Reading culture and literacy in Uganda
The case of the “Children’s Reading Tent”

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Abstract: The aim of our thesis is to study the two concepts “reading culture” and “literacy” in the context of Uganda. We base our study on the project the Children’s Reading Tent. We examine these two concepts in relation to the people working with the Children’s Reading Tent and the participating children. Moreover, we look at what needs the children have according to the adult informants and how these needs can be met.

The methods used are semi-structured interviews and observations of the Children’s Reading Tent. We interviewed ten of the project’s organisers, twenty of the participating children and conducted six observations. We applied the sociocultural approach to literacy in our study and used Street’s view on literacy as a social and cultural practise and Serpell’s concept “bicultural mediation”.

We concluded that the participating children come in contact with one culture in school and one at home. The adult informants connect these two cultures through including both literacy practices from school, such as reading and writing, and indigenous literacy practises such as storytelling into the concept literacy. This is due to the fact that children need to learn from the familiar, which in this case is the culture at home. This need can be met through mediation between the two cultures. A reading culture in Uganda implies having the habit of reading in your everyday life and not simply for school purposes. This is believed to be difficult to accomplish since reading is mostly connected with the culture in school.

Keywords: Children, literacy, reading culture, bicultural mediation, bicultural situation, storytelling, oral culture, Uganda
**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

- **BAI**: Book Aid International
- **CRT**: Children’s Reading Tent
- **EABDA**: East African Book Development Association
- **NABOTU**: National Book Trust of Uganda
- **NLU**: National Library of Uganda
- **SIDA**: Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation
- **UCWIA**: Uganda Children’s Writers and Illustration Association
- **ULIA**: Uganda Library and Information Association
- **UPE**: Universal Primary Education
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/Anna Jönsson (Karungi) and Josefin Olsson (Kemigisha).
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1. INTRODUCTION

Our master’s thesis is not only a study conducted in the subject Library and Information Science, but also a Minor Field Study (MFS) that is financed through a scholarship from Sida (Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation). As Swedish master students we have had the opportunity through Sida to do a study in a so called “developing country” for two months. Personal contacts led us to Uganda where we have observed and experienced a project called Children’s Reading Tent which is promoting reading for children in Uganda.

Reading culture and literacy became our area of interest. But the way these concepts work and what they mean in the context of Uganda was unclear to us. Reading was introduced in Uganda by missionaries at the end of the nineteenth century and has therefore a short history in this area (Ssekamwa 1997, p. 1). We wondered if the short history of reading had any influence on what constitutes literacy and reading culture for people in Uganda. Whatever the case may be, it must be acknowledged that the history and development of reading and writing differ between Uganda and the Western world. The difference in history influences the concepts since they do not work in a vacuum, quite the opposite since they are affected by the environment.

The way different concepts are influenced by different contexts and not easily transferred between different settings have, however, not always been acknowledged. The field of Library and Information Science can stand as an example of this. The field has developed in a Western context and has foremost studied concepts and issues present within this environment. For a long time libraries all over Africa were based on Western structures. Classification systems, library catalogues and collections were developed according to a Western context. Libraries in Uganda were introduced by the colonial power based on the British system of organising knowledge, which has continued to influence librarianship in this context. But as we have stated before Western concepts and issues can not be successfully transferred directly into other contexts. This has been recognised by a number of sources like Adolphe Amadi, Aissa Issak and Gabriel O. Alegbeleye. These authors claim that the needs of the users and communities in Africa differ from library users in Western settings and must therefore also be met accordingly. The authors also state that this issue must be addressed in order for libraries to serve communities in Africa (Amadi 1981, p. 120; Issak 2000 p. 21; Alegbeleye, 1998, p. 1).

In addition, the context must be taken into account. The fact that reading and writing are relatively new concepts influences how these literacy practises are perceived and used among learners. Hence, we believe it to be interesting to examine what needs users have in relation to literacy and reading culture in Uganda and how they can be met. We are influenced by the sociocultural approach which aims to try and go beyond a traditional Western focus and to seek knowledge outside of and beyond this. We hope that we will contribute to expanding the knowledge of what literacy and reading culture can be in the specific context of Uganda. We think that it is of interest for our field of study, namely Library and Information Science, to investigate aspects of literacy and different literacy traditions in different contexts since it can shed some light on how to meet the needs of different groups of users.

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1 Adolphe Amadi was at the time of his book active within the area Library and Information Science at the Cambrian College of Applied Arts in Sudbury, Canada.
Aissa Issak is Head Librarian at Instituto Superior de Ciencias e Tecnologia de Mocambique (ISCTEM)
Alegbeleye, Gabriel O. was at the time of his article working at the Department of Library Archival and Information Studies at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria.
We have a user perspective in our thesis and we will focus on the needs of children in Uganda in relation to literacy and reading culture. In congruence with the user’s perspective we decided to interview children in an attempt to hear their own views of reading culture and literacy. The interviewed children were participating in the Children’s Reading Tent\(^2\) and in order to complement the children’s responses we also interviewed people working with the project.

1.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of our master’s thesis is to study and gain understanding of the two concepts reading culture and literacy in the context of Uganda from a sociocultural approach based on the example of the project the Children’s Reading Tent. The research questions we have used are as follows:

- In what ways do the participating children of the Children’s Reading Tent view reading, writing and storytelling?
- What viewpoints of literacy and reading culture do the people working with the Children’s Reading Tent demonstrate?
- What needs, related to literacy and reading culture, do the participating children of the project have according to the people working with the Children’s Reading Tent?
- In what ways can the needs of the participating children as defined by the people working with the Children’s Reading Tent be met?

1.2 Limitations

We have limited our study to look at “reading culture” and “literacy” in the context of Uganda. We will, however, also use literature that deals with the same subject but is based on other parts of Africa.

We have also limited our study not to include the participating children’s teachers and parents, even if we believe that their views would have been interesting. However, based on our research questions we do not believe that it is vital to interview teachers and parents to be able to answer our questions.

In one way we have limited our study to the children participating in the project the Children’s Reading Tent.\(^3\) We do, however, touch subjects in the interviews that do not only deal with the project and are not only interesting in relation to this specific project.

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\(^2\) The project Children’s Reading Tent will be described further in chapter 4.

\(^3\) From now on the Children’s Reading Tent will be referred to as the CRT.
1.3 Definitions of concepts

**Literacy**: We perceive literacy as a concept that includes reading, writing and orality. The concept literacy is a hybrid of these literacy practises, which we believe can not be viewed as separated. They influence each other and the way that the literacy practises are given meaning. In the concept literacy we include orality and the literacy practises mentioned under the definition of oral tradition. We do, however, not include other forms of cultural expressions such as art, crafts, moulding and dance into the concept literacy. However, we do acknowledge the fact that these practises can be used in the promotion of literacy and the creation of a reading culture.

We view literacy as a practise that is not universal, natural or value-free. On the contrary, we believe literacy to depend on the social and cultural context. Moreover, we do not believe literacy to be simply decoding and sounding out words, but rather using, analysing and understanding information gained from different literacy practises. Our definition of literacy is influenced by the sociocultural approach to literacy and authors such as, Brian V. Street (1993a, 1993b), David Barton (2001), Robert Serpell (1993, 2001), Mastin Prinsloo and Mignon Breier (1996).

**Oral tradition**: Oral tradition is, according to us, characterised by the fact that information, history and literature are passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. The system that oral tradition represents has its own set of grammar, style and aesthetic canon. Oral tradition consists of several different forms such as storytelling, proverbs, riddles, tongue twisters, metaphors, similes, symbolic associations, idiomatic expressions, puns, anecdotes, poems, hymns, drama and song. We depend on Loyce Kwikiriza (2000), Arne Zettersten (1983) and Adolphe O. Amadi (1981) for our definition of oral tradition.

**Literacy practises**: We see literacy practises as different representations of reading, writing and oral tradition. We do not, however, see these practises as “pure”, but believe that they often consist of a mixture of both written and oral language. Similar to the concept literacy we perceive literacy practises as dependent on the social and cultural contexts they are used in.

**Literate person**: The meaning of a literate person is, according to us, being able to use, understand and communicate in written as well as oral language in one’s environment. To be literate entails “having mastery over the processes by means of which culturally significant information is coded” (de Castell & Luke 1986, p. 88). Hence, to be literate can not mean exactly the same thing in all contexts and in all periods in time. We believe that these three elements all are part of what it means to be literate. However, the degree and mix of the different literacy practises can differ. But for a person to be literate all these elements should be applied and used.

**Indigenous literacy practise**: By the term indigenous literacy practise we mean a literacy practise that has developed in the local context and is part of its heritage. Since the history and heritage of different contexts are different, indigenous literacy practises also manifest themselves differently from setting to setting. Of course, these indigenous literacy practises change over time and are not the same today as they were before for example colonialism.

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4 We also believe sign language to be a form of language equivalent to oral language. This means that a person that can use and apply sign language together with reading and writing is considered a literate person, in our view.
However, with this term we foremost want to point out that these literacy practises have had a history and a heritage in this context. In the Ugandan context indigenous literacy practises can for example be different expressions taken from the oral tradition.

**Local literacy:** With the term local literacy we refer to a literacy that has developed in a certain context. This is not a literacy only consisting of indigenous literacy practises, but rather of a mix of different literacy practises. This term is used in order to point out that different mixes of literacy practises exist and form different types of local literacies in different environments. Hence, local literacy takes different shapes in different contexts. Our definition of local literacy depends on Street’s work (1993a, 1993b) in relation to literacy.

**Bicultural situation:** The concept refers to a situation where people have two linguistic and cultural systems, with their own sets of practises. A bicultural situation involves having two different ways of defining and using literacy depending on its purposes and the context. With the concept we want to show that one way of using and creating meaning of literacy is present in school and one at home in this context. We refer to these linguistic and cultural systems as home and school culture. A bicultural situation does not, however, mean that the practises present in the different settings do not influence each other. On the contrary, we believe that they can never be seen as truly separated. The definition of the concept bicultural situation is influenced by the viewpoints presented by Robert Serpell (1993, 2001) and the sociocultural approach to literacy.

**Bicultural mediation:** We define the term bicultural mediation as the action that can occur when the two linguistic and cultural systems present at home and in school are linked together in a process of mutual enrichment. This process depends on the context and the people using and constructing meaning of different literacy practises. We find the term bicultural mediation important and useful since it can be one way for people to construct meaning of different literacy practises according to their own needs and context. This is possible through for example incorporating literacy practises and local knowledge systems and themes present in children’s home environment with the school curriculum. Our definition of bicultural mediation is influenced by Robert Serpell (1993, 2001) and the sociocultural approach to literacy.

**Reading culture:** We perceive a reading culture as a culture where reading is valued highly and a habit among its members. Reading and writing are part of and plays a significant role in the everyday life of the culture’s members’. Hence, reading and writing are not merely part of one aspect of life such as school and work, but are practised both at home and during leisure time. When people only use reading and writing at school we perceive this as being part of a school culture and not a reading culture. We are influenced by Elisam Magara’s and Charles Batambuze’s (2005) definition of a reading culture.

**Child:** We define the term child as a person under the age of 18, since it is at this time children are viewed as adults in the eyes of the law and in terms of their citizenship in Uganda.
1.4 Outline of the thesis

Chapter 1 gives an introduction to the thesis as well as a motivation for our choice of subject. Here, we also present our aim and research questions as well as the limitations for the study and the definitions of terms that we have used.

Chapter 2 describes and discusses our research methods which are semi-structured interviews and participating observations. We also discuss the problems that we have encountered in relation to using these methods as well as the ethical questions involved in interviewing children.

Chapter 3 presents our theoretical framework. This includes a presentation of the sociocultural approach to literacy and a discussion of the relation between orality and the concept literacy. Moreover, we will also give a presentation of Serpell’s concept “bicultural mediation”.

Chapter 4 presents the concept “reading culture” and what it means in the context of Africa and Uganda. This chapter also describes what is considered relevant literature for the promotion of a reading culture in Africa and Uganda. Continuing, this chapter includes further elaboration of the concept “bicultural mediation”. This includes a presentation of how some authors have argued that oral tradition and other cultural expressions can be incorporated into literacy in Africa and used in the promotion of a reading culture.

Chapter 5 provides some facts about Uganda as well as information about: “oral tradition”; the history of education systems in Uganda; the issue of language of instruction in schools in Uganda; libraries and school libraries in Uganda and finally some information about the needs of library users in Africa generally.

Chapter 6 gives a description of the project The Children’s Reading Tent and the background to it.

Chapter 7 presents our results and analysis using a sociocultural approach to literacy, starting with the material obtained from the child informants and ending with the material obtained from the adult informants.

Chapter 8 provides a discussion of the analysed material in the previous chapter in connection to the literature we have presented in chapters 5 and 6.

In chapter 9 we present our conclusions and chapter 10 gives some suggestions for future research. Chapter 11 is a summary of the whole thesis.
2. RESEARCH METHODS

Our choice of methods is based on our research questions. Since our questions relate to people’s views of reading culture and literacy and we want to study the character of these phenomena, we have chosen to use qualitative methods. We see, similar to Karin Widerberg\(^5\), qualitative methods as the type of methods that best fit questions that deal with how people understand phenomena (Widerberg 2002, p. 15, 17).

The two qualitative methods that we will be using in our study are semi-structured interviews and observations. In the first part of this chapter we will show our motives for choosing these two methods. Later on we will demonstrate how we used the methods in our study and what problems we have been facing while using our methods.

2.1 Semi-structured interviews

Our main method is qualitative interviews with children participating in the project the CRT and the people working with the project. We have chosen this method as our main method based on our view that if you want to know what people think of different issues, it is not only important but also unavoidable to ask the people involved directly. We do not believe that it is possible to say anything concerning people’s views if they do not get a chance of expressing their own opinion on the subject.

However, interviewing children raises questions of ethics. We wondered whether we would need the permission of parents in order to interview children and before we travelled to Uganda we asked members of NABOTU how to solve this issue. We were told that it would be almost impossible to get the permission from parents during the reading tents but that this was not something we should worry about. When it was time to conduct the interviews we had the permission from the organisers of the reading tents as well as from the teachers who were attending them. We also received permission to perform our study, including the interviews with children, from Uganda’s National Council for Science and Technology. Additionally, the interview questions are not of a sensitive nature and the children are anonymous since not even we know their names.

The semi-structured interview is the specific form of qualitative interview we have decided to use. We perceive the semi-structured interview as the most appropriate form of interview since we wanted our informants to feel free to express their views. One way of achieving this is through the open-ended questions which characterise semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, according to Steinar Kvale\(^6\) the qualitative semi-structured interview is a form of interview that allows the interviewer to circulate around specific themes that are chosen before the interview. However, it is not only the themes that are chosen before the interview takes place since the questions are prepared before interviews. Therefore semi-structured interviews are not totally free as to their form. Even so, the questions are only considered suggestions; consequently the interviewer does not have to follow an interview guide slavishly and is able to ask different questions depending on how the interview progresses (Kvale 1997, p. 119ff). We believed that the free form of the interviews would work in our favour since it would help us to change the course of the interview depending on the informants’ answers. Moreover, because it is the views of the informants that we want to obtain we found it important that the informants should not be controlled by a fixed structure.

\(^5\) Karin Widerberg was at the time she published the book used professor at the Institut for sosiologi og samfunnsgeografi at Oslo University.

\(^6\) Steinar Kvale is active at Århus University within the Department of Psychology.
since we believed that it could interfere with the informants’ possibilities to talk freely and possibly “off subject”. We felt that it was especially important for us to have this kind of free structure because we were “new” in Uganda. Thus, we had to try to stay aware and open to the fact that our questions, that we had written down beforehand, might not be relevant or even understandable to our informants.

We believe, similar to Heléne Thomsson\(^7\), that the free structure of the semi-structured interview can give a greater sense of control than a more structured form of interview since the informants get the opportunity to influence the content of their interviews (Thomsson 2002, p. 126). At the same time, we tried to follow the advice of Kvale that we should not let the subjects discussed in the interviews stray too far away from our area of interest. (Kvale 1997, p. 120).

Another advantage of the semi-structured interview and its flexibility is that it makes it possible to rephrase questions (Thomsson 2002, s. 40f) and we considered this to be especially important for us. The reason for this was that factors like age, cultural and language differences would present special challenges for us in relation to understanding the informants correctly and for them to understand us. Therefore we needed the possibility of rephrasing questions to clarify and to avoid misunderstandings as much as possible.

One important reason for using a qualitative method such as semi-structured interviews is that it would not be necessary for us to have a representative selection of informants. Since we had to choose informants that can not be seen as statistically representative, such as children who are fluent in English, we needed a method that allowed us to do this. Instead of making claims of being statistically representative, qualitative studies points to the trends and directions of attitudes and views of respondents in a given issue (Bryman 2002, p. 270f).

It is however important to note that our results might be strongly affected by the fact that we only interviewed children who were able to express themselves in English, some of them were also highly skilled in doing this. This could mean that these children have highly educated parents and might be especially privileged in their community. We know that at least two of the children that we interviewed had teachers as parents since they mentioned this during the interviews. Therefore, there is a possibility that there is a certain bias in our material.

To attempt to overcome the special obstacles of interviewing children we consulted guidelines presented by Elisabet Doverborg & Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson\(^8\). The first of these guidelines that we tried to apply was to find a quiet place to perform the interviews where we would not be disturbed. Secondly it was to try and create a good relationship with the children. Third it was to create questions where the children could relate the topic of discussion to a situation that is concrete and well-known to them. This was due to the reason that children are believed to have an easier time talking about subjects that they can relate to previous experiences, according to Doverborg & Pramling Samuelsson (Doverborg & Pramling Samuelsson 2000, p. 25, 33).

We also decided to interview the children in pairs of two. The reason for this was that we believed that it would enable the children to feel more secure if they were interviewed together with someone they knew and were friends with, rather than if they were alone with us, which is also argued by Thomsson and Doverborg & Pramling Samuelsson. We did not

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\(^7\) Heléne Thomsson is active at Stockholm University within the Department of Psychology

\(^8\) Elisabet Doverborg and Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson are active at the University of Gothenburg and are doing research related to children and learning.
want the children to be interviewed alone with the two of us since we did not want them to be put alone in the spotlight as we thought this could be intimidating to them. The authors mentioned here also state that children that are interviewed in pairs can inspire each other and come up with new ideas. New useful material can be obtained through these new ideas and this aspect also convinced us to perform the interviews in this way (Thomsson 2002, p. 71f, Doverborg & Pramling Samuelsson 2000, p. 29).

2.2 Observations

Our second type of method is observations. Based on our qualitative approach we believe, similar to Widerberg, that it is possible to combine different kinds of methods. Therefore, we considered it of value to use interviews together with observations (Widerberg 2002, p. 128).

Our reason for choosing to use observations in our study was very much due to the fact that we were, as mentioned before, “new” to Uganda and we were not familiar with the environment and the social interactions there. The observations gave us a chance to get to know the context. As stated by Alan Bryman9, observers are often known to be interacting with the people being observed, as a way of getting to know the environment that is being observed better, and this was just what we wanted to do. Bryman also describes observations as a way of being able to study behaviours within a group of people and not only taking the informants’ word for a fact but also to observe what is actually happening. However, to establish what was “actually happening” as contrasted to our informants’ statements was not our main aim for using this method. Rather it was to get a better insight into the context which as we have mentioned is another reason for using this method (Bryman 2002, p. 277).

We decided that we would do our observations before the interviews since it has many advantages, as argued by Widerberg. Conducting observations before interviews is seen as a way to gain insight into the context of the informants and acquire background information, which can be helpful when interviewing informants (Widerberg 2002, p. 129). Our observations can be called unstructured observations since we did not have a specific plan of what to observe. The type of observations that we did is a little difficult to pin down in terms of being participating or non-participating. However, as Michael Quinn Patton has noted:

The extent of participation is a continuum that varies from complete immersion in the setting as full participant to complete separation from the setting as a spectator. There is a great deal of variation along the continuum between these two extremes (Patton 1990, p. 206).

How the observations were performed and what they involved is described below.

2.3 Interviewing and observing

In this part of the chapter we will demonstrate how we carried out the observations and interviews with both children and adults. We will, however, mostly focus on the interviews with the children since we found these interviews most challenging.

Our observations were conducted during the three CRTs we attended. Each CRT lasted for two days. The activities for children during these events varied somewhat but were mainly free reading, reading aloud, storytelling, story writing, painting, quiz, debate, moulding, hand work, painting, drawing, singing and games. We did observations on all of these three CRTs but more time was given to interviews at the last two.

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9 Alan Bryman is Professor of Organisational and Social Research at Loughborough University in Leicestershire, United Kingdom.
At the first CRT in Ntungamo we only observed and took a more participating role than at the other two times. What we mean by this is that we tried to assist the organisers in the ways that we could through for example helping them to unpack, pack books and distribute them and other small practical things. A few times we were also given the role as “teachers” during the different activities which meant that we for example read to the children or listened to them reading and telling stories. However, during those occasions we were accompanied by “real” teachers as well and most of the time during the first CRT in Ntungamo we were just walking around trying to listen and observe what was happening during the different activities. After this first CRT we felt that we got a better insight into the project which gave new ideas on how to develop our study and our interview questions. During the observations we took notes on for example what books were being read or other things that we found interesting. However as mentioned, our notes were not conducted in a structured manner.

At the CRTs in Jinja and Mityana we were quite busy finding children whom we could interview and therefore we did not participate as much in the activities.

We felt that the approach of starting with observations worked well, since we did not have a clear view of what the CRT was before we attended it. We will, however, mostly base our study of the interviews we conducted. But even if it is foremost the findings from the interviews that are going to be presented, we will sometimes complement with our findings from the observations at the CRTs.

We have interviewed twenty children, ten girls and ten boys. We wanted to interview children that were talkative, not too shy and who were good at expressing themselves in English. These criteria were chosen in order for us to be able to get much information out of the interviews. To be able to find such children we were helped by teachers, the organisers of the CRTs and through our own interactions with the children. The children were between 10 to 14 years old, but most of them were 12-14 years old. The interviews lasted from 20 to 50 minutes depending on how much the children talked and seemed to enjoy being interviewed.

The interviews were recorded as a way of making it easier for us to collect all the information from the interviews, which helped us when we analysed our findings. The recordings also made it possible to use quotations in the report. We used a small mp3-player to record and it did not seem to disturb the informants. On the contrary, many of the children seemed to find it exciting to be recorded and some of them got to listen to their recorded voices which appeared to make them happy.

We prepared an interview guide with questions before the interviews, but since we used a semi-structured interview method we did not always ask the questions exactly the same way and not always all of them depending on the informants and their answers. Sometimes we also used follow-up questions. We found this free structure to be especially useful when interviewing children since they could change the direction of the interview through their unexpected thoughts and when that happened we found it useful to let the children talk freely. Their thoughts also led to new questions that we had not thought of before the interview.

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10 As mentioned we do not claim to have a statistically representative selection and this selection of informants may have strongly affected our results. However, we initially had the intention of using a translator, to be able to include children who did not speak English but this proved to be difficult and problematic as we will describe further ahead in this chapter.

11 With a few exceptions when the children spoke too quietly and there was too much background noise at the same time. We then relied on making extensive notes.
Even if we had consulted literature concerning the interviewing, the first interview with the children did not turn out the way we had hoped. In retrospect the interview was almost farce-like. Considering the literature concerning interviewing children that we had previously read, almost everything went wrong.

First, we tried to arrange a quiet place where we could interview the children. We were shown to a room where we could close the door. During the first interviews we were, however, interrupted several times when people entered the room for different reasons. This did of course lead to an interruption both for us as interviewers and the children in their thoughts. We realise that we should have been clearer about the fact that we did not want to be disturbed, not for our own sake but in respect to the children.

We also tried to arrange a good environment and create a good relationship with the children in order to make it easier for them to understand us and vice versa. One step towards this was through trying to use a translator to help the children. However, this seems to have had the opposite effect and had more disadvantages than advantages. The teacher started asking the questions in English and said that it was best since the children spoke English well. When the children did not understand the questions the teacher just repeated the questions and when we wanted to add something or ask a follow-up question the interview situation became somewhat chaotic. The children did not know whom to listen to and whom to answer. However, this can also be blamed on the fact that we did not have the opportunity to find a “proper” translator.

This first interview turned out to be a good lesson and it was clear that we needed a new approach. We decided to do the rest of the interviews by ourselves. This was however not a perfect solution, but it was the best one available. When we compare the two different interview situations we felt that the interviews where we were alone with the children had a more relaxed atmosphere. We felt that most children could express themselves quite freely and were not afraid to contradict us and ask when they did not understand us. There were however some who were very shy so we made those interviews short and tried not to press them too much to answer our questions. We also asked them several times if they were ok with the interview and told them that we did not want them to feel forced to participate. But even those children who were very shy made it clear to us when they did not understand and seemed to tell us their honest opinions even though their responses were significantly shorter than the others’.

We interviewed the children in pairs of two except for a few occasions when we interviewed more than two at once. We believe that the approach worked well and made the children more relaxed during the interviews. When it worked best the children stimulated each other and started discussing among themselves when they did not agree with each other. Here follows an example that shows how two boys started discussing among themselves about whether one of the boys enjoyed telling stories or not:

But do you enjoy when your friends tell you stories?
Boy1: I can enjoy
You can enjoy?
Boy2: But he does not want to.
Boy1: For me, I don’t, I don’t, I don’t want to waste my saliva telling those stories, but I can tell.
Yeah you can tell, and you can enjoy when people tell you?
Boy1: Yeah friends.
Boy2: But how can you enjoy when you don’t want to tell?
Boy1: A-aah! It’s like this: I enjoy telling and listening, as I have told you.
Boy1: But I can tell, but not too much.
Boy2: So just say: I can tell, ey?
Boy1: I can TELL! (Two boys 12 years old, Mityana, 2007-02-26)

Nevertheless, there can be disadvantages with interviewing two children at a time if one of the children is dominating the interview situation. This happened on one occasion and it was a difficult situation to handle. When this happened we tried to include the boy that was not to a large degree participating in the interview by asking questions directly towards him and also asking him of his opinion in relation to the other boy’s answers.

The interviews with the children involved some difficulties. However, we believed that it was important to get the children’s own views and not just let other people talk about their needs and situation. We are satisfied with our decision to include interviews with children in our study since the children were able to give us much information concerning their view of different literacy practises and about their context.

We have interviewed ten people working with the CRT. The interviews varied from 30 minutes to up to 120 minutes. The use of the semi-structured interview made it possible for the informants to talk freely and they got the opportunity to go a little bit off topic. Even if the free form of the interview sometimes led us too far from the area of interest, it also sometimes gave us information we had not expected.

We had chosen to interview the people working with the project one by one. This decision is based on the fact that we want their individual views and opinions and we also believed that they did not need the same kind of security that the children needed. Our informants are active within different part of the National Book Trust of Uganda, which is an umbrella organisation that has members who are active within different areas connected to reading.

We decided to interview the people working with the project after we had attended all of the CRTs. This gave us an opportunity not only to gain insight into the project but it also gave us a chance to meet and interact with many of the people working with the project before the interviews. We believe that this benefited us when interviewing the people working with the CRT since we had an idea of what they were talking about, it gave us new inputs to the interview questions and it was also an advantage to get to know the informants not just by name before the actual interviews.
3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter we will take a closer look at the sociocultural approach to literacy. We will give a short background to this approach and how it has developed and progressed. Furthermore, we will demonstrate and give insight into the most important features and concepts of the sociocultural approach. We are also going to present some of the ways in which this approach can help us when we analyse our findings.

3.1 Sociocultural approach to literacy

According to the sociocultural approach, the concept literacy is not a neutral or autonomous skill that can be easily described or taught. However, Suzanne de Castell & Alan Luke have stated that a common belief is that literacy is a context-neutral and value-free skill. Literacy is then viewed as quite an unproblematic technical skill concerning reading and writing. This view has been strong within the North American educational sector where children have been taught according to the same literacy programs, which presuppose universal stages of cognitive, linguistic, and moral development (de Castell & Luke 1986, p. 87, de Castell & Luke 1987, p. 422). Street also points out that this view has been “exported” to literacy programs in “developing countries” and we will describe this point in more detail later on (Street 1996, p. 5f).

This common view of literacy has been criticised by theorists from a number of different fields for not acknowledging the many different ways in which literacy can take form. Instead of talking about literacy, these theorists claim, we should be talking about literacies. Furthermore, this view sees literacy as a social and cultural practise that takes different shapes depending on the context. When literacy is studied in relation to other contexts than a Western setting it becomes especially clear that literacy does not look the same and can not be taught according to a universal pedagogy. This view of literacy is rooted in social science subjects like anthropology, sociolinguistics and ethnography. This perspective goes by a number of names and the most common ones are “New Literacy Studies”, “Cross-cultural approaches to literacy” and “Sociocultural approaches to literacy” (de Castell & Luke 1987, p. 422; Street 1996, p. 5; Street 1993a, p.1, 5; John-Steiner et al. 1994a, p. 2; Verhoeven & Snow 2001, p. 13). We have decided to use the term “Sociocultural approach to literacy” because it demonstrates the fact that different sociocultural contexts influence the way literacy is understood and is given meaning.

The critique of what proponents of the sociocultural approach call “The autonomous model of literacy” was put forward in the 1980s by theorists like Brian V. Street, Daniel A. Wagner, Shirley Brice Heath, James Gee, David Barton and Robert Serpell. In the literature

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12 Suzanne de Castell was at the time of the article associate professor at Simon Fraser University with in the Education department. Alan Luke was at the time of the article professor of Higher Education at James Cook University.

13 Brian V. Street was at the time of most of the works that we refer to active as a professor at King’s College, University of London. He has an anthropologic approach. Daniel A. Wagner was at the time of the article we used active at the University of Pennsylvania. Shirley Brice Heath is only referred to through second-hand sources but her study concerning literacy practises in three socioculturally different contexts are famous within New Literacy Studies. She has a socio-linguistic approach (Serpell 2001, p. 250). James Gee is not used in our study but is a giant within New Literacy Studies and his work where he discusses the term discourse in relation to literacy is famous. He has a socio-linguistic approach (Prinsloo & Breier 1996, p. 16 & 22).

David Barton was at time of the article we used active at the University of Lancaster.
concerning literacy these kinds of writers are often considered as part of the “New Literacy Studies”. However, it has also been noted in this literature that their works have developed independently of each other (Prinsloo & Breier 1996, p. 16; Street 2003, p. 77, Wagner 2001, p. 303; Serpell 2001, p. 243).

In our study we are going to depend mostly on Brian V. Street’s works since we have found them insightful and useful in connection to our research questions. Street is a professor at King’s College, University of London and is known for his ethnographic studies of literacies (Shohet 1997, p. 5). The fact that Street is seen as the first to introduce the term literacies in 1984 in his work *Literacy in theory and practise* is one way of showing that he has had an impact on the research of literacy in general and of the “New Literacy Studies” in particular (Wagner 2001, p. 303). Since the 1980s Street has continued to revise his findings and theories in a number of books and articles and we will be using some of them in our study.

Apart from applying Street’s works in our study we will also be using some of the concepts that Robert Serpell has demonstrated in his works. We found the concept bicultural mediation useful in relation to our findings. Moreover, Serpell’s works inspired our definition of the term bicultural situation. We will not be referring to all the theorists within the “New Literacy Studies”, that we mentioned above, however they and their work are constantly referred to in the literature we have used.

3.1.1 A social and cultural practise

The way we will view literacy in our study is based on Street’s notion of literacy as a social and cultural practise. In relation to that notion he continues by arguing that the concept of literacy is neither neutral nor independent of social context. On the contrary, literacy must be seen as a concept that has its roots in Western traditions and contexts and has been affected by these traditions. One way of showing the close relation between Western traditions and the concept of literacy is through the kind of characterisations that literate individuals are often given such as “modern”, “cosmopolitan”, “innovative” and “empathetic”. When literate people are connected with these “Western” concepts and when these concepts are given great value, literacy can not only be seen as a way of describing people, but must also be seen in the light of the power relations involved (Street 1993a, p. 5f).

One of the consequences of linking literate individuals with these different concepts is that non-literates are viewed as the opposite of these concepts. People with a low degree of literacy are seen as if they have “limited ability to solve problems and think powerfully” (John-Steiner et al. 1994a, p. 23). This is especially problematic when literacy is considered as a practise that exclusively deals with reading and writing since it downplays the experiences of people with, for example, a long oral tradition (Street 1993a, p. 6f). Mastin Prinsloo & Mignonne Breier are making a similar point when they are discussing the concept of “illiteracy”.

The notion of ‘illiteracy’, for example, has to be seen not as an objective description of a social fact, but as an ideological, historically located statement which is a product of specific interests and which constructs a group of people (Prinsloo & Breier 1996, p. 22).

Robert Serpell was at the time of the article we used active at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

14 Mastin Prinsloo and Mignonne Breier were both active at the University of Cape Town within the Department of Education at the time of the writing of the book *The social uses of literacy: theory and practise in contemporary South Africa*. 

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Additionally, we see literacy as a concept that has evolved in a Western context and is influenced by that specific context. It can not be seen as a neutral practice that easily can be transferred to different settings and contexts. In fact when literacy is seen and emphasised as a neutral practice, we agree with Street that it is in itself an ideological statement (Street 1993a, p. 7).

The sociocultural approach has, as we have shown above, criticised approaches that just perceive literacy as a neutral technical skill that is universal and based on the same predictable cognitive processes. The focus has been on the individual learner and not on communicative practices. The learner is seen as passive when she/he transforms from “illiterate” into “literate” (John-Steiner et al. 1994a, p. 2; Street 1993b, p. 25). Street points out that the previous research that focuses on cognitive processes and technical skills is still interesting and he does not deny that they are one aspect of literacy. However, Street understands these cognitive processes and technical skills as “encapsulated within cultural wholes and within structures of power” and should not be analysed as isolated practices (Street 1993a, p. 9).

The research that both Street and Prinsloo & Breier refers to as part of “The autonomous model of literacy” is foremost work of Eric A. Havelock, Walter J. Ong and Jack Goody.

These authors all stress the divide between the oral and the literate and how literacy can transform and develop human cognitive structures. Goody states that written language, in contrast to spoken language, is more likely to bring greater awareness of “contradictions” and “illogicalities” in thinking. He finishes one of his books with the statement “Cognitively as well as sociologically, writing underpins ‘civilization’, the culture of cities” (Goody 1987, p. 300). In addition, Ong argues that no other invention has transformed the human consciousness as much as the written language and that it is a necessity in order for abstract and logical thinking to be possible. Havelock demonstrates a similar point when he states that the swift from oral to literate by the Greek philosophers changed all Western thinking to come (Ong 1982, p. 78; Havelock 1977, p. 369). These authors imply that oral and the written language are separated from each other and that the written language is required in order to develop certain analytical powers. The written language is also viewed as part of the development and the evolution of humankind. According to Street this view is also present among many educators and policy makers who develop and design literacy programs that promote literacy in “developing” countries. It is stated that these kinds of literacy programs promote and “deliver” a package of neutral literacy skills, without proper concern about the contexts of the learners (Street 1996, p. 5f). The promotion of literacy through these programs is believed by the educators and policy makers to result in development, empowerment and modernisation. This conviction can be connected with the view of literacy as the separation between “traditional” and “modern” ways of life and between “primitive” and “civilised” people, which is the view that the authors within “The autonomous model” also put forward (Wedin 2004, p. 6).

However, it has been noted by Street among others that this expected and wanted empowerment, development and modernisation do not necessarily follow literacy programs (Street 1996, p. 5f; Scribner & Cole 1981 p. 14). There is no doubt that the written language did play a significant role in the development of industrialisation and modernisation in the Western part of the world, but this does not necessarily mean that a similar process can follow

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15 Eric A Havelock had a long academic career and he was among other things Professor of Classics at the State University of New York at Buffalo, before his retirement in 1973 (Wikipedia 2008a). Walter Ong was an American Jesuit priest, professor of English literature, cultural and religious historian and philosopher (Wikipedia 2008b). Jack Goody was Emeritus Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Cambridge at the time of the writing of the book The interface between the written and the oral (1987).
the introduction and promotion of the written language in other contexts. Moreover, literacy can be a way of reaching empowerment, but not if literacy is taught in a skilled-based way and the focus is on recall and evaluation. It is a myth that literacy always leads to social and economical gain, since it also depends on the structures present within the contexts. But this aforementioned view is often part of literacy programs aiming at learners in “developing” countries (Wedin 2004, p. 3ff).

In addition, within these dominant literacy discourses that have influenced literacy programs, literacy has been closely connected to educational practises as well as to the ability to read and write. But in the sociocultural approach, literacy is not only seen as a practise learned and used in school. On the contrary, literacy and learning is viewed as a practise that is intimately linked to our everyday life. David Barton stresses that children learn important parts of literacy through exposure to literacy practises in their home environment (Barton 2001, p. 24). Furthermore, Serpell argues that every family consists of its own unique culture that affects literacy. These different forms of family cultures are constructed through a set of paradigms, myths, stories and rituals. Serpell states that rituals play a significant roll for child development (Serpell 2001, p. 253). It has not been possible for us to really investigate these family cultures; however we have found it important to ask the children who are interviewed in our study questions about storytelling in their homes as a way of finding out something about the literacy practises present in their home environments.

We have been pointing out the weaknesses of different literacy discourses, but in what way can this “new” approach give us new insight into literacy practises? One important contribution of this approach is the focus on the context in relation to literacy, which we have already discussed. We will use this particular feature of the sociocultural approach in our study, when we look at how the people working with the project perceive literacy in relation to their specific context. We will demonstrate what we think literacy can mean in the context of Uganda.

Furthermore, the centre of attention in this approach is not on how literacy affects people but rather on how people affect literacy. Street states that people in what is considered to be a newly literate society do not have to be passively transformed by literacy, but instead “actively and creatively apply literate skills to suit their own purposes and needs” (Street 1993b, p. 25). In addition, Prinsloo & Breier argue that apart from focusing on what people do with literacy, research should also study people’s understanding of what they do and the value they give to these activities. Moreover, the values people give literacy practises must also be seen and examined in the light of the structures and ideologies that create those values (Prinsloo & Breier 1996, p. 24). By looking at how people affect different literacy practises it is unavoidable to also examine the context of those people. This means that we have to study how those people in their particular contexts influence the concept of literacy. In relation to this Street argues that a sociocultural approach

[e]nables us to see how literacy is incorporated into the receiving culture’s already existing conventions and concepts regarding communication (Street 1993b, p. 25).

When we examine our findings it is therefore not only important to look at the context in which literacy is based but also look at the ways in which the people working with the project and the participating children can make something new out of the concept and make it their own. In accordance with Prinsloo’s & Breier’s views we are going to look at the way the people working with the project understand and value literacy practises in their particular environment.
From a sociocultural point of view, literacy has to be constructed in relation to the people involved and their particular needs. This is however not always an easy task. It is much easier to promote already defined and “neutral” literacy skills through a centrally designed program than trying to adapt to the needs of the learners and implement local knowledge and literacies (Street 1996, p. 6). It is a challenge, still it is possible. In line with Street’s views we will in our study show in what way literacy can be constructed based on the needs of the children participating in the CRT. Or more specifically, as the needs are expressed by our informants. Furthermore, we will try to show, also based on the views of our informants, in what way the CRT can meet the needs of the participating children, based on their particular context.

3.1.2 Literacies

Street promotes a view of literacy that takes different local settings into account. He argues that we should not view literacy as one single concept with one meaning, but we should rather see literacy as a concept that has many different meanings depending on the context. Instead of talking of literacy as one thing he is stating that we should acknowledge that many different literacies are present in the world. He uses the term “local literacy” to show that literacy looks different depending on the local context (Street 1993c, p. 2).

The will, within the sociocultural approach, to look at different local contexts in relation to literacy is not, according to Street

[to ask for the preservation of tradition for its own sake or to resist change in order to fossilise local languages and literacy as though in a zoo (Street 1993c, p. 1).]

Street also argues that he is not romanticising local literacy practises. He bases this belief on the fact that he is not trying to preserve the status-quo but rather he is, through his research, committed to social transformation (Street 1996, p. 6). In addition, the sociocultural approach is based on a view that local languages and literacies have something positive and constructive to offer, whereas

[the uniformity assumed by mindless pursuit of a single language and a single literacy is damaging and impoverishing for us all (Street 1993c, p. 1).]

The introduction of Street’s term “local literacy” can be mistaken for an alternative form of literacy, contrary to a “Western” form of literacy; however this is not necessarily the case. Street points out that it does not have to be either or, but rather a combination of different literacy traditions. Different traditions of literacy can influence each other and adapt to the different needs of the learner. Indeed, it is not possible for previous colonial countries to go back to a pre-colonial state of things. The former colonial countries are still affected by the tragic history and the power relations that are part of that history. Nevertheless, a situation that is not based on black or white, but rather consists of grey tones is possible. The solution, from a sociocultural point of view, is to look at literacy as a fluid concept. Literacy in former colonial countries can not be uninfluenced by the “Western” way of looking at literacy, but still it is possible and useful to incorporate the different forms of communication patterns and literacy forms that are in use in the particular context (Street 1993b, p. 25).

The connection between local and global has in some ways intensified and in some ways changed since Street started developing his concept of “local literacy”. Maybe now more than ever before we can see how the local and global are tied closely together. These changes are also seen in the connection between different literacy traditions (Serpell 2001, p.252).
Street has acknowledged the connection between local and global in one of his more recent articles and he concludes that

\[\text{The result of local-global encounters around literacy is always a new hybrid rather than a single essentialized version of either. It is these hybrids that NLS}\textsuperscript{16} \text{focus upon rather than either romanticizing the local or conceding the dominant privileging of the supposed “global” (Street 2003, p. 80).}\]

The sociocultural approach challenges the idea that writing in some ways will replace oral communication, which is based on the assumption that literacy (in its strictest sense) is superior to oral communication (Street 1993b, p. 28). Instead oral communication is seen as a part of literacy and states that “the distinction between oral and literate is overstated”, as has been argued in previous dominant literacy discourses (Street 1993a, p. 6). One consequence of the fact that the dichotomous view of written and oral language is challenged can be that the concept literacy does not include only reading and writing, but also oral tradition. Different literacy forms and communication patterns are part of the concept literacy and form a hybrid. However, a definition of literacy that includes orality is not present among all theorists within the sociocultural approach. Instead of incorporating oral tradition in the concept literacy they see it as interconnected concepts that affect each other. The grounds for such as theoretical viewpoint can be found in the fact that the word literacy has a clear etymological connection to the concept letter or alphabetic print. Hence, it is hard to disregard the historical heritage and root of the concept literacy. Elizabeth Moje\textsuperscript{17} argues that the inclusion of orality in the concept literacy will strengthen the privileged print literacy instead of reinforcing orality. She believes that literacy can never be detached from its strong historical link with written text and therefore the written literacy representation will always be the primary form of literacy (Moje 2000, p. 655).

We think that Moje’s discussion has valid points, but we can not from our theoretical viewpoint be obliged to use this definition of literacy. From our point of view, orality and reading and writing are interconnected and part of a whole. We believe that it is more useful to include orality in the definition of literacy since it will show the connection between these literacy practises. To detach orality and writing in the definition of literacy will, according to us, underpin the impression that these literacy practises are separated from each other and thus in line with the views present within the autonomous model. The division of orality and writing and reading are foremost theoretical endpoints as Nancy N. Honberger points out. She states that

\[\text{[a]lthough we often characterize dimensions of bilingualism and literacy in terms of polar opposites, such as first versus second languages (L1 vs L2), monolingual versus bilingual individuals, and oral versus literate societies, it has become increasingly clear that in each case those opposites represent only theoretical endpoints on what is in reality a continuum of features (Hornberger, 1989, p. 275).}\]

Different literacy practises can not be viewed, according to Hornberger, as separated but rather as an intersected and interrelated continua (Hornberger 1989, p. 288) In addition, we agree with Street when he argues that

\[\text{[l]iteracy practices are always embedded in oral uses, and the variations between cultures are generally variations in the mix of oral/literate channels (Street 1988, p. 5 in Hornberger 1989, p. 279).}\]

\textsuperscript{16} New Literacy Studies
\textsuperscript{17} Elizabeth Moje was at the time of the article assistant professor at the School of Education, Educational Studies Program, University of Michigan.
This implies that the use of literacy practises in different context can vary, but not in terms of literate versus oral, but rather in what way oral and reading and writing are combined together and form intersected continua. In line with Street’s viewpoints we define literacy as a mix of both oral and written channels. We see this use of literacy as a way for us to try to deconstruct dichotomous views of orality, reading and writing. Furthermore, since different literacy practises are interconnected and impossible to truly keep separated we feel that this definition of literacy is the most appropriate and useful.

3.1.3 Bicultural mediation

Within the sociocultural approach to literacy we have also found the term bicultural mediation to be an interesting and useful concept concerning different cultural practises. Serpell uses the term bicultural mediation when he is referring to practises that can mediate between the two different cultures that are present in school and at home. This mediation is believed to be important since Serpell argues that the culture at home and the culture at school often differ (Serpell 2001, p. 267). Serpell states that one part of the socialisation and education of children in Africa is conducted by the family and the community through cultural systems of meanings, practises and institutions. Language and the use of different concepts are stressed as one important part of socialisation and upbringing of children in Africa. Furthermore, Serpell argues that storytelling is one way for the children to understand human behaviour and social institutions which are part of community life. Proverbs are also seen as part of the society’s cultural capital. It is also argued that the sharing and demonstration of different tasks, practises and activities in the community is one part of the children’s socialisation. What kind of practises that are used is believed to depend on the context. The examples Serpell gives are based on rural areas in Zambia and deals with activities and practises in relation to domestic work, but also farming and agriculture. However, Serpell also sees children’s games, songs and riddles as part of the culture present at home and in the communities. It is stressed that these activities are part of and incorporated in everyday life, contrary to formal education (Serpell 1993, p. 2, 60f, 72f).

Another part of the socialisation of children is conducted through the formal educational system. This system is based on a foreign language that is not familiar to the students in their homes. In Zambia as well as Uganda, both the language of instruction and the structure of the system are inherited from the former colonial power Britain. The fact that the system was developed in accordance with the concept of children and their needs in a specific European context did not exactly make it perfect for exportation to African countries (Serpell 1993, p. 106).

The system did not take into consideration the way African societies conceptualise children and their needs for socialisation. Hence, Serpell argues that the relationship between the culture at home and the culture introduced by formal and institutionalised schooling is one characterised by “considerable complexity”. This complexity is due to the fact that these different cultures do not correlate well with each other (Serpell 1993, p. 106, 2). The term bicultural situation is used to show the relation between home and school. This term is not used by Serpell, but we consider this term to be more useful than Serpell’s term “bicultural”. We believe that bicultural situation is a term that is clearer than “bicultural” which shows that we refer to a situation where two different cultures are present, one in school and one at home.

Serpell uses the example of Zambia and draws parallels to other African countries, but we are not trying to put forward the opinion that this is something which is the same everywhere in Africa or that is only present in African and other “developing” countries. We acknowledge
the fact that the culture at home and in school obviously also differ in other contexts. Moreover, what practises and the way they are given meaning obviously do not look the same in all contexts. Studies done in Western settings often deal with the differences between dominant groups’ cultures and minority groups’ culture in relation to school and performance amongst the students. Studies with a class perspective have also been conducted. It is not surprising that the culture that is present in the home of white middle-class children is the one that best fits the culture of most education systems (Serpell 2001, p. 250). Shirley Brice Heath shows in her study of literacy in U. S. that the schoolteachers, in her study, were only familiar with one type of family culture, which was based on the teachers’ own middle-class background. The consequence being that the schoolteachers could better meet the needs of those children with the same socioeconomic background as themselves (Heath in Serpell 2001, p. 250).

The importance of using the term bicultural situation and pointing out the differences of the culture at home and in school is because the studies dealing with this subject have shown that students’ acclimatisation and success in school to a large degree depend on the culture in their homes. If the school culture greatly differs from the home environment the children have a hard time adapting to the culture in school (Serpell 2001, p. 250). Due to considerable differences in relation to language and practises in schools and homes in Africa Serpell believes the bicultural situation to be an important factor to take under consideration when developing curricula for schools. In order to overcome the challenges relating to a bicultural situation, Serpell introduces the term bicultural mediation. The term describes the action that can take place when the cultures in school and at home are connected in a process of mutual enrichment. The mediation between the two cultures can not look the same in every context. The examples that Serpell gives in relation to literacy are based on different cultural expressions such as storytelling, drama, poetry and songs. These creative expressions can be a way of incorporating local themes and knowledge into the curriculum in school. Through these kinds of activities the two cultures of school and home can be connected with each other (Serpell 2001, p. 263, 267).

We see the concepts bicultural situation and bicultural mediation as useful concepts in relation to our study, since we can use them to show the situation present in schools in Uganda. We will try to show at least a glimpse of what the culture at home and in school can look like in Uganda. However, we are of course not in any position to fully map either the home or the school cultures. But we will show what practises the children’s statements show evidence of in relation to literacy and how they use those practises in different contexts.

3.1.4 A communicative practise

Another interesting aspect of the sociocultural approach is the importance that is given to the dialogic nature of language and learning situations. Meaning is understood as something that can only be created in social relationships. Dialogic interaction is to be found between both individuals and social contexts. It is stated that “we must depend on each other to construct meaning”. It is only in relation to the context around us that we can understand the meaning of different practises (John-Steiner et al. 1994b, p. 36-39). In addition, what meaning literacy is given depend on the dialogical relationship between on the one hand individuals and on the other hand the social context.
Serpell argues that even the literacy practises that are seen as private and silent actions, such as one person reading a text, are sociocultural processes and communicative practises. He argues that

[the language, the script, and the conventions of textual organization through which any reading or writing is performed, all derive from the existence of a community of people committed to the use of script for communication among its individuals (Serpell 2001, p. 244).]

The view that Serpell expresses is contrary to the common view where literacy is seen as a private process that only involves a person reading a text or a person writing a text. In the latter view the meaning of and the information in the text is transferred to the reader’s consciousness in an unproblematic and private manner. Similarly, the writer’s intentions are transferred into the text she/he is writing in a straightforward way (Serpell 2001, p. 244). Furthermore, according to the sociocultural approach, language and literacy are best learned through social interaction with others. It is through social processes between people that learning and knowledge are constructed (Verhoeven & Snow 2001, p.16).

Finally, we see the sociocultural approach to literacy as useful in relation to our master’s thesis and the project, the CRT, we are going to study. Therefore we have based our analysis of our findings from the study on this approach. We appreciate the perspectives that are found within this approach and the focus that is put on local contexts, communicative practises, literacies, bicultural mediation, power relations and particularly its view of individuals as active agents. Furthermore, we also value the attention that is placed on the fact that situations, institutions and concepts do not work in a vacuum, quite the opposite, they depend on different contexts. Based on this approach we plan to see how literacy and a reading culture can be constructed in the context of Uganda. We want to look at in what way the people working with the project influence the cultural construction of literacy in the case of the CRT. We are also interested in how the two cultures, the home culture and the school culture, correspond with each other in relation to literacy. Moreover, we want to examine in what ways bicultural mediation can take form in the context of Uganda and in the case of the CRT.
4. READING CULTURE

In this chapter we will try to show what the concept reading culture entails and especially in connection to the context of Africa and Uganda. We will give an overview of the different areas that the literature concerning reading culture discusses. This includes demonstrating what kinds of challenges are present when trying to promote a reading culture in this context. Moreover, we are going to see what methods that can be used when trying to create a reading culture.

A reading culture means that reading is part of a specific culture and a habit that is shared and valued highly by that particular society. Valued in the sense that reading is considered important in order to gain the information you need in your everyday life. The ability to read and write alone can not lead to a reading culture. Reading must play a significant role in people’s day to day life and become a habit in order to constitute a reading culture. For a reading culture to be possible reading must be part of all aspects of life and not only certain parts such as school or work (Magara & Batambuze 2005, p. 35f).

It has been acknowledged, that creating a reading culture in Uganda, and in Africa for that matter, is a big challenge. One obstacle for the establishment of a reading culture that has been mentioned is the fact that African societies are predominately oral (Magara & Batambuze 2005, p. 36). The difference between the nature of oral tradition and the nature of literate tradition is discussed by Myrna P. Machet. She states that reading is seen by black communities in South Africa as an abnormal and anti-social activity as well as connected to educational purposes. These attitudes do not promote the development of a reading culture according to her (Machet 2002, p. 80-81). Continuing she claims that:

The social nature of the oral tradition is in contradiction to the requirements of a literate tradition, as reading is a private and solitary activity (Machet 2002, p. 80).

Even if Machet’s article looks specifically at the situation in South Africa, oral traditions are present in virtually all African countries. In the case of Nigeria, Virginia W. Dike discusses similar aspects as Machet. She states that sociability is given a high value in Nigeria which “discourages a solitary activity like reading” (Dike 1995, p. 33). In addition, the fact that the culture of reading and print is an alien culture that has been superimposed on the people in many African countries makes it harder to encourage a reading culture (Dike 1995, p. 33).

Moreover, a major challenge that has been identified is the examination oriented education systems in Uganda. Elisam Magara and Charles Batambuze state that “even the literate stop reading after they finish writing their exams” (Magara & Batambuze 2005, p. 36; Sarjant 2005, p. 4). A reading culture can not be said to be present in a situation like this, where reading is only part of the school context and not all aspects of life.

18Myrna P. Machet was at the time of the article active at the Department and Library and Information Science at the University of South Africa.
19 Virginia W. Dike was at the time of her article active at the University of Nigeria at the Department of Library and Information Science.
20 Elisam Magara was at the time of this article a senior lecturer at East African School of Library and Information Science, Makerere University, Uganda. At present Magara is a professor at the same University. Charles Batambuze was at the time of the article Coordinator for Children’s Reading Tent and Secretary at the Uganda Library Association. Charles is now the executive director of the CRT and he was also our local contact person when we did our Minor Field Study in Uganda.
Reading is connected with passing exams and is seen as a way of accomplishing academic success. This view does not inspire students into reading in their leisure time since they associate reading with textbooks and attending school. Reading is part of something that they in some ways are forced to do, so that they can become successful in the future. Evidently the education system’s examination oriented structure can be seen as one of the obstacles to creating a reading culture.

Apart from this feature of the education system, Magara & Batambuze have also identified other obstacles to creating a reading culture such as the fact that

> there was limited access to books in most schools because teachers seemed more protective of books for fear of mutilation (Magara & Batambuze 2005, p. 40).

It was also observed that the books were normally kept in the head teacher’s offices. This kind of protecting and prevention of an open access of books for the children in the schools do not promote a reading culture. A solution that has been presented is school libraries. However, it is noted that even those schools that have libraries and reading materials do not make the appropriate use of the existing reading materials (Magara & Batambuze 2005, p. 40).

Furthermore, Magara & Batambuze also state that teachers should use more suitable teaching methods as a way of promoting a reading culture. The teachers “needed to be trained to teach people how to read” (Magara & Batambuze 2005, p. 40). It has also been argued that traditional methods of teaching, which are based on a single textbook, are much less effective than a book-based approach. This means that, instead of the traditional method of reading, the pupils should come in contact with many different kinds of books that are relevant to them (Elley 2001, p.240). These teaching methods can be seen as one way of changing the students’ perception of reading as school work. This aspect is important since it is believed that a reading culture can not flourish if reading is seen as something that pupils are obliged to do, but do not enjoy doing. When reading is viewed as enjoyment children can start using reading in other parts of their lives and hence reading can be a part of all aspects of their everyday life. The promotion of a reading culture in Uganda, and other African countries, must therefore go hand in hand with the promotion of reading as a pleasurable activity, which means that the students must start to read for fun and not just because they have to read for examinations (Rosenberg 2003, p. iv). For this to be possible Robert Sarjant\(^\text{21}\) states that the promotion of reading for enjoyment, or to “sell the sizzle of reading” as he puts it, must begin when the children are very young (Sarjant 2005, p. 4).

Moreover, it has been noted that a child who views reading as entertainment, instead of certain skills to be taught, will have a more rapid development in relation to literacy. Hence, the promotion of this type of reading promotion is seen as something positive (Serpell 2001, p. 248; Rosenberg 2003, p. iv). A study comparing “high achieving countries” and “low achieving countries” have shown facts that could strengthen this view. When students were asked “How do you become a good reader?” the answers differed between the good readers in the “high achieving countries” and the good readers in the “low achieving countries”. The good readers in the “high achieving countries” stressed factors like having many good books, having a lively imagination and learning many new words while the good readers in the “low achieving countries” pointed more towards factors like lots of drills, sounding out and self-discipline. Furthermore, it is noted the more skilled and drilled based education does not lead

\(^{21}\) Robert Sarjant was at the time of the article head of Operations at Book Aid International in the United Kingdom.
to better results. On the contrary, this pedagogy seems to lead to readers that do not read outside school and it does not create engaged readers (Elley, 2001, p. 235).

Reading culture involves using reading in all aspects of everyday life and not merely in school. Thus, it is interesting to see how it is possible to make children read not for school purposes but also in their leisure time. Our next area of interest is therefore what factors that promotes a “reading culture” among children.

4.1 Relevant literature

There is one factor that is represented in basically all literature concerning the promotion of a reading culture as well as in the literature concerning the mission to make children enjoy reading and develop a reading habit. This factor is the importance of relevant material (see for example Rosenberg 2003, p. vii, Sarjant 2005, p. 6f, Magara 2005, p. 3; Verhoeven & Snow 2001, p. 9; Elley 2001, p. 240f).

What is relevant material is, however, not something that can be settled once and for all. The relevance of the material depends on the context and the children. The best judges of what material that is stimulating and relevant for children are, according to Magara, the children themselves. When children get the opportunity to select their own books based on their own needs it can make the children become more interested and engaged. This is important since the children’s own interest and engagement are vital components for a good learning environment and the ability to promote a reading culture (Magara 2005, p. 3).

Although, it has been stated that the best way to promote reading as an enjoyable activity is to let the children choose the books they want to read by themselves, this is not always possible. In most cases when children get to choose books they still have to pick from a limited selection of books. Thus, it is interesting to see on what grounds these books are selected. In most of the literature that we have come across, it is stressed that books should be selected with the specific context in mind. It is acknowledged that “developing” countries require books printed in local languages and that reflect local knowledge, traditions and culture (Greaney 1996, p.13). Books that deal with subjects that are relevant for the children’s daily lives and reflect their world both inside and outside school are also believed to promote engaged readers (Verhoeven & Snow 2001, p. 9). Furthermore, it is stressed that to be able to produce culturally suitable books, local publishers should be involved in the production of books for children in “developing” countries. The importance of local publishers is not only related to the production of culturally suited books for children, it can also be seen as a way of preventing cultural imperialism (Elley 2001, p. 241).

Apart from books that deal with the everyday experience of children in Africa and Uganda it is also important to consider the African heritage when writing and selecting books that are relevant for children in this context according to Nhelengetfw (Nhelengetfw 2005, p. 6). To use the term “African heritage” is however, problematic since it is after all an entire continent we are talking about. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the aforementioned authors consider it important to consider similarities between different countries on the African continent, historically and culturally. So then is it also relevant to talk of a “Ugandan heritage”, which can affect the content of the literature that the children in Uganda encounter? We believe that it is interesting to discuss in what way literacy and literature for children in Uganda can be influenced by this supposed heritage.
4.2 Bicultural mediation

One suggested way of incorporating the “African heritage” with literacy is through the oral tradition. The oral tradition should then not only be seen as one part of literacy, it can also be integrated in the reading part of literacy. Dike is connecting these two forms of literacy cultures in an interesting way. She argues that since African countries in general, and Nigeria in particular, has a rich oral tradition it is hard to build a reading culture. Parents do not read stories to their children, they tell stories. She states that:

Because of this oral background, parents are unlikely to read to their children, even if they can do so. Storytelling is the predominant form of literary mediation for parents, literate and illiterate alike (Dike 1995, p. 33)

Storytelling and anecdotes are part of the African heritage, according to Dike, and she argues that this tradition should be seen as a way of bridging the gap between the culture in school and at home. These cultures do not have to work against each other; on the contrary they can be a form of mediation between the culture at home and in school (Dike 1995, p. 33, 40). A way of succeeding in creating bicultural mediation is to

[b]uild cultural compatibility into the schooling of early literacy, by searching in the indigenous culture for patterns of activity, linguistic form, and symbolic content and integrating them into the curriculum (Serpell 2001, p. 263).

In addition, Dike argues that what she calls literacy mediation can be accomplished through using indigenous cultural expressions (Dike 1995, p. 40). It has been stated that in Uganda indigenous cultural expressions that are part of the oral tradition can be used in school as a way of bridging the gap between the children’s home and school environment (Kwikiriza 2000, p. 90). Magara has also pointed out that drawing, scribbling, dancing and plays can be part of the concept family literacy and can be one way of creating a reading culture among children (Magara 2005, p. 2f, 7).

Furthermore, different types of crafts and artwork are part of the cultural expressions in Uganda and have been perceived as playing a vital part in the socialisation of children in Africa, together with the other aforementioned cultural expressions. Stories, lullabies, proverbs, tongue twisters, riddles, legends, fables, myths and songs are all part of the children’s everyday lives. According to Dike, they should be acknowledged as something that can lay the foundation for reading practises among children. Dike continues by arguing that it is mostly at home where this form of literacy is practised (Rychner 2000, p. 263; Dike 1995, p. 37).

In addition, Dike states that in almost all the homes of the children, in the Nigerian study, someone tells stories to the children (99%). However, it was only students in half of the schools out of the twenty-eight schools that said that their teachers told stories. Moreover, when the teachers told stories it was usually occasionally and often as a time filler after exams had ended rather than as part of the curriculum. Storytelling was taking place in informal settings such as the home and the playground. It is stated that the way literacy is manifested is different at home and in school (Dike 1995, p. 37, 40).

Dike argues that literacy mediation, through oral tradition and other cultural expressions, is required to promote a reading culture in Africa. She connects the need for literacy mediation with the children’s view of reading. The children in the study stated that they prefer stories that first of all are familiar, second are understandable, and third teaches a lesson. It is stated
that folk tales are likely to be familiar since they are part of the storytelling tradition. Similarly, folk tales have a strong moral lesson, which is also requested by the children in relation to reading materials (Dike 1995, p. 38ff).

The children in the study preferred books in English to books in their local language. These answers go against what the previous authors have argued, namely that books in local languages meet the children’s needs. The explanation for the children’s answers can be found in the reality that the children have not learned to read properly in their local language, but have instead learned to read in English. Another aspect that Dike points out is that there are few good books in the local languages and that most of them aim at an older audience (Dike 1995, p. 39).

The children in this study are requesting books that they can understand and relate to their everyday life. Dike believes that this is possible through mediation between the two cultures at home and in school. Through using the kind of themes and structures that are present within the stories told at home in children’s literature, they can be a relevant option for the children in Africa. In this way the cultures, which differ between the home and the school, can be connected. Nneka Nora Osakwe makes a similar point when she argues that storytelling, which is part of a long-standing oral tradition and informal education in Africa, should be incorporated into today’s formal education system. Through storytelling literacy and reading can be taught in a meaningful context. Literacy can become a meaningful, interesting and motivating activity contrary to a drilled and skilled based teaching method (Osakwe 2005, p. 185).

The oral tradition is not only a possible part of bicultural mediation; it can also play a significant role in relation to developing second language education in Uganda, according to Clifford A. Hill. Hills argument is that the structure present in oral narratives works well with teaching a second language. A key feature of oral narrative is repetition, which functions as a mnemonic device for both storytellers and listeners. This particular element can help learners who are trying to learn a second language since repetition plays a significant role in this type of learning situation. Without repetition the learner will not be able to remember and develop the second language. Repetition, however, does not mean that structural patterns of language should be repeated with no consideration to meaning. On the contrary, repetition should be incorporated into a story and through that be part of a meaningful context (Hill 2000, p. 106).

To incorporate Uganda’s indigenous culture into writing is not always easy since the oral tradition has some artistic structures that are hard to convert into written language. Furthermore, the oral tradition is often in local languages and it is not always easy to translate words, concepts, proverbs, similes, idiomatic expressions and puns to other languages (Newell 2006, p. 77f). However, if the oral tradition is only kept in the original language few people are able to access it. One way of keeping the written version true to the original language and form is trough translating literally. By translating literally the style of the original version can be transferred to the written form and it can be a way of bicultural mediation (Kwikiriza 2000, p. 90).

22 Nneka Nora Osakwe was at the time of the article active at the Department of English at the Nnamdi Azikiwe University in Nigeria.
23 Clifford A. Hill was at the time of the article Professor of Language in Education at the Teachers Collage in New York.
In addition, bicultural mediation can be seen as a way of strengthening the identity and cultural belonging of students in Uganda. Through art, music and storytelling the pupils can appreciate their own cultures. Finally, bicultural mediation is a way of starting from the known and expanding to the unknown. Schools can start from what is familiar to the children by using indigenous culture expressions that are present in the homes of the students in the education. When the teaching in schools is based on what is known to the students they can build new concepts such as reading and writing on that knowledge (Kwikiriza 2000, p. 91).
5. THE SETTING

In this chapter we will give a background to the Ugandan context. We will present a historical background not so much in terms of political history, but foremost the history of cultural traditions and education in Uganda. In this chapter we try to give an extensive background to the cultural landscape in Uganda. We want to look at the way indigenous cultural expressions can be incorporated into the concept literacy; hence a close examination of the culture is necessary. We have identified the oral tradition, the publishing industry and the library sector as the main elements within the cultural landscape that are interesting to look at in relation to our study. Likewise, we see the education systems as another important factor to consider when studying literacy and reading culture in Uganda.

5.1 Facts about Uganda

Uganda has an area of 236,000 sq km and a population of 27.7 million (in 2006). The country is located in East Africa and is bordered by Sudan in the north, Kenya in the east, Tanzania in the south, Rwanda in the south-west and the Democratic Republic of Congo in the north-west. Uganda’s capital is Kampala with a population of 1.4 million (Krokfors 2007). The name “Uganda” originates from the Buganda Kingdom existing prior to the colonization of the area by Britain between 1890 and 1926 (Holmberg & Holmertz 2007). A survey conducted between May 2005 and April 2006 showed that the overall literacy rates in Uganda were at 69 percent (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2006).

Before Uganda became a country with well-defined borders, different groups of people lived in the area we today call Uganda. Many of these languages and cultures can still be found in present Uganda and even today about forty different languages are spoken in Uganda. The largest language group is the one consisting of Bantu languages, with the Bantu language Luganda being the most common one in the country (Dahl 2007).

Not all of the different languages present in Uganda have standard orthographies and it is difficult to determine how many languages that have a script that is standardized. One of the problems with standardization of languages in Uganda is due to the fact that many of the languages are similar to each other and sometimes treated as dialects and sometimes treated as languages. This is for example the case with the language Aringa, which is sometimes treated as dialect of Lugbara language and sometimes considered a separate language. Moreover, what is sometimes considered “dialects” also have quite a few differences, which make standardizations of these languages difficult. Another example is the recent standardization of the four linguistically closely-related languages of western Uganda Runyoro, Rutoro, Runyankole and Rukiga that in the 1990s were adjoined as Runyakitara. Other languages that are widely used such as Luganda, Lusoga, Lwo, Pandikeri, Ateso/Akarimojong, Lugbara, Swahili, Arabic, Gujarati and Hindi also have standardized scripts (Uganda Government 1992, p. 17; Wikipedia 2007; PanAfriL10n 2007).
5.2 Oral tradition

The oral tradition has been present in Uganda long before the British came with their own set of knowledge system and culture. Even though the oral tradition has lost some of its importance in the communities since the British came this tradition still influences the cultural landscape and the knowledge system that are existent in Uganda today. In addition, it has been stated that

[for children, formal schools have frequently uprooted them from their origins and backgrounds, killing their orature. Yet African societies, especially in rural areas, still depend on orality for communication more than the written word (Kafeero 2000, p. 93).]

Moreover, it should be emphasised that it is not merely one form of oral tradition that is present in Africa and Uganda. However, we still believe that it is useful to use the term oral tradition in our study since there are some similarities and characteristics that can be seen throughout most oral traditions in Uganda. We will look at some of these characteristics since we will not be able to completely map the cultural landscape that has been and is present in Uganda (Breitinger, 2000, p. 8).

What characterises oral tradition is that it is passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. The system that oral tradition represents has its own set of grammar, style and aesthetic canon. Additionally, the narrative in the oral tradition is mostly in Uganda’s local languages. Within oral tradition several different forms of expressions exist such as storytelling, proverbs, riddles, tongue twisters, metaphors, similes, symbolic associations, idiomatic expressions, puns, anecdotes, poems, hymns, drama, song and dance. (Kwikiriza 2000, p. 88f; Zettersten 1983, p. 5; Amadi 1981, p. 134). These different forms of oral narratives have two main functions: education and entertainment. These two functions should not be seen as separated functions but rather as complementary. At the same time that they are entertainment they also teach the community moral lessons as well as providing advice and warnings. What is more, the stories can teach the community about their history, culture and environment. In addition, this can be accomplished through different forms of storytelling such as legends, myths and tales (Okumu 2000, p. 54, 57f, 69).

These various forms of oral narrative manifest themselves very differently in terms of structure and composition. Depending on the subject, the aim and the audience the form of oral tradition often differ. Moreover, within different groups in Uganda the oral narratives can be expressed very differently. For example, storytelling consists of different elements based on what characters that are used in the story. When storytelling uses animal characters satire and humour are often used as a way to expose human weaknesses. This is what Charles Okumu24 calls “correct through laughter”. However, when the main characters are human beings, irony and humour are usually not present in the story. In this type of story a warning is often given as a way of showing what the characters did wrong and how you should act instead (Okumu 2000, p. 60). Furthermore, in Ankole and Kigezi culture and tradition simile or metaphors play a significant role in the oral tradition and within the Runyankole and Rukiga languages proverbs are often used in their speech. In addition, dance, song and drama use different structures depending on the occasion such as weddings, funerals and birth as well as depending in what group those ceremonies are carried out (Kwikiriza 2000, p. 88f).

24 Charles Okumu has done research on oral literature especially in his home area Acholi.
Another distinctive feature of the oral tradition is the use of songs in poems, storytelling and drama. Songs can be a way of integrating the audience in the plot and the audience becomes a joint narrator. By using song as an element in the narrative the story can move forward (Okumu 2000, p. 59). Additionally, Rose Mbowa\footnote{Rose Mbowa was before her death in 1999 stated to be the most active and influential theatre person in Uganda for more than 30 years. She received many awards for categories such as best actress, best production and best play. She was also Head of the Department of Music, Dance and Drama (Breitinger 2000, p. vii).} shows how different elements of the oral tradition are integrated when she states that

> [t]raditional popular performance does not distinguish between the stage and the pit, the actor and the spectator, between real life and stage action nor between dialogue, drama, ballet or opera. It lives the form of integrated theatre where everyone participates in the performance of integrated song, dance, mime and drama (Mbowa 2000, p. 205).

In addition, oral tradition has an element of flexibility in the sense that the audience can become part of the narrative. The narrator also has the freedom to use her/his body gestures, wits, be innovative and let his/her imagination run free when telling the story. Imagination and innovation are essential when incorporating similes, metaphors, proverbs and puns into storytelling. The narrator should, however, consider the structure and thematic form of the narrative. As we have seen before some narrative forms aims at making the audience laugh while other have a more serious disposition (Okumu 2000, p. 59, 70). The appeal of the oral tradition comes from some of these characteristics mentioned above. Likewise, the impact of oral tradition derives from the

> [e]motional appeal, tonal texture, the communicator’s physical gesticulations, facial expressions, and the total effect created by the message (Amadi 1981, p. 134).

The oral tradition can basically be understood as having specific features that are hard to transfer into other literary traditions such as the Western tradition of the written word and books. Besides, those characteristics do not only define the oral tradition, they are also what make it powerful and appealing. Still, attempts have been made to try to apply the same system and structures that are present in the oral tradition in book form. It has also been noted that it is possible to overcome the gap between the two cultures by combining the oral tradition’s themes and knowledge system with the written form (Kwikiriza 2000, p. 90f). We have found this to be a valid point and have elaborated more on this subject under the headline 4.2 “Bicultural mediation”.

Oral tradition has, as we have seen before, two main aims: to educate and entertain. We have focused mainly on the entertaining part of oral tradition but in the next part we will examine the education element further.

### 5.3 Education systems

The formal education system that is present in Uganda today is a remnant of the colonial past. When the Protestant and Catholic missionaries came to Uganda at the end of the nineteenth century they were the first to introduce a formal education system in Uganda. The education system was aimed foremost at teaching Ugandans to read which would extend their religious knowledge by reading religious books provided by the missionaries. Until 1925 the missionaries were in charge of all formal education in Uganda. After the missionaries the British colonial power took over the education system (Ssekamwa 1997, p. 1ff). The “new” education system was not that new after all, many of its features remained the same as before. The colonial power stayed true to the missionary tradition by focusing on a broad general
education with strong religious elements. The focus on Christianity in the education system disfavoured other religions such as Islam. Moreover, students who were Muslims were often refused to attend these schools.

The education system was basically a way of educating Ugandans into clerks and lower civil servants for the colonial administration. No or little vocational training was given within the education system, which prevented the population from developing technical skills. Both education systems used English as the language of instruction in schools (Furley 1988, p. 176; Ssekamwa 1997, p. 1; Enter Uganda 2007).

Even if it is true that the formal education system was first introduced by the Christian missionaries in Uganda, it does not mean that Ugandans did not educate their children before the missionaries came. Before the missionary education system, the people in Uganda had their own form of education system. First, it was the parents’ duty to educate their children before the missionaries came. Before the missionary education system, the people in Uganda had their own form of education system. First, it was the parents’ duty to educate their children. Second, it was also the communities’ responsibility to see to it that all the children in the community were educated and especially in matters which dealt with social values, behaviour and attitudes. Finally, there was also what one could call professional teachers. This group of people taught different technical skills and medical knowledge to the young people in the community. Iron smiths, potters, medicine men and women, canoe makers et cetera was taught by skilled teachers in the community. It was not only the parents that taught their children their own professions, even if that were also the case, but what is more they could teach other children the different skills (Ssekamwa 1997, p. 28f).

However, this form of education system where the “homestead was the school, the fireplace the classroom and everywhere human activity took place was the laboratory” were gradually pushed into the background after the missionaries introduced the new education system in Uganda. Instead of teaching about “the lay of the land, the flora and the fauna of their areas, the lakes and the flow of the rivers and the different seasons of the year” (Ssekamwa 1997, p. 29f) the missionaries began to teach about

[the Themes and the English Channel, the American Mississippi and the Asian Ganges, and how gigantic trees grew and were felled in Canada and then rolled down the rivers; and they also taught them the four fantastic European and American seasons (Ssekamwa 1997, p. 30).]

J. C. Ssekamwa²⁶ states that the explanation to why the local forms of education lost its strong position and status in the communities in Uganda can be traced back to several different factors. First, the young who attended the missionary schools got the impression that what was called education could solely be taught by missionaries and through formal school institutions. The exams that the students took to be able to graduate never touched the kind of subjects and knowledge that was still taught by the fireplace in the communities. This form of education was mainly viewed by the young as interesting stories and entertainment, not what the missionaries labelled education. The students who went through the new education system were also given advantages over the ones that were educated through the traditional ways. The only way to gain influence and rise in the new order was through the missionaries’ new form of education, which was one of the major reasons why the traditional ways of teaching and the former teachers lost influence over education in Uganda (Ssekamwa 1997, p. 30f).

In this way the Western model of education in general, and the British in particular, began to take over indigenous education practices in Uganda. Even after independence in 1962 and up to today the education system is still based on the same British education system and the only

²⁶ J. C. Ssekamwa is a professor within the school of education at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda.
way for people to really succeed in the Uganda society is still by going through this channel (Bakka 2000 p. 83). However, even if the structure of the education system still is based on the British education system it has changed since independence. In the two decades that followed independence, civic conflicts and economic difficulties faced the country, which also affected the education system and its infrastructures negatively. In the 1990s the education system needed to change and much money was put into the education sector. The three biggest changes are the introduction of free Universal Primary Education (UPE), the mother tongue as language of instruction in lower primary school and the thematic curriculum. All these changes are important to the development of education in Uganda since the government aims to give more children the opportunity of schooling. However, in this context it is also to important to mention that it is crucial that you provide the children with the means to better understand and create meaning of the concepts taught in school. But even though these new changes must be seen as something positive, many challenges have emerged from the new changes. After the introduction of UPE in 1997 the enrolment went from 2,9 million pupils in 1996 up to about 7 million pupils in 2000. Obviously it is a huge challenge for the educational sector in Uganda to be able to meet the needs of all these new students, but is also a big step towards making the education system more equal and based on the children’s needs (Okech 2005, p. 2).

The matter of mother tongue as language of instruction in school has been a difficult issue to solve since independence. The problem of solving this issue has been due to the fact that it has to work on many different levels. We will look closer at what problems the government has been faced with when trying to develop a language policy in Uganda.

5.3.1 Mother tongue versus second language

The issue of language of instruction in schools in Uganda has been solved in different ways since independence. The big change came when the government in 1992 launched their new language policy through *Uganda Government White Paper on Education*. In this document it was stated that the language of instruction in Primary 1 to Primary 4 in rural areas should be in the children's relevant local languages. Children in urban areas should continue to use English as medium of instruction (Uganda Government 1992, p. 19). In the government’s guidelines words such as *flexible*, *dynamic* and *realistic* were used when talking about the use of mother tongue in primary school. Furthermore, it is stated that the local languages should be used *as much as possible* as the media of instruction. Hence, it opened the door for teachers and principals to interpret the new language policy in the way they best saw fit. The fact that many schools understood and used the new language policy based on their particular needs and situation does not necessarily have to be a bad thing. But the reality is that the new language policy did not have a big effect on the quality of education in Uganda. Some schools taught in mother tongue, some did not and based on the White Paper they did nothing wrong since they went on the pragmatic line that the government recommended (Muthwii 2001, p. 6, 34ff).

The reality that the policy has hardly been followed in primary schools has been blamed on the inadequate resources to develop teaching and relevant material in local languages. More to the point, the people in the communities have not been supportive of the language policy. This is due to the fact that all pupils in the upper primary levels are going to have English as medium of instruction and parents fear that their children will lose out on valuable time to learn English, compared to other schools that teach in English at all levels of the education system (Okech 2005, p. 11; Muthwii 2001, p. 6ff).
This overview of the language policy from 1992 shows that language policies are complex issues and their success depends on different levels. The government wants to promote a language policy that strengthens the Ugandan identity and culture, which is made possible through the encouragement of the use of Ugandan languages. Moreover, it also takes the children’s needs into account since it is supported by research that shows that children learn to read more easily in their vernacular (Uganda Government 1992, p. 16). The ideological motives do not, however, always correlate with the reality of the teachers in the schools, who deal with a situation where many different languages are present in the same school (since Uganda has about forty different languages). What is more, not all languages are considered “languages of wider communities” by the government and it is foremost these languages that are promoted as school languages and taught in school. Hence, not all children get the opportunity learn their mother tongue in school. The fact that all Ugandan vernaculars do not have a standard orthography is also a problem to overcome, since this makes vernacular publications difficult to achieve. In addition, the teachers are not trained in teaching in mother tongue and have no books in local languages. As a result they have to translate the material themselves into the vernacular (Muthwii 2001, p. 16; Ugandan Government 1992, p. 17; Wikipedia 2007).

Furthermore, the learning children and their views and needs should also be taken into consideration when developing a language policy. However, what is best for the pupils is not always easy to distinguish. Generally most research favours mother tongue literacy and is seen as a way of helping the pupils to start learning literacy from the familiar. Based on the familiar they are later able to learn other languages. To start learning how to read and write in a language that is not your mother tongue is considered to be a very difficult task. The government also supports its own policy based on this type of research. (Wagner 2001, p.307; Elley 2001, p. 236). But even if this type of pedagogy is seen as the best way for individuals to learn in school, it may still lead to inequalities between children in different schools since they use different language policies. The pupils themselves may very well favour the English language in school, contrary to what research shows is best for them, since they believe that they in future will benefit more from having English as medium of instruction all through school (Uganda Government 1992, p. 16; Muthwii 2001, p. 18f).

The mother tongue’s status in schools is, as we have seen, not an issue that is easy to solve and it seems like the government in Uganda did not solve it back in 1992 with the White Paper, especially since it is not being followed by all schools. As a way of dealing with the “failure” by many of Ugandan pupils to attain “acceptable” levels of literacy in primary school, the government has come up with a new curriculum. The curriculum’s previous focus on acquisition of facts and recall by students is seen as one of the reasons why this system failed. The implementation of the new thematic curriculum is starting in 2007 and the two main features are the strengthening of the previous language policy and a stronger focus on the children’s needs (National Curriculum Development Centre 2006, p. 4). In the new curriculum it is stated that

\[\text{only when the mix of language in a school is such that there is no predominant local language then the curriculum will be delivered and assessed in English (National Curriculum Development Centre 2006, p. 7).}\]

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27 The languages that are considered to be “languages of wider communities” are Luganda, Lwo, Runyakitara (Runyoro, Rutoro, Runyankole and Rukiga), Ateso/Akarimojong and Lugbara (Ugandan Government 1992, p. 17).
This differs from the way the White Paper expressed the issue. The former policy was more pragmatic and seemed to accept that the schools had their own interpretation of the policy and could choose what language to use as medium of instruction.

The second main characteristic of the new curriculum is that it has a child-centred approach. This can be shown through the way the curriculum uses themes as a way of focusing on the child and its needs.

The use of themes brings the curriculum closer to the child. The themes have been selected on the basis that they are close to the child’s interest and experience and reflect more closely the way in which the child views the world. The content, concepts and skills such as Science and SST have been rearranged in Themes that are familiar to young children’s experiences (National Curriculum Development Centre 2006, p. 9).

The impact of the new thematic curriculum is of course impossible to know now, because it has not yet been fully implemented and it will take time to see the result of this new approach.

5.4 Publishing industry

Uganda’s publishing industry has always been depending on the education sector. When books started entering Uganda it was on demand from the missionaries and part of their mission to educate and spread Christian values. The books came from British publishers since Uganda did not have an indigenous publishing tradition, which was due to the fact that Uganda did not have a tradition of reading and writing before the missionaries introduced it. British publishers continued to distribute books to Uganda during the colonial years and have continued to be one of the major players within the publishing industry in Uganda until today. The books have mainly been books for educational purposes and were for a long time printed in Britain and produced with British pupils in mind (Bogere 2002, p. 8, 13f). In spite of the difficulties facing local publishers after independence they were able to put out educational material as well as poetry and fiction (Tumusiime 2000, p. 14f).

However, in the early seventies the small publishing industry that was present in Uganda collapsed due to the breakdown of the economy. It was not until the early nineties that book projects that focused on providing books for school were developed and the supply of books in schools began to rise. Yet again the situation did not favour local publishers but international publishers. As a way of improving schools’ collections of textbooks, the government imported books instead of supporting local publishers (Tumusiime 2000, p. 16). The situation changed for the better in the mid-nineties when the government began to buy books from both international and local publishers. The significance of this change must be seen in the light of the fact that the publishing industry is dominated by the publishing of textbooks. It has been estimated that around 95 per cent of all books produced in Africa are textbooks (Machet 2002, p.69).

Obviously, the new policy does not solve all problems of the publishing industry in Uganda, even if it helps. Uganda and the African publishing industry are facing many different challenges and we will mention some obstacles that are often mentioned as the reasons for the weak book market. Illiteracy, lack of a reading culture, poor library and distribution channels, poverty, a lack of skilled staff and equipment are among the factors that are often identified as

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28 SST is abbreviation for Social Studies.
29 The breakdown of the economy was due to the terror regime of Idi Amin, who was the president of Uganda between 1971 and 1979 and is know for his cruel ruling methods. Amnesty International estimates the number of killings during his ruling at least 100 000 and possibly as many as 500 000 (Amnesty International 1993, p. 12).
the causes to the publishing industry’s problem to flourish in Africa. These different factors are often understood as interconnected and to demonstrate this the term “a vicious cycle” has been used. In Uganda there is a lack of reading materials, hence no reading culture, hence no market for reading material, hence no publishing, hence the vicious cycle continues (Sturges & Neill 1998, p. 24; Tumusiime 2000, p 19; Mbawaki 2005, p. 5f).

Additionally, within the publishing market in Uganda most books, both educational and fictional books, have been published in English. It has been stated that 80 per cent of all new literature in Africa is written in the former colonial languages, despite the fact that less than 5 per cent of the continent’s people are considered to be fluent in these languages (Sturges & Neill 1998, p. 26). This situation hardly promotes the development of engaged readers and must also be seen as a challenge that the publishing industry must tackle. Moreover, one of the things that hamper the development of vernacular publications is the fact that not all Ugandan languages have a standard orthography and there is a lack of consensus as to how local languages should be transferred into written script in both Uganda and the whole of Africa (Machet 2002, p. 76; Wikipedia 2007).

However, with the new thematic curriculum in Uganda the government has shown a will to give the mother tongue a higher status and role in primary school. The new curriculum will surely lead to an increase in the publishing of books in local languages. The government has stated that the pupils’ learning material should be in the local language the first three years of school, hence as a result the production of textbooks in local languages should begin to increase (National Curriculum Development Centre 2006, p. 7).

5.5 Libraries in Uganda

The first libraries in Uganda were products of the colonial government and directed towards an elite minority (Issak 2000, p. 8). The very first “public” library was set up in Entebbe in 1923 for expatriates who at that time were almost the only people who could read in English. The 1940s was the start of a nationwide spreading of libraries run by the East African Literature Bureau with headquarters in Nairobi and branches in Kampala and Dar es Salaam (Ikoja-Odongo 2003, p.3; Kigongo-Bukenya 1990, p.131). According to Ikoja-Odongo what sparked this development were the ideas of the colonial government that reading was a “stepping stone to civilization” as well as the wish for easier governance entailed in enabling Ugandans to understand written policies from the government. Hence, the need for public libraries in Uganda (Ikoja-Odongo 2003, p. 3). However, according to Kigongo-Bukenya, Uganda made a “faulty start” with insufficient resources as well as poor planning and running of the many libraries that were set up. As a result this gave librarianship a poor general impression and status in Uganda. Many reports, commissions and recommendations for improvement of libraries followed but no real action was taken (Kigongo-Bukenya 1990, p. 132f).

After independence in 1962 the library sector in Uganda developed due to support from foreign donors. Unfortunately, the progress that was achieved during the 1960s was reversed in the 1970s as a result of Idi Amin’s terror regime. The collapse of the economy in Uganda during the 1970s together with the ending of donations from abroad hit the libraries hard. It was not until the 1990s when the financial situation improved in Uganda that libraries once again were able serve the public and its communities (Nawe 2004, p. 382).

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30 J.R. Ikoja-Odongo is professor at the East African School of Library & Information Science in Uganda.
31 I.M.N. Kigongo-Bukenya is also a professor at the East African School of Library & Information Science.
32 See footnote 27 for more information.
However, libraries in Uganda are still under-funded and few. By the year 2003 there were still only 20 urban public libraries and 3 rural libraries in Uganda and only 20 of the 56 districts had a public library. One of the many problems with the libraries that do exist is lack of relevant and up-to-date materials (Ikoja-Odongo 2003, p. 3, 15).

5.5.1 School libraries in Uganda

As of yet there is no national school library policy in Uganda and school libraries in Uganda have been neglected for a very long time. As a result libraries are often lacking completely in many schools or are considered to be of an inadequate standard in the schools that do have them (Kigongo-Bukenya 1990, p. 133; Magara & Bukirwa Nyumba 2004, p. 316; Muwanga et al 2005 p. 71). There have been efforts to improve the situation. One of them is the School Library Development Project enacted by the National Library of Uganda (NLU) and the East African Book Development Association where books are selected and purchased annually and distributed among 36 primary schools in 12 districts every year. The NLU also monitors and evaluates the use of these books through regular visits (National Library of Uganda 2007).

5.5.2 Needs of library users in Uganda and Africa

The situation and history of Ugandan libraries share common traits with the history of libraries in Africa generally. Aissa Issak states judging from the results of her report Public Libraries in Africa: Synthesis Report that:

> [p]ublic library models were imported into Africa, without any consideration of the real situation of the continent and the information needs of the African people (Issak 2000, p.12).

One of the perhaps most well known critics of the library system “imposed” on African libraries is the Nigerian writer Adolphe O. Amadi who has claimed that:

> In the field of librarianship the absence in Nairobi, Lagos, or Kampala of a library comparable to the Library of Congress or the British Museum in terms of human and material resources – open access systems, computerized circulation, bibliographic retrieval gadgets and so on – becomes the yardstick for daubing African libraries as underdeveloped, primitive or backward. While comparisons are a useful means of understanding phenomena in general, it is, however important to realise the fallacy in the argument or assumption that what obtains or is deemed normal and appropriate in the Western world, is or ought to be automatically good, desirable and appropriate in Africa. The idea itself is indicative of the irrationality and imperialistic relationship between the so-called developed and developing nations (Amadi 1981, p. viii-ix).

One of Amadi’s main arguments is that libraries in Africa need to be adapted to the communities and societies they intend to serve and pay greater attention to “information packaging and presentations” in order to “achieve full maturity and effectiveness” (Amadi 1981, p. 120). In line with this argument Issak concludes in the aforementioned report that “real knowledge of the user community is crucial” and that it is necessary to involve the users “to make them feel that the library belongs to them” (Issak 2000 p. 21). The viewpoint that library services and library materials need to be culturally relevant seems to have been embraced by virtually all proponents of library improvement in Africa, including Uganda (see for example Muwanga et al 2005, p. 61; Alegbeleye 1998, p.1; Alemna 1995, p. 43).
6. BACKGROUND TO THE CHILDREN’S READING TENT

In this chapter we will give a brief background to the project CRT. We will show the history of the project, how it is described in literature and how it was actually carried out during our visit in Uganda.

The CRT\textsuperscript{33} is a project that East African Book Development Association (EABDA ) together with Book Aid International (BAI) have established in the East African countries such as Uganda, Kenya, Zambia and Tanzania to promote reading to school pupils and the wider community. The project is also supported by the Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation (SIDA) (Sarjant 2005, p. 1).

In Uganda the National Book Trust of Uganda (NABOTU) has the main responsibly for the project. However, it is implemented by different organisations that are members of the umbrella organisation NABOTU. The organisations and people that are found within the NABOTU organisation are all connected to reading such as authors, publishers, booksellers, printers, librarians, teachers et cetera. (National Book Trust of Uganda, undated).

Every CRT is implemented by different organisations and the ones that we participated in were implemented by Uganda Children’s Writers and Illustration Association (UCWIA) and Uganda Library and Information Association (ULIA). The CRT is a travelling project which visits disadvantaged areas in different parts of Uganda. We visited the CRT in the Ntungamo district, the Jinja district and the Mityana district. The CRT usually takes place at a primary school. However, when we were in Jinja it took place in connection to a community learning centre. At every CRT one primary school is the host and different nearby schools come to that school to participate in the activities. The number of children attending the CRT we participated in varied from about 100 to over 200 children. This is, however, not always the case. It has been noted that the number of children attending the project have varied from about 80 children to over 500 children (Magara & Batambuze 2005, p. 37).

The CRTs that we attended involved activities for children such as free reading, reading aloud, storytelling, story writing, painting, quiz, debate, moulding, handiwork, painting, drawing, singing and games. However, the activities between the different CRTs varied depending on the responsible organisation. Moreover, other activities have also been known to be included in the project such as reading marathons, poetry, music, face painting, puzzles and puppet shows (Magara & Batambuze 2005, p. 38, Sarjant 2005, p. 4). The activities were executed through different teachers from the participating schools on location, who were given an introduction by one of the organisers on site.

The aim of the CRT is to promote a reading culture among foremost children, but the people behind the project also want to reach out to adults like parents, teachers and basically everyone in the community (Sarjant 2005, p. 5).

Taking reading into an informal setting and out of the ordinary classroom situation is considered as a way to promote a new attitude towards reading. The hope is that children will view reading as a source of pleasure through the different enjoyable activities connected to reading at the CRT (Sarjant 2005, p. 4; National Book Trust of Uganda, undated).

\textsuperscript{33} When we refer to the CRT we mean the whole project with all the activities involved. We perceive the CRT as an event and therefore more than just an actual “tent”.

Another aim of the CRT is to promote local publishers through using their books during the actual project as well as donating their books to both the host school and the rest of the participating schools. This is seen as one way of getting books that are relevant to the target groups and to the particular local context (Sarjant 2005, p. 7).

While observing the CRT we noticed that most of the books that were used during the two days were donated by Book Aid International. These books did not come from local publishers; on the contrary they were published by Western companies. When we asked where all the books that we knew had been bought from local publishers were, we were told that they were being donated to the schools. The organisers did not want these books to be mixed with the other books and damaged during the two days of the project since they had a limited set of these books.

The kind of books that the children came in contact with, while attending the CRT that we were participating in, were mostly titles like “Light and Laser”, “Big cats”, “River and lakes”, “Bugs”, “Space”, “Football”, “Vietnam”, “Reptiles”, “Dinosaurs”, “Communications” et cetera. The titles “AIDS: the challenge”, “I can do it too” and “The story of our new classroom” were contrary to the other titles at the CRT fictional and took place in Africa and dealt with situations in this context.

At the last CRT the organisers stated that they tried to have more locally relevant books, even if that meant that those books might be worn-out. The books that were extra interesting at this CRT were titles like “A simple cure”, “Jacob and Esau”, “Teaching Thomas”, “Fishing”, “The Car Breaks Down”, “Dirty Water”, “Amos and the Leopard”, “Uncle George Feeds His Baby”, “Not Just A Cold”, “Child of the forest” and “Mzungu”34. But even at the last CRT most of the books that were published by local publishers were donated to the schools and not used on site. The books that were mostly science and fact oriented books were all donated by Book Aid International and contrasted with the kind of books that were bought by NABOTU, both in genre and contents.

34 The word Mzungu means “white person” in Kiswahili.
7. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

In this section of the study we will present and analyse the material that we gathered during the three CRTs we attended. The material that we are going to introduce is foremost from the interviews with the participating children and the people working with the project. However, we are also going to include some information that we collected during our observations of the CRT. We will analyse our material based on themes and concepts within our theoretical framework.

7.1 The child informants

We interviewed twenty children who participated in the CRT about their views relating to reading, writing and storytelling. In the interviews we did not focus on each child’s specific background. However, we identified some similarities between the children and their contexts. All children have another mother tongue than English. The most common vernacular was Luganda, but Acholi, Swahili, Runyankole, Rutoro, Runyakitara, Chiga and Luteso were other languages that the children we interviewed spoke. Only one of the children stated that he spoke only English with his father, due to the fact that his father had been living in England for a long time and had forgotten his vernacular when he returned to Uganda. Moreover, some children spoke more than two languages and the number of languages the children spoke varied from two languages to as many as five languages.

With few exceptions the children stated that their parents could read and write. Those children whose parents could not read or write or who had lost their parents said that someone in their family could read and write such as brothers, sisters, uncles and grandparents. The schools that the children attended were situated in disadvantaged and rural areas.

7.1.1 Reading culture and literacy

The children viewed reading and writing as something that is definitely connected to school and passing examinations. This view came through when the children talked about why it is important to be able to read and write. Many of the children said that passing examinations, job opportunities and future benefits were the main motivations for learning how to read and write. One boy spoke about the value of learning how to read and write in this way:

> It is important because as this one says that he wants to be a doctor, you can’t be a doctor, you can’t be any other person in the future, a useful person when you don’t know how to read or write (Boy 12 years old, Mityana, 2007-02-26).

Apart from perceiving reading and writing as vital to passing tests a majority also gave other reasons to why it is important to read. The children said that reading is important because you can “learn things”, “understand new things” and “get new skills” through reading. Reading also “helps you learn how to behave” and is a way to “communicate”. Moreover, some children said that it is important to read because otherwise you are not able to understand information given in written text. Those children stated that if you can not read you can miss out on information (and secrets) given through letters, signs and sheets. In addition, one child explained why reading is something to take seriously, since your life can depend on it.

> A driver who didn’t know how to what? Read. Now like what? Like a sign. There is a hump ahead. That means you have to decrease what? The speed. This man just rushed, when he doesn’t

35 The names of the languages that are stated in this part are the names used by the children. However, some of the languages are also known under other names. Acholi is also known as Lwo and Chiga is also known as Rukiga,

36 He is referring to his friend who participated in the same interview.
know that it is ahead there, what? A hump. He ended up making an accident. Because he didn’t know how to read. He saw a doctor, there was nothing he could do. It was the ending of his life (Boy 13 years old, Mityana, 2007-02-27).

Some children also express the view that writing can be part of their everyday lives outside school. This view came through when some children stated that they wrote letters to pen-pals, poems and in their diaries at home. One girl stated that she wrote about the war in the North which she had experienced first hand and said that it made her sad to write about the war but that she felt better afterwards (Girl 11 years old, Mityana, 2007-02-26).

Evidently, the children’s views on reading and writing are not only influenced by the education system’s examination oriented structure. On the contrary, it seems like the children also view reading and writing as something that is an essential part of their lives. In addition, they not only view literacy as a way of succeeding in their academic life but as a way of surviving and getting important information. The children also point out the communicative nature of literacy that is emphasised by Serpell among other authors within the sociocultural approach (Serpell 2001, p.244). Hence, we believe that many of the children do not simply perceive reading and writing as a skill to learn and use only at school. As we have seen the children also view reading and writing as functional and as important in their day-to-day life. The children’s viewpoints correlate well with the sociocultural approach since it is stated by Barton, for example, that literacy is not only tied to education. On the contrary, everyday life is believed to be closely tied to the concept literacy and the way the concept is given meaning (Barton 2001, p. 253).

Many of the children also showed other evidence of having a reading culture. Most children said that reading was the activity they liked the most at the CRT. In addition, more than half of the children said that they read for fun at home and about half of the children said that they also wrote at home just for fun. About half of the children also stated that their friends also read and write outside school because they enjoyed it. We believe that this shows that many children do not only use and connect reading and writing with school. This indicates, according to us, that many of the children to some extent have a reading culture since they have a habit of reading outside school for fun. One boy demonstrates this by saying that

[m]ost I read in my free time, like on weekends and holidays, when we’re not busy and sometimes we read when we can do what we like (Boy 13 years old, Mityana, 2007-02-27).

Furthermore, some stated that they liked reading at home since no one disturbs them, because it is quiet and they have more time to read by themselves at home. One girl told us about the difference of reading in school or at home:

I might be reading and they call me to attend classes but at home after doing the homework you enter the house or you go under the shade, you start reading and no one will disturb you (Girl 12 years old, Mityana, 2007-02-26).

In addition, one girl also states that it is easier to enjoy reading at home because

[i]n school other pupils are disturbing but at home it is quiet. I feel happy when I read a story about “The hyena and the hare” and “The lion and the goat” (Girl 14 years old, Mityana, 2007-02-26).

As we have demonstrated many of the children showed evidence of some form of reading culture. But it was still about half of the children interviewed who said that they did not read outside school and that they did not write for anything other than homework. Therefore reading and writing are not part of all aspects of their lives. This does not, however, mean that
these children do not take part in any literacy practises. Since we, similar to the sociocultural approach, do not limit the concept of literacy to merely reading and writing we believe it to be possible to find other literacy practises that are present in the children’s home environments. According to the sociocultural approach literacy is not only connected to education practises and school, but also to the home environment and everyday life (Barton 2001, p. 24). Based on this notion we will examine our findings.

7.1.2 Bicultural situation

Our findings showed that it was not primarily literacy practises like reading and writing that were present in the homes of the interviewed children, even if they were also present. In our material we could see that another literacy practise seemed to play an important role in the lives of the children. A literacy practise that we found evidence of among all children is storytelling. We could see that storytelling was to a large degree present in the children’s everyday life and home environment. All the children said that their friends told them stories and it was only two who said that they do not tell stories themselves and that no one tells stories in their home environment. The storytellers were mostly relatives like grandparents, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters and one child told us that her house girl told good stories at home.

During the interviews the children were asked to tell us a story they liked and out of the children that wanted to tell us about a story all but two chose a story that someone had told them. From the stories the children told us we believe it is possible to distinguish different themes. One important theme that came up regularly when the children discussed storytelling was “stories of long ago”. These stories can be seen as a way of telling the children about their history. The stories about African history that the children told us were about “slave trade and how it was stopped”, “how they suffered during the wars”, “how they long ago were hunting”, “about when early man started existing” and “how man discovered fire”. Most children stated similarly to one boy that “the elders tell stories about long ago” (Boy 12 years old, Mityana 2007-02-26) without explaining further what they included in the term “long ago”. However, it is not only ancient history that the children said was part of storytelling. One boy talked about storytelling in connection to modern history. He stated that

> [t]hey also tell about civil war and Idi Amin’s military coup and about Museveni and how many people died and lost their property (Boy 12 years old, Mityana 2007-02-26).

Some children also gave evidence that legends were part of the storytelling tradition. Stories such as “The story of Gipiri and Labongo” and “The story of Kintu and Nambi” are example of myths and legends which are part of the oral tradition in Uganda. These two stories were given as examples more than one time. The story of Gipiri and Labongo is part of the Acholi oral tradition and is one way of explaining the group’s history (Uganda Web 2007). In addition, the story of Kintu and Nambi is part of the Buganda tradition and one boy stated that “Kintu was the first Muganda” (Boy 12 years old, Mityana, 2007-02-26).

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37 Seventeen children told us about a story they liked.
38 Yoweri Museveni has been the President of Uganda since the beginning of 1986. See footnote 27 for more information about Idi Amin.
39 Muganda stands for a person who is part of the group that traditionally lived in the Buganda area. Muganda is singular and it is also common to talk of the Baganda people, which is the plural word for Muganda. The Buganda area is located in the central part of Uganda, close to the capital Kampala. It is the largest of the traditional kingdoms in present-day Uganda. The language Luganda is widely spoken in Buganda (Uganda Web).
Furthermore, in the end of the story

[t]he father of Nambi sent the brother, Kayikuzi, to fight Walumbe. So Walumbe when Kayikuzi came they started fighting so Walumbe ran in a hole there at a place called Tanda. […] So he went in a hole, […] so he died. From there Walumbe means death. Ey, so this name Walumbe is in Luganda meaning death. That’s the end of the story (Boy12 years old, Mityana, 2007-02-26).

In this way storytelling can be connected to certain groups in Uganda and to their history and heritage.

Another theme that we could identify among the stories the children presented was the use of animals as characters in storytelling. Animals were given human characteristics and weaknesses. Certain animals often represented the same kind of weaknesses in the children’s stories and the hyena and the hare are examples of these kinds of animals. These two share the characteristics cleverness and trickiness. The hyena is also portrayed as being foolish in the stories. One boy’s story about Mr Dog and Mr Hare can exemplify how animals are given different characteristics:

Mr. Dog was so popular in whistling. Mr. Hare was unpopular in the town. So one time Mr. Hare told him that: “If you want to succeed in your whistling come and I give you medicine”. Mr. Hare cut Mr. Dog’s mouth up to here. And up to here again (the boy shows where on his own face). […] They went to whistle in a party. When, Mr. Dog started whistling, he just started barking WOOF, WOOF. And then the people see that: “Aha, people now don’t listen to you, because you’re just making noise” (Boy 12 years old, Mityana, 2007-02-27).

In addition, many children told stories with animals as main characters, for example “The leopard and how he wanted to steal the bread of the deer”, “How a deer ate the hyena’s mother and how the hyena ate the deer’s mother”, “The leopard and the lion”, “The tricky hyena”, “The hidden fox”, “Mr. Chameleon saves Mr. Elephant” and “The hare killed the hyena”. Furthermore, one aspect of these kinds of stories is that you can learn something from them and as one boy points out they are stories “with hidden meaning” (Boy 12 years old, Mityana, 2007-02-27).

Another theme that we recognise among the children’s stories is stories with human beings as characters and which similar to the stories with the animals teaches the listener different moral lessons. These stories show “how we can be good children and behave to other people” and they give “advice about discipline”. Specific stories that can be included within this theme are “All that glitters is not gold”, “The story about the lazy girl”, “The lame man”, “The story of the beggar” and “The greedy king”.

One feature of storytelling that did not come up many times, but nevertheless were present in some of the stories was magical and supernatural elements. In the story “The greedy king” a witch doctor is present and puts a spell on the king so that everything he touches turns into gold. In another story a magician turns a woman into a baboon. The story “about a man who was eaten, who was gone back to come for the dead soul of a woman” also seem to have elements that is magical in some sense.

Some children also told us that their stories could relate to their environment and experiences. In addition, the children said that the stories they tell are about “family”, “sisters and brothers”, “my sisters and home”, “a certain girl”, “AIDS”, “a boy and a girl that are very good friends”. Furthermore, the children told us that their friends told them stories about “what they are going through” and “what they experience in their homes”.

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We find it interesting that almost all the children said that storytelling is done in their local language. This seems always to be true when grandparents, parents and siblings told stories at home. The exception was when the children told each other stories in school and the children did not have the same mother tongue. Additionally, we observed during the CRT that the children behaved differently depending on if they told a story in English or in their vernacular. When the children spoke in their own language the children were more confident and used a more vivid body language.

The children’s stories demonstrated that storytelling has different themes and elements that are part of the Ugandan culture and heritage. We see the children’s stories and the oral tradition that they represent as a literacy practise that is part of the children’s family culture. Similar to Serpell we believe that family culture consists of different forms of rituals, myths and stories that play a significant role in the development of children (Serpell 2001, p. 253). The way we perceive it is that storytelling can function as an instruction for the children in how to behave towards other people in the community. Furthermore, it teaches the children about their history and culture. Through the stories with hidden meaning they learn how to reflect and think powerfully. These functions can be a way of teaching the children the social order and the norms of the community, which we see as part of the children’s development in society. Storytelling also functions as a way for the children to learn their mother tongue. This became clear when the children stated that they learned English in school and their mother tongue only at home or only at the first years at school. Consequently, we believe that storytelling is a literacy practise present in the children’s homes and communities that with its elements and functions plays an important role for children in Uganda.

We realised when talking to the children that it was not only in connection to the closest family that storytelling played an important role. The children showed that they viewed storytelling as part of the social relations they had with friends. By telling stories the children said that they can entertain friends and one boy said that “if it’s a good story they have to laugh and have fun” (Boy 13 years old, Mityana, 2007-02-27). Some children also stated that they exchange stories and by this we think that storytelling can be seen as a form of social interaction. After you tell a story to your friends they continue by telling another story. One boy stated that he feels “very nice [when telling a story] because you enjoy, you tell your friends and they tell you” (Boy12 years old, Mityana, 2007-07-26). It can also be a way of getting recognition from your friends since “your friends can like you if you tell good stories” and one boy even said that “I think it can help you to get married to a girl” (Boy 13 years old, Jinja, 2007-02-23). Moreover, storytelling can also be seen as a social interaction between different family members and over generations as many of the children state that their parents, siblings and grandparents tell them stories.

We think that the children’s responses indicate that many of the children view storytelling as a social practise. Furthermore, we believe that it shows how storytelling can be part of the rituals, myths and stories that form family cultures, but it is also part of the social actions that together create the social order of the community. The children’s responses also show the communicative nature of the literacy practise storytelling. Similar to John-Steiner et al. and other authors within the sociocultural approach we believe that social interaction is an important part of the construction of different literacy practises (John-Steiner et al. 1994b, p. 36f).

Apart from being a social practise we believe that what signifies the literacy practise storytelling is that it, contrary to the literacy practises in school, is viewed by the children
foremost as entertainment. If the children connected literacy practises such as reading and writing with school they associated storytelling with leisure and home. Some children explicitly stated that storytelling is something you do when you have time over from school, which is difficult to get when you have much homework. One boy’s statement shows how it can be difficult for the children to find time to tell stories:

And when we’re free we sometimes play football. After playing football and we’re done cleaning and helping our parents, we will tell it (Boy 13 years old, Mityana, 2007-02-27).

The same boy goes on by saying that it is even harder to find time to tell stories these days

because now when I’m in P7, the last class of primary level and we’re so busy doing what and this and can’t tell each other stories. Because now my classmates are struggling very, very hard (Boy 13 years old, Mityana, 2007-02-27).

On top of this, it is not seen as serious business to tell stories, not like reading. Two boys discussed this and especially one of them was keen on expressing this view and he continuously brought it up during the interview. The boys start by discussing why they do not tell stories that much.

Boy 1: Yes, because we are at school […] we are serious, we study and we don’t get that time to… (interrupted)
Boy 2: Very, very, very serious (Two Boys 12 years old, Mityana 2007-02-26).

And the second boy later brings it up several times after this discussion again.

Boy 2: For me, I like reading stories and telling them but I am not very much interested in telling stories. I can’t waste my time telling stories […] For me, I don’t, I don’t, I don’t want to waste my saliva telling those stories (Boy 12 years old, Mityana 2007-02-26).

Interestingly the same boys later stated that storytelling is important even for school purposes. The reason for this was that some questions in their exams required that they know stories and one of the boys said that “you can fail miserably” if you don’t know the stories (Two Boys 12 years old, Mityana 2007-02-26).

From the children’s answers it seemed like the children viewed storytelling as less important and valuable than reading and writing. If you read and write you are doing serious work, contrary to if you are telling stories. We have previously shown that reading and writing can be done at home. But we found little evidence of the opposite: storytelling in school. We believe that the literacy practises in the homes of the children are separated from the literacy practises in school. At home you tell stories in vernacular and in school you read and write in English, it seems. However, as we showed before, it is not always that straightforward since many children also read and write at home. But we believe, similar to Serpell, that the problem lies in the fact that it can be difficult for children to acclimatise to the school environment if it differs from the culture they have previously experienced at home. Both Serpell and Heath have argued that the culture present in the school environment of many children does not correlate with the culture present in their homes. We believe, similar to them that this can cause problems for the children to succeed in their education (Serpell 2001, p. 250, Heath in Serpell 2001, p. 250). Related to this, we also believe that the fact that the culture in school primarily influences the culture at home and not the other way around is one part of the problem. We think that many children bring the culture present in school to their homes through reading and writing, but it appears as if the culture present in the homes of the
children does not affect the school culture to a large degree. Hybrids on more levels would, in our opinion, be an improvement since the children would benefit from it.

Based on these findings we feel that it is fruitful to talk of the concept bicultural situation in this context. Even if the culture in school influences the culture at home we would still like to use this concept as a way to emphasise the fact that the education system does not to a large degree regard and adopt the culture at home. Moreover, we think that the concept is relevant as a way to point out that there are two different cultures that are present at home and in school, even if they influence each other. We feel that it is especially important to show that a bicultural situation is present among the children since the literacy practises present in the two cultures are valued and viewed very differently. Reading and writing are ranked higher than other literacy practises and the same goes for the English language. Similar to Prinsloo & Breier we believe that it is important to see how people value literacy practises, but also what power relations that creates those values (Prinsloo & Breier 1996, p. 24). In the interviews with the children we noticed that many children valued reading and writing as important based on future benefits, such as job opportunities, that these literacy practises and the English language can give. We believe that the children’s answers indicate that reading, writing and the English language can be seen as gatekeepers to higher posts and status in the Ugandan society. The reason storytelling is viewed as less important can, in our opinion, be found in the fact that storytelling is viewed as light entertainment. Additionally, we think that this view among the children comes from the fact that storytelling does not seem to be emphasised as important in school and as part of the school curriculum.

On the other hand, even if we have acknowledged the fact that many of the children valued reading and writing as higher than storytelling several of them also viewed storytelling as something important. The children said that storytelling and stories can be important “because they can remind you of long ago” moreover “it is important to know what took place long ago”. It is viewed as a way of knowing your history. One girl sees it as a way of finding out about her family’s past:

You can know what was long ago, what grandparents did and their country Rwanda and how they went different ways after war and got lost (Girl 14 years old, Mityana, 2007-02-26).

Another aspect of storytelling that the children valued was the fact that storytelling can be a way of getting advice and it can also teach them how to behave towards other people. In addition, one girl also said that “it helps you understand what they are teaching in school” (Girl 11 years old, Mityana, 2007-02-26). The girl’s statement shows that storytelling can be viewed as a complement to formal education. More children saw storytelling as a form of education and believed storytelling to be important “because you can educate people”. This statement shows that it is not only viewed as important for the children’s own sake, but it can be seen as a way to help others. Additionally, two boys’ statements can also represent the view that storytelling can be a way for them to guide others.

Boy 1: Those stories have some advice…
Boy 2: Yeah.
Boy 1: …they give to friends. Yeah, they have some good advice. Yes, and even people or friends, let me assume that I am the one telling, my friends, those friends of mine will know the good and the bad.
[...] Boy 2: And telling, and telling stories, some of those young kids they can learn from you
(Two Boys 12 years old, Mityana 2007-02-26).

We have now looked at the interviewed children’s views concerning reading, writing and storytelling. Based on the children’s responses we have argued that it is possible to claim that
the children come in contact with two forms of linguistic and cultural systems. We believe that one culture is present in school and one at home in the lives of the children. Reading and writing is mainly connected to the culture in school and differs from the culture present in the homes of the children. In addition, an oral tradition is present in all the children’s lives and it seems like the children view storytelling as something that is separated from reading and writing. However, some of the children also connected the different literacy practises in their responses and we will now look closer at this phenomenon.

7.1.3 Bicultural mediation

We believe that it is possible to connect the culture in school and the culture at home in more than one way. When the two cultures are connected we believe, like Serpell, that it can work as mediation between the two cultures. Serpell uses the term bicultural mediation to describe this process (Serpell 2001, p. 267). In addition, we saw some examples among the children’s statements of how bicultural mediation can work. We saw evidence of bicultural mediation both when the children talked about storytelling, reading and writing. We will start with how the children used bicultural mediation in relation to storytelling.

One way the children applied bicultural mediation was through using stories they have read when telling a story. One girl’s story can show how this type of bicultural mediation can function. She told us that her favourite story was “Where is the baby” and she also liked telling her friends the story. However, the story she told us differed in many ways from the story in the book. We realised this when we later got the opportunity to read the book ourselves. For example when the girl told us the story she gave the baby a name and added characters that were not present in the book and subtracted others. This leads us to the conclusion that children can primarily find inspiration in books as opposed to just being able to retell stories they have read. In addition, one boy not only finds inspiration in books:

Boy1: Even some stories from these days, that I get from newspapers, from books, from magazines, they are good, ey.
Boy2: For me, instead of telling those stories, I just get the newspaper and I read, get some new words, spellings which I don’t know, instead of telling stories…
Boy1: Yeah, but for ME, I first get those things from the newspapers…
Boy2: This one is very good and interested in telling stories
(Two boys 12 years old, Mityana, 2007-02-26).

This quotation also shows how the interviewed children sometimes had very different views of reading and storytelling. Some children also told us that they sometimes wrote down stories they have heard. The reasons for writing down the stories differed between the children. Some said that they wrote down the stories to remember them till later and others found inspiration from stories when they wrote stories of their own. In addition, one boy states that:

My grandmother tells stories. She came when my mother died and told stories about long ago. The stories were about slave-trade and how it was stopped. I have used the stories my grandmother told me sometimes when I write (Boy 13 years old, Jinja, 2007-02-24).

Furthermore, when the children discussed writing, it once again became clear that the children connected the two cultures through writing. The children stated that the stories they and their friends write at home are about “animals”, “wars” and “school”. They gave quite specific titles and subjects that they and their friends had written such as “The slave trade”, “The first people of Buganda”, “A cow and a girl”, “The hyena”, “The father of Labongo and his

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40 See footnote 36 for more information about the people of Buganda.
We believe that the children’s responses are clear examples of how different literacy practises can form hybrids. The children have incorporated reading and writing into themes and elements that are present within storytelling and in this way the children have connected two literacy traditions with each other. According to Street people can affect literacy and make it into their own and we think that this is exactly what the children did when they formed this kind of hybrid (Street 1993b, p.25). In addition, we believe that the different kinds of hybrids that the children told us about in their responses can illustrate how people can apply their literacy skills according to their own needs. We think that the children, for example, can use written text when they need inspiration to tell stories or when they need to remember the stories being told to them.

When the two different cultures present in home and in school are connected to each other we believe that it also means that the literacy practises are integrated with the context of Uganda. The themes of the stories in the children’s writings relate to the children’s environment and culture. The examples of writings given by the children can be traced back to what the children experience at home and at school. We consider legends, fables and myths to be part of the Ugandan cultural history as well as the children’s home environment. Therefore, we believe that the children’s examples of writings show that the context of Uganda influences literacy practises such as writing. Similar to Street we believe that literacy practises are affected by the specific context (Street 1993a p. 5). In addition, we argue that the children’s writing, as we have previously shown, can illustrate a form of bicultural mediation. The themes that are present within literacy practises at home are connected with the literacy practise writing, that traditionally has been part of the school culture. We would also like to go as far as to say that the children’s writings can be seen as a form of hybrid, where the relatively new literacy tradition of reading and writing are incorporated into existing forms of knowledge systems and literacy practises in Uganda.

Apart from connecting writing with local literacy structures and themes the children also showed evidence of how reading can function as bicultural mediation. When the children talked about what books they preferred and believed to be relevant it became clear for us that one way of mediating between the two cultures is through books and their content. Moreover, we find it interesting to see what the children themselves consider to be relevant books since it has been stated before that to create a reading culture relevant material is the key.

In order to demonstrate how bicultural mediation can work we will first give a description of what kind of books the children preferred. The books that most children enjoyed were storybooks and novels in English. Some titles that the children gave as example of books that they liked were “A dog killed a cat”, “A simple cure”, “A car broke down”, “The good Samaritan”, “Kahidgi the great warrior”, “How the goat got into trouble”, “Jacob and Esau”, “Ggulu, Ggulu goes to school”, “The child of the forest”, “The golden book”, “Where is the baby”, “The magical griffin” “The lion and the goat”, “The hyena and the hare” and “Mr and Mrs Kemigisha”. The children said that they liked books that were taking place in school and that were about children and pupils. Some children pointed out that they wanted the story of the book to take place in Uganda and Africa. What is more, some stated that they were interested in stories from the Bible and books that were about long ago. Storybooks about animals also seemed to be popular among the children.
In addition, one boy had some interesting points about why he likes books that take place in his local environment and why they are relevant for him.

Yes, I like, because the most action take place, where? In the rural country, as the stories I have told you. If you told me a story from your place, I do not know how to behave and may not enjoy it. But when this one, which is coming from your place, what? Your own country. You have to be knowing how they discipline and what? Then you are able to, it is able to be good for you and have fun (Boy 13 years old, Mityana, 2007-02-27).

The boy’s statement shows that he wants books that he can relate to and understand, which in his opinion means that they take place in the rural country. We believe that this statement is a good example of what many children expressed since it shows that the kind of books that many children believed to be relevant are often related to their own context. They do not only take place in Africa but some also relate to fables and the local culture. We believe that this shows what within in the sociocultural approach can be called a hybrid, as Street points out (Street 2003, p. 80). The culture at home and local traditions can as we see it, through for example fables, stories of long ago and legends, be connected to the literacy practises present in school through books. When the mentioned themes are used in books we believe that these kinds of stories can work as a form of bicultural mediation. What we mean by this is that stories that relate to and are based on local traditions and cultures can mediate between the culture present in school and the culture present in the homes of the children. Moreover, we think that the reason to why the children prefer the books mentioned before can be found in this form of mediation. According to us the children like the books because they are able to connect the culture that is present in their homes and local communities with the one present in school, which we believe helps the children in their understanding. When the setting and content of the books do not relate to the children’s environment we believe that it can be difficult for them to fully relate to and understand them.

However, not all children preferred storybooks. Some children stated that they liked reading books that taught them something about unfamiliar subjects within social science and natural science. Within these kinds of subjects the children found books about explorers, reptiles and vegetation interesting. We believe that these book choices derive from the children’s curiosity about the unknown and we think that this is something positive since it helps the children learn new things. But we also think that it is important for the children to start learning from what they know and then they can later develop new concepts from what is known to them. We do not question the need among some children for these kinds of books, but we do not believe that they can function as bicultural mediation. During our observations of the CRT we also saw that many children were struggling with these kinds of books since they were difficult to understand both in terms of language level and content.

In this part we have tried to illustrate both the varieties between the children’s responses and the congruence that were present in the material. We have shown that the children view different literacy practises differently. We think that a bicultural situation is present among the children since they connect and put different values on the culture present in the homes and in the schools. However, the children also showed that the two cultures can be integrated through writing, reading and storytelling through what we, similar to Serpell, call bicultural mediation. We will now continue by looking at the same subjects but from another level. The perspective of the people working with the CRT will now be presented in the next part of the result and analysis.
7.2 The adult informants

We interviewed ten people working with the project CRT. The people working with the CRT belong to different stake holders within the umbrella organisation National Book Trust of Uganda. In order for the reader to get an insight into the personnel’s background we will give an introduction of the people we interviewed and show their areas of expertise.

Sam Andema
Sam Andema is a teacher by profession. He has been the Chairperson of the Reading Association of Uganda for the last four years. He has recently also been elected the Chairperson of the International Reading Association for Africa. Furthermore, he holds lectures at the Language and Literacy Department at Kyambogo University in Uganda.

Anonymous
Anonymous is a student at the East African School of Library and Information Science at Makerere University in Kampala. He has been involved with the Children’s Reading Tent during his studies.

Charles Batambuze
Charles Batambuze is a librarian by profession. He is the executive director for Children’s Reading Tent within the organisation National Book Trust of Uganda. He is also the Secretary of the Uganda Library Association.

Robert Kayiki
Robert Kayiki is a librarian by profession. He teaches at the East African School of Library and Information Science at Makerere University in Kampala. He is also a member of the Uganda Library and Information Association.

Evangeline Ledi Barongo
Evangelina Ledi Barongo is a retired librarian. Currently she is a children’s writer and the founder of the organisation Uganda Children’s Writers and Illustrators Association which publishes children’s books.

Stella Nekuusa
Stella Nekuusa works as a librarian at the National Library of Uganda in Kampala.

Yunia Obua Otoa
Yunia Obua Otoa is a retired teacher who before retirement had been teaching for about 50 years. She has been teaching at different levels of education from nursery school up to university level in the subject Early Childhood Education. She was the first Chairperson of the Reading Association of Uganda between the years 1998 and 2003. Furthermore, she is currently a member of the Uganda Children’s Writers and Illustrators Association. Moreover, she writes children’s books.

Jackie Sabiti Kateera
Jackie Sabiti Kateera is a librarian by profession. At the time of the interview she had resigned from her work as an administrative assistant at National Book Trust of Uganda since she was at home taking care of her new-born child.
James Tumusiime
James Tumusiime is the Chairperson and Managing Director of Fountain Publishers. He is one of the founding members of Reading Association of Uganda. Furthermore, he is the founding Chairperson of the umbrella organisation Uganda Publishers and Booksellers Association which was the precursor of the National Book Trust of Uganda.

Loy Tumusiime
Loy Tumusiime is a teacher by profession. She is a Human Resource Director at Fountain Publishing. She is also one of the founding members of Reading Association of Uganda.

Our group of informants must be seen as quite homogeneous since they all have similar backgrounds and work in the same area. However, within the umbrella organisation National Book Trust of Uganda the different organisations have the freedom to develop the CRT in the way they see fit according to their different perspectives. Therefore, we do not see the group as totally homogeneous. Nevertheless, the informants’ views correlated well with each other even if they demonstrated different aspects in relation to a reading culture and literacy. Furthermore, we will in this chapter present the informants’ views in relation to foremost literacy and reading culture. The views expressed by the informants will be presented according to different themes. We have decided on the themes based on our research questions and our theoretical framework.

7.2.1 Reading culture

In chapter 4 we have described a definition of reading culture provided by Magara and Batambuze (2005), but it is not obvious that our informants have the same definition. Therefore we were interested in how the adult informants defined and viewed reading culture.

When defining the concept of reading culture almost all the informants mention and stress that a reading culture should be voluntary, meaning that it should not be imposed on people.

A reading culture I think would be the ability to read freely and voluntarily, for pleasure, gain interest and understanding (Anonymous 2007-03-20).

To have a feeling that I have to read, daily. Not to read when you need to read. For example if you go to school then you read to pass exams - that is not a reading culture. That is forced reading. (Evangeline Ledi Barongo 2007-03-20).

Another aspect of this voluntary basis is reading culture as an “urge” or “spontaneous desire” to read or a “habit” of reading as mentioned by Robert Kayiki, Sam Andema, and James Tumusiime. Reading for pleasure or leisure, which many of the informants mention, is also part of this aspect.

Additionally, in order for the children in Uganda to fully be able to obtain literacy and a reading culture the informants view it as important for the children to consider these practises a natural part of their life. However, Charles Batambuze raises the question of “whose culture is a reading culture?” and answers it by saying “the reality of our society is that, this reading culture was actually imposed on us”. However, this view of reading as an alien, foreign thing is something that Charles Batambuze believes depends on how you wish to look at it. He states that it is even possible to claim that reading is African.
In addition, he argues that

[the reality is that reading goes hand in hand with written word. Now the question is which came first the written word or reading? [...] And so looking at the history of writing from the beginning [...] in Egypt in Africa. So the idea we’re trying to develop was that actually if writing is African than reading must be African (Charles Batambuze 2007-03-14).

This statement made by Charles Batambuze could be seen as a way of claiming (or maybe re-claiming) the concept of literacy and trying to subvert it from being a Western concept introduced by force and constructing it into something that is an original part of African (and in extension Ugandan) culture. Hence, the question of “whose culture is a reading culture?” can be answered: it is African. From the perspective of a sociocultural approach to literacy it is not of interest for us to discuss or establish whether reading and writing in fact is an African thing; rather it is to see how people, and in this case our informants, construct and affect the concept of reading culture and literacy (Street 1996, p. 6). The way that we interpret Charles Batambuze nevertheless is that regardless of the origin of reading and writing, for a reading culture to flourish in Uganda it is not only important that reading and literacy play a vital role in lives of children in Uganda. It is also important that children own the culture of reading and literacy. This means that reading and literacy is perceived by the children as something that is part of them. Discussing the same subject, Loy Tumusiime believes that it is difficult to achieve this because

[c]ulture is not something you just do overnight. It is not something you do targeting something, it is something you acquire early and when you grow. So a reading culture is like any other culture, you must acquire it and do it and grow in it until it is part of you (Loy Tumusiime 2007-03-27).

However, many of the informants believed it to be possible to influence the children’s perception of reading and literacy. The method that among the informants is viewed as being the most effective one, when trying to achieve this goal, is through the promotion of reading as fun and as pleasure. Jackie Sabiti Kateera demonstrates this view by saying that when the children read in an informal setting and

[w]hen we give them the opportunity to interact with the books in that kind of environment they learn and they enjoy it and they begin to take it up as part of their life (Jackie Sabiti Kateera 2007-03-26).

It is also stated by many of the informants that it is important to start the promotion of reading early, ideally starting with parents reading to their children.

The construction of reading as something fun and voluntary stands in sharp contrast to reading as imposed by the British colonial power. In fact, when it comes to trying to create a reading culture in Uganda, the traditional Western education system that has been imposed on Uganda is seen by virtually all the informants as one of the biggest problems. The adult informants say that people in Uganda generally associate reading with school and forced reading to pass examinations. In addition, most of the material that is available for reading is the kind of material that people read in school.

A lot of the material that is available turns out to be textbooks and the textbooks rather than entice reading actually, actually deter it. People get tired, they are scared of books (James Tumusiime 2007-03-14).
Relating to the lack of reading materials it seems that Charles Batambuze wanted to point out that it is somewhat unfair to say that Ugandans do not have a reading culture. This due to the fact that there is no possibility of having a reading culture where there is nothing to be read:

> Some people say; in Uganda we don’t have a reading culture. That is one part of the truth. Then the other side is, that some people say that the reading culture is there, but where is the material that people should be reading? So in other words; that you can not really say that we don’t have a reading culture because in the first place people don’t have the material to read, ey? So what is the basis of your judgement? It is not there (Charles Batambuze 2007-03-14).

Perhaps this statement can be seen as a form of resistance to the view of constructing non-reading Ugandans as being “ignorant” because of not reading. It also exposes that reading has to do with resources and that poverty is a big obstacle in Uganda for the creation of a reading culture. What is more, Batambuze’s statement shows how important it is to be aware of how the context influences the development of a reading culture. Poverty as a hindering factor when it comes to promoting a reading culture is also something that is mentioned by almost all the adult informants. They state that people in general do not have enough money to buy books, let alone to make ends meet. In the daily struggle to survive books are very far down on the list of people’s priorities if they are even present at all, according to our informants:

> One can hardly think of buying a book instead of buying a loaf of bread. So you know, it keeps them from reading, even if one wanted to read (Stella Nekuusa 2007-03-21).

Poverty is not only mentioned at the individual level. Charles Batambuze discusses the lack of money at the institutional level when he says that there are not enough public libraries, as some other informants also mention. Furthermore the libraries that do exist as well as the schools do not have enough money to buy books:

> So at the institutional level we also need to address poverty, if you can call it poverty of the institutions (Charles Batambuze 2007-03-14).

Relating to this, government support is mentioned by some informants as being crucial for the development of a reading culture and they lament that it is currently lacking in Uganda. For example, James Tumusiime states that the fact that the CRTs are funded by development aid and not supported by government

> [g]ains the impression that it is something superficial. It’s not appreciated by the people who push the development agenda. It’s the government who do that. That undermines the credibility of the program in the eyes of the users. ‘Cause they know this will end soon (James Tumusiime 2007-03-14).

In terms of lack of resources it is not only the lack of reading materials and the institutions that can provide them that are mentioned as a problem among the informants. It is also stressed that the reading materials should be relevant in order for a true reading culture to be possible in Uganda. The relevant books to satisfy the urge for reading are considered by the informants to be books with a content that people can relate to: books about their own culture, books in their local languages and storybooks rather than fact books.\footnote{We will return to this topic and describe it in more detail later under the headline “7.2.5 The children’s needs in relation to literacy and a reading culture”.} This view correlates well with the sociocultural approach to literacy, since it shows a way of constructing literacy in relation to the context of the people involved and their needs, as Street would have it (Street 1996, p. 6).
In congruence with this, many of the informants stress that reading culture should imply a functional, practical aspect, in the sense that someone who is part of a reading culture reads for the purpose of improving their knowledge or helping themselves improve their situation, not just to pass examinations:

If you have a problem, any challenges anything you want to do; you ask a book and see what is written about it. And then use that knowledge to solve your problem. And to me that is a reading culture. It is more than just people going to book shops and buying books and it’s more than people going to a library. It is actually going to a book shop to buy a book and using the information therein to solve something. So attaching value to the information in a book and knowing that a book is essential to somebody’s life in terms of the decisions they make on a daily basis (Charles Batambuze 2007-03-14).

Sam Andema in particular stresses the point that a reading culture should be more than the aspect of reading for leisure and pleasure:

But, technically when people talk about literacy – I mean a reading habit…or reading culture for that matter we are talking about reading for pleasure, but I think it should be beyond reading for pleasure but also include reading for general purposes. You can read for purposes of enlightening yourself about the environment; your health; your society; your culture, all that should constitute aspects of a reading culture. So the extent to which you desire to read to have such broad information to improve the quality of life should define reading culture, in my view (Sam Andema 2007-03-26).

Another aspect that many of the informants stress is the importance of a reading culture in relation to the development of the Ugandan society. Reading, it seems, is seen by most of the adult informants as a device through which virtually everything can be achieved by the reading individuals and the societies which they form:

Reading is a tool through which we can liberate ourselves from ignorance; from disease and from backwardness because a lot of information is contained in books. So if we could access this information in books we can go a long way in liberating ourselves, as Ugandans (Sam Andema 2007-03-26).

Reading is really key to everything. There’s no limit to how much a person can develop physically, emotionally, economically if they read, because reading opens up your mind to so many things (Jackie Sabiti Kateera 2007-03-26).

It is also seen by many as something that is necessary for individuals and societies to develop and achieve economic growth. For example, Charles Batambuze says that the government of Uganda has formulated a development strategy called “Vision 2025” and that one of its goals is for Uganda to become an “informed society”. Batambuze claims that in order for this to happen, people need to read. He mentions an example of a disease called “wilf” which is affecting bananas and is threatening the livelihood of many people in Uganda. Batambuze says that the farmers who are affected by this could gain a lot from being able to access information about how to stop this disease through reading. Discussing a similar topic, Loy Tumusiime states that Uganda is part of the global world and it is important not to be left behind in the global development. Since reading is part of development it is necessary to be able to read, she says and furthermore she considers reading to be absolutely necessary for a person’s ability to analyse.

From the perspective of a sociocultural approach to literacy, these latter statements of reading and reading culture as connected to development in society are indicating influences from what we perceive as the “autonomous model of literacy”. In this model literacy means first and foremost being able to read and write. As we have described in our theoretical framework.
this perspective links literate individuals with “Western” concepts of what are considered to be positive characteristics such as being “modern” et cetera (Street 1993a, p. 5ff), and in this case “developed”. We have also described how so called non-literate people or people with a perceived low degree of literacy are considered to have “limited ability to solve problems and think powerfully” (John-Steiner et al. 1994a, p. 23). One interpretation (which is perhaps harsh) judging from the previous statements made by some of the adult informants could be that being non-literate (in the sense of not being able to read and write) entails being “ignorant”, “backward”, “not being part of global development” and having “no analytical skills”, which is questionable and problematic from our viewpoint. We believe, influenced by Street, that it is problematic because we think that it downplays other forms of literacy such as the oral tradition (Street 1993a 6f). Another aspect of what can be interpreted as part of the “autonomous model of literacy” is that literacy, and in extension a reading culture, is a prerequisite for a democratic society:

But really for us to be democratic, for us to promote community development we need to develop all the members of our communities to participate actively in decision making. And the only way forward for such a phenomenon to exist in this country is to have a literate society, a society that can read, a society that can write. And of course the approach to that is through developing a reading culture. So that people like reading, to gain more knowledge, not only to pass examinations (Robert Kayiki 2007-03-21).

Other informants also mention similar aspects even though they do not mention the word democracy. But the fact that the adult informants are influenced by perspectives that are similar to the ones present within the “autonomous model of literacy” is hardly surprising. This is the view presented by many literacy programs and to view literacy as a way of reaching “development”, “empowerment” and “modernisation” is not something controversial. The problem lies in the fact that it is a somewhat simplified “truth” and it is not possible to say that literacy will definitely bring these results (Wedin 2004, p. 6).

Additionally, we do not mean to question the statements about Uganda being a part of globalisation, or question that Ugandan farmers would benefit from being able to read, or that Uganda should become more democratic et cetera. In our opinion this does not mean that being able to read and write has to be constructed as the highest form of literacy. Promoting the ability to read and write could rather be seen as a way of using a given situation into benefiting people. That is, not romanticizing local forms of literacy or seeing the dominant form (being able to read and write) as superior, but instead creating a “hybrid” by using and adapting the dominant form of literacy to suit ones own surroundings and needs (Street 2003, p. 80, 1996, p. 6, 1993b, p. 25). When literacy promotion is based on the learners’ needs literacy can in fact result in “empowerment”. This is also, at large, how we perceive the adult informants’ intentions. What is evident is that they all want Ugandans to improve the quality of their lives through reading and writing.

In addition, we also believe that the informants’ responses do not show a homogeneous view of a reading culture. In the statements made about reading culture and literacy in our interviews with the adult informants we think that different discourses of literacy emerge and intersect into (or maybe even conflict with) each other. From our viewpoint we see both examples of statements influenced by the traditional “autonomous model of literacy” as well as by the sociocultural approach to literacy, and most likely also discourses that we have not even identified or recognized (Street 1993a, p. 5). On one hand the informants stress that it is important to take the children’s needs into account when promoting a reading culture and believe that it is vital that the children own the culture of reading. On the other hand some of the informants seem to believe that in order for people in the communities in Uganda to be
able to analyse and avoid ignorance and backwardness a reading culture is necessary. A reading culture should be voluntary, many of them state, but at the same time many of them say that it is more or less a must. We are not mentioning this with the intention of portraying the informants as being contradictory in their statements, rather as an indication of the complexity of the issue and how seemingly opposite discourses of reading culture and literacy can intersect into each other.

7.2.2 Literacy

The informants perceive literacy first of all as the ability to read and write. However, this definition is seen by many of the informants as too narrow. Yunia Obua Otoa acknowledges the fact that the standard definition for literacy is the skills of reading and writing, but she states that literacy should be viewed as functional. In addition, instead of viewing literacy simply as the skill of reading and writing the informants believe that it should be viewed as the ability to “digest”, use and understand information solving your day-to-day problems. Furthermore, to be literate does not merely mean having acquired the technical skill of reading and writing but to use literacy skills as a way of communicating. We believe that the informants’ view of literacy in this sense correlates with the sociocultural approach to literacy. Similar to Barton the informants point out that literacy is closely tied to everyday life and not only connected to education (Barton 2001, p. 24). The critique of the traditional view of literacy that is present within the sociocultural approach is, in our opinion, also present among many of the informants. When the informants want to broaden the concept of literacy and oppose the standard definition of literacy, as merely the skill of reading and writing, we believe that this must be seen as a critique of a more traditional perception of literacy and the “autonomous model of literacy”. Moreover, the informants stress the communicative nature of literacy practises that John-Steiner et al. among other authors within the sociocultural approach also emphasise (John-Steiner et al. 1994b, p. 37f).

In addition, the informants do not only connect literacy with the skills of reading and writing but also to other practises such as storytelling, singing, art and craft. Sam Andema demonstrates this view when he states that:

We want to widen the concept of literacy. Confining literacy only to the pen and paper, to the eye and the book, we want to widen, it should be a large experience. If we define literacy broadly to include these aspects then we are bound to make sense to the children. But if we confine it so much to books they are bound to find it mechanical and they are bound to find it artificial, we want to demystify that (Sam Andema 2007-03-26).

We think that this quotation indicates a view of literacy that is connected to the context of the children and their needs. This view correlates well with the sociocultural approach since both Street and the adult informants view the social context and the learners’ needs as important when promoting literacy (Street 1996, p. 6). Andema represents a view that states that indigenous literacy practises can and should be incorporated into the concept literacy. Similar to Serpell it seems like Andema believes that it is important to connect indigenous literacy practises with literacy practises that traditionally have been associated with literacy, such as reading and writing, since it helps the children in their understanding. Serpell calls this connection bicultural mediation and according to Andema this connection or mediation is vital as a way to “make sense to the children” (Serpell 2001, p. 267). We believe that this means that in order for the children to be able to relate and understand the concept literacy it needs to be broadened according to the children’s needs.

This connection is emphasised not only by Serpell but Street also argues that it is important to look at “how literacy is incorporated into the receiving culture’s already existing conventions
and concepts regarding communication” (Street 1993b, p. 25). The ability to incorporate local communication patterns with the concept literacy is also mentioned by the informants. We believe that the reason the informants find it possible to include local literacy practises in the concept literacy can be found in their view of literacy. Because many of the informants view literacy as a way of communicating it can also be connected with other forms of communication than reading and writing. Evangeline Ledi Barongo makes interesting connections of the possible relation between arts and crafts and literacy

By creating different activities you create the mood of reading. Because the children start with this then they go to another one and eventually pick a book. Sometimes they want to see what they can model from what they have, when they see the pictures in a book, like a pot and they remember Oh I can model a pot [...] “Oh can you write the word pot?” “Pot?”, “P O T I”. “Is it? Let’s find out from the dictionary”. Then you go to the dictionary and there you find it is not there. He learns (Evangeline Ledi Barongo 2007-03-20).

Loy Tumusiime believes that drawing can be a way for the children to demonstrate their understanding of different concepts of the world, which she views as an important part of literacy. Furthermore, Jackie Sabiti Kateera shows how children’s drawings can help the children to express and communicate not only different concepts but also their daily experiences:

When they draw those pictures you can see that they are talking about the life that they know. They can’t express it in words, they can’t help you to understand except when they draw. Then there’s a picture, I remember which struck me the most, where they show rebels. They usually like to show the rebels with dreadlocks ‘cause the rebel leader Joseph Kony wears dreadlocks. So they show the rebels shaking hands with other civilians, basically people within the community and it’s like a sign of peace and reconciliation and they are saying that “we hope that someday we will see our community enjoy peace like we know the rest of the country”. So reading, I mean, when you draw you express your feelings and the same way when you read you learn how to express yourself in words, and when you write (Jackie Sabiti Kateera 2007-03-26).

Additionally, the informants perceive storytelling, singing, crafting, moulding, painting and drawing as related to literacy since they also demonstrate different forms of expressions and communication. We believe that these literacy practises can be viewed as what Street calls “existing conventions and concepts regarding communication” (Street 1993b, p. 25). We believe that through the CRT the adult informants connect these conventions and concepts with the concept literacy. When the informants view literacy as a concept that involves both traditionally “Western” literacy practises such as reading and writing and indigenous literacy practises such as storytelling they, similar to Street, believe that the concept literacy is a hybrid (Street 2003, p. 80). Different literacy practises form a hybrid that together is part of the concept literacy. This hybrid is one way to “make sense to the children”.

Furthermore, the informants did not only view literacy as a way to communicate, many of them also believed that creativity and imagination are important factors in the process of attaining literacy. Robert Kayikiki states that creativity is a very fundamental aspect of knowledge building and therefore views different forms of artistic expressions as essential elements in this process. Singing, storytelling, crafting, moulding, painting and drawing are seen by many of the informants as ways of promoting both creativity and imagination.

42 Since 1986 various rebel movements in the northern and eastern parts of Uganda have opposed the government. One of these movements, the Lord’s Resistance Army, has become widely known for its brutality and for sexually abusing and recruiting children by force (Holmberg & Holmertz 2007).
We have shown that the informants believe literacy to be a concept that includes both indigenous literacy traditions and “Western” literacy traditions. We see this hybrid of different literacy traditions as a way to consider the needs of the children since it takes their home environment into account. We believe that we have shown how people can affect literacy because the informants have created a form of literacy that is based on the context of Uganda. However, this is according to the sociocultural approach not the only focus of this approach. This perspective also entails that it is important to see what value the informants put on the different practises present within the concept literacy, as Prinsloo & Breier point out (Prinsloo & Breier 1996, p. 24). In congruence with this part of the sociocultural approach we will show how different aspects of literacy are valued and perceived differently by the informants.

In the material we could see that the informants placed different values on literacy practices depending on if it is an oral form of literacy or if it is reading and writing. As mentioned earlier in headline 7.2.1 “Reading culture”, some of the informants did express viewpoints that seemed to imply that reading and writing are in fact superior and more important than the oral tradition. As we have mentioned, reading and writing was seen by many as necessary for the development and economic growth of societies. Furthermore, reading was seen by Sam Andema as a way of being liberated from ignorance and backwardness. Loy Tumusiime went a step further and claimed that analytical power depends on your ability to read and she stated that

[i]f you don’t know how to read you cannot even analyse anything, you have no analytical power, you have no analytical skills. So reading is really in the heart of everything (Loy Tumusiime 2007-03-27).

Indeed, the reading and writing part of literacy is valued by many of the informants as something essential for both the development of societies and personal growth. In addition, we believe that these statements cannot be seen as neutral descriptions of what constitutes reading and writing since they have consequences. We, similar to John-Steiner et al., argue that when reading and writing is seen as necessary for acquiring analytical powers and preventing ignorance and backwardness this means that other literacy practices do not promote these traits (John-Steiner et al. 1994a, p. 23). In addition, our understanding is that many of the informants value reading and writing higher than literacy practices based on for example on oral tradition. However, this does not mean that the informants do not view indigenous literacy practices as important, as we have shown before.

We have seen how the concept literacy constitutes of different literacy practises according to the informants. These different literacy practises will now be examined closer and we will see how the informants view the literacy practises in the children’s school and home environment.

7.2.3 Bicultural situation

As we have previously shown many of the informants described the concept literacy as a wide concept that includes different literacy practises that together form a hybrid. The view of literacy that the informants demonstrate is not, however, the view that is present within the education system in Uganda. In addition, a critique of the education system was something that all the informants expressed. Formal education is seen by the informants as being oriented towards passing examinations. Many of the informants expressed the view that the education system represents a form of literacy that is mechanical. The children are believed to perceive reading and writing foremost as school work.
What is more, Loy Tumusiime acknowledges the fact that within local languages in Uganda the word school and reading is the same one. She states that when you finish an academic program you say: “I have finished reading”, because we don’t have different words unfortunately (Loy Tumusiime 2007-03-27).

We think that this is an interesting example of how the way a language is constructed is connected with values and perceptions within that community. The fact that the word for school and reading in many local languages in Uganda is the same one suggests, in our opinion, that most people do not read outside school. Hence, the literacy practices reading and writing are intimately connected to school. In addition, Charles Batambuze states that reading is primarily done in school and says that it “begins there and it ends there”. The culture of reading in school is viewed by many of the informants as being forced reading. Evangeline Ledi Barongo’s experience of reading in school is that the teachers use harsh methods of teaching and when discussing this she states that because when you are in a class you tame the children you push them by force, then they don’t learn anything. At the end of the day the child goes home without learning anything apart from being scared (Evangeline Ledi Barongo 2007-03-20).

Additionally, during our observations of the CRT we saw these tendencies among some of the teachers. For example we observed one teacher telling a child who was drawing a painting “Go and paint the leaf green, leaves are always green”. During the CRT we also observed some teachers telling the children to copy and recite what the teachers read. Moreover, Jackie Sabiti Kateera states that this is also true when teaching reading in class. She demonstrates this by saying that teachers use this thing of standing in class and say: “You! Stand up! Read!” That was terrible. Jackie Sabiti Kateera 2007-03-26).

Many of the informants believe that the reason for this form of pedagogy can be traced back to the fact that the curriculum focuses on examinations and that the teachers are struggling to meet the demands of the curriculum. In addition, Robert Kayiki sees this system as remains from the former colonial power and their views on what constitutes education. He states that our educational system incidentally is borrowed from the UK, because those were the colonialists of this country, before independence. So it dictates that at some level someone must be examined, pass that level and then go to another level. That is the system. […] People are tailored to reading for examinations (Robert Kayiki 2007-03-21).

Some of the informants also state that before the colonial education Uganda had their indigenous form of education system that was informal and based on the oral tradition. This was however not acknowledged by the British since they did not find schools with four walls and a roof.

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43 The word for reading is not only connected to a learning situation in local languages in Uganda. Machet for example acknowledges the fact that the word for reading in many black languages is the same as that for learning (Machet 2002, p. 81). Moreover, in Luganda school literally means “a place where one reads” (Namwanje 2002, p. 1).
In addition, Sam Andema describes the mistake the British colonialists made regarding education and describes how the informal education system was constructed:

They forgot to realise that in Africa education was part of life. Our education was in the place of work; in the garden, the garden was a class-room; where you make granaries is a school; the fireplace which during the evenings, the whole family will converse and sit around the fire and that is when you hear the parents telling stories to the children. You find children also developing their own stories, their ability to tell stories. And in that way we were transmitting our culture from the past to the present. And that to us was education. The children learnt how to look after animals; they learnt were they came from, all through this storytelling (Sam Andema 2007-02-26).

Some of the informants express the view that after the introduction of formal education in Uganda the storytelling tradition has declined. It is stated that few children in the urban areas are being exposed to storytelling in their homes. One explanation that is given is the fact that grandparents, who have traditionally been telling stories, are living in the villages or work a lot. Furthermore, some of the informants believed the oral tradition to be present at a higher degree in the rural areas. However, all the informants expressed the view that oral tradition has something important to offer. What is more, it is seen as something worth upholding. Jackie Sabiti Kateera states that

[y]ou know we don’t want to give up our culture that easy because this thing of telling stories around the fireplace you know, a grandchild, a grandfather telling a story to the children it was, it’s just, it was a fun activity, it was almost like you guys have daytime stories. That’s the way we just do our things (Jackie Sabiti Kateera 2007-03-26).

Even if some of the informants presented this view, that it is rare for the children in Uganda today to encounter storytelling, many still believed Uganda to be founded on oral communities. Charles Batambuze states that “I think every community is aware of the fact that storytelling is a part of us”. In addition, Sam Andema states that

[w]e are living in our society, culturally this is an oral society, or a society that is predominantly oral. In all our cultures you find we express ourselves in music; we express ourselves in poems; we express ourselves in stories; it is in purely oral literature (Sam Andema 2007-02-26).

Sam Andema’s quotation shows that self-expression is part of the oral tradition and this is one reason why the informants believed the oral tradition to be important. Many of the informants demonstrated the view that the oral tradition is vital since it teaches the children about their history, their culture, builds character, how to behave, give them “life-skills” and moral lessons. Moreover, it is a way for them to learn their mother tongue. It is pointed out that the oral tradition is informal and aims at both educating and entertaining the children. James Tumusiime believes that it is possible “to relate also our new generation to our own tradition and culture” through storytelling. In addition, Jackie Sabiti Kateera believes that the oral tradition can strengthen the children’s identity through interaction over generations. She demonstrates this view when stating that

[y]ou know you can pass on a story about, say your great grandfather who was like the greatest chief in the village. He did all these mighty and great things. Basically you convey that kind of information to your stories, to your children and it’s fun, they become proud of who they are. They, it’s just a fun way to basically bond with your family and your community to know exactly who you are (Jackie Sabiti Kateera 2007-03-26).

The informants’ descriptions of the oral tradition show what Serpell also argues: that literacy practises present at home are part of a special set of rituals, myths and stories that are important for children’s development and their participation in community life (Serpell 2001, p. 253). The culture is described by the informants as being part of the home environment and
not connected with the culture at school. This is believed by many of the informants as being due to the fact that the indigenous literacy practices were not viewed as education by the colonizers. The indigenous literacy practices were separated from the education system and this is still believed to be true today. Hence, we believe that a bicultural situation is present in Uganda. This does not, however, mean that the informants believe that a bicultural situation must continue to be a fact. Many of the informants argue that a connection or, as Street would say, a hybrid, is possible as a way to form a new kind of literacy. Similar to Street the informants argue that this form of hybrid must mean the integration of the home and school culture. This does not mean the preservation of an “authentic” local literacy that should or can replace a literacy tradition that is inherited (and sometimes perceived as imposed) by the “Western” world. According to the sociocultural approach this type of “authentic” literacy is never possible since hybrids are always present (Street 2003, p. 80, Street 1996, p. 6, Street 1993b, p 25). We believe that this view is also present among the informants since many of them state that formal education is in Uganda to stay. It is necessary for the children in Uganda to acquire the skills of reading and writing if they want to succeed in the Ugandan society. However, it is not desirable to keep the two cultures of literacy practices alienated from each other, according to many of the informants. As we have previously shown many of the informants also expressed the view that the two cultures at home and at school should be integrated and become a hybrid.

But according to Charles Batambuze the difficulties of combining the two cultures can be found in the education system’s short existence in Uganda. He argues that Western education is a recent phenomenon in Africa and that it is not yet incorporated into the African culture and it is still viewed as a foreign element. He believes that it is possible to make formal education into something that is part of the African culture, but that it will take some time. This process of combining the two cultures at home and in school, bicultural mediation, is our next area of interest.

7.2.4 Bicultural mediation

The process of incorporating the culture at home with the culture in school is called bicultural mediation by Serpell (Serpell 2001, p. 267). Many of the informants share Serpell’s view that mediation between the two cultures is important and possible. One of the ways that the informants believed bicultural mediation to be possible in Uganda was through the CRT. It is stated that the informal setting and activities like storytelling, singing, moulding, crafting, drawing and painting promote African culture. These kinds of activities are considered to be part of the African heritage and as indigenous forms of literacy that should be encouraged, according to many of the informants. However, similar to Street, some of the informants state that this does not mean that it is possible to restore the old way of things through the promotion of indigenous literacy practices (Street 1993b, p. 25). On the contrary, it does not have to be “either or” but rather a connection between the literacy practices present within the two cultures that together form a hybrid, as the informants show. Sam Andema demonstrates this view when stating that

[what we are doing in this Children’s Reading Tent, is to revive that aspect of our education system which was informal; which was natural; which was just in the community itself. It was part of life and we think that by putting it there in the reading tents, we are going to integrate the communal life with the formal reading that we are talking about in the schools (Sam Andema 2007-02-26).]

This aspect of the CRT can, as Sam Andema has stated before, be seen as a way to “make sense to the children”. The CRT has what some of the informants call a child-centred approach since it considers the children’s needs and their home environment. In addition,
Yunia Obua Otoa argues that the “children should not be detached from their culture”. It has already been stated that this detachment can be prevented through using indigenous literacy practises in the CRT and in the school. This view that the informants demonstrate correlates well with the sociocultural approach since the informants (similar to Street) take the context and the needs of the learner into account (Street 1993b, p. 25). Furthermore, it is not only through using indigenous literacy practises that bicultural mediation is possible. Many of the informants also argue that traditional themes and structures present within indigenous literacy practises can be incorporated into reading. We think that this can also be viewed as mediation between the two cultures. In order to perform this mediation the informants mention that the school and the CRT can buy books that relate to indigenous literacy practises and themes. To be able to buy these books Charles Batambuze states that

[w]e need to write books in such a way that, we, the books reflect the oral tradition of Africans. That really when somebody reads a book, like this, it should respond directly to their understanding of what it means to know, what it means to seek knowledge, what it means to seek information (Charles Batambuze 2007-03-14).

Some of the informants mentioned that books that are based on folk tales can be seen as an example of how it possible to combine aspects present with in the two cultures. Evangeline Ledi Barongo uses this kind of bicultural mediation in her authorship since she has been inspired by the oral tradition in her writings. The book “The ten foolish goats” was for example inspired by a story told to her by her great grandmother when she was a child. In addition, Yunia Obua Otoa points out that these folk tales often have elements of singing in them. She also states that when the stories are being told the storyteller combines the spoken word with singing. These two elements of storytelling can be seen as difficult to transfer to written texts and books. However, Sam Andema believes that it possible to use oral tradition in books as a way of creating bicultural mediation. He states that

[w]e want to convert that oral literature and want to integrate the two, so that what is already there, where we are coming from, can be directly related with the books. So that the children find in books an element of singing; the children find in books an element of stories; the children find in books an element of the life that they have been living in the village and in the home. We don’t want to divorce life in school with life in society, because the purpose of education is supposed to be to serve the society (Sam Andema 2007-02-26).

Additionally, one way of incorporating “elements of the life that they (the children) have been living in the villages and in the homes” is through vernacular publications. The mother tongue is one of the elements that is present and plays a significant role in the homes and community life of the children of Uganda. Jackie Sabiti Kateera brings up the importance of books in vernacular and believes that if the children start learning to read in their mother tongue, the process of going from what they know to something more complex can be made easier for them. She argues that teaching reading in the vernacular can be a form of transition. The children can learn a new thing, like reading, based on something they already know, like their own mother tongue. Moreover, to be able to use vernaculars when teaching reading she believes that books in local languages must be available and accessible. The promotion of books in vernacular is also viewed by other informants as important since they can help the children in their understanding. This view among some of the informants can, according to us, be seen as bicultural mediation because when the mother tongue is connected to reading it is a link between the culture at home and in school.

The informants mostly spoke about how the culture at school could be influenced by the literacy practises at home as a way of making sense to the children at school. However, some informants stated that parents also should take on reading at home. To change the children’s
reading habits the parents and their influence over the children are seen as important factors. Moreover, in order to change the children’s habits it is seen as vital by most of the informants to target children when they are young since it is considered easier to influence them when they are still young. Robert Kayiki illustrates this view by referring to the Luganda proverb “Akati akakyama amamera bwoyagala okukagolola mubukulu kamenyeka bumenye nsi” which he explains like this:

If a tree has got a bend from its tender age and that bend is not made right when you try to, if you attempt to make it right, at a later age, when this tree is already mature, ageing, then you know what happens? That tree just breaks (Robert Kayiki 2007-03-21).

This quotation implies that it is hard to change people who already have their own way of thinking and habits. In addition, Charles Batambuze states that it is important to involve the families since they have a huge influence on their children. Through incorporating the skills of reading (that traditionally have been associated with school) with the home environment it is seen as possible to bring up readers. Moreover, it is stated that reading through involving the parents can make reading into an important part of the children’s life, not only life in school. The view that literacy and reading should be incorporated into the culture in Uganda has been demonstrated by many of the informants. We think that the informants consider bicultural mediation to be possible and similar to Serpell they also believe that this should be a process of mutual enrichment (Serpell 2001, p. 267). According to us this view came through among the informants when they talked not only about how indigenous literacy traditions can be part of the culture in school, but also how the literacy practises in school should be part of the home environment. As we have pointed out before bicultural mediation can be seen as a way of meeting the children’s needs. We will now look closer at the needs of the children and later how to meet those needs.

7.2.5 The children’s needs in relation to literacy and a reading culture

The CRT is viewed by some of the informants as a child-centred approach that focuses on the children’s needs. Moreover, Sam Andema points out that the teachers’ efforts to teach reading should not be directed towards the pupils generally but towards individual pupils. It is acknowledged that not all of children have the same needs, on the contrary it is important to look at each individual child’s needs. In addition, many of the informants point out that different age groups have different needs. Different communities are also viewed by some of the informants as having different needs. Many of the informants brought up this discussion when talking about books. All the informants viewed access to books as the main need of the children, though not simply access to any reading material but to relevant material. In addition, relevant material is seen by many of the informants as being material that considers the children’s and the communities’ needs. Yunia Obua Otoa explains what the children’s needs can be when stating that it is important

[t]o capture the needs of the children, you know things which they’re interested in, things which they like, and which they do understand (Yunia Obua Otoa 2007-03-22).

Additionally, understanding is viewed by many of the informants as vital when you want to meet the needs of the children. Loy Tumusiime states that if the children do not understand the text they read it “switches them off” because if they can not follow the story they lose interest. Stella Nekuusa believes that it not only switches them off but if the children find the books too difficult they stop and they don’t want to read again. Many of the informants state that for the children to be able to understand the material they read the books must be relevant for their age, according to their level of education and culturally relevant for them. In
addition, this means that the reading material must take into account the language levels and
the stories’ settings and contents. It is stated that

books should be simple for them; books in their local languages; books which illustrate their
natural environment; things which depict their communities. [...] If it’s in northern Uganda, if it’s
about HIV/AIDS in Uganda, let us have names of Ugandans, let us have places of Ugandans, let us
talk about names of places which are familiar to those children so that they can get interest to read
(Anonymous 2007-03-20).

Many of the informants mention that it is important that the material reflects what the children
see and experience in their day-to-day life. The reason the informants emphasise this aspect of
books can be found in their belief that when children read about the familiar it helps the
children with their comprehension.

Evangeline Ledi Barongo demonstrates this view when stating that

we need our own materials which are written and illustrated for children especially, illustrations
showing what they can see daily. You know. [...] Because don’t talk about an apple when the
child can not see an apple. He will think it is a mango. You don’t have to talk about a kangaroo he
will think, it is an Australian animal, the child has never seen a kangaroo, he sees the kangaroo in
the picture but thinks that is a goat. And that is a misunderstanding between the book and the child
(Evangeline Ledi Barongo 2007-03-20).

Many of the informants believe that it is important that the books start from what is known to
the children and then later move on to the unknown. The informants’ will to try to meet the
needs of the children correlate well with the sociocultural approach since it is emphasized
within this approach that literacy has to be constructed based on people’s needs. The
informants’ statements show that they, similar to what Street argues, believe that literacy can
not be taught in the one way and based on the same literacy practises everywhere (Street
1996, p. 6). On the contrary, they have shown that it is important to acknowledge that each
child has different needs and should be met accordingly. The informants also connect the
children’s needs with the context of the children which corresponds well with the views
within the sociocultural approach (Street 1993b, p. 25). Besides, we believe that the
informants’ responses also show that they believe that one of the needs of the children is
mediation between the culture in school and at home. We think that this view came forward
when they talked about how the children need books that relate to their everyday life, the
familiar and the community. This shows that the children need the culture at home to be
incorporated with the culture in school as a way to understand and relate to the school culture.
Hence bicultural mediation is one of the needs of the children according to us.

However, even if many of the informants express the view that the children should start with
what is understandable to them, some of the informants also mention that as the children
progress they can be introduced to new and more complex issues, concepts and content.
Charles Batambuze demonstrates this view when stating that

at a later stage maybe when children are beginning to read they are introduced to local concepts
and ideas then as they progress and you know, become more expert in language skills and stuff
like that, then we bring in other literature, so that they can explore the world
(Charles Batambuze 2007-03-14).

It is not only what type of books that the children get that the informants discuss in relation to
reading. Many informants also point out that the children need to have free access to books. It
has been mentioned by many of the informants that this has been a challenge since many of
the teachers have a tendency to keep the books in a locked cupboard in the head teacher’s
office. Jackie Sabiti Kateera describes how the teachers’ behaviour was discovered when doing evaluations of the CRT. At evaluation she asked them

“What happened? How come the books have not been used?” They say “Ah! These children are terrible! They just tear out the books so we have to put them nicely so that they are safe and everything”. Then you wonder: “So what was the point?” (Jackie Sabiti Kateera 2007-03-26).

The teachers’ behaviour stops the children from being able to interact with the books. To be able to interact with the books is viewed by many of the informants as being one important need among the children. Furthermore, the teachers’ behaviour interferes with many of the informants’ beliefs that children should have the opportunity to pick books by themselves as a way of being able to define their own needs. In addition, Robert Kayiki states that

[i]t is not a question of bringing a particular book for the children, it doesn’t work out, bring all the books somewhere in a central place and let the child pick a book of his or her choice. […] Yes, we are telling the teacher “don’t decide the kind of books to use for the particular stereotype of children. Let the children have an opportunity to browse through the books and pick books of their own interest” (Robert Kayiki 2007-03-21).

The opportunity for children to pick books according to their own taste and needs correlates well with the sociocultural approach since Street stresses that it is important that people make literacy into their own (Street 1993b, p. 25). We believe that when the children choose what themes and content they prefer it can be one way for the children to affect what constitutes literacy.

Apart from having access to books according to their needs, the informants also mention that the children need to be taught how to read and get the opportunity to read by themselves. Moreover, it is stated by some of the informants that the children need to be exposed to a new type of pedagogy and approach to reading. What the children need according to the informants is a kind of pedagogy that enables the children to read for fun in an informal way.

We have demonstrated what needs in relation to reading and literacy children in Uganda have generally and particularly the children participating in the CRT, according to the informants. In addition, we will see how the informants believe that the CRT can meet those needs.

7.2.6 How to meet the needs of the children

In order to meet the needs of the participating children of the CRT the informants demonstrate different approaches and methods. First of all the informants point out that the CRT tries to provide relevant books for the participating children. In their effort to provide relevant books the informants say that they try to include factors like language, culture, age and content when buying books. Providing relevant books is seen by the informants as one way of meeting the children’s need to access books. We believe that the kind of books the informants want to buy for the children correlate well with the sociocultural approach since they regard both the needs and the context of the children (Street 1996, p. 6).

To buy relevant books is, however, sometimes considered to be difficult since the book industry is small in Uganda and therefore the variety of books is limited. However, Charles Batambuze states that one of the goals of the CRT is to support the publishing industry in Uganda. This support is achieved first through the fact that all the books that the National Book Trust buy for the CRT are all bought through local publishers. Second, CRT is seen as a way of developing a future market since it aims at creating future readers.
In addition, for the children to access books it is seen as important among many of the informants to set up a small school library. Many of the informants believe that the CRT promotes this development by educating the teachers in how to manage small book collections. Moreover, the CRT is seen by some of the informants as a way of teaching the children how to use books. Loy Tumusiime demonstrates this view by saying that

[w]e encourage them to let the children handle them freely and all the time. Of course we want them to teach them how to use books. Because it is also not right that they should just tear them and they should do that and they should steal them. It is an opportunity for them to go home and read a book. So to encourage the spirit of communal book use, where you use a book and you expect another person to use it after you, by reading it at school, by handling it properly. The teachers should make sure that the children have access, free access, because that is what is lacking the most at most schools (Loy Tumusiime 2007-03-27).

By teaching the children how to use books many of the informants hope that the teachers will let the children interact with the books freely. In addition, many of the informants believe that changing the perceptions of the teachers is one of the goals of the CRT. By exposing the informants to a new form of pedagogy it is perceived among many of the informants as possible to meet the needs of the children. Furthermore, it includes instructing the teachers in new ways of teaching reading and writing which includes using elements of indigenous literacy practises in school. Promoting the use of readers instead of textbooks and creating a more informal reading environment are also viewed by many of the informants as important steps towards meeting the needs of the children in Uganda. In addition, this new pedagogy involves valuing each child which implies that the teachers must look at the children as individuals and through that helping them according to their specific needs. These methods presented are in line with the sociocultural approach since Street among other authors stresses the importance of taking the children’s needs and context into account. Moreover, they promote bicultural mediation through connecting different aspects, systems and practises present within the two cultures (Street 1993a, p. 5ff, Serpell 2001, p. 267).

However, even if the informants believe that the CRT can be a step in the right direction many also states that the need is big in Uganda and it is hard to meet that need. Sam Andema states that some of the teachers were trained ten or twenty years ago and have never been exposed to this form of pedagogy before. In addition, he declares that “we can not expect them to have a miracle”. Moreover, Evangeline Ledi Barongo states that she tries to talk with the teachers about the approach to literacy they are trying to promote, but from experience she knows that “sometimes it works out, sometimes it doesn’t” (Evangeline Ledi Barongo 2007-03-20). Stella Nekuusa thinks that it is actually necessary to have a workshop for at least one day for the teachers to make them understand the purpose of the CRT and the different approach to reading that the CRT project wants to promote. But because of limited funding this has not yet been possible. She also pointed out that they as organisers actually want each CRT to last for about a week to be able to make a more lasting impact, but that this is also not possible within the realms of the current limited budget.

In spite of the difficulties the informants experience when trying to promote reading and literacy they still are confident that they can make a difference. Evangeline Ledi Barongo adds that even if she faces some problems when carrying out the CRT “you have to continue talking, because we are trying to introduce that free love of reading” (Evangeline Ledi Barongo 2007-03-20).
8. DISCUSSION

In this chapter we will discuss the analysed material in the previous chapter in connection to the literature we have presented. Moreover, we will compare the children’s views with the views demonstrated by the people working with the project.

8.1 Reading culture

One of our main aims with this thesis is to gain some clarity and understanding of the concept “reading culture” in the context of Uganda. However, anything in relation to the word “culture” is certainly bound to be complex and so reading culture is no exception. Relating to our analysis, we think that it shows that this concept touches upon and involves many different topics, aspects and views (or discourses as we have called it earlier). One of the complexities that the concept involves is the seeming paradox of a reading culture being something voluntary and at the same time almost a must. That is, a must if you want to succeed in society. In fact, the major challenge in creating a reading culture in Uganda, as it is described by our adult informants, is trying to make something that is perceived by people more or less as a necessary evil into something that will be perceived as a natural and facilitating part of people’s lives.

It has been emphasised by both the literature and the adult informants that one way for this to be possible is through the promotion of reading and writing as pleasurable activities. The argument being that if these literacy practises are something we enjoy doing we are more likely to use and practise them in our everyday life. This seems to have worked among many of the child informants since many of them perceive reading and writing as fun activities that they enjoy doing after school and in other aspects of life than school. In addition, the child informants are at a stage in their lives where they must read and write in order to complete their schooling, yet they do not seem to view reading and writing as a necessary evil. However, one of the problems regarding reading culture in Uganda, as the adult informants see it, is that people stop reading when they finish school because they have not picked up the habit of reading for pleasure and for knowledge to improve their lives. Similar to authors like Sarjant, Verhoeven & Snow and Magara & Batambuze, the structure of the existing formal education is believed by the adult informants to be the biggest problem when promoting a reading culture, because it tailors people into reading for examination (Sarjant 2005, p. 4; Verhoeven & Snow 2001, p. 14, Magara & Batambuze 2005, p. 36). The adult informants claim that after school people stop reading due to the structure of the education system. This is contrary to the adult informants’ definition of a reading culture, where reading is part of everyday life.

But as we have stated, we think that we see some tendencies of a reading culture (as it has been defined by the adult informants) being practised by the children. As we have described, about half of them read for fun outside school and most of them seem to view reading and writing as important parts of their lives, even though they saw it mostly as connected to school. At the same time, it should perhaps be noted that school is a major part of these children’s lives and in many cases it might be the only place where they encounter books. This lack of books is, as we have mentioned, stated by the adult informants as one of the most important reasons for a lack of a reading culture and especially the lack of relevant books. Relevant books in this case are, as Greaney among others have described, claimed to be books with a content that the children can relate to and which reflects their culture and tradition (Greaney 1996, p. 13). One of these traditions is storytelling, which Osakwe claims is part of a long-standing oral tradition and informal education in Africa (Osakwe 2005, p. 185).
Relating to this we have also described how Dike (1995, p. 33), Machet (2002, p. 80f), Magara & Batambuze (2005, p. 36) are discussing in different ways the difficulties and challenges involved in trying to create a reading culture in a society which is based on oral tradition. One example of the challenges that has been mentioned is the view of reading as an abnormal and anti-social activity, discussed by Dike in the context of Nigeria. In the present situation these different authors have presented the oral tradition as being more or less the opposite of a reading culture, yet the basis for their arguments is that it does not have to be this way. Even so, both Dike and Machet confirm the view that they seem to be criticising, namely that reading is a solitary activity (Dike 1995, p. 33; Machet 2002, p. 80). This seems, in our view, to be contra productive. Nevertheless, as we have described, Dike suggests a way of incorporating the oral tradition into reading in the same way that our adult informants have promoted. That is through using themes and structures from the oral tradition of storytelling and putting them into books as mediation between the cultures (Dike 1995, p 40). In addition, this type of literature is preferred by most of the child informants and many of their favourite books take place in Uganda and deal with issues and themes present in this context.

This kind of literature and bicultural mediation can, in our opinion, enable reading as a social activity since it should facilitate for parents to read to their children, for example (given that the parents can read). It could possibly also help to make people more interested in reading and discuss what they have read together since it is more related to their lives and context. Hence, oral tradition can be viewed as part of the solution instead of only as part of the “problem”.

Our adult informants do not seem to share the aforementioned view of reading as a solitary activity. Instead we think that they all promote and discuss reading as a social activity, in connection with the CRTs and through promoting that parents read to their children. Continuing, they have emphasised the importance of what we (similar to Serpell) call bicultural mediation (Serpell 2001, p. 267). Incorporating the themes, structures and stories from the oral tradition into books is one way of accomplishing this mediation.

The ability to own the culture of reading, as Charles Batambuze put it, is also a process that is affected in a positive way by bicultural mediation. To own the culture of reading implies that people feel that reading and writing are part of their lives. We believe that one way of accomplishing this is through books with themes that reflect the context of Uganda since this helps the learner connect to the “foreign” elements reading and writing. Some of the adult informants also mention the use of vernacular publication as a way for children to connect with their context and home environment, which can be another way of owning the culture of reading.

Owning the culture as we perceive it, does not necessarily mean that reading and writing have to be seen as “authentic” African traditions. Rather, through incorporation, mediation and hybridisation of traditions and cultural expressions in Uganda into the practices of reading and writing, a unique form of literacy can be created and “owned” by the people in Uganda (Street 1993a, p. 25). But as it has been stated by Loy Tumusiime “culture is not something you just do overnight”. Reading has, as Charles Batambuze mentioned, a short existence in Uganda and what is more it was imposed on the Ugandan people. Therefore, it is believed by many of the adult informants that it takes time to incorporate the relatively new culture into the Ugandan culture.

Nevertheless, we think that we have seen examples of “ownership” of a reading culture through the children’s statements about how they apply different literacy practises according to their needs. When the children use and find inspiration in stories being told to them, or
even stories that they have read when they are writing stories themselves, it is a way for them
to own the culture of reading. The culture could be claimed to be a part of them in the way
that they use the literacy practises reading and writing in their day to day life. That it is part of
their lives for many of them also became evident when the children stated that they read signs,
letters and sheets and write letters to pen-pals, poems and diaries. Thus, we believe that many
of the children showed evidence of a reading culture since reading and writing are viewed as
important in order get by and survive in their everyday life. This means that the children do
not exclusively connect reading and writing with school.

8.2 Literacy

The sociocultural approach can be seen as a critique of the “autonomous model of literacy”
that views literacy as merely the skill of reading and writing (Street 1993a, p. 5). We believe
that this approach correlates well with what the adult informants have expressed since many
of the informants stated that there is a need to broaden the definition of literacy from being
simply “the ability to read and write”. In addition, many believed that literacy should be
functional and should not only be viewed as a skill to be taught in a mechanical manner. How
information is used and understood is believed to be an important part of literacy. Many of
the children also believe that these aspects of literacy are important. They perceive reading and
writing to be vital in order to get by in their day-to-day life, as a way of getting new
information, learn new things, get new skills and communicate. These functions of literacy
correlate with the sociocultural approach since it is emphasised by for example Barton that
literacy is closely linked to everyday life. However, the children’s responses also showed that
they to a large degree connect reading and writing with school and passing examinations. The
sociocultural approach believes that this perception of literacy is part of the dominant literacy
discourse and the “autonomous model of literacy” (Barton 2001, p. 24; Street 1993a, p. 1).
Nonetheless, we think that the children’s perceptions of literacy do not only correlate with the
“autonomous model of literacy” since the children apart from linking literacy with education
also view literacy as part of their everyday lives to different extents.

Similar to the children many of the adult informants also emphasise that literacy is a way of
communicating. Based on this view of literacy, as way of communicating, the adult
informants believe it to be possible to connect other practises than reading and writing to the
concept literacy. Other practises such as the oral tradition, drawing, painting, crafting and
moulding are perceived to be ways of communicating, hence related to the concept literacy.
However, all these practises can not be seen as part of the concept literacy in our view, but
many of the adult informants viewed them as interconnected and important in the promotion
of literacy among children in Uganda. We also think that these connections that they made
were very interesting as well as convincing and that they made very sophisticated arguments
in support for these connections. Examples of these arguments are Evangeline Ledi Barongo’s
discussion about the relation between arts and crafts and literacy as well as Loy Tumusiime’s
and Jackie Sabiti Kateera’s discussions of drawing and literacy.

We perceive the adult informant’s views of the concept literacy as a hybrid, since different
literacy practises are part of this concept. Moreover, we think that this hybrid of different
literacy practises is constituted of two literacy traditions. Reading and writing are, as both the
adult informants and Ssekamwa point out, part of a Western literacy tradition brought to
Uganda by the missionaries and the British education system (Ssekamwa 1997, p. 1ff). The
oral tradition is another form of literacy tradition and is, contrary to the Western tradition,
believed by the adult informants and the literature to be part of the African heritage. We
believe that the latter tradition is constituted of different indigenous literacy practices such as
storytelling and singing. Together these two traditions form a hybrid or, to use Street’s terminology, a “local literacy” (Street 1993b, p. 25).

To support our claim that the informants view literacy as a hybrid and a fluent concept we also want to bring up the activities at the CRT. We believe that it is interesting to examine the activities since the adult informants have developed the content of the CRT. We think that the fact that the CRT uses indigenous literacy practices such as storytelling and singing together with reading and writing shows that the adult informants view literacy as a hybrid of different literacy practices. Similar to the adult informants the sociocultural approach also emphasises that literacy is a hybrid of different literacy practices, as Street has pointed out (Street 2002, p. 80).

Furthermore, the activities of the CRT can also be seen, according to us, as examples of how literacy can be “incorporated into the receiving culture’s already existing conventions regarding communication” (Street 1993b, p. 25). We believe that the previous indigenous education system can be seen as part of “the receiving culture’s already existing conventions regarding communication”. As Ssekamwa has stated the pre-colonial education system used storytelling as a way of teaching the children about their culture and surroundings. Moreover, he states that the indigenous education system was part of everyday life and was taught in an informal setting, such as the fireplace and the homestead (Ssekamwa 1997, p. 28ff). These aspects that Ssekamwa mentions as part of the indigenous education system are, according to many of the adult informants, incorporated into the CRT. Storytelling, moulding, drawing, painting, crafting and singing are examples of indigenous practices that were part of the pre-colonial education system and that are now incorporated into the CRT. Some of the informants also mention that the CRT revives the informal setting of the former indigenous education system that was part of the community itself. In addition, Street states that when local knowledge and literacies are incorporated into the receiving culture this can be seen as way of meeting the needs of the learner (Street 1993b, p. 25). Many of the informants seem to agree with this notion and Sam Andema’s statement can be seen as an example of this. He argues that it is important not to divorce life in school with life in society since this would disconnect the children from the life they have been living in their villages and homes. Hence, it is believed that the children need to be connected to their home environment in order to succeed in school.

We have emphasised that the adult informants want to widen the concept of literacy to include other forms of literacy practices than merely reading and writing. However, this does not mean that the informants believe that the indigenous literacy practices can replace the literacy practices present in school. On the contrary, many of the informants pointed out that the education system in Uganda is here to stay and it is not possible to go back to the indigenous education system present before colonialism. The reason for why it is not possible to replace formal education in Uganda today is the same reason that Ssekamwa argues was the reason the British formal education replaced the indigenous education system in the first place. Ssekamwa states that one of the reasons why indigenous education systems were replaced was due to the fact that the new system was the only way for people to succeed and reach higher posts in the Ugandan society (Ssekamwa 1997, p. 30f). Bakka states that this is still true today and the previous responses from the adult informants indicate the same thing (Bakka 2000 p. 83). Many of the children’s views of education correlate with the previous statements since they also point out that it is essential to read and write as a way of succeeding in life. They state that is important to read and write because of the future benefits and job opportunities that come with finishing formal education.
In addition, it is not only the fact that formal education is essential for succeeding in the Ugandan society that makes the possibility of going back to a pre-colonial state of things impossible. In accordance with Street’s views we also believe that it is not possible to find an “authentic” African tradition (which is not influenced by for example the history of colonialism). Thus to romanticise and try to preserve a “pure” African culture is a mission doomed to fail since a “pure” and “static” culture does not exist. Quite the opposite, a cultural hybrid is to some extent always present. The statements from the adult informants therefore correlate well with the sociocultural approach since they do not think that it is possible to find an “authentic” education system that can replace the formal education today (Street 1993c, p. 1; Street 1996; p. 6, Street 2003, p. 80). However, they still believe that indigenous literacy practices can be incorporated into the literacy present in school and form a hybrid, which can be done through projects like the CRT.

Apart from stating that the adult informants understand the concept literacy as a hybrid of different literacy practices, we also believe it to be possible for us to argue that the children also view literacy as a hybrid. Almost all the children stated that they meet more than one form of literacy practise. In the children’s everyday life they came in contact with reading and writing, but also literacy practices based on the oral tradition. What is more, some of the children stated that they used stories and information they have read when they tell stories. Some children also stated that they wrote down stories they had been told. We believe that these activities demonstrate that instead of one “pure” literacy tradition, the children meet and use a hybrid form of literacy. We believe that this shows how the children influence the concept literacy. Moreover, the different ways the children use and incorporate literacy practices show, according to us, how they apply them according to their needs. For example some of the children used written text when they needed inspiration to tell stories and some also wrote down stories that somebody had told them because they needed to remember them till later.

We will now continue to examine the different literacy practices that are part of the children’s life and see what contexts that the informants connect them with.

8.3 Bicultural situation

We have shown that the adult informants perceive literacy as a concept that consists of different literacy practices based on different literacy traditions. We have also tried to demonstrate that the interviewed children encounter different kinds of literacy practises that together form a hybrid. Furthermore, based on our material we have also come to the conclusion that these literacy practises are connected with different environments. Many of the children connected reading and writing with school and passing examinations and storytelling to entertainment and their leisure time outside school. Storytelling is described by many of the children as an activity that you do when you are not busy with homework. In addition, many of the children view storytelling as something that is not serious business, contrary to reading and writing. Many of the children stated that since they are serious students they have trouble finding the time to tell stories. We believe that these views show that many children connect different literacy practises with different environments and functions. Many children stated that storytelling is something mostly done at home by family and friends. Our findings correlate well with Dike’s results since she points out that parents in Africa do not read stories to their children they tell them, literate and illiterate alike. She also states that storytelling is not to a large degree present in the school environment but rather exists in informal settings and in the children’s home environment (Dike 1995, p. 33, 37).
Moreover, we believe that it is possible to find evidence in local Ugandan languages that supports our claim that the literacy practices reading and writing are mostly connected with school in Uganda. In many languages in Uganda and in other parts of Africa the words “reading” and “school” are linked. Loy Tumusiime states that they in Uganda unfortunately do not have different words for “school” and “reading” in their local languages. The word “reading” in different African languages can mean for example “school” and “learning”. What is more, the word school means “a place where one reads” in Luganda (Machet 2002, p. 81; Namwanje 2002, p. 1). Evidently, school and reading are closely connected in the minds of Ugandans. Our understanding is that the view that comes through in different vernaculars in Uganda represents the view that is presently dominating concerning reading and writing in Uganda. We believe that this view of reading, that links school with reading, influences the children in their perception of literacy practices.

All the adult informants also stated that the children view reading and writing as foremost school work. We believe that Charles Batambuze’s statement that “it begins there and it ends there” shows that reading and writing are practices that the children do not come in contact with neither before school and neither after. The fact that education systems in Africa are examination oriented is also believed by all the adult informants (and a number of sources) to be an obstacle for the promotion of a reading culture (Magara & Batambuze 2005, p. 36; Sarjant 2005, p. 4; Verhoeven & Snow 2001, p. 14). Reading is viewed by the children as something you do to in order to pass exams, not for pleasure. The children do not read at home for fun and hence reading and writing are not part of all aspects of the children’s lives, according to the previous sources.

We think that our statement that the children come in contact with different cultures in school and at home also became evident when the children talked about languages. All the children used different languages at home and in school. In school the language of instruction was English contrary to in their home environment where they spoke their vernacular. Storytelling was most of the time done in vernacular. Many of the children also stated that they learned to speak, read and write in English in school and all the children said that they learned their mother tongue at home. Based on the interviews with the children we have distinguished that two cultures are present in their lives, one in school and one at home. We use the term bicultural situation to categorise this phenomenon.

But it was not always this straightforward, since evidence of interaction between the school and home culture also was present in our material. Many of the children’s statements showed that reading, writing and storytelling are not totally separated from each other. About half of the children stated that they read outside school for fun and this shows that reading is not exclusively connected to their school environment. Some of the children also view reading as essential for their everyday life. We believe that this form of reading is functional since it involves reading for gaining information from for example signs, letters and sheets. We think that the fact that this type of literacy practise is present among some of the children shows that reading is not always solely connected to school. Moreover, some of the children also state that they prefer reading at home because they will not be disturbed and they have more time to their disposal there than at school. Thus, we believe that it is possible for us to claim that the school culture transcends over to the children’s home environment to some degree, since the literacy practises reading and writing were present in the children’s homes.

However, the culture at home did not seem to be part of the school culture to a large degree. This became evident to us when we looked at one of the aspects of the children’s home culture: storytelling. The literacy practise storytelling did not seem to be part of the school
culture that the children met. The children’s statements concerning storytelling did not show that the oral tradition is present in the school environment. It was only statements from two boys that showed that storytelling is sometimes part of the school curriculum. They stated that in some tests storytelling is part of the examinations and what is more they also said that their teachers sometimes told them stories based on legends. But besides these two boys’ statements the children did not show evidence of that oral tradition is incorporated into school activities and the curriculum.

We stated that a bicultural situation is present in Uganda. But we do not only want to bring up the concept bicultural situation as a way of showing the status-quo among the children, but also as a way of pointing out that this situation has consequences for the children. This situation, where the oral tradition is not part of the education system, is problematic in our view. Serpell also argues that the relationship between the school and the home is one that is characterised by “considerable complexity”. The two cultures do not correlate well with each other since they are part of different literacy traditions. This situation makes the student’s acclimatisation to the school culture difficult, since they meet a culture that in many ways are unfamiliar to them in terms of both language and literacy practises (Serpell 1993, p. 106).

Kafeero has described the consequences of this phenomena and he states that when children in Uganda come in contact with the formal school system it “uproots” them from their “origins” and is “killing their orature” (Kafeero 2000, p. 93). This statement might seem to clash with our view that it is not possible to talk of genuine “African” culture unaffected by colonialism. However the point we see as important in Kafeero’s statement is that African societies and their communities (foremost in the rural areas) depend strongly on oral communication. When this form of communication is being neglected in school we think that one outcome can be that these children will be to some extent disconnected from their communities. It is not only the connection with the whole community that can be affected in a negative way, but also the relation with the close family.

Each family consists of a family culture, according to Serpell. Serpell argues that this culture consists of its own set of rituals, myths and stories (Serpell 2001, p. 253). As we have previously stated we believe storytelling to be one aspect of family cultures in Uganda. This became clear to us when the interviewed children stated that they came in contact with storytelling foremost in their home environment. In addition, James Tumusiime stated that through storytelling it is possible to “relate also our new generation to our tradition and culture”. We believe that this statement shows that storytelling can be viewed as part of family cultures and is part of the socialisation of children in Uganda. Through storytelling children learn what aspects that are part of their families’ culture and heritage. Hence, we argue that when children are so to speak “uprooted from their orature”, that is when storytelling is neglected in school, it also detaches them from their family culture.

Furthermore, we believe that the detachment from the children’s family culture can also have other negative consequences for the children. These consequences relate to the different functions that oral tradition can have in children’s lives. One function that Kwirkiriza brings up is that oral tradition strengthens the identity and cultural belonging of children (Kwirkiriza 2000, p. 91). Jackie Sabiti Kateera also emphasised this fact and states that through storytelling children can learn who they are and be proud of who they are. She also argued that through storytelling interaction over generations is made possible, which is a way of bonding with your family and community. We believe that Sabiti Kateera’s statements show that the oral tradition is important for the development of the children’s identities and the relation with the family and community. The oral tradition can also help the children in their
development and socialisation. This became evident when both the adult and child informants stated that storytelling can teach children how to behave and teach them about history, since these aspects of storytelling teach the children the social order and norms of the family and the community. In addition, Dike also argues that the oral tradition is part of the children’s everyday life and that cultural expressions such as lullabies, hymns, storytelling, anecdotes, tongue twisters and riddles play a vital role in the socialisation of children in Africa (Dike 1995, p. 37). That fact that family cultures influence children’s development is also something that Serpell argues (Serpell 2001, p. 253). We have shown that storytelling is part of the children’s socialisation, development and identity construction. Therefore, we believe that it is possible to claim that when the oral tradition is neglected in school and the children are “uprooted from their orature” it can affect these processes negatively.

We have argued that two different linguistic and cultures in relation to literacy are present in the lives of children in Uganda. But in the material we could not only see that different literacy practises are present within the school and the home culture in Uganda, we could also distinguish that these practises are valued and perceived differently by the adult and child informants. Similar to the adult informants the children also, in our opinion, value the oral tradition and reading and writing differently. The children’s responses indicate that reading and writing are serious work contrary to storytelling that is light entertainment that you do when you are not too busy. The children also associate the different literacy practises with different contexts, reading and writing are mainly linked with school and storytelling with home. This explains, according to us, why the children place different values on the practises. We believe, similar to Prinsloo & Breier, that it is not only important to show what values different literacy practises are given. It is also essential to show that the values placed on different literacy practises are not formed in a vacuum, on the contrary they are a result of the structures and ideologies present in connection to those literacy practices (Prinsloo & Breier 1996, p. 24).

We believe that it is the structure of the education system that influences the values placed on the different literacy practises present in the two cultures. In addition, Ssekamwa has shown that this was one of the reasons why informal education lost its importance. He states that when the missionaries and the colonial power introduced formal education in Uganda, the oral tradition lost its status as an educational practise. This is believed to be due to the fact that the new education system gave advantages and was the only way to gain influence within the Ugandan society (Ssekamwa 1997, p. 30f). In addition, many of the children stated that the main motivation for learning to read and write was for job opportunities and future benefits. We think that when the children view education as essential in order to succeed in the future the literacy practises connected with this context are also given great value. In addition, since the literacy practises present in their home environments do not give the same benefits we think that they perceived the literacy practises in school as more important than practises linked with home. Hence, we think that it is possible to argue that the values placed on these literacy practises, among other things, depend on the structures present within the Ugandan society. These structures place great value on the education system and the reality is that people view formal education as the only way to succeed in Uganda, as Bakka also argues (Bakka 2000, p. 83). Because the oral tradition is not believed to be part of this education system it is valued lower than other literacy practises that are part of school.

This situation has not always been the case, on the contrary education before colonialism was given through the oral tradition, as Ssekamwa has pointed out (Ssekamwa 1997, p. 28f). Hence, we believe that the values that are placed on different literacy practises depend on the structures of the society. The history of education in Uganda shows, according to us, that it is
possible to change the structures that influence the education system. Ssekamwa stated that the missionaries and the British colonial power came with their own set of knowledge system and replaced the indigenous education system that was present in Uganda (Ssekamwa 1997, p. 28f). It is possible to change the education system once again. However, we do not believe that it is possible to go back to an “authentic” indigenous education system. But similar to Street and Serpell we think that it is possible to integrate different literacy practices and form a hybrid within the present education system (Street 2003, p. 80; Serpell 2001, p. 263).

We have stated that even though reading and writing are valued higher than other literacy practices by the children and by some of the adult informants, it does not mean that indigenous literacy practices such as the oral tradition are not seen as important. The children’s responses also showed that the oral tradition plays an important part in their lives, since they all told us that they came in contact with storytelling. Moreover, through the children’s statements and the stories they told us, we gained some insight into the literacy practices present at home and what is part of family culture. We could distinguish different themes, structures and elements in the children’s stories. It has been stated in the literature that the oral tradition has its own set of grammar, style and aesthetic canon and this became evident through the children’s stories. The literature concerning oral tradition such as Kwikiriza, Zettersten, Amadi and Okumu has also demonstrated what kind of themes, elements and functions that are part of the oral tradition and we found that the children’s stories correlated well with this literature. The children’s stories used themes such as legends, fables, “stories of long ago”, myths and tales, which is also mentioned in the literature as part of the oral tradition (Kwikiriza 2000, p. 88f; Zettersten 1983, p. 5; Amadi 1981, p. 134; Okumu 2000, p. 54). According to Okumu, fables are used as a way of exposing human weaknesses. This became evident through the children’s stories and it became clear to us that certain animals represented the same kind of weaknesses in the stories (Okumu 2000, p. 60). For example, the hyena and the hare shared the characteristics cleverness and trickiness, which we believe shows that certain structures and characters correlate with certain themes and story traditions within the oral tradition.

In addition, many of the children were also aware of the fact that the oral tradition functions as a way of giving moral lessons, advice and warnings. “Stories of long ago” were also mentioned by many children as stories that can teach them about their history. One boy also pointed out that some fables are stories “with hidden meaning”. Okumu mentions that the elements and the form of the stories depend on the subject and the aim (Okumu 2000, p. 59). We believe that stories “with hidden meaning” can be seen as examples of this, since certain elements that are part of the oral tradition such as metaphors, similes and symbolic associations are incorporated within these kinds of stories. In addition, the adult informants’ view of the oral tradition correlated well with the children’s since they also pointed out similar functions and elements as the children. However, the adult informants also mention music, poems and songs as being part of the oral tradition.

These elements, themes and structures are seen both by the literature, the adult and child informants as part of the oral tradition in Uganda. We believe that the children’s responses show that these elements of oral tradition can be seen as what Dike calls “indigenous cultural expressions” (Dike 1995, p.40). Many of the adult informants also identify the oral culture as being a form of cultural expression.

We have showed that a bicultural situation is present among many of the interviewed children. Moreover, we have shown that to separate the literacy practises present in the children’s home from those in the school environment has negative consequences. In order to
overcome this situation we believe, similar to Serpell, that it is possible to incorporate the two cultures present in home and at school with each other. We have also looked closer at indigenous cultural expressions since both Serpell and Dike state that cultural expressions can mediate between the two cultures. We use Serpell’s term bicultural mediation to describe this process (Serpell 2001, p. 267, Dike 1995, p. 40). We will now look closer how the culture at home and in school can be integrated with each other.

8.4 Bicultural mediation

We have seen that the oral tradition and other indigenous literacy practises are not to a large degree present in the interviewed children’s school environments. This situation is not beneficial for the children in Uganda, according to us. We base this assumption on the literature and the adult informants that state that children have a need of learning from the familiar and that it is easier for them to learn from what is known to them (Kwikiriza 2000, p. 91; Wagner 2001, p.307; Verhoeven & Snow 2001; p.12, Elley 2001, p. 236). By “familiar” we mean the culture present in the children’s homes. In addition, many of our adult informants mention that the children should not be detached from their culture and community life. We believe this to be possible through connecting the two cultures with each other. Serpell’s term “bicultural mediation” has proved to be useful when trying to define this connection.

According to Serpell, bicultural mediation can be accomplished through “searching in the indigenous culture for patterns of activity, linguistic form, and symbolic content and integrating them into the curriculum” (Serpell 2001, p. 263). We believe that the oral tradition can be seen as an example of “patterns of activity, linguistic form and symbolic content” that the children come in contact with in their everyday life. Hence, bicultural mediation is possible through incorporating the oral tradition into the school environment. This can work in different ways and one way of connecting the cultures, that both the adult informants and the literature mention, is through books. Themes present within the oral tradition such as legends, fables, myths and tales can be included in books (Osakwe 2000, p. 185; Dike 1995, p. 39; Kwikiriza 2000, p. 90). The adult informants also mention singing as one element of the oral tradition that should be incorporated into books. Moreover, structures and styles existing within the oral tradition can be a way of relating to concepts, conventions and knowledge systems that are familiar to the children. These structures and styles can be, for example: proverbs, riddles, tongue twisters, metaphors, similes, symbolic association, idiomatic expressions, puns, anecdotes and poems. Almost all of the interviewed children also stated that their favourite story was a story that someone had told them. When the children talked about both books and storytelling many stated that they liked the content to relate to previously mentioned themes such as animal stories, legends, myths and stories of long ago. Dike’s study also correlates well with our findings since she also argues that books based on the oral tradition, such as folk tales, are relevant for the children since they are familiar, understandable and often teaches a lesson. All of the latter qualities was what the children in her study required (Dike 1995, p. 38ff). Basically the children should “find in books an element of the life that they have been living in the village and in the home”, as Sam Andema puts it.

Another element that is part of the children’s home environment is the use of other languages than English, which the child informants’ statements showed. To incorporate this linguistic element of the home culture into the school culture can, according to us, be viewed as a form of bicultural mediation. In this way the transition from the home culture to the school culture can be made easier for the children, as some of the adult informants also mention. Similar to other elements that are part of the culture at home the vernacular can be connected to reading
and writing and form a “local literacy”. This can for example be possible through lessons of different local languages in school and publications in different local languages. We perceive the future of a “local literacy” based on different mother tongues brighter now than ever before. This is due to the fact that the Ugandan government has strengthened the language policy in school and favours the use of Ugandan mother tongues as the languages of instruction (National Curriculum Development Centre 2006, p. 7). With a clearer focus on mother tongue in schools, vernacular publications can play a more important role in Uganda. Through reading books in their vernacular, children can start learning to read and write based on something that is familiar to them. This is one important form of “local literacy” and a clear example of bicultural mediation.

We believe, similar to Dike, that these different forms of “local literacies” that combine literacy practices and linguistic elements from the culture at home with the one in school can be a way of promoting a reading culture (Dike 1995, p. 40). Moreover, we want to acknowledge the fact that the oral tradition, which has been considered by Magara & Batambuze to be one of the biggest challenges when promoting a reading culture in Africa, also can help to create a reading culture and making children read outside school for fun (Magara & Batambuze 2005, p. 36). Hence, we believe that it is possible to view the oral tradition not as an obstacle and a challenge when promoting a reading culture, but instead as part of the solution and as a tool that can mediate between the two cultures.

The children’s statements also showed other examples of how the two cultures can be connected and how bicultural mediation can function. Some children used written text such as books and articles as inspiration when they told stories. The opposite was also true since stories and the oral tradition functioned as inspiration when some of the children wrote stories. Themes and elements that are part of the oral tradition such as legends, fables, myths and poems were used when the children wrote stories. In addition, some children also wrote down stories they have heard in order to remember them. We believe that the way the children use literacy practices show how the children can affect literacy, which is something that the sociocultural approach emphasises. Moreover, we believe that the connection the children make between different literacy practices present within the two cultures show evidence of how it is possible to “actively and creatively apply literate skills to suit their own purposes and needs” (Street 1993b, p. 25).

Apart from helping the children relate to their context, the familiar and in their understanding, bicultural mediation can also have other functions. We think that the structures present in the oral tradition can be of help when the children learn a second language. Similar to Hill we want to acknowledge the fact that storytelling has certain features and structures that can help children when they learn a second language. Within the oral tradition repetition is often used as a form of mnemonic device for both the storyteller and the listener. All the interviewed children learned English as a second language (which is also true for all children attending school in Uganda) and this element of storytelling can help children since repetition plays an important part when trying to learn a second language (Hill 2000, p. 106). We believe that this is also a good example of how bicultural mediation can work since many different literacy practices are incorporated. Structures in the indigenous literacy practise of storytelling are connected to literacy practices such as reading and writing. What is more, English and storytelling are connected with each other which is something that we have seen is not the traditional way to do it within the oral tradition. This was true among the interviewed children since they stated that they most of the time told stories and were told stories in their mother tongue.
In addition, we think that the CRT can be seen as an example of how this can be done not only in theory but in real life. Activities based on different forms of literacy practices are present within the project. The adult informants believe that these different activities all promote the mood of reading. The use of indigenous literacy practices is believed to be a help to the children in their understanding and is a way of making sense to the children. It is also seen as a way to promote the African heritage. The CRT also tries to provide books which are not textbooks and which are culturally suitable for the children. We think that this can also be seen as bicultural mediation since many of these culturally relevant books are based on folk tales, fables and other themes that exist in literacy practices within the oral tradition.

8.5 Needs

The needs of the children in Uganda are something that can not once and for all be settled. The adult informants show this view when they argue that the children do not have the same needs and therefore can not be met in the same way. On the contrary, they argue that teachers should look at each child’s individual needs. This correlates well with the sociocultural approach since it emphasizes that literacy should be constructed according to the learners’ needs and the particular context of the learner. As Street also mentions this is not an easy task, quite the opposite, since it is easier to promote well defined and “neutral” literacy skills (Street 1996, p. 6). Nevertheless, the adult informants showed examples of how this can be accomplished.

The pedagogy used in school was one of the areas where the adult informants believed change to be required in order to meet the needs of the learning children. The methods used to teach reading and writing in school by teachers today are predominantly based on recall, as the adult informants point out. Drills, sounding out and copying and reciting what the teacher read were also methods that the observations showed and the adult informants’ statements confirmed. This type of approach to reading is often based on a single textbook and is believed by Elley to be less effective than using many different books that are relevant for the children (Elley 2001, p.240). Elley’s view correlates with the adult informants who argue that this type of pedagogy does not consider the children’s needs. Instead of an approach that is based on one single textbook the adult informants believe it to be important for the children to come in contact with different kinds of books that are relevant. Relevant material is believed, among the adult informants and authors like Elley, Sarjant, Magara and Verhoeven & Snow to promote engaged readers that read outside school (Elley 2001, p. 240f; Sarjant 2005, p. 6f; Magara 2005, p. 3; Verhoeven & Snow 2001, p. 9). The lack of relevant material is also the major need among the children according to the adult informants.

However, what constitutes relevant books for children in Uganda is not easy to conclusively decide on. In congruence with our sociocultural approach we believe that what is relevant literature differs depending on the context of the learner (Street 1996, p. 6). This correlates with the adult informants as well as authors as Dike who argues that children need storybooks with a content that is familiar to them and that they can relate to (Dike 1995, p. 38ff). But as we have stated before this can differ between children because they do not have the same needs. In order to overcome this problem we believe, similar to Magara, that it is important that the children are able to pick books by themselves, since the children are the best judges of what books that are relevant and stimulating for them (Magara 2005, p.3). The will to let the children define their own needs also became evident in the interviews with the adult informants. Robert Kayiki stated that it is important that the children are able to browse through the books by themselves and choose a book of their choice, which is made possible through the CRT. We think that this is a way of making it possible for the children to influence the content of the literacy practices they come in contact with. Moreover, we see it
as a way for the children to take an active role in the construction of the concept literacy based on their particular needs, which correlates well with the sociocultural approach (Street 1996, p. 6). It is therefore also interesting to see what the children stated as their favourite books, since it shows what they believe to be relevant according to their needs.

The children’s responses showed that they, similar to the adult informants, believed books with a culturally familiar content to be relevant. We became aware of this since their favourite books often took place in Uganda, were based on legends, fables and other local themes. This correlates with the view expressed by authors like Greaney, Nhlengetfwa and Verhoeven & Snow who stress the importance of having books that reflect the culture present in the children’s lives, both at home and in school. These authors also believe that in order for books to be relevant for children in Uganda they need to take the African heritage, and the local knowledge, tradition and culture that are part of this heritage, into account (Greaney 1996, p.13; Nhlengetfwa 2005, p. 6; Verhoeven & Snow 2001, p. 9). Greaney also notes that books aiming at children in “developing” countries should be in local languages. This view is also present among many of the adult informants who point out that books in vernacular can help the children in their understanding. However, this view is contrary to the viewpoints presented by the child informants since they preferred to read in English and not in local languages. This can at first seem strange, but since the English language is in fact the familiar because many of the children only learn to read in English, it makes prefect sense. This means that in the present situation books in vernacular are actually not representing the familiar for most of the children that we interviewed. Moreover, the explanation to the children’s responses can be found in the fact that many children favour the English language since it is seen as a gateway to future benefits, as Muthwii has pointed out (Muthwii 2001, p. 18f). We also think that Dike makes a valid point when she states that books in local languages often aim at an older audience than children users (Dike 1995, p. 39). Hence, the books in local languages are not written according to the children’s needs.

On the other hand, with the new thematic curriculum and its emphasis on giving the mother tongue a higher status and role in primary schools an increase in the publishing of books in local languages should follow. Nevertheless, these will probably be mainly textbooks, and textbooks are not seen by our adult informants as being enough for the creation of a reading culture. However it could be a start in breaking the “vicious cycle” of the local book market, as described by Mbawaki, and perhaps creating possibilities for the production of more storybooks (Mbawaki 2005, p. 5). This would lead to more opportunities for children to be able to learn how to read and write in their local languages. We also see it, similar to Elley, as a way of preventing cultural imperialism (Elley 2001, p. 241).

It was not only via the CRT that the adult informants believed it to be possible for the children to define their own needs through choosing books of their own choice. In order to meet the needs among the children to have access to relevant books, many of the adult informants also mention the importance of both school libraries as well as public libraries. Through libraries it is possible to choose books freely and thus be able to choose books according to one’s own needs. However, as the literature has pointed out, the school libraries in Uganda are presently few and insufficiently equipped (Kigongo-Bukenya 1990, p. 133; Magara & Bukirwa Nyumba 2004; p. 316; Muwanga et al. 2005 p. 71). Where they exist the children might also have very limited access to the books as some teachers are afraid that the books will disappear or be ruined, according to the adult informants. Therefore, there is not only a need for more libraries but also the need for these libraries to be adapted to the needs of their users, as stated by many of our adult informants. As we have stated earlier, this view, which is very congruent with the sociocultural approach, seems to be embraced by most authors engaged with the

We have seen that the mentioned authors often emphasise the children’s need to learn from the familiar in relation to reading culture and literacy. As we have seen this is true in relation to books, but we also believe it to be relevant in relation to other literacy practises than reading. We have seen in the children’s responses that they have a family culture that consists of different familiar elements such as storytelling. We have also stated that it is not beneficial for the children to be detached from their family culture. Hence, the children have a need for bicultural mediation in order to understand and relate better to the subjects in school. This correlates with the sociocultural approach since it is stated by Serpell that children have an easier time acclimatising when the culture in school is coherent with the culture at home. For this reason, the children have a need to have indigenous literacy practises and cultural expressions incorporated into the curriculum in order to succeed in school (Serpell 2001 p. 250, 263). Our understanding is that this does not simply imply using literacy practises such as storytelling in school but also other kind of cultural expressions such as drama, poetry, art and crafts. This understanding is based on authors like Dike, Rychnner and Kwikiriza who state that these kind of cultural expressions are part of the African heritage and the socialisation of children in Africa (Rychnner 2000, p. 263; Dike 1995, p. 37; Kwikiriza 2000, p. 90). Nevertheless, we want to point out that we do not mean that children in Uganda only need these cultural expressions in order to be literate. Different forms of cultural expressions can strengthen literacy practises, but can not be viewed as part of the concept literacy, according to our view. To be literate the children should be able to read and write. However, in order for the children to be literate they should also be able to use and apply literacy practises based on oral language in the local context. Together literacy practises from different literacy traditions can form a “local literacy”. This “local literacy” is a hybrid of different literacy traditions and is part of what it means to be literate in the Ugandan context.

The adult informants also show evidence of this view since they state that the children should not be detached from their culture and that life in school should not be divorced with life in society. Thus, the children need the culture in school to be connected with the culture at home. The adult informants believe that the CRT is one way of meeting the needs of the children, since the project gives them access to relevant books, lets the children choose books by themselves and connects different literacy practises with each other.
9. CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter we will further define our findings and our discussion by presenting our conclusions to our research questions. We will do this by presenting the research questions one more time and answer them one by one.

In what ways do the participating children of the Children’s Reading Tent view reading, writing and storytelling?

The children view the literacy practises reading, writing and storytelling differently, in our opinion. They associate reading and writing mostly with school, contrary to storytelling which they connect with their home environment. They view reading and writing foremost as school work and important in order to pass examinations. Storytelling is mostly viewed as leisure and light entertainment and something you do when you have time over. We use the term bicultural situation to describe this phenomenon, where the children come in contact with one culture at home and one in school.

The value the children place on different literacy practises often also differs. Reading and writing are viewed as serious work that gives great benefits in the future, contrary to storytelling. Thus, we believe that reading and writing are valued higher and are believed to be superior to storytelling. However, the children still view storytelling as important and part of their family culture. Storytelling plays an important part of their lives and they see it as a way of learning their history, how to behave, socialising with friends and family and getting advice and moral lessons. Hence, we believe that storytelling is part of the children’s family culture contrary to reading and writing that are part of the school culture.

It is, however, not always this straightforward since many children also view reading and writing as functional and part of their everyday life. Many children also read and write at home for fun. This shows that many of the children have a habit of reading and writing outside school, which we view as tendencies of a reading culture among the children. Moreover, the children do not only keep the literacy practises apart, they also connect them with each other, in a form of bicultural mediation. We believe that when the children link different literacy practises it is a way for the children to apply their literacy skills according to their own needs. When they connect different literacy practises they form a hybrid that can mediate between the cultures present in school and at home.

What viewpoints of “literacy” and “reading culture” do the people working with the Children’s Reading Tent demonstrate?

The people working with the CRT do not only define literacy as the skill of reading and writing. The adult informants view literacy as a wide concept that includes literacy practises from different literacy traditions. The concept includes reading and writing, which are part of the “Western” literacy tradition. But what is more the oral tradition, which is believed to be part of an African literacy tradition, is also included in the concept literacy. Hence, we believe that literacy is viewed by the adult informants as hybrid consisting of different literacy practises that together form a “local literacy”.

Literacy is also viewed as functional and as part of the everyday life. Understanding and the use of the information gained through literacy are also part of the concept. The adult informants also state that literacy is not only the technical skill of decoding but is also viewed
as way of communicating. In addition, because many of the informants view literacy as communication they also connect other cultural expressions apart from reading and writing such as storytelling. The CRT is one way of showing the adult informants’ views of the concept literacy. In the CRT not only reading and writing are part of the activities but also other forms of literacy practises. This has led us to believe that the adult informants consider literacy to be a concept that includes other literacy practises than reading and writing.

However, even if the adult informants include different literacy practises in the concept literacy they still place different value on different practises. We believe that the adult informants’ responses indicate that some of the informants perceive reading and writing as superior to indigenous literacy practises such as storytelling. We think that when reading and writing are believed to be necessary for acquiring analytical powers and preventing backwardness and ignorance, as some have stated, this implies that other literacy practises do not promote these traits.

Thus, we believe that the adult informants demonstrate a view of literacy that is not entirely homogeneous. On one hand the adult informants’ view of literacy correlates well with the sociocultural approach since they both promote the use of different literacy practises according to the learners’ needs and context. On the other hand the adult informants place different values on the literacy practises and some of them perceive the oral tradition as inferior to reading and writing. This shows how complex the use and views of different concepts can be. In addition, the complexity of showing the adult informants’ views of the concept reading culture also became evident to us.

The adult informants’ viewpoints on reading culture touch upon many different aspects and topics. They are very much related to their viewpoints of literacy. A reading culture should first and foremost be voluntary, in contrast to “forced reading” for school. The current education system, with its focus on reading for examinations, is viewed as one of the major obstacles for a reading culture in Uganda. Poverty is seen as another and including poverty of institutions such as libraries.

A reading culture should also be a habit and a natural, facilitating part of people’s lives, according to the adult informants. It entails reading for entertainment but also for knowledge and many emphasise the functional, practical aspects of reading, that reading should be used as a way of solving problems in people’s everyday lives. It has also been mentioned that people need to feel that they own the culture and that it is part of them, instead of being an alien culture imposed on them. In relation to this, promoting reading and writing as an original “African” thing has been mentioned but the point (as we perceive it) is rather that people can make reading and writing into something of their own in line with the sociocultural approach. This is where relevant literature, which is related to the Ugandan context and the needs of Ugandans, is mentioned as necessary for creating a reading culture. Introducing reading to children at an early age is also seen as one of the critical factors in creating a reading culture.

Continuing, a reading culture is also seen by many as necessary for development and economic growth in society and has been mentioned as necessary to avoid ignorance and backwardness. Additionally, a reading culture as a prerequisite for democracy has been mentioned. Reading culture is thus mentioned both as something that should be voluntary and as a necessity and we think that this shows the complexity of the issue and how different discourses can intersect into each other.
What needs, related to literacy and a reading culture, do the participating children of the project have according to the people working with the Children’s Reading Tent?

The children need, according to the adult informants, to learn from what is familiar to them. What is familiar to the children differs, hence their needs are also different depending on the children’s context. The children also need to have access to books and not simply any books but relevant books. Since the children need to learn from the familiar, the adult informants state that the children need to have storybooks whose content is familiar and that they can relate to. The children can best define their own needs and therefore they also have a need of browsing through and picking books of their own choice. This is one way for the children to take an active role in the construction of meaning in relation to different literacy practises and the concept literacy. The adult informants also state that the children need to learn literacy based on a book-based approach, contrary to teaching methods that focus on the technical aspects of literacy and is based on a single textbook.

The children also have a need of connecting the culture in school with the one at home. This is important, according to the adult informants, since it prevents the children from being detached from their culture and the life they have been living in the villages and in their homes. The need for bicultural mediation among the children is also one way of making sense to the children and helping them in their understanding.

In what ways can the needs of the participating children as defined by the people working with the Children’s Reading Tent be met?

The adult informants state that the CRT is one way of meeting the needs of the children. Through the project they try to provide relevant material. What is more, the children also get the opportunity to browse through different books by themselves and choose according to their own needs. School and public libraries are also ways of meeting the children’s needs since the children can find and look for books in these institutions. Through the CRT teachers also learn new methods of teaching reading which the adult informants believe to be important. This is because the adult informants think that the teachers need to learn how to teach reading in a way that is relevant and inspiring to the children.

In order for the children to gain access to books that are culturally suitable, the local publishing industry needs to flourish and the vicious cycle within the industry needs to be broken. Moreover, textbooks can not meet the needs of the children since the children need to read books that are interesting, familiar and understandable. A strong local publishing industry is considered by the adult informants as one way of providing relevant books because the local publishing industry has insight into the local context.

Bicultural mediation is also one way of meeting the children’s needs since it connects the familiar culture at home with the school culture. This type of connection is made possible through the CRT where the indigenous literacy practises are connected with literacy practises present within formal education in Uganda. The adult informants’ will to provide books that introduce local concepts, reflect the oral tradition and respond to the children’s understanding of what it means to know and what it means to seek knowledge is one way of mediating between the two cultures. Hence, meeting the needs of the children.
10. FUTURE RESEARCH

In this last chapter we want to bring up what kind of future research we believe can be of interest. In our study we found evidence of the literacy practise storytelling in the children’s homes. We did, however, not explore other aspects of the children’s home environment and their family culture. It would, according to us, be interesting to search for other indigenous literacy practises and cultural expressions in the children’s environment. In the adult and child informants’ responses it became clear that singing, poetry, drama, arts and crafts and music were also part of the Ugandan heritage and culture. To investigate these and other cultural expressions did not fit into the scope of this thesis, but it would be interesting to see what part they play in children’s lives in Uganda and other parts of Africa.

Furthermore, we believe that in order to get insight into family cultures and what role the different literacy practises play in children’s lives in Uganda and other parts of Africa it is important to interview and observe in the children’s home environments. Apart from the children we believe that other family members (such as parents and grandparents) also should be included in the research, since they together with children are what create family cultures. What is more, we think that the children and the family members should not be studied separately but preferably in their interaction with each other. We believe this to be important since it is in the interaction that family cultures are formed.

We also think that it is important to study how teachers view and apply literacy. We believe this to be vital since the culture at school influences the children’s view of different literacy practises. In addition, insight into the school environment could serve as a way to see how children’s views of reading and writing are constructed. We also think it is interesting to see how the new thematic curriculum can influence and change the school culture. If the new curriculum can change the view of school and reading and writing among the children is, in our opinion, also interesting to study. We also think that it is important to study how the theoretical viewpoints behind the development of the new curriculum relate to the reality in the classroom. This can be one way of examining if the children benefit from a connection between the culture at home and the culture in school.

Research with a gender perspective in this context is also something we believe to be missing. Among other things we think it would be interesting to study if and how gender affects literacy practises. What functions different literacy practises have among girls/women and boys/men is something we consider worth investigating.

The research suggestions we have made are the kinds we believe to be lacking. Our understanding is that few studies have been made focusing on agents like family members, teachers and children in relation to literacy and especially in this kind of context. We see it as important to further study learners’ needs in order to be able to meet them. This can also be connected to the use of libraries since it is essential to know the user in order to meet the users’ needs. As we see it this can be accomplished through knowing the users’ context and family culture and what cultural expressions and literacy practises that are part of the context and family culture.
11. SUMMARY

The aim of our master’s thesis is to study and gain understanding of the two concepts “reading culture” and “literacy” in the context of Uganda from a sociocultural approach to literacy. We base our study on the project the Children’s Reading Tent. In the study we examine these two concepts in relation to both the people working with the Children’s Reading Tent and the participating children. Moreover, we look at what needs the children have according to the people working with the project and how these needs can be met.

To be able to accomplish our aim and answer our research questions we used semi-structured interviews and observations of the Children’s Reading Tent. We interviewed ten of the people working with the project and twenty of the participating children. The observations were conducted during six different occasions in Uganda.

We analysed our findings from the interviews and observations based on the sociocultural approach to literacy. Concepts and viewpoints present within this approach were used when we analysed our findings. We applied Street’s view that literacy is a social and cultural practice that depends on context in our study. We used the term bicultural situation as a way of showing that the culture at home and in school often differs. Serpell’s concept bicultural mediation was also used in connection to the findings as a way of showing how literacy practises in the culture in school and at home can be connected.

Through the interviews with the children we gained insight into their views of reading, writing and storytelling. We think that the children’s responses indicate that they connect reading and writing mostly with school and storytelling with their home environment. We believe that this shows that a bicultural situation is present in the children’s lives. Reading and writing are seen as serious work contrary to storytelling that is viewed mostly as light entertainment. Different literacy practises are therefore connected to different cultures and we believe that this is one explanation to why the children viewed reading and writing as more important than storytelling. Reading and writing are connected to education and believed to give more benefits than the oral tradition. However, many children also viewed reading and writing as functional and showed evidence of a reading culture, which in this case means reading for fun and knowledge and not only for school purposes. The children also sometimes connect different literacy practises with each other, as a form of bicultural mediation. Many of them also mentioned that storytelling is important for knowing your history and how to behave which shows that it is not only seen as entertainment.

In our study we have concluded that the people working with the Children’s Reading Tent view the concept literacy as hybrid of different literacy practises. The adult informants do not only include “Western” literacy traditions such as reading and writing in the concept literacy but also indigenous literacy practises such as storytelling and singing. Including different literacy practises in the concept literacy can be viewed, according to us, as a way to connect the culture at home with the one in school in order to make sense to the children and hence considering the children's context. However, we believed that some of the adult informants perceived reading and writing as superior to the oral tradition.

The adult informants demonstrate a view of a “reading culture” in Uganda as something that should be voluntary, as opposed to “forced reading” for school. For a reading culture to exist in Uganda, reading should be part of all aspects of life, which for example means that people
read for fun, for gaining knowledge and for gaining information to solve problems. A reading culture is seen by many as a necessity for economic growth and development. Obstacles to a reading culture are considered to be the present education system, poverty and lack of reading materials and institutions such as libraries.

In the study we also examine what needs the participating children have according to the people working with the Children’s Reading Tent. The adult informants state that the children have a need of learning from what is familiar, which depends on the children’s context. Based on this assumption the children should have access to books that are familiar and relevant. However, the children themselves are the best judges of what books which are relevant and in order for them to define their own needs they should be able to choose their own books. Connecting the familiar home environment with the school culture is also believed to be a need among the children.

The adult informants believe that the children’s needs can be met partly through the Children’s Reading Tent, since the project lets the children choose books according to their own needs. Furthermore, the project connects the literacy practises present in the children’s homes with the ones in school; a process that we view as bicultural mediation. Apart from the Children’s Reading Tent, the adult informants also mention that the publishing market must change in order to meet the needs of the children. Books that are culturally suitable and relate to the children’s understanding need to be published. Libraries are also a way of meeting the children’s needs since they get the opportunity to access and choose books in these institutions.
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Anonymous  
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Charles Batambuze  
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Robert Kayiki  
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Stella Nekuusa  
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Yunia Obua Otoa  
2007-03-22

Jackie Sabiti Kateera  
2007-03-26

James Tumusiime  
2007-03-14

Loy Tumusiime  
2007-03-27

20 recorded interviews conducted with participating children in the Children’s Reading Tent. The recordings and the transcriptions are in hold of the authors.

5 interviews were conducted with participating children during the Children’s Reading Tent in Jinja district on the 23rd of February 2007.

Girl 12 years old, Jinja 2007-02-24
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Boy 13 years old, Jinja 2007-02-24
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- Girl 11 years old, Mityana 2007-02-26
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- Boy 12 years old, Mityana 2007-02-26
- Boy 12 years old, Mityana 2007-02-26
- Boy 12 years old, Mityana 2007-02-26
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6 participating observations were conducted during the Children’s Reading Tent in Ntungamo district on the 15th and 16th of February 2007, Jinja district on the 22nd and 23rd of February 2007 and Mityana district on the 26th, 27th of February 2007.

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APPENDIX 1

Interview questions to the participating children

What activities are the most fun here at the reading tent? Why?
What activities are the most boring? Why?
Have you learnt anything here at the reading tent? If so, what?
Can you read?
Can you write?
In what language/s can you read and write?
How did you learn it?
What is/was difficult?

Is there anyone in your home who reads or writes?
Is there anyone who reads for you from a book at home?
Is there anyone in your home who tells stories?

Can you tell us about a story that you like?
Did you read this story or did someone tell it to you?

What do you like best, reading a story or listening to someone who is telling a story?

Do you usually tell stories to people? Can you tell me about it?
Do you write stories at home that are not home-work just for fun? Can you tell me about it?
Do you read stories at home which are not home-work? Can you tell me about it?
Do your friends tell stories? Can you tell me about it?
Do your friends read for fun? Can you tell me about it?
Do your friends write for fun? Can you tell me about it?

How do you feel when you are reading?
How do you feel when you are writing?
How do you feel when you are drawing?
How do you feel when you are telling a story?

What kind of books do you prefer reading? (In what language? What kind of stories? Where does it take place? What are they about?)

What is it like to talk, read and write in English?
What is it like to read and write in your own language?

Is it important to know how to read and write? Why?
Do you think it is important to be able to tell stories?
Why do you think adults (teachers, parents) think it is important to know how to read and write?
APPENDIX 2

Interview questions to the people working with the Children’s Reading Tent

How would you define literacy?

What does reading culture mean in the context of Uganda?

What factors are important if you want to achieve a reading culture in Uganda?

What obstacles, relating to a reading culture, are present in Uganda? What are the challenges?

Why is it important to promote a reading culture in Uganda?

In what way does the Children’s Reading Tent promote a reading culture in Uganda?

In what way does moulding, crafting, drawing and painting relate to creating a reading culture and promoting literacy?

In what way does singing relate to creating a reading culture and promoting literacy?

In what way does storytelling relate to creating a reading culture and promoting literacy?

What would you say are relevant books for children in Uganda?

What is the difference between the books NABOTU buy for the Children’s Reading Tent and the ones you get from Book Aid International?

What needs would you say the participating children have in terms of literacy and reading?

In what way does the Children’s Reading Tent meet the needs of the participating children, in relation to reading and literacy?

What role does the strong tradition of story-telling play in the lives of children in Uganda?

How does the fact that the Children’s Reading Tent is funded by development aid affect the project?

What kind of information do you give the teachers when you talk to them in the beginning of the Children’s Reading Tent?

What is the most important thing you want the teachers to realise and possibly use when they teach after attending the Children’s Reading Tent?

What challenges does the publishing market have in Uganda?

If you were to decide, how would the Children’s Reading Tent develop and progress in the future?