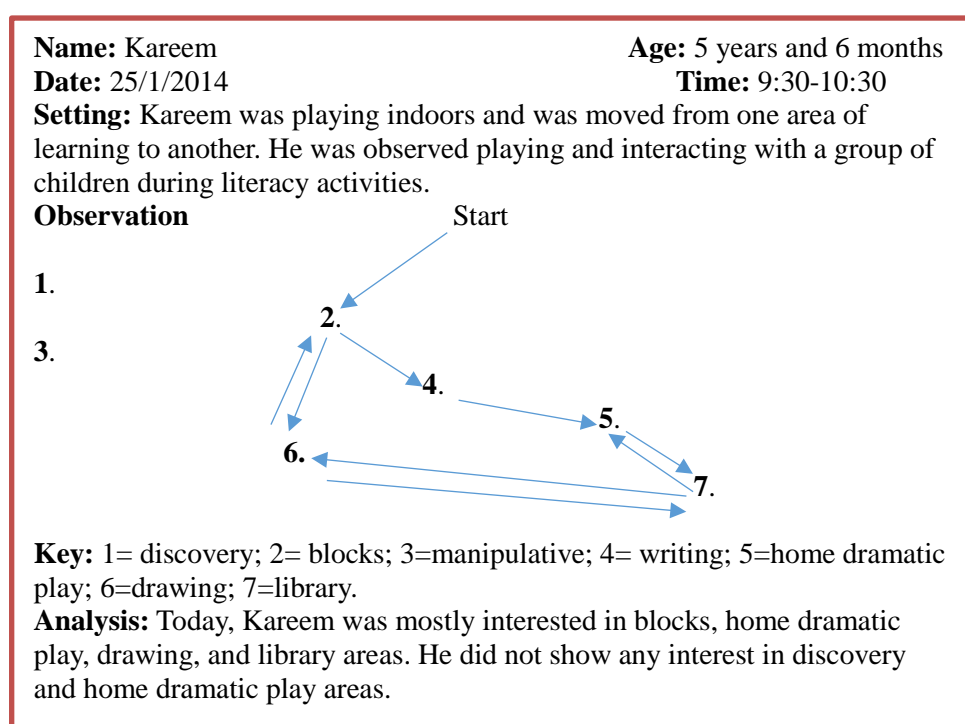


Figure 8.13: Visual diary of Kareem's daily interest in the indoor environment

As mentioned in Chapter Seven, the observations checklist used to investigate the frequency of Kareem's emergent literacy practices in the kindergarten included indicators such as literacy attitudes, language use, making meaning, concepts about print symbols, and writing. These indicators aimed to investigate the continuity of children's emergent literacy learning outcomes in a kindergarten setting through recording teacher-children social interactions. The summary table (see Appendix B.3, Table A8.12) shows how many times Kareem was observed in each experience. These indicators were answered by ticking "observed" or "not observed", followed by an analysis of each focus-child's literacy learning

process, illustrated with photos. These observations varied in terms of the introduced concepts as well as literacy events such as Saudi National Day. Observations of Kareem included his interest in writing activities, and playing in shared group activities in the home (dramatic) area. The observations included in Figures 8.14 and 8.15 demonstrate Kareem's imaginative and writing skills. As indicated earlier in Chapter Seven, the numbers used to score the child ranged from 0 - 20. Similar to Gasem, Kareem was engaged in several interactive shared activities with his teacher and peers. He obtained a score of 20 out of 20 for participating in interactions with others; initiating interactions with others; hearing and responding to others in small groups; following verbal directions; using language for a range of functions such as labelling, describing, explaining, predicting, imagining, analysing, and synthesising; and exploring with writing materials (pens, pencils, crayons, chalk, textas, brushes, paint). Thus, this result indicates that all focus-children were learning better and developing their emergent literacy skills through social interaction with others.

In Observation 9 (Appendix B.3), Rokaya designed the site of *Masmak* in the Home dramatic play area, which is a landmark in Saudi Arabia's history depicting the war won by King Abdulaziz to conquer and unite Riyadh. Nowadays, it has become a museum representing Saudi heritage in Riyadh. Kareem played the role of a Bedouin man wearing his head cover and sitting to have Arabic coffee with his friends, who also put on traditional clothes (for example, the girls put on long Bedouin embroidered abayas). They prepared the coffee and offered it to each other. They swept the house with a manual broom and cleaned it up while the boys were putting on traditional costumes, then they sat to share the coffee and had conversations using the Bedouin accent.

Analysis: This experience involved make-believe and role-playing Saudi historical figures (their traditional costumes, equipment, and appliances used at home, such as the kerosene lantern, the fan, the old broom, *etc.*). Kareem interacted with his friends in the area by playing the role of a traditional Bedouin, wearing their costume and enacting their way of life. He used language for a range of functions, such as describing, explaining, predicting, imagining, and analysing. He showed the ability to pronounce words conventionally, such as coffee, homes, dress, broom and so on.



Figure 8.14. Kareem's social interaction with his peers during imaginative play time

On the other hand, Kareem was not observed at all in some of the literacy activities; thus, scoring 0/20. This is due to the limited access and availability of the technological resources in the classroom. These activities included: being familiar with using various forms of technology (*e.g.* radio, cassettes, phones, and Gameboys); accessing and exploring the Internet; searching the net for information; manipulating a computer indiscriminately; playing games on a computer purposefully; and using a computer for word processing and searching. Although both focus-children had no opportunities in the classroom to play and learn using electronic resources (such as a computer, digital camera, and iPad), home resources provided by parents were rich and varied, and included printed open-ended resources and technological resources.

Writing observation (as numbered in Appendix B.3, Observation 16)

After Rokaya explained the rules of the areas at the end of the session, she explained to the children, including Kareem, how to complete the activities, including writing the word *watan*. Kareem entered the area and took a pencil. He wrote his name in the correct direction, from right to left, in Arabic, using his name card labelled with his picture to assist him in remembering how to do this (see Figure 8.10). Then, Rokaya asked him, “Kareem, do you know what this word is?” Kareem started thinking. Then the teacher prompted, “let’s spell the letters together.” Kareem started naming the letters and sounding them out then he said, “it’s *watan*.” The teacher praised him.

Analysis: Kareem was able to write the word *watan* after spelling the letters by himself and with his teacher Rokaya’s assistance. He recognised the right sounds of the letters of the word *watan*. Then he wrote his name by himself (see Figure 8.11). When Kareem was absent from kindergarten for a period of time, he was not able to write his name correctly, but he wrote the first part of his name in the wrong direction. The teacher started training him to write his name. This was the same problem with the child Gasem, as we found that the frequent absence of children has a big impact on their writing ability (see observation 18, Appendix B.3). After his teacher scaffolded his writing skills and his attempts to correct his mistakes, Kareem, in week six, showed a good ability to write words in the right direction, and progressed really well. This experience did not involve a narrative context, but simply writing the word *watan*. Kareem’s writing of his name and of some words relevant to the theme became better. Kareem also has become more interactive with his teacher and classmates after attending the kindergarten regularly.

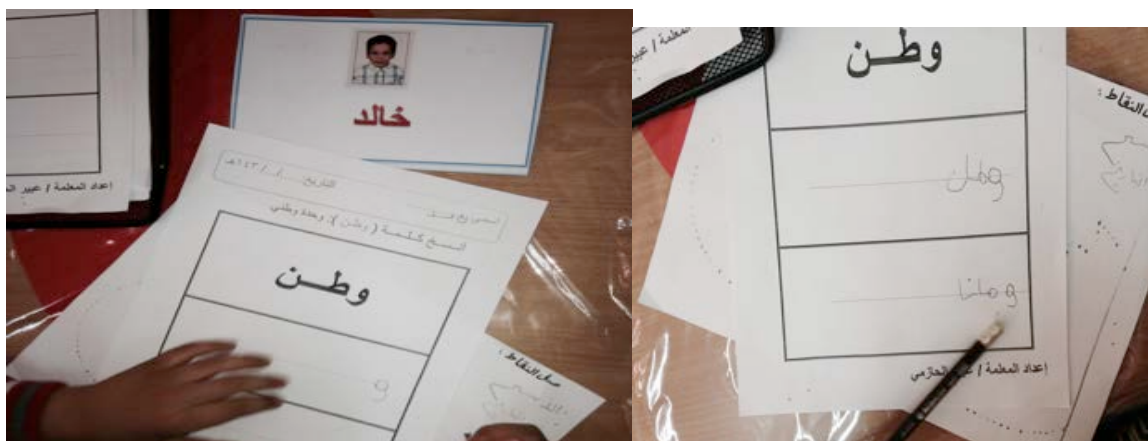


Figure 8.15. Kareem wrote his name using name cards and the word “watan” (country)

Through consistent observations, Kareem demonstrated few emergent behaviours and skills in writing and critical literacy. This is similar to Gasem. Kareem’s writing abilities during the classroom activities were consistent and related to his abilities in differentiating between writing and drawing; writing with letter-like forms; and writing with invented spelling (see writing observation below).

Although Kareem’s home was not a rich literacy environment in term of activities, resources, and social interaction, compared to the other focus-child, he showed improvement in

his writing skills and demonstrated developed skills in reading, imaginative play, creativity, problem solving, and critical thinking. Those skills were dictating texts (sentences, stories, or words) he or she wanted written down; writing right to left in Arabic (may be different for different language groups); responding to narrative or factual texts after reading; and listening or viewing with critical comments or questions, which scored about 5/20 (see Appendix B.3, Table A8.12).

According to Rokaya, Kareem only showed emerging ability in writing activities – in particular, in writing his own name, as compared with other peers his age who were generally more advanced. This may be due to his regular absence from kindergarten and to the limited writing activities introduced to him by his parents at home. Similar to Gasem, Kareem's writing skill was still emergent, which was observed in relation to his Arabic print direction. He was observed writing in the opposite direction (left to right), although he only spoke Arabic. It appears that his writing skills were still developing. With teachers' assistance and children's willingness to practice writing with other peers, they were observed to gradually improve their writing abilities.

8.5 Interpretative Summary of Kareem's Case Study

The analysis from Kareem's HLE reflects a monolingual environment in which Arabic is the only language spoken at home. This study showed that learning the Quran and celebrating cultural and social events were very significant social practices both at home and kindergarten, in which families, maids, and ECTs were engaged as part of KSA cultural heritage. This result is in agreement with Khan (2005), whose work indicated that Muslims believe they have to ensure their children have a strict Muslim environment where their children are required to read and memorise the Quran and perform rituals from a very young age. Kareem's home environment seemed to be limited in relation to the number of printed books available at home. This is evidenced by the parents' report of the number of books at Kareem's home, which was low, ranging from 1 - 10 books, relative to Gasem's case. Another notable result revealed that Kareem was interested in adult reading materials such as the newspaper, TV guide, and magazines, on a daily basis. A possible explanation as to the relative lack of children's books at Kareem's home may be that he preferred technological tools that developed his reading, listening, and drawing skills. Those tools consisted of an iPad, computer, iPhone and television.

Another possible explanation is that parents were not aware of how to select age-appropriate books that stimulated their children to read.

At home, Kareem's father was found to be engaged in reading to his child and listening to stories on the iPad compared with the mother. Further analysis from this study showed that fathers tend to be isolated from engagement in the kindergarten daily program. As discussed in Gasem's case, the issue of involving fathers in the daily program arose from the cultural and social nature of KSA lifestyle, and the influence of gender segregation law. Further analysis confirmed that the maid, Rani, played a limited role in interacting with Kareem, particularly in writing, drawing, and reading activities. As revealed from the interview with Rani, she interacted with Kareem by watching television, drawing, and playing literacy games (such as alphabetic apps on the iPad), yet she was engaged and interested mostly in Kareem's little brother. A possible explanation for Fatima's negative beliefs about her maid's role in her child's literacy learning was that Rani had a limited ability to speak Arabic fluently. With respect to Kareem's home literacy environment, the family's practices were more likely to follow technical and traditional approaches to teaching literacy, where children are not encouraged to engage in critical thinking or experience diverse cultures and new knowledge.

The analysis from Kareem's case showed that the kindergarten program filled in the gaps children had at home in relation to the variety of literacy resources and activities available for children. Drawing on empirical evidence, Rokaya's teaching experiences as a language teacher, and her understanding of Kareem and other children's emergent literacy level, developed her awareness of the importance of providing children with a variety of writing and reading activities. Joshi and Taylor (2005) found that teachers who were satisfied with their training felt more confident in teaching children, as well as establishing and maintaining good relationships with parents. As revealed in Rokaya's interview, she believed in the importance of parents' role as the primary educators in fostering and extending their children's literacy learning. It is evident that parental literacy-related beliefs and activities that afford opportunities for young children to learn are essential in a preschooler's acquisition of literacy and language skills (Wood, 2002). However, Rokaya believed that maids' involvement in children's literacy learning at home was a double-edged sword. Al-Jarf's (2009) study, discussed in relation to Gasem's case, is also relevant with Kareem's family. Al-Jarf revealed that foreign maids in KSA have little influence over children's Arabic acquisition. She argued that although children who were cared for from birth by maids who did not speak fluent Arabic may have been

negatively influenced in their linguistic development, that influence disappeared once the children attended kindergarten.

Based on ECTs' interview analysis, the influence of maids on children's literacy development and learning was based on several aspects, such as educational level. This included language proficiency, quality of time spent in interacting with the child, parental relationship with the maid, and maid working hours. These aspects were found to influence the mother's perspectives and beliefs toward maids' engagement in literacy practices at home. Family SES levels, according to Rokaya, did not affect the children's literacy learning, as all the resources were freely provided by the centre for all children. Rokaya believed in the importance of parents' educational level for developing their children's literacy learning. Although the SLC is based on a monolingual and monocultural approach that suits the KSA cultural and social background, the analyses in this study suggest that this approach is not sufficient to meet children's needs. In particular, bilingual children such as Gasem. Most importantly, Rokaya recommended that early childhood curriculum decision-makers should consider children's needs in terms of the inclusion of technological resources in the classroom that provoke children's literacy learning skills. The integration and discussion of the qualitative and quantitative results will be presented and analysed further in the following chapter.

Chapter Nine – Literacy Learning Relationships in the KSA

“Instead of thinking about literacy as an entity (something you either have or don’t have), thinking about literacy as social practice can be revolutionary” (Harste, 2003, p.9).

9.1 Introduction

There is much to learn about literacy as a social practice within home and kindergarten settings in the KSA, and this study aimed to explore this very issue. Contemporary theorists such as Barton and Hamilton (2000), Gee (1996), Spedding et al. (2007), Jones Díaz (2007), and Woodrow et al. (2014) view literacy as a social practice that occurs within social and cultural contexts, which consists of children’s interactions with texts in everyday life. Children engage in a world in which multiliteracies exist, and in which their families and communities construct specific ways of literate thinking and behaving, and value specific kinds of literacy (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). The concept of multiliteracies developed by the New London Group in 1996 was driven from the perspective of literacy as a social practice (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Mills, 2009; O’Rourke, 2005; Perry, 2012). The New London group, according to Hill (2007), focused on the pedagogy of multiliteracy, which has expanded our perspectives and understanding of literacy as reading, writing, speaking and listening, to also include various multimedia symbolic forms.

Drawing on these theories, the analysis of children’s early literacy interactions with adults, including parents, maids, and Early Childhood Teachers (ECTs), aimed to answer the following: (a) the main research question, which was to determine the role of adults in young children’s literacy learning in the KSA; and (b) the sub-questions, which focus mainly on investigating home and kindergarten elements, including adults’ educational levels, socioeconomic status (SES), adults’ beliefs about their roles, and how these elements influence the child’s emergent literacy at home and at kindergarten. These questions were presented in Chapters One and Five of this thesis. The methodological limitations of this study, in relation to children’s emergent literacy practices in the KSA context, were identified in Chapter Five. Accordingly, the analysis of the data (presented in Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight) suggested four main contributions to our understanding of home and kindergarten literacy practices in the KSA context. These are summarised as follows:

1. Literacy in KSA is a social practice, as seen through the way children and adults interact during literacy-related practices at home.

2. Communication between parents and ECTs is affected by gender segregation law in KSA, and is a dominant theme in both the home and kindergarten environments.
3. The relationship between adults (including parents and ECTs) in home and kindergarten settings is disconnected. They do not value each other's roles in contributing to emergent literacy in children.
4. The role of maids in engaging with young children's literacy practices in KSA is important, but undervalued, underutilised, and marginalised.

The discussions in this chapter explore these four key contributions to knowledge.

9.2 Key Contributions of the Study

9.2.1 Contribution #1

Literacy in KSA is a social practice, as seen through the way children and adults interact during literacy-related practices at home.

There were two major sub-findings regarding the social interactions between adults and children from an early age. The analysis of adult-child literacy interactions revealed that parents in KSA engage with their children in the Home Literacy Environment (HLE), particularly in practices such as following a family member's verbal directions, and involvement in conversations with adults. More specifically, the analysis of questionnaires demonstrated that the children's mean age was 17.90 months when their parents started singing for them.

In relation to print awareness, this study demonstrated that parents started to expose their children to pictures from one month to five years. Subsequent analyses revealed that parents started to read to their children from eight months to five years and one month. Nearly one third of parents indicated that their children had shown interest in adults' reading materials in the home, including newspapers, TV guides, magazines, computers, and smartphones. Further analysis revealed that some parents, though not the majority, indicated that their children had asked for help reading words in the environment, such as street signs or words written on food packages, either on a daily basis (14.5 per cent) or several times a day (9.5 per cent). These findings draw attention to the importance of parents' social interactions during literacy activities with their children at home. These findings were similar to previous Australian findings, which demonstrated that children from literacy-rich HLEs (in terms of the variety and

the regularity of early literacy activities, as well as the amount of time parents spend engaging with their children) become richer in literacy skills compared to children who come from poor HLEs (Brown et al., 2013). Thus, findings from KSA will add to the literature relating to young children's emergent practices.

In the same context, I examined childrens' responses to print in relation to their age and the availability of books at home. Analysis from the questionnaire suggested that there was neither a correlation between the child's interest in reading and their age, nor between using storytelling to promote reading and the children's age. This is surprising, as it has long been thought that there is a significant relationship between the age of a child and the child's interest in printed words in the year prior to entering primary school in Australia (Brown et al., 2013). A possible explanation of this may be the differences in parents' early literacy attitudes and the regularity of literacy practices between KSA and Australian households. In regards to the availability of books in Saudi homes, a notable finding of this study the statistically significant difference between the child's response to print materials and having reading materials other than books. When children had more printed materials, they were more responsive to print. These findings accentuated the importance of having reading materials in addition to books in the home, as this has a clear effect on a child's response to print in general.

The significant differences between those who had books at home and those without any books at their homes was also demonstrated in terms of children's literacy interactions with others. More importantly, analysis of this study suggested that having more books at home led to more literacy interactions, which has not been the subject of research to date, and needs to be examined further by future researchers. Two hundred parents indicated that their children had only one to ten books at home. Books were available in most Saudi homes for use by the children. This limited number of books demonstrated, to some extent, that Saudi children have very limited access to books at home, which may affect children's reading abilities later in school. Further evidence showed that the majority of parents visited bookstores to purchase books for their children. Those parents indicated that there were no public libraries in the city of Mecca with a reading section for children. Importantly, the meagre number of books in the home may illustrate the nature of parents' priorities, which may result in a lack of demand for public libraries where children can borrow books, which may cause children to be less engaged in printed resources with their parents at home. These findings are supported by previous studies which suggest that parents who showed positive attitudes towards literacy (such as reading to their children, keeping children's books in the home, and allowing their children to

see them practicing reading for pleasure) had a positive influence on their children's interest in literacy (Hume et al., 2012; Weinberger, 1996). Illustrative of this is the case study showing that Sarah (Gasem's mother) guided and motivated him during reading activities at home when spelling words and reading stories, and this made a link to his level of interest. These findings draw attention to the importance of encouraging children to become involved in reading activities at home, as well as in the kindergarten environment, in order to foster their reading abilities and provide children with continuity of learning. Besides, I advocate that children should be provided with public library services that have reading sections for children. In particular, for those children who have a low number of books at home. Overall, I argue that when children have access to other reading materials at home and also have adult input, their interactions with adults increase.

The analysis related to HLEs in this study has added to the existing literature in relation to the frequency of print use by children. The analysis of questionnaire data indicated that three to five and a half year old children did not frequently identify words in their environment, or on the front, back, top of, and bottom of a book, and did not turn pages appropriately for the Arabic language. However, in the case studies of Gasem and Kareem, they were observed occasionally identifying environmental print resources in the kindergarten, mostly in the Arabic language. These findings matched previous findings by Weigel et al. (2010), in that the more parents were engaged in environmental print and reading routines at home with their young children, the higher the reading interests and print knowledge of their children. Nonetheless, it is not clear whether those children behaved differently when they were not observed.

In regards to cultural values, the analysis of parents' reports relating to reading and discussing book content revealed that over three quarters of the parents were infrequently engaged in discussing books and other texts that promoted consideration of diverse perspectives (*e.g.* gender) with their children. Further analysis confirmed that nearly three quarters of the parents did not frequently provide opportunities for their children to engage in stories, songs, games, or books that were about cultures different to their own. Subsequent analysis of Kareem's case confirmed these findings. The remaining number of parents reported engagement with their children on a more regular basis. Unlike Kareem's case presented in Chapter Eight, and the majority of parents in the questionnaire, Gasem's parents were engaged on a weekly basis in discussing diverse perspectives in books and texts about gender. A possible explanation of this is that Gasem's parents were open to Western culture, and were aware of the differences between their own culture and other cultures, and were therefore more willing than

most parents to discuss these differences with their children. These findings may point to the sociocultural context of KSA, in which gender-related issues influence adults' literacy attitudes. This may lead parents to avoid raising critical discussion with their children related to diverse cultures and gender issues, as most parents demonstrated a desire to strengthen their children's identities through storytelling related to Saudi culture.

The empirical analysis of the Saudi HLE showed that these homes tended to reflect multiliteracies in which children could access diverse literacy resources. From the analysis of parental questionnaires, I found that 90 per cent of homes had a variety of resources, including story books, comic books, electronic books, magazines, cooking menus, alphabet posters, iBooks and literacy apps on iPads, educational programs downloaded on computers, felt boards with story figures, signs and labels, and magnetic letters. Importantly, the Quran was the most significant source for literacy at home and in kindergarten settings in KSA. The analysis of HLE resources revealed that children had access to Quranic resources, including books and CDs, to use for reading and listening. An integrated analysis from the parental questionnaire, teachers' interviews, and classroom observations revealed that reading the Quran to children at home and in the kindergarten was done frequently, in order to develop children's reading skills and strengthen their sense of identity with their Muslim culture and heritage. These findings are in agreement with Nydell (2002), who argued that the Quran is the epitome of writing in the Arabic style, and reading and reciting the Quran remains the most traditional means of education for people.

Additionally, when I investigated the differences between fathers and mothers' attitudes toward children's reading activities in the home, it was evident that mothers and fathers equally had an effect on their children's interest in reading, and on the use of stories as a language development technique. This finding matched the previous study from a similar Eastern context, where there were no differences found between mothers and fathers in the practice of skills development such as writing and reading to children (Al-Qaryouti & Kilani, 2013). However, caution must be applied when comparing mothers and fathers' literacy interactions with their children, as the findings in this study are based on parental self-reporting measures. Thus, parents may respond to questions in what they think is a socially prescribed manner. Although the design of the questionnaires I made to collect literacy-related information were well-suited to the cultural and social context of KSA, future researchers in the field of early childhood are recommended to go through the reliability process for this instrument.

Regarding phonemic awareness, parents in this study engaged frequently with their children during phonemic activities at home, which has not been previously noted in the literature. The majority of parents in this study (78.2 per cent) noticed their children relating some sounds with letters, either on a daily basis or several times a day. Further analysis showed that almost three quarters of the parents reported that their children sang simple songs, either on a daily basis or several times a day. Interestingly, when children's attention to rhyming sounds and literacy interactions with others were investigated in families with books or no books, the quantity of books appeared to have no influence on the child's interest in or attention to rhyming sounds. Another interesting finding was that there was a correlation between a child's attention to rhyming sounds, their interactions with others, and their age. Few parents (21.8 per cent) indicated that their children frequently produce rhyming sounds independently. More importantly, parents frequently attempted to teach their children alphabet sounds by pointing to the letters when reading storybooks to them, either on a daily basis or several times a day. This may point to a child's abilities or to parents' motivation of their children's phonemic awareness. Based on these findings, I claim that parents appear to be aware of their children's phonemic skills, which disagrees with the previous study by Al-Momani et al. (2010), in which parents were not found to be aware of the importance of other emergent literacy skills, such as phonics awareness and print knowledge, as they were exclusively focusing on developing their children's reading and writing skills prior to school. Although Al-Momani et al. conducted their study in a similar cultural context to my own study, the differences between these findings may be due to the new educational system in KSA, where most of the population are well educated and some education is now funded by the government in order to promote acquisition of higher education degrees from Western countries through the King Abdullah Scholarship Program.

With regard to technoliteracies, the majority of parents (63.7 per cent) in this study pointed out that their children were mostly interested in using computers, smartphones, iPads, or tablets for playing alphabet games, listening to rhymes or songs, either daily or several times a day. This finding is in line with a previous study by Marsh (2004), who suggested that HLE resources, including televisions, mobile phones, and computer games, were embedded in young children's everyday lives. Sub-analysis showed that almost one third of the parents provided their children with a mix of drawing tools and technologies, including pencils and iPads, as the main drawing tools for use in the home. Those parents indicated that their children were less frequently interested in writing names and letters using technology. However, those children were more likely to be interested, on a weekly basis, in using online technology to listen to

stories. It appeared that there was a significant effect of availability of home drawing tools (such as pencils, crayons, and drawing apps on iPads, computers, and iPods) as an influencer of children's interest in using technology as a literacy source. This means that the more children had drawing resources available at home, the more they were interested in accessing technological tools, which positively affected their interest in drawing. These findings are in agreement with previous findings from Dezuanni et al. (2015), who stated that playing with iPads enables children to explore painting, drawing, writing, digital photography, animation, digital storytelling, and iBooks through the different available applications, and share them with others, such as their parents, teachers, and peers.

In relation to writing activities, the findings of this study indicate that children pretended to write letters, on a daily basis, at home. Sixty-two percent of parents engaged with their children by drawing a picture, telling a story about it, and writing the story down. Parents frequently collaborated with their children in writing experiences at home, from several times a day to daily. There were significant differences in the parents' regularity of engagement with their children in writing words. For instance, 66.1 per cent of parents indicated that their children had not regularly written words, whereas 21.2 per cent of parents reported this occurred rarely or occasionally. These two findings refer to the differences between children from different age groups. For instance, in the analysis of the questionnaire, older children demonstrated clear abilities to write words, while younger children showed clear abilities to write letters. These findings have not been investigated by the previous literature. Most importantly, most children in this study tended to prefer learning with technological tools at home. These findings demonstrated a clear picture of the positive influence of parental attitudes on their children's literacy learning. It is very likely that these parents value the importance of integrating technology in teaching their children literacy skills at home.

Interestingly, more than half the number of parents (53 per cent) reported that their children have never used computers to search for information or to communicate with others (via Skype, FaceTime, or similar), whether independently or with their parents' assistance. It seems that parents' attitudes toward encouraging their young children to use technology was focused exclusively on the purpose of education, rather than enjoyment.

In regards to popular culture, previous literature emphasises the vital role of parents in boosting their children's critical literacy knowledge when watching TV at home, through interpreting the technical words and concepts on TV for their children, thus increasing their

level of understanding and comprehension (Aloofy, 1994; Marsh, 2005). Analysis of data from the parents' questionnaire in this study suggested that popular culture played a significant role in children's literacy learning. Parents in this study reported that they spent less than 4 hours per day watching TV programs with their children at home. Further analysis revealed that the most popular programs watched on TV by children were cartoon programs (including Spongebob, Tom and Jerry, Gumball, Ben 10, and Spiderman), followed by rhyming programs. This illustrated that Saudi parents allow their children to engage in popular culture through watching Western TV programs, which also acts as a source of literacy development. This finding is similar to those within an Australian context: Jones Díaz et al. (2000) found that many recognise the significant influence of popular culture in developing children's language learning as they read toy catalogues, packaging, advertisements and logos. It seemed that parents in this study allowed their children to watch those programs on TV as those were the available programs for children to watch, instead of thinking critically about the differences between cultures or questioning their children about the content of programs.

Analysis of TV watching habits in this study revealed there was no significant difference in the scores for "watching" or "not watching" conditions, in terms of adult-child interaction: watching TV with children did not have any impact on the parents' interaction with their children's literacy activities. Parents, in addition, did not play an active role during TV watching, such as in discussing TV programs. These findings contradict the previous finding by Marsh (2005), which stated that when children and their families engage in watching television programs, they become more involved in discussions, playing games related to their favourite TV characters, or acting out narrative texts within the home space. The overall analysis of data related to Saudi HLE resources in this thesis demonstrated that children were immersed in multiliteracies and technoliterate environments where they had access to those resources, although the quality of the use of these resources was not examined further in this study.

Additionally, this study revealed findings related to Saudi parents' attitudes towards playing games that develop their children's abilities during literacy-related activities at home. The findings indicated that 29.5 per cent of parents interacted with their children in physical activities, including reading scores when playing football, walking, and biking, while 22.2 per cent reported that they engaged with their children in playing computer games and playing alphabetic and phonemic games in order to improve their children's literacy skills. Hence, these findings showed that some Saudi parents do value the importance of playing with their children and exposing them to a variety of literacy activities within the family context, even though they

were not aware of the importance of play as social practice. Therefore, I assert that Saudi parents socially interact with their children from an early age, which has not been explored by previous literature.

9.2.2 Contribution #2

Communication between parents and ECTs is affected by gender segregation law in KSA: a dominant theme in both the home and kindergarten environments.

In relation to the way adults communicate with each other in the community, little of the existing literature has explored partnerships between the HLE and Kindergarten Literacy Environment (KLE) in relation to children's literacy learning in KSA (Gahwaji, 2011). In addressing this gap, I investigated the regularity of communication as well as opportunities and challenges between parents (particularly fathers) and ECTs. The overall analyses in this study showed that mothers were the only people who communicated with their children's teachers. Fathers in this study found it difficult to communicate with ECTs due to cultural and social restrictions based on gender segregation law in KSA. Just over half of the mothers (52.3 per cent) preferred to communicate with their children's teacher in person, followed by approximately one quarter of parents (23.1 per cent) who reported this communication occurred on the phone. Further analysis showed that 44.6 per cent of mothers reported having occasional communication with their children's teacher, followed by 22.3 per cent of mothers who noted this occurred on a weekly basis.

This study also indicates that well over half of parents (70 per cent) were satisfied with the type and amount of communication they had with their children's teachers. For instance, it is interesting to point out that Kareem's mother found it difficult to communicate with Rokaya (Kareem's teacher), unlike Gasem's mother, who indicated that it was not challenging for her to communicate with Aisha. Further analysis indicated that there was positive communication between Aisha and Sarah, and this positively influenced Gasem's literacy learning outcomes at home and at kindergarten. However, Kareem's mother indicated that she was not satisfied with the frequency of communication with her child's teacher and that she rarely met in person. This finding needs to be considered in light of Rokaya's interview, where it was stated that most mothers, including Kareem's mother, seem to be very sensitive towards issues concerning their children, and they are not open to learning about their child's weaknesses or emotional problems. A possible explanation of these findings may refer to mothers and teachers not being

able to decide on an accepted way of communication. Another possible explanation may be due to mother being afraid of being blamed by teachers for her child's literacy progress in kindergarten. This may have reflected previous research that claimed mothers in countries such as KSA and Jordan have been blamed for their children's lower literacy and educational achievements (Al-Momani et al., 2010; Bader, 2005). Consequently, these findings reflect previous findings in KSA, where mothers have been expected to effectively develop literacy practices, including reading habits for their children, especially for those under six years of age (Bader, 2005; Fayez et al., 2011). This agrees with Ure and Raban (2001), who believed that those children with an interest in literacy, or who had shown ability in writing and reading in preschool, would have these abilities fostered as there was continuous support for this in the home environment and vice versa.

Drawing on the analysis, I argue that communications between home and kindergarten environments in KSA face cultural challenges that may affect children's literacy learning. The first challenge mentioned by ECTs is related to fathers being less effectively involved in their children's literacy learning at the kindergarten centre. Those teachers indicated in the interviews that they encourage fathers' participation in the kindergarten program or in the social events such as Saudi National Day, in respectful and particular ways that take into account religious and cultural values. Further findings from the interviews with teachers demonstrated that communication with fathers was culturally allowed in limited cases, such as in an emergency, if the father was single, or if the mother was sick or deceased. According to ECTs, this was due to KSA traditions, where direct communications between males and females is generally forbidden as a result of the gender segregation law. The most surprising finding was the fact that Saudi fathers, in all cases, were found to be mostly involved in the kindergarten centres in relation to their children's behavioural issues. For instance, in Case Study Two, Rokaya pointed out the importance of communicating with fathers in some sensitive cases that required fathers' involvement to resolve learning or behavioural issues that their children may have had in kindergarten. Interestingly, in these situations, the kindergarten director was the only person to communicate with fathers, not the class teachers themselves. This may be due to the fact that directors in the KSA hold a position of power and therefore have sufficient status to communicate with fathers.

Accordingly, I suggest that ECTs need to be aware of how to empower the role of fathers in their children's literacy education. This may include planning some literacy activities that children can take home to share specifically with their fathers. Thus, although I utilised a mixed

methods design in this study to overcome cultural barriers in order to reach fathers – a new methodological approach in investigating the role of home and kindergarten literacy environments – there is still a need to apply an ethnographic study (Alzaydi, 2010) to observe fathers' roles in their children's literacy development, which can be done by male researchers or research assistants.

Another culturally challenging factor mentioned by ECTs concerned transportation availability for mothers. As discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, women in KSA are not allowed to drive, and therefore they rely entirely on their husbands or private drivers, which made it difficult for some mothers to attend face-to-face meetings with their children's teachers. This affected the method of communication between teachers and mothers. Findings from the interviews with teachers indicated that they preferred to use WhatsApp, an instant SMS messaging application, as a way of communication with mothers, who found this more convenient. Findings from the interviews with teachers illustrated that they believed in positive and regular communication with parents, as this improved parents' understanding of the important role of the kindergarten centre in educating and nurturing their children. In order to overcome the communication barriers of the KSA cultural and religious context, using a website as a technological tool, and as the most culturally appropriate communication method, would be an easier and more effective way for teachers to incorporate fathers in the daily program of children's literacy activities, through accessing general information about kindergarten events and programs online. These findings are in line with Alameen et al.'s (2015) study, which stated that using technological channels of communication, such as websites and emails, was effective in bridging the gap between the home and the kindergarten setting in the KSA context, helping to develop relationships with parents and the community.

In brief, findings from this study showed that communication between home and kindergarten centres remained challenging, taking into account the fact that integration of fathers in the kindergarten program was limited due to gender segregation laws. Accordingly, there is a need to activate fathers' roles in their children's literacy education, such as by designing literacy workshops to develop fathers; understanding of the importance of emergent literacy learning, and to involve them effectively in their children's education. It also seemed that ECTs have not been trained or made aware of the value and importance of working with families in partnership, which needs to be considered by policy makers in the field of early childhood education.

9.2.3 Contribution #3

The relationship between adults (including parents and ECTs) in home and kindergarten settings was disconnected, and they did not value each other's roles in contributing to emergent literacy in children.

I explored the differences between parents and ECTs' literacy attitudes, roles, and beliefs in relation to children's emergent literacy learning. The sub-analysis of parents' beliefs about adults' roles showed that almost all parents (96 per cent) agreed that fathers and mothers play a significant role in their children's literacy development. Interestingly, the majority of parents (83.4 per cent) reported their dissatisfaction with the role ECTs have played in fostering their children's literacy learning. In regards to mothers, some mothers still had an outdated perception about the role of the kindergarten as a nursery and care provider rather than as an educational setting. These findings relate to parental beliefs about ECTs and highlight the gap between home and kindergarten environments, which may influence communication between teachers and parents. This gap may exist due to parents' lack of understanding of the value of kindergarten programs, what actually happens there, and ECTs' role as educators, as well as a general lack in regularity of communication with parents. Parental involvement in kindergarten programs is new to Eastern education systems. As a result, both parents and ECTs do not fully understand how involved parents could be (Al-Momani et al., 2010). In light of these findings, ECTs should open more communication avenues with children's parents in order to share knowledge, thoughts and concerns about the children's learning. This is also a chance to develop mutual ideas and expectations, make decisions, and plan curricula. On the other hand, parents might benefit from this communication by showing a more positive attitude towards the teacher's role and their efforts in extending children's literacy learning. Parents could be more aware of their own strengths and potential for collaborating with, and having input to, the kindergarten program, and need to be more open and willing to communicate with teachers. Thus, planning parental conferences and workshops is recommended in order to facilitate a partnership between ECTs and parents and provide opportunities to spend time in the centre.

Another important finding from the interviews indicated that ECTs had different beliefs among each other about the influence of parental levels of education on children's emergent literacy learning. Aisha, for instance, believed that there was no difference between formally educated and non formally educated mothers in terms of children's literacy learning. For Aisha, parents' level of education was not really a significant variable that impacted on children's literacy development and learning. Her belief perhaps indicates that non formally educated

parents try harder to ensure their children have a better education. This finding is consistent with previous findings by Hume et al. (2012), Park (2008), and Wasik and Hindman (2010), who found that there is no direct impact of parental education on children's literacy learning. In contrast, Kareem's teacher Rokaya believed that educated mothers influenced their children more positively than non-educated mothers, not only regarding their education and language, but also in terms of their behaviour. This result supports previous arguments that the more parents are educated, the more attention and assistance children are likely to gain to develop their early literacy skills (Al-Momani et al., 2010; Al-Qaryouti & Kilani, 2013; Bennett et al., 2002; Korat et al., 2007; Korat, 2009; Phillips & Lonigan, 2009; Weigel et al., 2006). Based on the different findings regarding parental education in this thesis, I assume that the differences of ECTs' beliefs about parental levels of education may have been influenced by their various teaching and qualification experiences and/or personal experiences with different families, rather than by research evidence.

Interestingly, analysis in this study showed that there was no correlation between a parent's level of education and their children's response to print. However, parents' level of education had an impact on children's interest in using technology as a source of literacy learning and communicating with others at home. In another words, the more parents were educated, the more they encouraged their children to learn literacy through technological tools at home. A possible explanation of parents' positive attitudes towards technology may be that more educated parents were more likely to value and understand how to integrate technology in teaching literacy at home, as well as being more able to afford it.

It can be noted that no literature was identified that investigated the significant influence of income on children's early literacy practices and attitudes in KSA. Therefore, I explored whether a family's income influences children's HLE practices. The analysis of data showed that there was no significant effect of household income level on a child's attention to rhyming sounds or on children's interactions with others. Most interestingly, there was no significant effect of household level of income on the children's interest in using technology as a language and teaching source, or to aid learning and communication with others. However, there was a statistically significant effect of household income on a child's attitudes in response to print. Based on this analysis, I claim that the factor of household income only contributes to children's response to print. These results contradict previous findings that suggested there was no relationship found between family income, their levels of print resources, and how these resources were used in the home (Grieshaber et al., 2011; Weinberger, 1996). Therefore,

income level has a different level of influence on children's response to print in different contexts.

From the ECTs' perspectives, this study found that teachers do not believe in the influence of the income level on children's literacy learning and skills. ECTs often stated that all kindergartens centres in the KSA provide literacy resources for children, including storybooks, educational games, puzzles, drawing tools and other materials, free of charge to all children. In addition, this study found that other types of reading materials in Saudi homes included a variety of resources, such as storybooks, comic books, electronic books, magazines, cooking menus, alphabet posters, iBooks and literacy apps on iPads, educational programs downloaded on the computer, felt boards with story figures, signs and labels, and magnetic letters. The most common literacy resources that children used at home indicated by parents included, but were not limited to, cooking menus, signs and labels, stories, puppets and theatre, and felt boards with figures of story characters. The second most dominant literacy resources that some parents reported as used by their children were alphabet posters, cards, or whiteboards. These findings supported the previous study by Metsals (1996), which indicated that families from middle-income households preferred to provide their children with a range of opportunities for constructing their own understanding about literacy through making literacy materials available for their children's independent use. Despite my new findings, different results may be found in other income-level families regarding children's literacy practices. Thus, further investigation is required beyond middle-income level in future.

Little is known about the role of ECTs in promoting children's literacy learning in KSA and other Eastern countries, especially in prior-to-school contexts (Al-Momani et al., 2010). Findings from the interviews with ECTs showed that both teachers agreed on the importance of the roles of both fathers and mothers as the primary source of their children's literacy learning. Concurrently, parents did not believe in the significance of the role of ECTs in assisting children with literacy learning. This draws our attention to the gap in connecting the home and kindergarten settings, and to the importance of teachers and parents discussing their own expectations and working together to achieve them in order to benefit children's literacy learning. Thus, this study has revealed a significant barrier to parent-ECT partnerships when parents do not value or understand the important role played by ECTs.

In regard to teaching strategies, parents in this study indicated that they often used a direct approach and selected the type of learning opportunities they provided for their young

children, and they also controlled when and how these opportunities took place (such as book readings). Another finding revealed that parents were frequently engaged in co-playing rhyming games with their children, mostly on a weekly basis but ranging to occasionally. Those parents showed that they helped their children to write words or alphabetic letters regularly: several times a day or daily. This great amount and quality of social interaction occurring between parents and children at home positively influenced children's literacy learning at the prior-to-school age. These findings matched previous findings from Bennett et al. (2002), who discovered that parents and children's interactions in literacy activities before formal schooling are regularly very parent-dependent.

Additionally, teachers used a range of socially interactive teaching strategies to teach children literacy at the kindergarten centre. However, findings from classroom observations of the focus children showed that social interactions occurred between the child and their peers, not predominately with teachers. Importantly, findings from the interview with ECTs and classroom observations showed a disconnect between children's home and kindergarten practices as there was a limited use of technological tools. There were no computers or iPads used as literacy learning tools. Teachers pointed out that the computers were used only once a year as a curriculum requirement for My Book units in all public kindergarten centres in Mecca. However, these findings may not be universally representative, as this might be different to private kindergarten centres in KSA. This was mentioned previously by Gahwaji (2011), who argued that using interactive teaching programs in teaching children emergent literacy was very effective for enhancing those children's oral language skills and increasing their word acquisition. This was not examined in this study due to the lack of availability of hardware and software. Importantly, ECTs in this study believed in the importance of using technological tools. However, Rokaya indicated that despite this belief, ECTs were unable to access these tools and were unaware of how to apply these tools in a literacy context due to the mandatory curriculum in KSA. This finding is similar to that of Lee and Ginsburg (2007), who stated that preschool teachers should understand the effectiveness of using computers as a significant means of social interaction in teaching young children literacy. On the other hand, Rokaya believed that policy makers and authorities should encourage teachers' development and creativity in incorporating more diverse teaching strategies, including using computers as a source of literacy learning. These findings matched previous findings by Gahwaji (2011), in KSA, that when ECTs were encouraged to use Information and Computer Technology (ICT) in private kindergarten classrooms, children became more independent learners, which gave them

opportunities to learn emergent literacy components in interesting ways. This new approach of using technology can stimulate young children to learn literacy components, which needs to be considered and implemented further by teachers in all kindergarten centres. It could also form an important link with home as they find out what children and families do there.

Another outcome of the interviews with teachers demonstrated that they were focusing exclusively on developing reading and writing skills, although they showed clear understanding of the importance of other literacy skills. Writing resources used by children in this study were limited to pens, pencils, crayons and paper, which reflected a traditional way of learning. This finding supported the previous findings from the USA by Clark and Kragler (2005), where the ECTs' attempts to include more writing materials, as well as to increase children's opportunities to write through writing activities, were found to have an influence on children's awareness of how language works and to focus children's attention onto particular types of print.

The ECTs' role was mostly guiding and facilitating, such as assisting in decision-making and encouraging children to engage in shared activities and building positive relationships between children by encouraging the use of discussion, speaking, and listening skills. These findings showed the ECTs' role was influenced by the Montessori approach of teaching and structuring the learning environment in a particular order. A teacher's role in a Montessori approach is as a director who encourages children's self-directed learning without interrupting the learning process, as well as unobtrusively guiding children's independent learning in the classroom (Widger & Schofield, 2012; Ültanır, 2012).

Further analysis from the case studies demonstrated that although both Gasem and Kareem's mothers had different HLEs (a bilingual HLE in Gasem's case, with exposure to both Arabic and English, and a monolingual HLE in Kareem's case, with exposure only to Arabic), both children's writing skills were still only demonstrative of emergent skill levels. Based on classroom observations, it appeared that both children did not have an interest in writing activities in the classroom. Rokaya justified this as owing to Kareem's regular absence from the centre, which perhaps influenced his lack of interest in writing. These findings matched a previous study by Clark and Kragler (2005), where the teachers' roles in including more writing materials, as well as increasing children's opportunities to write through writing activities, were found to have an influence on children's awareness of how language works and to focus children's attention onto particular aspects of print, such as what writing looks like. Despite the importance of findings from the observations undertaken, caution must be applied in

interpreting the observational data, as it was not clear whether the children would behave differently when not observed, or whether they would undertake more writing activity if there was a wider variety of options. It is important to note that the time for observation in this study was only seven weeks, a relatively short time to conduct classroom observations of teachers and children's literacy practices. Thus, the use of long-term direct observations of children's interactive literacy activities with their peers and teachers is recommended for future research.

Another finding from the ECTs' interview was that teachers' qualifications and teaching experiences influence the way they understand what literacy is and how it should be taught. An example from Rokaya's interview showed that her earlier teaching experiences as a primary teacher focused on teaching linguistic skills, which influenced the way she provided intensive and varied literacy activities: in particular, reading and writing activities in the classroom. This can be compared with Aisha, who viewed literacy as more about social play between a child and their peers. Another possible explanation for this was that Aisha had attended several training workshops about using storytelling as social practice - through engaging children in orally telling their story, then writing the story in exercise books with her help. These books were kept in the library area of the classroom, to share later with other peers.

The teachers' role in involving mothers in a literacy workshop at the centre also came into focus. Teachers indicated that although these workshops rarely happen, they were very productive and positively impacted the mothers' teaching strategies regarding their children's writing and reading skills. These findings supported previous studies, which found that ECTs faced many challenges relating to parents' expectations and demands for their children's literacy development and learning skills prior to school level (Goldstein, 2007; Al-Momani et al., 2010; Al-Qaryouti & Kilani, 2013), as the literacy activities were limited and taught within the mandated KSA curriculum (Sylvester & Kragler, 2012).

From the ECTs' observations and interview data, it is clear that ECTs in the KSA faced many challenges. These included communicating with fathers; lack of resources; lack of curriculum guidance; being unable to implement their understanding of contemporary perspectives on literacies; lack of ICT hardware, software and training; and a lack of training about the importance of connecting with families and meeting parental expectations that their children are able to read and write before they enter school. Overall, these findings in this study drew attention to the very significant issue of a lack of understanding of the contemporary meaning of literacy as a social practice, and the role of adults in providing not only a rich

literacy environment that incorporates multiliteracies and technoliteracies, but also quality interactions and learning. Thus, the dilemma of maintaining successful communication between home and kindergarten environments was related to parental awareness of the ways they could be involved in their children's literacy learning in kindergarten centres. It is also related to teachers' awareness as to how to establish better ways to connect families in the kindergarten program, which is a new field of inquiry in the education system in the Eastern world (Ihmeideh et al., 2008).

Overall analysis confirmed that the relationship between homes and kindergartens in KSA was disconnected, which influenced the children's continuity of literacy learning. This finding matches those by Jones Díaz, Arthur, Beecher, and McNaught (2000) that the disparities between what children experience at home and what they experience at preschool led significantly to a disconnection between home and preschool learning. This critical issue was highlighted by Baker (2014), who emphasised that there are clear challenges, particularly in the UAE, regarding children's cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the classroom, which significantly contributed to the children's approaches and readiness to play within the sociocultural context. The gap identified here in this thesis acknowledges that parents and ECTs have different knowledge, attitudes, and willingness towards providing for children's literacy experiences. Although I was unexpectedly invited by Gasem's mother to observe her child's home literacy environment and was able to take some photos, the other two mothers only sent me a few photos of their children's literacy resources and working samples. These different social attitudes illustrated that even mothers who had the same cultural, social, and educational backgrounds responded differently. This may refer to their own beliefs on the importance of emergent literacy, or possibly to suspicion of an unknown researcher within a restrictive social context.

9.2.4 Contribution #4

The role of maids in engaging with young children's literacy practices in KSA is important, but undervalued, underutilised, and marginalised.

In this study, maids were investigated as a significant element of the HLE in relation to supporting children's literacy learning at home. The questionnaire found that almost two thirds of the parents had no maids in their homes, while the rest did. The anecdotal evidence suggests that the percentage is really much higher. Only one hundred and seventeen of parents (36 per

cent) indicated that they have maids. This may be due to the fact that this study has been conducted at a time when KSA has faced major issues with the “running maids” phenomenon (Al-Seghayer, 2012). This may influence parents’ true responses and indications to the researcher as to whether they have maids at home, due to a fear of being found to be employing a maid illegally. Responses indicated that over two thirds of the participants who did say they had maids did not believe that maids played a significant role in their children’s literacy development. Parents in this study were also asked whether or not these maids involved their children in at-home literacy learning activities. In this study, more than 70 per cent of parents did not believe in the importance of maids in their children’s literacy learning specifically, or in their children’s development generally. This finding matched the previous findings from Alansari (1990) and Roumani (2005) from the UAE and KSA, who found that parents expressed concern about the negative effect of their maid’s presence on their young children’s language, emotional, and social development, as well as on their cultural and religious beliefs. According to parents’ reports, these maids spend little time with their children, varying between two to more than four hours daily. This attachment may have included some kind of social interaction, such as conversation, which may affect the children’s language learning. This needs to be explored further in future.

The correlation between having maids at home and children’s attitude towards literacy learning was evident. The majority of parents (63.2 per cent) who had maids pointed to their maids’ efforts to involve their children in literacy learning activities at homes, while the rest of parents (36.8 per cent) with maids indicated that maids had no role to play. Findings indicated that the most common activities that maids were responsible for at home, as reported by parents, included playing computer games or watching TV with children. In addition, there was no significant effect of parents’ educational level on the maid’s attitude towards child’s literacy learning. Only 56 (75 per cent) parents with maids were involved in their children’s at-home literacy activities. They noted that their maids had never read storybooks to their children. Significantly, findings suggest that having maids at home did not have an effect on the child’s response to print, or on using stories as a language development technique. More specifically, this study revealed that there was no significant difference in the scores for having maids or no maids at home in terms of children’s interest in reading. The analysis in this study confirmed that there were no significant differences in the scores for “other reading material” and “not having a variety of materials” in terms of maids’ attitude toward child’s literacy learning. This

is a significant contribution because maid's contributions to children's learning to read has not been previously studied in KSA.

In relation to phonemic awareness, more than 29 per cent of parents in this study showed that their maids did not frequently sing nursery rhymes with their children, ranging from never to occasionally. Findings confirmed that there was no significant difference between families who had a maid and who had no maid in terms of the children's interest in using technology as a language source or for communicating with others. Similarly, it was found that the majority of maids were rarely involved in children's writing and drawing activities at home (responses ranged from never to occasionally). These findings from parental reports suggested that having maids at home had no effect on their children's access to literacy resources and had no influence on their children's emergent literacy learning. Twenty-nine per cent of parents who indicated they had maids at home reported that their maids engaged with the children in watching movies on TV or playing computer games at home. Another finding showed that almost two thirds of the parents reported their maids to be rarely involved in their children's sport and cooking activities at home, ranging from occasionally to no involvement. Although maids appeared to have very minimal input into children's sport, cooking, or technology-based language activities, they seemed to be willing and enthusiastic to play a role in literacy learning at home. In relation to children's social interactions with others in the family, analysis showed that having maids at home had an effect on children's interactions with others, as those maids played a role in their employers' children's social activities, which cannot be marginalised. I therefore assert that when there was a maid at home, children's interactions with parents were decreased, and it is evident that maids' presence has significant influence on the children's social interaction with parents during literacy related practices.

More importantly, analysis showed that having maids at home contributed differently to children's writing and drawing, with some maids never engaging with children in these literacy activities (37.8 per cent) and some only occasionally engaging (28.4 per cent). This supported the previous findings in KSA by Al-Jarf (2009), who found that foreign maids had little influence over children's Arabic acquisition. However, she argued that although children who were cared for from birth by maids who did not speak correct Arabic may have been negatively influenced in their linguistic development, that influence disappeared once the children attended kindergarten. These results must be interpreted with caution because the reports of maids' daily habits were written by parents who were mainly at work, and so may not be

accurate. The overall analysis in this study makes it evident that there were no negative effects of maids on children's literacy practices in KSA.

On the other hand, the qualitative data from interviews with ECTs in this study showed that they both agreed that maids do influence Saudi children's literacy learning. However, they had different perspectives regarding the level of maids' influence on children's literacy learning. A possible explanation of the differences in ECTs' beliefs toward maids' influence may stem from teachers' own perspectives and working experiences with children and parents and/or their experiences with their own maids. For instance, Aisha believed that maids in general had a negative influence on children's literacy learning: specifically, Indonesian maids who were not educated and who did not speak Arabic well may have affected the language of the child in a negative way. In contrast, Rokaya believed that maids may influence children's literacy learning depending on: how much time the child spent interacting with their maids, the maids' cultural and social backgrounds, and on the maids' level of education. These findings in this study are supported by previous research from Al-Jarf (2009) and Roumani (2005), who found that maids had a negative impact on the children's language skills. However, this impact depended on the amount of time children spend with their maids at home and whether these maids were educated or not. This is consistent teachers' beliefs about maids' influences on children's literacy learning and language development.

Relevant analysis from both maids' interviews demonstrated that their employers did not allow them to read for children in Arabic due to their maids' lack of language proficiency. More predictably, nearly all parents who had maids at home reported that their maids rarely utilised their own languages when interacting with their children. These findings illustrated that parents differ in level of concern about their children's language development prior to school years. This depended on their beliefs and on maids' language proficiency, since those maids spoke different languages natively. Evidence from the interviews with Rani indicated that she was not allowed to use her own language (Indonesian) with her employers' children at home. However, Normini indicated that her employer encouraged her to use her own language (Tagalog), and that she was involved in reading, watching TV, singing, playing sport, and cooking activities at home with the children. In comparison with Rani, Normini affirmed that she used English as the language of communication at home, as well as Arabic. Interestingly, this study revealed that there were noticeable differences in the amount of time and type of literacy activities that Normini and Rani had with their employers' children. This may refer to the differences between them in qualifications and the educational backgrounds they held. Although both maids had

only a primary degree, Normini spoke two languages (Tagalog and English) and had a training certificate as a maid. These differences may influence the way that parents view the value of their maids as socially engaged in their children's emergent literacy. These findings are similar to Leung's (2012) finding relating to Filipina maids in Hong Kong. Leung (2012) found that parents acknowledged the positive influence of the presence of a live-in English-speaking Filipina maid, with their children experiencing an increased ability to understand a number of varying English language idioms, including American, British and Hong Kong English. This increased the opportunities for their children to practice L2 English. Thus, this study noted that the differences of beliefs found between ECTs and parents on maids' influences on children's emergent literacy and language development may refer to the quality of maid-child interaction, parental attitudes towards their maids being engaged with children, the educational background of maids, and the amount of time maids spend with children. This critical point drew attention to the importance of opening a communication channel between parents, ECTs, and maids in term of child rearing and education, in order to achieve quality of care and learning for all children in KSA.

9.3 Limitations of the Study

Limitations of this study at the interviewing stage revolved around the difficulty of accessing maids for interviews, even with their willingness (and the willingness of their employers) to participate in the next stage of the study. This has been mentioned by Roumani (2005) in her research in Kuwait and the UAE: although maids and their employers ensured that their privacy would be protected, accessing maids was still challenging, leading the researcher to conduct indirect interviews with maids through their employers.

Another limitation of this study was that although teachers participated in the interviews, they all refused to have their voices recorded due to religious and cultural barriers that forbid unknown men from hearing female voices. This meant interviews could not be reheard or transcribed.

The third limitation of this study was study sampling, as this study collected the data for its first phase from 325 parents and, in the case studies phase, from two maids, two ECTs, and two kindergarten children. It did not go beyond the city of Mecca, which is another consideration for future researchers. Likewise, there was no direct access to fathers.

The final limitation was related to the sampling for the case studies. This was selected randomly. This led to two boys being observed for the second phase; therefore, the differences in literacy practices between gender (girls and boys) has not been addressed in this study, which could be the subject of future investigation.

9.4 Final Thoughts about Early Literacy Learning in KSA

In this thesis, I have made four main contributions to the knowledge field of early childhood education in KSA, relating specifically to HLEs and KLEs, in regards to young children's early literacy learning. These, as discussed earlier in this chapter, are as follows: a) literacy in the context of KSA is a social practice, as seen through the way children and adults interact during literacy-related practices at home; b) communication between parents and ECTs is affected by gender segregation law in KSA: a dominant theme in both the home and kindergarten environments; c) the relationship between adults (including parents and ECTs) in home and kindergarten settings seems to be disconnected, and they do not seem to value each others' roles in contributing to emergent literacy in children; and d) the role of maids in engaging with young children's literacy practices in KSA is important, but undervalued, underutilised, and marginalised.

Drawing on these four contributions, I argue that the social and cultural beliefs and practices unique to KSA create a unique set of requirements for early literacy learning in home and kindergarten settings. As revealed from ECTs' interviews, there are still some critical challenges relating to parents and the Self-Learning Curriculum (SLC). ECTs seemed to have a lack of awareness as to how to actively involve parents in kindergarten programs, including through decision-making, evaluating, and planning literacy activities. Due to the mandatory curriculum (SLC), ECTs have limited opportunities to integrate technoliteracy resources, such as computers, iPads, and the internet, for teaching literacy, and there is a lack of literacy training. Children need to be socially engaged with adults, including parents, ECTs, and even maids. Another significant challenge is the gender segregation laws in KSA which affect the ways parents and ECTs communicate. In particular for fathers and ECTs, these laws create a virtually impenetrable gap between the settings. Cultural and social characteristics of KSA were reflected through children's literacy practices at home and kindergarten environments, such as in reading the Quran, celebrating Saudi National Day and Eids, praying, and being less involved in critically discussing other culturally diverse differences, such as gender.

Maids in this study were found to influence children's writing and drawing skills and children's social interaction with others at home, while they showed no influence on children's attention to rhyming sounds, using technological tools as a source of learning and communication, children's response to print, and reading skills. Parental level of education was not found to influence maids' attitudes toward children's literacy learning: only parental beliefs were found to influence the role of maids in interacting with children's practices at home. Hence, it is recommended that parents assist their maids in developing their linguistic and educational backgrounds through developing their Arabic skills. Most parents encourage maids to read the Quran as the main source of acceptable Arabic language. In addition, parents could show more positive attitudes toward maids communicating in their own language. This would minimise the issues of cultural shock that the newest maids face when they come to KSA for the first time. As most maids in this study were reported to influence children's social interaction with others at home, parents are recommended to understand the level of influence that maids have on their children and how they can control the time their children spend with maids at home. I recommend involving maids in part of the kindergarten's program, such as in cultural events, as this would bridge the gap and allow maids to learn by watching. Parents also should be more open to their maids' cultures through learning and valuing their own stories, rhymes, and traditions, instead of believing that exposing children to other cultures is a negative thing. Thus, future research could extend the investigation into HLEs and KLEs beyond the city of Mecca to broader geographic locations in order to see if there are any differences or similarities between parental literacy practices across KSA. Although this study used the triangulation approach of investigation through utilising questionnaires, interviews, and observations, future research may use video recording of children's literacy practices and social interaction at home with their maids to observe the levels of influence that maids have on children's development and emergent literacy learning.

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Appendices- Appendix A. Phase One materials (A.1: Questionnaires)

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Project Title

Investigating the roles of the home and the kindergarten literacy environments in supporting Saudi children's emergent literacy

Approval Date [08/08/2013]

Parent Questionnaire

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After you fill in the questionnaire, please return it to your child's kindergarten in the enclosed sealed envelope. A collection box will be made available. The questionnaire should be returned to teachers within a week if possible.

If you have any questions regarding this questionnaire, please contact me via email or phone.

Miss Sabha Alleyhani
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Emergent Literacy - Parent questionnaire

This questionnaire relates to your child who is attending a kindergarten involved in the research project named above. It can be filled in by mothers or fathers alone, both together, or by other family members who care for your child. You are invited to respond to five sets of questions. This should take you about 15 minutes. Some of the questions provided in this questionnaire are open questions which invite you to provide extra information, while other questions are based on a 1-6 response scale. You can answer these questions by ticking (✓) in your response box that is closest to your views.

Sample response: Please say how often you do the following things:

1. Several times per day	2. Daily	3. Weekly	4. On occasion	5. Rarely			6. Never	
			1	2	3	4	5	6
How often does your child pretend to read a book (such as turning pages, producing speech that is similar to the actual story in the book and so on)?			✓					

Emergent Literacy - Parent questionnaire

Section 1: The following questions (1-4) are demographic questions about you as parent and contain general information.

a. Who is completing this questionnaire?	Mother <input type="checkbox"/>	Father <input type="checkbox"/>	Both <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/> Please name the role (e.g. grandmother.).....
--	---	---	---	--

1. How old is your child in years and months? (e.g. 3 years 6 months)

.....

2. Please tick the box that best fits your answers to the following questions:

1. Higher education (Doctorate)	2. Higher education (Master)	3. Bachelor degree	4. Diploma	5. Completed High school	6. Completed primary					
					1	2	3	4	5	6
a. What is your level of education?										

1. More than 40,000SR	2. 30,000-40, 000 SR	3. 20,000- 30,000SR	4. 15000- 20,000SR	5. 9000- 15000SR	6. 4000- 8000SR
--------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	------------------------------------	-----------------------------------	---------------------------------	--------------------------------

	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. What is your average household salary per month?						

3. How old was your child when you began to:

	Child's age (e.g. 3 years 6 months)
a. sing for him/ her nursery rhymes or educational songs?	
b. point to pictures?	
c. point to alphabetic letter and sound it out?	
d. read to her/him picture books?	

4. Can you please explain why you decided to start reading to your child at this age?

.....

Section 2: The following questions (1- 12) are about your child's literacy practices at home include reading attitudes and interests, response to print, language and phonics awareness, writing and drawing, and technological interests.

1. Please say how often you do the following things:

1. Several times per day	2. Daily	3. Weekly	4. On occasion	5. Rarely	6. Never
-----------------------------	-------------	--------------	-------------------	--------------	-------------

Child's reading attitudes and interests. How often does your child:	1	2	3	4	5	6
a. ask or indicate an interest in having a story told or read?						
b. pretend to read a book (such as turning pages, producing speech that is similar to the actual story in the book and so on)?						
c. make up a story based on the pictures?						
d. fill in words or lines from a story when reading with you? (When you are reading a book your child says the next line or word before you read it)?						
e. show interest in adult reading materials (i.e. newspaper, TV guide, magazine, computer, smartphone. etc...)?						
f. ask for help in reading words such as street signs or words on food packages?						
g. name letters of the alphabet?						
h. ask you to spell words?						
i. point or talk about pictures when you read stories?						
j. point to or ask about logos, symbols or signs						
k. ask questions about characters or event when you read or tell stories or predict the next event?						
l. collaborate with others in reading experience?						

2. Does your child have books at home?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If yes, approximately how many picture books do you have in your home for your child's use?

1. 1-10	2. 10-20	3. 20-30	4. 30-40	5. 40-50				6. more than 50	
Number of picture books at home				1	2	3	4	5	6

3. Does your child have other reading materials at home (e.g. comic books or electronic books, magazines etc.)? Yes ☐ No ☐

If so, what are they?

4. Does your child go to the library to select books? Yes ☐ No ☐

If No, can you please explain "why or why not"?

.....

5. Please say how often you do the following things:

d. Please say how often you do the following things:									
1. Several times per day	2. Daily	3. Weekly	4. On occasion	5. Rarely	6. Never				
Child's Response to Print. How often does your child				1	2	3	4	5	6
a. identify words in the environment (such as food packaging, signs of stores and restaurants, etc.) in your environment by him or herself?									
b. identify the front, back, top of, and bottom of a book and turns pages appropriately for Arabic language?									
c. recognise that illustrations on a page are related to what the print says?									

6. Does your child know Arabic print is read from right to left?

Yes ☐

No ☐

7. Please say how often you do the following things:

1. Several times per day	2. Daily	3. Weekly	4. On occasion	5. Rarely			6. Never		
Child's Language and phonics awareness. How often does your child:				1	2	3	4	5	6
a. produce rhyming by her/himself?									
b. comment on rhyming words?									
d. repeat clapped patterns?									
c. recognise rhymes, sounds or word patterns?									
d. relate some sounds with letters?									
e. sing simple songs?									
f. follow your (or someone else's) verbal directions?									
g. participate in conversations with others?									
h. initiate interactions with others?									
i. use language for a range of functions e.g. labelling, describing explaining, predicting, imagining, analysing, synthesising?									

8. Please say how often you do the following things:

1. Several times per day	2. Daily	3. Weekly	4. On occasion	5. Rarely			6. Never		
Child's Writing and Drawing. How often does your child				1	2	3	4	5	6
a. draw pictures?									
b. write letters or letter approximations?									
c .pretend to write letters?									
d. write words?									
e. draw a picture and tell the story about it?									
f. collaborate with others in writing experience?									

9. Does your child draw with:

Pencil ☐ Crayons ☐ Computer ☐ I Pad ☐ Other ☐ If other, can you please give more information.....

10. Please say how often you do the following things:

10. Please say how often you do the following things:									
1. Several times per day	2. Daily	3. Weekly	4. On occasion	5. Rarely	6. Never				
Child's Technological interests. How often does your child:				1	2	3	4	5	6
a. use computers, phones or tablet pads to play alphabet games?									
b. use computers, phones or tablet pads to listen to rhymes or songs?									
c. watch movies on computer?									
d. listen to online stories?									
e. writing names and letters?									
f. communicate with other family member using Skype, face time or similar program?									
g. use computers to search for information?									

11. Do you watch TV with your child?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>		No <input type="checkbox"/>							
1. 0-2 hours per day	2. 2-4 hours per day	3. 4-6 hours monthly	4. 6-14 hours monthly	5. 14-20 hours monthly	6. 20-25 hours monthly				
				1	2	3	4	5	6
a.. How many hours does your child watch TV?									

12. What types of TV programs does your child usually watch?

.....

Section 3: The following questions (1-7) about your literacy beliefs, attitudes, and practices at home.

1. Please tick the box that best fits your belief:

1. Strongly agree	2. Mostly agree	3. Agree	4. Disagree	5. Mostly disagree	6. Strongly disagree					
Adult Literacy beliefs				1	2	3	4	5	6	
a. Early childhood teachers play an important part in fostering children's literacy learning.										
b. Fathers play an important role in their children's literacy development.										
c. Maids play an important role in children's literacy development.										
d. Mothers play an important role in children's literacy development.										

1. Please say how often you do the following things:

1. Several times per day	2. Daily	3. Weekly	4. On occasion	5. Rarely	6. Never					
Adults' literacy attitudes and practices at home					1	2	3	4	5	6
a. mother reads to child?										
b. father reads to child?										
c. the maid reads to child?										
d. encourage your child's knowledge of beginning sounds (during rhymes, language games(e.g. I spy something that begins with a/f/sound) in group and one to one)?										
e. attempt to teach your child alphabet sound with pointing to the letters when reading story books?										
f. play rhyming games with your child?										
g. help your child to write words or alphabetic letters?										
h. discuss with your child about the program you watching?										
i. play with your child in games that involve literacy (e.g. pretending to cook and reading a recipe, writing a shopping list, pretending to read to the toys etc.)?										
j. engage with your child in discussion about books and other texts that promote consideration of diverse perspectives(e.g. gender)?										
k. tell or read familiar family and community stories and stories related to your culture?										
l. provide opportunities for your child to engage with stories, songs, games or books that are about cultures different to your own?										

3. What do you usually do when you playing with your child (e.g. playing football with score, computer games, pretend to set up a shop and so on)?

.....

4. What else do you do at home to improve your child's literacy skills?

.....

5. Which holidays specific to your cultural heritage does your family celebrate?

Name of holiday(s) and date(s)?

.....

6. What are the literacy resources that you child has at home (e.g. alphabetic poster, cooking menus, signs and labels, stories, puppets and theatre, felt board with figures of story characters....etc)?

.....

7. Do you have a maid at home?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If yes, please answer questions 1-5 in the following section.

Section 4: The following questions (1-5) about your maid's background, and literacy involvement with your child at home.

1. How long has this maid worked for you?

.....

2. What is her home country?

.....

3. How much time does your child spend with his/her maid per day?

.....

4. What do your maid and child spend time doing together during the day?

.....

5. Does your maid involve your child in literacy learning activities at home?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If yes, please say how often do they these activities?.....

1. Several times per day	2. Daily	3. Weekly	4. On occasion	5. Rarely	6. Never					
Maids' literacy attitudes and practices at home				1	2	3	4	5	6	
a. the maid reads to child story books?										
b. the maid sings nursery rhymes with your child?										
c. the maid involves in your child writing and drawing activities?										
d. the maid engages with your child in watching movies on TV or playing computer games ?										
e. the maid use her own language when engaging with your child?										
f. the maid involves in your child sport and cooking activities at home?										

If other member, can you please name them?

Section 5: The following questions (1-5) are about the relationship between home and kindergarten

1. Who usually communicates with your child's teacher?

Mother ☐

Father ☐

Both ☐

Maid ☐

Other member ☐

2. How do you usually communicate?

In person ☐

Email ☐

letters ☐

phone call ☐

other ☐

If other, can you please give more information.....

3. Please say how often you do the following things:

1. Several times per day	2. Daily	3. Weekly	4. On occasion	5. Rarely	6. Never
				1 2	3 4 5 6
a. How often does this communication take place?					

4. Are you satisfied with the amount and type of communication you have with the kindergarten?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Can you please explain why or why not?

.....

5. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about your child's literacy learning at home or at the kindergarten?

.....

.....

.....

"Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire. A report of the findings of the research will be made available for you at the kindergarten when the project is completed"

Appendix A.2: Consent Form for the Head of Kindergarten Organisation in Mecca

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Investigating the roles of Home and Kindergarten Literacy Environments in Supporting Saudi Children's Emergent Literacy

Sabha Allehyani

Document Version [2]; Dated [29/7/2013]

I agree to participate in the above research project and give my consent freely.

I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement, a copy of which I have retained.

I understand I can withdraw from the project at any time and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing.

I consent to allow the researcher to a) access kindergartens in my organisations in order to observe the children and teacher b) collecting children's literacy work samples c) interview teachers and d) contact the parents of children and their maids at my site to invite them to participate in this research.

I understand that my personal information will remain confidential to the researchers.

I have had the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

For further contact

Miss Sabha Allehyani	Dr. Jo Aliwood	Dr. Linda Newman
School of Education	School of Education	School of Education
University	o University of Newcastle	University of Newcastle
Newcastle	Callahan NSW 2308	Callahan NSW 2308
Callahan NSW 2308	02 4961 6603	024961 6603
KSA ph:025270585	Jo.aliwood@newcastle.edu.au	Linda.Newman@newcastle.edu.au
C3156441@uon.edu.au		

Appendix A.3: Consent Form for the Kindergarten Director

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Investigating the roles of Home and Kindergarten Literacy Environments in Supporting Saudi Children's Emergent Literacy

Sabha Allehyani

Document Version [2]; Dated [29/07/2013]

I agree to participate in the above research project and give my consent freely.

I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement, a copy of which I have retained.

I understand I can withdraw from the project at any time and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing.

I consent to allow the researcher to a) access my site in order to observe the children and teacher b) collecting children's literacy work samples c) interview teachers and d) contact the parents of children at my site to invite them to participate in this research.

I consent to allow the researcher to conduct the interviews with children's maids at the kindergarten centre in a private room that has been provided by the centre for this purpose.

I understand that my personal information will remain confidential to the researchers.

I have had the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.

Print Name: _____

Contact phone number or email address (will only be used to arrange interview):

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

For further contact

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Appendix A.4: Consent Form for the Parents/ Guardian and Child

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Linda.Newman@newcastle.edu.au



Investigating the roles of Home and Kindergarten Literacy Environments in Supporting Saudi Children's Emergent Literacy

Sabha Allehyani

Document Version [2]; Dated [29/07/2013]

I agree for me and my child to participate in the above research project and give my consent freely.

I agree for my maid to participate in the above research project and give my consent freely.

I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement, a copy of which I have retained.

I understand that I and my child can withdraw from the project at any time and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing.

I consent to a) completing a questionnaire; b) the researcher collecting and/or photographing literacy work samples from my child; c) interview my maid at the kindergarten centre; d) to include the data generated from questionnaire, interview and observations in the thesis and other publications; and e) observe my child during literacy activities in the classroom.

I understand that my personal information will remain confidential to the researchers.

I have had the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

I provide my contact phone number and email address in order to arrange the interview dates and to answer any questions you need to ask regarding this research.

“Consent form for children”

Your parents have agreed that it is ok for you to be part of this research project. By circling a face below you are showing that the project has been discussed with you and you are happy to participate in this project.



Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

(Please sign the completed consent letter and return with your child`s consent letter to Kindergarten`s office or your child`s roll call teacher)

For further contact

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Appendix B.1 Phase Two (Case studies) materials

B. 1.1 Interview Protocol-Semi-structure interview for maids

Associate Professor Linda Newman
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Project: “Investigating the roles of Home literacy and the Kindergarten literacy environments in supporting Saudi children emergent literacy”

Time: -----

Date: -----

Place: -----

Interviewer: -----

Interviewee: -----

Position of interviewee: -----

Projects description and aims: This research is done to investigate children’s and parents home literacy practices and the kindergarten environment in how it support children literacy skills. The data of this interview will collect to use for the purpose of the study. Your identity will not be released and you have a right to withdraw from the study any time you want. This interview will be conducted after you sign the consent form. {*Turn on the tape recorder to test it*}

Questions:

1. Tell me about your working background, where are you from?
2. What languages do you speak?
3. What is your educational level?
4. Have you received any training or do you have any experience in childcare before you became a domestic employee? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Can you please elaborate?
5. How long have you worked here in this house?
6. How many hours do you work daily?
7. Do you usually use your own language to teach the child some letters, words, sing songs, telling a story? Can you please elaborate on this?
8. Do parents encourage you to teach their child your own language?
9. Does the child ask you to read or write for his/her in your own language?
10. How often you use your own language to teach the child?

11. Do you attempt to learn the child's language (Arabic), and how did you learn?
12. Do parents encourage you to learn their own language by providing you with Arabic resources, or talk to you in Arabic?
13. What are the other kinds of activities other than literacy, which you usually engage in with children during the weekend?
14. Are you involved with children in their cultural activities and celebrations at home?
Can you give me an example?
15. Is there is anything that you want me to ask you or there is anything that you want to add?

“Thank you for your time”

Signature

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B.1.2 Interview Protocol-Semi-structured interview with teachers

Project: “Investigating the roles of home literacy and the kindergarten environments in supporting Saudi children’s emergent literacy”

Time:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of interviewee:

Project’s description and aims: This research is done to investigate children’s and parents home literacy practices and also the kindergarten environment to determine how it will support children’s literacy skills. The data collected during this interview will be used for the purpose of the study only. Your identity will not be released and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time you desire. This interview will be conducted after you sign the consent form. {Turn on the tape recorder to test it}

Questions:

Section 1: The following questions relate to your teaching background

1. Tell me about your teaching background: how long have you been teaching?
2. How long have you been working in this child care centre?
3. What educational qualifications do you have?
4. Have you received any specific training or attended workshops which deal with teaching children literacy?

Can you please elaborate?

Section 2: The following questions are concerned with investigating the teacher’s literacy practices and teaching pedagogies in the classroom

4. From your perspective as an early childhood educator, what do you think literacy is?
5. In which areas of the classroom do you integrate literacy? (For instance block area, library area, computer area or home area).
6. Do you think the way in which you learned in the past has influenced how you believe literacy should be taught and your teaching strategies today? If yes, how has it shaped your way of teaching?
7. What are your teaching pedagogies which assist children’s literacy learning? How do you teach children literacy?

8. Is there is any specific theory which has influenced you? If yes, what is this theory and how has it influenced your way of teaching literacy?
9. How do you integrate literacy outside the classroom? (For instance in the playground.)
10. What is your teaching philosophy?
11. What is your personal belief about improving how children can learn literacy?
12. How do you plan literacy activity in daily program?

Section 3: The following questions are concerned with the kind of relationships teachers have with children's parents and their beliefs regarding the parents roles and contributions in assisting their children's literacy learning.

13. What is the relationship between home and childcare centre?
14. In which way do you usually communicate with children`s parents?
15. How often do you communicate with them?
16. Do you communicate differently with fathers and mothers? Why?
17. Which other family member do you communicate with?
18. Tell me what do you think about mother and father roles in children literacy development?
19. Do you think the mother plays a more important role in their children`s literacy learning compared to the role of the father?
20. How do you think parent`s educational levels influence children literacy learning? Can you please give me an example?
21. As a teacher, do you think it is important that you understand the background of your children in the classroom? And how do you think this helps their literacy learning?
22. How do you explore your children`s funds of knowledge at their homes?
23. Do you consider children`s funds of knowledge when you structure or plan literacy activities in the classroom?
24. As a qualified teacher and carer, do you think that maids have an impact on young children`s literacy practices at home? Why?
25. How do you assist children with different abilities in your class?
26. Do you have special workshops or program to encourage parents in terms of fostering their children's literacy learning?

Section 4: The following questions are investigating the teacher`s personal literacy habits at home and their perspective towards literacy

27. Do you usually read at home? If yes, what kind of books or other material do you like to read? (For instance, newspaper).
28. What other literacy activities do you like to do at home?
29. What do you think needs to be changed to improve children`s literacy skills?(For instance, in the curriculum, classroom structure and so on).
30. What are your strengths and challenges in teaching literacy?
31. Is there any other question you think I should ask you? Or is there anything you wish to add?

“Thank you for your time”

Signature

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Appendix B.2.1 Consent Form for the Teacher

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Investigating the roles of Home and Kindergarten Literacy Environments in Supporting Saudi Children's Emergent Literacy

Sabha Allehyani

Document Version [2]; Dated [29/07/2013]

I agree to participate in the above research project and give my consent freely.

I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement, a copy of which I have retained.

I understand I can withdraw from the project at any time and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing.

I consent to allow the researcher to a) conduct an interview; b) to include the data generated from this interview in the thesis and other publications; c) collecting or photographing children's work samples and d) observe my teaching and interactions with the participating children during literacy activities in the classroom.

I understand that my personal information will remain confidential to the researchers.

I have had the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

I provide my contact phone number and email address in order to arrange the interview dates and to answer any questions you need to ask regarding this research.

For further contact

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B.2.2: Consent Form for the Research Project (maid)

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Investigating the roles of Home and Kindergarten Literacy Environments in Supporting Saudi Children Emergent Literacy Sabha Allehyani Document Version [2]; Dated [29/07/2013]

I agree to participate in the above research project and give my consent freely.

I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement, a copy of which I have retained.

I understand I can withdraw from the project at any time and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing.

I consent to allow the researcher a) to conduct an interview; b) to audio record the interview; and c) to include the data generated from this interview in the thesis and other publications.

I understand that my personal information will remain confidential to the researchers.

I have had the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

I provide my contact phone number and email address in order to arrange the interview dates and to answer any questions you need to ask regarding this research.

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Appendix B.3: Open-Ended Observation Checklist of Children's Literacy Skills in the Classroom (3)

Investigating the roles of Home literacy and the Kindergarten literacy environments in supporting Saudi children emergent literacy
Document Version [2]; Dated [29/07/2013]

Child's name: Gasem **Age:** 5 years and a half **Date:** 2/23 **Time:** 09.30am
Observer's role: Observation **Length of Observation:** (30) minutes

Context: Free play area – ART (free drawing on the oil painting board).

Child's literacy background: Gasem loves playing with blocks. He likes reading and listening to stories, singing the Alphabet letters songs and playing letters games in both languages, Arabic and English. Gasem also likes to watch National Geography programs and Cartoon Network. His mother is an English language teacher in Mecca. She lived with her husband and their two sons, Gasem and his older brother, in America for one year. Gasem's mother is from an educated family and she loves reading, travelling and she is very open to learning about various cultures. The family's maid is Filipino and she speaks English with all members of the family. Sometimes, she also uses her own language, Tagalog.

Indicator 1: Language	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Participates in interactions with others	✓		Interacts with his friend who is drawing on the other side of the board, and the Researcher.
Initiates interactions with others	✓		
Hears and responds to other in small groups	✓		
Understands others when spoken to	✓		
Follows verbal directions	✓		
Ask different kinds of questions: e.g. Categorisation (Who and What) e.g. actions (What and Where) e.g. Social and physical explanations (Why & How).	✓		The teacher asks Gasem : What are you drawing? Gasem answers: I am drawing mum and myself on the beach. Teacher: and what is this circle? Gasem: This is the sun and this is the shore (pointing at the line below the sea).
Identifies familiar sounds		✓	Not in this experience.
Differentiates similar sounds		✓	Not in this experience.
Relates some sounds with letters	✓		Yes, e.g. Sun (s) – Beach (ch).
Uses language for a range of functions e.g. labelling, describing, explaining, predicting, imagining, analysing, synthesising	✓		He uses language to describe his drawing, analyse it and explain it.
Has appropriate vocabulary for level of maturity and experiences	✓		

Pronounces words conventionally	✓		Yes, like: Sun, Beach, sea.
Uses varied syntactic structures	✓		Verbal phrases not written, such as: This is me with my mother at the beach. This is a picture of the sun.
Can be understood by others	✓		
<p>Analysis</p> <p>In this activity, Gasem has chosen to draw on the oil painting board outside the scope of the class, with his friend and under the supervision of the Researcher. Gasem first drew wide close lines in blue in the middle of the page, and then the Researcher asked him: “What is this shape Gasem ?” He said: “A sea”. Then he drew a vertical line and a horizontal line, a circle representing the head, two straight lines representing the legs and he did the same thing another time saying that his drawing represents him and his mother at the beach. Then, he drew a circle describing it as the Sun; a line below the sea saying that it is the beach. Gasem was able to build on his previous experience as he mentioned that he went to the beach with his family in Jeddah city, so his artwork was a mixture of his imagination, analysis and his previous experience. He was able to describe the content of his drawing using verbal terms such as Sun, Beach that represent the letters “S”, “B”, “Ch”, “M” (me, Gasem) and “M” for my mother.</p> <p>Gasem used the blue colour for the sea and light brown for the sandy beach, persons (himself and his mother) and the sun.</p>			

Indicator 2: Literacy attitudes	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Initiates looking at or reading images and texts e.g. books, magazines, sings, toy catalogues, software in Arabic or other languages		✓	Not in this experience. (He is able to pronounce the letters in both languages, Arabic and English).
Utilises literacy resources in dramatic play context	✓		
Integrates literacy within play experiences	✓		
Asks to be read to in Arabic or other languages		✓	Has previously been observed. In the classroom, he reads words in the Library area, in Arabic and English. Also, as it was mentioned in the parents’ questionnaire and from the interview held with the maid, at home, he asks his mother and the maid to read to him some words in Arabic and English.
Explores the illustrations whilst being read to		✓	
Responds with questions and comments to texts read to him.		✓	
Initiates drawing, reading etc. for own purposes	✓		He draws for own purposes.
Asks about letters in own name		✓	Has previously been observed.

Asks about purpose of reading and writing		✓	Has previously been observed.
Draws, reads, writes for own purposes	✓		He draws.
Analysis As we have mentioned, this experience involved free drawing for Gasems' own purposes, from a real home experience. Gasem was inspired by his previous experience when he visited the beach in Jeddah with his family, during the summer. He mentioned this visit while he was drawing. The experience did not involve any written text or reading, but a description and a verbal interpretation of the drawing.			

Indicator 3: Making meaning	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Retells, reads or writes stories from familiar narrative images and texts e.g. books, videos, movies and interactive books		✓	Not in this experience.
Retells, reads or writes information from familiar factual images and texts e.g. books, videos and web sites		✓	Not in this experience.
Is familiar with using various forms of technology e.g. radio, cassettes, phones and Games Boys		✓	Not in the classroom but only in the home environment as mentioned by parents in the questionnaire and by the maid during the interview. For example, educational games downloaded on the iPad such as Letters, Mind craft, watching CDs of cartoons, Arabic and English songs on TV).
Retells, reads or writes narratives including story structure elements: Setting; Theme; Plot episodes; Resolution		✓	
Responds to narrative or factual text after reading, listening or viewing with literal comments or questions		✓	Not in this experience.
Responds to narrative or factual text after reading, listening or viewing with interpretive comments or questions		✓	
Responds to narrative or factual text after reading, listening or viewing with critical comments or questions		✓	
Accesses and explores the Internet		✓	
Searches the net for information		✓	Just at home. He uses the internet to search new games in

			Arabic and English and to watch cartoons on Cartoon Network and on MBC3 [an Arabic Children TV channel].
Understands that texts have a range of purposes: Selling products Attracting attention Promoting a world view		✓	Not in this experience.
Analysis As previously mentioned.			

Indicator 4: Concepts about print and symbols	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Recognises symbols in the environment e.g. stop signs, traffic lights, wheel chair access, no smoking	✓		Such as the designated rubbish bin, the symbol for male and female toilets, Instructions and steps for hand washing with soap and water after using the toilet, as outlined in the toilet; Traffic signs and stop sign in the Building Area.
Reads environmental print e.g. McDonalds or Coke	✓		As previously mentioned, in the home environment.
Reads own name	✓		When the teacher called out the names of students who are present or absent at the beginning of the session, using student names cards.
Knows that oral language can be written down and then read	✓		
Knows Arabic print is read from right to left	✓		
Aware of print direction in Arabic	✓		
Know What a letter is and can point one out on a page	✓		
Knows what a word is or what a character represents and can point one out on a printed page		✓	
Recognize some words by sight	✓		
Names and identifies rhyming words	✓		
Concepts about books		✓	
Knows that books are for reading		✓	
Identifies the front, back, top of, and bottom of a book and turns pages appropriate for Arabic or home language		✓	

Differentiate between the text and illustrations		✓	
Recognises that illustrations on a page are related to what the print says		✓	Yes. The link between the illustrations on the page and the printed words (the picture of the paint, paint materials, pictures of tools).
Knows where to begin reading in appropriate place for home language	✓		Has previously been observed. Through writing and reading his name.
Knows what a title is		✓	
Knows what an author is		✓	
Knows what an illustrator is		✓	
Analysis The experience did not include reading a story with written texts that can read through the illustrations. Rather, it involved free drawing.			

Indicator 5: Writing	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Draws for own purposes	✓		
Write for own purposes		✓	
Explores with writing materials (pens, pencils, crayons, chalk, textas, brushes, paints, mouse, computers)	✓		Uses pens, crayons and pencils.
Dictates texts (sentences, stories, or words) he or she wants written down.		✓	
Copies letters, words and symbols.		✓	
Initiate writing to convey meaning, regardless of writing focus.		✓	
Writes his or her name	✓		
Collaborates with others in writing experience		✓	
Check (✓) the focus of the child's writing: -Draws for writing and drawing <input type="checkbox"/> ✓ -Differentiates between writing and drawing <input type="checkbox"/> ✓ -Writes with scribble patterns <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with letter-like forms <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with letters in a random fashion <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with invented spelling <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with invented and conventional spelling <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with conventional spelling <input type="checkbox"/> ✓	✓		
Uses writing implements with control		✓	
Writes from right to left in Arabic (may be different for different language group)		✓	

Manipulates computer indiscriminately		✓	
Plays games on computer purposefully		✓	
Uses computer for word processing, searching		✓	
Analysis There is no computer in the classroom.			

Observation checklist of assessing children's literacy skills in the classroom (10)

Child's name: Gasem **Age:** 5 years and a half **Date:** 2/23 **Time:** 08.30am

Observer's role: Observation **Length of Observation:** (30) minutes

Context: LAST MEETING – Classification Game (classification of real pictures and vegetables in boxes holding categorization of vegetables and their types: Root, leafy or fruit vegetables).

Indicator 1: Language	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Participates in interactions with others	✓		Interaction with the teacher and his peers. Revision of the Last Meeting topic: Classification of Vegetables.
Initiates interactions with others	✓		Initiates interactions with the teacher and his peers in the Classification game.
Hears and responds to other in small groups	✓		
Understands others when spoken to	✓		
Follows verbal directions	✓		He listens to the teacher's directions about how to enter the Last Meeting Area quietly, how to sit in a circle, how to raise the hand when wanting to speak, listening carefully to the game's rules and turn waiting.
Ask different kinds of questions: e.g. Categorisation (Who and What) e.g. actions (What and Where) e.g. Social and physical explanations (Why & How).	✓		The teacher tells Gasem who had the first turn in the game: "the cards are pictures and names of tomatoes, carrots, cucumber, parsley, okra, lettuce, mint, onions and potatoes". Gasem took the card that depicts Parsley. The teacher asks: To which group does Parsley belong? Gasem said: to the leafy vegetables. He then put the card in the box labelled "leafy vegetables". Gasem then took the card that has Potato. The teacher asks: To which group does Potato belong? Gasem said: to the root vegetables, and put the card in the box labelled "root vegetables". He then took the card that depicts Okra. The teacher asks: To which group does okra belong? Gasem said: to the fruit vegetables and put the card in the box labelled "fruit vegetables" and so on.

			Then the teacher gave him a basket of lettuce, potato, capsicum, onion, tomato, lemon, okra, mint, mouloukhia and carrot, to sort them with the help of his peers.
Identifies familiar sounds		✓	
Differentiates similar sounds		✓	
Relates some sounds with letters		✓	
Uses language for a range of functions e.g. labelling, describing, explaining, predicting, imagining, analysing, synthesising	✓		He names the pictured and labelled cards, groups them and explains the similarities and differences between them.
Has appropriate vocabulary for level of maturity and experiences	✓		
Pronounces words conventionally	✓		For example, names of vegetables: potato, sweet potato, cucumber, green beans, capsicum, onion, tomato, mint, zucchini, mouloukhia.
Uses varied syntactic structures	✓		For example: 1. Mint belongs to the Leafy group of vegetables, like the mouloukhia. 2. Potatoes and sweet potatoes belong to the root vegetables. 3. Tomatoes, green beans, and okra belong to the fruit vegetables group.
Can be understood by others	✓		
<p>Analysis</p> <p>The topic of the Last Meeting related to the Session that was about “Vegetables, classification of them, their shapes, benefits and similarities and differences between them”. Then, earlier in the session, pictures of the vegetables were displayed on the projector with their names. The Last Meeting activity also included the Classification game of the vegetables and putting their cards in labelled boxes according to their types: Root vegetables, leafy or fruit vegetables).</p> <p>The teacher prepared three boxes labelled according to the types of vegetables. Each box had a label with a type of vegetables. She also put on the box the name and picture of a vegetable as an example: For instance, The first box: (Fruit vegetables: Example picture and name of okra belongs to this group). The second box (Leafy: example: mint (picture and written name)). On the third box, (root vegetables: picture and name of potato belongs to this group). All vegetables were real. Children brought them from home with the help of their parents.</p> <p>Then, the teacher explained to the children, including Gasem, the game by applying it first herself. Then she chose Gasem to play and classify the cards with the pictures and names of vegetables according to their group. The game involved comparison, grouping, using senses by touching the vegetables and learning about their texture and comparing their thickness, benefits and textures.</p> <p>From this game, Gasem was able to classify, name, describe and compare various sorts of vegetables without the assistance of his teacher.</p>			

Indicator 2: Literacy attitudes	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Initiates looking at or reading images and texts e.g. books, magazines, sings, toy catalogues, software in Arabic or other languages	✓		Initiates looking at the cards that display the vegetables names and pictures in the Last Meeting activity.
Utilises literacy resources in dramatic play context	✓		Uses language to name vegetables according to their group, in the Matching Area.
Integrates literacy within play experiences	✓		
Asks to be read to in Arabic or other languages		✓	
Explores the illustrations whilst being read to	✓		Explores the pictures that have the names of vegetables after listening to the teacher's explanation before he starts the game.
Responds with questions and comments to texts read to him or her	✓		
Initiates drawing, reading etc. for own purposes		✓	
Asks about letters in own name		✓	
Asks about purpose of reading and writing		✓	
Draws, reads, writes for own purposes	✓		He reads.
Analysis The Observation included verbal conversations and reading the names and types of vegetables and their group in order to group them and placing them in the appropriate labelled boxes.			

Indicator 3: Making meaning	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Retells, reads or writes stories from familiar narrative images and texts e.g. books, videos, movies and interactive books		✓	
Retells, reads or writes information from familiar factual images and texts e.g. books, videos and web sites		✓	
Is familiar with using various forms of technology e.g. radio, cassettes, phones and Games Boys		✓	Not in the classroom but in the home environment.

Retells, reads or writes narratives including story structure elements: Setting; Theme; Plot episodes; Resolution	✓		According to the responses of the parents in the distributed Parents' Questionnaire. Also, from the pictures that his mother provided the Researcher with.
Responds to narrative or factual text after reading, listening or viewing with literal comments or questions		✓	According to the responses of the parents in the distributed Parents' Questionnaire. Also, from the pictures that his mother provided the Researcher with.
Responds to narrative or factual text after reading, listening or viewing with interpretive comments or questions	✓		Responds to factual text. He listened to his peers' experiences about their hygiene habits at home. According to the responses of the parents in the distributed Parents' Questionnaire. Also, from the pictures that his mother provided the Researcher with.
Responds to narrative or factual text after reading, listening or viewing with critical comments or questions		✓	At home. According to the responses of the parents in the distributed Parents' Questionnaire. Also, from the pictures that his mother provided the Researcher with.
Accesses and explores the Internet		✓	There is no computer or internet in the classroom, just at home. According to the responses of the parents in the distributed Parents' Questionnaire. Also, from the pictures that his mother provided the Researcher with.
Searches the net for information		✓	In both languages, Arabic and English, such as games, children's songs such as letters, numbers, audio stories downloaded on the iPad. According to the responses of the parents in the distributed Parents' Questionnaire. Also, from the pictures that his mother provided the Researcher with.
Understands that texts have a range of purposes: Selling products; Attracting attention; Promoting a world view		✓	
Analysis The experience did not include any narrative content.			

Indicator 4: Concepts about print and symbols	Observed (O)	Not Observed	Comments
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		(NO)	
Recognises symbols in the environment e.g. stop signs, traffic lights, wheel chair access, No smoking		✓	In the Kinder environment. Such as the designated rubbish bin, the symbol for male and female toilets, Instructions and steps for hand washing with soap and water after using the toilet, as outlined in the toilet, Emergency evacuation sign.
Reads environmental print e.g. McDonalds or Coke	✓		
Reads own name	✓		Yes. When the teacher called out the names of students who are present or absent at the beginning of the session, using student names cards.
Knows that oral language can be written down and then read	✓		Yes, in the home environment, according to the Parents' Questionnaire. In the class setting, through reading names and types of vegetables already prepared and written by the teacher.
Knows Arabic print is read from right to left	✓		Through reading names and prices of products, written on the packets.
Aware of print direction in Arabic	✓		During the attendance roll. Also, the names of the three groups of vegies.
Knows what a letter is and can point one out on a page		✓	For example: M for mint – C for carrot - S for sweet potato.
Knows what a word is or what a character represents and can point one out on a printed page		✓	
Recognises some words by sight	✓		Yes. Names of the vegetables and their group.
Names and identifies rhyming words	✓		
Concepts about books		✓	
Knows that books are for reading		✓	
Identifies the front, back, top of, and bottom of a book and turns pages appropriate for Arabic or home language		✓	
Differentiate between the text and illustrations	✓		Yes, for example: he differentiates between the word "Green beans" and the picture of it.
Recognises that illustrations on a page are related to what the print says	✓		

Knows where to begin reading in appropriate place for home language	✓		Yes. He knows how to read his name and the names of his peers in the home language, the Arabic language. Also, reading names of vegetables written on the cards.
Knows what a title is		✓	
Knows what an author is		✓	
Knows what an illustrator is		✓	
Analysis As mentioned earlier, the Last Meeting experience included written texts that the children needed to read in order to group the vegetables and place them in the appropriate labelled boxes.			

Indicator 5: Writing	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Draws for own purposes		✓	
Write for own purposes		✓	
Explores with writing materials (pens, pencils, crayons, chalk, textas, brushes, paints, mouse, computers)	✓		He explores the names and types of vegetables using the projector.
Dictates texts (sentences, stories, or words) he or she wants written down.		✓	
Copies letters, words and symbols.		✓	
Initiate writing to convey meaning, regardless of writing focus.		✓	
Writes his or her name		✓	
Collaborates with others in writing experience		✓	
Check (✓) the focus of the child's writing: -Draws for writing and drawing <input type="checkbox"/> -Differentiates between writing and drawing <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with scribble patterns <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with letter-like forms <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with letters in a random fashion <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with invented spelling <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with invented and conventional spelling <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with conventional spelling <input type="checkbox"/>		✓	
Uses writing implements with control		✓	
Writes from right to left in Arabic (may be different for different language group)		✓	
Manipulates computer indiscriminately		✓	
Plays games on computer purposefully		✓	
Uses computer for word processing, searching		✓	

Analysis

There is no computer in the classroom and the experience did not involve any writing.

Table A7.13

A7.13: Gasem's observations summary of his literacy interests, attitudes and learning progress

Indicator 1: Language	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)
Participates in interactions with others	20/20	
Initiates interactions with others	20/20	
Hears and responds to other in small groups	20/20	
Understands others when spoken to	20/20	
Follows verbal directions	20/20	
Ask different kinds of questions:	11/20	
e.g. Categorisation (who and what)		
e.g. actions (what and where)		
e.g. Social and physical explanations (why and how)		
Identifies familiar sounds	9/20	
Differentiates similar sounds	13/20	
Relates some sounds with letters	15/20	
Uses language for a range of functions e.g. labelling, describing, explaining, predicting, imagining, analysing, synthesising	20/20	
Has appropriate vocabulary for level of maturity and experiences	18/20	
Pronounces words conventionally	20/20	
Uses varied syntactic structures	20/20	
Can be understood by others	19/20	
Indicator 2: Literacy attitudes	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)
Initiates looking at or reading images and texts, e.g. books, magazines, signs, toy catalogues, in Arabic or other languages	11/20	
Utilises literacy resources in dramatic play context	19/20	
Integrates literacy within play experiences	19/20	
Asks to be read to in Arabic or other languages	8/20	
Explores the illustrations while being read to	14/20	
Responds with questions and comments to texts read to him	12/20	
Initiates drawing, reading etc. for own purposes	16/20	
Asks about letters in own name	16/20	
Asks about purpose of reading and writing	4/20	
Draws, reads, writes for own purposes	12/20	
Indicator 3: Making meaning	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)

Retells, reads, or writes stories from familiar narrative images and texts, e.g. books, videos, movies, and interactive books	7/20	
Retells, reads, or writes information from familiar factual images and texts, e.g. books, videos, and websites		20/20
Is familiar with using various forms of technology, e.g. radio, cassettes, phones, and GameBoys		20/20
Retells, reads, or writes narratives, including story structure elements: setting, theme, plot episodes, resolution	13/20	
Responds to narrative or factual text after reading, listening, or viewing with literal comments or questions	14/20	
Responds to narrative or factual text after reading, listening, or viewing with interpretive comments or questions	12/20	
Responds to narrative or factual text after reading, listening, or viewing with critical comments or questions	8/20	
Accesses and explores the Internet		20/20
Searches the net for information		20/20
Understands that texts have a range of purposes: selling products, attracting attention, promoting a world view	11/20	

Indicator 4: Concepts about print and symbols	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)
Recognises symbols in the environment, e.g. stop signs, traffic lights, wheelchair access, no smoking	16/20	
Reads environmental print, e.g. McDonalds or Coke	13/20	
Reads own name	15/20	
Knows that oral language can be written down and then read	13/20	
Knows Arabic print is read from right to left	14/20	
Aware of print direction in Arabic	16/20	
Knows what a letter is and can point one out on a page	11/20	
Knows what a word is or what a character represents and can point one out on a printed page	7/20	
Recognise some words by sight	13/20	
Names and identifies rhyming words	15/20	
Concepts about books	3/20	
Knows that books are for reading	15/20	
Identifies the front, back, top of, and bottom of a book and turns pages appropriate for Arabic or home language	16/20	
Differentiate between the text and illustrations	17/20	
Recognises that illustrations on a page are related to what the print says	16/20	
Knows where to begin reading in appropriate place for home language	15/20	
Knows what a title is	15/20	
Knows what an author is	13/20	
Knows what an illustrator is	8/20	

Indicator 5: Writing	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)
Draws for own purposes	11/20	
Write for own purposes	4/20	

Explores with writing materials (pens, pencils, crayons, chalk, textas, brushes, paints, mouse, computers)	20/20	
Dictates texts (sentences, stories, or words) he or she wants written down.	9/20	
Copies letters, words and symbols.	16/20	
Initiate writing to convey meaning, regardless of writing focus.	6/20	
Writes his or her name	15/20	
Collaborates with others in writing experience	14/20	
Check(✓) the focus of the child's writing:	7/20	
Draws for writing and drawing <input type="checkbox"/>		
Differentiates between writing and drawing <input type="checkbox"/>		
Writes with scribble patterns <input type="checkbox"/>		
Writes with letter-like forms <input type="checkbox"/>		
Writes with letters in a random fashion <input type="checkbox"/>		
Writes with invented spelling <input type="checkbox"/>		
Writes with invented and conventional spelling <input type="checkbox"/>		
Writes with conventional spelling <input type="checkbox"/>		
Uses writing implements with control	13/20	
Writes form right to left in Arabic	5/20	
Manipulates computer indiscriminately		20/20
Plays games on computer purposefully		20/20
Uses computer for word processing, searching		20/20

Open-ended Observation checklist of children's literacy skills in the classroom (15)

Investigating the roles of Home literacy and the Kindergarten literacy environments in supporting Saudi children emergent literacy

Document Version [2]; Dated [29/07/2013]

Child's name: Kareem **Age:** 5 years **Date:** 4/5 **Time:** 09.00am

Observer's role: Observer **Length of Observation:** (30) minutes

Context: Free play area – Planning (Writing the word “*Malmas*” [Meaning texture in English]).

Indicator 1: Language	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Participates in interactions with others	✓		
Initiates interactions with others	✓		
Hears and responds to other in small groups	✓		
Understands others when spoken to	✓		
Follows verbal directions	✓		
Ask different kinds of questions: e.g. Categorisation (Who and What) e.g. actions (What doing and Where) e.g. Social and physical explanations (Why & How).		✓	
Identifies familiar sounds		✓	
Differentiates similar sounds		✓	
Relates some sounds with letters	✓		The sound of the Arabic word “ <i>malmas</i> ”
Uses language for a range of functions e.g. labelling, describing, explaining, predicting, imagining, analysing, synthesising	✓		The sound of the Arabic word “ <i>malmas</i> ”
Has appropriate vocabulary for level of maturity and experiences	✓		
Pronounces words conventionally	✓		<i>Al Masmak</i> , Flag
Uses varied syntactic structures	✓		The green Saudi flag.
Can be understood by others	✓		
Analysis Kareem was able to write the word “ <i>malmas</i> ملمس” correctly after many attempts, as he found it a challenging word because the letters are all connected together and not separate. <i>[In the Arabic language writing, the shape of Alphabet letters change depending on their position in the word]</i>			

Indicator 2: Literacy attitudes	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Initiates looking at or reading images and texts e.g. books, magazines, sings, toy catalogues, software in Arabic or other languages		✓	
Utilises literacy resources in dramatic play context	✓		
Integrates literacy within play experiences	✓		
Asks to be read to in Arabic or other languages		✓	
Explores the illustrations whilst being read to		✓	
Responds with questions and comments to texts read to him		✓	
Initiates drawing, reading etc. for own purposes	✓		Drawing for own purposes (He drew a car).
Asks about letters in own name		✓	
Asks about purpose of reading and writing	✓		
Draws, reads, writes for own purposes		✓	
Analysis As we have already mentioned, Kareem's writing of his name and of some words relevant to the Theme has become better. Kareem also has become more interactive with his teacher and classmates, after attending the kinder regularly.			

Indicator 3: Making meaning	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Retells, reads or writes stories from familiar narrative images and texts e.g. books, videos, movies and interactive books		✓	
Retells, reads or writes information from familiar factual images and texts e.g. books, videos and web sites		✓	
Is familiar with using various forms of technology e.g. radio, cassettes, phones		✓	Not in the classroom but in the home environment (computer

and Games Boys			and iPad).
Retells, reads or writes narratives including story structure elements: Setting; Theme; Plot episodes; Resolution		✓	Not in this experience.
Responds to narrative or factual text after reading, listening or viewing with literal comments or questions		✓	
Responds to narrative or factual text after reading, listening or viewing with interpretive comments or questions		✓	
Responds to narrative or factual text after reading, listening or viewing with critical comments or questions		✓	
Accesses and explores the Internet		✓	There is no computer or internet in the classroom, just at home
Searches the net for information	✓		
Understands that texts have a range of purposes: Selling products; Attracting attention; Promoting a world view	✓		
Analysis This experience did not include a narrative context, but writing the Arabic word “ <i>malmas</i> ” and spelling it correctly.			

Indicator 4: Concepts about print and symbols	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Recognises symbols in the environment e.g. stop signs, traffic lights, wheel chair access, no smoking		✓	In the Kinder environment, such as the designated rubbish bin, the symbol for male and female toilets, Instructions and steps for hand washing with soap and water after using the toilet, as outlined in the toilet. In addition to traffic signs, Stop sign, Works sign, Hazards sign and Parking sign.
Reads environmental print e.g. McDonalds or Coke		✓	As previously mentioned, in the home environment.

Reads own name		✓	When the teacher called out the names of students who are present or absent at the beginning of the session, using student names cards. Not in this experience.
Knows that oral language can be written down and then read		✓	Through reading the words given by the children on the whiteboard, but not in this experience.
Knows Arabic print is read from right to left		✓	Through spelling the words given by the children and also those written on the whiteboard. In the Planning and Matching areas, he was able to recognise the letters and pronounce them correctly. He was also able to match the names to the body parts in the Matching area, but not in this experience.
Aware of print direction in Arabic		✓	He was able to recognise the letters and pronounce them correctly.
Knows what a letter is and can point one out on a page		✓	
Knows what a word is or what a character represents and can point one out on a printed page		✓	Not in this experience. After the session, in the religious teaching of Arabic vowels applied to the Quran, Kareem was able to learn the vowels and the letter sounds, especially after the first and second remarks given to him.
Recognises some words by sight		✓	Not in this experience, but he recognises the human body parts.
Names and identifies rhyming words		✓	Not in this experience.
Concepts about books		✓	
Knows that books are for reading		✓	
Identifies the front, back, top of, and bottom of a book and turns pages appropriate for Arabic or home language		✓	
Differentiate between the text and illustrations		✓	
Recognises that illustrations on a page are related to what the print		✓	

says			
Knows where to begin reading in appropriate place for home language		✓	
Knows what a title is		✓	
Knows what an author is		✓	
Knows what an illustrator is		✓	
Analysis All experiences in this indicator (Language and printed symbols Concepts) <u>have been observed previously</u> , and there is a significant progress in Kareem's reading; for example, he reads and makes the connection between the body parts and their names.			

Indicator 5: Writing	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Draws for own purposes		✓	
Write for own purposes	✓		He writes in this experience but not for own purposes.
Explores with writing materials (pens, pencils, crayons, chalk, textas, brushes, paints, mouse, computers)	✓		Has been previously observed (Textas and Whiteboard).
Dictates texts (sentences, stories, or words) he or she wants written down.		✓	
Copies letters, words and symbols.		✓	
Initiate writing to convey meaning, regardless of writing focus.		✓	
Writes his or her name	✓		He writes his name on the Writing activity.
Collaborates with others in writing experience		✓	
Check(✓) the focus of the child's writing: -Draws for writing and drawing <input type="checkbox"/> ✓ -Differentiates between writing and drawing <input type="checkbox"/> ✓ -Writes with scribble patterns <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with letter-like forms <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with letters in a random fashion <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with invented spelling <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with invented and conventional spelling <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with conventional spelling <input type="checkbox"/> ✓	✓		
Uses writing implements with control	✓		
Writes form right to left in Arabic (may be different for different language group)	✓		

Manipulates computer indiscriminately		✓	
Plays games on computer purposefully		✓	As he mentioned and as mentioned by his parent, he is able to hold the mouse and use it to search for things that he likes such as games, and he downloads them.
Uses computer for word processing, searching	✓		Has been previously observed. For Searching.
<p>Analysis</p> <p>There is no computer in the classroom, just at home. Kareem uses his iPad where his favourite games are downloaded, such as letters, numbers and cars.</p>			

Open-Ended Observation Checklist of Children's Literacy Skills in the Classroom (9)

Child's name: Kareem **Age:** 5 years and a half **Date:** 25/3 **Time:** 09.00am

Observer's role: Observer

Length of Observation: (30) minutes

Context: Free play area – Family Life (Pretending, make believe play in “My Country” unit).

Child's literacy background: Kareem loves cars. He knows the Alphabet letters, their sounds and their pronunciation. He likes to play games that are downloaded on his iPad, such as games about letters and numbers. Kareem searches the Internet and downloads new games by himself. Kareem is able to write some simple words with the assistance of the classroom teacher.

Indicator 1: Language	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Participates in interactions with others	✓		This experience involved make- believe and role play about our ancestors (their traditional costumes, equipment or appliances used at home such as the lantern on kerosene, the fan, the old broom, etc...).
Initiates interactions with others	✓		
Hears and responds to other in small groups	✓		
Understands others when spoken to	✓		
Follows verbal directions	✓		
Ask different kinds of questions: e.g. Categorisation (Who and What) e.g. actions (What doing and Where) e.g. Social and physical explanations (Why & How).		✓	
Identifies familiar sounds	✓		He interacted with his friends in the area by playing the role of traditional Bedouins, their costumes and old way of life.
Differentiates similar sounds		✓	
Relates some sounds with letters		✓	
Uses language for a range of functions e.g. labelling, describing, explaining, predicting, imagining, analysing, synthesising	✓		Such as pouring Arabic coffee and cleaning the house.
Has appropriate vocabulary for level of maturity and experiences	✓		
Pronounces words conventionally	✓		For example: Station, traffic light, homes, railway, cars, etc...
Uses varied syntactic structures	✓		For example: I drink coffee.

Can be understood by others	✓		
<p>Analysis</p> <p>In the Family Life area, the teacher designed the site of <i>Masmak</i>, a landmark in Saudi Arabia's history, depicting the war won by King Abdulaziz to conquer and unite Riyadh. Nowadays, it's become a Museum representing Saudi heritage in the city of Riyadh. Kareem played the role of a Bedouin man wearing his head cover and sitting around to have Arabic coffee with his friends who also put on traditional clothes (for example, the girls put on long Bedouin embroidered Abaya). They prepared the coffee and offered. They swept the house with a manual broom, cleaned it up while the boys were putting on traditional costumes, then they sat to share the coffee and they had conversations using the Bedouin accent.</p>			

Indicator 2: Literacy attitudes	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Initiates looking at or reading images and texts e.g. books, magazines, sings, toy catalogues, software in Arabic or other languages		✓	Not in this experience.
Utilises literacy resources in dramatic play context	✓		
Integrates literacy within play experiences	✓		
Asks to be read to in Arabic or other languages		✓	
Explores the illustrations whilst being read to		✓	
Responds with questions and comments to texts read to him		✓	
Initiates drawing, reading etc. for own purposes		✓	
Asks about letters in own name		✓	At this stage, he is able to recognise very easily the letters in his own name.
Asks about purpose of reading and writing		✓	
Draws, reads, writes for own purposes		✓	
<p>Analysis</p> <p>After attending regularly the kinder and at this stage, Kareem was able to write his name without assistance. Kareem drew the germs as today's concept that explains what are the germs and their different shapes. This was clear from the children's drawings using their imagination and previous experiences.</p>			

Indicator 3: Making meaning	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Retells, reads or writes stories from familiar narrative images and texts e.g. books, videos, movies and interactive books		✓	
Retells, reads or writes information from familiar factual images and texts e.g. books, videos and web sites		✓	
Is familiar with using various forms of technology e.g. radio, cassettes, phones and GameBoys		✓	
Retells, reads or writes narratives including story structure elements: Setting; Theme; Plot episodes; Resolution		✓	
Responds to narrative or factual text after reading, listening or viewing with literal comments or questions		✓	
Responds to narrative or factual text after reading, listening or viewing with interpretive comments or questions		✓	
Responds to narrative or factual text after reading, listening or viewing with critical comments or questions		✓	
Accesses and explores the Internet		✓	
Searches the net for information		✓	
Understands that texts have a range of purposes: Selling products; Attracting attention; Promoting a world view		✓	
Analysis There is no computer in the classroom. Children, including Kareem, don't have the opportunity to search the internet or play games. As the teacher has mentioned in the "My Book" theme, they just have access to a computer without internet. So, games are downloaded for them to play and learn. These include rhymes, letters and words, numbers and audio stories.			

Indicator 4: Concepts about print and symbols	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Recognises symbols in the environment e.g. stop signs, traffic lights, wheel chair access, no smoking	✓		In the Kinder environment. Such as the designated rubbish bin, the symbol for male and female toilets, Instructions and steps for hand washing with soap and water after using the toilet, as outlined in the toilet, in addition to traffic signs,

			Parking sign, hazardous area, etc...
Reads environmental print e.g. McDonalds or Coke	✓		As previously mentioned, in the home environment.
Reads own name	✓		As we have already mentioned. When the teacher called out the names of students who are present or absent at the beginning of the session, using student names cards. Names beginning with some letters, e.g. A, T, etc...
Knows that oral language can be written down and then read	✓		Through writing down the words given by the children on the whiteboard, but not in this experience.
Knows Arabic print is read from right to left	✓		Through spelling the words given by the children and also those written on the whiteboard. In the Planning area, he was able to recognise the letters and pronounce them correctly; but not in this experience.
Aware of print direction in Arabic	✓		
Know What a letter is and can point one out on a page		✓	
Knows what a word is or what a character represents and can point one out on a printed page		✓	After the session, in the religious teaching of Arabic vowels applied to the Qur'an, Kareem was able to learn the vowels and the letter sounds, especially after the first and second remarks given to him. Not in this experience.
Recognize some words by sight		✓	Yes, for example the names of body parts; but not in this experience
Names and identifies rhyming words		✓	Not in this experience
Concepts about books		✓	
Knows that books are for reading		✓	
Identifies the front, back, top of, and bottom of a book and turns pages appropriate for Arabic or home language		✓	
Differentiate between the text and illustrations	✓		

Recognises that illustrations on a page are related to what the print says	✓		
Knows where to begin reading in appropriate place for home language		✓	
Knows what a title is		✓	
Knows what an author is		✓	
Knows what an illustrator is		✓	
Analysis All experiences in this indicator (Language and printed symbols Concepts) <u>have been observed previously</u> , and there is a significant progress in Kareem's reading; for example, he reads and makes the connection between the body parts and their names.			

Indicator 5: Writing	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Draws for own purposes		✓	
Write for own purposes		✓	
Explores with writing materials (pens, pencils, crayons, chalk, textas, brushes, paints, mouse, computers)		✓	
Dictates texts (sentences, stories, or words) he or she wants written down.		✓	
Copies letters, words and symbols.		✓	
Initiate writing to convey meaning, regardless of writing focus.		✓	
Writes his or her name		✓	
Collaborates with others in writing experience		✓	
Check(✓) the focus of the child's writing: -Draws for writing and drawing <input type="checkbox"/> ✓ -Differentiates between writing and drawing <input type="checkbox"/> ✓ -Writes with scribble patterns <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with letter-like forms <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with letters in a random fashion <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with invented spelling <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with invented and conventional spelling <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with conventional spelling <input type="checkbox"/> ✓		✓	
Uses writing implements with control		✓	
Writes form right to left in Arabic (may be different for different language group)		✓	
Manipulates computer indiscriminately		✓	
Plays games on computer purposefully		✓	As he mentioned and as mentioned by his parent, he is able to hold the mouse and use it to search for things that he likes

			such as games, and he download them.
Uses computer for word processing, searching	✓		For searching. Has already been observed.

Open-ended Observation checklist of assessing children's literacy skills in the classroom (16)

Investigating the roles of Home literacy and the Kindergarten literacy environments in supporting Saudi children emergent literacy

Document Version [2]; Dated [29/07/2013]

Child's name: Kareem **Age:** 5 years and 6 months **Date:** 4/5

Time: 09.00am

Observer's role: Observer

Length of Observation: (30) minutes

Context: Free play area – Planning (Writing the word “*Watan*” [meaning: Country] in Arabic)

Child's literacy background: Child's literacy background: Kareem loves cars. He knows the Alphabet letters, their sounds and their pronunciation. He likes to play games that are downloaded on his iPad, such as games about letters and numbers. Kareem searches the internet and downloads new games by himself. Kareem is able to write some simple words with the assistance of the classroom teacher.

Indicator 1: Language	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Participates in interactions with others	✓		
Initiates interactions with others	✓		
Hears and responds to other in small groups	✓		
Understands others when spoken to	✓		
Follows verbal directions	✓		
Ask different kinds of questions: e.g. Categorisation (Who and What) e.g. actions (What doing and Where) e.g. Social and physical explanations (Why & How).		✓	
Identifies familiar sounds		✓	
Differentiates similar sounds	✓		
Relates some sounds with letters	✓		Yes. For example the sounds of the letters forming the word " <i>watan</i> ".
Uses language for a range of functions e.g. labelling, describing, explaining, predicting, imagining, analysing, synthesising	✓		Uses language to name the word: <i>watan</i> .
Has appropriate vocabulary for level of maturity and experiences	✓		
Pronounces words conventionally	✓		Watan.
Uses varied syntactic structures	✓		My country, Saudi Arabia.
Can be understood by others		✓	

Analysis

After the teacher explained the rules of the Areas at the end of the session, she explained to the children including Kareem how to solve the activities including the “word watan”. Kareem entered the area and took a pencil. The teacher asked him: “Kareem, do you know what this word is?” Kareem started thinking. Then the teacher prompted: “let’s spell the letters together”. Kareem started naming the letters then he said “it’s watan”. So, the teacher praised him. Kareem was able to write the words “malmas”, “watan” after spelling the letters, by himself and without assistance. He recognises the right sounds of the letters of the word “watan”. Then, he wrote his name by himself. Given Kareem’s absence from Kinder for a period of time, he was not able to write his name correctly but he wrote the first part of his name in the wrong direction. The teacher started training him to write his name. This is the same problem with the child Gasem, as we found that the frequent absence of children has a big impact on their writing ability.

Indicator 2: Literacy attitudes	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Initiates looking at or reading images and texts e.g. books, magazines, sings, toy catalogues, software in Arabic or other languages		✓	He initiates looking at the written text (watan) and reads it correctly.
Utilises literacy resources in dramatic play context	✓		
Integrates literacy within play experiences	✓		
Asks to be read to in Arabic or other languages	✓		In Arabic only.
Explores the illustrations whilst being read to		✓	
Responds with questions and comments to texts read to him or her	✓		
Initiates drawing, reading etc. for own purposes	✓		Reading but not for own purposes.
Asks about letters in own name		✓	
Asks about purpose of reading and writing	✓		
Draws, reads, writes for own purposes		✓	
Analysis As we have already mentioned, Kareem’s writing of his name and of some words relevant to the Theme has become better. Kareem also has become more interactive with his teacher and class mates, after attending the kinder regularly.			

Indicator 3: Making meaning	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Retells, reads or writes stories from familiar narrative images and texts e.g. books, videos, movies and interactive books		✓	Not in this experience.
Retells, reads or writes information from familiar factual images and texts e.g. books, videos and web sites		✓	Not in this experience.
Is familiar with using various forms of technology e.g. radio, cassettes, phones and Games Boys		✓	Not in the classroom but in the home environment (computer and iPad).
Retells, reads or writes narratives including story structure elements: Setting; Theme; Plot episodes; Resolution		✓	Not in this experience.
Responds to narrative or factual text after reading, listening or viewing with literal comments or questions		✓	
Responds to narrative or factual text after reading, listening or viewing with interpretive comments or questions		✓	Not in this experience.
Responds to narrative or factual text after reading, listening or viewing with critical comments or questions		✓	
Accesses and explores the Internet		✓	There is no computer or internet in the classroom, just at home.
Searches the net for information		✓	
Understands that texts have a range of purposes: Selling products; Attracting attention; Promoting a world view		✓	Not in this experience.

Indicator 4: Concepts about print and symbols	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Recognises symbols in the environment e.g. stop signs, traffic lights, wheel chair access, no smoking		✓	In the Kinder environment, such as the designated rubbish bin, the symbol for male and female toilets, Instructions and steps for hand washing with soap and water after using the toilet, as outlined in the toilet. In addition to traffic signs, Stop sign, Works sign, Hazards sign and Parking sign.

Reads environmental print e.g. McDonalds or Coke		✓	As previously mentioned, in the home environment.
Reads own name		✓	When the teacher called out the names of students who are present or absent at the beginning of the session, using student names cards. Not in this experience.
Knows that oral language can be written down and then read		✓	Through reading the words given by the children on the whiteboard, but not in this experience.
Knows Arabic print is read from right to left		✓	Through spelling the words given by the children and also those written on the whiteboard. In the Planning and Matching areas, he was able to recognise the letters and pronounce them correctly. He was also able to match the names to the body parts in the Matching area, but not in this experience.
Aware of print direction in Arabic		✓	He was able to recognise the letters and pronounce them correctly.
Knows what a letter is and can point one out on a page		✓	Not in this experience.
Knows what a word is or what a character represents and can point one out on a printed page		✓	Not in this experience. After the session, in the religious teaching of Arabic vowels applied to the Qur'an, Kareem was able to learn the vowels and the letter sounds, especially after the first and second remarks given to him.
Recognises some words by sight		✓	Not in this experience, but he recognises the human body parts and the word "watan".
Names and identifies rhyming words		✓	
Concepts about books		✓	
Knows that books are for reading		✓	
Identifies the front, back, top of, and bottom of a book and turns pages appropriate for Arabic or home language		✓	
Differentiate between the text and illustrations		✓	
Recognises that illustrations on a page are related to what the print says		✓	

Knows where to begin reading in appropriate place for home language		✓	
Knows what a title is		✓	
Knows what an author is		✓	
Knows what an illustrator is		✓	
Analysis All experiences in this indicator (Language and printed symbols Concepts) <u>have been observed previously</u> , and there is a significant progress in Kareem's reading; for example, he reads and makes the connection between the body parts and their names.			

Indicator 5: Writing	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)	Comments
Draws for own purposes		✓	
Write for own purposes	✓		He writes in this experience but not for own purposes.
Explores with writing materials (pens, pencils, crayons, chalk, textas, brushes, paints, mouse, computers)	✓		Has been previously observed (Textas, Whiteboard, pencils, crayons).
Dictates texts (sentences, stories, or words) he or she wants written down.		✓	
Copies letters, words and symbols.		✓	
Initiate writing to convey meaning, regardless of writing focus.		✓	
Writes his or her name	✓		He writes his name on the Writing activity.
Collaborates with others in writing experience	✓		
Check(✓) the focus of the child's writing: - Draws for writing and drawing <input type="checkbox"/> ✓ -Differentiates between writing and drawing <input type="checkbox"/> ✓ -Writes with scribble patterns <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with letter-like forms <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with letters in a random fashion <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with invented spelling <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with invented and conventional spelling <input type="checkbox"/> -Writes with conventional spelling <input type="checkbox"/> ✓	✓		
Uses writing implements with control	✓		
Writes form right to left in Arabic (may be different for different language group)	✓		
Manipulates computer indiscriminately		✓	

Plays games on computer purposefully		✓	As he mentioned and as mentioned by his parent, he is able to hold the mouse and use it to search for things that he likes such as games, and he downloads them.
Uses computer for word processing, searching	✓		Has been previously observed. For Searching.
Analysis There is no computer in the classroom, just at home. Kareem uses his iPad where his favourite games are downloaded, such as letters, numbers and cars.			

Table A8.12

A8.12: Kareem's observations summary of his literacy interests, attitudes, and learning progress

Indicator 1: Language	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)
Participates in interactions with others	20/20	
Initiates interactions with others	20/20	
Hears and responds to other in small groups	20/20	
Understands others when spoken to	20/20	
Follows verbal directions	20/20	
Ask different kinds of questions: e.g. Categorisation (who and what) e.g. Actions (what doing and where) e.g. Social and physical explanations (why and how).	12/20	
Identifies familiar sounds	13/20	
Differentiates similar sounds	10/20	
Relates some sounds with letters	11/20	
Uses language for a range of functions, e.g. labelling, describing, explaining, predicting, imagining, analysing, synthesising	16/20	
Has appropriate vocabulary for level of maturity and experiences	17/20	
Pronounces words conventionally	18/20	
Uses varied syntactic structures	14/20	
Can be understood by others	18/20	
Indicator 2: Literacy attitudes	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)
Initiates looking at or reading images and texts, e.g. books, magazines, signs, toy catalogues, software in Arabic or other languages	10/20	

Utilises literacy resources in dramatic play context	18/20
Integrates literacy within play experiences	18/20
Asks to be read to in Arabic or other languages	9/20
Explores the illustrations while being read to	6/20
Responds with questions and comments to texts read to him	8/20
Initiates drawing, reading etc. for own purposes	12/20
Asks about letters in own name	14/20
Asks about purpose of reading and writing	10/20
Draws, reads, writes for own purposes	8/20

Indicator 3: Making meaning	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)
Retells, reads, or writes stories from familiar narrative images and texts, e.g. books, videos, movies, and interactive books	7/20	
Retells, reads, or writes information from familiar factual images and texts e.g. books, videos and web sites	6/20	
Is familiar with using various forms of technology, e.g. radio, cassettes, phones and GameBoys		20/20
Retells, reads, or writes narratives, including story structure elements: setting, theme, plot episodes, resolution	6/20	
Responds to narrative or factual texts after reading, listening, or viewing with literal comments or questions	11/20	
Responds to narrative or factual texts after reading, listening, or viewing with interpretive comments or questions	7/20	
Responds to narrative or factual texts after reading, listening, or viewing with critical comments or questions	5/20	
Accesses and explores the Internet		20/20
Searches the net for information		20/20
Understands that texts have a range of purposes: selling products, attracting attention, promoting a world view	11/20	

Indicator 4: Concepts about print and symbols	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)
Recognises symbols in the environment, e.g. stop signs, traffic lights, wheel chair access, no smoking	15/20	
Reads environmental print, e.g. McDonalds or Coke	14/20	
Reads own name	15/20	
Knows that oral language can be written down and then read	14/20	
Knows Arabic print is read from right to left	6/20	
Aware of print direction in Arabic	13/20	
Knows what a letter is and can point one out on a page	16/20	
Knows what a word is or what a character represents and can point one out on a printed page	12/20	
Recognises some words by sight	8/20	
Names and identifies rhyming words	13/20	

Concepts about books	16/20	
Knows that books are for reading	17/20	
Identifies the front, back, top of, and bottom of a book and turns pages appropriate for Arabic or home language	16/20	
Differentiates between the text and illustrations	15/20	
Recognises that illustrations on a page are related to what the print says	17/20	
Knows where to begin reading in appropriate place for home language	14/20	
Knows what a title is	16/20	
Knows what an author is	12/20	
Knows what an illustrator is	9/20	
Indicator 5: Writing	Observed (O)	Not Observed (NO)
Draws for own purposes	14/20	
Write for own purposes	8/20	
Explores with writing materials (pens, pencils, crayons, chalk, textas, brushes, paint)	20/20	
Dictates texts (sentences, stories, or words) he or she wants written down.	5/20	
Copies letters, words and symbols.	16/20	
Initiate writing to convey meaning, regardless of writing focus.	7/20	
Writes his or her name	13/20	
Collaborates with others in writing experience	15/20	
Check (✓) the focus of the child's writing:	11/20	
-Draws for writing and drawing ☒		
-Differentiates between writing and drawing ☒		
-Writes with scribble patterns ☒		
-Writes with letter-like forms ☒		
-Writes with letters in a random fashion ☒		
-Writes with invented spelling ☒		
-Writes with invented and conventional spelling ☒		
Uses writing implements with control	11/20	
Writes form right to left in Arabic	5/20	
Manipulates computer indiscriminately		20/20
Plays games on computer purposefully		20/20
Uses computer for word processing, searching		20/20

Appendix C

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE



Notification of Expedited Approval

To Chief Investigator or Project Supervisor:	Associate Professor Linda Newman
Cc Co-investigators / Research Students:	Doctor Joanne Ailwood Mrs Sabha Hakim R Allehyani
Re Protocol:	Investigating the roles of home literacy and kindergarten literacy environments in supporting Saudi children's emergent literacy
Date:	08-Aug-2013
Reference No:	H-2013-0197
Date of Initial Approval:	08-Aug-2013

Thank you for your **Response to Conditional Approval** submission to the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) seeking approval in relation to the above protocol.

Your submission was considered under **Expedited** review by the Chair/Deputy Chair.

I am pleased to advise that the decision on your submission is **Approved** effective **08-Aug-2013**.

In approving this protocol, the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) is of the opinion that the project complies with the provisions contained in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, 2007, and the requirements within this University relating to human research.

Approval will remain valid subject to the submission, and satisfactory assessment, of annual progress reports. *If the approval of an External HREC has been "noted" the approval period is as determined by that HREC.*

The full Committee will be asked to ratify this decision at its next scheduled meeting. A formal *Certificate of Approval* will be available upon request. Your approval number is **H-2013-0197**.

If the research requires the use of an Information Statement, ensure this number is inserted at the relevant point in the Complaints paragraph prior to distribution to potential participants You may then proceed with the research.

Conditions of Approval

This approval has been granted subject to you complying with the requirements for *Monitoring of Progress*, *Reporting of Adverse Events*, and *Variations to the Approved Protocol* as detailed below.

PLEASE NOTE:

In the case where the HREC has "noted" the approval of an External HREC, progress reports and reports of adverse events are to be submitted to the External HREC only. In the case of Variations to the approved protocol, or a Renewal of approval, you will apply to the External HREC for approval in the first instance and then Register that approval with the University's HREC.

• **Monitoring of Progress**

Other than above, the University is obliged to monitor the progress of research projects involving human participants to ensure that they are conducted according to the protocol as approved by the HREC. A progress

Appendix D

More details relating to quantitative data analysis in Chapter Six.

Summary of Factor Analysis Tests of Children's Literacy Learning

Table A6.1 shows the factor analysis summary of the child's literacy learning at home. This includes child's reading, response to print, phonemic awareness, writing and drawing, technological interests, adults' literacy attitudes, and parents' beliefs toward adults' role. More details are discussed below.

Child's reading

An examination of the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO=0.868) with significant Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2=1.249$, $P<0.05$) suggested that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix and that the sample was factorable. The results of this orthogonal rotation of the solution are shown in Table A6.3.1. When loadings less than 0.30 were excluded, the analysis yielded a two-factor solution with a simple structure (factor loadings ≥ 0.40), explaining a total of 50.572 per cent of the variance for the entire set of variables. These two factors had initial Eigenvalues over one (4.729 and 1.340) before rotation; and 3.405 and 2.663 after rotation, and each explained 39.409 per cent and 11.163 per cent of the variance (before rotation) and 28.377 per cent and 22.196 per cent after rotation, respectively.

Child's response to print

An examination of the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO=0.621) with significant Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2=165.402$, $P<0.05$) suggested that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix and that the sample was factorable. The findings clearly suggest extracting just one factor. This factor had initial Eigenvalues of 1.82, which explained 60.760 per cent of the variance. The items that loaded onto Factor A all related to parent's belief about their children's response to print, and as such the factor was labelled as "child's response to print". The overall communalities of the included variables were moderate but both KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity indicated that the set of variables are at least adequately related for factor analysis.

Child's phonemic awareness

An examination of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO=0.840) with significant Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2=1.379$, $P<0.05$) suggested that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix and that the sample was factorable. The result shows that when loadings less than 0.30 were excluded, the analysis yielded a two-factor solution with a simple structure (factor loadings $\Rightarrow 0.30$), explaining a total of 60.889 per cent of the variance for the entire set of variables. These two factors had initial Eigenvalues above one (4.374 and 1.715) before rotation, and 3.451 and 2.638 after rotation, and each explained 43.736 per cent and 17.153 per cent of the variance (before rotation) and 34.509 per cent and 26.380 per cent after rotation, respectively.

Child's writing and drawing

An examination of the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO=0.802) with significant Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2=535.379$, $P<0.05$) suggested that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix and that the sample was factorable. The findings clearly suggest extracting just one factor. This factor had initial Eigenvalues of 2.98, which explained 49.801 per cent of the variance. The items that loaded onto Factor 'A' all related to children's writing or drawing activities and show their usefulness in children's learning, and as such the factor was labelled as 'writing and drawing as a means of children's learning'. The overall communalities included variables were moderate; even though the communalities for three items/variables included on the components were lower than 0.50 of the variable's variance, mainly one with low variance of 38.4 per cent. However, both KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity indicated that the set of variables are at least adequately related for factor analysis.

Child's technological interests

An examination of the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO=0.749) with significant Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2=640.813$, $P<0.05$) suggested that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix and that the sample was factorable. The result shows that when loadings less than 0.30 were excluded, the analysis yielded a two-factor solution with a simple structure (factor loadings $\Rightarrow 0.40$), explaining a total of 60.988 per cent of the variance for the entire set of variables. These two factors had initial Eigenvalues above one (2.979 and 1.290)

before rotation, and 2.43 and 830 after rotation, and each explained 42.560 per cent and 18.428 per cent of the variance (before rotation) and 34.842% and 26.146% after rotation, respectively.

Adults' literacy attitudes

An examination of the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO=0.830) with significant Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2=1.022$, $P<0.05$) suggested that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix, and that the sample is factorable. The result shows that when loadings less than 0.30 were excluded, the analysis yielded a three-factor solution with an almost complex structure (factor loadings ≤ 0.30), explaining a total of 54.457 per cent of the variance for the entire set of variables. These three factors had initial Eigenvalues above one before and after rotation, and each explained a considerable percentage of the variance before and after rotation.

Parents' beliefs toward adults' role

An examination of the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO=0.790) with significant Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2=111.616$, $P<0.05$) suggested that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix and that the sample was factorable. The findings clearly suggested extracting just one factor. This factor had initial Eigenvalues of 2.855 that explained a total of 47.588 per cent of the variance.

Table A6.1

A6.1: Summary of Factor Analysis Tests of Child's Literacy Learning

Tests	Child's reading	Child's response to print	Child's phonemic awareness	Child's writing and drawing	Child's technological interests	Adults' literacy attitudes	Parents' beliefs toward adults' role
Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO)	0.868	0.621	0.840	0.802	0.749	0.830	0.790
Bartlett's test of sphericity	$\chi^2=1.249$, $P<0.05$	$\chi^2=165.402$, $P<0.05$	$\chi^2=1.379$, $P<0.05$	$\chi^2=535.379$, $P<0.05$	$\chi^2=640.813$, $P<0.05$	$\chi^2=1.022$, $P<0.05$	$\chi^2=111.616$, $P<0.05$
Initial Eigen		1.823		2.988			2.855

value								
Initial	Bef	4.729		4.374		2.979	4.142	
Eigen	ore	1.340		1.715		1.290	1.275	
values	rota	39.409%		43.736%		42.560%	34.517	
	tion	11.163%		17.153%		18.428%	%	
							10.625	
							%	
	Aft	3.405		3.451		2.43	2.754	
	er	2.663		2.638		830	2.181	
	rota	28.377%		34.509%		34.842%	22.949	
	tion	22.196%		26.380%		26.146%	%	
							18.178	
							%	
Total of		50.572%	60.760%	60.889%	49.801%	60.988%	54.457	47.588%
variance							%	
Number of		2	1	2	1	2	3	1
factors								

Factor analysis details related to the adults' literacy beliefs are presented in Table A6.1.1.

Table 6.1.1

A6.1.1: Factor Analysis for Adult's Literacy Beliefs

Rotated Component Matrix ^a			Communality
	Component Loadings		
	Factor A	Factor B	
S3_Q1a_Teachers_Fostering_Learning	.787		.628
S3_Q1b_Father_Role	.733		.540
S3_Q1c_Maids_Role		.918	.860
S3_Q1d_Mother_Role	.624	-.509	.648
Initial Eigenvalue	1.576	1.100	
% of Total Variance (before rotation)	39.408	27.510	
Rotated Eigenvalue	1.564	1.113	
% of Total Variance (after rotation)	39.092	27.826	
Total Variance		66.918	

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotated Component Matrix^a: Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Factor loadings/small co-efficients < 0.30 are suppressed (only item loadings >0.30 were considered relevant to factor loadings)

Factor loadings > 0.30

Descriptive analysis

Table A6.2 indicates the children's reading attitudes and interests as part of literacy practices at home in their parents' view. According to this table, the participants were asked to report the frequency of their child's reading activities/practices to explore their attitudes and interests towards literacy. Their views revealed that just more than a half of parents ($n=174$, 53.5 %) reported that their children never ($n=44$, 13.5 %) or rarely ($n=130$, 40 %) ask/indicated an interest in having a story told to or read for them. Only 20 parents noticed that such an interest or tendency was on a daily basis ($n=15$, 4.6 %) or several times a day ($n=5$, 1.5 %).

According to participants' reports, 154 parents (47.4 per cent) reported that their children pretended to read a book (such as turning pages, producing speech that is similar to the actual story in the book and so on) either on a weekly basis ($n=99$, 30.5 %) or occasionally ($n=55$, 16.9 %) while 140 parents (43.1 per cent) noted their children rarely ($n=86$, 26.5 %) or never ($n=54$, 16.6 %) pretended to read a book. Only 31 parents (9.6 per cent) reported their children maintained the pretence of reading a book, on a daily basis or several times a day. Just over one-third of participants ($n=109$, 33.5 %) noted that their children have made up stories based on the observed pictures, on a weekly basis. Only 80 parents (24.6 per cent) reported their children constructed a story based on the pictures, either on a daily basis ($n=53$, 16.3 %) or several times a day ($n=27$, 8.3 %). Around 40.3 per cent of the parents ($n=131$) reported their children stated the next line or word from a story before it was read for them either on a daily basis ($n=68$, 20.9 %) or several times a day ($n=63$, 19.4 %); followed by 111 parents (34.2 per cent) who reported this to be on a weekly basis.

Nearly one third of participants ($n=107$, 32.9 %) believed that their children have shown interest in adult reading materials, followed by 71 (21.8 per cent) and 42 (12.9 per cent), who reported their children either rarely or never have shown any interest in doing so. The number of parents who noticed their children asked for help reading words such as street signs or those written on food packages either on a daily basis or several times a day was respectively 47 (14.5 per cent) and 31 (9.5 per cent). The majority of participants ($n=192$, 57.1 %) reported that their children either never ($n=88$, 27.1 %) or rarely ($n=104$, 32.0 %) name any letters on the alphabets. Only 29 participants (8.9 %) reported this happened on a daily basis ($n=18$, 5.5 %) or several times a day ($n=11$, 3.4 %). Over one quarter of the parents ($n=85$, 26.1 %) reported that their children have asked them to spell words either on a daily basis ($n=54$, 16.6 %) or several times a day ($n=31$, 9.5 %). For 156 participants this never ($n=55$, 16.9 %) or rarely ($n=73$, 22.5 %) has happened.

A considerable number of participants ($n=156$, 48.0 %) reported that their children have either never ($n=56$, 17.2 %) or rarely ($n=100$, 30.8 %) pointed to or talked about pictures when they read stories for them. Only 37 participants (11.4 per cent) reported this happened on a daily basis ($n=25$, 7.7 %) or several times a day ($n=12$, 3.7 %). Almost 44.6 per cent ($n=145$) reported that their children have either never ($n=61$, 18.8 %) or rarely ($n=84$, 25.8 %) pointed to or asked for logos, symbols or signs when they read stories for them. Only 45 participants (16.9 %) reported this happened on a daily basis ($n=37$, 11.4 %) or several times a day ($n=18$, 5.5 %). Almost half of the parents ($n=162$, 49.8 %) reported that their children have either “never” ($n=65$, 20.0 %) or rarely ($n=97$, 29.8 %) asked questions about characters or events when they read or told stories to them or predicted the next event. The number of parents who noticed this has happened either on a daily basis or several times a day was respectively 21 (6.5 per cent) and 15 (4.6 per cent). Nearly a third of the participants ($n=100$, 30.8 %) reported that their children have collaborated with others while reading on a weekly basis; however, parents ($n=80$, 24.6 %) and ($n=44$, 13.5 %) noticed that their children rarely collaborated with others or this has never happened to them, respectively.

Table A6.2

A6.2: Participants’ Views on the Reading Attitudes and Interests of their Children’s Literacy Practices at Homes

Child’s reading attitudes and interests at home	Frequency Distribution [n, (%)]						Total n(%)
	N*	R*	OC*	W*	D*	STD*	
a. having a story told or read	44(13.5)	130(40.0)	45(13.8)	86(26.5)	15(4.6)	5(1.5)	325(100.0)
b. pretend to read a book	54(16.6)	86(26.5)	55(16.9)	99(30.5)	23(7.1)	8(2.5)	325(100.0)
c. make up a story based on the pictures	29(8.9)	56(17.2)	51(15.7)	109(33.5)	53(16.3)	27(8.3)	325(100.0)
d. fill in words or lines from a story when reading with you	20(6.2)	37(11.4)	26(8.0)	111(34.2)	68(20.9)	63(19.4)	325(100.0)
e. show interest in adult reading materials (i.e. newspaper, TV guide, magazine etc...)	42(12.9)	71(21.8)	36(11.1)	107(32.9)	41(12.6)	28(8.6)	325(100.0)
f. ask for help in reading words such as words on food packages	50(15.4)	65(20.0)	43(13.2)	89(27.4)	47(14.5)	31(9.5)	325(100.0)
g. name letters of the alphabet	88(27.1)	104(32.0)	35(10.8)	69(21.2)	18(5.5)	11(3.4)	325(100.0)
h. ask you to spell words	55(16.9)	73(22.5)	44(13.5)	68(20.9)	54(16.6)	31(9.5)	325(100.0)
i. point to or talk about pictures when you read stories	56(17.2)	100(30.8)	49(15.1)	83(25.5)	25(7.7)	12(3.7)	325(100.0)
j. point to or ask about logos, symbols or signs	61(18.8)	84(25.8)	47(14.5)	78(24.0)	37(11.4)	18(5.5)	325(100.0)
k. ask questions about characters or event when you read or tell	65(20.0)	97(29.8)	39(12.0)	88(27.1)	21(6.5)	15(4.6)	325(100.0)

stories								
I. collaborate with others in reading experience	44(13.5)	80(24.6)	44(13.5)	100(30.8)	40(12.3)	17(5.2)	325(100.0)	

Table A6.3

A6.3: Children's Access to Other Types of Reading Materials at Homes

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	238	73.2	73.2	73.2
	No	87	26.8	26.8	100.0
	Total	325	100.0	100.0	

Table A6.4

A6.4: Children's Referral to Libraries to Select Books

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	126	38.8	39.4	39.4
	No	194	59.7	60.6	100.0
	Total	320	98.5	100.0	
Missing	99	5	1.5		

Table A6.5

A6.5: The Parents' View about their Children's Arabic Script Knowledge

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	256	78.8	78.8	78.8
	No	69	21.2	21.2	100.0
	Total	325	100.0	100.0	

Table A6.6

A6.6: The Parents' Belief on Child's Response to Print

Child's Response to Print	Frequency Distribution [n, (%)]				D*	STD*	Total n(%)
	N*	R*	OC*	W*			
identify words in the environment (such as food packaging, store signs, and restaurants, etc.) in your environment by him or herself	100(30.8)	75(23.1)	43(13.2)	74(22.8)	15(4.6)	18(5.5)	325(100.0)
identify the front, back, top of, and bottom of a book and turns pages appropriately for Arabic language	130(40.0)	97(29.8)	20(6.2)	55(16.9)	15(4.6)	8(2.5)	325(100.0)

recognise that illustrations on a page are related to what the print says	102(31.4)	85(26.2)	288(8.6)	73(22.5)	27(8.3)	10(3.1)	325(100.0)
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Table A6.7 indicates the child's language and phonemics awareness in their parents' view. In doing so, participants were asked to report the frequency of their children's language and phonetic activities towards their awareness. Accordingly, 140 participants (43.07 per cent) reported that their children produce rhymes by themselves daily ($n=71$, 21.8 %) or several times a day ($n=69$, 21.2 %); yet a considerable number of participants reported this to be on a weekly basis and even less frequent. Less than half of the participants ($n=154$, 47.4 %) reported their children commented on rhyming words either on either a daily basis ($n=78$, 24.0 %) or several times a day ($n=76$, 23.4 %). For 91 participants (28.0 %), the extent to which their children commented on rhyming words was occasionally.

Many participants ($n=182$, 56.0 %) reported that their children are able to recognise rhymes, sounds or word patterns either on a daily basis ($n=86$, 26.5 %) or several times a day ($n=96$, 29.5 %); followed by 73 parents (22.5 per cent) who noticed this to be occasionally. Around 160 participants (29.2 %) reported their children have frequently repeated clapped patterns either on a daily basis ($n=78$, 24.0 %) or several times a day ($n=82$, 25.2 %); followed by 82 parents (26.2 %) who noticed this to be on an occasional basis. The majority of parents ($n=254$, 78.2 %) noted their children have related some sounds with letters, either on a daily basis ($n=91$, 28.0 %) or several times a day ($n=163$, 50.2 %). Almost three quarters of the participants ($n=244$, 75.1 %) reported their children have sung simple songs, either on a daily basis ($n=98$, 30.2 %) or several times a day ($n=146$, 44.9 %).

The vast majority of the participants ($n=257$, 79.4 %) reported their children have followed their or other family member/relatives' verbal directions, either on a daily basis ($n=85$, 26.2 %) or several times a day ($n=173$, 53.2 %). Slightly less than three quarters of the participants ($n=239$, 73.5 %) noted their children have been involved in conversations with others, either on a daily basis ($n=79$, 24.3 %) or several times a day ($n=160$, 49.2 %). Many participants ($n=198$, 60.9 %) noted their children have initiated interactions with others, either on a daily basis ($n=82$, 25.2 %) or several times a day ($n=116$, 35.7 %); followed by 61 participants (18.8 %) who noticed this has occasionally happened. Almost two-thirds of the participants ($n=204$, 62.7 %) reported that their children have used language for a range of activities including, but not limited to, labelling, describing, explaining, predicting, imagining, analysing, and synthesising; either on a daily basis ($n=84$, 25.8 %) or several times a day

($n=120$, 36.9 %); followed by 62 participants (19.1 per cent) who noticed this has infrequently occurred to them.

Table A6.7

A.6.7: The Parents' View about Child's Language and Phonemics Awareness

Child's language and phonemics activities	Frequency Distribution [n, (%)]						Total n(%)
	N*	R*	OC*	W*	D*	STD*	
a. produce rhyming	21(6.5)	43(13.2)	95(29.2)	26(8.0)	71(21.8)	69(21.2)	325(100.0)
b. comment on rhyming words	20(6.2)	26(8.0)	91(28.0)	34(10.5)	78(24.0)	76(23.4)	325(100.0)
c. recognise rhymes	8(2.5)	27(8.3)	73(22.5)	35(10.8)	86(26.5)	96(29.5)	325(100.0)
d. repeat clapped patterns	16(4.9)	29(8.9)	85(26.2)	35(10.8)	78(24.0)	82(25.2)	325(100.0)
e. relate some sounds with letters	5(1.5)	12(3.7)	35(10.8)	19(5.8)	91(28.0)	163(50.2)	325(100.0)
f. sing simple songs	1(0.3)	11(3.4)	43(13.2)	26(8.0)	98(30.2)	146(44.9)	325(100.0)
g. follow your verbal directions	3(0.9)	5(1.5)	35(10.8)	24(7.4)	85(26.2)	173(53.2)	325(100.0)
h. participate in conversations with others	5(1.5)	10(3.1)	41(12.6)	30(9.2)	79(24.3)	160(49.2)	325(100.0)
i. initiate interactions with others	10(3.1)	22(6.8)	61(18.8)	34(10.5)	82(25.2)	116(35.7)	325(100.0)
j. use language for a range of functions e.g. labelling, describing, and so on	13(4.0)	21(6.5)	62(19.1)	25(7.7)	84(25.8)	120(36.9)	325(100.0)

Table A6.8 shows the children's writing and drawing activities. Participants were asked to report on the frequency of their children's writing and drawing behaviour and experiences. According to this table, nearly two thirds of the parents ($n=203$, 62.5 %) reported that their children drew pictures on a daily basis ($n=101$, 31.1 %) or several times a day ($n=102$, 31.4 %); likewise, over two thirds of participants ($n=220$, 67.7 %) noted their children write letters or letter approximations either on a daily basis ($n=117$, 36.0 %) or several times a day ($n=103$, 31.7 %). A large number – 192 participants ($n=192$, 59.1 %) – noted their children have frequently pretended to write letters, either on a daily basis ($n=92$, 28.3 %) or several times a day ($n=100$, 30.8 %). Only 81 participants (24.9 %) reported their children have frequently written words, whereas for many of them ($n=215$, 66.1 %) their children have not regularly written words: 82 participants (25.2 per cent) reported this has never occurred, 64 participants (19.7 per cent) reported this has rarely occurred, and 69 participants (21.2 per cent) noted this has occasionally happened. The participants' view on the extent to which their children tended to draw a picture and make/tell a story about it was varied. The majority of them mentioned their children have done this occasionally, followed by 66 (20.3 per cent) participants who noticed this to be on a daily basis. While 142 (43.7 per cent) participants – either daily ($n=74$,

22.8 %) or several times a day ($n=68$, 20.9 %) – noticed their children have frequently collaborated with others in writing. For the remaining, this collaboration has been infrequent.

Table A6.8

A6.8: The Parents' View about Child's Writing and Drawing Activities

Child's writing and drawing activities	Frequency Distribution [n, (%)]						Total n(%)
	N*	R*	OC*	W*	D*	STD*	
a. draw pictures	5(1.5)	21(6.5)	48(14.8)	48(14.8)	101(31.1)	102(31.4)	325(100.0)
b. write letters	7(2.2)	15(4.6)	46(14.2)	37(11.4)	117(36.0)	103(31.7)	325(100.0)
c. pretend to write letters	13(4.0)	22(6.8)	56(17.2)	42(12.9)	92(28.3)	100(30.8)	325(100.0)
d. write words	82(25.2)	64(19.7)	69(21.2)	29(8.9)	43(13.2)	38(11.7)	325(100.0)
e. draw a picture and tell the story about it	41(12.6)	59(18.2)	77(23.7)	39(12.0)	66(20.3)	43(13.2)	325(100.0)
f. collaborate with others in writing experience	32(9.8)	33(10.2)	70(21.5)	48(14.8)	74(22.8)	68(20.9)	325(100.0)

Table A6.9

A6.9: The Parents' View about their Child's Drawing Tools

Tool	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Pencil	34	10.5	10.5	10.5
Crayons	7	2.2	2.2	12.6
Computer (PC)	4	1.2	1.2	13.8
iPad	13	4.0	4.0	17.8
Pencil and Computer	31	9.5	9.5	27.4
Pencil and iPad	104	32.0	32.0	59.4
Crayon and (iPad/computer)	25	7.7	7.7	67.1
Pencil, crayon, computer and iPad	107	32.9	32.9	100.0
Total	325	100.0	100.0	

Table A6.10 indicates children's technological interests. The participants' report on their children's interest in technological advances revealed that for the majority of them ($n=207$, 63.7 %), computers, phones or tablets have been commonly of interest to their children for playing alphabet games. Almost two thirds ($n=211$, 64.9 %) reported frequent use of the same technologies by their children to listen to rhymes or songs, either daily ($n=88$, 27.1 %) or several times a day ($n=123$, 37.8 %). Around 125 participants (38.4 per cent) noted their children frequently use computer as a means of watching movies, either on a daily basis ($n=54$, 16.6 %) or several times a day ($n=71$, 21.8 %). For the remaining participants, the use of a computer to watch movies was less frequent, ranging from no use of computers ($n=48$, 14.9 %)

to weekly use of the technology ($n=55$, 16.9 %). Almost the same number of participants ($n=124$, 38.2 %) reported their children have shown recurrent interest in listening to online stories, either on a daily basis ($n=52$, 16.0 %) or several times a day ($n=72$, 22.2 %). For the rest of the participants this occurred infrequently, ranging from never using online technology to listen to stories ($n=60$, 18.5 %) to weekly use of online tools ($n=35$, 10.8 %). Around one third of the participants ($n=102$, 31.4 %) reported their children have shown frequent interest in writing names and letters through the use of technology, either on a daily basis ($n=63$, 19.4 %) or several times a day ($n=39$, 12.0 %). However, for the remainder, this occurred more infrequently, ranging from never using online technology to listen to stories ($n=47$, 14.5 %) to weekly use of online tools ($n=39$, 12.0 %). Only a small number of the participants ($n=32$, 9.9 %) reported their children have frequently used Information and Communication Technologies (e.g. Skype, FaceTime, or similar programs) to communicate with others, either once a day or several times a day. The vast majority of them reported no use of these technologies ($n=175$, 53.8 %) by their children. Almost the same number of participants ($n=28$, 8.6 %) reported the frequent use of computers for information searches, either once a day or several times a day. The vast majority of them ($n=175$, 53.8 %), however, reported their children have never used computers to search for information.

Table A6.10

A6.10: The Parents' View about their Child's Interest in Technology

Child's Technological interests	Frequency Distribution [n, (%)]						Total n(%)
	N*	R*	OC*	W*	D*	STD*	
a. use computers, or tablet pads to play alphabet games	12(3.7)	16(4.9)	37(11.4)	53(16.3)	99(30.5)	108(33.2)	325(100.0)
b. use computers, or tablet pad to listen to rhymes or songs	11(3.4)	22(6.8)	40(12.3)	41(12.6)	88(27.1)	123(37.8)	325(100.0)
c. watch movies on computer	48(14.9)	39(12.0)	58(17.8)	55(16.9)	54(16.6)	71(21.8)	325(100.0)
d. listen to online stories	60(18.5)	48(14.8)	58(17.8)	35(10.8)	52(16.0)	72(22.2)	325(100.0)
e. writing names and letters	47(14.5)	57(17.5)	80(24.6)	39(12.0)	63(19.4)	39(12.0)	325(100.0)
f. communicate with other family members using Skype, FaceTime or similar program	175(53.8)	55(16.9)	40(12.3)	23(7.1)	24(7.4)	8(2.5)	325(100.0)
g. use computers to search for information	175(53.8)	67(20.6)	40(12.3)	15(4.6)	18(5.5)	10(3.1)	325(100.0)

Table A6.11 indicates adults' literacy attitudes and practices at home. They were asked to express their views about fathers, maids, and mothers' literacy attitudes and practices at home.

According to them, while 200 mothers (61.5 per cent) have read to their children either on a daily basis ($n=122$, 37.5 %) or several times a day ($n=78$, 24.0 %), only 74 (22.7 per cent) noticed that fathers have done this on a frequent, daily basis. The vast majority of participants ($n=289$, 88.9 %), however, reported that maids have irregularly read to their children, ranging from never ($n=245$, 75.4 %) to weekly practices ($n=8$, 2.5 %). Only 134 participants (41.2 per cent) reported encouraging their children's knowledge of beginning sounds during rhymes, language games (e.g. I Spy) in groups and one to one, either on a daily basis ($n=77$, 23.7 %) or several times a day ($n=57$, 17.5 %). The remaining participants noticed the extent to which this has occurred is uneven, ranging from never ($n=28$, 8.6 %) to weekly ($n=54$, 16.6 %). Only 151 participants (46.5 per cent) reported that they have frequently attempted to teach their children alphabet sounds by pointing to the letters when reading story books to them, either on a daily basis ($n=85$, 26.2 %) or several times a day ($n=66$, 20.3 %).

When asked about the frequency of co-playing rhyming games with their children, many participants reported this has happened on a range from weekly ($n=43$, 13.2 %) to occasionally ($n=100$, 30.8 %), rarely ($n=63$, 19.4 %) or never ($n=36$, 11.1 %). Just over half of the participants ($n=169$, 52.0 %) reported helping their children to write words or alphabetic letters on a regular daily basis ($n=97$, 29.8 %) or several times a day ($n=72$, 22.2 %). For the rest of the participants, this has been less frequent. A substantial portion of the participants ($n=134$, 41.2 %) reported discussing with their children about the program they have been watching, either on a daily basis ($n=76$, 23.4 %) or several times a day ($n=58$, 17.8 %). The majority of participants, however, have less frequently discussed the TV programs with their children. While 125 participants (38.4 per cent) noted that they have frequently played with their children in games that involved literacy (e.g. pretending to cook and reading a recipe, writing a shopping list, pretending to read to the toys etc.), the majority of them noticed this has happened on a range of frequencies from weekly ($n=48$, 14.8 %) to occasionally ($n=97$, 29.8 %).

Over three quarters of the participants ($n=253$, 77.84 %) reported less frequently engaging with their children in discussions about books and other texts that promote consideration of diverse perspectives (e.g. gender). However, the remaining number of participants reported engagement with their children on a more regular basis ($n=72$, 22.2 %). Almost one third of the participants (32.3 per cent) noted that they have frequently told or read familiar family and community stories and stories related to their culture to their children. However, the majority of them noticed this has happened on a range of frequencies from

weekly ($n=64$, 19.7 %) to occasionally ($n=111$, 34.2 %), rarely ($n=36$, 11.1 %) and to no attempts ($n=9$, 2.8 %). Nearly three quarters of the participants ($n=242$, 74.5 %) did not report frequently providing opportunities for their children to engage in stories, songs, games, or books that were about cultures different to their own. Only 83 participants (25.6 per cent) reported that they have frequently given opportunities to their children to be engaged in such literacy practices, either daily ($n=48$, 14.8 %) or several times a day ($n=35$, 10.8 %).

Table A6.11

A6.11: Adults' Literacy Attitudes and Practices at Home

Adults' literacy attitudes and practices at home	Frequency Distribution [n, (%)]						Total n(%)
	N*	R*	OC*	W*	D*	STD*	
a. mother reads to child	4(1.2)	17(5.2)	47(14.5)	58(17.8)	122(37.5)	78(24.0)	325(100.0)
b. father reads to child	43(13.2)	67(20.6)	90(27.7)	51(15.7)	43(13.2)	31(9.5)	325(100.0)
c. the maid reads to child	245(75.4)	19(5.8)	17(5.2)	8(2.5)	20(6.2)	16(4.9)	325(100.0)
d. encourage your child's knowledge (during rhymes, language games	28(8.6)	29(8.9)	80(24.6)	54(16.6)	77(23.7)	57(17.5)	325(100.0)
e. attempt to teach your child alphabet sound	11(3.4)	30(9.2)	88(27.1)	45(13.8)	85(26.2)	66(20.3)	325(100.0)
f. play rhyming games with your child	36(11.1)	63(19.4)	100(30.8)	43(13.2)	52(16.0)	31(9.5)	325(100.0)
g. help your child to write words or alphabetic letters	9(2.8)	22(6.8)	80(24.6)	45(13.8)	97(29.8)	72(22.2)	325(100.0)
h. discuss with your child about the program you watching	12(3.7)	34(10.5)	100(30.8)	45(13.8)	76(23.4)	58(17.8)	325(100.0)
i. play with your child in games that involve literacy (e.g. pretending to cook and reading a recipe, writing a shopping list, etc.)	13(4.0)	42(12.9)	97(29.8)	48(14.8)	84(25.8)	41(12.6)	325(100.0)
j. engage with your child in discussion about books and other texts that promote consideration of diverse perspectives(e.g. gender)	22(6.8)	54(16.6)	113(34.8)	64(19.7)	47(14.5)	25(7.7)	325(100.0)

k. tell or read familiar family and community stories and stories related to your culture	9(2.8)	36(11.1)	111(34.2)	64(19.7)	64(20.0)	40(12.3)	325(100.0)
l. provide opportunities for your child to engage with stories, songs, games or books that are about cultures different to your own	34(10.5)	72(22.2)	104(32.0)	32 (9.8)	48(14.8)	35(10.8)	325(100.0)

Table A6.12

A6.12: Types of Activities that Participants Reported Usually Doing while Playing with their Children

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Nothing	78	24.0	24.0	24.0
	Exercising incl. football, walking, biking	96	29.5	29.5	53.5
	Playing computer games	72	22.2	22.2	75.7
	Going out for walking or restaurant	1	.3	.3	76.0
	Roleplaying e.g. as a doctor or cook	43	13.2	13.2	89.2
	Playing, watching and games	1	.3	.3	89.5
	Others	34	10.5	10.5	100.0
	Total	325	100.0	100.0	

Table A6.13

A6.13: Extra Activities Provided to Children at Home to Improve their Literacy Skills

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Conversation	47	14.5	14.5	14.5
	Alphabetic and phonetic practices like games, cards etc	49	15.1	15.1	29.5
	Book reading	47	14.5	14.5	44.0
	Storytelling	19	5.8	5.8	49.8
	Painting and writing	15	4.6	4.6	54.5
	Playing with toys and computer games	24	7.4	7.4	61.8
	Watching TV programs and cartoons	21	6.5	6.5	68.3
	Multi tasks	23	7.1	7.1	75.4
	Others	13	4.0	4.0	79.4
	Nothing	67	20.6	20.6	100.0
	Total	325	100.0	100.0	

Table A6.14

A6.14: Literacy Resources that Children have Access to at Home

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Book-based reading	22	6.8	6.8	6.8
	Computer-based resources	11	3.4	3.4	10.2
	Painting/drawing resources	3	.9	.9	11.1
	Using alphabetic posters, cards or whiteboards	67	20.6	20.6	31.7
	Watching TV programs	3	.9	.9	32.6
	Puppets	16	4.9	4.9	37.5
	Nothing	38	11.7	11.7	49.2
	Multiple resources	152	46.8	46.8	96.0
	Other resources	13	4.0	4.0	100.0
	Total	325	100.0	100.0	

Table A6.15

A6.15: Having Maids at Home

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	117	36.0	36.0	36.0
	No	208	64.0	64.0	100.0
	Total	325	100.0	100.0	

Table A6.16

A6.16: Maids' Involvement in Children's Literacy Learning Activities at Home

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	74	63.2	63.2	63.2
	No	43	36.8	36.8	100.0
	Total	117	100.0	100.0	

Table A6.17 indicated participants' views on their maids' literacy attitudes and practices at home. According to this table, 56 participants (75.5 per cent) who reported their maids have been involved in their children at-home literacy activities noted that they have never read any storybooks to their children. The majority of participants noted their maids have less frequently sung nursery rhymes with their children, ranging from never ($n=22$, 29.7 %) to rarely ($n=18$, 24.3 %), and to occasionally ($n=13$, 31.1 %). Similarly, the majority of participants noted less frequent involvement of the maids in their children's writing and drawing activities, ranging from never ($n=28$, 37.8 %) to rarely ($n=12$, 16.2 %), and to occasionally ($n=21$, 28.4 %). For 57 participants (77.0 per cent), their maids' engagement with the children in watching movies on

TV or playing computer games was less frequent, where 26 (35.1 per cent) participants reported this to be occasionally, followed by 13 (17.9 per cent) participants who explored this on a weekly basis.

Nearly all participants ($n=69$, 93.2 %) reported their maids have less frequently applied their own languages when engaging with their children, where, for example, almost two thirds of them ($n=49$, 66.2 %) noticed their maids have never used their own languages while engaging with those children. Almost the same number of the participants ($n=68$, 91.9 %) reported their maids have been less frequently involved in their children's sport and cooking activities at home, ranging from occasionally ($n=23$, 31.1 %), to no involvement ($n=22$, 29.7 %) to rare involvement ($n=21$, 28.4 %).

Table A6.17

A6.17: Participants' Views on their Maids' Literacy Attitudes and Practices at Home

Maids' literacy attitudes and practices at home	Frequency Distribution [n, (%)]						Total n(%)
	N*	R*	OC*	W*	D*	STD*	
a. reads story books to your child	56(75.7)	9(12.2)	5(6.8)	1(1.4)	2(2.7)	1(1.4)	74(100.0)
b. sings nursery rhymes with your child	22(29.7)	18(24.3)	13(31.1)	1(1.4)	7(9.5)	3(4.4)	74(100.0)
c. involves in your child writing and drawing activities	28(37.8)	12(16.2)	21(28.4)	4(5.4)	5(6.8)	4(5.4)	74(100.0)
d. engages with your child in watching movies on TV or playing computer games	8(10.8)	10(13.5)	26(35.1)	13(17.6)	11(14.9)	6(8.1)	74(100.0)
e. use her own language when engaging with your child	49(66.2)	10(13.5)	6(8.1)	4(5.4)	1(1.4)	4(5.4)	74(100.0)
f. involves in your child sport and cooking activities at home	22(29.7)	21(28.4)	23(31.1)	2(2.7)	2(2.7)	4(5.4)	74(100.0)

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare children's response to print in conditions where they had other reading materials (apart from books) and no reading materials at homes. There was a statistically significant difference between the two conditions in their effects on the children's response to print: ($M=-0.1734$, $SD=.8633$) vs ($M=0.4745$, $SD=1.1840$) conditions; [$t_{(323)}=5.392$, $P = 0.000$] (Table A6.18.2).

Table A6.18.1

A6.18.1: Group Statistics

Reading materials other than books	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE
Yes	238	-.1734	.8633	.0559
No	87	.4745	1.1840	.1269

These results suggest that having other reading materials at home (excluding books) have an effect on child's response to print.

Table A6.18.2

A6.18.2: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	P	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
										Lower Upper
Child's response to print	Equal variances assumed	15.700	.000	-5.392	323	0.000	-.6480	0.1201	-.8845	-.4116
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.671	121.021	0.000	-.6480	.1387	-.9227	-.3734

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare mean scores of both children's attention to rhyming sounds and children's interactions with others in families with other reading materials and no reading material conditions. There was a significant difference between those who had other reading materials at homes ($M=-0.154$, $SD=.9263$) and those without any materials ($M=-.421$, $SD=1.075$) in terms of "child's attention to rhyming sounds" [$t_{(323)}=4.747$, $P = 0.000$]. There was also a significant difference between those who had other reading materials at homes ($M=-0.075$, $SD=.9076$) and those without any materials ($M=-.2053$, $SD=1.199$) in terms of "children's interactions with others" [$t_{(323)}=2.252$, $P = 0.025$].

These results suggest that having other reading material than books influences the children's attention to rhyming sounds and their interactions with others. It is likely that when

children have access to other reading materials at homes, their attention and interaction would increase (Table A6.19: T-Test for Difference in Means).

Table A6.19.1

A6.19.1: Group Statistics

	Other Reading Materials	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE
Child's attention to rhyming sounds	Yes	238	.1541	.9263	.0600
	No	84	-.4217	1.075	.1153
Children's interactions with others	Yes	238	.075	.9076	.0588
	No	87	-.2053	1.199	.1286

Table A6.19.2

A6.19.2: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	P	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference		Lower	Upper
Child's attention to rhyming sounds	Equal variances assumed	3.256	.072	4.747	323	.000	.5758		.1213	.3372	.8145
	Equal variances not assumed			4.429	135.348	.000	.5758		.1300	.3187	.8330
Child's interactions with others	Equal variances assumed	6.446	.012	2.252	323	.025	.2804		.1245	.0354	.5253
	Equal variances not assumed			1.983	123.790	.050	.2804		.1414	.0004	.5603

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare writing and drawing as a means of children's learning sounds in other reading materials and no materials conditions (see Table A6.20). There was a significant difference in the scores for reading materials ($M=0.1438$, $SD=0.9306$) and no materials ($M=-0.3936$, $SD=0.1080$) conditions; [$t_{(323)}=4.411$, $P = 0.000$] in terms of writing and drawing as a means of children's learning. This finding suggests that having other reading materials than books at home has an effect on children's writing and drawing towards their learning.

Table A6.20.1

A6.20.1: Group Statistics

	Other reading materials	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE
Writing and drawing as a means of children's learning	Yes	238	.1438	.9306	.0603
	No	87	-.3936	1.080	.1157

Table A6.20.2

A6.20.2: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	P	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper
Writing and drawing as a means of children's learning sounds	Equal variances assumed	2.223	.137	4.411	323	0.000	.5375	.1218	0.2977 .7772
	Equal variances not assumed			4.117	135.392	0.000	.5375	.1305	.2792 .7957

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare children's interest in using technology as a language source and technology adoption to learn and communicate with others in conditions of having other reading materials and no materials at homes. There was a significant difference in the scores for reading materials ($M=0.0708$, $SD=0.9168$) and no reading materials condition ($M=-0.1936$, $SD=0.1182$) conditions; [$t_{(323)}=2.123$, $P = 0.035$] in terms of children's interest in using technology as a language source. A significant difference was also found in the scores for reading materials ($M=0.0713$, $SD=0.9967$) and no reading materials condition ($M=-0.1951$, $SD=0.9884$) conditions; [$t_{(323)}=2.139$, $P = 0.033$] in terms of technology adoption to learn and communicate with others. This finding suggested that having other reading materials at homes has an effect on children's interest in using technology as a language source and to learn and communicate with others (Table A6.21).

Table A6.21.1

A6.21.1: Group Statistics

	Having other reading materials	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE
Children's interest in using technology as a literacy source	Yes	238	.0708	.9168	.0594
	No	87	-.1936	1.182	.1268
Technology adoption to learn and communicate with others	Yes	238	0.0713	.9967	.0646
	No	87	-.1951	.9884	.1059

Table A6.21.2

A6.21.2: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	P	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference		Lower	Upper
Children's interest in using technology as a language source	Equal variances assumed	10.732	.001	2.123	323	0.035	.2644	.1246		.0193	.5096
	Equal variances not assumed			1.889	125.731	0.061	.2644	.1400		-.0126	.5416
Technology adoption to learn and communicate with others	Equal variances assumed	.002	.963	2.139	323	.033	.2665	.1245		.0214	.5116
	Equal variances not assumed			2.148	154.094	.033	.2665	.1241		.0213	.5117

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare parents' interaction with their children's literacy activities, parents' attitudes towards their children's literacy learning, and adults' role in supporting child's literacy in watching and not TV conditions. There was no significant difference in the scores for watching and no watching conditions in terms of the above mentioned factors. These findings suggest that watching TV with children does not have any effect on the parent's interaction towards their children's literacy activities, parents' attitudes towards their literacy learning, and adults' role in supporting their literacy (Table A6.22).

Table A6.22.1

A6.22.1: Group Statistics

	Watching TV	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE
Parents' interaction with their children's literacy activities	Yes	323	.0015	.9967	.0554
	No	2	-.2577	1.9823	1.4017
Parents' attitudes towards their children's literacy Learning	Yes	323	.0021	.9969	.0554
	No	2	-.3449	1.9219	1.3590
Adults' role in supporting child's literacy	Yes	323	-.0012	1.0024	.0557
	No	2	.2085	.5763	.4075

Table A6.22.1

A6.22.1: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	P	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Parents' interaction with their children's literacy activities	Equal variances assumed	2.028	.155	.365	323	.715	.2593	.7102	-1.1379	1.6566
	Equal variances not assumed			.185	1.003	.884	.2593	1.4028	-17.434	17.9533
Parents' attitudes towards their children's literacy Learning	Equal variances assumed	1.806	.180	.489	323	.625	.3470	.7101	-1.0499	1.7441
	Equal variances not assumed			.255	1.003	.841	.3470	1.3601	-16.8000	17.4942
Adults' role in supporting child's literacy	Equal variances assumed	.590	.443	-.295	323	.768	-.2098	.7102	-1.6072	1.1875
	Equal variances not assumed			.510	1.003	.697	-.2098	.4113	-5.0067	4.5870

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare parent's interaction with their children's literacy activities, parents' attitudes towards their children's literacy learning, and adults' role in supporting child's literacy in conditions of having other reading materials and no

materials at homes. There was a significant difference in the scores for other reading materials (M=0.0706, SD=1.009) and no reading materials condition (M=-0.1932, SD=0.9528) conditions; [$t_{(323)}=2.118$, $P = 0.035$] in terms of parent's interaction towards their children's literacy activities. A significant difference was also found in the scores for other reading materials (M=0.1047, SD=0.9156) and no reading materials condition (M=-0.2864, SD=1.1590) conditions; [$t_{(323)}=3.166$, $P = 0.002$] in terms of parents' attitudes towards their children's literacy learning. These findings suggest that having other reading materials at homes have effects on parents' interaction towards their children's literacy activities and parents' attitudes towards their children's literacy learning (Table A6.23).

Table A6.23.1

A6.23.1: Group Statistics

	Having other reading materials at home	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE
Parents' interaction towards their children's literacy activities	Yes	238	.0706	1.0093	.0654
	No	87	-.1932	.9528	.1021
Parents' attitudes towards their children's literacy Learning	Yes	238	.1047	.9156	.0593
	No	87	-.2864	1.1590	.1242
Adults' role in supporting child's literacy	Yes	238	.0112	.9810	.0635
	No	87	-.0306	1.0553	.1131

Table 6.23.2

A6.23.2: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	P	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Parents' interaction with their children's literacy activities	Equal variances assumed	.782	.377	2.118	323	.035	.2639	.1246	.0187	.5090
	Equal variances not assumed			2.175	161.1	.031	.2639	.1213	.0243	.5034
Parents' attitudes	Equal variances	3.042	.082	3.166	323	.002	.3912	.1235	.1481	.6343

towards their children's literacy learning	assumed Equal variances not assumed Equal variances assumed Equal variances not assumed									
				2.841	127.3	.005	.3912	.1377	.1187	.6637
Adults' role in supporting child's literacy		1.437	.232	.334	323	.739	.0418	.1254	-.2049	.2886
				.323	143.7	.747	.0418	.1297	-.2146	.2984

The same analysis was conducted to investigate the maids' attitudes toward children's literacy learning in the light of other reading materials at home (Table A6.24). Accordingly, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare maids' attitudes toward child's literacy learning in other reading material and no material conditions. There was no significant difference in the scores for other reading material ($M=-0.1112$, $SD=0.8566$) and no material ($M=0.2807$, $SD=1.2753$) conditions in terms of maids' attitudes toward child's literacy learning [$t_{(72)} = -1.534$, $P = 0.129$].

Table A6.24.1

A6.24.1: Group Statistics

	Having books	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE
Maids' attitudes toward child's literacy learning	Yes	53	-.1112	.8566	.1176
	No	21	.2807	1.2753	.2782

Table A6.24.2

A6.24.2: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	P	T	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Differ- ence	Std. Error Differ- ence	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Maids' attitude toward	Equal variances assumed	1.819	.182	-1.534	72	.129	-.3919	.2554	-.9013	.1173

child's literacy Learning	Equal variances not assumed	-1.297	27.453	.205	-.3919	.3021	-1.0114	.2274
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Table A6.25

A6.25: Maids' Duties and Activities toward their Employers' Children during the Day

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Supervising	22	18.8	18.8	18.8
	Playing computer games & watching TV	35	29.9	29.9	48.7
	Painting, writing	12	10.3	10.3	59.0
	Feeding	2	1.7	1.7	60.7
	Multiple duties	46	39.3	39.3	100.0
	Total	117	100.0	100.0	

Table A6.26

A6.26: Participants' Satisfaction with the Amount and Type of Communication they have with the Kindergarten

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	228	70.2	70.2	70.2
	No	97	29.8	29.8	100.0
	Total	325	100.0	100.0	

End of Appendices