

# A Discussion and Critique of the Key Features of School Literacy and Home Literacy

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**Abstract:** This paper will mainly talk about the key features of school literacy and home literacy. Therefore, the following questions are analyzed with examples: the main differences between learners' participation in literacy activities in school and at home; the discourse characteristic of school and home literacy.

**Key words:** key features; school literacy; home literacy; students' participation; discourse characteristic

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## 1. Introduction

The term "home literacy" refers to the literacy-related experiences, tools, and attitudes that students encounter at home. Home literacy is described in this study as the three-way interactions that occur at home between children, parents, and text. School literacy focuses on how students use various texts in classroom settings. It investigates how different texts are incorporated into a range of literacy activities across various topics, and a methodology, empirical, and theoretical basis are used in New Literacy Studies (NLS) (Street 2014).

As for learners' participation in school and home literacy, many course designs include classroom involvement, and the activities in home literacy also try to improve the participation of students. Positive and effective participation of students in literacy learning can lead to insightful feedback and fascinating connections with students, as well as a high degree of energy and excitement in a variety of learning environments (Street 2014).

Discourse is a language in use and a unifying concept in the broad field of discourse analysis. At the same time, social practices, especially the literacy teaching that creates or is affected by the operation of discourses will add a new dimension to education study (Swan 2001).

## 2. Analysis

### 2.1 What is the typical difference between learners' participation in literacy activities in school and at home

The disparities of students' participation at home and school may be caused by the different factors of school and home environment, such as the class and home size, the interaction ways between students, teachers and families and students' engagement willing in different environment.

In terms of students' participation in school literacy education, most of the learning activities in formal schools are carried out in classroom. As a result, students must be punctual and actively engaged in absorbing, seeking, and integrating the knowledge and material taught in classroom or other learning activities. This mutual contact between lecturers and students contributes to a healthy classroom environment. The students' position in classroom literacy, as well as their

classroom behaviour, can range from passive to active (Street 2014). They can simply sit and take notes, listen, or do something else, or they can ask questions, share their opinions, or answer the questions posed to them. Another aspect that influences students' willingness to participate in the classroom is contextual conditions such as the classroom size. At school, one teacher will instruct several students or more, the students should be more concerned and more engaged in the literacy learning and the classroom size can also create competition among students.

Therefore, just like the examples showed in video, the social research teacher just stood in front of the class and asked students to discuss and think critically by providing the basic information of knowledge and asking them to discuss the questions to make them engaged in the class with several students and a teacher, which also created a cooperative and competitive relationship between students. By teacher's leading and instruction, students could transfer their learning attitude from passively absorbing to express their own ideas actively in literacy learning (Swan 2001).

For the children's participation in home literacy environment, the interaction has changed, which is among students and their families. The parents will encourage and appreciate students' literacy achievements and support their learning process, and the learning, reading and writing materials are the media (Swan 2001). Moreover, the children's role in home literacy activities is different from that in school. The intellectuality of home literacy comes from toys, games, indoor and outdoor activities or the library and social media. Thus, children should use their initiative to think and imagine in their daily life study and be alert to the learning materials, which needs the ability of self-directed learning.

Meanwhile, unlike the classroom size in school, their literacy models are their parents or other family members and they can acquire literacy knowledge from their families. Thus, the situation can be one "students" and several "teachers" in home literacy. According to the reading materials, both Emilia and Julia could play outdoor and they were instructed by their parents. At the same time, they could use digital devices by themselves or accompanied by their parents. Julia made ladybug by searching the information initiatively, and she read and thought independently at first. Then she discussed with her mother. This one-to-one learning form has greatly cultivated students' initiative and promoted students' participation greatly, and parents were partner, which is different from the literacy learning in school.

In summary, learners' participation in literacy events at school and at home are different. In school literacy, one teacher may face with several students and teachers act as leaders and monitors. The students' participation is passive and their initiative are motivated by teachers' guiding. However, in home literacy children behave, respond, and act in their own ways. Parents can create one-on-one accompany. Children here are proactive and they take part in the home literacies actively, that is to say they have initiatives before parents' joining, then the parents give a hand to help them to learn. In the school literacy, students' participation is stimulated by teachers. In home literacy, students may be creative and active in participating literacy learning activities and parents are just like companions.

## 2.2 The discourse characteristic of school and home literacies

Discourse may be various in different environment. Thus, the discourse in school and home literacy would also be different according to its using subjects, using purposes and using environments. As far as I'm concerned, the discourse may be more flexible and causal in home but restricted and focused in school literacy.

Classroom discourse, in general, refers to various forms of written and spoken communication that occurs in the classroom Today, the term includes representing, thinking, understanding, sharing, reflecting, agreeing, and disagreeing, as well as debating and arguing. The first feature of discourses in literacy between students and teachers is that the discourses are shaped by the curriculum they teach, for the discourses depend on the content of the class and the aim of teaching.

At the same time, the discourse is bounded by sanctions in school and the timetables of having class and taking a rest. Furthermore, in order to prompt students' thinking and brainstorming, the discourses are always in the form of contrived

problems. Thus, according to the video, the English teacher gave the instructions and displayed the knowledge. All her words were suitable for the school environment, and all discourses were related to the contents. The math teacher asked the students to discuss and think, which showed that their words were always shaped by the curriculum and their aim.

However, in home literacy, the characteristic of discourses between family members and students is different from those in school. Firstly, the regular routine in the families provided a stable and organized environment for the case study of children's self-initiated and/or adult-initiated digital device and material activities. Therefore, the discourses between children and their families are spontaneous and flexible, which are used in daily communication. Secondly, it is shaped by children's interests, so it should be suitable for children's literacy learning features and daily life.

Moreover, the discourses of students seem to have a close distance to their parents. What's more, in-home discourses are related to nature problems and are immersed in everyday language. According to the reading material, the role of parents is supporters. For instance, parental mediation has a significant impact on children's use of emerging technology and media. The use of new technology and media in the lives of children is ingrained in the family everyday rhythms, including routine mealtime, playtime, and outdoor activities. Julia tried to send messages to her grandma, all of the topics were about their life, so their discourse was flexible and the discourses were shaped by students' interests. Thus, the characteristic of discourses is different between in-home and school literacy, the features are all related to the using environment, the objects, and the aim of the words.

To sum up, teachers in a school literacy environment are usually educated and experienced in a range of teaching approaches. For professional reasons, teachers participate in language and literacy activities. Teachers often engage students in exchanges in which they are asked to elicit and then transcribe vocabulary from them (Young 2009). However, home literacy is more flexible and it can give children much freedom to choose their way to develop their reading and writing ability. The home environment sets the groundwork for later learning.

### **3. Conclusion**

Despite the fact that many students have access to literacy in their everyday lives, they do not benefit from the instruction and support provided by the teachers and staff in this setting. When students have the advantages in school, they are more able to concentrate on other reading skills such as phonemic recognition, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Carter 2006).

Thus, home literacy and school literacy are different but complementary. Literacy development should be a joint effort of home and school. Teachers and parents should keep in touch and build a healthy two-way connection. Following a collective and cooperative approach, remember that both teachers and parents have different areas of literacy experience and expertise when working together. After-school literacy curriculum facilitation and encouragement: Parents should remain current on subjects being taught in order to spark interest in studies and validate what is learned in the classroom (Kenner 2008). Only by doing this, can children learn the most when their parents and teachers are acquainted with each other and have a basic understanding of how things work at home and at school.

## **Conflicts of Interest**

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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