

# Aida and Her Mainstream Classroom: A Case Study of a Young English Language Learner's Literacy Development

**Bambang Yudi Cahyono<sup>1</sup>**  
*State University of Malang*

**Abstract:** This article reports a nine-month study of literacy development of Aida, a young English language learner from Indonesia, who was mainstreamed in a Grade 2 classroom in a primary school in the south-eastern part of Australia. This article initially reviews the literature concerning features of the mainstream classroom conducive for second language learning and for literacy development. Following the presentation of methodological issues, it examines English learning activities in Aida's classroom and highlights her literacy development with examples of her work. The results from this study show that Aida developed literacy skills considered important for her second language and learning development. The variety of English learning activities and the encouraging environment in her classroom contributed much to her literacy development.

**Key words:** mainstream classroom, young English language learner, literacy development, minority language children

A central issue in the discussion of second language learning (e.g. Genesee, 1994; Gibbons, 2002) and English as a second language (ESL) learning (e.g. Saker, 1994) in the mainstream classroom is how pedagogical activities should be handled with the presence of second language

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<sup>1</sup> Bambang Yudi Cahyono is a faculty member of the English Department of the State University of Malang and is currently a PhD student at the Department of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics of the University of Melbourne.



learners. For these children, learning the language used in the mainstream classroom is a necessity, as they need to be involved in the social life of the school and to be successful academically (Genesee, 1994:1). Accordingly, the mainstream classroom should fulfill the needs of the students in general and should support the needs of language minority children in particular (Gibbons, 1993; Linning, 2000).

A review of the literature suggests that in order to be supportive of language minority children, the mainstream classroom, as Gibbons (1993) argues, should provide "a comfortable learning environment" and "opportunities for meaningful interaction between peers" (p. 11). Similarly, Tabors and Snow (1994:123) state that children learning a second language in the mainstream classroom are likely to be successful when they are provided with opportunities to participate in language interactions with adults and peers. They also confirm that although children initially undergo the "nonverbal period" (p. 107), they keep on communicating with others using various forms of nonverbal communication. Therefore, as Tabors and Snow emphasize, language minority children should be encouraged to take advantage of opportunities in language interactions.

In their thorough case study, Platt and Troudi (1997) found that a warm and friendly environment contributed to a language minority child's success in participating in her mainstream classroom. Platt and Troudi observed Mary, a Grebo-speaking child from Liberia, who was mainstreamed in a Grade 3 classroom at Maplecrest Primary School in the south-eastern United States. When she began to study at the school, she had limited English and almost no word attack skills. The researchers reported that Mary was able to take part actively because children in the classroom were valued for their involvement in various activities regardless of their capacity in doing the tasks. In addition, Mary's engagement in activities was attributed to the teacher's beliefs about learning. Her teacher was aware of the importance of acculturation in language learning, the natural process of cognitive development, and the efficacy of cooperative learning. It seems that supportive learning environment and meaningful interaction in the mainstream classroom help second language children develop their second language and academic learning (Linning, 2000; Platt and Troudi, 1997, Tabors and Snow, 1994).

A number of publications have specifically discussed the features of

a mainstream classroom supportive of literacy development of second language learners (e.g. Cameron, 2003; Linning, 2000). Literacy refers to "the ability to read and write" (Pearsall, 1998, p. 1076). The issue of literacy learning (i.e. learning to read and write) is important because second language learners' ability to read and write determines the success of teaching and learning in the mainstream classroom. In addition, second language learners tend to fall behind because they need more time to learn to read and write, not because they cannot learn to speak the language used in the mainstream classroom (Cameron, 2003:106).

In her examination of how children become literate, Hudelson (1994:131-137) avers that a number of factors contribute to the development of child literacy. They include exposing children to an environment where printed words are used, engaging children in book reading activities, and encouraging them to construct their literacy through writing. An important issue in literacy development is to allow literacy skills "to emerge naturally and in a low-anxiety environment" (Hamayan, 1994:298). In addition, literacy development activities should be oriented to the "construction of meaning" (Hudelson, 1994:51), by interpreting text written by others (reading) and by creating one's own original text (writing).

According to Linning (2000:106), literacy appreciation can be improved when there is sustained reading in the mainstream classroom (i.e., with the availability of time, space, and reading materials). Through sustained reading, learners are given an opportunity to share and discuss the contents (e.g. stories and information) of reading materials. An important example is the introduction of a program called "literacy hour" into primary and secondary schools in the United Kingdom (Cameron, 2003:108). Through this program, time (an hour every day) is provided for "directed literacy skills teaching" which is aimed at fostering students' mastery of literacy in English.

A mainstream classroom will also be supportive of literacy learning if graded materials are used where children have opportunities to read from easy to increasingly difficult texts (Lining, 2000:106). In this case, teachers play an important role to direct learners in selecting their reading materials and in encouraging them to respond to the texts.

In addition to learning to read as a part of literacy development endeavor, learning to write should be done at the same time. It is important



to teach children the correspondence of sound and letters through their own original writing. Opportunities to write can be provided by engaging children in writing activities such as writing personal stories and writing dialogue journals (Hudelson, 1994:142-144).

Parents may contribute to their children's literacy development. Involvement of parents will ensure that children "receive support in all aspects of school life" (Sears, 1998:123). Wells (1986:161) reported a program held in Toronto which involves collaboration between school and parents. In a first-grade classroom, Wells observed, children take home books to read to their parents and books parents should read to them. Parents willing to volunteer were invited to read books to a group of students. Parents also helped in the publication of books that children had written.

The above literature review suggests that a mainstream classroom with special features can be fruitful for second language learners' development of language skills in general and literacy learning in particular.

#### THE PRESENT STUDY

This research is a case study of Aida, my Indonesian-speaking daughter, who was mainstreamed in Ms. Diane Ortisi's classroom (Grade 2) at Carlton Gardens Primary School in Victoria, the south-eastern part of Australia. It examines Aida's English language learning activities in her mainstream classroom within a period of 9 months. This study focuses on the development of her literacy from March, when she had just arrived from Indonesia, to December 2002, when she finished her Grade 2 education.

Aida was 8 years old when she left Indonesia for Australia. English was not new for her when she started to study at the primary school. In her home country, she took a private English course twice a week. However, the emphasis there was to make her like English language. She seemed to enjoy learning to sing some children's songs (e.g. *Old Mc Donald* and *A Sailor Went to Sea*) and drawing pictures of simple vocabulary (e.g. "house", "a boy" and "a doll"). She understood little English, but her motivation to learn English was high. On the third day following her arrival in Australia, she started her study in the mainstream classroom.

I was not sure how she felt about her new school, as the classroom situation differed from the learning situation in her Indonesian primary

school. Learning and teaching styles seemed to be more informal (e.g. seats are not arranged straight toward the teacher). In this class, children seemed to be actively involved in various learning activities. For example, children were arranged into groups so that they could work and interact with their classmates when doing learning tasks.

#### LITERACY EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

Literacy education in Australian primary schools, more particularly in Victoria, is implemented in accordance to the "Early Years Literacy Program". This program is based on the principle that effective teaching and learning in the classroom have an important role in the process of literacy education (Raban and Essex, 2002:218). Accordingly, primary schools have to apply the "two-hour literacy block" as the key element of the program (Raban and Essex, 2002:221). This means two hours are allocated daily for structured literacy teaching. The purpose of the literacy block is to enable teachers to meet the needs of their students in literacy learning.

While the focus of the literacy program is on reading and writing, listening and speaking are employed optimally to support the approaches used for teaching reading and teaching writing (Walkers, 2002). The reading approaches adopted such as oral reading, reading to children, shared book reading, guided reading reflect the use of listening and speaking.

In terms of writing, early literacy education emphasizes the mastery of the intricacy of handwriting and spelling. In addition, opportunities are provided for children to learn aspects of reading and writing. Children are then geared to develop a sense of the grammar of written language. With awareness of the grammatical aspects of language, children learn to differentiate meaning delivered in speech and meaning represented in writing (Christie, 1995:9).

The "Early Years Literacy Program" has been considered a great success (Raban and Essex, 2002:228). It has affected the way children learn literacy in their early years at schools. With the experience and success of the literacy program in the early years of primary schools, it stands to reason that attention is currently extended to the middle years of schooling. In the future, it is expected that literacy program as such can be



implemented in all grades of primary schools, especially in the south eastern part of Australia.

### AIMS OF THE STUDY

In light of the theoretical perspectives and the research context, this study aims (1) to describe English literacy learning activities in Aida's mainstream classroom, and (2) to highlight Aida's English literacy development.

### RESEARCH METHOD

To achieve the aims of the research, this study employs the case study approach as it aims to examine a case in a particular context (Johnson, 1992:76) by describing aspects of situations concerning the case. Aida, the young English language learner in this study is considered a "bounded system" (Merriam, 1998:12) or a "single instance" (Nunan, 1992:75). The case study is a research approach which is useful for second language learning research (Cahyono, 2002).

As a research approach, the case study has several advantages. Given that it represents reality very closely, the case study can be a natural source of data (Cohen and Manion, 1994:123). Furthermore, the case study approach has been a useful approach when it is used to study a case in the context of second language learning (See, for example, Johnson 1992:76-83; Platt and Troudi, 1997). Another advantage of the case study is that it enables the researcher to describe the process and outcomes of the research in a detailed manner (Brown, 1988:2).

The case study, however, also has limitations. To deal with the limitations, this study undertakes the following procedures. To enhance the reliability, triangulation was used by applying different kinds of data collection methods such as observation, the use of documents and portfolios, and retrospective interview. In addition, the theory behind this study, particularly concerning features of mainstream classroom supportive of second language learners' language and literacy development, was elaborated so as to enhance the reliability (Merriam, 1998:106-107). Therefore, the use of multiple instruments (Yin, 1994) and the description of research situation (Merriam, 1998:211-212) will increase the validity of this case

study.

In developing this study, I visited Carlton Gardens Primary School a number of times and observed the classroom and the learning activities. At mid-year, I had an interview with Ms. Ortisi to talk about Aida's academic and English language learning. Throughout the academic year, I monitored Aida's progress in her study by asking her about various learning activities. At the mid-year and end of academic year, Ms. Ortisi gave me the academic record and a compilation of Aida's work throughout the year. In writing this article, I referred to Aida again for further recollections of her learning activities and her impressions about what she was doing in Ms. Ortisi's classroom.

### RESULTS

This section describes the results of observation and analysis of the environment, literacy (reading and writing) activities, and reading and writing assessment in Aida's mainstream classroom. Excerpts of Aida's literacy work and comments from Ms. Ortisi are presented to give an idea of her English literacy learning and development.

### CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

I observed that Aida's classroom was rich in items and materials for literacy development. Posters with printed words were put on the wall while some forms of children's work (e.g. pictures, stories, were exhibited on cardboard around the classroom walls. Shelves full of books and children's literature stood in the corner of the classroom. I have an impression that, to a large extent, Aida's classroom fits what Hudelson (1994:131) calls a classroom with "print in the environment".

There was a poster with the alphabet and pictures describing the use of the alphabet. To make use of the poster, children were asked to recall the alphabet letters by connecting them with the pictures. In this case, they tried to make sense of the letters through playful recitation. The letters were chanted together in syntactical contexts, followed by the pronunciation of the sound for three times: "Ants are on the apple, /a! a! a!;/ Balls are bouncing, /b! b! b!;/ Caterpillars are coughing, /k! k! k!;/ Dolls are dancing, /d! d! d!;/ ...; Zig-zag zebras, /z! z! z!/"



A "language experience approach" (Wells, 1986:159) seemed to be applied in the classroom. Through this approach children were provided opportunities to discuss about objects and events in their environment or information and stories they read from books not only through oral activities (e.g. show and tell before classmates and reading aloud) but also through the medium of writing.

## READING

Reading activities are provided as part of the implementation of the Early Years Literacy program. Students are introduced to various text types such as picture books, chapter books, and poetry. One of the important aims of reading is "to enable children to sort and classify texts as fiction and non-fiction and as real and imagined experiences" (Walters, 2002:2).

## BOOK READING

In Aida's classroom, books were read regularly every day. The reading activities included *class reading* and *silent reading*. In the class reading, a child was asked to read a book aloud while their classmates listened to him/her. Each child had a turn of reading. Occasionally Ms. Ortisi took turn reading a particular page for the child.

A variation in the class reading activity is book reading that is conducted together. In this case, Ms. Ortisi read a book within the category of "This book is to read together". One of the books Ms. Ortisi read was *The Gingerbread Man* (Aylesworth, 1998). This book tells about the adventure of the Gingerbread Man in trying to run away from his makers (i.e., a lonely old couple) in order not to be baked. In the "run away" adventure, people or different kinds of animals attempt to catch him. The story is written with expressive words. Children were asked to repeat each sentence after Ms. Ortisi's reading and they enthusiastically and joyfully did it.

In the *silent reading*, children were given the opportunity to read books of their own choice from the books kept in the bookshelves. Thirty to forty-five minutes were allocated for this activity.

## HOME READING

An activity used to foster children's ability in reading is home reading. Ms. Ortisi assigned children to take home books. The book was kept in a folder along with two sheets of paper attached in the inside part of the front and back covers. The first paper sheet was used to record information concerning reading activities. It had several columns: date, book title, pages, and guardian/parent signature. Before giving a book and the folder to her children, Ms. Ortisi filled out the "date" and the "book title" columns. The other two columns were to be completed by parents or children's guardian.

The other sheet of paper in the folder is Ms. Ortisi's letter for parents. Parents were informed that children would bring home books of different kinds (e.g. commercially-made readers or school library books). They were also told that children could choose their own books or, occasionally, the teacher chose the books for children. Parents were reminded that the home reading aimed to "encourage children to take an interest in books" and to "develop a desire to read without being forced" (Ortisi, 2002:2).

Parents were recommended to do a number of things concerning the home reading task. First, they should read stories to their children as much as possible. In doing so, parents were required to pass on their enjoyment of stories to children. They should also allow children to tell the story so that they could know what children have understood. Furthermore, especially when children begin to read to their parents, they should give encouragement and patiently listen to their children. In addition, Parents were recommended to "talk about the story and share ideas and feelings" with them (Ortisi, 2002:2).

In the early months, Aida listened when I read books for her. She then read a book in part and I read the rest for her. However, commencing from the fourth month, Aida began to read her own book, while I was listening to her reading. Books that Aida listened to or read included fairy tales (e.g. *Thumbelina*, *Cinderella*, and *Frog Prince*), books on animals (e.g. reptiles, platypus, and emu), books on nature (e.g. weather, space, and water), and contemporary children's story books. Many of the books were picture books. However, Ms. Ortisi occasionally gave her a chapter book, especially in the school holidays which lasted for two weeks. As



soon as a book was done, I had to write the number of pages in the home reading sheet and to give my signature. On average, Aida's listening or reading ranged from 23 pages (in early months) to 27 pages (in later months).

Periodically, normally once a week, Aida's home reading sheet was commented on for encouragement. "Fantastic", "Splendid", and "Awesome" are among the types of encouraging words she received. In the seventh month, a comment on Aida's sheet reads "Congratulations Aida on your excellent progress" (See Figure 1).

Date	Book Title	Pages	Guardian / Parent / Teacher
17.9.02	Tadpole Diary	1-18	[Signature]
18.9.02	The tiger who came to tea	1-32	[Signature]
19.9.02	Ducklings on the pond	1-28	[Signature]
20.9.02	Nim's Island	1-120	[Signature]
21.9.02	Counting on Frank	1-44	[Signature]
22.9.02	Lost in Dinosaur World	1-30	[Signature]

Figure 1. List of Books Aida Read for Home Reading

Figure 1 shows a list of books that Aida read for home reading. The titles in the list include *Tadpole Diary* (18 pages), *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* (32 pages), *Ducklings on the Pond* (28 pages), *Nim's Island* (120 pages), *Counting on Frank* (44 pages), and *Lost in Dinosaur World* (30 pages). Except *Nim's Island*, all the books are picture books. The last column contains parent signatures and comments from the teacher.

**READING AND SUMMARIZING**

Children in Ms. Ortisi's classroom were occasionally given an assignment to summarize a chapter book. This assignment was given in the school holidays. In a school holiday which lasted for two weeks, Aida was given a book entitled *Nim's Island* (Orr, 1999). This book is a chapter book with a sketch or two appearing in each chapter.

Having read the book, Aida made her summary. Aida's summary of *Nim's Island* that she made in the seventh month of her study is shown in Figure 2.

**Nim's Island**

One day Nim lives on an island and she have friend who have name is Alex Rover and Jack and she have a pet the pet iguana called Fred, a sea lion called Selkie, a turtle called Chica. She like to conteck with Alex Rover and make an email to Jack too because Alex and Jack lives on other island. Alex Rover wanted to go to Nim's island because they don't have to do with email.

Figure 2. Aida's summary of Nim's Island (written in the seventh month).

Figure 2 shows Aida's summary of the story *Nim's Island*. Although the story contains a number of spelling and syntactical errors, Aida seemed to be successful in grasping the whole idea in the story. She was able to describe the environment of the Island by mentioning about pets. Aida was also successful in showing the problem of being separated with friends as indicated by the last sentence of the summary.

**WRITING**

**HANDWRITING**

Handwriting was taught using a cursive handwriting book by Nightingale and Nightingale (1992). As suggested by the book, lessons were conducted twice to three times per week and each lasted approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

The lessons started from tracing broken line examples (e.g. down-stroke movement and anti-clockwise oval) and copying letters. The latter exercises aimed to practice in writing combinations. For example, Aida was asked to copy a sentence "Hans Hopper went hunting with his father and friends" to practice "H" and "h" in combination with other letters. The most advanced practice in Grade 2 was to practice numerals. At the same time, children were introduced to write diagonal joins (e.g. "i" to be combined with "n") and horizontal joins (e.g. "b" to be combined with



“o”).

All markings seem to be positive and encouraging. Ms. Ortisi gave Aida “Good”, “Well done”, “Excellent”, a “tick”, or a “smiley”. This evaluation seems to follow Nightingale and Nightingale’s (1994:4) recommendation that a child should be rewarded with “praise and positive reinforcement to further the desire to write well”. An example of Aida’s handwriting with Ms. Ortisi’s positive reinforcement (“Well done”) is presented in Figure 3.

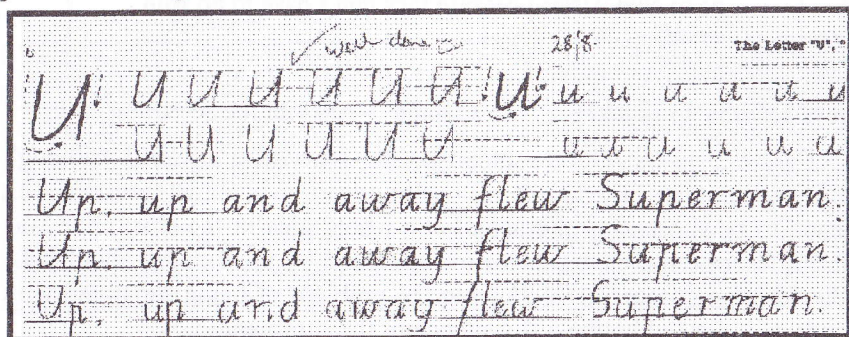


Figure 3. Aida's Handwriting (Written in the Fifth Month)

### SPELLING EXERCISES

Spelling exercises were given every week. As written in the cover page of Aida's spelling folder, children were asked to bring their spelling folders to school each Monday and Friday and to practice each day. On Mondays, Ms. Ortisi wrote ten words on the chalkboard that children had to copy in their note books. The children were recommended to take home their books in order to learn and memorize the spelling of the ten words. Many students, including Aida, did not take their books home. However, they had an opportunity to have a look at their books during free time at school.

On Fridays, Ms. Ortisi read the ten words in a row. She asked the children to write the words with correct spelling. Following the dictation, Ms. Ortisi checked the children's work and gave them stickers. Aida gained stickers of different kinds. When 8 to 10 words that Aida wrote

were correct, Ms. Ortisi gave her “brilliant”, “great”, “impressive”, “terrific”, “very good” or “good work” stickers. However, when she had 7 correct words or less, Ms. Ortisi gave her a “huge effort” sticker. An example of Aida's spelling work and Ms. Ortisi's reinforcing stickers is presented in Figure 4.

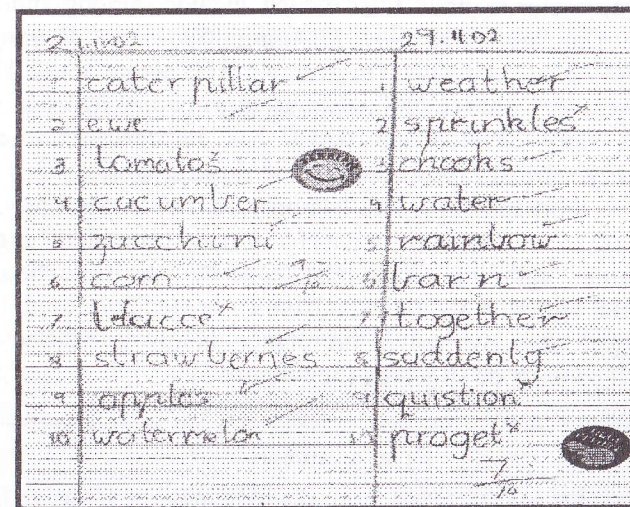


Figure 4. Aida's Spelling Work (Written in the Ninth Month) and Her Teacher's Reward.

### STORY WRITING

Children in Ms. Ortisi's classroom were asked to write stories on a regular basis. They were free to choose topics they would like to write about. Aida started to write stories in April 2002, the second month of her study in the mainstream classroom. By the end of November (the ninth month), Aida had written 27 stories, or an average of one story per week.

A thorough examination of the stories shows that although Aida's story writing was not free from grammatical and spelling errors, development of her writing ability was noticeable, especially commencing from the fifth month. All the stories she wrote from the second to the fourth month were concerned with her personal experiences when she was still in



Indonesia. For example, in these early months Aida wrote about her play activities with Donald Duck, cats, her sister, and her bike. The length of her stories ranges from 18 to 43 words, or 27 words on average.

Commencing from the fifth month, most of the stories Aida wrote were fictions, based on her imagination and her reading. Unlike the previous stories, these stories have titles which include, among others, *The Magic Teddy*, *The Poor Little Girl*, *Lightning*, *Snowman*, *Raining*, *Rabbits*, *Lions*, and *Farm's Animals*. On average, Aida wrote about 41 words per story. However, word length did not seem to be her focus in writing, rather it was story development which has an introduction-conflict-resolution. A story entitled *Lions* is one of the shortest stories. This story is written in three short sentences and has only 16 words. Similarly, *Lightning* consists of 16 words, but it is written in one sentence. In *Lightning*, which she wrote "lighning" Aida tells "One day the little house with black bricks met lighning and the man from there died".

The longest story, written in the eighth month, is entitled *Farm's Animals* which consists of 86 words (See Figure 5).

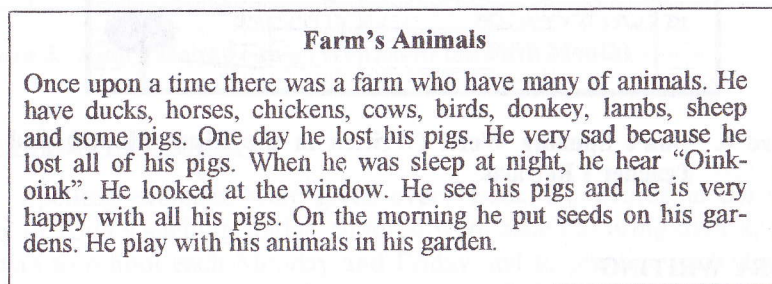


Figure 5. The Longest Story (86 words, Written in the Eight Month)

Regardless of the spelling and grammatical errors in the stories, Ms. Ortisi gave Aida a "well done" for her lightning story and a "fabulous effort" for her story about farm animals.

#### DIARY WRITING

Every Monday, children in Ms. Ortisi's class had to write in a diary. Children were free to write about anything they experienced during the

previous week. Aida wrote in her diary regularly. She started her entries with a salutation "Dear Diary". There were 17 entries in her diary and most of them were concerned with her week-end experiences. Accordingly, a phrase "On the week-end," was a common opening in her diary entries. Aida wrote her experiences when she went shopping, played with friends, went to a bookstore, played in the garden, or watched television. In addition to her writing, Aida provided drawings of what she talked about in the diary.

As children were encouraged to "talk" about their experiences and feelings in their diaries, Ms. Ortisi did not need to provide responses. However, she read and went through each entry to provide feedback on errors of spelling or expressions. Figure 6(a) shows the way Ms. Ortisi gave corrective feedback to one of Aida's diary entries.

Ms. Ortisi also provided reinforcing remarks such as "good", "great" or "well done" and encouraging figures such as a "smiley" or a "tick". For example, Ms. Ortisi gave a "fantastic" for Aida's last entry in which she talked about seeing Santa in a shopping centre (See Figure 6b).

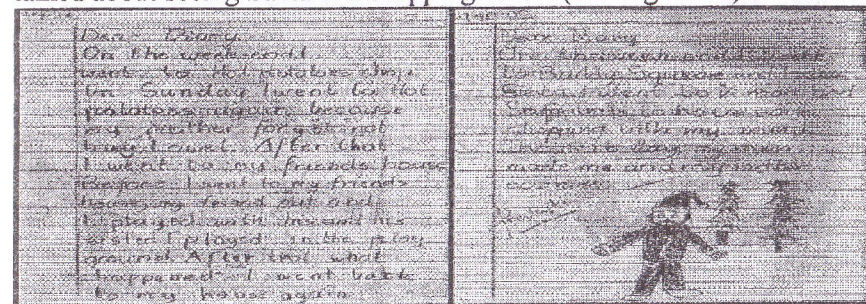


Figure 6. (a) One diary entry (written in the seventh month) with corrective feedback. (b) Aida's last diary entry (written in the eighth month).

Ms. Ortisi tried to do her best in encouraging children to like writing in the diary. In an entry, Aida wrote a sentence only, "Dear Diary, on the week-end, I stayed home" with her drawing of her home, a house with a stairway. Responding to this, Ms. Diane showed her appreciation by writing "very good".



## ASSESSMENT OF LITERACY LEARNING

The assessment of literacy learning in Ms. Ortisi's classroom was conducted regularly based on children's day-to-day performance. As described previously, Ms. Ortisi provided corrective feedback in children's work and marks which were encouraging for further learning. These methods of assessment had been applied for different forms of reading and writing activities in her classroom.

In addition to regular classroom assessment, Ms. Ortisi had to make assessment reports conducted mid-year and at the end of the year. With regard to Aida's literacy learning up to the mid-year, Ms. Ortisi reported as follows (Walkers, 2002:3):

Aida enjoys reading and is to be congratulated for bringing her reader to school regularly. She is gaining confidence in story writing and always completes work to the best of her ability .... Aida is to be commended on producing fantastic results in her weekly spelling tests and for bringing her homework to school regularly. Keep up the fantastic work Aida!

In the mid-year, children were given an opportunity to conduct self-assessment. Children were given a "student self assessment" form asking about the areas they are good at and the areas they need to work harder on. In this evaluation sheet Aida wrote that she was good at reading and she felt she needed to work on writing (Walkers, 2002:8).

At the end of the academic year, Ms. Ortisi had to write another report in which she had to decide if children could continue their study to Grade 3. Concerning Aida's literacy learning, Ms. Ortisi wrote as follows (William, 2002:3):

Aida is to be congratulated for bringing her homework and reader to school regularly. She is writing her own creative stories independently and her handwriting is neat. Aida demonstrates enjoyment in her ability to read independently and often shares stories to peers. She has achieved excellent result in weekly spelling tests and has built up a good sight vocabulary .... Well done Aida!

Like her mid-year's assessment of her reading and writing, in the end-year report, Aida stated that she felt good at reading, but she admitted that she had to work on story-writing.

## DISCUSSION

Aida's mainstream classroom represents an environment which is encouraging for literacy learning. The environmental print in the classroom conveyed an idea that printed letters convey messages (Wray and Medwell, 1991:75). In addition, it was also used as a means for collaborative learning activities emphasizing the importance of literacy. The literacy activities required children to use discourses understood by classmates who were listening to them. As such, these activities provided contexts where children could pay attention not only to what they wish to say but also to how they are saying it (Gibbons, 2002:15).

An examination of the teaching and learning activities in Ms. Ortisi's classroom through Aida's reading and writing shows that the classroom is suitable for young second language learners mainstreamed in the classroom. Opportunities for self-selected reading were provided so that children felt free to choose books they like. These are supported with the abundant supply of children's literature available at the "Reading Corner". The opportunity for self-selected and independent reading enables children "to see themselves as readers and to view reading as something enjoyable" (Hudelson, 1994:149).

A good habit in reading outside the classroom is formed as a result of home reading assignments. Reading habit formation is encouraged as Ms. Ortisi wrote the title of the book in the reading sheet, whereas parents or guardians had to write the number of pages listened to or read at home. I observed that Aida was happy as the number of books in her reading sheet increased from day to day. Also, from the list she knew what she had read and how much she read in a particular day.

Activities in Aida's classroom not only provided her with opportunities to learn the rudiments of handwriting and spelling, but also taught her to reconstruct meaning by writing (Hudelson, 1994). For example, in story writing Aida was able to write about her experience and creative stories. In diary writing, she attempted to record what she experienced weekly. It is interesting to know even though at times she did not have any activity such as going shopping or playing with friends to report, she still tried to write that she stayed home all the time in the weekend.

It should be noted that the connection between reading and writing was emphasized so as to stimulate thoughts in the process of learning. In



summary writing, the story from a chapter book had to be summarized into a few sentences. Additionally, in story writing, Aida seemed to be inspired by her reading. This may be seen in the introduction-conflict-resolution pattern, a common pattern that can be identified in child stories she has read, not from her personal experiences. Thus, literacy education in Aida's classroom supports the connection of reading, writing, and thinking.

In addition to the contribution of her classroom teachers, parents also had an important role to help her to construct the foundation of literacy. For example, parents' reading for children in the early weeks of schooling supported the formation of reading habit. I regularly read to Aida a reading book that she took home from school. Within a few months, she felt more confident to read stories by herself, and I listened to her.

Positive reward was not something unusual in Ms. Ortisi's class. Ms. Ortisi was persistent in looking at learning to read and write as successes rather than failures. No matter how much Aida read and how much she wrote, reward was always provided. The positive reward encouraged Aida to read more and write more. However, that was not the ultimate goal. In addition to read and write more, she also attempted to be a better reader and writer. Aida knew that whenever she performed well, she would get "golden stickers" which were only given to excellent work. When she collected 15 golden stickers, Ms. Ortisi gave her a toy. Positive reward is one of the features of a classroom which is conducive to development of literacy in a second language (Hamayan, 1994:295).

In Ms. Ortisi's classroom, assessment activities seemed to be an integral part of instructional planning. Through children's daily performance, observation, portfolios, and literacy documents, decisions about success of learning could be made. Genesee and Hanayan (1994:237) state that in order for assessment to be effective "teachers need to combine different methods of assessment which are relevant to her classroom circumstances". The availability of materials for assessment made it easier for Ms. Ortisi to make a semester report for children's learning and to make a decision whether her children could continue to the next grade.

## CONCLUSION

In this article I have reported the result of literacy learning of Aida,

an Indonesian-speaking child, who was mainstreamed in an Australian classroom where English is used as a medium of instruction. Excerpts of Aida's English literacy work and her teachers' comments suggest that Aida has successfully developed her literacy learning.

The classroom environment and the variety of literacy learning activities have been supportive of Aida's English literacy learning. In addition, the teacher's encouragement, indicated through her methods of teaching literacy and assessment, was also at play in supporting Aida's literacy learning. The positive result of literacy learning has in turn supported the success of her academic learning in the mainstream classroom.

The features of the mainstream classroom described in this article might be interesting for teachers of English in Indonesia. It is expected that insights from the mainstream classroom contribute to improvements of pedagogical aspects of English literacy learning for young learners in the Indonesian context.

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