Mapping students’ everyday multimodal language practices in a high needs school

This is my Flag
and I speak this language also. My dad, my brother, two, and my sis.

I like my language.

Margaret Somerville
Jacqueline D’Warte & Lin Brown
MAPPING STUDENTS' EVERYDAY MULTIMODAL LANGUAGE PRACTICES IN A HIGH NEEDS SCHOOL

FINAL PROJECT REPORT

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

DET – Department of Education and Training
DEC – Department of Education and Communities
DP – Deputy Principal
EAL – English as an Additional Language
EED – *Explore, Experience, Discover* (Erehwon Public school intervention program)
EPS – Erehwon Public School
L1 – First language
PS – Public School
UWS – University of Western Sydney
Acknowledgments

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Margaret Somerville and Jacqueline D’warte

February, 2015
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Erehwon Public School initiated the language mapping project in parallel with a drama and music program designed to focus on emotional and social language. The school is characterised by complex multicultural classrooms with 21% Aboriginal students and 44% of students from Language backgrounds other than English. There are disproportionately high numbers of students enrolled in the school who have complex support needs. Across the school population of approximately 200, they are catering to the needs of students with autism, mild to moderate intellectual disabilities and a range of challenging emotions and behaviours, often trauma related. The school is strongly committed to ensuring that they have comprehensive and rigorous support programs in place that address the needs of all students, their families and school staff. The Explore, Experience Discover program utilised drama and music to establish a whole-school sustainable model to build the capacity of students and staff to identify, understand and better manage complex and challenging emotions and behaviours. The language mapping project was undertaken in parallel to the music and drama program with a focus on language generally, including social and emotional language and students’ everyday language practices as a resource for learning. Two classroom teachers (Grade 3/4 and 4/5) and the music and drama teachers participated in the project. The name of the school, the teachers and students are all pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of participants.

The Project

The study investigated ways to work with teachers to identify how and in what ways they could create opportunities for students to reveal the language and literacy skills and experiences they possess, and to incorporate these in enhancing students’ expression and engagement in their school learning. The study used creative methods within day to day classes to investigate students everyday multimodal language competencies. This involved students creating maps (visual and spatial representations) that illustrated their everyday language practices and experiences. These maps were used as a basis for the development of activities to assist English learning. The teachers were involved in three professional learning days. The first introduced them to the methods of the project, the second involved teachers and researchers in collaboratively analysing the children’s maps and the third in collaboratively analysing work samples the students produced during the study.

Summary of Findings

Teachers as Researchers

The first professional learning day introduced teachers to the research processes through direct experience. We recorded some observations resulting from the general presentation of the approach and the specific activity of language mapping. In relation to the general presentation, the teachers noted the differences between their specific school context and others where previous research had taken place. They discussed the ways that the research processes might be adapted for their particular school, students and classroom practices. Some interesting observations were made about the places outside of the classroom that children from different languages and cultures learn and their own alienation from the specialist languages of sport. They raised important issues about the intersection of the everyday language practices of children in their class with the outcomes and practices of standardised testing.
**Collaborative analysis of student maps**

In both classes the students’ language maps could be grouped into similar categories to those that emerged in the pilot study (Somerville & D’warte, 2014). Most of the maps fell into two distinct groups, one showing Separation of the different domains of language practice where the student portrayed barriers to moving between these domains such as home and school. In the other group, that we named Connection, there were no barriers and students showed that they could move seamlessly between the different places and types of their language use. There was also another group in both this study and the pilot study that we called the Outliers with a small number of examples that showed neither of these characteristics. Some very disturbed children made maps in this category.

The teachers and researchers learned a great deal through this collaborative analysis activity with the teachers learning from the analytical skills of the university researchers and the researchers learning the depth of teacher knowledge of their students and their particular learning needs. A surprising outcome of the analysis was that teachers became aware of students Aboriginality for the first time. The practice of speaking dialects of standard English was not always visible to either teachers or children and sometimes Aboriginal children did not want to acknowledge any dialect difference. This was not true however for the one outstanding map on which the children had use Aboriginal symbols all over the map and had written “I LOVE MY LANGUAGE” in capital letters across the map. This was the one the teacher looked at and said ‘I did not know this child was Aboriginal’. Teachers were generally much more aware, interested, and supportive of English as a second language speakers.

This analysis offered all participants a chance to consider students’ everyday language practices and experiences through an alternative lens. We were able to see how a group of students represented the connections and separations between the way they used language at home and school and in the different places and spaces in their everyday worlds. The connection between language and identity was elucidated for all participants as evidenced in the transcripts of the collaborative analysis day. The creation and analysis of the maps offered teachers an opportunity to enhance their knowledge and develop a deeper understanding of their students.

**Collaborative analysis of student work samples**

On the second collaborative analysis day the grade 4/5 teacher described a writing exercise in which students collectively and then individually re-worked a passage of writing to change the emotional tone. Linked to both their social and emotional language work in music and drama and their mapping of everyday language practices, the students named this process as ‘text morphing’. The teacher noted the precise grammatical detail of the additions, where phrases, not just words, were used to make the changes. She noted the increased emotional range in their developing ability to express a wide range of emotions in their writing. Students were extending their knowledge and adding more complexity to the task. They were showcasing their skill and displaying engagement in making these texts authentic. Shirley suggested student were seeing themselves as writers sometimes for the first time.

Shirley believed that this activity illustrated what makes these students feel like successful writers. They can see a published book with a beautiful phrase in it and they know they can do exactly the same. The students are not only learning to write but they are learning to evaluate what makes a successful writer. They compared their own attempts at changing the words and emotions being expressed in the writing with a published book with a beautiful phrase in it. They came to understand what makes ‘a beautiful phrase’ (or passage) by identifying how the
emotion is evoked in particular words and phrases (by embodied and emplaced writing) which they were able to change. The teacher included both collaborative and individual aspects to the exercise, noting that the ‘slower’ writers do not finish their individual pieces but part of the exercise was the collaborative negotiation where they learned from each other. The children developed their own rules, or processes for what works and the text and emotion defined the limits they conformed to.

These examples of classroom events illustrate multimodal language practices in real ways – ways that included music, drama and affective language use as aligned with the School’s intervention program. Many oral literacies were also involved here, listening, observing, turn taking, negotiating, viewing, responding, thinking and discussing. For Shirley a key emphasises was that emotion had been the key to ‘getting good results’ with students writing.

The emotional and social language maps of the Grade 3/4 class revealed a range of ways that students negotiate emotional and social languages. They used this attention to the emotional dimension of language in their writing, and the ways their writing improved was demonstrated in the maps. They practised a similar ‘text morphing’ to Grade 4/5 changing the story of Cinderella to a scary story. They did the task in groups and then did their own individual one. Anne reported that the students loved the exercise, and yeah being given the freedom to write about whatever they wanted. She observed proper sentence structure for the first time, and the arrangement of the narrative with context, pattern, rhythm, language and words.

The transcripts of the collaborative analysis of student work samples detail teachers’ observations about the student data generated in the 3/4 and 4/5 classrooms in this study. Evident in these transcripts, are the ways teachers began to see how home and school practices were being realised by their students. Teachers used an alternative lens through which to develop a more nuanced understanding of the language and literacy practices and experiences of their students. They were also beginning to see how students’ practices were linked to the skills, competencies and behaviours on display in their classrooms. Like Shirley, Anne extended her individual knowledge of her students. Both teachers discussed the ways students were not only engaged in the content, but also, the ways skills, understandings and behaviour were on display for them and for the students themselves. Teachers’ expectations of what students could do were enhanced. Connections between the emotional and social language program, the language mapping techniques and reading/writing exercises were on view.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The students were highly engaged in all aspects of the language mapping project, enjoying individual and collective work that focussed on themselves. They were aware and excited about being part of a university research project and were excited that the teachers were bringing their work to the university to be analysed. They waited anxiously for the teacher’s response on her return. The collaborative research that involved both children and teachers in the research itself produced increased motivation to produce writing for an ‘authentic audience’ outside of the teacher and their own classroom.

The teachers found the process of taking part in the research a rich and rewarding professional learning. They particularly noted the importance of having time out of the classroom to reflect on their students and their teaching practice. They found the opportunity to work collaboratively with their peers invaluable, both for the new teacher who learned so much from the experienced teacher and the experienced teacher who appreciated the exposure to new and
fresh ideas. They commented on the high levels of student engagement and the success in writing that was beyond all their expectations. They thought it would be good to involve more classes across the school and that in future research it would be important to develop a framework to assess outcomes.
INTRODUCTION

The Mapping Project

The Mapping Students’ Everyday Multimodal Language Practices in a High Needs School project was a participatory action research study undertaken with two teachers from a high needs primary school in Western Sydney (Identified in this report by the pseudonym Erehwon Public School). Based on the premise that students’ everyday language practices can be a key asset in learning English, this research involved teachers and their students researching the ways they use language in different places and with different people. The knowledge they gained from this research was then applied to their school learning. This participatory action research project involved two classes of students in mapping their everyday multimodal language competencies. The aim of the project was to adapt a collaborative research and pedagogical model developed for use in multi-lingual classrooms (D’warte, 2013; 2014) to the requirements of a low SES, high Aboriginal, and high special needs school.

The study investigated ways to work with teachers to identify how and in what ways they could create opportunities for students to reveal the language and literacy skills and experiences they possess, and to incorporate these in enhancing students’ expression and engagement in their school learning. The study used creative methods within day to day classes to investigate students everyday multimodal language competencies. This involved students in creating maps (visual and spatial representations) that illustrated their everyday language practices and experiences. These maps were used as a basis for the development of activities to assist English learning. This study was designed to complement and contribute to Erehwon’s whole school sustainable model that seeks to build the capacity of students and staff to identify, understand and manage complex and challenging emotions and behaviours at the school.

The project was committed to building teacher capacity and disseminating this research to support teachers in building on their students’ linguistic knowledge to augment individual students and the whole school’s performance in English in order to enhance learning for all students at Erehwon Public School. Curriculum will be developed that can be used in diverse contexts; this curriculum will be linked to the new National English Curriculum outcomes across stages, contributing new understandings that can support teachers and students in the further development of English language and literacy.

BACKGROUND

Erehwon Public School

Erehwon Public School (EPS) was built in 1973 on Dharug lands on the western edge of the Mt Druitt District. Since this time, it has been very much a community school committed to working in partnership with parents, carers and community to achieve positive outcomes for students. In 2012 Erehwon’s total enrolment was 227 students, comprising 105 girls and 122 boys. 21% of Erehwon Public School students are Indigenous students and 44% of students are from Language backgrounds other than English. The school is committed to implementing programs to enhance both the academic achievement of Aboriginal students whilst educating our wider school community about Aboriginal Australia. There are a disproportionately high number of students enrolled in the school who have complex support needs. Across the school population of approximately 200, they are catering to the needs of students with autism, mild
to moderate intellectual disabilities and a range of challenging emotions and behaviours, often trauma related. The school is strongly committed to ensuring that they have comprehensive and rigorous support programs in place that address the needs of all students, their families and school staff.

In 2012, the school implemented the Nordoff Robbins Music Therapy program as a targeted intervention strategy for students with complex emotional/behavioural needs. Due in part to the success of the Music Therapy program, the school moved to implementing a broader curriculum-based project for all students and all staff. The Explore, Experience, Discover (EED) project aimed to establish a whole-school sustainable model to build the capacity of students and staff to identify, understand and better manage complex and challenging emotions and behaviours. The EED project utilised quality literature, music and drama to explore, experience and discover emotions and behaviours within a classroom setting. The program aimed to progressively build the capacity of students and teachers to better identify, understand and manage complex emotions and behaviours. It drew upon the unique qualities of music and drama as methods of expression and engagement to strengthen the opportunities for all students. The program used quality literature as a narrative thread from which students and teachers can build meaning upon and use as a point of reference throughout the process.

The objectives of the EED program included establishing a common and consistent language (both verbal and non-verbal) to describe or identify certain emotions and behaviours. This language may for example include: sound, numbers, movement, words or colours with the aim of developing metacognitive strategies to build the capacity of students and teachers to monitor and better manage emotional and behavioural responses across a variety of contexts and circumstances. The school invited the researchers to use the previously trialed language mapping process in parallel with the EED program in a one year study to investigate the integration of students everyday multimodal language practices into their classroom learning.

THE MAPPING PROJECT

In the multimodal language mapping project we planned to contribute to and complement Erehwon Public School’s Explore, Experience, Discover (EED) program by building on Orellana’s (2009) US curriculum work and D’warte’s (2013) Pilot Study conducted in NSW public schools to introduce curriculum that involves visual and textual mapping of students’ everyday language/s and literacy practices. Everyday language practices are valuable cultural resources and funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) that can be built on in school. We saw the mapping project and accompanying pedagogies as a means to explore the capacities of Erehwon’s diverse student population and make a valuable contribution to the whole school sustainable model for addressing the challenging needs of the student population.

Students’ linguistic repertoires and the home languages, which they bring with them to school, can be a key asset in learning English (Cummins, 2000; Orellana, 2009). Recognition of Aboriginal cultural ways of using English is a key to Aboriginal learning success (Eades, 2013) and ‘the legitimacy of Aboriginal English and the need to assist teachers to understand its use is important to many communities’ (DET, 2004, 113). Aboriginal students’ knowledge and use of their Aboriginal languages are fundamental to the development of their identity and to enhance their self-esteem (DET, 2004, 113). Mastery of Standard Australian English is key to learning across the curriculum. In this approach language is understood in the broadest sense as including multimodal forms such as music, drama, literature, narrative, social and
emotional language use. Language use will not only serve as a response to an activity or event, but rather, as an actual social activity that is studied, that engages students in examining and calling on their own and others’ everyday language skills, practices and experiences (D’warte, 2012). Mapping students’ language repertoires and their place in everyday classroom language practice will be a first step in developing new pedagogies to enhance teacher capacity for realising the potential of students’ language repertoires to enrich the learning of English and other subject areas. This approach also had possibilities to be integrated into the EED program and further support students and teachers in understanding emotions and building relationships in their classrooms.

Methodology

**Collaborative ethnography**
The project used a collaborative ethnography approach in which students and teachers were trained to be researchers of their own practice. In term 2 and 3 of 2014 two Erewhon classroom teachers (one early career teacher Year 3/4 and a very experienced teacher Year 4/5) were involved in a professional learning curriculum adapted from the previous pilot study by D’warte (2012). The two teachers were engaged in an initial professional learning day in which they were trained in the project methodology and hence were able to implement the visual and textual method of mapping students’ everyday language/s and literacy practices within their respective classrooms. The university researchers visited the music and drama classes and participated in the activities with the two classes who were part of the project. The specialist music and drama teachers joined the two classroom teachers in the collaborative analysis of the second and third professional learning days. The second professional learning day engaged all four teachers and the two university researchers in the collaborative analysis of students’ completed maps and the planning of a series of lesson and activities for implementation as a result of this analysis. The four teachers then participated in a final session that involved analyses of students work samples produced across the 2 terms of the project and their reflection on project outcomes. Researchers also visited the teacher’s classrooms during the implementation phases.

**Research Methods**
Language Maps: Students’ language maps were collected from each class and collaboratively analysed by the participating teachers.
Focus groups: Focus group discussions were digitally recorded and transcribed from each Professional Learning day, providing evidence of the ongoing processes of teacher learning and research engagement.
Collaborative analysis: Collaborative analysis was digitally recorded and transcribed and used in the construction of this report.

**Ethical procedures**
The project received ethical conduct clearance from the University of Western Sydney’s Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC: H10517-see Appendix One) and also from the NSW State Education Research Applications Process (SERAP: 2014071-see Appendix Two)

**Project Timeline**

**Term 1, 2014**
- Teacher participants and classes identified.
- Ethics approvals: NEAF and SERAP complete.
• Participant permissions collected.

**Term 2, 2014**

• Professional Development Day 1: Teachers participate in research training and project implementation.
• In class: teacher-researchers implement linguistic repertoire mapping with students.
• Professional Development Day 2: Teachers and researchers analyse language maps, identify their place in everyday classroom language practice and design lessons and activities connected to curriculum outcomes for future assessment and evaluation.
• In class: Beginning implementation of designed lessons and activities and collection of classroom materials.
• In class: Classroom visits from researchers.

**Term 3, 2014**

• In class: Ongoing implementation of designed lessons and activities and collection of classroom materials.
• In class: Classroom visits from researchers.
• Professional Development Day 3: Analyse artifacts from implementation phase; review project outcomes.

**Term 4, 2014**

• Presentation to whole school community.
TEACHERS AS RESEARCHERS

Overview
The first Professional Learning day was planned to provide the participants (2 teachers and the Deputy Principal) with an introduction to and familiarization of the project methodology and methods. The following is the plan for the day.

EXPLORING LINGUISTIC REPERTOIRES

What do we know about multimodal language learning and associated practices?
- Linguistic resources
- Aboriginal language

Past Project Work
- Linguistic Repertoires Project: UWS/DEC 2012-2014
- Project report and student artefacts

Creating language maps
- Participants create their own personal language map

Research Methodology: Teachers as Researchers
- Reviewing the Project Plan processes and procedures
- Organization & protocols (Consent Forms)
- Linking research to curriculum

Project Team Planning
- Reflecting on our local context
- Scope and sequence for students’ language mapping

In addition to the scheduled activities listed above, the first Professional Learning Day afforded the teachers opportunities to establish a collaborative relationship with the university research team. The process of equipping the teachers with an understanding of the methodology began with the creation of personal language maps with textas, coloured pencils and crayons on A3 sheets of paper. Both university- and teacher-researchers created and discussed their representations of how, when and where they used language, for what purpose and with what audiences. This activity modelled the approach teachers would take with their students.

An audio recording was made of the team’s discussions of their language maps and how the project might take shape at Erehwon.

Focus Group Discussion

Drawing on previous experiences the university research team Margaret and Jacqueline shared their experience of working with students with little or no English in isolated Aboriginal communities in central Australia and in US schools in Los Angeles, the Bronx and Harlem with high proportions of African/American and Puerto Rican students. The teachers
then began to think about how this methodology could be adapted to the children in their classes and what the project might look like as it was implemented at Erehwon PS.

**Connecting the methods to Erehwon Public School**

By listening to the scenarios presented by researchers about their previous projects, Shirley, the experienced year 4/5 teacher, raised her concern about maintaining the interest of the younger children in her class if they were required to keep working on their language maps:

> Yes I can see the benefits of doing [the language maps] in that way. I’m just wondering how I would get my younger age group to see it as not being more work. “Oh I've done my work but now I have to do more!” That’s perfect to be able to get them to do [a map] their way first… they’ve achieved and they feel good. “Look what I've done!” But then we need to tidy it up or make them see that it can be done differently for a reason or it can be done better for a reason. [They need to see that it’s] not just more work because they’ll just stop doing this bit. If you give them more work they just won't do this bit to start with. They know if they do that bit, they're going to get more work. That’s how they think.

**Adapting the methodology**

In response to Shirley’s concerns, researchers and teachers discussed the fact that undertaking collaborative research meant that the methodology would be adapted in whatever way best suited the teachers with their expertise and knowledge of their students at Erehwon. It was acknowledged that the approach and outcomes for each teacher would possibly be very different from that implemented at any other school or class. Teachers and the Deputy Principal began to share their ideas about how the project might be adapted to suit the students in their classes. This was further elaborated by Shirley who commented on the wide range of students’ learning abilities, suggesting that ability may also be an issue in their first language, and this added to the complexity of her classroom: “a lot of the levels too… some of them are very, very low level and they have trouble communicating with the kids [that are] on a higher level simply because of the language they’re using”.

**Students as learners in their L1**

Shirley recounted the difficulty of assessing the learning ability of children who speak a language other than English and how their ability in their first language also impacts on their learning of English. She suggested that a Samoan speaking professional staff member might be able to help with this issue:

> … we said to her, “You are a teacher now. Go and do an assessment on how well they learn in Samoan and come back and tell us if they’re good learners”. We just need to know what they're learning ability is, so that we can work from there.

Knowing whether the children knew the alphabet or could count in Samoan would impact on their understanding as they were integrated into an English only learning environment.

> … it’s no good thinking, “Oh yeah we think they can count in Samoan it’s just match that up with English”. They might not be able to do count in Samoan either.

The Deputy Principal entered this discussion by raising his concerns for students with language learning difficulties negotiating both English and their first language: “One of the big issues [with English as] a second language is students’ falling down between both languages and that’s a huge issue particularly in primary school”. He was confident that the
Language Mapping activity would be a useful strategy for the English as an Additional Language learners (EAL).

**Where do children learn best?**

The teacher-researchers made further connections between the information being provided on the aims and methodology and the students in their classes. Learning language outside the classroom was identified as a successful strategy. In Shirley’s 4/5 class, the school garden had provided many students with a specific space for learning success. She recalled how she had taught several children from Samoa who arrived in Year 3 or 4 from village life to live with their grandmother and attend Erehwon as their local school. These children had no formal schooling and little cultural capital in this context. For one child in this extended family, she recounted:

> In the school garden is where he got to learn most of his school-based learning that he needed to know. He learnt how to share down there. He learnt how to play with people nicely down there. All the things he couldn’t do, he was able to do down there.

Teachers recognised that the integration of social learning is important and it happens differently in different places, even within the context of the school. Anne observed that different language practices are learned during sport, but the dominance of a sporting culture was a challenge for her: “Unfortunately, yeah the football culture at our school is very, very strong which is useful and powerful when you need it but I find it a little bit smothering at times too”. Jacqueline was able to connect this to the aims of the project by providing the example of Maori children speaking tactics in their first language so other teams were not aware of their calls. In reflecting on this Jacqueline discussed how this was extended to support the children’s understanding of language use … asking them to think about:

> What kind of language is used on a sporting field as opposed to what you would be doing every day? It’s that kind of drawing out I think in some ways and … actually getting them to be critical themselves about the way that they’re using language and so building towards understanding language generally and then English as a result of that.

Whilst it was generally agreed that it is important to cater for the different ways that students learn and to create successful contexts for learning, Shirley agreed that it is also important to ensure the teacher’s experience is considered in the context of student learning: “Well I’m just not there in football. It doesn’t work with me at all. So you know that can be an issue too. The teacher’s got to be able to teach within that context as well - that environment as well”.

**Connecting to standardised testing**

As the teachers continued to discuss how the Language Mapping project might be implemented using children’s home language as a resource for English learning, the impact on teaching and learning of the standardised testing regime (NAPLAN) and the national curriculum for all schools was raised. Shirley noted the constraints these placed on her teaching:

> I can see if children are allowed to write the way they speak, that you do get a better response from the children and I can accept that … but ultimately we’re responsible to work from a syllabus with a set curriculum that specifically states what is acceptable and what’s not. That bothers me. What you’re saying makes sense to me but I’m just the ‘middle man’. With NAPLAN, we don’t mark those. We do send them away and someone else does it. We can see how that kid has
sweated over that bit of work and has been keen to do it and has tried their very hardest. That person marking it doesn’t see that at all. They see the final result and they’re the ones who label that child and that label comes back. It gets put in their student record cards. That label gets sent home to tell parents the same thing and that quite often is negative.

The Deputy Principal summarised the issue as the ‘inflexibility of the big bureaucratic system versus the individual needs of the individual child’ and noted the need to find a balance: “at the end of the day it’s also a standardised test. It happens once a year. It’s a snapshot of our kids’ education so I guess we’ve got to find the balance and how much importance do we give NAPLAN”.

For the Language Mapping project, an important understanding was that the project activities would be best incorporated into classroom lessons rather than as an ‘add on’. As a unit of work within the language program the Language Maps could be used as a tool to assist children to understand the language capacities they already had and to represent these visually with or without text.

**Insights from language mapping**

After completing their own Language Maps the teacher-researchers discussed the amount of knowledge and information that actually could be represented on the maps. They particularly noted the scope of vocabulary, audience and purposes that encompassed their communication.

As the teachers discussed their lack of knowledge in some areas such as horticulture and sport or understanding what health professionals are saying, Shirley understood that sometimes she may need to say to her students: “I don’t know what you’re talking about. Can you say that in another way so I know what you’re talking about?” For Anne her personal Language Mapping exercise enabled her to empathise with the students who might be second language speakers.

I got a feel for the students who don’t speak English when I was doing this, because it made me think … especially when I’m writing an email, if I’m writing an email to friends sometimes I won’t even say “Hi”. I just get straight to the point and just send it off. But when I’m sending an email to someone, … staff or something I have to triple check, grammar’s correct, I’ve got an introduction and … I’m just constantly checking over that.

The issue of appropriate communication with an audience was then discussed. As with emails and texting, where the communication takes place was an important issue raised. The teachers recognised the different ways language is used in formal and informal situations between teachers and students at school:

I find at school, I’ll speak informally in the playground. So if I’m getting to know the students I’ll talk about the games they’re playing at recess or lunch and I’ll just use everyday language with them. But when we’re in class it’s “Good morning” and speaking properly. So not just “Hey!”

The Deputy Principal in recognition of the ‘generational’ language gap between the students and himself noted a similar strategy of language use:

When talking with the kids, my language changes a lot depending on the setting as well. So [firstly] the different languages because I’ll always try and learn some words in whatever language they’ve got as well. It’s just something I do,
but there’s also a generational language gap too between myself and the kids. I’m very conscious of that, and I talk about that with the kids all the time, and we laugh about the generational language between us… it’s got to be genuine I guess, or purposeful in that for someone like myself I can’t try and use the same language as the kids because it’s too artificial and it’s too forced. Even though you’re trying to close the gap with that strategy you’re going to obviously distance the gap dramatically, so, there’s certain languages I can share with the kids, and there’s certain languages I can’t share with the kids.

He also observed how he used different language with different children and circumstances. For example with a child deliberately misbehaving in class he would use a deep voice and abrupt speech, as opposed to a child misbehaving because of a difficult home life where he would ensure his language use enabled the child to still feel safe at school.

Anne observed that the process of mapping their own everyday language practices made them aware of moving between registers and using different language for different purposes and different audiences:

Looking at all of this [on the Language Map] it just comes as a second nature that I’ve got to do it … when I actually wrote it down on paper it was like, “Wow these kids are doing this all the time, checking whether their language is correct”.

The teachers came to understand the potential of the Language Mapping project to encompass the many different skills and experiences children have in knowing how to use different languages and dialects and different language practices between different groups of people.

Summary

The first Professional Learning day introduced teachers to the research processes through direct experience. We recorded some observations resulting from the general presentation of the approach and the specific activity of Language Mapping. In relation to the general presentation, the teachers noted the differences between their specific school context and others where previous research had taken place. They discussed the ways that the research processes might be adapted for their particular school, students and classroom practices. Some interesting observations were made about the places outside of the classroom that children from different languages and cultures learn and their own alienation from the specialist languages of sport. They raised important issues about the intersection of the everyday language practices of children in their class with the outcomes and practices of standardised testing.

After the teachers had completed the mapping of their own everyday language practices the conversation expanded as they became aware of how their naturalised everyday moving between different registers could be a resource for understanding language use. They reflected on their different language uses in email and SMS communications, in formal and informal relations at school, and intergenerational differences. They felt prepared to undertake the next step of introducing the research processes to their students.
COLLABORATIVE ANALYSIS

Overview

The second Professional Learning day engaged the two classrooms teachers in sharing the process of map making and then, with the drama and music teacher and the two university researchers engaging in collaborative analysis of the students’ language maps.

The process of making the maps

Talking about language with students

The teachers described the process of making the maps with the children in their Grade 3/4 and 4/5 classes respectively. They recounted that they began by talking with their classes about their everyday language practices, an activity that engaged the children as described by the teachers:

They don’t get opportunities just to sit there and talk about themselves in the class, they just loved talking about themselves. Once they started they just kept going and going with it. They actually wanted to just keep sitting on the floor and talk about their language at home.

Teachers observed that some children were able to talk more easily about their home language practices than others:

I’ve got a lot of students who are Aboriginal in my class but they didn’t want to bring that up. They just wanted to talk about them speaking in English. One Aboriginal student who ‘gets picked up and taken back to country all the time, we were trying to encourage him but he was too shy – didn’t want to let us know.

Learning about students

Teachers learned about the multiple home languages of children whose families had migrated from other countries, teachers detailed their developing understandings about students practices and experiences:

There was one girl who I never would have picked it, but she has four languages at home. And that was a real eye opener and then through discussion with her a lot of that was brought into the house. So there was one from her real dad, then there was one from her step dad and then there was a language from her other step dad and it’s just all these people that are coming into the house and speaking languages.

Other children knew that they spoke different languages at home but did not know how to name the language, it was simply their everyday life, like Denmark, “So what do you call Denmark language?” They didn’t know, and the Arabic – there was a Persian type of language and she didn’t quite get the name of it right – because I was trying to write it down.

Teachers began to realise that each time a child speaks in school they confront questions of: Who am I in this setting? What identity do I have here? What words am I going to use? What accent will I speak in?’

Map making

The Deputy Principal (DP) introduced the mapping task to each of the classes while the teachers made notes and gave examples on the whiteboard of how the children could make a
map of their language practice. The children were initially challenged by the size and blankness of the A3 sheet with no lines: “So just the fact that they had a big piece of paper, oh I can’t fill that. Some of them panicked. It’s a lot to fill so we had to talk about those”. The A3 sheet required the children to enter a visual and spatial field of representation. As noted by the DP: “Once they had put something on the paper they were fine, becoming very attached to their language maps”. Researchers also evidenced the students’ attachment to their maps, in later classroom visits.

Collaborative Analysis

The team of seven, three university researchers and four teachers began the collaborative analysis of the maps by spreading them out on two large flat surfaces in order to view the maps from one class at a time. Analysis began with the Grade 3/4 maps then moved to the Grade 5/6 maps. Most notable, were the ways the space of the A3 sheets were used by the children to map the nature and locations of their language practices. Most notable in the Grade 3/4 maps after prolonged observations were the inclusions of central human figures: I hadn’t noticed before that there was a person in — pretty much in the middle of every single one, even though they’re very different sizes. The use of colour, the use of space, and the extent to which connections were represented were all significant differences.

I looked at the connections that some of them made, like the one over there really jumps out at me because it feels like this pizazz and those arrows going around everywhere. And then some children have obviously separated everything and they haven’t drawn any lines between the things, so they’re just choices that I, I found that quite interesting, like the depiction of where they fit in to those groups.

It was decided to group the maps into those that indicated connections and those where no connections were evident between the different spatial domains of language practice. We also noticed the ones that stood out as different from all of the rest and we called them the outliers:

This is another one that stood out. He’s a reluctant writer he will not write and that’s why – I can pick up a few things just by looking at the picture that he’s drawn.

Once the maps were grouped into the categories of separation, connection and outliers for each class, the teachers chose one from each group for the focus of our analysis.

Collaborative analysis of Year 3/4 maps

Deepening perspectives on students practices and experiences

Teachers began to make connections between individual students’ maps and the practices and behaviours of individual students as observed in their classrooms. These maps began to offer teachers an additional window through which to view their students.
This map has a central large green expanse surrounded by curly cloud or tree shapes around the left hand side and along the bottom. A single curly tree shape sits in the top right hand corner. It is drawn as a bird’s eye view of the landscape from above. In the middle of the vast green central area is a very small figure drawn first in pencil and then shaded over by the vivid green pastel so that it has almost completely disappeared. The first cloud/tree shape on the left hand side says: soccer language/no manners; the second cloud/tree shape says friends/polite/manners; on the bottom left corner the cloud/tree shape is partly shaded with vivid blue triangle with the words school/english buried in the blue repeated outside the blue; the next cloud shape going along the bottom says: aunty is polite manners/shops polite/uncles abrigalan manners; then a vivid orange cloud/tree shape fully coloured in right to the edge of its curls repeats: uncles abrigalan manners; in the left hand bottom corner: dad aberrigulan. The lone uncoloured cloud/tree shape in the top right hand corner says: home/English/manners.

Collaborative analysis of each of the maps began with the individual class teacher explaining her choice of map to analyse then moved into collective responses from all participants.

The teacher, Anne, explains:

Only one stood out to me as actually writing types of language spoken at home. Others just had nice or polite or rude in different settings. This one has told us they speak English at home and at school but with uncles and aunts they speak Aboriginal with their dad they speak Aboriginal so that’s why I’ve chosen that map.

Together all participants responded to the map:

What’s this one up in the corner on its own? This one says home English home and then that’s dad. We’ve got soccer, friends, school – do these run in a sequence around the edge? They’re not actually very connected all fairly separate domains.
The perspective is interesting like this child floating. This tiny little pea in a big sea of green really dark heavy-handedness then that’s obviously very coloured. Who’s the orange representing? Uncle that makes more sense, why it’s coloured in separately. Maybe there’s a connection here then.

That’s what came to me too! This huge big green space in the middle with a little tiny weeny figure coloured over. You almost can’t see it. This is quite a happy colour green that they’ve chosen to put themselves in the middle of. It’s quite bright like a big grassy field of green. The figure is just floating manners manners manners everywhere.

Anne was asked what she knew about this child:
He’s reasonably quiet. You wouldn’t pick that he was Aboriginal from looking at him. I didn’t know at first. Really nice, quiet, compassionate, kind, gentle with the other kids in the class. Yeah, very quiet. Just gets in, does what he needs to do.

**Connections**

This map filled the whole space in an orderly patterned way. Patterns are made by lines of connection, linked to each place of language practice. The main domains of language practice are arranged evenly around the outside of the space with a stylised human figure in the centre. Language domains are labelled *School* (from top centre going clockwise), *Class*, *Home*, *tonga*, *English*, *Samoan*, and *Church*. Church has a house symbol with a large cross on top, and home has a house symbol. The human figure is part of the patterns with repeated patterns within the body, arms and legs. Black lines of connection mark the basic links between domains. School is connected to the human figure and English; Home is connected to Church and Tonga; Tonga is connected to human figure, Samoan and Church; Sport is connected to human figure and English; Samoan is connected to human figure, Tonga and church; Church is connected to human figure, Tonga and Samoan. In the top right hand corner the yellow outline of a sun shape beams its rays on all. In between black lines of connection, fine coloured lines make patterns in dark pink, blue, yellow and green.

![Figure 2: Connection Map-Year 3/4](image-url)
Anne offered:
   So this was connections group. This one was chosen because if you follow the lines you can actually see clear connections. Lots of lines everywhere. He’s separated class from school not sure why. You can see that at church he speaks Samoan and Tongan. He’s quite intricate isn’t it? Quite purposeful.

All participants looked at the detail of this map:
   Tongan and Samoan are coming out of him. His feet are connected to sport. His head’s connected to school and the rest is all joined by layers and layers of lines. It’s in his brain isn’t it? School’s connected to his head. Class is connected only by a single line to English - might be that class is about what happens in school in formal lessons. It’s where only English is spoken and all of the other places, the playground and so on, all connected up - multiple lines of connection different kinds of languages patterns of lines are lovely. It’s like they’re various domains, like a mandala. All kind of fitted in and connected not just connected with single lines but all of the kind of multiple fitting of a life.

Anne was surprised at this map:
   I just didn’t think it would come from him, something so connected like this. I honestly didn’t expect anything like this from my class which sounds really bad but it’s – yeah.

Anne compared the child who drew the first map and the second map:
   They’re both very similar. They’re both very placid and get in and do their work. Anne described the first child as being ‘very strong on his culture. He loves that he’s from Samoa and always talks about it. I’ve never heard of Tonga’. Anne was unaware that the first child was Aboriginal until something came up about him needing glasses ‘and that’s when I found out that he was Aboriginal but he had never said anything about it’.

In these maps we could see students’ emerging awareness of register dimensions. How language shifted and changed for different audience and purposes. Anne began to enhance her understanding of her students to think more deeply about who her students were and what they could do.

Collaborative analysis of Year 4/5 maps

Deepening perspectives on students practices and experiences
As with the grades 3/4 maps, categories included separation, connection and outliers. The 4/5 teacher, chose one from each group for the focus of collaborative analysis. This began with the individual class teacher explaining her choice of map to analyse, and then moved into collective responses from all participants.
This map has four evenly divided vertical columns representing the different places of language practice with no connecting lines between them. The columns are structured with repeating patterns that give a sense of balance and harmony despite the lack of connection. The dividing lines are drawn in pencil overlaid by a thick dark pink line drawn in crayon. The structure of each column repeats the same pattern made by the coloured crayon outlines and landscape symbols. At the top of each there is a heading in pencil framed by a blue crayon cloud shape. The heading is underlined in orange. Underneath each cloud framed heading there are dot points about language practice written in pencil. A large area of white space down the middle of all columns ends at the bottom with a yellow straight line, a yellow curved line and a house-like symbol drawn in green. The house symbol in the first two columns is a standard square shape with a triangle roof; in the second two columns the square shape is an elongated rectangle with the roof inverted. The first two columns represent Church and Home and the second two represent School and Shop. The text in the first column Church says: Manners, We speak Samoan, Some people speak Samoan and English. The second column labelled Home says: Speak different languages, We always understand our Great Grampa’s language, At home sometime my family speaks moari [sic]. The text in the third column labelled School says: Most of use [sic] at school speak English. In the fourth column labelled Shop: We always have to use your manners; If the shop keeper speaks moari [sic] I will tell my mum to speak for me.

The teacher, Shirley, chose the map inserted here for deeper analysis. All participants responded to the map comments are included below:

Organised very clearly. Said quite specifically what they do, where they do. First one, church, I think they’ve started with the most important, just because of the way they’ve organised things – speak Samoan some people speak Samoan and English – made that distinction, not purely Samoan. Some people choose both – interchange between Samoan and English indicates an interchange of those two languages.
At home speaks different language – always understand our great grandpa’s language. At home sometimes my family speaks Maori. Important that language from previous generations is kept – a cultural thing in Maori. You get your cultural stuff from your ancestors. Sounds like they speak Samoan and English. Maybe they understand Maori that might be great grandpa’s language but they don’t speak it.

And all of us, including Shirley, read the map:

For me it’s patterns – symmetrical and balanced. These are all the same headings. The same, then these two the same, then these are the same. Considering everything is quite patterned just reverted the shapes rather than another meaning. The roof on the house is upside-down. Why would they be so thin the Maraes in a Maori culture? The house that’s in the centre, they’re up on sticks like that. They’re often wedged up on tree huts. They have a kind of scalloped top with the palms coming up. Interesting the grandfather and connections to Maori house.

Beautiful pattern making almost symbolic with clouds up top and little blue house down the bottom – privileges cultural heritage going back to the great grandpa and probably beyond in Maori, generational. Lovely interrelationship between tradition and a place people come to that place from all generations. They’re from that Marae, that central community people come to do festivals and meet.

Shirley shared a story about this child that resonated with the pattern making in the language map:

She’s one of the taller girls in the class. She’ll usually have her hair put back like that and she doesn’t say much. Even the bullet points, it’s just so ordered. That’s the sort of child she is. She will always have her stuff ready. She always packs up. She always has the equipment she needs. She always has everything that she needs organised, but a very quiet achiever and likes to learn. Likes to find out things in a quite unassuming way, and makes patterns. Creative I guess. You would have noticed her hair when dad did it. Dad’s creative as well because he under-shaved the entire lot and then did patterns in it. At some stage she even had 4/5 H in 2014 shaved into everything. So dad’s been using her head as a palette. She loves it, thinks it’s a lovely pattern. She wears that part up then so you can see it all, yeah.

Connection

This map has a large and quite elaborate pencil drawing of a girl in the centre of the A3 sheet with radiating lines leading from the central figure. The human figure has a very large out of proportion head with elaborately drawn eyes with pupils, eyelashes and eyebrows, nose, mouth, ears and long hair. Her dress is drawn with complicated internal lines to show an adolescent figure and a small circle of jewellery at the neckline. Her legs have a line across mid calf suggesting either leggings or boots. Fingers are drawn and feet with high heeled shoes. Radiating lines extending from the figure that are richly populated with text and small cartoon figures. Reading from the top right the text says At home I speak Dari with my family. I speak with my mum and dad good mannered and with my sister and brother bad. Each is illustrated underneath the line with stick figures relating to the text, the first of her with sisters and brother and the second with herself and mother and father. She is very small in between mother and father and large with ‘shout’ lines emitting from the head, beside her brother and sister.
The second line says: *At school I speak nicely with my friend and teacher* then English is added with an indication arrow after speak. Underneath this line of text there are five equal sized female cartoon figures. A third line radiating from the human figure says: *At church I speak dari with people.* Underneath three female stick figures of equal size, one with a speech bubble that says ‘hi’. On the left hand side the bottom of three lines says: *At the shop I speak English.* Underneath a male behind a square counter with a speech bubble that says ‘here go’ and a female stick figure with speech bubble that says ‘thanks’. Two further radiating lines are likely incomplete and show no text or drawings.

In responding to her choice of the connections map inserted here Shirley offered:

This one doesn’t look it’s been completed but they’ve drawn the connections ready to go. No colour on this. Lots of little added illustrations to back up the text.

I just liked how family, friends, teachers, people they’ve been categorised as well. We all look the same. All have the same haircuts. She’s got such a big head in relation to the sort of central idea of her, kind of, grown up. That’s what I thought too as she was wearing heels and a fancy kind of a dress.

Beautiful necklace! It’s kind of glamorous but the head is very, very large because what’s important too are facial expressions and mouths the things involved in language communication all of these have got facial expressions.

Shirley shared her observations of this student also:

She’s from an Arabic background, lives with her family across the road from the school. Her mum’s English is not fantastic so I think Fatima does a lot of translating. Mum – I haven’t met dad but mum is really keen to bring her children up in a culturally respectful way, the same as what she was. So culturally their family is very strong from the mum’s homeland. Her mum misses her home and Fatima knows that, that her mum has given up a lot so that she and her siblings have a better life over here. Fatima feels really strongly about what mum has given up to do that. She’s quite...
perceptive towards other people’s emotions and needs. She’s a clever little thing, asks lots and lots of questions to further her understanding. Not just for the sake of it. If she wants to know something she is able to ask the question that will get the answer that satisfies her needs which not a lot of second language English speakers can actually do that very well.

She does lessons in Dari and another Persian type language. Study Ladder is a program we use at school with activities and there are other languages and they’ve found a Persian language that’s very close to Dari so Fatima does those lessons outside of school on Study Ladder in Persian. She’s quite keen to make connections if she sees a word in English that’s similar to one that she knows in Dari she will point that out. Or if a word sounds similar she’ll point out it’s a similar sounding word and whether it’s got the same meaning or not. We have quite a few books here – in our room I’ve picked them up on my travels and they were just on my bookshelf and she found them and she’s able to read them. So she will often – the kids like her to show off and read it and she’s quite happy to do that. She’s from Kabul, Afghanistan, Dari is one of the dominant languages of Afghanistan. That’s the girl who had to go and check with mum if it was called Dari. She wasn’t sure what the language was actually called.

Making connections: Language, identity, and learning
As an experienced teacher, Shirley extended her learning about the children in her class through this work. Although language is at the core of this work Shirley also reflected on the larger social emotional behaviours and practices of her students. Shirley talked about including different language words in spelling, and the way that children came to school on Monday “because some of the children go home and speak their own language all weekend to their family and Monday they come in with a very thick accent as that home language is still really fresh in their mind”. Shirley considered that a child may be slow when answering a question in English because: “He has answered in two languages in his head and now he’s translated it into the English so he can now tell me back. If it’s going to take him that long to do anything how hard is learning going to be for him?”

On the other hand the situation for Aboriginal children seemed far more complex. Some Aboriginal children did not acknowledge any language difference, just that they spoke English. Shirley talked of the child encouraged to speak about his Aboriginal language, who gets taken from school to return to Country, but who similarly refuses to speak about his experiences. Shirley shared how this child cried for a long time when he comes back to class from country. The complexity of students speaking of Aboriginal language is further illustrated in one 4/5 map that stood out from all of the others. Drawn in thick black texta with vividly coloured Aboriginal symbols, the map portrays the child, his brother and his father as large central figures and the words ‘I love my language’. There is no reference to school at all on his map. Surprisingly, when we view all the maps were viewed together, Shirley realizes that she did not know this child was Aboriginal.

Summary
In both classes the students’ Language Maps could be grouped into similar categories to those that emerged in the pilot study (Somerville & D’warte, 2014). Most of the maps fell into two distinct groups, one showing Separation of the different domains of language practice where the student portrayed barriers to moving between the different domains such as home and
school. In the other group, that we named Connection, there were no barriers and students showed that they could move seamlessly between the different places and types of their language use. There was also another group in both this study and the pilot study that we called the Outliers with a small number of examples that showed neither of these characteristics. Some very disturbed children made maps in this category.

The teachers and researchers learned a great deal through this collaborative analysis activity with the teachers learning from the analytical skills of the university researchers and the researchers learning the depth of teacher knowledge of their students and their particular learning needs. A surprising outcome of the analysis was that teachers became aware of students' Aboriginality for the first time. The practice of speaking dialects of standard English was not always visible to either teachers or children and sometimes Aboriginal children did not want to acknowledge any dialect difference. This was not true however for the one outstanding map on which the child had used Aboriginal symbols all over the map and had written “I LOVE MY LANGUAGE” in capital letters across the map. This was the one the teacher looked at and said ‘I did not know this child was Aboriginal’. Teachers were generally much more aware, interested, and supportive of English as a second language speakers.

This analysis offered all participants a chance to consider students’ everyday language practices and experiences through an alternative lens. We were able to see how a group of students represented the connections and separations between the way they used language at home and school and in the different places and spaces in their everyday worlds. The connection between language and identity was elucidated for all participants as evidenced in the transcripts of the collaborative analysis day. The creation and analysis of the maps offered teachers an opportunity to enhance their knowledge and develop a deeper understanding of their students.
COLLABORATIVE ANALYSIS OF STUDENT WORK SAMPLES

The process for the collaborative analysis of student work samples involved classroom teachers sharing student work that had been completed in class in response to the Language Mapping and the lesson plans that were produced in response. The two classroom teachers, the music and drama teachers and the two researchers discussed the process of producing the work and then reviewed the student work samples. For Year 4/5 this included writing samples where students and teacher explored the writing possibilities of an excerpt from *Mao’s Last Dancer* and for Year 3/4 the teacher had collected a new set of maps in which students had explored the spatial dimensions of their emotional and social language use.

**Year 4/5 - Text**

**Student Writing: Text Morphing**

Students in year 4/5 began to read the book *Mao’s Last Dancer*. Shirley reported that the students were very engaged and really enjoyed reading this text. She could see clear connections between this text and the social and emotional language work they were undertaking in the music and drama program. In deciding to build on students’ engagement and help them to make clear connections between their own writing in class and their social and emotional language work Shirley focused on one particularly emotional passage from this text:

> And there was one passage in there that was a highly emotional passage and we picked up on that immediately. That wasn’t part of my program. I had a whole page I was supposed to be doing. We didn’t get to that because I thought I’ve got them with this bit. We’ll stick with this bit. So we wrote it up on the board and we identified all the words that were emotional type words, and then as a class, we rubbed out those ones and replaced them, changing the emotion. They identified it as being sad. We changed it to being happy and then they went and did one of their own choice.

The original passage was as follows:

> Sometimes I would find a place to hide amongst the weeping willows. Their dripping leaves quivered as my tears fell, as if the trees themselves understood my sadness.

Shirley designed a three phase exercise where students first identified the emotion in the passage and then isolated the words that the author had used to create this emotion. In this exercise students picked out some key words such as: ‘hide’ as something that you do. Shirley also focused on the weeping willows as representing ‘place an environmental factor’. The ‘descriptions of feelings’ was seen as expressed in ‘dripping leaves quivered and tears fell in sadness’, identified by the emotion. As a whole class students offered new words that they could substitute to change that emotion and proceeded to change the emotional feeling in the original passage through a range of different emotions. Students were then asked to do some independent writing to innovate on this original text by picking a place of their own and choosing words that would convey an emotion of their choice.

**Text morphing**

As children began to work on these texts they introduced the term *text morphing* to describe what they were doing. Shirley stated:
Oh no, the kids were, they were the ones who sort of come up with … well they knew morphing, like transformers, they know what morphing means. It changed things. So they’ve changed the whole passage into a completely different emotion by picking out those emotional based words and changed them and that’s where we decided to call it morphing, because they were changing it.

The naming of this practice was significant. By deciding together on the naming students engaged in a kind of evaluative practice, a collaborative recognition of what the exercise achieved and a practice that could be recognised and repeated because it was articulated. A clear connection is also made to purposeful language and literacy practice. The connection links knowledge of popular culture (toys – transformers – popular movie series) with their in-school literacy practices. It can be argued that this naming reinforced the connection between everyday language practices and in-school reading and writing literacies. The focus on the nature of everyday language practice articulated through the language maps may have attuned students to thinking about language and the ways it is not only used in both home and school, but what connections might be made. In this class language work was a collective activity as well as an individual one and the students were assisted by working within a group before they were challenged in their individual writing literacy.

Connecting language and place

In the collaborative analysis workshop all participants began to review the individual writing samples produced by Shirley’s students in their text morphing practice.

Examples of these texts are included below:

> Sometimes I would find a place to play amongst the purple canopy of the giant jacaranda tree.

> The beautiful flowers swaying side by side as my laughter echoed through the everlasting bloom as if the tree itself understood my happiness.

> I would find a place to lie down amongst the giant green and brown palm trees, the wonderful trees swinging sideways as my (and it says as my) gently flows right through me and a wind blowing my voice up and down as my mind gently goes to sleep.

> The small pointy leaves poke me as if they were teasing me, they’re teasing me. Sometimes no-one understood, anger, how upset I was.

Salient for participants as they reviewed these texts were the connections students made to language and place, and the wide range of emotions students chose to cover. In this writing place connected to the spatiality of language practices in similar ways to how it worked when students mapped the places of their everyday language practices. Place and language were strongly connected in the writing exercise. The teacher and class most specifically connected the emotional and social language program to the Language Mapping techniques in the implementation of this reading/writing exercise.

Shirley shared how students began to think about places they knew to construct this text. They asked about trees in the school grounds for example: “Trees that were blooming in the school grounds at the time”. Many asked about “the purple trees”, what one child described as
“those happy trees”. Shirley was able to tell all children that these were called Jacaranda trees, which several students went on to use in their writing. In discussing one text in particular Shirley shared how one student had used palm trees, making a clear link to the landscapes of her native country, Samoa.

The teacher noted the precise grammatical detail of the additions, where phrases, not just words, were used to make the changes. The teacher was also pleased and proud of her students’ work, noting the emotional range and what she identified as a developing ability to express a wide range of emotions in their writing. She suggested students: “had not just chosen a sort of generalised happy or sad”. Clearly students were extending their knowledge and adding more complexity to the task. They were showcasing their skill and displaying engagement in making these texts authentic. Shirley suggested student were seeing themselves as writers sometimes for the first time:

**Students as successful writers**

Shirley believed that this activity illustrated what makes these students feel like successful writers. They can see a published book with a beautiful phrase in it and they know they can do exactly the same. The students are not only learning to write but they are learning to evaluate what makes a successful writer. They compared their own attempts at changing the words and emotions being expressed in the writing with a published book with a beautiful phrase in it. They came to understand what makes ‘a beautiful phrase’ (or passage) by identifying how the emotion is evoked in particular words and phrases (by embodied and emplaced writing) which they were able to change.

The teacher pointed out that an additional dimension was the fact that the students were part of a research project and they were excited that the teacher was sharing their work with the researchers from the university: “They were so excited to bring them down to show you. And there was this whole thing of, who’s got the neatest writing so you can read it”. The collaborative research that involved both children and teachers in the research itself produced increased motivation to produce writing for an ‘authentic audience’ outside of the teacher and their own classroom.

The teacher also worked on writing in relation to a single emotion such as ‘anger’ and asked the students to recall the music and drama lessons where they used music and movement to reflect emotions. In the music and drama program, the room was divided into four equal quadrants and children wrote one emotion in each quadrant. Then students were invited to step into the quadrants, small groups at a time, to respond to music that played one of the emotions, by placing themselves in the relevant quadrant according to how it made them feel. The music then changed to represent an emotion in another quadrant and students had to move to another quadrant and express that emotion in their body language. This was another version of ‘morphing’, done through music, listening, movement and body language. In this way the children in this class drew on other modes of expression (multi-modal literacies) which were then applied to reading and writing literacy learning.

The teacher explained her view of the dynamics of collective and individual pedagogies of language learning as she reflected on the process of text morphing. These reflections reveal the high level sophisticated understanding that could be articulated through the ongoing collaborative work of this research:

Yes, the slower writers, the ones that just take longer to write didn’t necessarily finish their own one, but this bit in the middle that we contributed as a whole class, they
were sitting there, and you know kids inside, they get closer and closer [to the whiteboard at the front]. They were all on top of the smart board, and you know, because they were just wanting to get in closer, closer, and there were lots of different ideas being bought up, and it was a matter of then, “well which idea do we like best to fit with this?” And they would need to then decide whose idea they wanted to use. Then they get a bit political to say, “well we’ve already used your idea once, we’re not using yours again. Let’s use this person?” But you know, there was that decision making, as long as it fitted in with what we were doing in the text, and they had to keep in context with [the activity]. If we were doing happy, it had to fit in. And they were all really engaged with it. So yeah, I was really pleased with it. But I just have found every piece that we’ve done that has been emotional based piece of writing, I’ve got great results from, just wonderful results.

The teacher included both collaborative and individual aspects to the exercise, noting that the ‘slower’ writers do not finish their individual pieces but part of the exercise was the collaborative negotiation where they learned from each other. The children developed their own rules, or processes for what works and the text and emotion defined the limits they conformed to.

Shirley also discussed a YouTube video that also stimulated writing:

It was just a little silhouette clip with music, no talking, of a farmer, a windmill. The farmer came out and planted some seeds and they grew into windmills and a storm came and broke them all, and he was really sad. Then he went and sulked a bit in his little cottage and when he came out in springtime, little baby windmills were growing everywhere. The music was just phenomenal that went with it. It showed the emotion, and students interpreted the visuals and the music with what was happening. Students created a great piece of writing as well, which came about unintentionally and once they started, you just couldn’t stop them. So they’re really keying in… they understood the music and the way it changed to show the emotion of what was happening in that clip. …. it’s helped with their descriptive writing, and the narratives just seemed to flow a lot better when they’re able to do it. What happened is that this (clip) went viral, through the school and teachers used it with their classes.

Shirley connected the video with the previous emotional language exercise and the use of music to extend students language and literacy repertoires. This includes watching and analysing, building vocabulary. Shirley suggested that what became clear to students was that: “they can have a lot of words that mean one thing as well they don’t just have to stick with one word”, thus expanding their vocabulary and emotional range of their writing.

These examples of classroom events illustrate multimodal language practices in real ways – ways that included music, drama and affective language use as aligned with the School’s intervention program. Many oral literacies were also involved here, listening, observing, turn taking, negotiating, viewing, responding, thinking and discussing. For Shirley a key emphasises was that emotion had been the key to “getting good results” with students writing.

Year 3/4 - Emotional language maps

Students in year 3/4 created emotional Language Maps as the work samples to be analysed in the third Professional Learning day (the second Collaborative Analysis day). In this task students built directly on the work of the first language maps and the social and emotional
work of the music and drama program. Students used A3 sheets to list emotions and then added a picture, symbol, and/or text to detail this emotion in their lives. Anne suggested that students were engaged and really enjoyed this task. Three examples of the students’ work are included below.

**Learning more about students**

As with the previous language analysis all participants, the two university researchers, the two classroom teachers and the music and drama teacher, engaged in a collaborative analysis. The process was led by the class teacher Anne, who chose three maps to analyse and began by discussing the first.

![Figure 5: Social and emotional language: Flowing -Year 3/4](image)

He’s very bright, like compared with the rest of the class he’s, he knows what he’s talking about. He’ll take in everything that’s happening. His language isn’t very well developed… He’s Samoan background, but I don’t know how long they’ve been over here for, because it still takes a while to understand a few things, but in terms of learning…he uses what he learns. Yeah, and his English isn’t all that good, like its good you know, but it’s not as fluent as it could be. He is very calm. He’s very even tempered and I was going to add that he wants it to go well for the group. He’s one of those boys.

The music teacher also included her observations of the student:

He’s not only in art, drama and music classes, but he’s in a drumming group that I’m doing and he’s the one who will pull everybody in to start at the right time, even though he’s not the best drummer by any means at all but he’s just the one who wants things to go well. So I think he often takes that role and in our classes, I know I often call on him to get up with somebody who might be a little bit more difficult to work with. He’s just, he’s one of those kids you can rely on to bring things together.

All participants joined in analysis and their reflections are included below:
He’s pulling everything – brings them together. So aware, everything! It’s just interesting seeing a different class’s results and how they portray something a bit differently.

I love the way he’s used all the different colours to connect and made a pattern of it. It’s interestingly different than his last map because his last map had a figure in the middle and he hasn’t put that here.

It’s very flowy isn’t it? He’s used the whole space equally. His last map, the connections, the patterns were more rectangular, more angular and this map, like you say, it’s just very flowy, just all flows around. Would you say he’s happy?

Balance, that’s what I’d say when I look at that. I’d say he looks happy, that he’s happy. He loves school, yep. It’s interesting isn’t it? That you can see that and I like the way he always takes up the entire space, like there’s no constriction. There’s no tightness there. It just flows right across the whole space and he hasn’t sort of realised that, “Oh I’ve got a space here so I need to do something big to fill it up”, it’s all very even. It’s, like this, because it’s underlined, like maybe it’s something that’s grounded him as well or just helped him to be more aware of where it’s all flowing to and from.

The discussion then moved to the teacher’s analysis of an emotional Language Map that was disconnected – separated.

![Figure 6: Social and emotional language: Disconnected -Year 3/4](image)

This is not finished but the thing that stood out is that she’s showing the actual places that she shows her emotions. So when she’s dancing, which we know from drama and music lessons, she always wants to be up dancing, acting, doing something, yeah it’s just her – and in birthday parties and stuff like that, she’s happy. She’s got … under happy and sad … She’s also got that she’s sad at other people’s houses. So I don’t know what that could be, and then when she’s teased.
Yeah so she’s also got the word like suspicious, mysterious for emotions and then she’s drawn different faces for the emotions. But there’s no clear link as to which face she’s got for each one. They’re just all at the bottom. So it’s more emotions and more places. So when she’s angry, she’s at home or at school, sad is home or with a relative, suspicious is at home, school and relatives, serious was home, school and shops and scared is home, school and shops. So shops play a big part there. But home is really interestingly present across a whole range of emotions. She’s thought about all her headings.

Like she didn’t just do one section. She’s thought I’ll have all these headings and then she would have got back to filling them out later when she had more time ….

Do you think the faces are related to the boxes? I mean happy, happy and then I’ve got sad, sad? She’s got the little versions here as well. This one … angry. A small happy and a small sad .Yeah and that could be the suspicious, serious and then scared. That’s just, they’re really interesting to me. Why she put cheeks in or some kind of marking? They look like emoticons to me from the computer. Bit more dramatic too, like she’s quite a dramatic – she’s also … so there she’s got the crease in the forehead and …

Yeah and it’s showy. I think she’s a showman, and even here, like to me it kind of seems that she’s all of these things everywhere. So either she’s unsure is what I get from this - or she’s volatile. Or that she’s … what she presents in class, it’s always very extreme or comical.

She likes to get a reaction I think from people. But she wasn’t always like this. She was a lot quieter earlier in the year. When I first started she was very quiet and now she’s just come out of her shell and these almost look like masks. So they’re – yeah something, they’re separate from this a bit. They’re kind of a bit more than just facial expressions aren’t they? They’re, I think they’re about, a bit about performance, about that performance element. I think so. I really get that from her.

**Linking social and emotion language maps to written language work**

As the collaborative analysis continued one of the researchers asked the following question: “Do you think these maps are related to students’ English work?” Interestingly, Anne said that this child “loves to perform and be up in front of everybody. But other than that she’s normally a rather quiet girl”. She goes on to say that “this student is one who has started to use a lot of feelings in her writing, in describing characters as well, so her writing has become more sophisticated as a result of this work”.

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In choosing the final map Anne said: “I chose this one because there was just so much about it. It shows all the different types of weather that you would associate with those sorts of feelings. I think that’s a rainbow, I'm not sure”.

That … the heat of it. And this is like, you’d think that it might be swapped – and raining and they’re fighting – and looks like stormy when you’re scared. Is she in every one of those? Is she the one with the ponytail? That would be her yeah. Yeah that’s exactly how she, is. That’s her in the first one. It’s her party or something and this one, with the teasing it’s three people against her – and well this one here, she’s an onlooker to the fight. So that still makes her angry seeing other people fight.

Yeah and these are boys so that’s how she does boys, and this is always how she does herself. They’re so cute. That’s interesting because it’s like she, this is the one, so like is she a stranger to someone if that’s her, maybe that’s her – and that’s an older figure, yeah. Again it’s got that really interesting facial expression. You know what that reminds me of, and we said that before over there about the one with the big open mouth, it reminds me of … ‘The Scream’, you know that painting? It just looks so like that, and what’s interesting about that is that there’s so much putting themselves into the space of that feeling and communicate that in such a sort of condensed way. I think that’s fascinating because it does give them a whole new language to talk about things, about anything. If you actually look at the facial expressions on her faces it is what she’s got up the top. So it is showing the feeling that she’s talking about. I’m not sure what this is though. I don’t know if it’s just she had an extra box so she decided to draw a pattern to fill it in beautifully.

Very sort of underground and the last one she’s not the person in trouble is that right? I think she is yeah. I think she is – that one has a ponytail as well. Yeah and it says “oops”. She’s in trouble I think. That’s just amazing how large this figure’s looming there isn't it? And how little she is. She’s littler than all the others. Yeah always larger than everything isn’t she? Same with the stranger. The stranger’s really tall compared to her in this picture. But the last one she’s littlest of all – scared and in trouble, or shocked and in trouble.
I like how she did her mouth very excited … thinking about your comment for her face … scared, and it’s, you know I quite like that, just the fullness of your mouth. Yeah but that weather is just very insightful. It just gives another dimension doesn’t it?

**Linking to students’ writing**

The whole class, their writing’s just improved and in fact it shows in these three maps. I read Cinderella to them and they had never heard of Cinderella, and they just loved it. We changed the fairy tale, and so we did it as a class and it was around Halloween time so we were making a scary fairy tale. Then they did it in groups and then they got to do their own individual one, and yeah they just loved it. It was just giving them the freedom to write about whatever they wanted and I was actually seeing the proper structure of a sentence that I had not seen all year. So I was almost in tears when I was marking their work, I was like “You can do it”. When I look at that I can kind of see the proper structure of a sentence … it’s like the proper structure and the arrangement of a narrative. Everyone can tell a narrative but there’s a context, there’s pattern, there’s rhythm, there’s language, there’s words. I just think that’s an extraordinary achievement – that Map.

The transcripts of the collaborative analysis of student work samples detail teachers’ observations about the student data generated in the 3/4 and 4/5 classrooms in this study. Evident in these transcripts, are the ways teachers began to see how home and school practices were being realised by their students. Teachers used an alternative lens through which to develop a more nuanced understanding of the language and literacy practices and experiences of their students. They were also beginning to see how students’ practices were linked to the skills, competencies and behaviours on display in their classrooms. Like Shirley, Anne extended her individual knowledge of her students. Both teachers discussed the ways students were not only engaged in the content, but also, how skills, understandings and behaviour were on display for the students and for themselves. Teachers’ expectations of what students could do were enhanced. Connections between the emotional and social language program, the language mapping techniques and reading/writing exercises were on view.

**Collaborative evaluation**

In the concluding session of this final Professional Learning day, participants reflected on the process and the insights gained from engaging in this research with their students. Transcripts of those reflections are included below. This final reflection and review was driven by the following the key questions:

- What was learned over the whole year?
- What would participants like to do again?
- What might be done differently?

Researcher (Jacqueline):

I’d like to continue to concentrate on thinking about how to design lessons that actually build a little bit more on this and try in some ways to link, maybe just one or two outcomes. I think we’ve got to make this case that we are meeting English outcomes, or even learning outcomes. It doesn’t have to be English, but outcomes through this notion of treating kids as experts and positioning them in that way. So if I can help in any way, I mean I think teachers have the best ideas, and really just taking the time to think well, how can we meet those things? I think that will be fantastic!
The notion here is developing our understanding through looking at how language works. There’s enormous capacity for development of students’ learning across the whole sector in all sorts of ways. I think the notion of language and literacy as a larger concept, the idea of visual, of the visual imagery and photographs, images, sound, music, personality, being. You know, there’s a new notion of literacy that includes things like dressing and disposition and all sorts of stuff so that you’re really looking at this larger kind of notion of what literacy is . . . So that’s where to next, for me and hopefully Erehwon will be back in again [in the 2015 project], because we’d love to work with you again. You’ve done fantastic work and so we hope that you’ll come back and we’ll have other schools. We think it will be really rich, that the schools can learn from each other and the teachers can work together developing things for themselves.

Music teacher (Bea):

I would like to replicate it. It’s been a 2-term kind of program just to replicate it again to see . . . It’s been something quite new for me, and I see just enormous potential . . . I get a much richer sense of how it’s connected to the broader picture and I see much more developments as well, I think. So I’d really like to explore that, I think, and work with different schools, different kids, and different classes and particularly classes that haven’t had a relationship with us prior. That’s something we’ve both noticed too, that these kids, a lot of them have had a relationship with both of us before this started. So that would be really interesting. The other angle for me would be to develop an effective framework that we can measure some outcomes through. So if it’s not something that is in say, a project like this, as a stand-alone program, would be useful for schools in a variety of ways.

Year 4/5 teacher (Shirley):

I can see how focusing on the literacy side, I’ve got the ideal platform doing it from the library [my new role from 2015]. I can see the relevance and importance of explicitly teaching emotions – what they look like and sound like. Explicitly teaching it so that the kids understand and know it better. Because I think that’s what’s been missing. We’ve presumed they know and they don’t. So I’m not sure. I’ll have to rethink how I’m going to fit that in, but I’m sure, through the library there’s going to be opportunities, because I can see how important it is.

Drama teacher (Anthea):

I’m very keen to explore the links. Certainly both times we’ve come to these meetings it’s made a lot more sense. So while I feel it’s definitely still good to keep that, you know, you’re coming from one perspective and I’m coming from another, and you’re coming from another. I think that’s been really rich. If we were to do it again, I think I’d probably try to just put in things a little earlier in the piece about perhaps setting out, you know, like we did recently, setting out the spaces, just perhaps doing those things a little bit more structurally. But yeah, I mean we’ve talked about this quite a bit. We’d really like to just do the same, or something quite similar again so that we understand better what we wanted to get out of it, because there’s been so many other things going on. So we’re just really curious to know what it’s like with different teachers. I mean we’ve got almost exceptionally good relationships with you two so it would be quite good to see what that’s like in a different formation. I think certainly if we were to do it again I’d like to have a sit down at the beginning, because I certainly
found at the beginning of this one, just the way that it happened, that we didn’t know perhaps what exactly we could have done.

Year 4/5 teacher (Shirley):
Can I add on your comment, just the idea of timing in the program too. Like thinking about when to run [with it] and also being mindful of school terms and you know, thinking like term 2 and 3 probably is ideal. Like if we were going to be included, say, to run something, just, yeah, we’re mindful that term 4 is very busy and it’s hard for ‘head spacing’ capacity. It’s probably alright for me really, but yeah, just for the school environment. The timing has been heaps more important than I first realised. Even just changing the time the class had made … so it would be good to sit-down and just have a look at the school’s needs.

Grade 3/4 teacher (Anne):
It would be interesting to see with more classes as well. We’ve had two this time, which has been great, but it’s only two. We don’t have the comparison of one Year 3 class with another, let’s say 3/4 class. We’ve only got those so that’s something I’d like to see again. I found these sessions invaluable. They’re really good. I think when it happened, like when you run it again, to try and incorporate more of these, or even like you were saying before, more coming out to the school to have these sort of meetings, even if it’s only an hour, just to get the feedback from everybody about it. I’ve loved it. It’s been great, and I loved seeing what Shirley does with her class. Like she said we don’t get time to sit down and talk about it. So it’s good to sit down, see what her class are coming up with, compared to what my class is coming up with, and you know, it gives me some ideas to take back too. But yeah, it’s been really good. I’ve seen a massive difference in my students. They’re just a lot more settled too. Like they used to go from one extreme to the other, now they sort of, they know a middle area.

Researcher (Margaret)
I think it’s a good model to have an experienced teacher and a less experienced teacher because one of the things that we need to remember in the schools is to always use the wisdom of our experienced teachers to teach less experienced teachers, and this works really well for that. Whereas if we just work with two experienced teachers, we are getting a lot but the school’s not necessarily getting as much and the individuals aren’t necessarily getting as much. So I think that has worked out really well.

Year 4/5 teacher (Shirley):
I think it works both ways too, because I mean, I love hearing ideas that are new, that you don’t hear when you’ve been around for a while. So it works both ways.

Researcher (Margaret)
That’s really nice. So I guess from my perspective, it will be good to have a project that’s better funded [in 2015]. The Professional Learning days will be different because we’ll have all the schools coming in together. So if we have four schools, say, or between 4-6, so if we have four schools and three people from each school, potentially, plus us, it will 12-15 people. So there’ll be a lot of Professional Learning in that. The other thing I think that I’d like to be really different is the need for the school to incorporate it into their planning. If you just add it on the teachers have to do
all the work of integrating it. Whereas if the school takes it on board, they incorporate it into their planning and then it’s kind of legitimately embedded, and that’s different. It’s been a fantastic year for me and I’ve loved working with you all and I’ve really loved the fact that you’ve been willing to come in and to we’ve come to your classes that you’re running and participating.

Year 4/5 teacher (Shirley):
It’s been very enlightening because you know, as teachers we see things all the time, every day, where you don’t get to see it from a different set of eyes. The way you see things, we haven’t seen that until you pointed it out. “Oh yeah, you’re right, you know?” So it’s been good to have our eyes opened to what you’ve been able to see in their drawings. Whereas sometimes, you know, because we see drawings every day you don’t get to spend a lot of time on every one of them, so it’s been really good.

Researcher (Margaret)
I’ve learnt a huge amount as a researcher from being part of a group doing this kind of analysis. It’s been fabulous, so thank you.

Music teacher (Bea):
I wanted to add one thing. I just wanted to say that it was very rewarding for me. At the beginning I didn’t know how our work would be necessarily viewed. So I feel that you’ve been really supportive and it’s lovely to be included in this type of project because I feel that you’ve become very open and taken on board what we’re doing, so thankyou.

Researcher (Margaret)
In the beginning we were the same. We didn’t have a clue how we were going to integrate it. That was the school’s decision not ours, and so that’s been really interesting. But one of the things that I keep on remembering, and this is I guess why I’ve enjoyed working with all of you, is that in all of your different ways, you’re interested in asking questions, and it’s the people who will keep on asking questions that are really good to work with in research. Whereas other people that we won’t mention their names, but we just discussed it before, who think they have all the answers, aren’t really good for us to work with in research because they’re never open to what you say or listen to that possibility that everyone might shift, everyone might learn and working together you can actually see things that are quite different, rather than any individual thinking that we’ve got the answers, because there’s lots of answers we don’t have.

Year 3/4 teacher (Anne):
It’s really helped us though, I think, to kind of be more broad and a bit more purposed in why we’re going to do things as well, and kind of like, “Oh yeah, it’s connected to a larger [picture]”. We want kids to be equipped, and it’s been a really good to get out of your little niche as well and go, “how can this contribute?”

Researcher (Jacqueline):
Yeah, I think too that the conceptualisation in the middle of this for me is the notion of kids as knowers. They’re bringing a lot of information. They are the resource. You position them as the experts. It makes a huge difference because the general notion is that that’s not how it happens. You know, not as a criticism of teachers but
responsibilities. I’ve got all of these outcomes to get through. I’ve got all of this work to cover. I have to move them somewhere else. [Sharing the knowledge with students] I think that’s really a new way of thinking about it, because you’re just drawing it [the knowledge] from them, and starting from where they’re coming from. That’s something that’s always interested me as a teacher and a researcher, recognising what kids bring and build on it. What is it? How do you recognise it? And we have to make a space to actively get at it and you’ve done that in a really nice way, and I thank you for that.

The teachers found the process of taking part in the research a rich and rewarding professional learning. They particularly noted the importance of having time out of the classroom to reflect on their students and their teaching practice. They found the opportunity to work collaboratively with their peers invaluable, both for the new teacher who learned so much from the experienced teacher and the experienced teacher who appreciated the exposure to new and fresh ideas. They commented on the high levels of student engagement and the success in writing that was beyond all their expectations. They thought it would be good to involve more classes across the school and that in future research it would be important to develop a framework to assess outcomes.

DISCUSSION

New policies, new curricula, and the focus on local, national and international benchmarks are presenting complex challenges for educators. Increasing pressure is being placed on students and teachers to demonstrate evidence of English language and literacy proficiency in very short time frames. It is in this context, that researchers and educational practitioners continue to explore new ways to meet the educational needs of diverse student populations. This study was designed to complement and contribute to Erehwon’s whole school sustainable model, a model that worked to build the capacity of students and staff to identify, understand and manage complex and challenging emotions and behaviours at the school.

In this research project, we engaged students and teachers in studying students’ everyday language practices and experiences and working to leverage those practices in the service of learning. We aimed to investigate the possibilities for enhancing learning, and English language development in particular, through facilitating students’ capacities to use their full linguistic toolkits. Creative methods within day to day classes were used to investigate students’ everyday multimodal language competencies. This involved students in creating maps (visual and spatial representations) that illustrated their everyday language practices and experiences. These maps were used as a basis for the development of activities to assist English learning.

The needs and uses of language in everyday life are usually very different, repertoires may vary, languages and ways of using language may rarely be equal, and competence across languages may be uneven (Moore & Gajo, 2009). School based research continues to reveal that young people have multiple language knowledge, they cross registers and codes flexibly and strategically for different relationships in a variety of contexts (Orellana et al., 2012; Dwarte, 2013, 2014; D’warte & Somerville 2014; Somerville, 2013; Somerville & D’warte 2014). Despite teachers’ best intentions, recognizing and building on students’ everyday languages, literacies and cultural competencies in the service of classroom learning can be a vast challenge. The emerging research findings reveal new insights and a number of exciting
possibilities as outlined below.

**Visual spatial articulation of language as multimodal**
The use of mapping invited children to use drawings, symbols and text, to make representations outside the limitations of written language and encouraged different modes of communication. It also opened the investigation to insights that the children may not even be aware of themselves, giving them a way to reveal this to themselves and to their teachers. The mapping pedagogy implemented with all children in years 4/5 and 3/4 involved working in pairs and whole class to consider how word and text level choices influenced purpose, and audience in authentic ways. The construction and analysis of these maps elucidated register dimensions, as students examined the types of texts employed in their everyday encounters at the emotional, social, cultural, textural and word level.

Students’ multimodal language practices encompassed music, drama and affective language use as aligned with Erehwon’s intervention program.

In the analysis of the maps three categories: separation, connection and outliers emerged. These categories enabled the team to begin to better understand how to support children to navigate their language use between different sites, especially between formal school curriculum and informal language practice in home and community. Language maps showcased students’ capacity to be experts and authentic chroniclers of their own lives and experiences.

**Learning about students**
Ways of communication and multiple language can be used separately or together for different purposes, in different places and spaces with different people and these myriad communicative ways may result in repertoires, where languages are rarely equal or speakers entirely fluent in their languages. In this project teachers were keen to know what students could do and how to better use that in their learning:

> With NAPLAN, we don’t mark those. We do send them away and someone else does it. We can see how that kid has sweated over that bit of work and has been keen to do it and has tried their very hardest. That person marking it doesn’t see that at all. They see the final result and they're the ones who label that child and that label comes back.

As a first step we used mapping, the process of visually representing the ways language was used everyday in all sorts of places as a means to give students the capacity to document their practice and experience. In the making of the maps and further analysing these maps new understandings were revealed:

> I’ve got a lot of students who are Aboriginal in my class but they didn’t want to bring that up. They just wanted to talk about speaking in English. One Aboriginal student who gets picked up and taken back to country all the time, we were trying to encourage him but he was too shy – didn’t want to let us know.

When speaking out their maps to their teachers students recounted the importance of speaking home languages. For teachers, realising the potential of language repertoires was not restricted to learning about their students but also extended to new understandings about the school community.

**Increased expectations of students**
Learning is fostered when tasks are engaging and instructional practices encompass
meaningful comprehensible input that motivates students to produce meaningful comprehensible output. In this study, knowledge about students was collected with students in classrooms. Learners were viewed as possessing skills and competence rather than being perceived as lacking. Focusing on the linkages between and across everyday language use enabled teachers and the students themselves to build on their students’ skills and understandings by realizing their capabilities and seeing connections to instruction. As expressed by both classroom teachers:

I honestly didn’t expect anything like this from my class which sounds really bad but it’s – yeah.

It was just giving them the freedom to write about whatever they wanted and yeah I was actually seeing the proper structure of a sentence that I had not seen all year, so I was almost in tears when I was marking their work, I was like “You can do it”.

Although language is at the core of this work it reflected on the larger social emotional behaviours and practices of students. As expressed by one teacher: “looking at all of this [on the Language Map] it just comes as a second nature that I’ve got to do it … when I actually wrote it down on paper it was like, ‘Wow these kids are doing this all the time, checking whether their language is correct’.

Engaged learning
Positioned as experts, students engaged in rich tasks that supported learning, they benefited from the language competences of each other and enabled their teachers to see their strengths and areas for improvement. These maps enabled teachers to incorporate many oral literacies into learning, including listening, observing, turn taking, negotiating, viewing, responding, thinking and discussing. For Shirley a key emphasis was that emotion had been the key to “getting good results” with students writing.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
The students were highly engaged in all aspects of the language mapping project, enjoying individual and collective work that focussed on themselves. They were aware and excited about being part of a university research project and were excited that the teachers were bringing their work to the university to be analysed. They waited anxiously for the teacher’s response on her return. The collaborative research that involved both children and teachers in the research itself produced increased motivation to produce writing for an ‘authentic audience’ outside of the teacher and their own classroom.

The teachers found the process of taking part in the research a rich and rewarding professional learning. They particularly noted the importance of having time out of the classroom to reflect on their students and their teaching practice. They found the opportunity to work collaboratively with their peers invaluable, both for the new teacher who learned so much from the experienced teacher and the experienced teacher who appreciated the exposure to new and fresh ideas. They commented on the high levels of student engagement and the success in writing that was beyond all their expectations. They thought it would be good to involve more classes across the school and that in future research it would be important to develop a framework to assess outcomes.
References


HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

4 April 2014

Doctor Jacqueline D’Warte
Centre for Educational Research

Dear Jacqueline,

I wish to formally advise you that the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved your research proposal H10517 “Mapping students’ everyday multimodal language practices in a high needs school”, until 19 December 2014 with the provision of a progress report annually and a final report on completion.

Conditions of Approval

1. A progress report will be due annually on the anniversary of your approval date.

2. A final report will be due at the expiration of your approval period as detailed in the approval letter.

3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee prior to the project continuing. Amendments must be requested using the HREC Amendment Request Form. 
   http://www.uws.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/491130/HREC_Amendment_Request_Form.pdf

4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events on participants must be reported to the Human Ethics Committee as a matter of priority.

5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the Committee as a matter of priority

6. Consent forms are to be retained within the archives of the School or Research Institute and made available to the Committee upon request

Please quote the registration number and title as indicated above in the subject line on all future correspondence related to this project. All correspondence should be sent to the email address humanethics@uws.edu.au.

This protocol covers the following researchers:
Jacqueline D’Warte, Margaret Somerville

Yours sincerely

Professor Elizabeth Deane

Presiding Member,
Human Researcher Ethics Committee
APPENDIX TWO: State Education Research Applications Process (SERAP) Approval

Dr Jacqueline D’Warte
Centre for Educational Research
University of Western Sydney,
Bankstown Campus Locked Bag 1797
PENRITH NSW 2751

Dear Dr D’Warte

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in NSW government schools entitled *Mapping students’ everyday multimodal language practices in a high needs school*. I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved. You may contact principals of the nominated schools to seek their participation. You should include a copy of this letter with the documents you send to schools.

This approval will remain valid until 19/12/2014.

The following researchers or research assistants have fulfilled the Working with Children screening requirements to interact with or observe children for the purposes of this research for the period indicated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approval expires</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jacqueline D’Warte</td>
<td>05/10/2016</td>
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I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in NSW government schools:

- School principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time. The approval of the principal for the specific method of gathering information must also be sought.
- The privacy of the school and the students is to be protected.
- The participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and must be at the school’s convenience.
- Any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the research approvals officer before publication proceeds.

When your study is completed please email your report to: serap@det.nsw.edu.au.

You may also be asked to present on the findings of your research.

I wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Susan Harriman
Leader, Quality Assurance Systems
7 May 2014

Policy, Planning and Reporting Directorate
NSW Department of Education and Communities
Level 1, 1 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst NSW 2010 – Locked Bag 53, Darlinghurst NSW 1300
Telephone: 02 8244 6080 – Email: serap@det.nsw.edu.au